

# Victoria & Albert Art & Love

## ‘The whole is quite consonant with the truth’: Queen Victoria and the myth of the Highlands

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## ‘The whole is quite consonant with the truth’: Queen Victoria and the myth of the Highlands

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Fig. 1  
Edwin Landseer (1802–73),  
*Queen Victoria landing at Loch Muick*, 1850  
Oil on canvas, 42.9 x 76.5cm  
Royal Collection, RCIN 403221

Queen Victoria and Prince Albert visited Scotland for the first time in 1842 and embarked on a lifelong association with the country, its wild and beautiful landscape, its people and its ancient traditional culture. At least that is the popular perception. In fact, from the first to the last, from the couple's sojourn at Blairs Castle in Perthshire in 1844 to the lease, purchase and rebuilding of Balmoral on Deeside, and the subsequent extended annual residences there, the couple had a love affair with a fantasy, a myth. With tremendous enthusiasm they immersed themselves in a fanciful notion of Scotland, believing it utterly and revelling in its supposed arcane traditions and esoteric survivals from the distant past.

These survivals were by and large well under fifty years old when Prince Albert signed the lease on Balmoral in 1848, and the traditional practices were generally inventions, often stemming from the fiction of Sir Walter Scott (1771–1832). The royal couple's personal commitment to this view of Scotland is played out in the art they commissioned with a Highland theme. Thus the 1850 sketch of *Queen Victoria landing at Loch Muick* ([fig. 1](#)) by Sir Edwin Landseer (1802–73) was recorded by the Queen in her Journal in the following terms:

*[T]he picture is intended to represent me as meeting Albert, who has been stalking, whilst I have been fishing, and the whole is quite consonant with the truth. The solitude, the sport, and the Highlanders in the water &c. will be, as Landseer says, a beautiful historical exemplification of peaceful times, & of the independent life we lead in the dear Highlands.<sup>1</sup>*

The Queen's complete immersion in this Highland lifestyle and her unquestioning acceptance that she and her entourage were fitting into an existing culture, and not creating it as a bubble isolated from reality, is striking. Through an examination of paintings of the period, this paper will consider the origin of this conception of Scottish life and culture, the contemporary understanding and representation of life at Balmoral, and the impact that the royal endorsement of the myth of the Highlands had on Scottish art and visual identity.



It is instructive to begin by comparing the painting which earned the Queen's approval as 'the truth' with a near-contemporary image of the royal couple in an English setting. *Windsor Castle in Modern Times* ([fig. 2](#)) is also by Landseer and dates from the early 1840s. The contrasts between the two paintings are remarkable, and very revealing about the way life in Scotland was understood. The *Windsor* painting is a representation of civilisation. It is an interior scene with the exterior, which is formal and controlled, seen through a window. In the bath chair being wheeled around a formal garden is Queen Victoria's mother; the Duchess of Kent. In comparison, in the painting of Loch Muick there is no sign of civilisation. Although the subject matter is

**Fig. 2**  
Edwin Landseer (1802–73),  
*Windsor Castle in Modern times: Queen Victoria,  
Prince Albert and Victoria, Princess Royal, 1840–43*  
Oil on canvas, 113.3 x 144.5cm  
Royal Collection, RCIN 406903

very similar – Queen Victoria and Prince Albert greeting each other after the Prince has been off hunting – there are significant differences between the two pictures. The Windsor painting is a mid-nineteenth-century family scene with the royal couple taking on the accepted gender roles epitomising accepted domestic structures. Queen and Consort look at each other: they are a loving married couple, with the man as the outdoor action figure and the woman as the interior domestic figure. The Prince Consort has been out hunting while his wife has been at home taking care of the household: she holds a flower and is accompanied by a child. Although she is Queen, Victoria she is presented here as the ideal nineteenth-century woman – the adoring wife and mother; a homemaker absorbed in domestic life. In the painting of the life of the couple in Scotland, their relationship is very different: here the Queen herself has been pursuing outdoor sports. Rather than being shown as the keeper of the domestic sphere to which Prince Albert returns after a hard day, she has participated, albeit in a ladylike fashion, in the outdoor life.

There are many direct contrasts between the two images. The relationship between the figures of the Queen and her consort is different: in Windsor she looks adoringly at her husband, while at Loch Muick both look at the stag. The landscapes are also diametrically opposed: Scotland is shown as uncontrolled, informal, wild and empty, the antithesis of the formal garden in the Windsor painting. The servants, too, might be contrasted. The liveried figure who pulls the Duchess of Kent around Windsor is tiny, insignificant and servile, while the highlanders in the Muick painting are much larger and are active, more independent men: the gillie with the gun looks assured and comfortable in this elevated company, and there is no hint of servility. The objects of the hunt are also different. The creature killed in the Scottish painting is itself a large, dominant animal rather than a series of small, defenceless birds. Similarly, the dogs at Windsor are pampered toys eagerly ingrating themselves, while that at Muick is a working deerhound lying tired at the feet of the gillie. These paintings suggest that the Scottish Highlands represent a very different sort of culture from ordered, controlled and civilised England, their wild and unruly nature disrupting regular Victorian values. This is a place where the normal rules of polite society do not apply: as the Victoria herself said, this is 'the independent life we lead in the ... Highlands'.

That 'independent life' was understood by the royal couple wholly in terms of the romantic myth of the Highlands and Highlanders developed and popularised by Scott. For example, the events of the day's outing recorded in *Queen Victoria Landing at Loch Muick* are discussed in some detail by the Queen in her Journal. Her record of the events of mid-September 1850 contains assertions that the 'Highland race' are independently minded, 'singularly straightforward, simple-minded, kind-hearted' – all the characteristics of the inhabitants of the region described by Scott and painted by Landseer.



She then goes on to equate the outings at Loch Muick directly with Scott, relating that the royal family were accompanied in a rowing boat on the loch by a piper, who played while other servants rowed:

It reminded me of Sir Walter Scott's lines in *The Lady of the Lake*:—

*Ever, as on they bore, more loud  
And louder rung the pibroch proud.  
At first the sound, by distance tame,  
Mellow'd along the waters came,  
And, lingering long by cape and bay,  
Wail'd every harsher note away.*<sup>2</sup>

Everything about Queen Victoria and Prince Albert's life at Balmoral needs to be understood in relation to this fundamental conception. When in Scotland, they saw themselves as part of a different culture and subject to different conventions and rules. As a consequence, all sorts of things at Balmoral were different from the other royal residences. The members of staff were all expected to wear Border tartan, except on holidays when they had to wear Stewart tartan. Keepers and gillies were required to wear kilts at all times, except when stalking.

Most interestingly of all, in a discussion on the royal couple's patronage of the arts, Balmoral was not considered a suitable venue for important works of art. Rather than being home to part of the very extensive and high-quality collection built up by the royal couple during the early years of the Queen's reign, Balmoral was decorated by engravings after Edwin Landseer ([fig. 3](#)). This appears to be related to the belief that life in Scotland was of a different order from that of other Royal residences. Rather than being an urbane, cultured environment for the contemplation



**Fig. 3**  
James Roberts (1800–1867),  
*The Drawing Room Balmoral*, 1857  
Watercolour on paper; 26.1 x 38.3cm  
Royal Collection, RL 19777

of Italian Renaissance painting or of contemporary sculpture, it was a place of rough, primitive outdoor pursuits, explicitly free from the social constraints of Windsor, Osborne or Buckingham Palace. The corollary was that it was also free of the sophisticated material culture of these residences.



It is important to recognise that this identity as a place outside the boundaries of contemporary society was not an imposition on Scotland. The wild, romantic Highlands as the embodiment of the country was not an idea invented in England and forced upon unwilling Scots who were desperate to have themselves perceived differently. This 'Highlandism', as it is usually called, began in Scotland and was very happily embraced by vast numbers of Scots. It is how, from the early nineteenth century on, Scotland presented itself to the rest of Britain and to the world (**fig. 4**).

This is not the place to explore the intricacies of the evolution of the Highlandist identity, but it is worth briefly examining its origins. In the nineteenth century, to an even greater extent than today, Scotland's popular identity was not Lowland, but Highland. While today some 50,000 Scots football supporters from the country's heavily populated and urbanised central belt still gather at Hampden Park, Glasgow, to sing of their 'wee bit hill and glen', emphasising the continued appeal of 'Highlandism' to the national psyche, in the nineteenth century the identity of the country with its northern, western, non-urban regions was significantly stronger.<sup>3</sup>

**Fig. 4**  
Horatio McCulloch (1805–67),  
*Glencoe*, 1864  
Oil on canvas, 112 x 183.3cm  
Glasgow Museums, Kelvingrove,  
Art Gallery and Museum

The creation of this Highland 'hallucination', as it has been described, was enormously successful in providing Scots with an identity that both preserved a sense of national distinctiveness and remained stalwartly loyal to the constructed state of Great Britain.<sup>4</sup> But it was – and is – a fantasy;<sup>5</sup> it is not in any sense real.

By the middle of the nineteenth century, when Queen Victoria and Prince Albert began visiting Scotland, Highlandism was unchallenged as the veritable embodiment of the nation. This establishment of an economically insignificant and, for the majority of Scots, culturally alien environment as their defining characteristic was very new. For hundreds of years Lowland Scots had despised and feared the Highlands in equal measure. In 1568 that strong sense of difference – and considerable contempt – had been standard for almost two centuries before the Edinburgh merchant George Bannatyne (1545–1608) compiled an anthology of poetry which included the folk-poem, 'How the first Heland-man of god was maid of Ane horse turd in argyll as is said'. Following his inauspicious creation, the Lowland poem gives to the eponymous Highlander one clear ambition: 'I will doun in the lawland, lord, / And thair steill a kow.' He goes on to vow never to work again if there is ever anything available to steal.<sup>6</sup>

This derision, tempered by fear of lawlessness, lasted until the late eighteenth century. The notion that the region represented a uncontrollable and warlike society right on the doorstep of modern Scotland only ended with the defeat of the second Jacobite rising in 1745 and the subsequent brutal suppression of the Highlands. No longer regarded as a credible military threat, perception of the region underwent a remarkable, and remarkably rapid, *volte face*. Highlanders' supposed warlike nature went from being a cause for alarm to a reason for pride as, with large numbers enlisting, Highland regiments distinguished themselves in the British Army. Popular understanding of the Gaelic male shifted from rebel to hero.<sup>7</sup>

At the same time, the Europe-wide development of Romantic sensibilities, valuing intense emotion and extreme states of being, meant that the dramatic topography of the Highlands, derided by Samuel Johnson in 1773 as a 'wide extent of hopeless sterility', could be seen, less than thirty years later by John Stoddart, as a 'great theatre of a new and more impressive class of natural beauties'.<sup>8</sup> The key moment in the creation of Scotland's Highland identity occurred in connection with another royal visit to Scotland. In 1822 Walter Scott designed and orchestrated a tartan-bedecked spectacular for the visit of George IV to Edinburgh ([fig. 5](#)). The visit was witnessed personally by one seventh of the Scottish population, and it sealed the popularity of Highlandism in the minds of both Scots and English.<sup>9</sup> The King was charmed by Scott's presentation of Scotland as an ancient and traditional clan society, even if a few – very few – commentators thought that the whole thing was in poor taste.



**Fig. 5**  
Sir David Wilkie (1785–1841),  
*The Entrance of George IV at  
Holyrood House, 1830*  
Oil on canvas, 126 x 198.1 cm  
Royal Collection, RCIN 401187

John Gibson Lockhart (1794–1854), Scott's son-in-law, was one of those who objected to the construction of the country as Highland. He wrote: 'So completely had this hallucination taken possession, that nobody seems to have been startled at the time by language which distinctly conveyed his Majesty's impression that the marking and crowning glory of Scotland consisted in the Highland clans and their chieftains.'<sup>10</sup> Clearly Victoria and Albert were not the first members of the royal family to embrace the romance of the Highlands.

Despite Lockhart's disquiet, Scotland's Highland identity was an astonishing success. Early nineteenth-century Scots had been anxious about their profile within Great Britain: there was uncertainty of what it meant to be Scottish now that the country was part of Great Britain. Scots seized on Highlandism as a badge of difference from their bigger, richer and more powerful partner in statehood. That individuality was entirely cultural. Rather than resistance to English political hegemony, there was, encapsulated within Highlandism, an extravagant loyalty to the British state.

This loyalty was important for Victoria and Albert, and enhanced the appeal of the Highlands to the royal couple. Their Scottish fantasy, played out with a cast of loyal retainers in full Highland dress, in a castle interior replete with tartan carpets, residence for a queen adorned with jewellery made from the teeth of stags shot by her consort, meant that by mid-century, to all intents and purposes, Scotland was the Highlands ([fig. 6](#)). The very high profile of Victoria and Albert as they embraced Highlandism gave the idea tremendous power. The affection they held for Scotland was genuine and very obvious, and any challenge to its underlying principles necessarily called that affection into question. Highlandist art, with its Romantic subject matter allied to a relatively conventional artistic interpretation, became the official art of Scotland and was vigorously defended by the Scottish art establishment.





**Fig. 6**  
Carl Rudolph Sohn (1845–1908),  
*John Brown at Frogmore*, 1883  
Oil on panel, 43.5 x 32.2cm  
Royal Collection, RCIN 406271

Any challenge to it questioned not just a set of artistic principles, but the entire identity of the country. To criticise the depiction of stags, glens, kilts and tartan rapidly became tantamount to treason.

This sounds ludicrously exaggerated, but by examining the painting of the period it is possible to demonstrate the validity of the assertion. Consider what the pictures actually tell you about the Highlands and compare that with what was actually happening in the region at the time. The period 1750–1850 was a time of enormous change across rural Britain, nowhere more so than the Highlands. The 'clan' society had been in decline well before this time, and by the mid-nineteenth century very little trace remained of the 'traditional' culture. Yet the process of extraordinary change

in the Highlands – as the region became a source of military might for the British Empire, a huge, untapped grazing ground for the growing sheep-rearing industry and a killing-field for the elite sportsman, as well as attracting a new class of aesthetic pleasure-seekers – did nothing to stop the area being 'discovered' as a timeless, backward land of tradition. In a time of unprecedented change, the Highlands were perceived as timeless and unchanging. The reputation of the region as a Romantic treasure house spread throughout Europe. Scott's vision of the Highlands was very widely read and its influence in European painting was extraordinary: between 1822 and 1837 more than two hundred paintings based on Scott appeared in French exhibitions alone. Improbable images of Highlanders, such as a figure in kilt and stiff-brimmed black sunhat, appeared in images like the Frenchman J.B. Gassies's generic *Paysage d'Ecosse*.<sup>11</sup> Felix Mendelssohn visited the Highlands and wrote a *Scottish Symphony* with a strong martial theme, references to bagpipe music and a final movement derived from five folk songs which has been read as a 'gathering of the clans' – a virtual checklist of Highlandist components.<sup>12</sup> Highlandism became a European obsession embraced by Romantic artists in all media across the Continent.



**Fig. 7**  
Richard Ansdell (1815–85),  
*The Isle of Skye*, 1856  
Oil on canvas, 108 x 183cm  
Private Collection (Sotheby's, 2006)

Major English painters worked extensively in Scotland. Queen Victoria's favourite, Edwin Landseer, built his reputation on Scottish subjects. His contemporary, the Liverpool painter Richard Ansdell (1815–85) also worked extensively in Scotland: his *The Isle of Skye* (1856) shows a shepherd, clad in a belted plaid and a glengarry hat, rounding up sheep in the shadow of the Black Cuillin (**fig. 7**). Though recognisable, the hills are given an exaggerated saw-tooth profile and a fringe of swirling mist, and are set against a lurid sky. The figure, bathed in strong sunlight, stands in the middle ground on the edge of a vertiginous drop, while the foreground is dominated by one of the shepherd's two dogs and a flock of blackface sheep. The struggle of man against a harsh and unforgiving environment, the terrible beauty of nature in the raw, the threat of imminent danger; the depiction of exotic costume, all contribute to the archetypal Romantic image. The absence of any sign of human habitation or activity,

other than that of the lone shepherd, serves both to heighten the drama and to make it timeless: there are no societal reference points. The figure stands against the skyline with an arm raised in a gesture, both gathering of the flock and saluting to the natural spectacle laid out before him. There is no sign that Ansdell was aware of or interested in either the activity or the individual depicted. In 1856 Skye was undergoing a virtual social revolution, large parts of the island having been sold in recent years. The introduction of large-scale sheep farming, under the direction of imported Lowland farmers, had led to entire settlements on the island undergoing 'clearance', with people compulsorily removed to make way for animals. The sheep in the painting are what local Gaels referred to as '*Na Caoraidh Mora*' ('big sheep') – not the small, hardy breed farmed locally for generations, but imported animals, introduced in vast numbers to the newly created 'sheep walks'. For all its modernity as a subject, this radical departure from the 'traditional' life of the Highlands is represented as changeless epic, the ancient hallowed ways of the Highlands. Ansdell's image caters to contemporary fashion for a landscape described in the *Illustrated London News* as 'the desolate grandeur of the scenery of Skye, [which] annually attracts to it crowds of tourists ... delighted as well they may with the wildest and most impressive scenery in the kingdom'.<sup>13</sup>

Or consider the sporting paintings so popular with the Queen and Prince Albert. From the early 1830s, but particularly after Victoria and Albert had begun to come to the region in the 1840s, the view of the Highlands as dramatic and wild and largely empty led to the growth and development of the area as a venue for 'sport', that is, shooting. William Allan's *Highland Gillie and his Pony* (fig. 8) is an early testament to this development. The iconography is more complex than it first appears. The subject relates to deer stalking but rather indirectly. Commonly a gentleman stalker would follow a selected stag in the company of at least two gillies. He might follow the animal for a considerable distance before the opportunity arose to shoot. After the kill the junior gillie was sent to fetch a pony used to transport the stag off the hill. It is this figure that Allan's painting depicts, returning with the as yet unladen pony. As an image of the idiosyncratic, time-honoured life of the Highlands this is highly problematic. As with the introduction of large-scale sheep farming, the spread of deer forests – that is, areas cleared of people and left empty for deer to roam – led to antagonism and open conflict between local populations and new proprietors. In addition, the employment opportunities offered by sporting estates split local communities. Those who worked on the deer forests, though often of the 'crofter class', were bitterly resented by their former peers.<sup>14</sup> Certainly some of this antipathy may have been the result of envy at the high wages paid by sporting estates. A stalker might earn over £70 per annum at a time when a crofter's fishing income was typically £7.10s.<sup>15</sup> Principally, however, stalkers, gillies, gamekeepers and foresters were disliked for the powers they could and evidently did wield.



**Fig. 8**  
William Allan (1782–1850),  
*Highland Gillie and his Pony*, c.1848  
Oil on board, 73.5 x 61 cm  
Stirling, Smith Art Gallery and Museum

Those who worked on the sporting estates appear to have routinely abused their positions to harass, exploit and undermine crofting tenants. There exist large numbers of well-documented accounts of crofters' treatment at the hands of individuals such as that depicted by Allan. Not infrequently the gillie's or keepers' gun was a significant factor in the harassment. For example, a Skye crofter reported in the 1880s that he was compelled to pay a 'dog tax' to allow him to own a dog. The animal was necessary to keep the deer from destroying his crops. Despite the tax, the crofter recalled 'the shooting tenant's gamekeeper came to the back of my house and shot that dog about fifty yards off. The dog was lying beside my wife and daughter who were lifting potatoes at the time.'<sup>16</sup> The gun carried by Allan's gillie is virtually a badge of office: it is a side-by-side hammer shotgun, not a weapon used to stalk deer. While Allan presents it as one of the tools of the trade of the Highland gillie, for contemporary crofters it carried considerable symbolic significance. Rather than alluding to a relationship between man and nature and the joys of Highland sport, the local populace would have seen it as a mark of their subjugation.

Some contemporary Highland landscapes deliberately offered a challenge to Highlandism by depicting the realities of life rather than the fantasy. This is most immediately obvious in paintings of sheep. While the painting of sheep walks is unsurprising in a documentary sense, by the time paintings of the Highlands began to become popular large-scale sheep farming in the region was well established, but the removal of the people to make way for the sheep had provoked enormous upheaval and a great deal of controversy. The most notorious of the clearances occurred on the estate of the Queen's 'Mistress of the Robes' and good friend, the Duchess of Sutherland. Although these events began more than forty years before the creation of any of the paintings discussed here, they are far from irrelevant. The Sutherland clearances entered folk-memory and have remained ever since a standard reference-point in the popular history of the destruction of the culture of the Gael. Fear and bitterness at the Sutherland clearances were further exacerbated by mid-century events. During the 1850s, the decade of crisis prompted by the Highland potato famine, the management of the Sutherland estate was the subject of very high profile attacks in *The Times* which, given the family's royal connections, must have been the topic of fascinated discussion at Balmoral. At the same time Karl Marx (1818–83) wrote an article on 'The Duchess of Sutherland and Slavery', reflecting on anti-slavery remarks about America made by the then Duchess, daughter-in-law of the individual who had presided over the clearances. Marx observed that the Duchess would have to look to her own behaviour before anyone would take notice of her opinion on matters overseas: 'The history of the wealth of the Sutherland family is the history of the ruin and of the expropriation of the Scotch-Gaelic population from its native soil'.<sup>17</sup>

From the first decade of the century onwards, the Sutherland clearances became a byword for persecution. As late as 1878 the 'Highland and Agricultural Society' was reporting on the reduction of the number of Highland smallholdings in favour of



large sheep farms, so the issue remained topical right through the period of the royal fascination with Scotland.<sup>18</sup> By the 1880s the entire question of the land rights of the indigenous population was rapidly becoming a major concern in British politics. The 'Crofter's War', the period of intense unrest over the issue of land reform in the Highlands, came to a head on Skye in 1882, with violent confrontations between crofters and police. In the end, as Prime Minister Gladstone phrased it, it was necessary to restore to the crofters 'the rights of which they have been surreptitiously deprived'.<sup>19</sup> But nothing of this appears in any way in the Highland paintings or decorative arts commissioned by Queen Victoria and Prince Albert. Instead there is a relentless parade of noble stags and kilted Highlanders. This blindness to reality was by no means unique to the royal family or to the aristocracy, or to English visitors to Scotland. The celebrated Scottish painter Joseph Farquharson (1846–1935) made an entire career out of depicting the hardy Gael tending sheep in the snow – an extraordinary idea given that sheep were directly responsible for the destruction of the very culture he was supposed to be celebrating.



**Fig. 9**  
George Reid (1841–1913),  
*Dornoch*, 1877  
Oil on canvas, 77.8 x 110.6cm  
Royal Scottish Academy  
(Diploma Collection)

In the 1870s and later, images of sheep in the Highlands was far from an ideologically neutral subject, which makes George Reid's *Dornoch* of 1877 (**fig. 9**) all the more remarkable. This is a painting of 'big sheep' – in this case cheviots, the least hardy of the breeds imported to the Highlands, requiring most access to the former smallholding land. Furthermore, Reid's composition is set in Sutherland, the epicentre of the clearances. These factors seem almost calculated to cause maximum offence. *Dornoch* had a particular place in clearance history: the parish itself was subject to one of the earlier clearances in 1812, and the moors at Achavandra, three miles away, had been the proposed site of one of the early clearance settlements, to which the

proprietors attempted to relocate farmers forcibly removed from the interior of the county. By giving the painting the title *Dornoch*, and setting it in the moors west of the town, Reid seems to allude directly to both these events.

Reid's painting is of an entirely different order from those Highland images acquired by the royal family. Though set in the far north of Scotland, the two figures shown are not plaid-wearing Highlanders. A rather anonymous duo, possibly a man and a woman, they are not even clearly associated with the sheep. They walk slowly towards us, the left-hand (female?) character may be carrying a bag, and the man on the right carries a stick and appears not to be wearing shoes. They are given no particular prominence and no very distinct task. The painting has no clear narrative. There is no overt reference to the great emotional drama of dispossession and eviction played out on precisely this spot; that context must be supplied by the viewer. Reid's painting abstains from emotive appeals and is completely lacking in the Romantic drama of Highlandism. Instead, it makes a claim for objectivity and relies on the viewer's knowledge of the issues, both historic and contemporary, to provide a context for the image. Given the widespread familiarity with Highland-related matters then current, that knowledge was all but guaranteed. In these circumstances the figures in the painting must have invited speculative interpretation. The shoeless man and the women with a bag walk slowly away from Dornoch in the company of sheep, the usurpers of traditional land rights.

Furthermore, Reid's realist method is very different from that of Landseer, Allan and their like. His brushwork and quiet tonal structure are as important in communicating with the audience as the content. The rough scumbled surface and dragged paint enhance the sense of muscular physicality in the painting and contribute to a sense of open honesty. In the direct manner in which the marks of the painter's hand are seen, with an absence of artifice in the technique, there is a claim for natural truth in the image. Reid's method seems almost effortless – a direct transcription of the world.

Both the specific knowledge alluded to in Reid's painting and the reference to the contentious contemporary Highland issues mark this work out as a genuinely realist image. It is not related to works of painters such as Edwin Landseer or Joseph Farquharson, which, as Reid described them, were 'without a single redeeming feature in them'.<sup>20</sup> Highlandist paintings of sheep unthinkingly offer up, for Lowland Scottish or English consumption, images of hardy Highlanders, struggling bravely with their environment, calling to mind vague Christian connotations of good shepherds or lost sheep. The sheer crassness of trying to encapsulate the 'romance of the Highlands' in images of the very creature that led directly to the final destruction of Highland culture and the eradication of entire communities seems to have entirely eluded their creators.<sup>21</sup> However, although historically of interest, challenges such as these did very little long-term damage to Highlandism. It remained as the popular visual identity of Scotland right through the twentieth century and it is still immensely popular today, despite the fact that it now bears even less relationship to reality.

## Notes

1. Journal, 19 September 1850.
2. Journal, 16 September 1850.
3. The line is from *Flower of Scotland*, a Scottish song used frequently at sporting events as an unofficial national anthem. It was written by Roy Williamson of the folk group The Corries in 1967, and refers to the victory of the Scots, led by Robert the Bruce, over King Edward II of England at the Battle of Bannockburn in 1314. The first stanza reads: 'O flower of Scotland / When will we see your like again / That fought and died for / Your wee bit hill and glen / And stood against him / Proud Edward's army / And sent him homeward / Tae think again.'
4. Lockhart 1893, pp. 484–5.
5. Interestingly, the words to the later twentieth-century *Flower of Scotland* exactly echo this mid nineteenth-century sentiment of difference from England but stalwart loyalty to the United Kingdom. Referring to the Wars of Independence with England, the final stanza opens with the lines: 'Those days are passed now / And in the past they must remain.'
6. The original Bannatyne Manuscript is held in the Library of the Faculty of Advocates, Edinburgh. The quotation is taken from *The Bannatyne Manuscript*, printed for the Hunterian Club, vol. 3, Glasgow 1896, p. 460.
7. For a full analysis of the change in responses to the Highlands and their inhabitants, see Clyde 1995.
8. Johnson 1985, p. 32 (originally published 1786). See Stoddart 1801, vol. 1, p. 215.
9. For an analysis of the development and consequences of Highlandism for Scottish painting, see Morrison 2003.
10. Lockhart 1893, pp. 484–5.
11. Jean-Bruno Gassies (1786–1832), a pupil of Jacques-Louis David (1748–1825), was a member of the French Navy who was captured and imprisoned by in England. Following his release he travelled in England and Scotland. He returned several times to visit, in 1821, 1824 and 1826. It was during his last visit that he painted *Paysage d'Ecosse*. The painting is now in the Musée Rolin, Autun.
12. Felix Mendelssohn (1809–47) visited Scotland on a walking tour aged 20 in 1829. He spent three weeks travelling from Edinburgh to the Western Isles and drawing at several noted picturesque viewpoints. The climax of Mendelssohn's trip was a visit to Staffa off the coast of Mull.
13. 'Emigration from the Isle of Skye', *Illustrated London News*, vol. 22, no. 603 (15 January 1853), p. 1.
14. *Report* 1884, p. 89.
15. For a discussion of wages on sporting estates, see Orr 1982, pp. 113, 127.
16. *Report* 1884, p. 542.
17. Marx 1853. See Marx/Engels online library (<http://marx.eserver.org/1853-scot.clearings.txt>).
18. Devine 1994, p. 197.
19. Letter from Gladstone to Sir William Harcourt, Home Secretary, quoted in Cameron 1996, p. 33.
20. *Veri Vindex* 1868, p. 45.
21. See Morrison 2005, pp. 97–111.

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