Gaelic Scotland in the Colonial Imagination

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In the early modern period, Scotland’s central government authorities increased their efforts to bring the kingdom’s geographical and political “fringes” more fully under their control, aiming to align the cultures and societies of these margins with the principles of the emerging capitalist nation-state. Among the various fringes which existed, the Gaidhealtachd turned out to be particularly resilient to such streamlining efforts. Already existing Lowland traditions of representing Highlanders as inferior and potentially hostile Others gained new energy and a new tone. In the Middle Ages, such antagonisms had often been portrayed with a certain playfulness, almost like the good-humored banter one finds between neighboring but slightly rivaling villages or small islands. But early modern Lowland discourse about Gaels appears more earnest, reflecting the modern nation’s impatience with alternative ways of life.

The sense of cultural antagonism was also fueled by disputes about the rights of the Stuart royal dynasty. Having ruled Scotland since 1371 and England since 1603, their authority was called into question by the Civil Wars of 1639 to 1651, culminating in the execution of King Charles I in 1649 and the subsequent Cromwellian interregnum. The Stuart monarchy was restored in 1660, but was unsettled again by the Revolution of 1688 which deposed the Catholic king James II and strengthened the role of parliamentary powers. Although the dynasty initially continued to rule through two female Protestant Stuart monarchs, the throne passed to the Protestant House of Hanover in 1714, bypassing Catholic Stuart claimants like James II, his son (also James), and grandson (Charles Edward, alias “Bonnie Prince Charlie”).

During and after these various seventeenth- and eighteenth-century disruptions, many (though by no means all) Gaels continued to support the Stuart dynasty, including its Catholic representatives. Supporters of the deposed James II and his Catholic line after 1688 were called “Jacobites” (derived from “Jacobus,” the Latin form of “James”). Jacobites existed in all parts of the British Isles and acted from a range of motives. Some believed in the
divine right of kings and thus considered deposition by revolution as unacceptable. Some were Catholics themselves and thus preferred a Catholic monarch. Some belonged to other marginalized denominations, such as Episcopalianism, and channeled their dissatisfaction with the current status quo into the hope that a change of dynasty would further their interests. Similar calculations were sometimes made by Gaels who felt wronged by the current government’s policies or representatives: Jacobitism offered a chance to avenge themselves on their enemies and a hope of better fortunes under a new status quo. Some may have felt that their ambitions for office, fortune, or lands had no realistic chance under the present system, but that Jacobitism offered a high-risk gamble which, in the event of success, would give them a new monarchy that would gratefully reward their services by granting them the boons they desired. After 1707, certain adversaries of the Union likewise pinned their hopes on Jacobitism, hoping that the restoration of the old line would also restore separate English and Scottish statehood. Furthermore, some patriots objected to the German origins of the Hanoverian dynasty and preferred the Stuarts due to their British background. Jacobitism also became a rallying ground for other kinds of social discontent. Hence, the movement was very diverse, and not all goals were necessarily compatible or realistic. Nonetheless, it was an important social force, and many of its complexities were neglected in the simplistic portrayals it received from both supporters and adversaries. For instance, although Scottish Highlanders played an important role in the movement and provided its military backbone, not all Highlanders were Jacobites, and not all Jacobites were Highlanders. But many hostile representations of the movement simplistically equated its political otherness with the cultural otherness of the Gaelic Highlands. The association with Jacobitism reinforced the notion that Gaeldom was out of tune with the nation’s mainstream—a sense of political otherness that lasted until the defeat of the last Jacobite rising in the mid-eighteenth century.

The modern nation-state also saw a need for greater cultural unity. Although the concept of “one nation, one culture, one language” did not come to full fruition until the second half of the eighteenth century, the desire to assimilate the Gaels to “mainstream” cultural norms (as defined ethnocentrically by those in power) is already evident in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, if not earlier. Nonetheless, Lowland opinion retained some vestiges of respect for Gaelic culture (though more for its past than its present), for instance because it could be used to underline Scotland’s difference from England, thus justifying national independence. This strategy was already used by Scottish historians and propagandists in the Middle Ages. But when the modern period placed a Scottish-English union back on the agenda, the need to bolster Scottish distinctness by reference to its Gaelic traditions declined. Increasing differences between Scotland’s Highlands and Lowlands, the desire for intra-national homogenization, and inter-national convergence with England all contributed to a growing sense that Gaeldom was a disturbing
internal Other which impeded national unity. Hence, both the Scottish and, later, the British mainstream wished to assimilate these Gaelic “barbarian Others” into a more homogeneous national collective, and launched “civilizing missions” to achieve this end. The belief in cultural hierarchies and civilizing missions aligns Lowland and English images of the Gaidhealtachd with similar perceptions that informed contemporaneous colonial projects in Ireland and overseas. The Lowlanders’ colonizing stance toward Highlanders may also have been a response to their own marginalized status in relation to England: by denigrating and “civilizing” the “barbarous” Highlanders, Lowlanders could emphasize that they were not, or not only, England’s backward colonized periphery, but also civilized colonizers themselves, thus moving closer to the English center. A similar change of roles from colonized to colonizer was embraced by many Scots, both Lowlanders and Highlanders, who participated in the colonization of Ireland or Britain’s overseas territories.

The Quest for National Homogeneity and Progress: Gaeldom, Scotland, and Britain

The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries saw various attempts to strengthen central government control over the Highlands and bring them closer to Lowland standards. However, the initial effect was not law and order, but a destabilization that arguably made the Gaidhealtachd more “disorderly” than before. This perceived lawlessness increased the Highlanders’ notoriety in Lowland opinion, which blamed internal Gaelic factors rather than government interference. One reason why the Highlands were associated with disorder was territorial insecurity: James VI attempted to increase royal income by raising rents and renegotiating feu duties, which “led to a demand that the clan elites (fine) produce their charters and leases of crown lands in 1598.” But written charters and leases did not always exist. A related problem was incongruity between what the modern historian A. I. MacInnes has termed oighreachd and dùthchas: the fine held their estates as individual heritage (oighreachd). But their followers often inhabited not only the oighreachd but a wider territory (dùthchas) for which the fine did not have charters. Late sixteenth- and seventeenth-century attempts to bring dùthchas and oighreachd to congruence caused several conflicts and feuds.

Economic differences also contributed to the increasing perception of Highlanders as “Other.” In the Lowlands, pasture and hunting became less important, farming methods changed, and foreign trade and cities grew. Malcolm Chapman’s general observations on culture clashes between lowland agriculturalism and highland pastoralism, which was often related to poorer soils, also applies to early modern Scotland: “From the valleys the mountains look like a wilderness, dangerous and insecure, and the pastoralist society, with its mobility, seems to share that insecurity. This insecurity then becomes
a figure for logical, moral, and sexual insecurity, with all that these offer in outrage and excitement.”\(^6\) This accords with Dawson’s remark on cross-cultural misunderstandings related to cattle-raiding: “The very idea horrified many settled Lowlanders, who were often its victims, but within Gaelic society it was an accepted custom . . . carefully regulated by its own . . . rules.”\(^7\) This internal logic of Gaelic practices was denied in Lowland discourse where cattle-raiding signified a total absence of rules, an epitome of lawlessness and a threat in need of containment by ordering Lowland hands.\(^8\)

Similar phenomena occur in colonial discourses of antiquity and modern European overseas empires. Gaeldom’s real offense, however, was not a lack of rules and authority, but that it posited an alternative system of rules and authority, one which the rest of the nation was trying to transcend, but which still held out on the periphery due to the latter’s relative autonomy from centralist state authority.\(^9\) For instance, Womack remarks on cattle-raiding and blackmail, where raiders or their patrons guaranteed individuals the security of their cattle for a certain sum:

What was particularly offensive . . . was that it was not simply a crime but also a system: . . . the outlaws’ protection was so much more worth having than that of the state that even respectable . . . proprietors came to terms. . . . It implied, not just illegality, but an alternative legality—a territorial jurisdiction and a right to tax. In this it resembled, at least from a metropolitan point of view, the old sovereignty of the clan: the blackmailing brigand is a criminalised image of the Chief.\(^10\)

Blackmail seemed so emblematic of Highland otherness that it still informed Lowland depictions of Gaels long after its real heyday was over. By the early eighteenth century it was limited to a few areas, and to broken clans or freelance reivers rather than “regular” Gaelic social practices.\(^11\)

The emergence of the modern nation-state also altered perceptions of language. The idea that an autonomous nation needed an autonomous and, if possible, single national language gained greater prominence. In Scotland, the dominant voices agreed that this language was Scots or English, but definitely not Gaelic. This Celtic tongue was increasingly perceived and combated as a threat to national unity and progress.

Linguistic and cultural anglicization often began at the top of Gaelic society: partly in response to government pressure and partly voluntarily, Highland elites were increasingly hybridized and integrated into the national mainstream. Chieftains pursued new status symbols like court positions and metropolitan luxuries in Edinburgh and London. Absenteeism increased, patronage of traditional Gaelic arts declined, and chieftains’ expenses were greatly increased by their new lifestyles, the many wars of the seventeenth century, taxes, and forced loans. This led to higher rents and sank many
aristocrats into debt, creating further upheavals. Anti-Gaelic Lowlanders frequently ignored that it was the very integration of the Highlands, a hybrid society in dynamic transit, into the mainstream which created much of the “disorder” they criticized. Instead, Gael and Gall (non-Gael) were often constructed as binary opposites, and Highland disorder was blamed on an allegedly static adherence to barbarous traditions.

One of the people who regarded Highlanders as a threatening Other within was the Scottish king James VI. His 1599 Basilicon Doron was a political manual for his son Henry and distinguishes between two kinds of Highlanders with varying degrees of barbarism: “the one, that dwelleth in our maine land, that are barbarous for the most parte, and yet mixed with some shewe of ciuil- itie: the other, that dwelleth in the Iles, & are allutterlie barbares, without any sorte or shewe of ciuilitie.”12 King, Parliament, and Privy Council considered Highlanders and Hebrideans as “wild savages” “void of religioun and human- itie” and believed some of them culpable of “maist detestabill, damnabill, and odious murtherers, fyiris, reveisching of wemen, witchcraft, and depredatiounis,” partly even to the point of being “barbarous cannibals.”13 Already in 1903, the historian W. C. MacKenzie criticized these attitudes and the accompanying policies as being similar to the colonization of Australia’s Aboriginal peoples.14 More recently, fellow historians James Hunter and Edward J. Cowan have likewise drawn colonial comparisons. For instance, Hunter writes:

> These sentiments have a great deal in common with the views which . . . King James’s English subjects were just then beginning to express about the Native Americans. . . . It is not surprising, therefore, that there are striking similarities between what was done to Highlanders and what was done to American Indians on the orders of the Scottish and English politicians who, from this point forwards, were looking to gain more and more control over both these sets of “savages.”15

Although anti-Gaelic othering increased, early modern Lowland Scotland preserved a limited interest in the country’s Gaelic past, in continuity with medieval constructions of national identity. Because Gaelic traditions and kings had played a prominent role in Scotland’s early history, the Gaelic inheritance was associated with particular antiquity. Antiquity in itself was considered as a source of authority and venerability. Stressing early Gaelic roots also bestowed respectability on the modern nation and its reigning royal dynasty. It legitimized royal authority, boosted patriotic pride, and gave a reassuring sense of continuity.16 Moreover, the Gaelic heritage embodied Scotland’s difference from England, thus legitimizing national autonomy. Such uses of the Gaelic past did not prevent unsympathetic treatment of contemporary Gaels, whose persisting difference was felt to be a thorn in the flesh of national homogeneity, governmental authority, civilization, and order.
Similar ambivalence is observable in religion. Advocates of the Reformation commended early Columban Christianity, supposedly free from the corruptions of the Roman Catholic Church, as a proto-Protestant icon. But even here, the Gaelic dimension was sometimes played down in an attempt to instrumentalize the antiquity of Gaelic Scotland without over-publicizing its distinctness from other parts of Britain or its connections with Ireland, an “inferior” colonized Other and persistently Catholic into the bargain.

One author who wrote in this vein was John Spottiswoode (1565–1639). His comments on Saint Columba are also noteworthy for inverting aspects of the saint’s biography. Earlier traditions and modern historical consensus claim that Columba lived in Ireland before he moved to Scotland and became a founding figure of Scottish Christianity. But Spottiswoode claims that Columba moved from Scotland to Ireland in order to missionize the pagans there. This illustrates the complicated position of Scottish Gaeldom in colonial discourse. On the one hand, the distortion of Gaelic history and its use by outsiders from the hegemonic Lowlands can be read as an instance of internal colonialism. On the other hand, Scotland’s Gaels are implicitly distinguished from, and set above, an external colonized population, that is, Irish Gaels. Spottiswoode’s projection of an early medieval Scottish Christian civilizing mission in Ireland parallels the English and Scottish colonial ventures which aimed to civilize the Ireland of his day—this time not only religiously, but also politically, economically, and linguistically. He suggests that Ireland was always more backward than Scotland, and that civilizing missions always moved in the same direction, with Ireland forever a receiver, not a donor country. By implication, casting Scotland’s ancient Gaels in the role of cultural donor also includes them among those who were superior to the Irish in the seventeenth-century present: Scotland’s Gaels are integrated into the supposedly superior British civilization as a co-colonizer of the Irish. Not all commentators would have agreed. There was considerable insecurity about whether Scotland’s Gaels were to be placed on the British or Irish side of the line. The Scottish Gaidhealtachd shared many Irish traits of subalternity, and thus was often cast into the role of internal barbarian Other. De-othering the Scottish Gaels required distinguishing them from the Irish, either discursively as in Spottiswoode’s writing, or practically through the political and cultural policies discussed below.

The relationship between Gaeldom and Protestant religious discourse is also ambivalent for another reason. Here as well, espousing real or imagined ancient Scottish Gaelic history did not prevent hostility toward contemporary Gaelic culture. Whereas Scotland’s state church was Protestant, in certain parts of the Highlands Catholicism remained stronger than in many other parts of the country, at least for some time. Thus, mainstream discourse could associate the Gaidhealtachd with religious otherness—another threat to the national consensus.

Spottiswoode’s comments on religion show a tendency that also occurs in other fields: the urge to de-Irishize the Scottish Gaels by downplaying
pan-Gaelic commonalities. Again, this already occurred in some premodern texts, but intensified in the modern period. This was in keeping with the general principles of modern nationhood which implied a basic congruence between cultural boundaries and the territorial boundaries of the state. Ireland was as much a different country from Scotland as England was, and Scotland’s autonomous national identity could only be affirmed by distancing it from both these neighbors. Attempts to distance Scotland from Ireland also had a colonial dimension which highlights the ambiguous position of Scotland in (post)colonial discourse: far from declaring solidarity with Ireland as a fellow victim of internal colonialism and English hegemony, many Scots despised the Irish colonized just as much as many English people did and eagerly stressed their country’s difference from Ireland.20

Scotland’s distinctness from England became more problematic as the two countries moved closer together. In 1603, James VI succeeded to the English throne as James I. Both kingdoms now shared the same monarch (Union of the Crowns), but otherwise remained separate independent states with their own parliaments and policies. However, since the monarch still had political power (rather than a purely representative function, as today), there could be problems: if the king was supposed to represent two different countries at once, what was he to do when these two countries’ interests clashed? The conundrum is particularly evident in seventeenth-century Scottish foreign policy:

The Scottish Parliament had never managed to secure much influence over foreign policy before . . . [1603], and an independent foreign policy therefore disappeared over the Border with James after the Regal Union. At the same time, . . . both James and his successor, Charles I, . . . tended to favour the position of England, the senior partner in the dynastic union, especially when any conflict emerged between English and Scottish vital interests.21

These problems were among the reasons why some people pushed for a more complete union between the two states. In 1707 Scotland and England merged into a single state, Great Britain, with a Treaty of Union that created a Union of Parliaments, abolishing the Scottish Parliament and giving Scottish delegates seats in the Parliament in London which now served the entire island. But even in this new pan-British state, some distinctions remained: Scotland kept its own state church and its own legal and educational system. Those who espoused the Unions of 1603 and 1707 sometimes downplayed Scotland’s Gaelic side in order to make Scotland appear more similar to England. While James VI pursued his claims to the English throne, and after he had attained it, his propaganda machine disseminated unionist iconography with matching origin legends that marginalized the separateness of Scotland's Gaelic tradition in favor of pan-British figures like Brutus or Arthur.22
That the Scottish-English rapprochement exacerbated the position of Scottish Gaeldom is also evident in King James’s practical policies, for instance concerning the mercenary trade between Gaelic Scotland and Ireland. Tudor colonialism had increased Irish chieftains’ demand for hired soldiers from Scotland. Since the late sixteenth century, when Queen Elizabeth’s death and James’s accession to England’s throne drew near, the Scottish king increasingly regarded colonial Irish affairs as his own and tried to curb these intra-Gaelic exchanges. As the mercenary trade clashed more and more with the national interest, it was seen as another sign of Highland lawlessness. The crown’s desire to drive a cultural and political wedge between Scottish and Irish Gaeldom was one of the intentions behind the Ulster Plantation which began in 1609 and involved a redistribution of substantial proportions of Northern Irish land to English and Scottish incomers. The withering of the mercenary trade between Gaelic Scotland and Ireland removed one source of “disorder,” but created new ones: because surplus Scottish Gaelic manpower could no longer be sent to Ireland, there was an increased pressure on economic resources at home. Sometimes, clan elites resorted to piracy to support themselves.\(^{23}\)

Despite these negative associations which Gaelicness held for the nation’s anglophone mainstream, the Gaelic inheritance was not purged entirely from national identity constructs—not even after the Union. Even James VI/I occasionally found Gaelic traditions ideologically useful. In a speech to the English Parliament in 1604, he portrayed himself through the Gaelic concept of a king married to his kingdom(s).\(^{24}\) Stuart propaganda continued to invoke Gaelic traditions to underline the antiquity of the Scottish monarchy and the legitimacy of the current dynasty. For Charles I’s coronation visit to Edinburgh in 1633, William Drummond of Hawthornden devised a spectacle which featured several ancient Gaelic kings, some of whom were real while others were invented. The coronation ceremony for Charles II which took place in Scotland in 1651 relied on early Scottish medieval traditions by taking place in Scone and featuring the recitation of the royal pedigree. The ancient Gaelic kings further resurfaced in the portraits of royal ancestry commissioned by the future James VII/II for Holyrood Palace in 1684.\(^{25}\)

Another issue which prevented the total erasure of the Gaels from Scottish history was the fact that the Union with England turned out to be more uneasy than had been hoped. Significant sections of society in both countries feared that their own nation might be submerged and disadvantaged. Such anxieties played a key part in seventeenth-century political and religious developments. The Scottish Covenanting movement, which started in the 1630s and whose main pledge was to protect the Presbyterian faith, also criticized royal abuses of power, endorsed parliamentary rights and a constitutional rather than absolute form of monarchy, and even had more radically demotic strains favoring grassroots power. Thus, the Covenanters can be read as a movement which not only aimed to protect Scotland’s religious identity,
with its Presbyterian Church, against Anglican and Episcopalian inroads, but to some extent also aimed to defend Scotland’s political identity in the face of an absentee monarchy. In a climactic phase of the British Civil Wars, between the late 1640s and the early 1650s, England favored republicanism, while Scotland’s parliament merely wished to reeducate king and monarchy in line with Covenanting principles. During these disagreements, both countries attempted to impose their principles and interests on their neighbor nation. English imperialism in Scotland is only one side of the coin; similar attempts were made vice versa. A Scottish invasion of England was defeated in 1648. A few months later, the king was executed without consultation of the Scottish Parliament. The latter responded by proclaiming the dead king’s son as Charles II, king of Great Britain. It also wanted to presbyterianize this new British monarchy, England included. This amounted to an attempt to reimpose British dynastic Union on Scottish terms. Cromwellian England gained the upper hand and conquered Scotland in 1650–51. Scotland was occupied and lost its independence until 1660, when the Restoration of the Stuart monarchy also restored the Union of the Crowns and separate statehood under separate national parliaments. Mutual fears of national disadvantaging persisted until the Union of 1707—and beyond. In Scotland, such anxieties led to reaffirmations of Scottish identity, a great popularity of patriotic epics and histories throughout the seventeenth century, and an interest in symbols which underlined difference from England.²⁶

Patriotic invocations of Gaelic traditions can, for instance, be found in Defense of the Antiquity of the Royal Line of Scotland (1685) and other writings by Sir George Mackenzie of Rosehaugh, who had Gaelic family connections and some Gaelic language skills, although he was born and bred in the Lowlands. Mackenzie invokes a (nonexistent) Gaelic manuscript from around the birth of Christ, as well as ancient Gaelic oral sources, to substantiate his historical claims. Again, the ancient flavor of the Gaelic heritage is celebrated for patriotic purposes. However, the authority of contemporary Gaelic discourse produced by bards and seanchaidhs was dismissed: though Mackenzie paid lip service to the validity of such sources, he did not use them himself. Moreover, like several of his contemporaries, he downplays Scotland’s Irish roots and the validity of Irish Gaelic sources. While he does not dismiss the Scottish-Irish link altogether, he stands the traditional narrative on its head by claiming that the Irish were descended from the Scots rather than vice versa. Ferguson points out that Mackenzie launched an anti-colonial critique of English historical narratives and to some extent sided with Irish counter-discourse, but only as far as Irish sources were not detrimental to his own objective, which was to assert Scottish nationalism in the face of English hegemonic aspirations.²⁷ This Scottish self-assertion also involves casting the Scots as an ancient colonial mother country of Ireland. Mackenzie’s work again illustrates the ambiguity of Scottish discourse that was situated uneasily between Gaelic roots and anti-Irishness, and between
anti-English solidarity and a junior partnership in the ongoing colonization of Ireland.

The Union of 1707 was not just hotly debated at the time, but also by later commentators and right up to the present. The debate is also relevant with regard to Scotland’s position vis-à-vis the (post)colonial. Though the Union was nominally a consensual treaty between two equal partners, its critics have argued that it was actually an English hegemonic project achieved mainly through pressure, and that it exacerbated Scotland’s political, economic, and cultural marginalization by its more powerful southern neighbor. In the eyes of some, this even went so far as to make Scotland a quasi-colonized country. In 1765 the anonymous pamphlet *A North Briton Extraordinary*, sometimes ascribed to Tobias Smollett, criticized English anti-Scotticism and the Union’s harmful economic and political effects on Scotland, culminating in the assertion that “while we scorned to become a province to England, we are in fact become its most valuable colony.” And in 1793, the Scottish political reformist Lord Daer argued that, already since 1603, Scotland was “a conquered province,” alluding to ancient Rome where a conquered territory which had been firmly integrated into the empire was called a *provincia*. If we accept that Scotland’s position resembled that of an imperial colony, this makes the Highlanders doubly colonized: first, by the Lowlanders who were themselves “singly” colonized by the English, and second by the English who colonized both kinds of Scots. However, the Scots were not the only ones who complained about the Union: many eighteenth-century English people were far from seeing themselves as colonial conquerors, let alone profiteering ones. Instead, they were anxious about Scottish economic competition and about government being swamped by an invasion of ambitious and greedy Scots.

Those who stress the Union’s benefits for Scotland emphasize that at least some parts of Scottish society had wanted the treaty, and that it had more to do with Scottish ambitions to become a successful global colonizer than with Scottish victimization as an internal colonized. Scotland had already pursued overseas colonial ambitions before the Union, but not very successfully. Its own military and naval resources were not sufficient to protect its economic interests abroad. Scottish overseas ambitions were also undermined by the competition of its more powerful English neighbor. In 1618, an attempt to establish a Scottish East India Company foundered when the king’s patent was withdrawn under English pressure. A Scottish Guinea Company for trade with West Africa existed from 1634 to 1639. There were also attempts to establish Scottish colonial settlements in North America: the colony of Nova Scotia was first established in 1629, but abandoned in 1633 and only retaken after the British Union in the eighteenth century. Scottish colonies also existed in East New Jersey (1683–1702) and parts of South Carolina (1684–86). In 1695 a Company of Scotland Trading to Africa and the Indies was founded. In practice, its main venture was the highly ambitious Darien scheme in Central America which began in 1698 and foundered
in 1700. This was the most famous Scottish colonial project. It was not only hampered by limited national resources, adverse weather, illness, and internal disagreements but, most importantly, clashed with the mercantile and strategic interests of England and Spain, which used their much greater economic and military clout to undermine the Scottish scheme. The failure of Darien swallowed up a great proportion of Scottish capital and seemed to underline that Scotland’s economic, political, and military resources were not enough to compete successfully on an international stage. A more complete Union with its powerful English neighbor offered Scotland access to English resources, and legal access to English colonial markets, which would further Scottish imperial ambitions better than an independent Scottish state could have done. Even if we accept the notion of Scotland as internally colonized within Britain, one might say that Scots accepted this status in order to become colonizers elsewhere. Advocates of the Union could also cite other advantages, such as unhampered Scottish access to English domestic markets. Moreover, it is argued that, even after the Union, Scotland retained sufficient autonomy by preserving its own legal, educational, and ecclesiastical institutions, and was well represented through informal political structures, networks, and Scottish politicians who became powerful in the Westminster system. However, many Scots only came to believe in these advantages with hindsight, several decades later. At first, Scottish anti-Union sentiment was widespread, spanning the Highlands and the Lowlands, and swelled the ranks of Jacobitism which, having initially been based on religious and dynastic arguments, could now also be identified with the cause of Scottish independence. The Highlands were a mainstay of the Stuart camp, which exacerbated their image as a threatening Other. Already during the seventeenth-century revolutions, many Highlanders had supported the Stuarts, sometimes for religious reasons (Catholicism and Episcopalianism were strongest in the Gaidhealtachd and the northeast), sometimes for more material considerations. Some also invoked the divine right of kings and sought to link this to an image of conservative clan values. Jacobitism brought many Highlanders into conflict with those segments of English and Scottish society that supported the revolutionary/Covenanting and later the Hanoverian side, which eventually won out. These segments of society, which represented the new status quo, worried about the Gaidhealtachd’s continuing potential as a recruiting ground for insurrection. In addition to widespread Stuart sympathies, the Highland region’s geographical and infrastructural isolation from the centers of power would make it a convenient landing place for invasion armies, especially from France, Britain’s main rival and home to the exiled Stuart court. Gaelic feudal structures always provided ready contingents of fighting men which might be turned against the government. And the “manipulability of . . . clan mustering” as well as “their relative inaccessibility . . . enabled unhindered mobilization.”
In reality, not all Catholics or all Highlanders were Jacobites: Catholic clans were just as divided as Protestant ones. But mainstream perceptions often conflated Gaeldom, religious otherness, and Jacobitism. Among the various Jacobite schemes of the first half of the eighteenth century, the 1715 rebellion had the widest support and the highest chances of success, with a basis not only in Scottish nationalism but also in more general social discontent which comprised even parts of England. When this rising foundered after all, government propaganda downplayed the breadth of its base and retrospectively portrayed it as a case of Highland insurrection.

The acceptance of the Union by the Scottish mainstream in the decades following 1715 might partly be explained by sheer pragmatism or resignation in view of the fact that there were no feasible alternatives. Partly, there was also more genuine espousal of the Union as its economic and career benefits (at least for certain parts of the population) began to show. Jacobitism and/or a fight for independence also seemed unattractive because insurrection and civil war would endanger the regular course of business. Moreover, it was feared that a restored Stuart Britain would be strongly influenced by France, an absolutist state whose example might lead francophile Stuart kings to curtail the liberties of Britain’s constitutional monarchy. As France was also Catholic, Britain’s Protestant mainstream saw Stuart francophilia as a potential threat to the island’s religious identity. France was also a major imperial and economic rival of Britain. Monarchs and their governments were expected to pursue policies which gave their own country advantages against rival powers. But it was feared that francophile Stuart monarchs might not pursue British interests against France with as much rigor as British patriots and businessmen might desire. In all this, the Scottish mainstream was united with the English mainstream, desiring a royal dynasty which would defend pan-British interests against the French Other.\(^35\)

Some people developed a pan-British national identity more easily, while others retained their traditional affiliations to Scotland, England, or subnational regions. Scottish/English patriotism and Great-Britishness could also coexist, even in the same head: many Scottish people felt concentric loyalties toward both Scotland and Great Britain.\(^36\) The respective weight given to these loyalties could change over time and depending on context (e.g., culture vs. politics). But all in all, Scottish support of Britishness and anglicization intensified as the eighteenth century unfolded. This exacerbated Gaeldom’s position as an inconvenient internal Other because it represented a part of Scotland’s heritage that was definitely non-English and thus threatened unionist identity constructions.\(^37\)

During the next major Jacobite campaign, led by Prince Charles Edward Stuart in 1745/46, the Gaels were again divided. Some fought on the government side, others remained neutral, but those who did support Jacobitism were numerous enough to play a dominant part in the rising and in the way in which the Jacobite movement was represented. Most of their Scottish
compatriots had already settled safely and acquiescently into the Union. This seemed to reconfirm the Gaels’ position as an internal barbarian Other, an anomaly within an otherwise respectable national collective made up of harmoniously coexisting and rather similar Lowlanders and English people. Once this Jacobite rising was defeated, the British establishment was determined to eliminate any further Highland threat to national stability and unity. It proceeded to eliminate such threats at their cultural roots (see the section on “Religion, Education, Language Policy, and Assimilation” below).

The second half of the eighteenth century saw an economic boom and imperial expansion which further intensified Scottish identification with the Union. In several sectors, Scotland’s contribution to the British Empire even surpassed that of the English. First, the Scottish gentry was often poorer than its English counterpart, and thus more willing to accept risks and hardship abroad in pursuit of a fortune. Second, some customary career paths for ambitious Englishmen were less open to Scots because of entrenched networks of intra-English favoritism, as well as anti-Scottish prejudice, for example, in the upper administration. Thus, Scots often opted for career paths where English people and scotophobia were less entrenched, for instance in less fashionable parts of the army and in the overseas colonies. Third, patriotism often urged Scots to help each other in imperial advancement, perhaps to compensate for national handicaps like the small size of their country or English prejudice. The East India Company after 1750 became “a veritable Scottish fiefdom.” Similar things could be said about trading companies in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Canada. Lower-class Scots likewise hoped for colonial career opportunities. Colonial profits were often reinvested in Scotland itself, thus benefiting the domestic economy. It is thus little wonder that “Rule Britannia” was written by a Scotsman, the poet James Thomson. Among Britain’s internal peripheral nations, Scotland was arguably the most prominent in imperial projects overseas, although Ireland and Wales also played an important part.

So much for Scotland’s post-Union fortunes as an overseas colonizer. But what of the other side of the Scottish experience—that of an “internally colonized” periphery within an English-dominated Britain? In economic terms, the applicability of the label “internally colonized” is debatable in the eighteenth century: in some respects the concept seems to fit, in others it does not. As already noted, a typical colonized economy is often described as focusing on the production of a limited variety of raw materials for export to the “mother country” (e.g., England) where they are processed and mainly also consumed. Within the British Isles, the Irish economy seems to fit this image most closely. The post-Union Scottish economy, at least on the whole, was different: it remained relatively diversified, had its own successful manufactures, and from the late eighteenth century onwards became an increasingly urbanized powerhouse of industrialization. Highly vulnerable undiversified economies focusing on raw materials for export existed only in parts of Scotland, such
as the Highlands and Islands, whose economy James Hunter labels as “neo-colonial” and whose lack of sustained development was lamented even by contemporary advocates of improvement. Devine argues that one of the reasons why Scotland did not develop a typical colonized economy is that economic exploitation in the north was not a prime English interest. England wanted the Union mainly as a guarantee for political stability and military security, which was best ensured by a policy of low interference and by not draining the Scottish economy too much.

This is not to say that people in Scotland from mid-century onwards never felt any discontent with the Union. There were always setbacks, and groups that profited less than others. But all in all, the benefits of Union sufficed to create considerable identification with the new pan-British nation.

As eighteenth-century Scotland was increasingly integrated into a united Great Britain, the majority of the Scottish establishment accepted a new identity as “North Britons” and wanted to rid themselves of awkward vestiges of their traditional national difference from England. In practice, this meant not so much mutual hybridization as the cultural anglicization of Scotland. In principle, this logic extended to Highland and Lowland Scots alike. Highlanders were seen as the least civilized population group and had the furthest way to go until they could fulfill “civilized” anglocentric norms. Some Highlanders voluntarily embraced anglicization as a means of social climbing; those who did not were subjected to various forms of coercion (see below). Although Scottish Lowlanders already seemed far more civilized than the Highlanders, they were still often perceived as inferior to the English. Hence, even Lowlanders felt that self-anglicization was the key to social acceptability and a British career. Unlike the often coercive framework of Highland anglicization, cultural pressures on Lowlanders were more indirect, taking the form of career prospects or ridicule, for instance. Indirect pressures and voluntary identification sufficed to make many Scots eager to anglicize themselves. Even aspiring Lowlanders felt a need for linguistic assimilation and tried to purge their English of scoticisms, or, as the Scottish intellectual James Beattie called them, “barbarisms.” An anglicizing drive can also be discerned in literary tastes and middle-class behavior.

The ambivalence of colonial mimicry, which can entail elements of both collusion and subversion (as outlined in the “Introduction”), can also be discerned in eighteenth-century Scotland: on the one hand, Scottish self-anglicization reflected and bolstered England’s hegemony within the Union; but the very success of these anglicized Scottish sociocultural “upstarts” also caused much English unease about “Scots on the make” who threatened to become undue competition, for instance when they infiltrated the London elites.

The relevance of the concept of colonial mimicry in eighteenth-century Scottish-English relations is also noted by Evan Gottlieb. But he also notes limitations of the “internal colonialism” thesis, for instance because Scots
did not simply discard their inherited Scottishness in favor of emulating a ready-made model of Englishness that was entirely defined by others, that is, the English themselves. Instead, Scots also significantly invested in (and shaped) a new overarching notion of Britishness which encompassed both Scottish and English people, supposedly on a more or less equal basis, thus allowing both peoples to contribute to the defining and shaping of this new, pan-British national identity and culture. The ideal of Britishness thus offered a compromise: Scots had to give up some of their particularities and “civilize” themselves, but not on exclusively English terms; instead, both peoples were supposed to join in the creation of something new. This allowed Scottish people a degree of recognition and cultural power that was denied to more “typical” colonized subjects. Scots on the make proved their compatibility with an English/British establishment; they were “Same” or at least hybrid enough to be highly successful in a pan-British and even international context, for instance in literature, Enlightenment philosophy, or politics. Scottish playwrights like John Home or David Mallet were successful on London stages. Scottish Enlightenment philosophers like David Hume or Adam Smith made a huge, lasting, and international impact. A significant proportion of London booksellers were Scottish, and the Ossianic prose poems of Scottish writer James Macpherson became international bestsellers beloved by such luminaries as the German poet Johann Wolfgang Goethe and the French emperor Napoleon. Various Scottish intellectuals, including John Home, David Hume, and James Macpherson obtained significant government pensions in recognition of their work. Scottish literati often formed networks to help each other, just as Scottish traders would soon do in the colonial companies. Britain even had a Scottish prime minister for a while, namely the Earl of Bute (1762–63).

However, the self-anglicization of ambitious Scots did not always result from a cultural cringe, but could also be a mere tactic and was often combined with interest and pride in Scotland’s own traditions. A limited engagement with Scottish culture could gratify local patriotism in a non-subversive way—it was deemed compatible with British/Hanoverian affiliations as long as it did not question the legitimacy of the British state. In principle, both Lowland and Highland traditions could be acceptable in this framework. Which of the two was more acceptable has been answered differently by different people—both in the eighteenth century and in modern historical debates. As in previous centuries, some eighteenth-century Lowland scholars retained an interest in Gaelic history as an icon of national antiquity (and hence respectability). Some of them were also attracted to Gaelic literature and culture—decades before Macpherson’s Ossianic writings of the 1760s inaugurated the Celticist craze of the romantic age. Various non-Gaelic intellectuals discovered an interest in the Gaelic language itself and learned it. This was related to a wider fashion for Celtic linguistics. Dauvit Horsbroch suggests that in some senses the standing of Gaelic as a badge of Scottish
identity was stronger than that of the Lowland Scots tongue. However, there is also contrary evidence which suggests that in some areas of discourse interest in Highland and Gaelic tradition actually declined further, whereas Lowland Scots traditions were deemed more acceptable because they were culturally and linguistically closer to England’s. Another reason why Gaelic tradition often seemed less compatible with the British status quo is the idea that Gaelic culture was so interwoven with political and economic otherness that neither could be eradicated without the other.

Hence, outside the realm of scholarship, in sociopolitical practice, the desire to assimilate contemporary Gaels into the modern nation clearly won out. In addition to intra-national homogenization, another factor which influenced the image of Gaels at that time was external expansion. We have already seen this with regard to Ireland. Similar things apply to colonialism further afield, for instance across the Atlantic, in Africa, or in the Pacific region. The rise of Britain’s overseas empire fueled British interest in themes of intercultural encounters, comparisons, and hierarchies, in “civilizing missions,” and also in the history and culture of other empires. This helped to form an arsenal of British colonial discourse patterns which also influenced the representation of intra-British “barbarians” like the Gaels. The Gaels were increasingly seen in comparison to the “barbarians” described by ancient Roman writers, and to the modern “barbarians” encountered by Britain’s own imperial adventurers overseas. Even Lowland Scotland was compared to a conquered imperial province. These inter-imperial comparisons in the description of Scottish culture(s) are examined more closely in the following section.

**Colonial Visions across Time and Space:**

Celticity, Classicism, Empire, and Enlightenment

The construction of cultural hierarchies is greatly facilitated by stable economic and political hegemonies. These had existed in Roman times, then disappeared from northern Britain for several centuries, and since the late Middle Ages gradually returned. In the early modern period, this development was intensified by the emergence of the modern capitalist nation-state and overseas colonial ventures. British people increasingly saw the Roman Empire as a mirror for their own supremacy. A classicist vogue had already started during the Renaissance, but gained a further boost from seventeenth- and especially eighteenth-century overseas colonialism. The Roman Empire provided a model for British identity constructions as the center of civilization and a colonizing world power. London was sometimes referred to as “Augusta” to indicate its status as “the heir to imperial Rome.” Another model for Enlightenment Britain was ancient Greece, which, though not as outwardly imperialist as Rome, had likewise regarded itself as a navel of civilization. Enlightened Edinburgh was referred to as “the Athens of Britain” or
“the Athens of the North.” The distribution of these classical urban labels among different parts of modern Britain mirrors internal power imbalances: Greece was incorporated into the Roman Empire as politically subordinate, but its culture often continued to be seen as the epitome of civilization, even in Roman eyes. Applying the name “Athens” to Scotland’s capital city likens the entire country to Greece; in relation to London’s designation as a new Rome, Scotland is portrayed as a conquered province of an English empire. At the same time, the reference to Athens expresses Scottish cultural pride: it implies that Edinburgh, city of the Enlightenment, is London’s equal or superior in civilization, though not in political and economic power. Early in the nineteenth century, Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine voiced similar attitudes:

While London must always eclipse this city [Edinburgh] in all that depends on wealth, power, or fashionable elegance, . . . and while London is the Rome of the empire, to which . . . [people] resort for . . . pleasure, . . . fortune, or . . . ambition, Edinburgh might become another Athens, in which the arts and the sciences flourished, under the shade of her ancient fame, and established a dominion over the minds of men more permanent than even that which the Roman arms were able to effect.

The general fascination with classical antiquity also encompassed Roman writings about barbarian Others, cultural hierarchies, and civilizing missions, which were reread to inform the modern British mainstream’s image of itself and of its “primitive” Others at home and abroad. This also entailed the rediscovery of the Greek and Roman category of the “Celt” as a blanket term for barbarians who lived northwest of the “civilized center.” This ancient category of the “Celt” was now recycled as a label for the modern northwestern “barbarian” fringes of Britain and France. This discursive mobilization of “Celtic” as a regional/ethnic identity was facilitated by the discovery of linguistic kinship: the languages spoken on Britain’s and France’s modern northwestern fringes—Manx, Irish, and Scottish Gaelic, as well as Welsh, Cornish, and Breton—belong to the same language family as ancient Gaulish. These commonalities had already been observed by George Buchanan in the sixteenth century, but mainstream opinion only espoused such notions from the eighteenth century onwards. This language family came to be labeled as “Celtic,” subdivided on the basis of a prominent sound shift into the “q-Celtic” Gaelic group and the “p-Celtic” group comprising Welsh, Cornish, and Breton. Linguistic commonalities have also been taken as a signifier of other cultural similarities which set these groups clearly apart from neighboring non-Celtic-speaking peoples, though in reality such correlations are not automatic. The assumption of a distinct “Celtic culture” also associated the speakers of Celtic languages with barbarism, since the label “Celt” originated as an externally imposed blanket label for barbarians of the northwest.
Due to these various associations of Celticity with barbarism and marginalization, ancient and modern Celticism could furnish models for depictions of indigenous peoples encountered by British colonizers further afield. In analogy to Orientalism, eighteenth-century anglophone scholarly interest in Gaelic culture might in itself express a colonizing zeitgeist by reflecting a desire to “own” the “colonized,” here the Gaidhealtachd, more completely: material ownership in political and economic terms is rounded off with intellectual “conquest” and guardianship; discursive authority is assumed by anglophone elites while the Gaelic margin’s own voices are marginalized. This answer to the question “Who gets to speak?,” the privileging of powerful outsiders’ voices, constitutes a similarity between Celticism and international colonial discourse on a formal level. There are also similarities at the content level. Just as Greek and Roman texts had done, Renaissance and Enlightened thinkers envisaged the development of human society as progress through several stages, and located their own cultures in the most advanced stage, both materially and intellectually. Usually, the notion of cultural superiority also involved pride in the art of writing and a denigration of oral societies. The representatives of the self-styled centers of civilization measured other cultures by the norms of their own; those not conforming to this model were downgraded as savage or barbarian, that is, as representing earlier stages of development which the civilized center had long left behind. Social theorists of the Enlightenment usually distinguished developmental stages by modes of production, “progressing” from nomadic hunting and gathering via pastoralism to fixed settlement and agriculture, and from there to urban civilizations with their division of labor and lively trade. The synchronous presence of different sociocultural formations was thus seen in terms of uneven development and anachronism: while dominant metropolitan cultures that shaped the general state of the world or the spirit of the age were already at an advanced stage, marginal cultures in the same period still represented a more backward one.

The “civilized center” was associated with order, control, lawfulness, cleanliness, rationality, intellect, reality/realism, constancy, regularity, dynamism, and progress; while the barbarian periphery represented the exact opposite: disorder, lack of control, lawlessness, dirt, emotion, irrationality, unreality, dreams, ghosts, superstition, inconstancy, irregularity, and stasis. In Britain, the position of the civilized center was allocated to anglophone culture in England and often also Lowland Scotland, while the position of the barbarian periphery was allocated to people from the “Celtic fringe,” such as the Gaelic Highlanders. Eighteenth-century improvers mainly saw the periphery’s side of the binarism in a negative light. However, in contrast to much nineteenth-century racism, even “inferior” Others were accorded the potential for progress; they were not doomed to perpetual primitiveness. For instance, “barbarians” were sometimes claimed to possess simple virtues which formed a good basis for further improvement once the obstacle of
their traditional culture was out of the way. To some extent, the belief in primitive virtues foreshadows romantic ideals of noble savagery, but while romanticism values primitiveness for its own sake, the main concern of pre-romantic perspectives is to civilize and change the “noble savages”: their very virtues are seen as a promising basis for assimilation to the center. The above-mentioned characteristics ascribed to center and periphery in Celticist discourse also appear in Greek and Roman texts about barbarians, and in representations of modern overseas (post)colonies, such as various forms of Orientalism, racist denigrations of black people, or positive reevaluations of negritude.

Despite its associations with colonial discourse strategies, the label “Celtic” was not only used by outsiders and for “colonizing” purposes. The adoption of the label “Celtic” as an ethnic self-designation by Scots, Irish, Welsh, and other people also goes back to the eighteenth century. At a time when non-English populations of the British Isles were under political and cultural threat from an expansive, homogenizing anglocentric state, pan-Celticism could offer a rival supra-identity (though cultural rather than political), pride in ancient indigenous ancestry, and solidarity based on shared difference from England.60

Universalist cultural hierarchies and other aspects of Enlightenment thought can already be found in the seventeenth or even the sixteenth century, although the Scottish Enlightenment is traditionally seen as belonging to the eighteenth.61 The pre-Union Scottish state had its own drive towards internal centralization, commercialization, and nation-building, as well as colonial ambitions overseas, all of which warranted ideas about civilizational ladders and Roman parallels. This is also evident in Martin’s works, as shown in the next chapter. The center providing the model for the future evolution of the peripheries was not necessarily identified as lying in England or more specifically London, but could also be located in Lowland Scotland and its capital city, Edinburgh.

After the Union, however, many Scottish intellectuals identified England as the hub of civilization. Not only the Gaels were portrayed as barbarians: some commentators depicted the entirety of Scotland as a primitive periphery which was bound to profit from exposure to English culture. The Edinburgh Review asserted that the Union had enabled “a disposition to . . . improvement in . . . a people naturally active and intelligent. If countries have their ages with respect to improvement, North Britain may be considered as in a state of early youth, guided and supported by the more mature strength of her kindred country.”62 Here the Scottish populace as a whole, like its Gaelic segment in other texts, is portrayed as being full of good potential, but in need of a superior neighbor to set them on the right path to higher civilization, on a universal ladder of social evolution. Another, related colonial discourse trope is the metaphor of childhood which describes the “inferior” periphery. To realize their potential, children need guidance and education—a role
allegedly fulfilled by the benevolent parental figure of the superior, mature colonizer.\textsuperscript{63} The emphasis on the Scots’ potential to learn and improve also highlights the extent to which the “internal colonization” of Scotland relied on indirect strategies of control, such as cultural assimilation. To some extent, this strategy also played a part in other colonies, but there the relative importance given to more obvious forms of domination was often much greater.

Picturing Scotland as a country which was only just now emerging into the light of civilization meant that many Enlightenment historians were not greatly interested in pre-1688 Scottish history, whether Highland or Lowland. It was considered too full of barbarity, religious extremism, and disorder to merit scholarly study: they wanted to write the history of civilization, not of primitiveness and chaos.\textsuperscript{64} Accordingly, they also downplayed the Gaelic heritage and “Dark Age” national origin legends. First, the “Dark Ages” were the epitome of barbarism and thus unworthy of academic attention anyway. Second, the scarcity of verifiable sources from this time made historians too dependent on speculation, which was unattractive to Enlightened scientific rationalism.\textsuperscript{65} Thus, Enlightened scholars had little use for Gaelic traditions as part of a progressive national present and future—or even as part of a venerable national past. Nonetheless, they showed some interest in Gaelic culture. Though often uninterested in the particulars of national or ethnic premodern histories which diverged from “civilized” norms, they were interested in “barbarian” cultures for a different purpose: the purpose of generalizing from them. From studying specific barbarian cultures they deduced information about the general nature of primitive society and human development. The origins and nature of society were, after all, a favorite subject of Enlightened philosophy. John Millar’s account of social evolution drew its examples of savagery from both ancient and modern sources, implying a basic comparability of such diverse groups as Native Americans, Old Testament Jews, the Trojans and Greeks of Homeric times, and “Dark Age” Gaeldom as described in Macpherson’s Ossianic publications.\textsuperscript{66} As early as 1755, before Macpherson’s works appeared, William Robertson had asserted that even in the contemporary Scottish Highlands and Islands “society still appears in its rudest and most imperfect form.”\textsuperscript{67} Adam Smith likewise assumes a universal ladder of progress. He compares ancient Celts with modern Africans and Native Americans as representatives of the lower stages. Modern Highlanders are placed slightly higher, between nomadic “Oriental” people and advanced mainstream European commercial society.\textsuperscript{68} Gaels provided convenient specimens for the study of “primitive” man because they united a sufficient degree of “backward” otherness with geographical proximity and relatively easy access, while overseas “savages” were more difficult to reach. It was only in the nineteenth century, with further imperial expansion and consolidation, as well as improved travel facilities, that many overseas “savage” regions were truly opened up for ethnographic scrutiny.\textsuperscript{69}
Thus, Highlanders and other “Celts” could function as *the* paradigmatic barbarian Other in British culture, and even as a substitute for non-European colonial Others when these seemed too far out of reach. In the scholarly, literary, and tourist imagination, Celtic and non-European Others were often mapped onto each other. Notions about Celts could be mapped onto non-Europeans. Later, as non-Europeans moved more to the foreground of the colonial imagination, this could have two different kinds of effect: sometimes, the differences between Celtic and non-Celtic Britons paled into insignificance when compared to the much greater otherness of non-European peoples. This could mean that Celts were now more readily admitted to the ranks of the “civilized,” as people who had a valuable part to play in conquering and “civilizing” non-European Others (also see chapters 3 and 6). Sometimes, however, the equation between Celtic and non-European Others was still maintained, so that new ideas about non-Europeans could also reflect back on European Others and affect the way in which the “Celts” were perceived. This will become particularly clear in the examination of biologistic racism in chapter 5.

For Enlightenment thinkers who, like Robertson and Smith, thought that Scottish Highlanders represented an earlier, more primitive stage of society, the Highlanders functioned as “contemporary ancestors”: they were living examples of a way of life that the more advanced society of the Lowlands and England had also come through, but which it had already left behind. Thus, the concept of the contemporary ancestor retained a sense of difference, barbarity, and civilizational hierarchy, but it allowed for eventual development: even the “primitives” were capable of attaining a more civilized level in the future. The universal teleology of progress could legitimate assimilation policies as the inevitable corollary of an impersonal course of history. These implications are not only inherent in eighteenth-century scholarly views on social development, as in Robertson’s or Smith’s work, but also in wider public opinion, as is evident in the various “civilizing missions” that were unleashed to accelerate historical progress in the Highlands (see below). It was thought that the progress of advanced societies could put mounting pressure on neighboring backward ones until the latter were forced to make an accelerated leap forward. The colonizing impetus of Enlightenment theories of society operated not only through othering, but also through same-ing: in a sense, they “samed” *all* human beings by claiming that the entire species follows the same evolutional pattern. This is again exemplified by Smith: while the Highlands are deemed the slowest part of Scotland to advance in civilization, even the more progressive Lowlands have been slower than England or other European countries, but he reckons that Scotland has profited greatly from the Union—despite initial difficulties—and is now on a good path. Similar benefits are envisaged for Ireland and the overseas colonies. While Smith criticizes certain aspects of colonialism, the general principle of empire is still deemed capable of being very beneficial to all concerned, as a great
catalyst for progress, trade, and universal material well-being—provided that such an empire is well managed and founded on greater economic and political equality.74

The role of Gaels and Celtic-speaking peoples as contemporary ancestors to the more “advanced” imperial centers was also manifested in the notion that the Celtic languages descended from Europe’s aboriginal tongue, and could thus reveal information on early history. Jerome Stone (1727–1756) believed that Gaulish once was Europe’s common language, antedated Latin and Greek, and had an importance only matched by Hebrew. He even claims linguistic parallels between Hebrew and Gaelic, and suggests that Gaelic might have been spoken in the Garden of Eden.75 On the one hand, this continues older historiographical traditions by claiming the antiquity of Gaelic tradition as a source of Scottish national pride. On the other hand, the link to early European prehistory and even further back to Eden positions modern Gaels as contemporary ancestors, which denies them coevalness with the center and provides a clear link to colonial discourse. Another link to colonial discourse is the trope of noble savagery: the Garden of Eden is associated with human moral innocence before the Fall. Imagining prelapsarian humans as Gaels suggests that Gaeldom as a whole, even contemporary Gaeldom, consists of primitive people whose simple moral virtues are based on ignorance. While the “primitive” is here celebrated on moral grounds, he (or she) is still patronized on intellectual grounds. Early European colonizers had applied the same trope to Native Americans: here as well, comparisons to the Garden of Eden had been drawn. Thus, Stone’s writings about the Gaels constitute one further piece in a larger discursive mosaic which connected Celtic “primitives” to colonial discourse further afield. Stone’s image of Gaels as noble savages also anticipates a trend which became more prominent in Scottish literature during the romantic age (see chapter 3).

Stone was not the only scholar of Celtic linguistics whose work implied connections with colonial discourse. Another example is David Malcolm (d. 1748), who drew linguistic parallels between St. Kilda Gaelic, in his view a particularly old form of the language, and Chinese.76 Here, the comparison is probably not based on an assumption of shared barbarian inferiority but on shared ancientness. In the eighteenth century, China was usually considered to be on a par with Western civilizations, while notions of its inferiority only spread in the nineteenth century.77 Nonetheless, Malcolm’s comparison constitutes another connection with colonial discourse because it links Celticism with Orientalism.

Despite the fascination with “primitives” as objects of study and as contemporary ancestors, the main impetus of practical policy was to “civilize” them as far as possible. As was already shown at the beginning of this chapter, the development of the modern capitalist nation-state in Britain initially proceeded primarily from the island’s anglophone centers in England and the Scottish Lowlands. As the modern nation-state’s central governments and the
proponents of capitalism tried to extend their spheres of influence over the entire island, the Scottish Highlands seemed particularly hard to subdue, control, assimilate, and “modernize.” They harbored very different socioeconomic and cultural patterns that, for a long time, seemed relatively resilient. Thus, the Gaelic Highlands increasingly appeared as an Other which the nation’s anglophone capitalist centralizing mainstream was increasingly unwilling to tolerate. To justify its “modernizing” interference, the mainstream cast Gaelic traditions as backward and savage. Europe’s power-hungry modern nation-states were not content with internal centralization; they also sought to extend their influence far beyond their own borders, for instance by establishing colonies overseas. Capitalism’s voracious thirst for new resources and markets did not stop at national borders either: here as well, there was an appetite for overseas outposts and dependencies. As in the Scottish Highlands, expansive European states and capitalist business interests encountered social systems overseas which were organized in a different manner. Again, local interests often clashed with the interests of incoming forces. Here as well, subjugation and assimilation were justified by casting local traditions and populations as backward and savage. It is thus little wonder that different kinds of “savages,” such as Gaels and Native Americans, were often depicted through the same strategies of “colonial discourse,” and that they were also directly compared with each other. This chapter has already given various examples of anglophone mainstream texts which constructed the Gaels as an inferior Other and implicitly or explicitly compared them to colonized populations further afield. All these textual representations could be used to justify practical policies of subjugation and assimilation. The remaining sections of this chapter look more closely at these practical policies themselves, and show that similarities with overseas colonial projects existed not only on the textual, but also on a practical level. These sections also give examples of how individual policies were textualized. It will be shown how “internal colonial” and “civilizing” missions in the Gaidhealtachd were pursued on a wide range of levels: infrastructural, military, political, administrative, demographic, religious, educational, linguistic, sartorial, and economic.

“Colonial” and “Civilizing” Missions in the Gaidhealtachd

As has already been shown, Britain’s non-Gaelic establishment in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was getting more and more impatient with Gaelic barbarity within its civilized national borders, and launched “civilizing missions” against it. Gaelic difference had to be assimilated. This tied in with Enlightenment theories of social evolution and with a colonial sense of civilizational superiority. In overseas colonialism the educational and missionizing drive only reached its heyday in the nineteenth century. With regard to Scotland and its Gaels, the ideal of a civilizing mission developed already in the
seventeenth century. Again, this illustrates that the “Celtic fringe” often set precedents for later colonial discourse about overseas territories. At the same time, the “otherness” of non-Europeans was a reference point for textualizations of “Celtic” otherness. Some authors suggested that Gaels, at least before they could be sufficiently assimilated to the national mainstream, had more in common with the non-European “primitives” encountered in the Orient or on overseas colonial ventures than with their fellow British subjects at home. This view is exemplified by Alexander Pennecuik’s poem “A Curse on the Clan M’Pherson, Occasioned by the News of Glenbucket His Being Murdered by Them.”

The clan’s “villainy” is claimed to be “far worse than” that of “Infidel or Turk,” and the speaker exclaims:

Perpetual clouds thro’ your black clan shall ring;
Traitors ’gainst God, and Rebells ’gainst your King,
Until you feel the law’s severest rigour,
And be extinguished like the base M‘Gregor.

The comparison between Gaels and “Infidel or Turk” goes back to the Middle Ages and forms another connection between Celticism and Orientalism. Further comparisons between Gaels and non-European Others—in this case Oceanians—are drawn in Henry Peter Brougham’s comments on his 1799 visit to St. Kilda:

Nothing in Captain Cook’s voyages comes half so low. The natives are savage. . . . [Locally made] thread and horn-spoons are . . . infininitely coarser . . . , and made in smaller quantity and less variety, than those . . . in . . . the Pacific islands, New Holland . . . excepted. A total want of curiosity, a stupid gaze of wonder, an excessive eagerness for spirits and tobacco, a laziness only to be conquered by the hope of the above-mentioned cordials, and a beastly degree of filth, the natural consequence of this render the St Kildian character truly savage.

Comparisons to Pacific Islanders were not the only colonial discourse tropes in Brougham’s account; elsewhere, he even likens the people of St. Kilda to animals: “The only mortals among the . . . inhabitants whom we found in any degree civilized above the brutes, were the priest and his family.”

While Brougham could still perceive remote St. Kilda as untouched by civilization, other areas of the Gaidhealtachd had already been exposed to “civilizing missions” for about two centuries. The pre-Union Scottish government, Cromwellian occupying forces, post-Union Hanoverian British authorities, and various religious institutions had all tried to increase their control over the Gaidhealtachd and assimilate it to their standards. Such measures were partly facilitated by scientific and technical advancement, for instance in mapmaking and road-building. Moreover, after the 1707 Union,
governmental civilizing missions to the Gaidhealtachd had more clout, as considerable English resources were added to Scotland’s own.83 Belief in integration reached its heyday after 1745—it seemed increasingly likely that Gaelic otherness as the last stand of inner-British barbarism would soon be assimilated into civilization.

Ever since the inception of the modern state, the quest for a unified, centrally controllable nation kindled desires for more knowledge about the internal Other, as well as for classification and discursive containment. This is illustrated by innovations in cartography. The first systematic mapping of Scotland in the 1590s already reflected the wish to unify and control the national territory, although these maps were not easily available and the coastline was not accurately charted before the mid- and late seventeenth century.84 This also entailed greater integration and internal colonization of the Gaidhealtachd, similar to the function of mapping in overseas colonial discourse.85 Further parallels to overseas imperialism, but also to colonized Ireland, can be discerned in early modern attempts to colonize Scotland’s Highlands and Islands more directly via military occupation or “plantations” of anglophone settlers, as well as indirect attempts to control the Other by assimilating the native population itself to the center’s standards of religion, language, education, economics, or dress.

Throughout the British Empire, more direct forms of conquest, control, and coercion were combined with more indirect strategies of rule, like rewarding voluntary self-assimilation with career benefits, and reliance on local intermediaries. However, the proportions in which direct and indirect measures were combined could differ from region to region. In Scotland, “civilizing missions” eventually relied much more strongly on indirect strategies than they did in Ireland or overseas, where more violent and direct coercion played a greater part.

For historian Allan Kennedy, the extent to which the integration of the Gaidhealtachd into the Scottish nation state relied on indirect rule and voluntary assimilation largely devalues the “internal colonialism” or “imperial” model, at least for parts of the seventeenth century. He posits a “collaborative” counter-model which stresses the collusion of local elites and the center’s readiness to temper its desire for control and assimilation with a pragmatic respect for local interests and peculiarities. However, his juxtaposition of “imperial” and “collaborative” as binary opposites is problematic, since it implies a simplistic understanding of imperialism as necessarily based on a clear-cut dichotomy between colonizer and colonized where none of the colonized population willingly cooperates or profits, and which always aimed for a wholesale transformation of the colonized society.86 In reality, colonialism very often relied on a degree of local collaboration, indirect rule, and only partial transformation of colonized lifestyles, even in times and places where Kennedy considers “imperial” readings appropriate (e.g., eighteenth-century Scotland or Europe’s overseas colonies). Although Kennedy himself admits
the possibility of overlaps between the “imperial” and “collaborative” models, he immediately negates the importance of such overlaps and returns to stressing the differences between the two models by reiterating a more simplistic model of imperialism which sees the periphery as an “abject,” “passive recipient of an acquisitive centre,” while he claims that only a “collaborative” model can accommodate a “vested interest of local elites in strengthening the relationship” with the core.87 The notion that *any* colony has ever been a completely passive recipient would probably be rejected by most postcolonialists. Hence, while Kennedy’s work brilliantly illustrates the complexity of center-periphery relations in the Highlands, I would argue that this complexity does not invalidate (post)colonial readings, especially where these readings focus on discourse, representation, and perceptions rather than sociohistorical realities, since the former often claim clear-cut dichotomies even where social realities are more complex.88

Nonetheless, even in discourse the position of Scottish Gaeldom could slightly differ from the position of colonized populations elsewhere. For instance, Scottish Gaelic “barbarians” supposedly had sufficient potential for assimilation, while Irish “barbarians” did not. Hence, stupidity as an ethnic trait features more frequently in anglophone stereotypes of Irish Gaels than in depictions of Scottish Highlanders.89 Even where coercive measures along Irish or overseas colonial lines were planned for Scotland, their implementation was often pursued more halfheartedly—possibly one of the reasons why the Scottish Gaelic sense of victimization by (and opposition to) the government was often less unanimous than in more “typical” colonies. But again, this is a difference in degree rather than a difference in kind. Ambiguous “native” responses to colonial governance, mixing acquiescence and repulsion, also existed elsewhere, and the difference is rather in emphasis and proportion. In eighteenth- to twenty-first-century Scotland, the proportion of acquiescence seems higher than in colonies which had to be conquered by military force rather than by treaty, or which ended their colonial dependency with the help of military insurrection.

Despite such differences, the objectives—and some of the practical and representational strategies—of “civilizing missions” in the Highlands show various similarities to more “typical” concepts of colonial projects. This is further illustrated in the following sections.

**Military, Political, and Administrative Control; Expropriation and Lowland “Plantations”**

An early attempt to exert direct Lowland control over the Gaidhealtachd, in a manner which paralleled—in vocabulary and action—seventeenth-century colonial policies in Ireland and North America, was the attempt to settle Lowlanders in Scottish Gaelic areas, comparable to the plantation of Ulster. Already in 1597, the Scottish government proposed the establishment of
burghs and settlements of anglophone Lowland settlers in Kintyre, Lewis, and Lochaber—a project which the king shortly afterwards described as “planting Colonies among them of answerable In-lands subjects, that . . . may reforme and civilize the best inclined among them: rooting out or transporting the barbarous and stubborne sorte, and planting civilitie in their rooms.”

The pacification of the Isles and their inhabitants should be effected “not by agree-ment with the countrey people, bot by extirpation of them.” In practice, however, these schemes met with considerable resistance and setbacks. It was this less successful outcome that set the “plantations” scheme in the Scottish Gaidhealtachd apart from its counterparts in Ireland and North America. Its intentions and colonial mindset were, however, very similar.

The seventeenth century saw several military expeditions, forced expropriations, evictions, and the dispersal or outlawing of certain clans. However, external pressure was not the only relevant factor. Internal disunity of those clans also played a part. Moreover, much of the external pressure came not directly from central government but indirectly via rival Highland families, “frontier clans with a foot in both Highland and Lowland society” functioning as the crown’s “Trojan horses in Gaeldom”—such as the MacKenzie and Campbells. Unlike their Irish counterparts, Scotland’s Gaelic elites were not destroyed by a big anti-Gaelic scheme of military conquest and wholesale expropriation. Routing Gaelic society and literally supplanting it with Lowlanders was not considered the only solution for the Scottish Highlands. It was believed that this region might also be improved by civilizing the Gaels themselves and integrating them into the national body politic. Direct penetration and plantation of the Gaidhealtachd was complemented by attempts at indirect control through pressuring clan chiefs (who, for example, had to swear oaths of responsibility for their followers’ good conduct), commercialization and anglicization of estate management, legislation against the Gaelic language, the assimilation of Gaelic elites into Scotland’s landed classes, and their use as local arms of government.

This greater reliance on indirect ways of conquering Scotland, and the smaller proportion of more direct strategies, may be one reason why (post)colonial status is often more readily ascribed to Ireland, where there was a greater proportion of direct coercion in the mixture of strategies. That Irish Gaels were colonized through more uncompromising tactics than the Scottish Gaels also provoked different reactions: in Ireland, political and discursive resistance is considered to have been fiercer, while in Scotland “the stormy relations between the Stewart kings and their Gaelic-speaking subjects were regarded in the same light as quarrels between clans or kin-groups which themselves could easily turn bitter and bloody.” Thus, the Scottish Gaels, “though they might portray themselves as sorely oppressed, . . . could not convincingly ascribe their predicament to an alien power which sought to conquer their lands.” That Gaeldom was a part of Scotland was never questioned, and it was Scotland’s own kings the Gaels were in conflict with. Hence,
any Scottish Gaelic sense of oppression was felt to be an intra-national conflict between two Scottish entities. Pre-conquest Ireland, by contrast, was felt to have been its own country, so that English and later British anglocentric hegemony was experienced as a foreign conquest and an imposition from external enemies.

In Scotland, a more obviously alien invasion was the Cromwellian occupation of the mid-seventeenth century which also attempted to increase centralist control of the Gaidhealtachd, for instance by establishing garrisons in strategic places. After 1660, Scotland’s own restored government also made efforts to “pacify” the Highlands. For instance, the expansion of the road network facilitated both military control and the intensification of Lowland-Highland trade connections which made their own contributions to integration.96

After the failed Jacobite rising of 1715, strict measures for extending centralist control over the Gaidhealtachd were suggested, but implementation was rather halfhearted. Some estates were forfeited but restored after six years in return for assurances of good conduct, and the Disarming Act was not very strictly enforced either. Garrisons were again established, along with a further road- and bridge-building program to facilitate military control, but the government soon shifted its priorities elsewhere.97 Lynch even argues that “the Union Regime was until the mid-1730s in less control of the Highlands than any government since the late sixteenth century.”98

The Jacobite rising of 1745 focused government attention again upon the Highlands and strengthened old prejudices about an inextricable connection between this alien, “barbarian” culture and Stuart insurrection. In reality, Jacobite aristocrats were not any more traditionalist than Hanoverian ones, for instance regarding commercialization or patronage for Gaelic culture. Neither did Gaeldom’s own marginalized status lead to a generally anticolonial attitude: for instance, the Jacobite chieftain Donald Cameron of Lochiel participated in Caribbean trade.99 Despite such incongruities, Lowland and English perceptions often considered all things Gaelic as irredeemably unprogressive, both economically and politically. Jacobitism was perceived as the expression of a threatening barbarian culture, and the fact that the Highland army had managed to move so far south and even planned a march on London (they got as far as Derby before turning back) had given “civilized” Britain quite a fright.100 The picture painted of these “barbarians” in Hanoverian discourse is gruesome indeed. The Scots Magazine described the Jacobite army as follows:

Out of the barbarous corners of this country: many . . . are Papists, under the immediate direction of their priests; trained up to the sword, by being practised in open robbery and violence; void of property of their own; the constant invaders of that of others; and who know no law, but the will of their leaders.101
The apparent paradox that Highlanders are associated with lawlessness, freedom, and slavery at the same time can be resolved as follows: lawlessness and freedom both relate to the chieftains’ relative autonomy from centralist state authority. As the centralist state is associated with civic freedom, a weakness of state authority in the Highlands means that the common Highlanders, the subjects of the chief, are not free. They are seen as slaves to their chief’s tyrannical local power. It is thus no real paradox that later heavy policing of the Gaidhealtachd was described as “extending freedom” to common Highlanders. The portrayal of local Highland traditions as cruel and barbarous makes government efforts to subdue the Highlands appear as a benevolent civilizing mission, and thus legitimates the subjugation of the region.

The same contrast between barbarous local traditions and benevolent plans for civilizing missions is projected in an anonymous text entitled “Some Remarks on the Highland Clans, and Methods Proposed for Civilizing Them” (1746 or shortly after), which likewise considers “the General Savage Character of the people” as capable of the most grisly deeds: “their Barbarous inclinations, which According to Ancient Customs will be the murdering of people of all Sexes and Ages, the Burning of Houses, and Cutting of Cattle to pieces.” Again, a major evil is clan feudalism, which in turn induces raiding and laziness. Some English people in 1745 even seem to have believed that Highlanders were cannibals. The memoirs of James Johnstone, who fought on the Jacobite side, contain an anecdote about a terrified Englishwoman who thought that Highlanders ate children.

Following the shock of 1745, the mainstream was now determined to pull out evil by its roots. After the decisive Hanoverian victory at Culloden, the Highlands suffered severe reprisals, and more long-term transformations were set on their way. These were part of a wider effort to increase cultural and ideological integration throughout Britain, which in turn was part of a Europe-wide trend towards national identity-building. But in the Gaidhealtachd, integration had a particular urgency and seemed less like a connection of equally worthy partners than a civilizing mission among primitive barbarians, thus acquiring distinct colonial overtones. The Hanoverian judge and politician Duncan Forbes wrote:

The inhabitants of the mountains . . . united . . . by the singularity of dress and language, stick close to their antient idle way of life; retain their barbarous customs and maxims . . . ; and being accustomed to . . . Arms, and inured to hard living, are dangerous to the Public peace . . . untill, being deprived of Arms for some years, they forget the use of them. . . .

. . . It has been for . . . many years impracticable . . . to give the Law its course amongst the mountains . . ., for this reason . . ., that the Crown, in former times, was obliged to put . . . Jurisdictions, in the hands of powerful families in the Highlands, who . . . could give
execution to the Laws within their . . . territories, . . . frequently . . . at the expense of considerable bloodshed.

But as . . . good order and government have been very much improved of late years over all Scotland, excepting the Highlands . . .; it seems absolutely necessary . . . to restrain and civilize those lawless Highlanders. . . . Whilst the rest of the Country is . . . improving, they continue . . . their accustomed sloth and barbarity. The Want of Roads . . . [and] Accommodation . . . and the difference of language, have proved hitherto a bar to all free intercourse between the high and low lands, and have left the Highlanders in possession of their idle customs and extravagant maxims, absolute strangers to the advantages that must accrue from Industry, and to the blessing of having those advantages protected by Laws.

. . . If the Highlanders can be effectually debarred from the use of Arms . . ., their Successors . . . must be as harmless as the commonalty of the adjacent Low Countries; and when they can no longer live by Rapine, must think of living by Industry.

. . . It will require a considerable standing force, . . . for some years, to disarm . . . the rebellious Highlanders.107

Forbes also suggests economic civilizing missions to complement the military ones.108 The Mackay chieftain Lord Reay likewise hoped that military measures would “civilize” the Highlanders by transforming them from “wild” and “idle ignorant people” into “useful subjects”—though this would be difficult, “as it is easier to conquer than to civilize barbarous people.”109

Post-Culloden penalty measures against the Highlands entailed a period of terror and killings inflicted by government troops upon the local population, as well as formal trials, large-scale transportations to the colonies, and executions.110 Lynch’s evaluation of these events explicitly draws colonial parallels to Ireland, and implicitly also to overseas territories: “it was . . . a repeat performance of the final Elizabethan conquest of Ireland after 1601, . . . bloodletting . . . after forty years of frustration . . . in dealing with a Celtic people. It was one more act in the long drama of the consolidation of an English Empire.”111 The drastic nature of post-Culloden punitive measures in the Highlands also begs the question of whether the emerging field of post-colonial trauma studies might lend useful tools for future inquiries into the impact of those measures on the Highland population and its culture.

Long before Lynch’s historical retrospective, parallels to Ireland were already drawn in the eighteenth century: in the aftermath of Culloden it was repeatedly suggested that the Scottish Gaidhealtachd should get the same treatment that Ireland received in the previous century, that is, the complete dispossession of indigenous elites and their replacement by English or Lowland incomers.112 However, the path eventually chosen was to further assimilate indigenous Highlanders. This further confirms that in Scotland
hybridity and assimilation were more important, and boundaries between colonizer and colonized less neat, than in Ireland.

Measures implemented after 1745 to control and assimilate the Gaidhealtacht once and for all included a renewal and intensification of earlier measures: increased military control through garrisons, extensions of the road network, and building other infrastructural features like canals, harbors, and bridges. The civilizing potential of military occupation was commended by an anonymous account of the mid-eighteenth century Highlands which is generally assumed to have been written by the Lowlander and government agent David Bruce:

The . . . Savage Highlanders need to be Bridled . . . by Garrisons and Standing Forces. . . . Those unhappy and infatuated People will . . . Continue Savages if nothing else is done to recover them from their Ignorance and Barbarity . . . ; but as the rest of the People of Britain who are now Civilized were once as Wild and Barbarous as the Highlanders, . . . proper measures would Civilize them also.113

A colonial mindset is indicated by epithets like “savage,” “wild,” and “barbarous,” as well as the trope of contemporary ancestry and the universal ladder of progress. The text even draws an explicit comparison between Gaels (albeit not contemporary ones but their forebears before ca. 1730) and “Hottentots,” namely regarding their supposed uncleanliness.114 Again, this illustrates the frequent association of Gaels with overseas colonized peoples. The particular colonized people singled out for comparison here is likewise noteworthy: the “Hottentots,” alias the Khoikhoi in southern Africa, were not just seen as one among many other “savage” ethnic communities, but occupied a special position in the European colonial imagination as the most savage people of them all. Such ideas had been current since the mid-seventeenth century, and in the eighteenth century it was even believed that “Hottentots” occupied an interim position between humans and animals. The term “Hottentot” could also be used as a “common slur for someone of congenital stupidity.”115 In addition, it featured as a synonym for a person who was supposedly uncivilized or culturally inferior.116

Apart from a general association with primitiveness and stupidity, a more particular reason for comparisons between “Hottentots” and Gaels could have been that the traditional economies of both cultures contained strong elements of pastoralism and had recently been disrupted by the encroachment of “foreign” systems of modernization: Khoikhoi autonomy declined due to European encroachment between the mid-seventeenth and eighteenth century; while the Highland Scottish economy was changed by the rise of capitalism. As a result, many people in both cultures had become landless laborers. Their “belated” introduction to capitalism, and in the Khoikhoi’s case even to agriculturalism, also inspired mainstream onlookers with the
notion that both Gaels and Khoikhoi were lazy and had remained integral parts of their natural environment instead of becoming proper conquerors and transformers of nature.¹¹⁷

However, there were also important differences. One of these was skin color: as white Europeans, Gaels possessed no unmistakable phenotypical differences from the representatives of European mainstream cultures. Another obvious difference between Gaelic and “Hottentot” Others could have been religion: even the most hostile observer would have found it difficult to deny that Scotland’s Highlanders were religious, though they were often said to follow the wrong religion: Catholicism as the “wrong” brand of Christianity, or residues of pagan superstition in folk belief. “Hottentots,” by contrast, were sometimes deemed too stupid to have any religion whatsoever.¹¹⁸

The relative closeness of “Celtic” religion to European mainstream culture was not necessarily a deterrent from Gaelic-African comparisons, even concerning religion: the term “Hottentot” was also used for the disparagement of one kind of Christian by another. This becomes clear from Strother’s remark on another “Hottentot” - “Celtic” connection:

The slur [“Hottentot” as a synonym for stupidity] was often transferred from one colonial situation to another: Ireland. The term was also . . . used to disparage a person’s religious understanding. . . . When applied to the Irish, probably both prongs of the epithet were intended.¹¹⁹

That Ireland was not the only Celtic country that was deemed comparable to “Hottentots” is illustrated by Bruce’s remarks on the Scottish Highlands. The associative connection which Bruce’s text forges between Scottish Gaels and the extreme colonial otherness of “Hottentots” shows the extent to which the Gaels were part of the colonial imagination. Despite the Highlanders’ phenotypical, geographical, and cultural closeness to Britain’s anglophone mainstream, they are likened to an indigenous ethnic group in southern Africa whose phenotypical and cultural features are persistently portrayed by colonial discourse as a case of utmost otherness and “primitiveness.” This not only exemplifies the fluidity of race and ethnicity as discursive constructions, but also highlights that the history of constructing the Gaels as colonial barbarians makes postcolonialism a highly relevant analytical approach in Scottish studies.

Bruce not only proclaims Gaels and Hottentots to be equal in savagery and in their need of civilizing missions, but even considers the domestic civilizing missions to be more urgent than overseas ones: “Has not Britain laid out much Greater Sums on Colonies abroad of not half the Importance of Civilizing and Improving this part of Britain itself . . . ?”¹²⁰

Post-1745 military measures were complemented by legislation: in 1747, the private jurisdictions of clan chiefs were abolished and replaced by royal
jurisdiction. Estates of rebel chiefs were forfeited to the crown on an unprecedented scale, which was also considered a starting point for the infiltration of Lowland economic practices (capitalism) into the Highlands. Looking back, the twentieth-century journalist and administrator James Shaw Grant labeled those eighteenth-century military and legal penalty measures, as well as the dispossession of rebel chiefs, as “colonial” measures. The new thoroughness of “civilizing missions” finally promised success. Direct political, infrastructural, and military measures were only one side of the coin. Other “civilizing missions” concentrated on culture and ideology, complementing direct mainstream interference by indirect control through the assimilation of “native” populations. These cultural missions also go back as far as the early seventeenth century, as the following section demonstrates.

Religion, Education, Language Policy, and Assimilation

As important sites of cultural power, the church and education played important roles in missions to “civilize” the Gaidhealtachd. An early attempt to promote cultural assimilation was the legislative initiative known as the Statutes of Iona (1609), which decreed that every gentleman or yeoman owning a certain number of cattle had to send his eldest child to the Lowlands for a Protestant and anglophone education. Chiefs from the central and northern Highlands had already done so for decades, but most on the west coast had not. The statutes aimed to further the transformation of clan elites into responsible members of the Scottish body politic, and probably also aimed to weaken ideological unity between clan and chief.

A significant proportion of the Gaelic elites now spent more time in the Lowlands—for education, and in adult life due to increased involvement in national politics and the pleasures of southern lifestyles. There were also attempts to carry Lowland culture into the Highlands themselves and spread its influence among the Gaelic-speaking masses. The de-gaelicization of elite education was extended to children of lower rank in 1616 through the Act for the Settling of Parochial Schools, although its actual implementation in the Highlands had to wait for several decades. The aim of this act was “that the . . . Inglishe toung be universallie plantit, and the Irishe language, whilk is one of the . . . principall causis of the continewance of barbaritie and incivilitie amongis the inhabitantis of the Ilis and Heylandis, may be abolisheit and removeit.” Around 1620, Sir Robert Gordon gave the following advice to his nephew John, 13th Earl of Sutherland:

Take away the reliques of the Irishe barbaritie which as yet remains in your countrey, to wit, the Irishe langage, and the habit . . . . Ciwilize your countrey and the inhabitants . . . . Plant schooles in ewerie corner . . . . to instruct the youth to speak Inglishe. Preasse to ciwilize your countrey and the inhabitants . . . lykwyse in all other things.
In 1626, Charles I renewed the earlier governmental order to establish anglo-phone schools in all parishes to facilitate the “civilising and removing of the Irish language and barbaritie out of the heigh lands.” But a truly thorough implementation of linguistic assimilation had to wait until the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. For the present, King Charles soon “lost interest in ‘civilising’ the Highlanders, who were eventually to become his most prominent supporters.”

In addition to linguistic missions, there were also religious missions to convert Catholics and Episcopalians to Presbyterianism and to ensure that Highlanders already adhering to the reformed faith would withstand the forces of counter-reformation, such as Jesuit missionaries, among whom, thanks to their Irish connections, Gaelic language skills were—at least initially—more widespread than among their Protestant counterparts. It was also hoped that the extinction of Catholicism and Episcopalianism would undermine the Jacobitism associated with these denominations. Moreover, the eighteenth-century increase of the kirk’s disciplinary powers, for example, concerning moral transgressions, meant that clan commons were no longer subject to just one master (their chief), but two. The kirk could thus become a rival authority which broke the feudal chief’s regional monopoly of power.

Missions were run by different bodies, such as the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland or the Society in Scotland for Propagating Christian Knowledge (SSPCK, dominated by landlords and lawyers). From 1725 onwards, such missions were also supported by the London government. After 1745, crown commissioners administering annexed estates likewise promoted Presbyterianism. Between the defeat of the rising in 1746 and the final removal of the Jacobite threat through the death of the Stuart prince in 1788, there was also more direct government suppression of Catholicism and Episcopalianism which condemned these creeds to a situation verging on outlawry. During his post-1746 terror campaign, the Duke of Cumberland, commander of the government forces, demanded that Catholic priests should be surrendered and chapels destroyed. Teinds (tithes) were monopolized by Presbyterians, which caused great financial difficulties to the Episcopalian Church while Catholicism as an international denomination could resort to external funding. Educational missions, like the religious ones, were carried out by different—often Presbyterian—institutions: some schools were run directly by local parishes, some by religious charity organizations like the SSPCK.

Perceptions of the Gaidhealtachd as a religious wasteland paralleled similar views on overseas colonies. The title of an SSPCK report even mentions both missions in the same breath: *State of the Society in Scotland, for Propagating Christian Knowledge, Giving a Brief Account of the Condition of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland. . . . Together with Some Account of the Society’s Missionaries for Converting the Native Indians of America.* Later, a report to the same organization commented on the Gaels’ inadequate
theological knowledge and their need for ministers and schools: “They know no more than by hearsay, that there is a God. . . . Were they to be asked anything further they would be found . . . as ignorant as the wild americans.” In 1765, the Rev. Dr. John Walker’s report to the General Assembly stated that many Gaels retained the “prejudices of an uncivilized state,” but that a thorough civilizing mission could improve this situation, as it already had in some parts of the Highlands: “wherever they have access to Schools . . . and the ordinances of Religion . . . they are . . . more civilized in their manners, and in their way of Life.” Similar progress had been noted in 1760 by Archibald Wallace, an Edinburgh friend of the Gaelic poet Dugald Buchanan. Buchanan was a preacher in Rannoch, and Wallace praised these efforts as “very diligent and successful in civilizing one of the most barbarous places in the Highlands.”

Civilizing objectives identified by educational bodies fall into different categories. Christian schools emphasized the religious mission: promoting Protestantism. In line with the Protestant tenet that every Christian should be able to read the Bible, schools stressed the teaching of literacy, often using religious class texts only. The second mission of education was economic: already in the early eighteenth century, the SSPCK asserted that greater economic integration of Highlanders was possible, and set up a scheme for establishing “industrial schools.” The teaching of crafts and “industry” parallels the objectives and curricula of certain missionary schools overseas. The third and fourth major aspects of educational missions were linguistic and political: during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Church of Scotland aimed to transform all Highlanders not only into Protestants, but also into loyal subjects of the monarchy (after 1688, this meant the Protestant monarchy, not the Catholic Jacobite line). This objective seemed unattainable without anglicization because the Gaelic language appeared to be inextricably bound up with religious deviation, backwardness, and political unrest. In 1703 the Synod of Glasgow and Ayr wrote about the Highlanders:

> While they continue in their present neglected state Strangers to the Gospell, and bound up to a separate Language and Interest of their own, they are most dangerous to this Church and Nation, ready to assist invading Forrainers, or to break out for plunder in case of Domestick troubles.

But the synod also assumed that Highlanders, “once brought to Religion, Humanity, Industry, and the Low Countrey Language . . . , might yet become a noble accession to the Commonwealth.”

It is thus hardly surprising that the church did little to spread the Gaelic Bible, and even in preaching used English wherever possible. Church of Scotland schools and SSPCK schools were similarly unsupportive of Gaelic: as soon as basics in English were acquired, English was supposed to be the sole

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medium of instruction, and only anglophone texts were to be used for reading. As the SSPCK put it:

Nothing can be more effectual for reducing these countries to order, and making them useful to the Commonwealth than teaching them their duty to God, their King and Country and rooting out their Irish language, and this has been the case of the Society as far as they could.\textsuperscript{135}

Using Gaelic in class was only permissible as a temporary measure to facilitate learning and thus eventually assist anglicization. Teaching literacy in Gaelic was not encouraged.\textsuperscript{136} This policy was supported by government officials: crown commissioners who administered estates that had been annexed after the 1745 rebellion likewise recommended the appointment of non-Gaelic-speaking schoolmasters and the prohibition of Gaelic speech in class. Spinning schools for girls established on such estates also taught English. J. S. Grant includes these policies in his list of “colonial” features in Highland history.\textsuperscript{137} Although the colonial comparison is arguably justified, it is also important to note differences between internal and external colonialism. For instance, Janet Sorensen points out that “the initial emphasis on linguistic homogenization was much more pronounced in the Highlands (and Wales and Ireland) than in India” because Britain’s internal peripheries were not only perceived as a colonial Other but also as a national Same.\textsuperscript{138} It seems ironic that precisely this sense of sameness and non-coloniality subjected the Celtic fringe to a linguistic colonization which was more thorough than in many overseas colonies.

Religious, cultural, and economic missions, or even the same kind of mission as understood by different institutions, were not always congruous. While schools wanted to teach Protestantism, English, and economically profitable skills like spinning or weaving, landlords might accept the latter two aims but not necessarily the first: Catholic landlords sometimes protected the Roman faith among their tenants, though this seems to have decreased after 1770. A second incongruity occurred toward the turn of the nineteenth century: while Presbyterian institutions continued to see Catholicism as a form of quasi-paganism in need of missionizing and extermination, the government changed its attitude. Catholicism was no longer associated with a Jacobite menace and had proved its loyalty to the Hanoverian establishment. The number of Highland Catholics had declined anyway, mainly due to emigration, and the government, concerned to stop this population drain, became the main patron of the Catholic Church in the Highlands.\textsuperscript{139}

A third incongruity between different “civilizing” objectives lay in the fact that general educational and civilizational aims of uncompromising anglicization sometimes clashed with religious objectives. Reaching the hearts and minds of the flock was easier in their mother tongue. Moreover, it would
have been desirable to the locals (clergy, teachers, and populace) if children acquired literacy in Gaelic and English, thus being able to read the Gaelic psalms to their illiterate relatives. The educational bodies’ central authorities were less eager to provide Gaelic literacy. There were also differences between organizations. The seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Presbyterian Church was more inclined to use Gaelic for religious instruction than its Episcopalian counterpart was, probably because Presbyterianism gave local elders and ministers a greater say and placed more emphasis on the sermon, which needed to use a language that the listeners understood well. The General Assembly showed an earlier lenience toward Gaelic than the SSPCK.

A limited amount of Gaelic religious reading became permissible in schools from the mid-eighteenth century onwards. As the political threat of Jacobitism and chieftainly autonomy was now annihilated, the Gaelic language no longer seemed a great menace to national stability. All these instances of tolerance toward Gaelic did not spring from sudden cross-cultural respect, but were mainly intended as short-term tactics on the way toward long-term anglicization. Nonetheless, these tactical concessions had some unintended positive effects on Gaelic culture: greater tolerance toward Gaelic in schools, as well as bursaries and educational facilities to create a body of Gaelic-speaking preachers, produced a core of people who could contribute to the creation of a modern Gaelic literature. The same developments created a readership for such literature. These policies also prepared the ground for the extensive use of Gaelic by nineteenth-century evangelical religion, an important factor in language maintenance far into the twentieth century.

But the educational “English only” practice still died hard. Again, the sense of a civilizing mission and the parallels to overseas colonization became explicit in the terminology used. In 1760 the Revs. Hyndman and Dick reported to the Church of Scotland’s General Assembly about the success of industrial schools:

> The propagation of the English Language appears to be the most effectual method of diffusing through those Countries the advantages of Religion and Civil Society. . . . We observed with pleasure that the English Language is making a very quick progress in the neighbourhood of those small colonies which have come from the low Country for the promoting of Manufactures.140

“Colony” might be read, firstly, as a relatively neutral general term for a human settlement in a rural area, or, secondly, as it is generally understood today, that is, a settlement of people from a conqueror nation on new territory. The context in which the term is used here, that is, the endorsement of a mission of cultural change, suggests that the second reading is more appropriate. Colonial terminology was also used in a pamphlet from 1809 which reviews the SSPCK’s founding objectives from 100 years earlier: before
the SSPCK’s educational mission took off, Gaelic society was full of “plun-
derers” and “gross barbarism,” “their minds were fierce,” “their manners barbarous,” “hostile to . . . Government”—while SSPCK schools endeavored to “rescue . . . [them] from . . . barbarism.”141

All these examples show that the objectives of religious and educational policies in the Scottish Highlands often followed colonial patterns. The next issue which pertains to a discussion of these policies in (post)colonial terms is the question of whether the local population’s reaction to the “missions” likewise followed colonial (or anticolonial) patterns. A related issue is the ultimate efficiency of the “civilizing missions.”

As to religion, Presbyterianism indeed became more widespread in the eighteenth-century Gaidhealtachd, especially after 1746. However, many Highlanders’ allegiance to the Presbyterian Church of Scotland was initially formal and nominal rather than heartfelt, partly because Calvinism’s individualist ethic did not easily “appeal to a people for whom work and war were necessarily communal.”142 The real breakthrough for Presbyterianism came not from the mainstream of the national church, but from a new brand of Presbyterianism: evangelicalism. The latter’s spread through the Gaidhealtachd was not exclusively due to outside interference, but also to indigenous developments, such as the role of lay evangelicals (na daoine, “the men”) who combined modern evangelical religion with elements of local tradition, such as speaking Gaelic and fulfilling a seer-like role. Despite their rootedness in local culture, these lay preachers did not support all its aspects: similar to Lowland civilizers, they regarded many Gaelic traditions as quasi-pagan and wanted to root them out. The evangelical movement, however, was demotic. It became especially important in the nineteenth century. By restoring a degree of local self-confidence, and through its antiestablishment strain, it laid vital foundations for the anti-landlord protests which happened later in that century.143 Evangelicalism also transformed outsiders’ perceptions of Gaels: while earlier accounts portrayed them as barbarian quasi-pagans, by the 1820s the Highlanders often appeared as sober Calvinists, but sometimes also as religious fanatics—an image which partly survives today.144

As to the linguistic mission, Scottish Gaels were not entirely hostile to anglophone education. This illustrates a tendency which has been discernible since the Middle Ages: though Lowland discourse often portrayed the Gaels as outside the nation, the Gaels themselves did not construct an alternative Gaelic nationality, but often felt concentric loyalties to both Gaeldom and Scotland. If their advancement within Scottish society necessitated cultural hybridization and the acquisition of English language skills, this was commonly deemed an acceptable tactic rather than being condemned as a betrayal of Gaelic heritage. As formal education was often only available through anglicizing schools, people were eager to use them.

Despite indigenous complicity in anglicization or at least hybridization, the effects on Gaelic culture were not always favorable. After the indigenous
written tradition of premodern Gaelic elite culture had declined (e.g., due to elite anglicization), modern literate mass culture in the Highlands relied largely on English, the language favored by church and schools. “The possibility of a smooth transition . . . from medieval to modern culture . . . was lost.” Henceforth, Gaelic culture remained predominantly oral, with long-term effects on linguistic identities. In time, the notion that literacy was a prerequisite for cultural excellence was also internalized by Gaels, who then perceived their largely oral mother tongue as inferior to the only medium of book-learning the schools had taught them: English. This cultural cringe has partly endured into the present, although Gaelic literacy has increased since the nineteenth century (partly due to the evangelical movement), and although the role of Gaelic in schools has improved.

Nevertheless, the efficiency of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century educational missions should not be overestimated. They achieved some of their objectives, such as spreading Protestant doctrines, increasing basic literacy, and giving more Highlanders a smattering of English. But success was not as complete as the “colonizers” might have wished. There were still too many Gaels who had no access to education at all; or if they did, their exposure was not sustained enough. Due to low population density and rough terrain, the way to school was often too far and too difficult, especially in the Isles. Poverty made tuition fees hard to afford and often required children to help with farm labor rather than going to school. The Highland practice of spending long summer months on remote shielings (pastures in the mountains) to graze the cattle likewise made for patchy school attendance. Even where children did go to school, the teaching methods failed to give them a good active knowledge of English. Many ended up being able to memorize or read aloud anglophone religious texts without properly understanding them; and without much ability to form their own sentences. While the education available installed cultural cringes and a belief that Gaelic was not an adequate vehicle for learned discourse, it did not yet succeed in making English replace Gaelic as a community language for everyday topics.

While certain colonial elements existed in the self-understanding of both sides—for example, a sense of civilizing mission among school providers, and the beginnings of a cultural cringe among the local populace—not all aspects of the Highland experience conform to the classical colonial model. For instance, binary constructions seemed somewhat less prominent in the Highlands, while more fluid boundaries and hybridity appear to have been (even) more important than elsewhere.

Religion, education, and language were not the only fields where cultural assimilation policies were implemented. Another significant area was dress. After 1747 Highland dress was proscribed by law—another act of cultural imperialism which is included on J. S. Grant’s list of “colonial” elements in Highland history. The Disclothing Act was not always efficiently implemented, especially in the remoter areas and during a period of greater leniency
between the 1760s and the formal lifting of the ban in the 1780s.\textsuperscript{149} Nonetheless, it managed to abolish the plaid as usual everyday wear. The revival of Highland dress was mostly a matter for special occasions and romantic fancies enjoyed by the privileged.

\textit{Economy: Capitalization and "Developmental Aid"}

Since the late seventeenth century, extensions of the road network facilitated greater integration between some Highland areas and the Lowland economy, mainly via the cattle trade. Commercialization slowly got under way, often as a result of clan chiefs’ own initiatives. However, in Lowland eyes this development was not fast and thorough enough; and certain feudal patterns in Highland social organization inhibited commercialization. After 1745, civilizing missions in the Highlands became increasingly economic in orientation, and several initiatives were launched to support and accelerate commercialization.\textsuperscript{150} J. S. Grant again indicts these measures as “colonial.”\textsuperscript{151} The Rev. Dr. John Walker, having traveled the Hebrides, wrote a report for the Commissioners of the Annexed Estates in which he portrayed the Gaels as occupying a lower rung on the civilizational ladder, but possessing ample potential for improvement—if led by a benevolent outsider’s guiding hand:

\begin{quote}
Their Soil remains, as it was left at the Creation: The Inhabitants, when compared to their fellow Subjects, with Respect to Arts, are in almost the same Situation as in the Days of Oscian, yet . . . capable of being greatly advanced . . .: and . . . a sensible, hardy, and laborious Race of People.\textsuperscript{152}

Highlanders are as capable to judge of . . . and . . . pursue any innovation that is advantageous . . . as any other People whatever.\textsuperscript{153}

Unassisted Exertions of Industry are not to be expected from a People still in the Pastoral Stage of Society; nor from unenlightened Minds are we . . . to expect the sudden Discontinuance of Bad Customs. But, whatever the Highlands are defective in industry, it will be found . . . to be rather their Misfortune than their Fault. Their Disposition to Industry, . . . if judiciously directed is capable to rise to the greatest heights.\textsuperscript{154}
\end{quote}

The Board of Commissioners of the Annexed Estates offered this kind of guidance and aimed to become a launchpad for the infiltration of Lowland economic practices into the Gaidhealtachd. “Industrial” schools were established, and Highland boys were apprenticed to Lowland traders. The improvement of traffic infrastructure, partly implemented to facilitate military control, also promised economic benefits. Road inspector Colonel Robert
Anstruther wrote in the 1790s: “Hitherto the Chief Object of Government by making Roads, was to March Troops . . . ; but after the . . . suppression of the Rebellion, the Plan was extended . . . to Civilize and improve the Country, to make the Highlanders . . . Industrious useful subjects.”

There were also construction projects for villages and towns. At least one “improver,” James Small, believed that these would weaken the Highlanders’ notorious hardiness and render them physically unfit for crime: “Proper houses and beding are . . . necessary improvements in the Highlands . . ., for as the people are from their infancy used to lye on the ground in no more than a single blancket, this fitts them for the hardships of their theevish expeditions.” Small advocates a civilizing mission and an improvement of the Other’s living standards as a strategy of domination. The efficiency of such a strategy had already been pointed out in Tacitus’s comments on the introduction of baths and other amenities in Roman England.

To promote loyalty and integration, money from confiscated Jacobite estates was reinvested into the local economy, for instance as subsidies for local industries like tanning, papermaking, fishing, or whaling. Even those chiefs who were allowed to retain their estates were pressured to adopt commercial principles. Initiative from the Gaidhealtachd’s own elites carried the commercialization process further after the Board of Commissioners of the Annexed Estates was dissolved and forfeited estates were restored to the heirs of dispossessed Jacobite chiefs in 1784. Now the mission of modernizing estates and “civilizing” their Gaelic inhabitants definitely relied no longer on government interference, but on the native elites themselves. They rose to the occasion with remarkable enthusiasm and relentlessness.

One example of accelerated commercialization after 1745 relates to the tacksmen. Occupying an intermediary position in the landholding system between chieftain and clan commoners, tacksmen were traditionally also military leaders and recruitment agents for the clan. As long as the clans’ military autonomy lasted, tacksmen were pillars of chieftainly authority, and chiefs took care not to alienate them. For a while, such calculations forestalled certain unpopular but economically advisable measures, such as excessive rent increases or the replacement of local tacksmen with outside incomers who paid higher prices. But after 1745, law and order were no longer guaranteed by the chieftain’s own military and legal authority, but by central state authority. Traditional functions of tacksmen became obsolete, and chiefs felt less constrained in pursuing commercializing reforms.

The commercialization of estates was inextricably linked to the Highland Clearances, which occurred mainly between the second half of the eighteenth and the middle of the nineteenth century. The traditional farming system was not profitable enough to meet modern commercial standards. Far too many people lived off the land, using methods which were too old-fashioned to yield any significant surplus which could be skimmed off as rent to fill the chiefs’ coffers. Thus, modernization often took the following forms: good
farming lands were cleared of their previous inhabitants and reorganized into profitable bigger farms held by a single tenant. These were frequently sheep farms, a boom sector at that time. Often the people renting or managing these farms were Lowlanders or English people because they had the best know-how about new southern farming methods and imported sheep breeds. Cleared commoners of the clan were resettled elsewhere, often on tinily subdivided “crofts” on land which was not amenable to commercial large-scale farming anyway. In some regions this was virgin ground which had to be broken in for several years, but then became profitable enough to be added to a larger farm as the crofters were resettled on some other patch of virgin land to start anew. In other cases, crofts lay on unsheltered, infertile coastal lands which were permanently useless for serious farming. Crofts were deliberately planned to be insufficient for providing a living, so that people were forced to take up supplementary employment, for example in the kelp industry, in fishing, or as laborers on bigger farms.\(^{158}\) Usually the landlord was also the employer, which aggravated dependency.

The Clearances and their aftermath caused pauperization, displacement, uncertainty, and enduring trauma. This is another area where the Highland experience can be fruitfully linked to international postcolonial scholarship and its growing interest in trauma studies. Another emerging subfield, postcolonial ecocriticism, is likewise relevant to eighteenth-century (and later also nineteenth-century) Scotland, for instance concerning the material transformations of the “wild” Highland landscape through roads, bridges, canals, and large-scale commercial sheep-farming. The literary representations of this “wild” landscape likewise underwent important changes which can be studied through a postcolonial ecocritical lens.

For the landlords, the profits reaped from modernized estates were enormous. In the second half of the eighteenth century, the Highland economy participated in the general economic boom: cattle prices rose, and cattle trade with the Lowlands expanded further. Other Highland goods were also increasingly exported to the Lowlands: fish, timber, slate, lead, wool, whisky, and later kelp. The “civilizing mission” to integrate the Highlands into the national economy was in that sense successful. This was already announced by the Board of Trustees for Manufactures and Fisheries in 1763:

\[
\text{The Linen manufacture hath been introduced into \ldots the Highlands, the whole Country is thereby greatly civilised & if the same means be continued is likely to become a very useful part of the United Kingdom but if discontinued \ldots it will soon relapse into its former Sloth & Barbarity.}\(^{159}\)
\]

Such civilizational “successes” swelled the purses of landlords, but did not necessarily improve the situation of crofters and laborers. One early nineteenth-century traveler even considered the situation of Hebridean
landless laborers to be worse than that of slaves in Jamaica. Another comparison to overseas colonialism was drawn by Lord MacDonald, who called North Uist, which was especially profitable in kelping, his “little Peru.” This implies that the amount of profit he earned from Hebridean kelp was comparable to the colossal wealth which Spanish colonizers had extracted from America, for instance by looting Inca gold. MacDonald’s comment illustrates the integration of Scotland’s Gaidhealtachd into the British colonial imagination.

Commercialization of estate management took place in both Lowlands and Highlands, but there were important differences. In the Lowlands, the process was more gradual because land leases tended to be written and ran for longer time spans. In the Highlands, leases were either customary and unwritten, or written but only extending over a short term, both of which facilitated eviction. Moreover, in the Lowlands—and on the southern and eastern fringes of the Highlands—cleared ex-tenants were more easily absorbed by other economic sectors, for instance as agricultural laborers, in rural manufactures, or in the growing cities. In the western and northern Highlands, there were few alternatives to crofting, and when that new economy collapsed after 1815 these regions’ inhabitants drifted toward a catastrophe.

Commercialization also had cultural consequences. It intensified the tendency toward chieftainly self-Anglicization and the local elites’ loss of interest in more traditional forms of Gaelic Highland culture. Anglicization in turn reinforced the commercializing impetus because the more time Highland aristocrats spent in the south, the greater their expenses and their exposure to the example of southerly commercializing trends, such as enclosures. Absentee landlordism increased further. This did not go uncommented. Gaelic poets had criticized absenteeism since the seventeenth century. An early nineteenth-century prose critique can be found in James MacDonald’s complaint about “the non-residence of many of the proprietors who drain the poor Hebrides of their wealth and, too often reside[e] in other parts of the empire.”

An increasingly common response of tacksmen and clan commoners to the pressures of “modernization” was emigration, especially from the 1760s onwards. This was often a preemptive move to avoid imminent clearance and the hardships of crofting. Many Highlanders eagerly embraced colonial migration as an opportunity to escape the oppressive regime of landlords and obtain a farm of their own. For Catholics before about 1793, the desire to escape religious discrimination could be an additional motivation. Initially, the most popular destinations were areas which are now part of the United States. After U.S. independence, Gaelic migration to North America refocused on British possessions in what later became Canada. Later mythology portrayed these migrants unequivocally as coerced paupers who became colonizers against their will. This, however, is a reductive picture. Many
eighteenth-century Gaelic colonizers migrated of their own accord and came from the middling ranks of society, being tacksmen, farmers, and craftsmen with some skills, capital, initiative for self-improvement, and success. Rather than a reluctant flight of passive, wretched victims, these migrations were often proactive strategies of material betterment and social protest. Emigration frequently went against the wishes of landlords, who feared the loss of profitably exploitable tenants. Tenants could also use the threat to migrate as a means to extort concessions from landowners. Naturally, the transformation from internal colonized to eager overseas colonizers further complicates the position of Scottish Highlanders in the global British Empire and the colonial imagination.

The ambivalent mixture of a clear sense of sociocultural antagonism on the one hand, and a remarkable degree of (self-)hybridization and adaptation on the other, can also be discerned in the literature of the period. This is illustrated in the following chapter through a case study of Martin Martin. His travel books are an example of anglophone “colonizing” discourse, but this is seriously complicated by the fact that Martin was a native Gael, whose hybrid position is palpable at various points in these texts.