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How the “Ploughman Poet” Jumpstarted Highlandism:  
A Study of Robert Burns and his Influence on Modern Scottish Identity and  
History

A thesis submitted to Regis College  
The Honors Program in partial fulfillment of the requirements for Graduation with  
Honors

by  
Allison Ward

May 2019

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**Approval Page**

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“How the “Ploughman Poet” Jumpstarted Highlandism:  
A Study of Robert Burns and his Influence on Modern Scottish Identity and History”

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## **Chapter 1: Brief Outline of Scottish History**

Robert Burns has many names—the Ploughman Poet and Scotland’s Favorite Son to name a few. Burns is most often referred to as the National Poet of Scotland as he is most known for breathing new life into the ‘broken and mutilated’ Scots vernacular tradition by engaging it with natural modernity and social change (Leask 8). Burns himself, now a national symbol of Scotland, was alive during a time when Scottish identity was changing. Highland Culture, although modified, was starting to represent all of Scotland to not only Scots, but to the world. Their culture was now selling like a commodity through the global trade Scotland was now a part of. This thesis will explore how Robert Burns was influenced by the Scottish Enlightenment, agricultural improvement, and Scottish history. The question, then, is not only how was Burns affected by this romanticizing of his culture and the ideas of the Scottish Enlightenment, but how Burns commercialized these ideas and turned them into something representative of a distinctly Scottish sensibility.

This thesis will explore three main aspects of Robert Burns’ work. The first is how Scottish history affected Burns. The second is how the Scottish Enlightenment thinkers, particularly Adam Smith, affected Burns’ poetry. The third lens is, as Robert Burns is the Ploughman Poet, how the agricultural improvements of the Scottish Enlightenment pushed Robert Burns to write in the nostalgic way that he did as he was seeing the farming way of life around him changing and becoming more modern. This final lens takes into account that the Jacobite Rising dislocated his father and grandfather from the Highlands, and Burns would have grown up hearing about the Highlands and Clan life. The conclusion of this thesis will break

down how the romanticization of the Scottish Highlands, how the modification and adaptation of their culture, and how Robert Burns' part in Highlandism affected Modern Scots' own sense of national identity.

The study of the history of Scotland is a relatively new concept. According to my many history professors at the University of Glasgow, it really was not studied independently and as a separate phenomenon from the history of Great Britain until the 1900s. At this time, the history of Scotland was looked at separately from the history of Great Britain. This was prompted when the term "Scottish Enlightenment" was first coined, something that was happening not only in Scotland but also across the pond in Ireland. Known as the 'Celtic Twilight' the transformations of Celticism and Irish tradition were modernized into modern traditions and romantic myths (Sheils 304); an interest in the past of these Celtic kingdoms was a popular phenomenon of the early 18th century. Scotland, now being set apart from the rest of Europe during the Enlightenment, pushed historians to separate its history from the rest of the United Kingdom, which before was focused on the history of Britain. During the 1900s, the thinking started to shift away from the common conception that as of 1606 Scotland's history became the same as Great Britain's history. This shift was towards the understanding that Scotland, because of its separated region and culture, had its own history (UoG Professors, Scottish Origins, slides 41-45).

I personally approached Scottish history in the same way. I knew it was now a part of the U.K. and thought nothing else. I had the opportunity to study abroad at the University of Glasgow in Scotland in the fall of 2017. When I first got off the plane in Scotland, and told the customs agent that I was studying history the first question he asked me was if I had seen



*Braveheart*. I responded, “no.” He laughed and told me, “Good its shit anyways, not accurate at all, don’t watch it until you’re done with your history studies.” However, it wasn’t until I walked into my History 1A class with about 600 other students that I understood how little I knew about Scotland and Scottish history. I can remember the day like it was yesterday. It was raining outside, and the leaves had just started to change as Scotland’s fall was beginning. I had gotten lost looking for the lecture hall. I walked in, out of breath, and gratefully took the first seat I found. The lecturer walked to the front of the room and, with a thick Scottish accent, asked how many of us knew anything about Scottish history. The professor was pleased that about half the room had taken some Scottish courses before, leaving me with a feeling of unease and the fear of being behind before the class even began. The professor then dove into the history of Scotland starting with the pre-medieval times.

During the first lecture I was immediately struck by the perception of ‘the other’ that Scotland has faced even before written history. I had previously grouped Scotland in with the rest of Great Britain and I couldn’t have been more wrong. Scotland, the small kingdom north of Great Britain, has been often forgotten about or joined with its neighbor to create one kingdom, one popular tourist destination, the U.K. With popular knowledge lacking when it comes to Scottish history, and how it is in fact very different from British history as a whole, I came to the realization that I had traveled to Scotland unable to conjure anything other than the vague notion of Scotch and Kilts. I had traveled across the world without much more than an understanding of what Highlandism had commercialized. I had the opportunity, while in Scotland, to take two courses particular to Scotland and her history. The first was an introduction to the history of Scotland, starting in the Scottish Middle ages and going up through 2014. This class gave me a

high-level view of how Scotland has changed. Scotland was both affected and had a global effect throughout history.

The other class I had the opportunity to take was focused purely on the Scottish Enlightenment. It was in this class that I was introduced to Adam Smith as a philosophical thinker and the poet Robert Burns, two very influential people when it comes to this thesis. It was while I was in this educational setting that I began to see that there were two sides of the same culture: the surface level culture that had been commercialized and spread to a global audience, and the much more complex side having stemmed from traditions of the Highland Clans. Robert Burns, as I will demonstrate throughout the course of this thesis, was instrumental in the creation and commercialization of a national identity of Scotland. Burns used his poetry as a method of delivery for the romanticized Scottish fantasy that he had created. His poetry celebrated the rustic peasants, bogs, kilts, and hard-to-understand speech patterns of those living in the Highlands of Scotland. Ironically, it is because of Burns that we have the bullshit of *Braveheart*, allowing Scottish history to be reduced to an Australian rewriting history to make a blockbuster movie.

Before exploring in detail the effect of Burns on the representation of Scottish intellectual and aesthetic history and delving into the analysis of Scottish culture, some preliminary distinctions must be made. There are several words and concepts that I learned during my experience abroad that fit well into this context. First, it must be understood that there is a difference between the Highlands and Lowlands of Scotland. Not only do they have two very distinct cultures, but there is also a geographical fault line that physically divides the two. The Lowlands, the southern part of Scotland, is not only geographically different from the rest of

Scotland, as it is physically lower in terms of elevation, but its culture is also much more similar to the culture of Great Britain. Some historians argue that there is not a significant distinction between those living in the north of Great Britain and the south of Scotland because there is no clear linguistic or cultural line that separates them. Instead of a clear border, the language blurs from the London-style English to the Scottish vernacular associated with the Highlands, even though it is hard to trace because of the lack of written works going back throughout Scottish history. This transformation showed up in different ways throughout the various parts of the countryside of Scotland and Britain (Johnson and Agutter). To those living in the Highlands, the Lowlanders were too British to be Scottish; conversely, those living in Great Britain found the Lowlanders too Scottish to be British, making the Lowland a sort of middle ground and a zone of transition between northern Great Britain and southern Scotland.

The Highlands, being geographically higher, were known for their Clan culture, referring to the structure of family power in place throughout the Highlands. Because of its more diverse landscape, those who lived in the Highlands were much more spread out and lived in small communities called Clans. Each Clan had a leading family that the members swore loyalty to in return for protection. The Clan leader was a father-like figure to his people; it was his responsibility to collect taxes, serve as the head of their army if ever threatened or attacked, take in orphans and widows, and provide for them in case of food shortages (Cowan 259-84). Clan leadership was passed down from father to first-born son, parallel to how reigning power of the King was passed down. As this clan culture became scarce due to political and social reasons, that will be discussed later in this thesis, it was also popularized by the upper and middle classes of the Lowlands. This movement is called “Highlandism” (Devin 85).

Highlandism is the appropriation of Highland culture for mainstream consumption, such as men always wearing their kilts with their clan tartan and bagpipes played at every party. Highlandism started in the late eighteenth century in the Lowlands of Scotland as the middle and upper class started to adapt traditional Highland dress such as Kilts and Clan Tartantry as a way of not only setting themselves apart from Great Britain and as a part of Scotland, but also in an attempt to gain from the capitalization of this new exotic and exportable national symbolic identity. A popular novel published in 1771, *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker*, written by Tobias Smollett is an explicit invitation to the view of Scotland as this foreign and exotic place. A story of a man, Matthew Bramble, and his family as they travel from Wales, to Bath, to London, then Scotland, and home again. It tells of exotic natives they meet along the way, including Humphry Clinker, and paints a thrilling picture of what is like to travel outside of the eighteenth-century version of British life his audience is experiencing.

Once the culture of the Highlands was seen as something exotic and exciting, it was sold on the global market because it attracted the wealthy from outside the country who wanted to go on an adventure. This adventure that included the rough wilderness and maybe an encounter with a wild Highlander, and for those who could not afford to travel to the exotic Scottish Highlands they would read about the tales written by those who did. This appropriation, Highlandism, is a central concern of this thesis. Highlandism is in direct relationship with the popular British concept of “romanticism,” as the concepts from the Scottish Enlightenment are woven throughout romantic works. Scottish contributions cannot be ignored even though Britain took credit for much of the Romantic Movement (Davis 20).

While in Scotland, I came to an understanding of how the Lowland appropriation was a consequence of certain aspects of English Romantic ideologies as it stems from the Lowlands worship of the exotic and the yearning for the celebration of nationhood. As I was being a tourist around Scotland, I went on various tours with groups of other Americans who were trying to experience the legendary Scottish Highlands for themselves. We would hear tales of warriors and battles and epic love stories that took place at each location we were visiting, painting a romanticized view of the Highlands. Romanticism, according to the Oxford English Dictionary, is the tendency to view something in a romantic manner (*OED*). A romantic manner then is viewing something in a light similar to that of a medieval narrative. A medieval narrative is “relating the legendary or extraordinary adventures of some hero or chivalry” (*OED*).

Romanticism in the context of this thesis is referring to the popularization and commercialization of a culture by viewing it in relations to the heroism and chivalry associated with its past, specifically a culture that had been legally destroyed and attacked only years before. As noted in the collection of essays, *Clanship to Crofter’s War: The Social Transformation of the Scottish Highlands*, “by 1780 the Highland dress seemed extinct, and no rational man would have speculated on its revival [...] yet it was precisely at this time that tartan and plaid started to become widely popular among the Lowland upper and middle class” (Devine 86). The Lowlander view of the Highlands of Scotland transitioned from the Highlanders being the “other” to simply being “a living illustration of the social mores of the Scottish past” (Devine 94). This pushed the division of England and Scotland and began to unify Scotland as one Kingdom rather than the previously separated cultures of the Highlands and the Lowlands.

Despite the Lowlands' appropriation of the Highland culture, not everything about the emergence of Scottish nationalism can be traced to cultural forces from the U.K., meaning neither Scotland nor Great Britain are solely responsible for this movement. At the same time Highlandism began to emerge, a global phenomenon had started to take off: the European Enlightenment. Here I would like to point out there is a difference between the "Scottish Enlightenment" and the "European Enlightenment," as they were occurring at the same time but had key differences that shaped how they spread and were accepted. While religion collapsed under the rationale and critique of continental political and social reform throughout the European Enlightenment, in Scotland, the church continued to fund education and encourage diversity of thought. Although this difference may seem finite, it marks a major point of divergence between the two intellectual movements. The church in other countries at this time feared the Enlightenment. For them, it meant people turning away from faith and towards science and reason. The European Enlightenment had the goals of "rational humanity" and these were based on "knowledge, freedom, and happiness," pushing people to turn away from religion and towards the exploration of emotions and sensations (Duigan). The role of faith in the Enlightenment was the driving factor that set Scotland apart from the rest of Europe as their tolerant and flexible attitude towards faith allowed for an inclusive environment while the aggressive relationship between the church and other European countries created a hardship on universities and other centers of learning as they lost funding and had to rebuild and restructure how they functioned. Scotland was known at the time for its Universities and advancements in the medical field. These well-educated people helped Scotland become a powerful force in the Enlightenment both locally and globally.

Throughout this thesis I will connect the history of Scotland to the poet Robert Burns before explaining the profound effect Burns had on the national identity of Scotland. I will begin by introducing a key figure of the Scottish Enlightenment, Adam Smith, and discuss his moral and economic philosophies before explaining how these ideas pushed Scotland into an age of urbanization. I then introduce Robert Burns and make explicit how these ideas and events had a direct effect on Burns and his writing, giving him the fuel needed to commercialize these ideas and push Scotland further into a romanticized mindset. My thesis will conclude with a connection to the present day by showing the modern implications Burns has on political events like Brexit and the potential for a second Scottish Referendum. For the purpose of exploring the effect Burns had on the culture shift experienced throughout Scotland in the eighteenth century, where the Lowlands began to see themselves as an extension of the Highlands, I will begin by contextualizing the history of Scotland.

How then did the Scotland we know today, the Scotland that is a part of the United Kingdom, come to be? The beginning of the end of Scotland as an independent kingdom happened in 1603 at the Union of the Crowns, when King James VI of Scotland, by birthright, becomes King James I of Great Britain. King James VI of Scotland's coronation as King James I of Great Britain was the start of the attack on Scottish tradition as the umbrella effect of thinking of Scotland as an anonymous part of Great Britain started. In theory, this was a win for Scotland as they had their king on the British throne; but it was at this moment that the historical erasure of Scottish history and independence was to begin. King James I & VI immediately relocated to Westminster, where British Kings before him were located. Scotland had now lost its king and was ruled as if it were an acquired territory under British control. This was the first attack on the

traditions of Scottish society. Scotland was a patriarchal society, meaning they rallied behind their King and their Clan leaders to make important decisions. Tradition was that the King would travel around Scotland in order to make important decisions and the law would follow him as he went. The law was not centralized to a capital city but to this father-like figure of a King. Therefore, when James moved to become the British King, Scotland lost a piece of their tradition forever (Alan F.R. Smith).

The Highlands and the Lowlands have always been separated in some sense. They have seen themselves as having a different culture and a different way of life from each other dating farther back than written language (PoMS: Explaining the Paradox). It was when Scotland was grouped together as this 'other' from Britain, with the Union of the Crowns in 1603, that this cultural gap between Highlanders and Lowlanders began to widen. This was before the later collapse of this gap that occurred when the Scottish way of life was attacked and their culture destroyed after the Union of 1707. In 1603 it was clear that the Lowlanders had started to assimilate with the British culture while the Highlanders desperately held onto whatever they could from their old way of life, a trend the Lowlanders would also adapt about a hundred years later. Then what was the process that took this Clan culture of the Highlands of Scotland and shifted it from outlawed to idealized?

The seeds of Romanticization of the Highlands began in the form of nostalgia and remembrance as the Lowland middle and upper classes searched for a way to hold onto their Scottish identity. This started with the Union of the Crowns in 1603 when Scotland lost their King to the English throne; this was the first time that the Lowlands of Scotland were directly associated with the Highlands as just Scotland. James I & VI began to rule Scotland as if it were



an acquired territory, ruling from afar with a pen. With the realization that they had lost their King and they were being ruled as purely Scottish and purely other is when those living in the Lowlands began to identify with and adapt the Highland traditions. James fueled this nostalgic way of thinking before he even took the English crown with the slaughter of Clan McGregor through three attacks in 1593, 1596, and finally in 1601 using Clan Campbell to kill members of the McGregor Clan. This outright attack on the Clan culture was used to prove that James had total power. This pushed the idea that the Highland way of life was one of the past and those living in the Highlands were stuck in this old way of doing things. Another cultural attack by James, once he had the English crown, was the removal of the Gaelic language. He did this by making English the only language of education. He even went as far as to remove Clan Chiefs' children to have them educated in the Lowlands of Scotland. These actions further united the Highlands and the Lowlands as Scottish as they now had a common language. At the same time Highland traditions were leaving the Highlands as their children were being educated in the Lowlands.

The relocation of their King and the legal attack on their language and Highland customs created conditions for a revolution; conditions that created the Covenanting Revolution. The Covenanting Revolution was a key turning point, stemming from the Union of the Crowns in 1603 and, in return, influencing the Jacobite Revolution in the early 1700s. Emerging from the hatred for King James I & VI and his son Charles I, a National Covenant was created in 1638 and the people of Scotland rallied behind this new and glorious marriage between God and their people, some even going as far as signing it in blood. This Covenant was a contract that the people of Scotland, from both the Highlands and the Lowlands, signed to create a new

relationship with God. It stated that Scotland's people first had loyalty to God and second loyalty to a Scottish King, but only a King who held Scotland's best interests first. This National Covenant, launching the Covenanting Revolution, also known as the war of Three Kingdoms, resulted with riots and battles all over Scotland, from riots in the Lowland capital of Edinburgh to the Battle of Inverloch, a town well into the Highlands of Scotland. The Covenanting Revolution ended with the Execution of Charles I, the son of King James I & VI (James King Hewison). This National Covenant created the lasting sentiment that loyalty should first be with God and secondly with a King who puts Scotland first because he understands her history and her culture.

With the Highlands and the Lowlands not self-identifying as Scottish near the end of the Covenanting Revolution, a common enemy was arising. This common enemy being a King that did not put Scotland first. This need to fight for a Scottish King who would put Scotland first created the concept of Jacobitism. Jacobitism started with the Revolution of 1688-1689. Previously known as The Glorious Revolution, this revolution was led against Charles I's son James VII & II, and had two driving factors, monarchical power and religion. Jacobite, roughly translated from "supporter of James," referred to James Stuart who was a descendant of the rulers of Scotland before James VI & I came to power in 1603, before Scotland was abandoned by their King. This was more popular in the Highlands of Scotland where Clan culture was familiar with and supported by the tradition of family line of dependence, in which each Clan was set up like a small kingdom; meaning there was one Laird, or large landowner, who was in charge of the land that their clansmen lived on. It was the Laird's job not only to collect taxes, but also to provide and protect their people in times of need. Therefore, it shouldn't come as a

surprise that Highlanders wanted to bring the Stuart line, the original Royal Bloodline of Scotland and who had been originally charged with the protection of Scotland, back to power. The peak and last great battle of Jacobitism was the Battle of Culloden in 1746 where the Jacobites were brutally defeated and the Highland way of life continued to deteriorate in the years to come. With the Battle of Culloden, the culmination of the Union of the Crowns in 1603 and the Union of 1707, it is clear that Scotland's fight for independence was becoming unavoidable.

The Union of 1707 was greatly driven by economics. Scotland had no access to Britain's American Colonies and was going bankrupt because they had nobody to trade with (W. Ferguson). The Union of the Crowns had left Scotland out of any trade that their neighboring kingdom of Great Britain was benefiting from. Scotland tried to create her own colony in the Americas in order to also reap the rewards from this new market that Great Britain was already profiting from. Hence in 1695 the Company of Scotland was created with the goal of creating the Darien Colonie. This went horribly wrong and because of the lack of any royal support and poor planning, the Company of Scotland failed as they tried to make a trading post of land already claimed by Spain. This created an economic loss of about £400,000 that affected Scotland's middle and upper class. Many Scots felt as if their king, who sat in the English throne, had abandoned them by not supporting them and letting their colony fail. Hence the Union of 1707 came to be. With Scotland set up for immediate financial gain their economy was saved by gaining access to the British colonies in the Americas. This was obtained at the price of their freedom as they lost their Parliament. Many would argue they lost more than they gained. Scotland lost a lot of their legal power sealing their fate as a second kingdom to Great Britain.

The Jacobite cause started gaining ground quickly in 1688 when a son was born to Mary Stuart and William of Orange, the Hanoverian rulers of Britain and Scotland at the time. The birth of this son, James Francis Edward, was the promise that this royal bloodline would continue on and this Catholic Dynasty would continue to rule. Those who supported the Jacobite cause wanted their own king, who would put Scotland first, back on the throne. This king at the time was known as Bonnie Prince Charlie, the Young Pretender, Prince Charles. Charles was living in France at the time because he was not welcome in either Scotland or Britain because of his royal bloodline and being a threat to the Hanoverian Government. He had to come up with enough money to not only get to Scotland but gather an army to march and take back what he believed was rightfully his. He was relatively successful, winning a number of battles starting in 1745 when Charles Edward Stuart lead a rising without French support, landed on the west coast of Scotland and took Edinburgh before attempting to advance to London. He was eventually defeated, ending the revolution with his defeat at Culloden Moor in 1746. This created an environment and way of thinking that set the two Kingdoms of Scotland and Great Britain in opposition of each other, even though legally they were bound together as the United Kingdom. This hostile environment continued to push the Lowlanders to continue modification of Highland traditions as a way setting themselves apart from Great Britain.

After Culloden is when the attack on the Traditional Highland Clan culture peaked, through force taken against Highlanders and their families. Over 1,500 Jacobites were killed during the battle of Culloden, while only 50 were killed from the opposing force. The Highlanders were vulnerable after their brutal defeat at Culloden. Not only were their losses significant on the battlefield, but the following years were marked by continual massacre and the

plundering of their lands. In the rising of 1745, the Jacobites had exhausted all their resources, leaving them with almost nothing after their defeat at Culloden Moor. Consequently, the attack on their culture was successful in destroying what was known as the Highland Clan Culture. Their way of life was attacked after Culloden as Gaelic was made illegal because it was the language of their traditions. Bagpipes were forbidden because they were the instrument used to orchestrate military attacks. Tartan, the pattern used to represent Clan patronage, was outlawed because it was the symbol of Clan power and allegiance. Everything that once represented Clan culture was banned.

As the culture of the Highlands was attacked and their once prominent symbols began to disappear, no man would have ever thought that kilts would be worn again. However, it was not long after that the very symbols that used to represent Highland Clan Culture were transformed and taken on as national symbols of Scotland as a whole by the upper and middle class of the Lowlands as a way of distinguishing themselves as Scottish and setting themselves apart from the rest of Britain. Much of this change was brought about by a group of Scots who came together in 1778 and called themselves the Highland Society of London. They pushed for the restoration of the Highland dress and the preservation of Highland music, literature, and language (McNeil 1). This society had a huge influence in the 1782 bill that repealed the law outlawing Highland dress (McNeil 1). This society sought to define themselves as Scots within this age of the British Empire.

This transformation of Highland culture started to take place in the late 1700s, the same time as the Scottish Enlightenment. With English now being the language of education, the language barrier between the Highlands and the Lowlands started to disappear as everyone now

had to speak English. Children were forced to come down to the Lowlands to be educated, causing the two cultures, of the Lowlands and the Highlands, to start to blend together (Alan G. R. Smith). The Highland culture was now seen as something from the past and something that was no longer in use. The Highland culture was being taught as a history lesson. The Lowlanders, while this was happening, were seeing their own culture starting to disappear as they began to feel more and more like Northern Britain rather than Scotland. Their English language, their traditional view of the Highlander's being the 'other' and their lack of traditions to differentiate them from the rest of Britain pushed them to start adapting the traditions of the Highland clans in order to form a newly imagined Scottish identity (Devin 86); as a way to reconnect them with the rest of Scotland and make the statement that they were not the same as the English, who in their eyes had taken over control of Scotland and was ruling them like an acquired territory. This modification and taking on of the Highland culture was, in a way, a stepping back from the Britishness and clearly stating they were still part of Scotland. Even though the Highland tradition had been attacked and destroyed not long before, it was modified as it was revived throughout the Lowland middle and upper classes. The Tartan was transformed from a pattern that meant loyalty and Clan family to symbol of one's heritage and Scottish background. The bagpipes were transformed from a weapon used in battle to a traditional instrument and a symbol of the old times. These once dangerous symbols were representative of a connection to a past, a past that the English could not take away from them because with these new meanings these symbols no longer possessed a military threat. At the same time, the Scottish Enlightenment was evolving and new ideas were being formulated from great Scottish minds.

The Scottish Enlightenment emerges in Scotland in the mid-18th century and comes from several factors. It came to be because Jacobitism has ended and the people of Scotland started to ask social and moral questions as the Scottish Enlightenment reached its peak and education was again a priority. It came from the new leadership being that of lawyers, gentry, and university professors. It came from Scotland's attempt at copying the English and learning what was considered the "more cultured ways" of the time. Finally, it came from laws such as the Education Act of 1695, which taxed parish schools in order to create a nationwide education system. The Scottish Enlightenment is a very specific part of the Enlightenment that was occurring at the same time across Europe. Scotland was already known for their advancements in education as their Universities were famous for the science and medical practices they taught even before the Enlightenment hit Scotland. The Scottish Enlightenment produced great social theorists like Adam Smith and Adam Ferguson. The Scottish Enlightenment was seen as an evolution of culture and a focusing on the preliterate past. This brought Scottish ballads and songs to the attention of the Scottish Enlightenment thinkers (McLean 85).

The Scottish Enlightenment pushed readers' interest in ballads, like those written by Robert Burns. It also had a great impact on writers, such as Robert Burns, who grew up learning about these great new theories and this becomes evident by studying their works. Ballads were one of the true heirs of the Scottish Enlightenment and were referred to as "a window on the manners of a past era; all specimens were, to some extent, historical" (Cowan 6). Ballads throughout Europe at this time were popular because they were cheap to print and oral tradition helped them spread quickly. It was common during this time, the eighteenth century, for "poets and writers to compose songs in the native idiom" (Campbell and McCue 94), meaning that they

wrote these ballads to sound like native speakers and incorporated native traditions rather than writing them in dictionary proper English. The ballads at this time had a strong connection to the past, especially in Scotland there were traditional tunes and melodies that writers then wrote new poetry for. The “musical context is thus often of crucial importance in maintaining the links between old and new, ancient and modern, oral and printed song” (Campbell and McCue 98). In one of Robert Burns first works published in the first volume of *Museum*, he breaks this tradition by altering the melody of a traditional song by removing its chorus (Campbell and McCue 98), thus opening the door for the widespread popularity Robert Burns was to gain by creating a new tradition from the old.

Robert Burns has become a figure head of the Scottish culture, an icon for Scottish nationhood. His poem has been read throughout the Kingdom in various settings since Burns’ death in 1796. He has been read in parliament, there is a club that has the sole focus of discussing his poems in the context of unionism and Scottish national patriotism, and there are over 2,000 different editions of his poems today (Carruthers 1-2). I was first introduced to Robert Burns when I had the opportunity to travel to his birthplace in Alloway, Scotland. A few classmates and I took the trip south of Glasgow to see the humble beginnings of a man now understood to be the face of Scottish National Identity. While in this small two room cottage that young Burns grew up in, our professor told us tales of how the Burns family would have lived, what an average day might have looked like and ending by reciting one of Burns’ most famous poems “To a Cotter’s Saturday Night” which was written as a nostalgic look back on Burns’ childhood in this very cottage.



## **Chapter 2: Scottish Enlightenment, Agricultural Improvement and History**

The Scottish Enlightenment, as pointed out in chapter one, has been set apart from the Enlightenment that was spreading across Europe around this same time and has a very different history. This Enlightenment, that was engulfing Europe at the time, took interest in maths, sciences, philosophy, and reason. The great thinkers of this Enlightenment, most recognizably Voltaire, Locke, More, and Kant to name a few, began to question the old philosophy as new scientific views were gaining support. It was generally understood that growth towards science and reason was growth away from the Church and religion; they were in opposition to each other. This greatly shaped how much of the western world came to view the pursuit of knowledge and reason. Unlike the general Enlightenment which focused on the ideas of reason and science by pushing the church away from the decision-making process, the Scottish Enlightenment was not set up in opposition of the Church. Scotland embraced both the sciences and new ways of thought without having to push their faith and their church aside. Instead the Scottish Enlightenment was supported by the Church of Scotland, throughout Scotland's history the Church has pushed for and funded education. This support of the church created an environment that promoted integration of disciplines and cultivated the idea that everything was related.

This inclusive environment allowed for thinkers like Smith to publish works in both Moral Philosophy and Economics. It also pushed the agricultural improvement as thinkers from Scotland's universities were looking for solutions. Without these organic integrations across disciplines, which were created by the Church of Scotland's support of the Scottish Enlightenment, agricultural improvement would have been left in the hands of those working the

land. The Church of Scotland promoted this new way of thinking and wanted people to learn how to think for themselves and have better education. This support made the spread of ideas much quicker as the Church was not an opposing force, this support helped Scotland's higher education thrive. Even before the Enlightenment was in full effect, cities like Edinburgh, Aberdeen, and Glasgow all had established universities and were excelling in teaching well-rounded curriculum to their students. The support that the church gave both these universities and the Scottish Enlightenment set the Scottish education system apart from those universities of Paris, London, and Jena because there was no transformation period. The Scottish universities did not have to switch away from the support of the Church; they still educated the future priests of Scotland, and they did not lose their financial support.

This environment for greater thinking created the Scottish Enlightenment which gave us thinkers like David Hume, Thomas Reid, Adam Ferguson, and Adam Smith. Adam Smith is the perfect example of a Scottish Enlightenment thinker as not only was he a lecturer, he was involved in the community of thinkers at the time, shown from his letters to and from most members of this highly respected community. In short, his connections made his ideas spread and create a large circle of influence throughout the Scottish Enlightenment and the principles associated with it. Adam Smith is also frequently pictured as a figurehead of the Scottish Enlightenment because of how he was able to export his work on a global scale and help position Scotland within the global community. Smith was writing during a time of transition of national identity; the Highlands were moving away from being viewed as the 'other' and moving towards a culture that was to be protected.

Looking specifically at the writings of and about the Highlands, it is clear that from the view of the Scottish Enlightenment and the stages of humanity, the Highlanders were “a people on the first rung of the ladder of social progress, sharing with other contemporaneous ‘primitives’ around the globe while living adjacent to, and sometimes venturing into the civil space of the modern nation” (McNeil 4). There was of course the contradiction and tension between the romantic voice and the voice of improvement, Smith contributing to the later. During this time, the mid-eighteenth century, Scots had established their own trading posts throughout the colonized world and through the early nineteenth century Scots emigrated all over the world bringing their romanticized culture and Scottish Enlightenment ideas with them. On this global scale, Smith’s theories, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* and *Wealth of Nations*, gave way to a whole new way of looking at why people act the way they do and had a great influence on how human nature was seen. Smith’s theories, and other Scottish Enlightenment thinkers created the understanding “of the historical development of human society and the mechanisms of change within particular human societies [as this understanding] was indebted to theorists of the Scottish Enlightenment” (McNeil 54). Smith and the thinkers of the Scottish Enlightenment created a society where Robert Burns was later able to enter and push the romanticizing of the Scottish Highlands and rural way of life. Burns was born into a world where the “romantic identification of special sights of premodern, or more precisely, the ‘antimodern,’ is intrinsic to the creation of new ideas of space and time in an emergent global imperial culture” (McNeil 52) and he was able to capitalize on this new view of the “antimodern” vision of the Scottish Highlands. These new views of humanity and new Scottish Enlightenment theories gave readers

the platform to ask about the ‘why’ behind our actions and the actions of others, a new and unexplored direction of thought.

The *Theory of Moral Sentiments* focuses on judgements; specifically the two types of judgements. The first is of the propriety of our acts, meaning how right and wrong our actions are, and the second is regarding the merit of our acts, meaning if we are going to be held accountable for our actions or not (Broadie 155). In *The Scottish Enlightenment an Anthology*, edited by Alexander Broadie, is one of Adam Smith’s essays titled “Sympathy, Property, and Merit” where he explains that *The Theory of Moral Sentiment* has the main focus of sympathy. Sympathy, according to Adam Smith, is one’s ability to act compassionately. *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* is firstly based off mankind’s ability to imagine, which leads to a concept Smith called the *Invisible Spectator*; this is based off Smith’s belief that mankind only does good because others are watching. This *Invisible Spectator* is the idea that mankind also has the ability to create an imaginary being that is watching their every move and this spectator is why people do good even when nobody is around (Smith 157): an impartial person who will judge one’s actions harshly. This unnatural creation of a spectator leads to human nature and mankind’s push to do what is socially right, what is seen as natural. This *Invisible Spectator* is the basis for Smith’s later creation of *The Invisible Hand Theory*. This theory is in his most popular, widely read, and widely misinterpreted, Smith’s *Wealth of Nations*. The *Wealth of Nations* focuses on language. Smith points out that the clear distinction between mankind and animals is that mankind has commerce because they have the ability to of speech (Leask 120), much like mankind is able to experience sympathy because of speech. The *Wealth of Nations* comes from ideas brought to life in *Theory of Moral Sentiments*. *Theory of Moral Sentiments* is where the

idea that mankind is different from animals because of our ability to imagine first became a theory and it is mankind's' imagination that allows us to understand what another is feeling and therefore act with sympathy. Smith also focus on history, which is written down in segments; it is written in the present as a way of writing off the past (Davis and Leith 80), as a way of distancing ourselves from those that came before us. Perfectly summarized by R.F. Brissenden,

“In *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* he [Adam Smith] attempts to develop the concept of a unified moral order; and it is possible to see, in the socially self-regulating principle of sympathy, a mechanism closely analogous to the self-regulating principles, such as the market which finds its own "natural" level, that he takes as working hypotheses in *The Wealth of Nations*.” (Brissenden 961-962)

Adam Smith, educated at the University of Glasgow starting in 1737 and graduating in 1740, later went on to give public lectures in Edinburgh before becoming the professor of logic and then the professor of moral philosophy at University of Glasgow in 1751 (Heilbroner).

Adam Smith's first work, *The Theory of Moral Sentiment* was published in 1759. This publication focuses the power of imagination by questioning what the driving force behind man's action is. It opens up with Smith's personal definition of sympathy, which is mankind having the ability to put oneself into the situation of another. In other words, for Smith, sympathy is the ability to imagine what another person is going through. Smith later comes to the conclusion that we act the way we do because of the judgement of others. We act morally because either someone is watching or because of a concept he named the *Invisible Spectator*, more commonly referred to as the conscience, which, in short, is the idea that mankind's imagination creates an impartial and invisible person who is watching our every move and

judging our actions accordingly. Smith then published *Wealth of Nations* in 1776 continuing the idea of the impartial spectator.

There are two main ideas that are important in *Wealth of Nations*: the first is the outline of society that Smith presents in four stages, and the second is the idea of “*The Invisible Hand*” that is present in the last stage of society. In short, the four stages of society start with the hunters, move to nomadic agriculture, then to a feudal stage of farming, and end in the commercial stage of interdependence. This is Smith’s way of creating an outline of the historiography of human society (McLean 85). The “invisible hand,” only being present in the fourth and final stage of society, comes directly from *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* and the idea of the inner man driving our actions, each individual’s personal actions for self-improvement drive economic growth for all (Heilbroner). Because the “invisible hand” comes from the framework of sympathetic imagination in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* it also has the ability to inform the conscience —the natural and intrinsic force of the invisible hand.

With the Scottish Enlightenment came almost immediate and tangible social changes. This change came in the form of agricultural improvement. Scottish farmers did this by looking for ways to live out Adam Smith’s *Wealth of Nations* and better their own economic standings. The most obvious way they did this was by rethinking how they were farming. Although “scholars of the Scottish Enlightenment have tended to undervalue the links between the philosophical spirit of the age and agricultural improvement, both of which fundamentally transformed man’s relationship with nature in practical as well as in theoretical terms” (Nigal 15). The Scottish Enlightenment was a time when new ideas of human nature and morality were being questioned, but it was also a time when people were looking to improve their way of life.

In 1700, the yield in Scotland was obscenely low. For every one seed planted, a farmer could expect to harvest three to four seeds. The saying at the time was that you would have one for rent, one for next season's plant, and one to eat. By the 1790s this number had increased to ten seeds for every seed originally planned. This came about because of two main forces: the first is the science behind agriculture and the understanding of how soil and water interact, while the second is the historical and economic forces driving a new way of dividing the land.

Scotland's land was previously dominated by a Runrig system. A Runrig is a method used in group farming. Each farmer would have a few strips of slightly raised land spread out over a section of land. The idea behind this was if you have a few crops in every section of the field the sections that do well and the sections that do poorly will be evenly distributed among the tenants. The land was raised slightly because it was believed that this prevented crops from being over watered as Scotland climate is very wet. Fields were planted and harvested the same time every year. The change came in the form of enclosed fields, the fertilization of the land, the adding of limestone in order to reduce the acidity of the soil, rotating crops and resting the land meaning each field would not be used every season, but every few years be used and when they are used rotating what crops are in each field. These changes lead to a vast economic change as the previously father-like Clan Chiefs turned into powerful landlords who expected high rents from their tenants. A society of landowning gentry had started to form in the north and west of Scotland. This agricultural improvement in late eighteenth-century Scotland was revolutionary in a socioeconomic sense (Leask 31). However, improvement does not mean that everyone's life is improved and many, in fact, suffered from these improvements.

In the early stages of improvement there was a famine that had a 10% death rate and is often referred to as 'the silent Lowland clearances' as it mainly affected the Lowland farmers. These improvements also caused rents to skyrocket. With rising harvest yields it is understandable that landlords expect to receive more for their land. One example of a prominent landowner raising rates is the Duke of Hamilton, who between 1722 and 1821 raised his rents about 1,196% in those 99 years. His rents went from £2,404 in 1722 to £28,755 in 1821, while the harvest yields only increased between 250-333% from 1700 to 1790. This pushed for a massive surge of urbanization peaking at 17.3% in 1800. This rapid growth led to overcrowded cities and wages lower than the destitution line. This line is an extreme of low wages that means people are living without money, food, a home, or possessions and any of the things needed to live, and with several epidemics causing high death rates in cities like Edinburgh and Glasgow (UoG Professors, Enlightenment & Improvement slides 6-12). This decline of rural population and the decline of quality of life in an urban setting pushed many Scots to reminisce of the past when their families were back in the rural setting.

It was also at this time, the mid-late 1700s, that both Highlandism and Robert Burns began to become popular and common in the Lowlands. It was when people began to look at the past with a nostalgic feeling, caused by a longing for a different and better way of life, that they began to see historical events like Culloden Moor, which was still in living memory, with even more repugnance as it was the clear and bitter end of this now romanticized and dreamt of way of life. Those living in Lowland cities like Glasgow and Edinburgh, experiencing their poor standard of living in these overcrowded cities, longed for the open spaces of the Scottish Highlands. Stories were passed down about the old ways of Scotland with Clans and farming; it



was portrayed as a simpler time where people were healthier and happier. The agricultural improvements of the Scottish Enlightenment that led to urbanization were to blame for their current position, and works like Smith's *Wealth of Nations* had pushed these improvements and fueled the change that led to their current positions. In the next chapter I will discuss how Robert Burns later played a major role in this sentimental way of thinking, fueling the romanticisation of this simpler rural way of life which was a key component in the popularization of Highlandism.

### Chapter 3: Burns

Robert Burns was born on January 25, 1759, in the small town of Alloway in the south of Scotland. He grew up, the son of a ploughman, learning how to work the land in order to make a living. His father highly valued education and hired a tutor from whom Burns, and his siblings, learned about proper English, morality, and other popular topics of the time. From this tutor Burns would have also been introduced to the new and popular ideas coming from the Scottish Enlightenment. Even though he received the proper “English” education of the time, as Burns grew up he presented himself as a peasant, a farmer, the ploughman poet. Robert Burns, although born in the Lowland town of Alloway, grew up listening to tales of his father reminiscing about the Highlands. His father was born in Kincardineshire, present day Stonehaven, a town in Aberdeenshire, Scotland and would have been a Sept of the Clan Campbell, or part of a family that followed the Clan (History of the Burns Clan 1).

One of Burns’ most notable poems, “My Heart’s in the Highlands,” has a nostalgic tone that comes from the stories Burns would have heard growing up from his father, having only been to the Highlands himself twice. “My Heart’s in the Highlands” gained popularity because it was set to a popular tune of *Failte na miosg* and according to Burns’ notes “the first half stanza is old - the rest is mine” (Burns 253). Although the first stanza is not recognizable now, at the time of publication it made a clear connection to the past.

Looking back at the library and literary collections is where the first obvious connection between Adam Smith and Robert Burns appears. On Burns’ shelf was a copy of both *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* and *The Wealth of Nations* by Adam Smith, while Adam Smith had a subscription of four copies of the Burns’ *Kilmarnock Second Edition*; this shows each had an

interest in what the other had to say. Robert Burns, having been born the same year that the Smith published *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* had grown up surrounded by the ideas of the Scottish Enlightenment. With the proper “English” education Burns received from the tutor his father supplied, he would have been actively studying and learning about the new ideas being published around Scotland. The first evidence is that Burns found interest in Adam Smith’s *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, around 1783 (Wesling 148) when Burns would have been around the age of 24. It is obvious that Burns was directly influenced by Adam Smith as Burns wrote “I entirely agree with that judicious philosopher, Mr. Smith,” (Wesling 148) in his commonplace book entry. It is also evident later in Burns’ career as throughout the *Kilmarnock* volume “Burns uses Smith’s categories to judge himself and those who judge him” (Wesling 149). Adam Smith’s influence is apparent throughout several of Burns works as I will explore throughout this chapter.

Although there are many other prominent figures of Scottish history, none were able to achieve global recognition as a figure head of Scotland. Figures that might come to mind are William Wallace, Robert the Bruce, or the Bonnie Prince Charlie. These figures, although remembered as heroic have become the faces of a specific era of Scottish turmoil; however, unlike Robert Burns they were unable to capture what it meant to be Scottish to a global audience. Burns was a culturally fundamental aspect for Scots in the British Empire, and by the nineteenth century the construction of public monuments of Burns was seen as statements of Scottish identity all over the world (Pittock 39). John Willison, who wrote about the idealized view of Robert Burns said, “read Burns and you understand peasant Scotland, and because peasant Scotland is unique, you understand what is unique to Scotland” (Pittock 31). Burns on

the other hand never portrayed himself in this heroic lens as he tried to capture the idea of honest poverty, portraying himself as a peasant and a ploughman. Burns' portrayal of himself as this everyday man created someone whom his readers could identify with; he wasn't a mythical and idealized figure from Scotland's past.

Although he is now seen in a similar light as figures like William Wallace, Robert the Bruce, or even the Bonnie Prince Charlie, these characters in Scottish history are single-faceted and idealized while Burns was able to portray himself as an everyday man. These characters did not have the ability to become a national symbol because they had nothing that was exported globally and they were associated with single events: Bonnie Prince Charlie is associated with the rising of 1745, William Wallace the uprising of the 13th century, and Robert the Bruce the warrior king of the 13th century. None are able to appeal to an everyday man as they have been idealized and associated with significant historical events. While Burns was a recognizable name globally at the peak of his popularity through present day, these other men would not have been known as representative of Scotland to anyone other than those who had an understanding of Scotland's history. Thus comes the analysis of Burns that will take place later in this thesis.

It is understood that Burns has become a national symbol of Scotland because of his ability to capture and commercialize what it means to be Scottish, but I will be analyzing the forces that influenced his writing, and later in Chapter Four I will analyze how Burns' work had a strong effect on the national identity of Scotland and still does today. Burns was able to capture what it meant to be Scottish on a global scale not only because of how he was writing, but of the time in which he was writing. As mentioned in Chapter One, when Burns was writing, Scotland was entering into the global market because of the Union of 1707. His works were globally

exported making him the first thing that people thought of when they thought of the foreign kingdom of Scotland. Throughout this thesis I am looking at how Burns was able to capture Scotland during the transitional time that Highlandism was taking off and how he was able to push the romantic view of Scotland's past. In short, I am looking at how, because of Burns, people associate the Scottish culture with figures like William Wallace, Robert the Bruce, and the Bonnie Prince Charlie, who are now looked at as heroic figures of Scotland.

Robert Burns was able to capture Scotland in a time when social change brought by the Scottish Enlightenment and Highlandism was affecting what it meant to be Scottish. He wrote in a way that allowed him to internalize the modern Scottish community (Carruthers 9), meaning he was able to appeal not only to individuals who were a part of this community, but also to portray the community as a whole. Burns was able to evoke emotions in his readers while simultaneously using the Scottish dialogue, a dialogue that was associated with the language of the lower class (Carruthers 100-102). This obvious opposition challenged these traditional views and allowed for the new and romantic view of a culture now physically in the past, to shift and have a powerful influence on the people of Scotland. He became a figurehead of Scottish national identity because of his ability to capture the historical context in which he was writing and export it on a global scale.

“Remorse, a Fragment” is a poem that was published in the *First Common Place Book* in 1783 (BBC - Robert Burns - Remorse); however, it is now most commonly found in the *Burns Complete Works* that was published in 1890 and contains over a thousand pages of Robert Burns’ works. The *First Common Place Book* is the first instance Burns’ is attempting to write in Scots Vernacular and the beginnings of his association with Scottish National Identity.

“Remorse” is a poem that Burns wrote when he was anxious about his reputation and is a clear response to Adam Smith’s *Theory of Moral Sentiments*. He had the great fear of how his character would be attacked upon his death (Wesling 151). As explained in the article “Moral Sentiment from Adam Smith to Robert Burns” throughout ‘Remorse’ “Burns inflicted punishment on himself in order to duck the disapprobation of his community; in the satirical and familiar-epistle poems of the later 1780s, where misanthropy is a polar opposite of sympathy, he excoriates others, including others not know to him personally, like King George III,” (Wesling 152). Burns wrote, “I entirely agree with the author of *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, that Remorse is the most painful sentiment that can embitter the human bosom; an ordinary pitch of fortitude may bear up admirably well, under those calamities, in the procurement of which we ourselves have had no hand; but when our follies or crimes have made us wretched, to bear all many firmness and at the same time have a proper penitential sense of our misconduct, is a glorious effort of self-command,” (Remorse - A Fragment by Robert Burns). Burns here is commenting on when Adam Smith wrote of remorse that “of all the sentiments which can enter the human breast [it is] the most dreadful,” (Brissenden 958). Burns, having an obvious appreciation for Adam Smith, incorporated it into his writings. “Remorse” is Robert Burns trying to put his guilt and his anxiousness into words when he says:

“Beyond comparison the worst are those  
That to our Folly, or our Guilt we owe.  
In ev'ry other circumstance, the mind  
Has this to say, It was no deed of mine:

But, when to all the evil of misfortune

This sting is added, blame thy foolish self;" (Burns 3-8).

Burns is making the point that the worst guilt is when we own the guilt, when we understand that we should be feeling guilty and want to push the event that caused it away. Adam Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments* complicates this notion when it explains where guilt comes from and that the idea of sympathy and judgement of others occur the same way when the impartial spectator judges our own actions.

Robert Burns published *Poems, Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect* in 1786, with John Wilson of Kilmarnock. This edition is now commonly known as the *Kilmarnock Edition*. The first edition though mainly bought by friends and colleagues of Robert Burns paved the way for the mass consumption of the second edition published a year later in 1787. Over 3,000 copies of the second edition were published, compared to only 612 copies of the first edition. His jump to fame in only a year of the first publication speaks for itself as his reputation as a poet and a songwriter was established (Frassetto 101).

Burns' "To a Mouse," its longer name being "To a Mouse, on Turning Her up Nest With the Plough," has clear connections to the *Theory of Moral Sentiments*. The narrator, a ploughman, is talking to a mouse and feeling sympathy for he has turned up her home before winter has come and he feels sorry for what he has done. He is apologizing as he knows winter is coming soon and now there is no place for this mouse to live. He is putting himself in the shoes of the mouse, as Adam Smith in his *Theory of Moral Sentiments* claims we do every day. As the poem continues on, the farmer starts to show jealousy in some sense towards to mouse as he

understands that the mouse lives completely in the present and he, as a man, is unable to do so.

He is forever worrying about the struggles of tomorrow; this is made evident when he says:

“But Mousie, thou art no thy-lane,  
 In proving *foresight* may be vain;  
 The best laid schemes o’ *Mice* an’ *Men*,  
     Gang aft agley,  
 An’ lea’e us nought but grief an’ pain,  
     For promis’d joy!” (Burns 37-42).

He understands this mouse he is talking to does not understand the concept of planning, and instead is only able to live in the moment. Burns, being a ploughman himself and growing up working the land is writing from a place of familiarity; there is an explicit connection between Burns and the ploughman in this poem. The ploughman, understanding his need to plan ahead and how that prohibits his happiness, looks at this mouse not only with sympathy for destroying its home, but also recognizing the happiness in the simplicity of its life. Burns throughout “To a Mouse” is engaging with the concepts of sympathy found in Adam Smith’s *Theory of Moral Sentiments*. He does this by not only by trying to understand the position the mouse is now in because of him, but also imagining himself in the position of the mouse and trying to understand what it must be thinking. Burns has taken the moral philosophy of Adam Smith and portrayed it as a situation that is easy to understand for the general public. *To a Mouse* reads like a conversation. The Ploughman switches back and forth between a self-reflective tone and a conversational tone. Burns is able to illustrate the compassion the ploughman feels for the mouse while also revealing the sad reality that humanity is facing. A reality filled with worrying about



the future, a future that cannot be controlled. The Ploughman, after feeling sympathy for the mouse, comes to the understanding that he lives in fear of the future and he can only guess the outcome. It is in this last stanza,

“Still, thou art blest, compar’d wi’ me!

The *present* only toucheth thee:

But Outh! I *backward* cast my e’e,

On prospects drear!

An’ *forward*, tho’ I canna *see*,

I *guess* an *fear!*” (Burns, 43-48).

Burns is able to capture the very human feeling of being afraid of the unknown future. Burns portrays this so clearly by taking Adam Smith’s concept of imagination, written about in his *Theory of Moral Sentiments*. Burns puts his speaker, the Ploughman, in the shoes of the mouse, as the Ploughman tries to understand what it must be like to only worry about the present. It is clear throughout *To a Mouse* that Burns was influenced by Adam Smith’s *Theory of Moral Sentiments*. It is also evident that Burns helped commercialize Smith’s ideas by using them in a tale of an everyday man.

“Twa Dogs, a Tale” is the first poem in the *Kilmarnock Edition* and it sets the tone for the publication of his poems. Adam Smith is most famously known for his creation of the *Wealth of Nations*. Robert Burns had clearly learned about it and come to understand this writing as when he wrote “Twa Dogs, a Tale” in 1786 he clearly disagrees with Adam Smith’s argument. “Twa Dogs, a Tale” is a conversation between two dogs about their masters and pointing towards Adam Smith’s *Wealth of Nations* points out that it is commerce that sets humanity aside from the

speechless and dependent animals. In “Twa Dogs” there are two dogs— one dog, a gentleman’s newfoundland and the second dog, a ploughman’s collie— discussing their masters’ bad habits (Carruthers 104). However, the dogs in Burn’s poem are clearly different as it is through their conversation we see their world. It is clear that Burns understood that animals were more than the commodity Smith’s *Wealth of Nations* made them out to be (Leask 120, 145). Burns, identifying as part of the middle class and a ploughman is clearly commenting on the lifestyle of gentlemen of the time as being in opposition to Adam Smith’s *Wealth of Nations*. Burns, throughout “Twa Dogs,” is comparing the lifestyle of the upper class and the middle class, and he makes the point that the gentleman’s upper-class lifestyle is not what people should be striving for. The gentleman’s newfoundland is unable to see how the ploughman’s collie is able to find any happiness without wealth. The commentary progresses into a stance against the wealthy lifestyle. Adam Smith on the other hand would argue that the end goal of society is to progress to a stage where everyone is able to have this lifestyle through the commercial phase of society. These two arguments, though not in direct conflict with each other, contradict each other as Adam Smith’s argument is promoting the progression of wealth, while Robert Burns’ argument pushes against that and points out where this pursuit of wealth as a form of happiness often goes wrong.

As “Twa Dogs” is an obvious conversation between two representatives of the two classes, the gentry class and the peasant class, Burns is clearly commenting on the obvious class distinctions pushing it even further by adding the position of nationhood and national identity. When reading “Twa Dogs ” several things stand out. The first is that the ploughman’s collie has a stronger vernacular than the narrator of the poem and the dog of the gentry. This is the first move

Robert Burns makes to set the two dogs — the two classes— apart. He then continues on to add commentary regarding how the gentry class is viewed. At the start of this poem the “toiling” (Burns, 60) of the peasant class is explained, pushing the assumption that the peasant class would envy those of the gentry class as on the surface their life is much easier and they have fewer hardships, however it is the gentry’s dog that says “The *gentles* ye wad neer envy them!” (Burns 191) and he continues to say “An’ev’n their sports, their balls an’ races, / Their galloping thro’ public places, / Their’s sic parade, sic pomp an’ art, / The joy can scarcely reach the heart.” (Burns 212-215). In simple English, the gentry’s dog here is explaining that the ploughman has nothing to envy because even though the gentry class has all these ‘joys’ they never experience a deeper, real joy; they never experience a joy that reaches their heart. Burns’ statement complicates Adam Smith’s *Wealth of Nations* as he is still writing for the educated class, the gentry class, however he is capturing the viewpoint of a common man and by doing so has started to romanticize the peasant and ploughman way of life as a simpler way of life. A way of life that is filled with more real joy. This is one of the first obvious steps Burns took towards creating the romantic view of rural Scotland and the way things used to be.

Burns then makes the move to include his commentary on Scottish national identity, specifically in relation to Britain. Burns uses the phrase “for Britain’s guid” (Burns 149) repeatedly in order to position the gentry’s dog on the side of Britain, creating the idea that this dog is not truly Scottish while the ploughman’s collie is. This contradiction of a false Scot and a true Scot further pushes the class distinction that Burns made earlier in the poem. Burns tells the reader here that a true Scot is a common man, someone from rural Scotland who works the land and he tells the reader that a false Scot is someone who has money, is considered part of the

gentry class, is well-educated, and has been in and out of London. He is commercializing the idea that an essential Scot is a rougher and peasant Scot. Burns aligns himself with the ploughman's collie here, a common, low born, everyday man, but a true Scot because even though he is an educated poet he is the ploughman poet.

By looking at three of Robert Burns' poems, it is clear that he was influenced by Adam Smith, one of the great minds of the Scottish Enlightenment, and this influence in turn gave Burns the intellectual arsenal he needed to write poems that had the large impact and global influence that they still have today. By commercializing what it meant to be an everyday man, particularly an everyday man in Scotland, Burns was able to market Scots and make a lasting impression on the definition of Scots. Burns' poetry played off the power of emotion. The Scottish Enlightenment thinkers at the time were re-valuing human emotion and causing the market for emotional writing to grow while Burns was writing. Burns then connected this emotion to the growing sentiments associated with the Highlands and started to create a global market from a local feeling. Burns then took this new marketplace that was created by the combination of the capitalization of emotions and his portrayal of the Highlands of Scotland and created a new sense of nationalism, then labeling it distinctly Scottish. Burns' reader feels they have an insight to the Scottish culture and some sort of understanding no other outsider has. Thus, Adam Smith's focus on emotions and Robert Burns' ability to incorporate that within the context of the Scottish Highlands further fueled Highlandism and gave Burns strong influence over Scottish national identity.

Burns, having grown up in the time of the Scottish Enlightenment and having a tutor who studied in Edinburgh, would have been taught the ideas of the great thinkers of the time.

The poems “To a Mouse” and “Remorse,” show that Robert Burns understood Adam Smith’s theories from the *Theory of Moral Sentiments*. The poem “Twa Dogs” shows that Burns read and had an opinion about Adam Smith’s *Wealth of Nations*. These demonstrate how the Scottish Enlightenment offered Burns a moral and aesthetic framework in which he was able to work within and apply his observations on the land, ethics, identity, and nationhood. The Scottish Enlightenment allowed for Burns to participate in the larger conversation with the principles that he was influenced by. Smith’s influence on Burns is one very obvious example of how Burns was influenced by the thinkers of the Scottish Enlightenment. Burns’ poems were shaped by these new and forward-thinking ideas meaning that the mass consumption of Burns because of his popularity meant also the mass consumption of the ideas of the Scottish Enlightenment and the promotion of new thought.

The Scottish Enlightenment was paired with another movement, the revival of the Scottish Vernacular (Shuttleton 22). This movement, though happening parallel to the Scottish Enlightenment had a focus opposite to the Scottish Enlightenment, as its focus was “to preserve and valorize native language and traditions” (Shuttleton 22). Robert Burns is known for his ability to switch between English and Scottish vernacular, he gained this ability because of the combination of his “proper” English education and his upbringing in rural Scotland. Burns’ ability to capture the Scottish vernacular sets him apart as a distinctly Scottish writer, because at the time English had already been not only the official language of education across Scotland, but there was no official dictionary that captured how the Scots at this time spoke. Burns, through his writing in this vernacular, began to capture and commercialize the everyday man of Scotland like never before.

“To a Mountain-Daisy On turning one down, with the Plough,” written in April 1786, most commonly referred to as “To a Mountain-Daisy,” is one poem that made Burns a notable author who was known to be able to write in both Scots and English and it pushed his image as the ploughman poet. “To a Mountain-Daisy” also propelled the stereotype that poetry written in Scots was a purely nostalgic way of writing as old Scots vernacular and Gaelic were thought of as simply representatives of the Scottish past, a past that had been separated from everyday life because of the new improvements stemming from the Scottish Enlightenment. “To a Mountain-Daisy” was published in *The Kilmarnock* edition where it received praise from the Edinburgh critique Henry Mackenzie that it was a beautiful and truly pastoral poem and the use of Scots created a framework for the reader of a “neo-Augustan English” (Leask 166). Augustan being a British style of literature created in the early 1700s, and the prefix neo- stemming from the Greek word for new. Robert Burns in “To a Mountain-Daisy” and *The Kilmarnock* edition is taking on a new way of writing poetry and his reputation as the ploughman poet grew with his success.

*The Kilmarnock* edition, titled *Poems, Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect* is making a political statement that Burns here is trying to capture Scots’ language and view of the world. He is using this title to set his poems distinctly apart from those of the English, he is making something distinctly Scottish. Throughout the *Kilmarnock* edition there are several poems that are written in both Scottish dialect and proper English of the time and it is with this edition that Burns first created his reputation for his ability to switch back and forth between Scots vernacular and the proper English of the time. By promoting the use of the Scottish dialect Burns also presents himself as an everyday man, a Scotsman who speaks the language of the middle class. Several of Burns readers who were familiar with the dialect of the Scottish Highlands attributed his use of

the vernacular as a natural aspect of his low birth, as he was born as a ploughman, while those who were unfamiliar found this vernacular an obstacle to their understanding (Stafford 1). Burns' ability to switch back and forth between English and Scots allows him to market himself as a Scottish poet, and he uses this to label his work as distinctly not English.

“To a Mountain-Daisy” is a perfect example of Burns switching between Scots and English because he does it so obviously throughout the poem. The poem starts out describing a flower that has been crushed by the speaker, as the poem progresses the tension builds by contrasting the beauty of the daisy before and after it was crushed before Burns in verse six switches to standard English. It is in this verse that Burns says

“Such is the fate of artless maid  
 Sweet flow’ret of the rural shade!  
 By love’s simplicity betraye’d  
 And guildless trust  
 Till she, like thee, all soil’d is laid  
 Low i’ the dust.” (Burns 31-36)

In these lines Burns is connecting the daisy to the fate of a woman who, as explained later in the poem as in relation to him, is fated to suffering because “human pride or cunning driv’n” (Burns, 45). This drive Burns mentions is stemming from the longing to financially succeed in the new Scotland created by agricultural improvement and the new mentality of every man for himself. With the closing stanza, still in standard English, Burns brings “To a Mountain-Daisy” full circle with the lines

“Stern Ruin’s plough-shared drives elate

Full on they bloom  
 Tukk crush'd beneath the furrow's weight  
 Shall be thy doom." (Burns 51-54)

Burns here is opening this poem up to a larger audience because he is relating this daisy to life. He is saying that the plough pushed towards creating happiness for others who will stay in bloom until it is their time to leave this earth as the daisy did when crushed by the plough. He too shares in this fate. Burns here is taking the Scottish vernacular and celebrating it as something from the past in order to raise it into a sphere of aesthetics and unapologetically creates something that is able to be commercialized within the global economy.

Aesthetics, being a popular concept of the Scottish Enlightenment is defined at this time as "the philosophical study of beauty [and] the sublime" and the questioning of the nature of beauty (Broadie 2003). Burns here is writing during a time where two movements are in full force: the Scottish Enlightenment and the Scottish Vernacular Revival, "the one, a cosmopolitan movement, concerned to explore a universal 'science of man'; the other, a movement to preserve and valorize native language and traditions" (Shuttleton 22). This created a complex environment for Burns to position himself within as by writing in the Scots dialect he declared a political statement that there was a difference between Scots literature and English literature. This was a political statement during Burns' time because in the generation following the defeat at Culloden, Burns' father's generation, there was an acceptance of a "distinctly 'British' critical perspective" (Shuttleton 31) as there was a positive embrace of 'British' literature.

As mentioned above, Burns' usage of the Scottish vernacular was associated by most Scots with the nostalgia for the old way of life, a way of life that was being threatened by



modernization and things like agricultural improvement. They saw the use of the Scots written vernacular as a direct notion to the past. English was the language of education and Scots as a written language was never established, it was simply the way the Scots spoke. The vernacular becomes more distinctive the farther away from Britain one travels and the further into the Scottish Highlands one goes. The speaker of “To a Mountain-Daisy” is clearly living in a rural part of Scotland and their Scots dialect is distinct and Burns makes it obvious to his audience. The premise of “To a Mountain-Daisy” is that the speaker feels remorse and regret for having destroyed a beautiful mountain daisy with a plough. The irony comes in when the reader realizes that this mountain daisy, although now ruined, is receiving more attention now that its existence is being threatened by modernization. This is identical to how the Highland culture was being commercialized. It was being celebrated because of the modern threat of improvement and innovation overpowering the old and traditional way of life. Like the daisy in “To a Mountain-Daisy” this creates a complicated relationship with the agricultural improvement that has threatened them. This modern attack has caused them to be taken into consideration in a new and romanticized light creating an eternal image of both this mountain daisy and the highland culture.

“My Heart’s in the Highlands,” which was published in 1790 (268) in Volume Three of *The Scots Musical Museum*, four years after *The Kilmarnock* edition, made Burns famous and recognizably a Scot. *The Kilmarnock* edition pushed Burns to stay in Scotland and grow his writings within in the Scottish vernacular as he continued to write and capture what it meant to be Scottish. It was because of *The Kilmarnock* edition and the success that it brought Burns that he continued on his career, later writing poems like “My Heart’s in the Highlands,” and Burns

the man began to grow into Burns the myth and character who represented the everyday man of Scotland. “My Heart’s in the Highlands” is now found in the 1890 edition of *Burns Complete Works* along with some of Burns’ notes on the song (McGuirk 1). The collection of the traditional music of Scotland, *The Scots Musical Museum* was the cultural debut of “My Heart’s in the Highlands.” Its widespread publication and its having been set to a very popular tune of the time would have pushed this poem quickly to popularity furthering Burns’ reputation as a writer of the Scottish Highland past and highlighted his nostalgic tendencies. Burns is set apart as nobody before had been able to capture a changing culture, commercializing the everyday man, and do so in a vernacular strongly associated with the past and filled with nostalgic tendencies.

As mentioned above Robert Burns grew up listening to his father’s romantic tales of life in the Highlands of Scotland. His father, having lived in Scottish Highlands until he was displaced because of the battle of Culloden Moor, would have told Robert and his siblings’ stories of the old Highland way of life, pushing Burns to later write poems like “My Heart’s in the Highlands,” which is filled with nostalgia for a lifestyle Burns himself never experienced.

The chorus of “My Heart’s in the Highlands” makes it obvious that Burns is talking about a way of life that he can no longer experience as he says

“My heart's in the Highlands, my heart is not here,  
 My heart's in the Highlands, a-chasing the deer;  
 Chasing the wild-deer, and following the roe,  
 My heart's in the Highlands, wherever I go.” (Burns 5-8)

Although the Scottish vernacular is minimal here, it is present enough that the reader or most likely audience of a performance would know that it was from the point of view of a displaced

Highlander who has had to leave their home because of historical circumstances. Each verse starts with “Farewell.” Burns is acknowledging that he is talking about a way of life that he cannot experience anymore. This would have been a familiar feeling to those who had been displaced from their urban homes and were now living in the overcrowded cities of Glasgow and Edinburgh. By producing this popular song, Burns captured a moment in time. A moment where people understood this old ‘Highland’ way of life was gone, but they weren’t ready to give up on it.

Robert Burns’ ability to use the Scottish vernacular in order to capture a mindset of a time period pushed his reputation globally. He was beginning to embody the idea of what it meant to be Scottish. Burns, having grown up learning from the Scottish Enlightenment and then witnessing the social change as the people of the Lowlands took on Highland culture as a new national identity, captured these ideas and through his popularity commercialized them within a global market. This popularity turned Robert Burns into a symbol of Scotland as the cycle of Highlandism progressed.

#### **Chapter 4: Proof Burns Helped Jumpstart Highlandism**

Robert Burns' most recognizable poem is "A Cotter's Saturday Night." Being published in *The Kilmarnock Edition* it made a fast impression on its readers. Burns created a place for Scotland on the global market, meaning he wrote Scotland into his poems. However, to Burns "there is no contradiction between Scotland and the world" as he pushed to create something for the "solace of mankind" (McIlvanney 13-14). Burns' humble upbringing pushed his reputation, it was well known after Burns' death that he "had the common education of a Scottish peasant, perhaps something more, and that spirit of independence, which [...] is sometimes to be found to a high degree in the humblest of classes of society" (Andrews 1), and more so it became common belief that Burns was a "man who was the pupil of nature, the poet of inspiration, and who possessed in an extraordinary degree the powers and failings of genius" (Andrews 1), thus boosting his image as a common man who was able to represent Scotland and her now nationalized and commercialized traditions. Burns grew up in a cottage and created a reputation for himself as a common peasant and a ploughman. Burns wrote this poem as reminiscent of the days past. Burns' reputation of the ploughman poet, a peasant, and an everyday man came into the popularity of "A Cotter's Saturday Night." This was because Burns makes a commentary against agricultural improvement and against the Englishness of the gentry class. Burns creates an essential Scottishness in his ploughman character as he works the land and is an everyday man of Scotland. Burns was able to capture what it meant to be a 'true Scot' and this becomes very clear in "A Cotter's Saturday Night."

He portrays himself as both a peasant and a ploughman, while incorporating ideas from Adam Smith, revealing results from agricultural improvement, and making commentary on English versus Scottish. Burns took his education and his upbringing, English and Scottish, and created a variety of works that argued what it meant to be Scottish and his reputation of a 'true Scot' followed. The poem, never saying where this cottage is set, embodies the nostalgia for the Highlands, the way of life now dead and gone. The cottage where Burns was born and grew up, sold and modified throughout the years only to end up being restored to a representation of what Burns would recognize as his family home, is "A Cotter's Saturday Night" brought to life. The first time I heard Burns' famous poem "A Cotter's Saturday Night" I was standing in the reconstructed popular tourist destination of the Burns' Cottage, the cottage where he was born. My professor had us all gather around where the Burns family would have gathered before bed and in this cold and dark, yet cozy room, and in a deep Scottish accent began the tale of a cotter's Saturday night.

"A Cotter's Saturday Night" is arguably Burns' most pastoral poem. Burns relies heavily on his reputation as a peasant and a ploughman in order to capture this pastoral essence and portray it to his audience living in the cities of Scotland. "Burns is praised here for achieving the difficult balancing act between a rural realism drawing heavily on Scots idiom, and a quality of aesthetic 'delicacy' that, from the perspective of a city audience, seemed so difficult to attain" (Leask 215). Leask is making it clear that Burns has positioned himself as a lowly cotter, a peasant, and is appealing to his audience. His audience is now mainly those Scots living in the Lowlands of Scotland and experiencing the horrible conditions of overcrowded urban life. These Scots look longingly on the life that they could have if they were still in the rural settings where

life was remembered to be simpler and happier, made easy during a time when the essential Highlands version of Scottish identity had spread throughout the Lowlands of Scotland. This key combination of awful urban living conditions and the beautiful imagining of how urban living used to be and the ideal way of life those in the Highlands had, created the perfect environment for the nostalgic and romantic view that pushed the modernization and embrace of Highland traditions and symbols. This environment gave Burns the ability to capture this changing mindset and commercialize it on a global scale.

A common way of reading this poem is with the rural setting of the Highlands in mind. Although this poem never mentions a geographical location, with Highlandism bleeding into the everyday life of the upper and middle class of Scotland as well as painting the image of what the everyday life of a Scotsman looks like, it is easy to see how the assumed setting is that of the Highlands. This reading, a reading where it is set in the Highlands of Scotland, is proof that Burns was read in the context of Highlandism. This is a context that he not only helped to create, but ultimately pushed him to become a symbol of Highlandism. Burns' escalation to a national symbol of Scotland continued to push Highlandism, and created a cycle where now Burns' life is romanticized too. Burns has captured this honest man of old Scotland. Burns, by writing "A Cotter's Saturday Night" in the first person is solidifying his reputation as this honest man and a man who understands this longing to go back to this simplified version of rural living. He is also making a claim on the behalf of this declining class of small tenant farmers and those who were seen as holding this status of honest poverty (Pittock 207). In stanza 20, in perfect English Burns says

"O SCOTIA! my dear, my native soil!

For whom my warmest wish to heaven is sent!  
 Long may thy hardy sons of *rustic toil*,  
 Be blest with health, and peace, and sweet content!  
 And O may Heaven their simple lives prevent  
 From *Luxury's* contagion, weak and vile!  
 Then howe'er *crowns* and *cornets* be rent,  
 A *virtuous Populace* may rise the while,  
 And stand a wall of fire around their much-lov'd  
 ISLE." (Burns 182-191)

With a focus on the last two lines of the stanza, "And stand a wall of fire around thier much-lov'd / ISLE" (Burns 190-191) Burns is referring to Scotland as this much loved isle, but the fact that he does so at the end of a stanza that has been written in perfect English instead of the Scottish vernacular makes it clear that he is making this statement as someone who is more English than they are Scottish. The following stanza, stanza 21, opens with "O THOU! who pour'd the *patriotic tide*, / That stream'd thro great, unhappy WALLACE' / heart;" (Burns 192-194). Wallace here is referring to William Wallace of the first War of Independence of the late 13th century. Wallace's story was quick to escalate to that of myth and legend, though a common man of the middle class, Wallace was given status of a great warrior and hero because he outlived his commanders on the battlefield and he was remembered as a great leader who won the Battle of Stirling Bridge. Burns describes Wallace as great but unhappy because he is remembered as great, however the falseness of this statement is disappointing. The next lines follow with "Who dar'd to, nobly, stem tyrannic pride, / Or *nobly die*, the second glorious part:"

(Burns 195-196). Burns here has emphasized he is remembered as this great hero because of his apparent willingness to die for his cause, a very romantic idea that, especially when Burns was writing, was very much associated with the warrior aspects of what it meant to be a Scottish Highlander.

Burns' famous poem "A Cotter's Saturday Night" is evidence that he was able to capture and promote the mindset of Highlandism. With a blend of Scottish vernacular and perfect English he wrote a nostalgic story of a time long gone for his audience, a time that many of them dreamed of. By capturing this mindset Burns was able to push it globally as his poems were exported, commercializing this romantic view of the Highlands as part of the national identity of Scotland. In return he too became a part of this national identity and is now a symbol of what it means to be Scottish. Burns becoming a national symbol himself proves that he was successful in capturing what it means to be Scottish as the people of Scotland have taken his words as a manual and dictionary to portray their culture to the rest of the world.



## Conclusion

The idea of national identity and nationhood is nothing new. However, tracing the origin of Scottish national identity can be tricky as it is not something that has been documented and kept track of over the years. Looking back on the history of Scotland gives some insight to how her national identity started to form. We know that there was a split in identity between the Highlands and the Lowlands, first documented in 1320. So how did we get to all of Scotland having the same national identity as one kingdom within the U.K. Was it the Union of the Crowns in 1603 when Scotland lost her king to Britain? Was it the Union of 1707 when Scotland voted her parliament out of existence and officially became a part of the U.K.? Was it after the Jacobite Rising of 1745 was crushed in Culloden in April of 1746?

Although a strong national identity could have started to form at any of these key moments of Scottish history, I believe it was not until after the defeat at Culloden, when the Clan culture was attacked causing mass displacement, that a strong and uniform identity was shaped. As you now understand there were many forces that feed into this mass displacement. The first and most obvious was that of the legal attack on those living in the Highlands after the battle of Culloden, the second was the clearances that were caused from the agricultural improvements of the Scottish Enlightenment. It was when the people of Scotland were forced to relocate in mass numbers that many of them moved to cities like Glasgow and Edinburgh where they missed their old way of life. It was because of these nostalgic tendencies, along with a need to remember that they were more than just 'northern British,' that Highlandism became the popular movement which Robert Burns captured in his writing.

Burns captured this because he was writing in an environment that welcomed the romantic view of the world before modernity took over. This was a view that was created by Scottish Enlightenment thinkers like Adam Smith who published theories like his *Wealth of Nations* where the four stages of society were explained. Readers and other thinkers saw how the Scottish Highlands were different and not fully in the fourth stage, the commerce stage of Smith's outline. With this new point of view combined with the urbanization and decline of living standards, Robert Burns was able to capture a way of life his readers found appealing, as he wrote about the simpler and therefore happier way of life. At the same time the laws that had previously banned Highland wear, like tartan and kilts, had been removed. This made the tartan a wearable symbol of Scottishness and Scots started to wear it to show their Scottish heritage regardless of where they were born. The tartan, along with the national identity of Scotland, grew in popularity as Scotland and her romanticized culture entered the global market.

These conclusions have a significant impact moving forward as Scotland is still arguing over whether or not they should once again be their own kingdom. Scotland has a history of being overlooked, but Brexit has made it obvious that this is a modern problem. A problem that was not helped by Burns romanticisation of Scotland's past. The unintended consequences of Burns' success was that as his invented version of Scotland became more prominent, the real Scotland grew more and more invisible. Globally there is still the exotic view of Scotland, what we hope to be true after reading Burn's poetry and seeing movies like *Braveheart*. However this means that there is no global realistic recognition of modern Scotland that the global public is consciously aware of. The term Brexit comes from the combination of two words "British" and "Exit" as it is the British exiting the European Union. Even in the naming of Brexit Scotland was

not considered. When popular media is published about Brexit it is focused around London and how Great Britain's industry will be affected, Scotland, much like Wales and Northern Ireland, has not been included in this conversation. Brexit, in the context of Scotland's representation, is an example of these unintended consequence of Burns' success.

Brexit has now been delayed twice and is going into effect October 31, 2019, and more than ever before the question of where an independent Scotland would stand is on everyone's minds. The publicized reason for this is that Scotland feels like her voice has not been heard throughout the Brexit conversation. This could be for several reasons, the least complicated reason for this is simply the difference in the populations between Scotland and the rest of the U.K. A few other more complicated reasons could be the proportionally low percentage of immigrants to Scotland, the depopulation of rural Scotland, or the global reputation of Scotland that Highlandism has created. In reality it is combination of all four of these have created a political environment where many Scots feel as if they do not have control over their own future. In order to gain a deeper understanding of what the people of Scotland are thinking as the potential for another referendum approaches, I reached out to several people across generations currently living in Scotland. First was Gary Black, a Scottish comedian who is currently running the *Trampled Bat Podcast*. When asked his opinion on the potential for Scottish independence his response was very detailed, and he explained how his beliefs were shaped from boyhood in Scotland. He explained to me that he does understand how national identity plays a part in where he stands as when describing that "even as a teenager I was very firmly Scottish, European then British a very distant third" (Black), but he was very against the "traditional Scottishness" that, as shown throughout this thesis, was commercialized by Robert Burns. He believes that if

Scotland had voted yes for independence before Brexit, the most recent vote being in 2014, it would have been a day for celebration. However, he fears what Brexit means for all of the U.K. as it threatens lowering of food standards, the erosion of workers' rights and other EU protected standards. Another Scot who agrees with Black, that Scotland would be better as an independent kingdom with the approach of Brexit, is Scottish content creator Liam Dryden. Dryden is a millennial who grew up in rural Scotland and went to university in Edinburgh but has lived in London the past six years. He speaks strongly about moving back to Scotland if a second Scottish referendum seems more possible. He has the intention of helping further the movement for Scotland's independence from Britain. Dryden strongly identifies as Scottish saying, "I'm pretty secure with my identity personally, that I am a Scot. That's where I was born, that's where I was raised, that's where all my family is from, that's where I would call home if somebody asked" (Dryden). This is important to note because even though he has now moved to London and has created a life there he still identifies as 100% Scottish and would love to one day see Scotland as its own independent kingdom again.

Looking then from the other side, I also reached out to a second-year student at the University of Glasgow who was born and raised British but is now being educated in Scotland. Shemmis Webbe firstly notes her Britishness automatically creates a biased view of independence, she states "I am very much aware of how much national identity and pride [Scots] have (more so after moving to Glasgow) but I truly believe we're better together and united" (Webbe). However, she explained that multiple areas of industry and everyday life of the Scottish economy, if separated from the U.K., would simply not be able to stand on their own.

Another set of opinions who have complex relationships with both Scotland and Great Britain are those of Chris and Carmel Perry. A lovely older couple, whom I stayed with for a short time on my second trip to Scotland, has a long and complicated history with both Britain and Scotland. They have both lived in London and Glasgow. Chris growing up in Glasgow, Lowland Scotland, strongly identifies as Scottish. Carmel, having grown up in Northern England, grew up feeling neither fully English nor Scottish, but instead a mix of the two. She lived in a zone of transition. This zone of transition is very obvious linguistically as accents and spelling of words gradually transition from Scottish to London English. Growing up in the zone of transition however also affected how she feels she fits into national identity. She explained that she did not feel fully English, not associating herself with the London national identity, but she is also not Scottish having been outside that border. Both Carmel and Chris agree that the potential for another vote for Scottish Independence is more likely after Brexit, but both are opposed to the idea. They agree that Scottish independence would create a poorer Scotland with higher unemployment rates. With the uncertainty of an independent Scotland being welcomed into the European Union, Scotland would become a small one-party State (Chris Perry). Both Chris and Carmel concluded by explaining that they do not believe their national identity has affected their opinions, Chris stating “I am Scottish through and through but [I] have lived and worked away from Scotland for 40 years. I am a committed member of the UK and my concern is for the poorer and vulnerable people, those who have been ‘left behind; throughout the UK and internationally, not just those in Scotland” (Perry), and Carmel stating that she wants “a fairer society and country for people throughout England, [...] not just for Scotland” (Perry).

All four of these perspectives have been affected by the recent Brexit vote, however only two believe that Scotland will be better off as an independent state and this could happen in the near future. When the original Brexit date of March 29<sup>th</sup> came and the first extension was agreed upon by the European Union, Scottish voices spoke out that they were not represented in this decision. With this outcry came a call for a second Scottish Referendum and the most notable voice was that of Scotland's First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon (BBC News). Although there is no set date or confirmation this will happen, Brexit has pushed people to question their place within the United Kingdom. This is where national identity has made an obvious impact on how politically people chose to represent themselves.

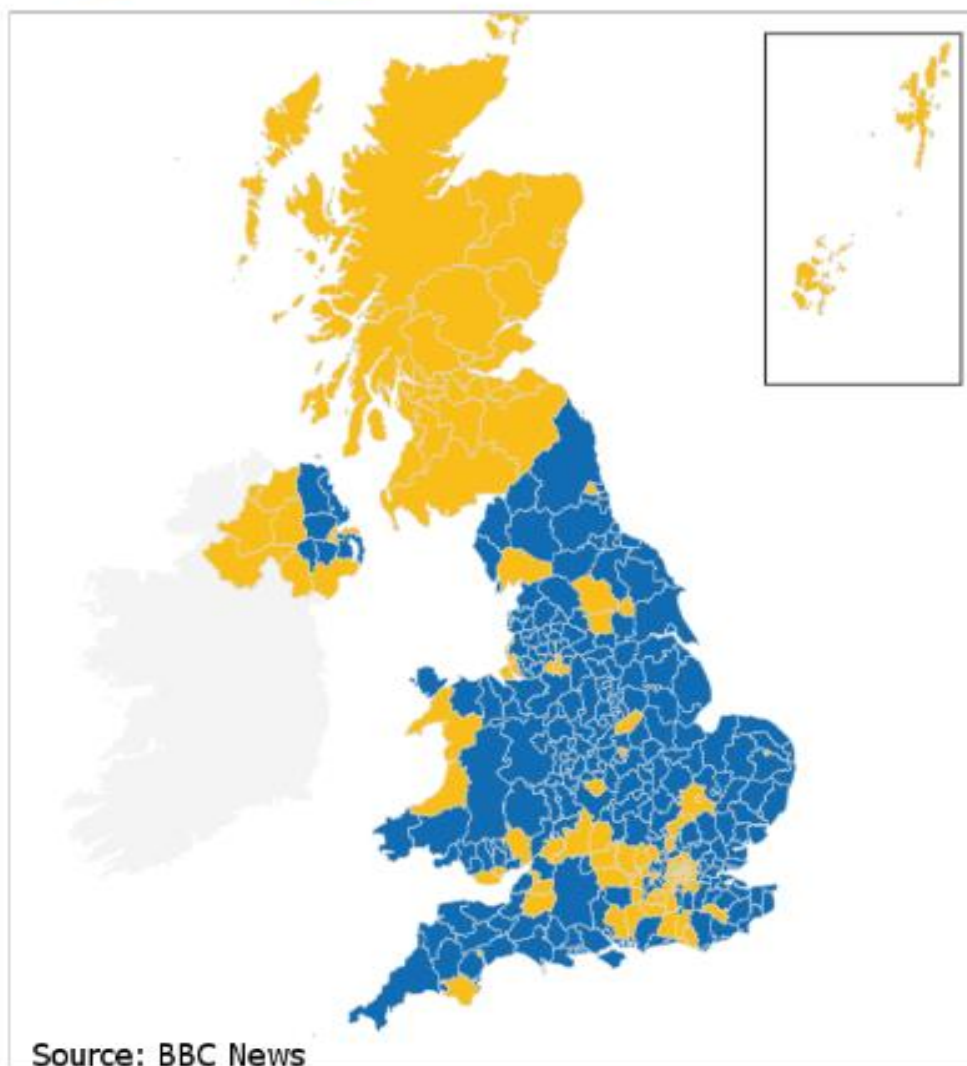
Looking at the results from the Brexit vote in 2016, even without borders drawn, the split between Scotland and the rest of the U.K is obvious. Scotland's majority voted to remain as part of the EU, as shown a map below from the BBC. There is no zone of transition when it came to the results on the Brexit vote in 2016. The large cities in Britain, like London and Manchester, voted to remain. Almost all of the north and rural Britain voted to leave, but there is a dramatic

and obvious change in the results as soon as Scotland's border is reached, as there is no county in Scotland that voted to leave. Scotland voted 'remain', Britain voted 'leave'.

### The overall result

Leave polled the most strongly in 270 counting areas, with Remain coming first in 129.

Key: ■ Majority leave ■ Majority remain ■ Tie ■ Undeclared



As mentioned above by Gary Black, this result has pushed his yearning for Scottish Independence even more as the potential outcomes of Brexit scare him. This is a common feeling

among those who are currently pushing for Scottish independence. Gary Black explained that because of Brexit, if Scotland did achieve independence it would not be the celebration that it could have been in 2014 if they voted yes on the original referendum. This original referendum came out 55% to remain part of the U.K. and 45% hoping for independence. As explained by *The Guardian*, the most popular reason for voting to leave the U.K. was because they believe in “the principle that all decisions about Scotland should be taken in Scotland” (The Guardian), while the primary reason for voting to stay in the U.K. was that “the risk of becoming independent looked too great when it came to things like currency, EU membership, the economy, jobs and prices” (The Guardian). The argument to become an independent kingdom does not reason with the tangible things like money or jobs, but it is focused on having control over the decisions that affect them. They felt as if they have a distinct culture and way of life that separates them from the rest of the U.K., and they believed that they should have the power to make decisions for themselves because of this difference. The definition of national identity is “sense of a nation as a cohesive whole, as represented by (the maintenance of) distinctive traditions, culture, linguistic or political features” (*OED*). This directly corresponds with the reasoning behind why 45% of Scotland decided to vote ‘leave’ on the 2014 referendum.

Ultimately the goal of this thesis is to break down the modern implications of Robert Burns’ work and reputation by first analyzing his works and those that influenced him and then understanding how he is still affecting modern Scotland. He was able to capture Scotland as Highlandism turned the old symbols of the Highland way of life into national symbols, and commercialized the romantic notions associated with the Highland culture. Burns was capturing these ideas when, for the first time, Scotland was coming together as not the Highlands and the



Lowlands, but as one kingdom in order to set themselves apart from the rest of the U.K. Robert Burns changed what it meant to be Scottish and created a global image of Scotland that captures the romantic and warrior lifestyle of a Highlands that no longer exists. Robert Burns was almost too successful at doing this. Through his poetry he blurred away the complexity of the symbols once associated with the Highlands of Scotland making it possible for people to travel to Scotland and not experience any real Scottish culture. The spread of Highlandism, and the simplification of Scotland's symbols, greatly affected Scotland's national identity in ways of how Scots saw and represented themselves and how they were understood globally. As the potential for a second Scottish Referendum approaches it will be important to note how feelings of Scottish national identity will greatly affect Scotland's future.

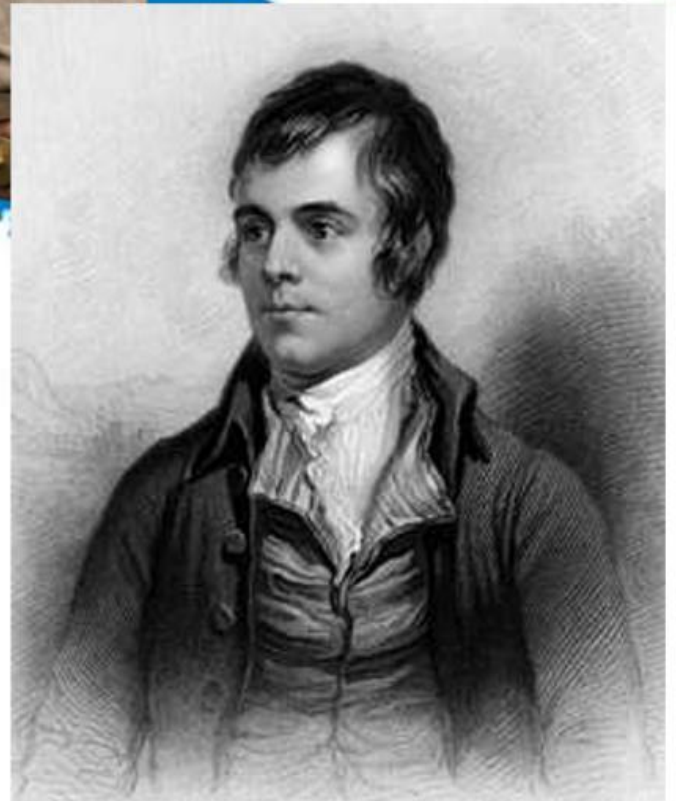
How we got...



From...

*How the "Ploughman Poet"  
jumpstarted Highlandism:  
A study of Robert Burns and his  
Influence on Modern Scottish  
Identity and History*

*By: allie ward*



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