

*'Return No More!': Highland Emigration and Romantic Nostalgia*¹

Kirsten Daly Cheltenham and Gloucester College

Thus, while I ape the measure wild
Of tales that charmed me yet a child,
Rude though they be, still with the chime
Return the thoughts of early time;
And feelings, roused in life's first day,
Glow in the line, and prompt the lay.

[...]

And ever, by the winter hearth,
Old tales I heard of woe or mirth,
Of lovers' sleights, of ladies' charms,
Of witches spells, of warriors' arms;
Of patriot battles, won of old
By Wallace wight and Bruce the bold;
Of later fields of feud and fight,
When, pouring from their Highland height,
The Scottish clans, in headlong sway,
Had swept the scarlet ranks away.²

Reflecting in *Marmion* (1808) on the process of composition, Scott explains that his work aims to recapture the sense of wonder he felt as a child when hearing about the exploits of his Highland ancestors, and, framed within a circular logic, the lines suggest that adult imitation reawakens the feelings of childhood which in turn shape the act of writing in the manner of an organic unity. Scott's nostalgic desire to re-experience the supposedly unfettered perception of children can be aligned with his broader antiquarian project of

imaginatively recovering Scotland's past in order to ensure that it remains present for his own and subsequent generations. This enterprise is nostalgic in the sense that it situates the historian as a lamenting preserver and the object of inquiry as a lost site of innocent plenitude, primitive authenticity and vigorous selfhood. Conceived at a time when Scotland had ceased to exist as an autonomous political entity, Scott's nostalgic project functions as a cultural compensation which simultaneously accommodates and resists the country's assimilation by accepting loss whilst enacting a literary recuperation. Such is the magnitude of Scott's contribution to Romantic debates on Scottish national identity that the role played by his contemporaries tends to be overlooked. This essay aims to recover some of these perspectives by exploring the relationship between nostalgia and Highland emigration in two rhetorically suggestive poems, known and admired by Scott: Anne Grant's 'The Highlanders' (1802) and James Grahame's *The Sabbath* (1804).³ During the eighteenth century, nostalgia came to be understood as an illness generated by geographical displacement, or, as one physician put it, 'A vehement desire for revisiting one's country, known by impatience when absent from one's native home; attended with gloom and melancholy, loss of appetite, and want of sleep'.⁴ It was explicitly associated with the Swiss and the Scottish Highlanders; Rousseau claimed that upon hearing the 'Ranz des Vaches' played in a foreign land, Swiss mercenaries were so overcome with homesickness that they would desert or die,⁵ and William Coxe added that the Highlanders were equally susceptible.⁶ By conceptualising nostalgia as a malady, Grant and Grahame participate in a wider cultural enterprise, rooted in medicine and popularised by Rousseau, which registers as traumatic different kinds of dislocation as symptoms of a rupture in the national body. A consideration of their poems refocusses the picture offered by Scott by revealing that nostalgic forms of national identity were also constructed from the perspective of geographical displacement, specifically Highland emigration, hence foregrounding a different kind of national dissolution. Scott only alludes to the nostalgia of emigrants in the introduction to *A Legend of Montrose* (1819) after relating how Sergeant More M'Alpin returns from the Napoleonic Wars to find that his sister has preferred to serve the 'intruding Lowlander' rather than emigrate with her kinsmen. He adds poignantly: 'For two years previous to the emigration, when the night wind howled down the pass of Balachra, its notes were distinctly modelled to the tune of, "Ha til mi tuidh," (we return no more,) with which the emigrants usually bid farewell to their native shores'.⁷ Concealed in Scotland's landscape as a haunting memory, emigration is also buried in Scott's text as a troubling reminder of the nation's other loss, and, used as a leitmotif by Anne Grant in 'The Highlanders', the phrase 'we return no more' functions as a repressed echo of her poem.

Conventionally associated with the Victorians, and memorably captured in such iconic representations as Ford Madox Brown's *The Last of England*

(1852) emigration nevertheless did occur during the Romantic period, most frequently from the Highlands of Scotland to North America, and, arguably, in comparatively large numbers.⁸ Following Britain's acquisition of Canada during the Seven Years War, discharged members of the Highland regiments were encouraged to remain for the purpose of defence, and, having been granted allocations of land, these settlers provided a nucleus for subsequent emigration from the newly independent United States as well as the Scottish Highlands in the late eighteenth century. Eric Richards observes that it is impossible to be statistically precise about Scottish emigration before 1825 but that even taking the lowest of contemporary or modern estimates, a significant proportion of the Highland population left between 1773 and 1803, often in large groups under some form of leadership.⁹ Historians have shown that the reasons for emigration were complex, ranging from economic deprivation to strategic opportunism, but whether the Highlanders should be considered as victims or heroes, it seems incontrovertible that the Highland clearances, in which the clan system was finally destroyed, had a major impact on their departure. In her acclaimed study of how a cohesive British national identity was forged during the long eighteenth century, Linda Colley argues that the acquisition of a burgeoning empire contributed to this process, and, most importantly, she highlights as unparalleled the role of the Scots as colonisers and imperialists. Identifying them as the veritable 'arsenal of empire', she implies that the Scots became British through the instrumental part they played in this national mission.¹⁰ As far as attitudes towards emigration are concerned, the early nineteenth century was a time of transition, when the prevailing doctrine that 'as the People of every Nation constitute its strength and wealth, the Parent State suffers a loss when an industrious Individual leaves it' was increasingly being challenged by some utilitarians, who argued that emigration offered a viable solution to problems of overpopulation and widespread unemployment.¹¹ It was only during the economic depression of the 1820s that the British government seriously began to contemplate emigration as a comprehensive policy; at the instigation of Sir Robert Wilmot Horton a committee was established in 1826 to investigate the possible benefits, and although public responses to its optimistic findings were mixed, sceptics tended to argue on the basis of practicality not desirability.¹² The most vociferous opposition to emigration from the Highlands came from the Highland Society, established in the 1780s to protect and foster Scottish culture, whose members argued that the Highland economy could be regenerated to accommodate the collapse of the clan system, and encouraged the development of alternative industries such as fishing and the manufacture of kelp, also successfully lobbying ministers to regulate the transportation of emigrants. Early indications of what was to become the dominant view were, however, already circulating in the Earl of Selkirk's report on his experimental venture of settling a group of emigrants from the Isle of Skye to Prince Edward Island, *Observations on the Present*

State of the Highlands of Scotland (1805), in which the author concludes that 'Emigration was an unavoidable result of the general state of the country, arising from causes above all control, and in itself of essential consequence to the tranquillity and permanent welfare of the kingdom', with the haunting admission that 'to emigrate, implies a degree of violence to many of the strongest feelings of human nature; a separation from a number of connexions dear to the heart; a dereliction of the attachments of youth, which few can resolve upon without the spur of necessity'.¹³ At this stage, then, emigration is viewed with reluctant approval as the only practical solution to a state of national crisis, but it is also identified as a profoundly unnatural act which violently wrenches individuals from the people and places that have contributed to their emotional well being.

The perspective of emigrants to British North America has generated a great deal of interest, and a substantial body of work now exists to explain how a distinctive national identity was constructed with reference to the former homeland.¹⁴ Less understood is the literature on emigration by subjects still resident in Britain, and the poems I examine throughout this essay, Anne Grant's 'The Highlanders' and James Grahame's *The Sabbath*, form part of this resource, for they embody self-conscious attempts to imagine the situation and feelings of departed compatriots. Romantic Studies has begun to explore configurations of national identity in Britain, drawing attention to the influence of regionality, class, gender and imperialism, but the significance of emigration has so far been overlooked.¹⁵ Most importantly, these poems suggest that emigration raised questions of national identity not just for the emigrants themselves but also for the abandoned (or abandoning) homeland. Embodying profound anxieties about the nationality of displaced Britons, they reveal more, then, about the fluid and fractured nature of the national name. At a rhetorical level the poems strongly promote arguments in favour of and against, respectively, the emigration of the Highlanders, and therefore they can be considered as historically representative documents, reflecting the transitional stage of the wider debate. They negotiate the identity of the Highlanders according to radically different visions of the nation, so that whereas Grant imagines Britain as an expansive metropolis, Grahame views it as a defensive fortress, and, like so many poems of the period, definitions of the nation are informed by the apparent omnipresence of the French, either as colonial rivals or potential invaders. As literary artifacts, the poems represent emigration through figurative analogies as a fortuitous kind of transplantation or alternatively as a murderous act of uprooting, demonstrating that what would become a national exodus could be understood within the framework of organic and evolutionary theory. They also voice concerns that were marginalised by official discourses, most significantly the issue of how the emigrants might feel about leaving their homeland, something which is only discussed in passing alongside more pragmatic considerations, if indeed it is mentioned at all.¹⁶ The most intriguing aspect of these

poems is that they self-consciously represent the emigrants as nostalgic whilst also seeking to remedy their nostalgia by, for example, offering up heroism as an antidote or even sending missionaries to revive them, as if nostalgia were compelling yet ultimately unbearable. The belief that departed compatriots lamented the loss of their native land perhaps masks feelings of guilt or shock, which need to be allayed through such assurances. The deployment of nostalgia in 'The Highlanders' and *The Sabbath* can be seen as part of a much broader symptomatology, for as Linda Colley argues, the acquisition of an empire initially produced in Britons a 'collective agoraphobia' or what Nigel Leask documents as 'anxieties of empire'.¹⁷ While it is possible, if reductive, to argue that nostalgia simply functions as a sentimental device in these poems, it seems to me that this motif was also fuelled by, and fuelled, powerfully ambivalent responses to emigration and colonisation within a society where it was still not unusual to be born and to die in the same place.

I

Anne Grant's poem 'The Highlanders' (1802) begins with the narrator embarking upon an excursion to the Highlands, hoping to be restored and uplifted by the contemplation of 'tranquil peace and rural joy', but, encountering only the silence of a deserted village, she mournfully declaims that the inhabitants and their culture are 'no more' (17, 18). Throughout the poem, the narrator situates herself as a nostalgic mourner whose aims are to record and celebrate the customs and practices of a vanished culture by figuratively awakening the legendary harp of Malvina to 'teach the mountain echoes to complain' (17). However, this elegiac narrative is underpinned by a carefully constructed logic which insists that the emigration of the Highlanders is both inevitable and necessary, resulting from, and contributing to, the modernisation of Great Britain. 'The Highlanders' is informed by Grant's commitment to colonialism and her fear that Canada is under threat from the French, and, contrasting the hardy virtue of the Highlanders with the Frenchified effeminacy of the leisured classes, she argues that only emigration can protect and consolidate the nation. Framed by attempts to imagine the feelings of Highland emigrants in British North America, the poem defines them as nostalgic in order to ensure that they remain attached to the homeland yet reconciled to their mediatory situation. Like the physicians who thought that nostalgic soldiers and sailors could be cured by being reminded of their patriotic duty, Grant aims to ameliorate the nostalgia of her emigrants by vigorously convincing them of the instrumental part they played in this national mission.¹⁸

After opening 'The Highlanders' with her own nostalgic lament, Grant turns immediately to consider the nostalgia of Scotland's former inhabitants in the following meditation:

Say, banish'd masters of the tuneful art,
Who sway with latent pow'r the willing heart,
Where are you now? across th'Atlantic's roar
Do your sad eyes your native hills explore?
Or homeward do you strain your aching view,
Where restless waves each other still pursue?
Where angry billows meet with frowning skies,
Till fancy's self recoils, and vision dies:
Or, bending o'er the prow, your mournful strain
Mix with the murmurs of the boundless main,
Where sinking surges equal cadence keep,
While misty showers around you seem to weep;
Or wakes the harp the well-known notes of woe,
That wont along the funeral path to flow,
That, while our vanish'd comforts we deplore,
Repeats emphatic, "They return no more."
Go, hapless bards, and sing in other lands
Your country's praise to charm her exile's bands;
And soothe each drooping mind with thoughts of home,
While hopeless through the pathless wilds they roam.
But wherefore exile'd? while afar they rove,
Still glow their filial breasts with patriot love:
The thoughts of home still aching at their heart,
While distance only aggravates the smart. (19)

The initial question 'Where are you now?' is evocative, serving to highlight the distance of the bard from the speaker, but it also richly ambiguous, and could be asking about the precise location of the bard, or, more darkly, alluding to the possibility that he might no longer be in this world. Alternatively, the question could be making a distinction between his geographical location and the landscape of his imagination, suggesting that, in spirit, he may still reside in Scotland. It is the last of these options that Grant chooses to pursue when she then asks about the bard's nostalgia. While this is phrased as a speculation, she confirms that he mourns the loss of his homeland, where the tentative quality of the enquiry emphasises his displacement rather than her doubt. The representation of nostalgia is structured so as to suggest that it constitutes a vital part of the process of mourning, encompassing vivid memories of the homeland, an agonised longing to return coupled with a recognition of separation, a symbolic acknowledgement of loss, and, finally, a repetition of the funeral song. The lament takes place in the continuous present but Grant implies that mourning is drawing to a close, a process reinforced by the barrier formed by 'angry billows' and 'frowning skies', the chasm of the 'boundless main' and the sympathy of 'misty showers [that] around you seem to weep'. The narrator is concerned to argue that the absolute geographical separation of the emigrants does not mean that their ties to the homeland will be severed, and, alluding to Rousseau's famous

analysis of the 'Ranz des Vaches', she adds the following note to the line 'They return no more':

There is a plaintive air which the Highlanders always play on the bagpipes at funerals or on other mournful occasions, which when heard out of Scotland, affects a Highlander much in the same way as 'Ranz des Vaches' does a Swiss. The words '*Ha pill, ha pill, ha pill, mi tuillidh,*' signify, 'We return, return, return, no more.' The Author has heard it played to two parties of emigrants marching towards the sea. (102)

The point being made is that when it accompanies funerals and other departures the plaintive air symbolises loss, but when played in a foreign land it acts as a memorative sign, inducing a bittersweet feeling of nostalgia which resurrects the absent homeland and ensures that it will remain forever present in the imagination. As Grant turns to instruct her bards to 'sing in other lands' she turns from considering nostalgia as a response and instead locates it in the context of colonisation as the means of inspiring and consoling the settlers, whom she represents as hopelessly lost in their new wilderness. The portrayal of the emigrants as simultaneously glowing with pride and longing for home points to the instability of such a subjectivity, but the implication is that this constitutes a bitter-sweet dialectic, which, countering alienation and fuelling motivation, reconciles the tension between separation and attachment.

Throughout most of 'The Highlanders' Grant conducts an extensive survey of Highland society, carefully documenting the characteristic features of its landscape, inhabitants, customs and culture. Embedded within this apparently dispassionate account, however, is a rhetoric which locates the essence of national identity in culture rather than place, so as to suggest that Highland society is eminently capable of transplantation. This section of the poem begins with an invitation to join the narrator in tracing 'The local habits of the CELTIC race [...] That live in OSSIANS songs, and RUNIC rhymes', establishing that Scotland's unique heritage and tightly-knit communities are embodied in its oral poetry. At the outset Grant confronts what she considers as the endearing but rather arcane local attachment of the Highlanders: 'Come, trace with curious search what secret cause / Each native's heart with strong attraction draws, / Though wealth in happier lands her stores unlock, / To cling with fervour to his native rock' (25–6). This question is never satisfactorily answered, only reiterated (44) and, invoking the logic of evolution, she suggests that while the harsh terrain has of necessity bred a virtuous community, landscape, rather than being an immutable basis for community, is actually an impediment to its future development. Local attachment is also subtly accommodated by the insistence that the essence of land is embodied in song; in one example land becomes supplementary to song: 'Dear to his heart, those rocks that oft have rung / With

legends which the CELTIC muse has sung' and in another, land inhabits the poetic mind as 'the boundless wilderness of thought' (26, 35). In effect, Grant enacts a rhetorical clearance, figuratively transposing the solidity and permanence of land into the fluid portability of culture. The argument that the Highlanders are uniquely equipped to explore the Canadian wilderness is also promoted through the medium of symbol and prophecy, which situates emigration as a natural stage in the evolution of primitive culture. Remarking that it is customary for the Highlanders to retire to their homes in winter, the narrator foregrounds the tale of young Farquhar, whose dauntless quest to rescue his father's lost heifers becomes a symbolic analogue for the collective destiny of his kinsfolk. As he sets out for the perilous Corry, Farquhar proclaims: 'I go, where to the west / Declining suns in Ocean's bosom rest: / I go, your wand'ring heifers to explore, / To find them, or, alas! return no more' (54). This both recalls and anticipates the emigration of the Highlanders, whose fate it was, and will indeed be, to 'return no more'. Having reached the summit of Corryaric, the hero observes how the sun 'Begins his radiant progress in the East; / And where with milder majesty he shines, / When in the western wave his light declines' (56). The implication is that just as Farquhar's survival depends on fixing his attention westwards, so too will the survival of the Highlanders depend on a westward move, and through the symbol of the setting sun this trajectory is framed in terms of a glorious destiny. The move is also given divine approval when after having chided himself for succumbing to 'coward fears', the hero thanks the Almighty for protecting him throughout his dangerous journey and submits to his 'dread command, – / I dwell beneath the shadow of that hand' (57).

After this survey of Highland society, Grant charts the events of the Jacobite Rebellion, the Highland clearances, and the waves of emigration that followed, and, incorporating a Whig view of history, the narrative is framed in terms of the inevitable demise of old customs and the inexorable modernity of full political union between Scotland and England. The connection between the Jacobite Rebellion and emigration was already prefigured in the account of Farquhar's journey when he eventually rescued Moraig and her family from the deserted village of Glendoe, for, at this point, Grant suggested that the depopulation she initially contemplated was ultimately caused by the Rebellion. This link is fully established through Charles Edward's dramatic Farewell Song, after he hears of the Battle of Culloden and judges that he will henceforth be doomed to perpetual exile. Invoking Farquhar's sublime revelation, the song traces the decline of the Stuart dynasty through the symbol of the setting sun, and its magisterial climax reveals that rebellion and emigration are fatally intertwined, for, as the sun of Jacobitism declines in the West, it marks the site of rebirth for the British Highlanders. The song ends with Charles Edward's mournful declaration: 'In vain our vanish'd glories we deplore, / For Fate imperious cries, –

return no more!' (76). This prophetic cry, as well as prefiguring his own nostalgia and both echoing and anticipating the nostalgia of the emigrants, completes what has been throughout the poem a haunting refrain by indicating that the threat of Jacobitism has finally been exorcised. The relationship between the Rebellion and emigration is also explained in more conventional terms through the figure of Flora MacDonald, who offers a liberal reading of the Rebellion as unpopular and rash but not deserving 'the rigour of the Victor's hate', and, of course, after helping the Prince to escape, Flora herself emigrates (80). Grant uses Flora MacDonald to argue that the Rebellion should not be seen as evidence of any political commitment on the part of the Highlanders, instead illustrating their affectionate loyalty to a former compatriot, a generosity of spirit which she daringly suggests was entirely bipartisan, for, as Flora tells George II: 'If cast a suppliant on my native plain, / You never should have sought my aid in vain' (88). Throughout, Grant takes the pragmatic view that the Rebellion represented a doomed attempt to resist the reality of integration between Scotland and England. This, she suggests, will result in the creation of a far greater entity than Britain itself, encompassing a network of extended territories that will protect the homeland from the commercial and military threat posed by the French.

Towards the end of the poem Grant returns to the perplexing question of the Highlanders' affection for their country, and, interweaving the narrative of local attachment with the narrative of the Jacobite Rebellion, she prepares the ground for the Highlanders' final farewell to Scotland. Remarking that the successor to Sir James MacDonald held 'frigid notions, and opinions new' and could not understand the organic design of the clan system, she compares his incomprehension with the surprise of a stranger upon discovering the structure of the fig tree in India (90). Ostensibly the metaphor of the fig tree illustrates the communal nature of the clan system, but, given that this foreign fruit had already been successfully cultivated in Britain for over two centuries, and that according to Grant its organisation is based on the principle of dissemination (presumably wide, as indicated in the vague 'However far' (91)) it clearly suggests that the clan system can, and should, be transplanted to more congenial soil. Grant makes this point more directly when she argues that as a result of the legislation introduced by the English after the Rebellion, the Highlands effectively no longer exist to be inhabited; portraying the clansmen as 'Despoil'd of arms, in foreign habits clad', she claims that there remained 'No tie to love the alter'd land' (93). In the light of previous arguments this implies that emigration is the only means by which the Highlanders can retain some of their distinctive cultural identity whilst simultaneously becoming British, a compromise solution that negotiates separation and belonging. With no ties left, the bonds of attachment are deemed to have been released, and, like wild sea birds, the Highlanders are finally depicted soaring to the land of freedom, accompanied by 'loud laments':

When first they felt the swelling billows roll,
'Twas like the pang that frees the parting soul;
And when the dusky isle was lost to view,
Thick answering sobs forbade the faint adieu.
The world of waters mingles with the skies,
And SCOTIA hides forever from their eyes. (94)

Holding in tension the connotations of both death and rebirth, Grant portrays the moment of departure as cathartic and redemptive, also suggesting that the swell of the waves, like the bosoms of the emigrants, embodies a kind of painful plenitude, where the final wrench really prefigures a future state of bliss. Nationality is again firmly located in community and a shared portable culture, so that while Scotland disappears from sight, any absolute farewell is precluded by the collective lamentations of all the other emigrants. On one level, the last couplet emphasises the finality of the departure, but on another it is infused by ideas of blending, absorbing and mixing, and Grant subtly hypothesises that just as the ocean mingles with the sky, though lost to the eye, the homeland is imprinted in the collective imagination of the Highlanders, and will be perpetually rediscovered. At the end of the poem, this reappraisal of the Highlanders' farewell is completed by an explicit articulation of what has been borne in mind all along, namely that their hardy virtue qualifies them to act in Britain's interests by protecting Canada from the designs of the French. Like the Spartans who repelled the Persians, the Highlanders will, Grant hopes, defend British Canada from the potential encroachment of the French, and thereby 'Preserve the sacred flame of liberty' (98).

III

Whereas 'The Highlanders' is structured according to a set of coherent interlocking narratives, James Grahame's *The Sabbath* (1804) is constructed more informally, following a loose associative logic, and at first sight the poem seems less concerned with emigration. What binds together the various strands of Grahame's poem is, appropriately enough, the sabbath itself, and, broadly polemical in intention, it seeks to promote and inculcate the values of Christianity through a radical critique of the institutions that victimise the poor. Like 'The Highlanders' *The Sabbath* is informed by the threat of the French, but it is specifically preoccupied with the possibility of a French invasion, and, arguing that depopulation exhausts the nation's protective resources, Grahame eloquently attacks Highland emigration along with other forms of involuntary exile. These rather pragmatic objections to emigration are, however, underpinned by Grahame's religious and political beliefs, for he identifies this kind of displacement as part of a general system which banishes the most vulnerable and virtuous members of society. For

Grahame, nostalgia is therefore a tragic illustration of harshly exclusionary social practices, and, deploying the prophecy of the Jubilee and the missionary movement, he enacts imaginary resolutions of nostalgia, countering Grant's liberal expansionism with mythical narratives of return. Like the more humane branch of the medical establishment, which recognised that the best cure for nostalgia was to send the patient home, Grahame refuses to countenance any alternative treatments, insisting that emigrants must be restored to their native land.

Beginning with the prospect of a small community in peaceful worship, and ending with the vision of an old man in blissful retirement, both carefully enbodied within the pastoral landscape of Scotland, *The Sabbath* is framed by gestures of protective enclosure. The village is pictured on the day of the Sabbath, when 'The dizzying mill-wheel rests; the anvil's din / Hath ceased' and the community is gathered together, which, for Grahame, encapsulates the inherent virtue of Scotland itself, implicitly imagined as a citadel within a corrupt and menacing world (4). At the end of the poem, he celebrates the joys of tranquil solitude through the figure of an old man whose earthly journey is 'near a close' but for whom 'heaven is his home', highlighting the idea of life's natural journey as spiritual rather than geographical (50). It becomes increasingly clear that *The Sabbath* is informed by the possibility of a French invasion, and the narrator qualifies his approval of seclusion by noting that the old man is 'Retired (yet ready at his country's call)', also praising members of the army and navy in a note which insists: 'We must *continue* in the attitude of an armed nation' (49, 130). In a figurative sense, there is a close connection between the securely enclosed village and the potential invasion of the country, and the frame of the poem might itself be seen as a defensive fortification, suggesting that if the community is broken up, the land will be vulnerable to attack.

In *The Sabbath* the emigration of the Scottish Highlanders is depicted alongside other forms of displacement, and, firmly identified as banishment, it is inscribed within a radical framework that draws attention to the social practices and institutions underpinning it. Grahame outlines his position in relation to aspects of eighteenth-century nationalism when he turns to contemplate a mysterious figure, who, like Gray's Bard, 'broods / O'er all his ever-changing plans of death' (19). The youth's fancied banishment is contrasted with the fates of genuine outcasts like vagrants and prisoners, who, despite having been treated unjustly, exhibit faith in the capacity of divine justice to override the arbitrary tyranny of state laws, and are hence consoled by the thought that they have 'a home beyond the grave' (21). Banishment and imprisonment are united in the figure of the sailor who has been pressed into service, and since he is absent and mute, Grahame speaks on his behalf to protest at the fate of those expelled from their country, asking readers to 'think, think of those / Who, torn away without one farewell word / To wife, or children, sigh the day of life / In banishment from all that's dear to man'

(25). Following this exhortation, he invokes the day of Jubilee, and through the vehicle of this mythical resolution, he insists that the nostalgia of displaced people must be alleviated:

Free is the bondman now, each one returns
To his inheritance: The man, grown old
In servitude far from his native fields,
Hastes joyous on his way; no hills are steep,
Smooth is each rugged path; his little ones
Sport as they go, while oft the mother chides
The lingering step, lured by the way-side flowers:
At length the hill, from which a farewell look,
And still another parting look, he cast
On his paternal vale, appears in view:
The summit gained, throbs hard his heart with joy
And sorrow blent, to see that vale once more:
Instant his eager eye darts to the roof
Where first he saw the light: his youngest born
He lifts, and, pointing to the much-loved spot,
Says, – “There thy fathers lived, and there they sleep.”
Onward he wends; near and more near he draws:
How sweet the tinkle of the palm-bowered brook!
The sun-beam slanting thro’ the cedar grove
How lovely, and how mild! but lovelier still
The welcome in the eye of ancient friends,
Scarce known at first! and dear the fig-tree shade,
‘Neath which on Sabbath eve his father told
Of Israel from the house of bondage freed,
Led through the desert to the promised land; –
With eager arms the aged stem he clasps,
And with his tears the furrowed bark bedews:
And still, at midnight-hour, he thinks he hears
The blissful sound that brake the bondman’s chains,
The glorious peal of freedom and of joy! (28)

Drawing on the authority of the Old Testament, Grahame invokes the prophecy delivered to Moses in the Book of Leviticus that on the day of Jubilee the Israelites would be restored to the Promised Land. Since it follows and counters the original exodus, the narrative does not directly represent nostalgia but instead the resolution of nostalgia, which is assumed to have been a melancholic longing for the homeland rather than a process of mourning leading to the accommodation of exile, as it was in ‘The Highlanders’. The resolution erases what was presumably an agonised departure by placing it within a divine scheme of return, and hence the weary steps of wandering in the wilderness are replaced with the lighthearted gambolling of an excursion, culminating in the ascent of the hill from which the farewell

glance had been cast. The assumptions underpinning this return are that the links between man and country, where country includes home, family, friends, heritage and, of course, land itself, are indissolubly strong. Though shaped by the logic of associationism, the connection seems so intrinsic that in terms of force it is closer to organicism, and in this context the nostalgia of exiles is imagined as a form of slow death. Thus, harnessing the authority of scripture, and extending its promise to all displaced people, by an act of faith Grahame counters narratives of dissemination with a prophecy of restoration.

Following this mythical resolution of nostalgia Grahame announces that the sabbath is celebrated 'in all lands / From pole to pole, or civilized or rude', and he then turns to focus on the situation of exiled Highlanders, 'Driven from their homes by fell Monopoly' and nostalgically singing '*By Babel's streams we sat and wept*' (30, 30, 31). In a note he explains that when the proprietors of Highland estates discovered that breeding sheep instead of black cattle required one tenth of the labour force 'large districts of the Highlands have been nearly depopulated', and, addressing the argument that such measures ultimately benefit the nation, he declares: 'The country and the village inhabitants are, in truth, the *source* of the national population; and if *it* be drained, the towns must of course decay' (112, 113). Within the poem Grahame argues that the bond between the Highlanders and their native land is so powerful that it cannot, and should not, be broken, on the basis that 'strong mysterious links enchain the heart / To regions where the morn of life was spent' (31). This local attachment is emphatically understood to override ties of kinship, and, hence, nationality is located in place rather than community or culture, for, according to the narrator, 'In foreign lands, though happier be the clime, / Though round our board smile all the friends we love, / The face of nature wears a stranger's look' (31). Noting that even when the homeland is deserted the blind man still 'Deplores its distance', Grahame invokes a mode of subjectivity which locates itself though the senses in relation to surrounding landscape, so that, for the man, 'The three gray stones, that marked where heroes lay [...] Oft had they told him that his home was near' (31, 32). Consequently, Columbia's essential strangeness only serves to remind the banished man of the familiarity of home: 'dearer the redbreast's note, / That mourns the fading year in SCOTIA'S vales', he says, 'Than Philomel's where spring is ever new' (33). Having highlighted the centrality of local attachment for the Highlanders, Grahame turns to imagine the tragic situation of a shipwrecked man, who, bearing the double burden of banishment and solitude, lives a life of perpetual nostalgia:

Each seventh eve he marks the farewell ray,
And loves, and sighs to think, – that setting sun
Is now empurpling SCOTLAND'S mountain-tops,
Or, higher risen, slants athwart her vales,

Tinting with yellow light the quivering throat
Of day-spring lark, while woodland birds below
Chant in the dewy shade. Thus, all night long
He watches, while the rising moon describes
The progress of the day in happier lands.
And now he almost fancies that he hears
The chiming from his native village church:
And now he sings, and fondly hopes the strain
May be the same, that sweet ascends at home. (35)

Grahame imagines the shipwrecked man on the Sabbath contemplating in astonishingly precise detail a picture of how his native land would be at that particular point in time. This, as we may recall, was only the first stage for Anne Grant's emigrants, but is instead viewed here as a perpetually recurring moment. The man's existence is characterised by a tension between his physical location and the landscape of his imagination, where the memory of Scotland is both pleasurable and painful because it reminds him of his distance from it. Thus, although he asserts his nationality through song, this medium can only ever be a shadowy substitute which symbolises the painful gap between present exile and the absent yet all-encompassing home. Unlike the trajectory of 'The Highlanders', in which the setting sun indicated to Farguhar that his destiny lay in the west, for Grahame's banished man it serves a recollective, comparative, and confirmatory function by indicating to him what time it is in Scotland. Grahame suggests that the power of memory is such that his vision is nearly realised: 'he almost fancies that he hears', and it is this vivid act of faith that ensures he will be rewarded. And thus we hear the echoes of sweet music 'slowly floating on the shoreward wave' as he is rescued by a band of wandering missionaries, who have renounced 'Their homes, their country, nay, almost the world' in order to bring 'glad tidings to the farthest isles' (38, 39, 39).

Throughout *The Sabbath* Grahame argues on principle that banishment is fundamentally inhumane, severing the intrinsic ties between man and country, but, more pragmatically, he recognises that depopulation is more dangerous in a country facing invasion, a possibility confronted towards the end of the poem. Contrasting missionaries who, like sunflower seeds are 'borne on downy wings / To distant realms', with the promoters of the slave trade, in which virtuous Christian converts are cruelly 'Stolen from their country', he distinguishes between the unnatural crime of piracy and the naturalised trajectory of Christian missionaries, calling on Erasmus Darwin in a note to explain the reference to sunflower seeds: 'The seeds of many plants of this kind are furnished with a plume, by which admirable mechanism they are disseminated far from their parent stem' (42).¹⁹ Of the slave trade the narrator finds England '*literally* and *exclusively* culpable' and he warns it to repent: 'Implore protection to thy menaced shores; / Then, God will blast the

tyrant's arm that grasps / The thunderbolt of ruin o'er thy head' (116, 44). As an indication of what might happen, he describes Napoleon's occupation of Switzerland as an avalanche that has obliterated its native genius of 'Freedom, and her stern compeer, / Proud virtuous Poverty', and contrived a new and shadowy land 'subdued by Slavery's basest slaves' (46). Most importantly Grahame draws on the anecdote about the 'Ranz des Vaches' to represent nostalgia in a new and uncanny light:

No more, as dies the rustling of the breeze,
Is heard the distant vesper-hymn; no more
At gloamin hour, the plaintive strain, that links
His country to the SWITZER'S heart, delights
The loosening team; or if some shepherd boy
Attempt the strain, his voice soon faltering stops;
He feels his country now a foreign land. (48)

In a note, Grahame explains that the plaintive strain is the 'Ranz des Vaches', which, following William Coxe, he says 'was forbid to be played among the Swiss troops in the French armies; as it created in the soldiers such a longing recollection of their native country, that it produced in them a settled melancholy, and occasioned frequent desertion' (126). What is particularly striking about this portrayal of nostalgia is that the context in which it potentially takes place is the homeland itself, a profoundly uncanny and disturbing idea, but, furthermore, it cannot even happen there, for Switzerland has effectively ceased to exist, and the shepherd boy is a stranger in a foreign land who cannot bear to contemplate what it once was. Imagining nostalgia as a hypothetical moment of unthinkable trauma in the context of invasion was to become a more widespread idea as Napoleon pressed further into Europe, but at this point Grahame simply offers it as a distant possibility: 'O, Scotland! canst thou for a moment brook / The mere imagination, that a fate / Like this should e'er be thine!' (48). The tragic scene, then, has an admonitory function, illustrating what might happen to Scotland if England persists in its colonial pursuits, which, by attempting to rival rather than resist the French, are draining the nation of its moral defences.

IV

Throughout this essay, I have explored how nostalgia was imagined in two rhetorically significant Romantic poems as a central component of the emigrant experience which was used to negotiate the national identity of those who both were and were not part of Britain, at a time when the nation was rapidly expanding and therefore reformulating its borders. As well as speculating on issues of the Highlanders' attachment, loyalty and independence, the poems probe more deeply to consider what the basic components of

national identity might be, in what objects they might be vested and, crucially, the extent to which this is affected by geographical displacement. The debate centres around the question of whether nationality is located in culture or place, and the terms in which it is articulated – the language of transplantation and uprooting – illustrates that emigration was beginning to be understood through organic analogies. It is significant that both poems are concerned with a section of the population that was already peripheral, certainly in relation to England and perhaps also to Scotland, but, as we have seen, the special and distinctive features of Highland culture could be used to argue for as well as against the desirability of emigration, as if its very marginality encouraged fluid forms of appropriation. In these poems nostalgia is represented, interpreted and evaluated in the context of strong rhetorical arguments informed by different political standpoints and distinct conceptions of the nation, so that, for Grant, homesickness must be accommodated whereas, for Grahame, this is impossible. Hence, shaped by its commitment to colonialism, ‘The Highlanders’ portrays nostalgia as part of the process of mourning, and, as a state of mind poised between loss and pride, it is intended to inspire a colonial subjectivity based on the negotiation of heroic action with attachment to the native land. In contrast *The Sabbath* is structured by a more defensive vision of the nation where nostalgia is represented as a melancholic desire to return to the homeland, which, if tempered by an unswerving faith in the power of divine justice, will miraculously be rewarded by a glorious restoration as the only just solution to banishment. More broadly, the presence of nostalgia in these poems testifies to profound anxieties about the national identity of displaced Britons, for by imagining the emigrants as nostalgic, Grant and Grahame both respond like protective parents who need to reassure themselves of the continued attachment of their offspring. The configuration of colonists as children has long been recognised as a familiar trope in the history of colonisation, but ‘The Highlanders’ and *The Sabbath* show that they were also situated through Rousseau as exiles suffering from a distressing and dangerous malady. In this respect, the poems might be said to concur on the nature of the disorder but disagree on the best method of curing it, just as contemporary physicians debated the rival merits of, for example, reminding patients of their responsibilities or sending them home to recuperate.

By the early nineteenth century, a significant number of Britons were leaving the country, and the perspectives of Grant and Grahame differ markedly from Goldsmith’s portrayal of ‘wild Oswego’ as an almost unimaginable horror.²⁰ However, in comparison to the 1840s, emigration was still relatively infrequent, and, foregrounding it as momentous, dramatic and isolated, ‘The Highlanders’ and *The Sabbath* are closer to Goldsmith than either Gaskell or Dickens, who register a decisive change in its scale. By the middle of the nineteenth century, the Great Exodus was under way; social commentators like Carlyle accepted emigration as a solution to apparently intractable domestic

problems, and, fittingly, it featured in the conclusions to several Victorian novels: *Mary Barton* (1848), *David Copperfield* (1850) and *Alton Locke* (1850). This Victorian sense of scale was anticipated by the late-Romantic poet Felicia Hemans, whose work dramatises a generalised sense of displacement, featuring a gallery of exiles – soldiers, adults, emigrants – from different historical periods and cultures. Hemans’s poem ‘We Return No More!’ shows that Highland emigration and Romantic nostalgia were subtly redeployed at a time when emigration was beginning to become more firmly established and promoted by state-sponsored schemes in the 1830s.²¹ Most importantly, the key refrain is articulated in such a variety of contexts as to create a plethora of associative echoes and reverberations, so that the initial nostalgia of the Highland emigrants is transformed by the end of the poem into an all-encompassing sentiment characterising humanity itself. By distinguishing between the cyclical time of nature and the linear time of culture, Hemans argues that just as birds do not regret their seasonal migrations from the homeland, we do not lament the passing of summer, the fading of bird song or the setting of the sun because these things are bound to return in the future. In contrast, she suggests, the objects of our nostalgia – dreams, love, trust, faith – are inscribed within a rigid time scheme that consigns them to the irrecoverable past of childhood and history, located by the epigraph in the Romantic period. On one level ‘We Return No More!’ can be read as a sentimental poem in which the specificity of the emigrant experience is lost amid a rather whimsical set of generalisations. Alternatively, Hemans’s insistence that nostalgia is felt by everyone could be seen as a gesture of public sympathy directed at the emigrants, reassuring them of their participation in a common experience. But, underpinning the logic of the poem is a disturbing sense of tremendous and inexorable change, of decisive movement towards some undefined end, and of a mysterious and unexplained destiny, which points to an apprehensive anticipation of widespread cultural upheaval, where emigration is emblematic rather than symptomatic. Bearing in mind that Hemans identifies this temporality as unnatural (though universal) she seems to situate Highland emigration as an originary moment within a nation undergoing profound convulsions of expansion, in which all Britons are at least figuratively, and perhaps even literally, cut off from their past. Hemans’s broad deployment of Romantic nostalgia can be traced through dominant configurations of Victorian memory and medicine, encapsulated in James Copland’s claim that we can never forget the ‘indefinable sweetness [of] our native soil’.²² However, the relationship between emigration and nostalgia was to be realigned in the light of debates on social divisions within Britain, or, what Disraeli identified in *Sybil* (1845) as the problem of the ‘Two Nations’. Mid-century novels like *Mary Barton* foreground the issue of internal migration from the country to the city, and emigration is positioned as an evasive solution to urban poverty and domestic conflict. For Gaskell, migration gives rise to a memory that is nostalgic for a

part of Britain (the countryside) or the nation's history (a vanished rural life) rather than the nation itself. In this context, emigration paradoxically comes to represent a way of recapturing that lost place: the pastoral ending of *Mary Barton* echoes the beginning, and figuratively reinstates all the novel's homeless protagonists. But Gaskell's description of the Bartons' Canadian home, suffused in 'The glory of an Indian summer', is itself tinged with the nostalgic memory of what Britain once was, and the mournful recognition that it can only be that place again elsewhere.²³

Notes

1 I should like to thank Angela Keane for her supportive advice on redrafting this piece.

2 Walter Scott, *Marmion: A Tale of Flodden Field* 5th edn, ([1808]; Edinburgh; London, 1810), pp. 125, 127.

3 Anne Grant, 'The Highlanders; or, Sketches of Highland Scenery and Manners: with some reflections on emigration', in *The Highlanders, and other poems*, 2nd edn ([1802]; London, 1808); James Grahame, *The Sabbath* (1804), in *The Sabbath: A Poem, to which are added Sabbath Walks*, 4th edn ([1806]; Edinburgh; London, 1806). All references are given in parentheses and refer to the page number.

4 Robert Hooper, *Lexicon Medicum; or, Medical Dictionary*, 6th edn ([1802]; London, 1831), p. 887.

5 J[ean]-[Jacques] Rousseau, *A Dictionary of Music*, trans. by William Waring (London, 1778), pp. 266–67.

6 William Coxe, *Travels in Switzerland. In a Series of Letters to William Melmouth, esq. from William Coxe*, 2 vols (Dublin, 1789), vol. 1, p. 457.

7 Walter Scott, *A Legend of Montrose* (1819), Waverley Novels, 48 vols (Edinburgh; London, 1829–34), vol. 15, pp. xxxvi–vii.

8 For this summary, I have consulted Helen I. Cowan, *British Emigration to North America: The First Hundred Years*, rev. edn ([1928]; Toronto, 1961); W. S. Shepperson, *British Emigration to North America: Projects and Opinions in the Early Victorian Period* (Oxford, 1957); A. J. Youngson, *After the Forty-Five: The Economic Impact on the Scottish Highlands* (Edinburgh, 1973); R. A. Cage (ed.) *The Scots Abroad: Labour, Capital, Enterprise, 1750–1914*, (London, 1985).

9 Eric Richards, *A History of the Highland Clearances*, 2 vols (London, 1985), vol. 2, pp. 194–95.

10 Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707–1837* ([1992]; London, 1994), p. 120.

11 C. O. 42 /82, Report of Council, 11 Jan., 1791, cited in Cowan, *British Emigration*, p. 14.

12 I refer to the responses of the *Westminster Review*, 6 (1826), 342–73 and the *Edinburgh Review*, 45 (1826), 49–74, both of which are reprinted in *Emigration in the Victorian Age: Debates on the Issue from Nineteenth Century Critical Journals*, ed. by Oliver MacDonagh (Farnborough, 1973).

13 Earl of Selkirk, *Observations on the Present State of the Highlands of Scotland, with a view of the Causes and Probable Consequences of Emigration* (London; Edinburgh, 1805), pp. 2, 170.

14 See, for example, Stephen Fender's recent study, *Sea Changes: British Emigration and American Literature* (Cambridge, 1992).

15 See, for example, Gerald Newman, *The Rise of English Nationalism: A Cultural History, 1740–1830* (London, 1987).

16 I refer specifically to the reports of the Select Committee on Emigration, of 1826 and 1827.

17 Colley, p. 105; Nigel Leask, *British Romantic Writers and the East: Anxieties of Empire* (Cambridge, 1992).

18 For a summary of the treatments for nostalgia, see Jean Starobinski, 'The Idea of Nostalgia', trans. by William S. Kemp, *Diogenes*, 54 (1966), 81–103 (p. 96).

19 The reference is from *The Botanic Garden, A Poem in Two Parts, Containing 'The Economy of Vegetation' and 'The Loves of the Plants'. With Philosophical Notes* ([1791]; London, 1824), p. 143.

20 Oliver Goldsmith, *The Traveller* (1764), in *The Collected Works of Oliver Goldsmith*, ed. by Arthur Friedman, 5 vols (Oxford, 1966), vol. 4, pp. 243–69 (1.411).

21 Felicia Hemans, 'We Return No More!', in *Works of Mrs Hemans, with a Memoir by her Sister*, 7 vols (Edinburgh; London, 1839), vol. 6, pp. 190–91.

22 James Copland, *A Dictionary of Practical Medicine*, 3 vols (London, 1844–58), vol. 2, p. 900.

23 Elizabeth Gaskell, *Mary Barton: A Tale of Manchester Life* (1848), ed. by Edgar Wright, *World's Classics* (Oxford, 1987), p. 463.