

The noblest prospect which a Scotchman ever sees, is the high road that leads to England, said Samuel Johnson. Like many of his countrymen his vision was impaired by the Great Wen: why else would he utter such a sadly parochial statement? As an Englishman – even more so as a Londoner – Johnson imagined himself as living at the heart of things, a dweller in the Middle Kingdom surrounded by the scurf of a barbarian hinterland. The Scots labour under no such illusion; proudly marginal, consciously peripheral, the world is our oyster, and there are a great many locations better suited to pearl-fishing than that flat bland country to the south.

Are we Scots more naturally adventurous, then? Perhaps our upbringing in the land of the mountain and the flood lends to our characters a staunch and steely resolve; perhaps our vertiginous and all-too-near horizons breed in us a desire to see beyond the hills of home. Or maybe we are just searching for a better climate. What is undeniable is that great numbers have voluntarily departed fair Caledonia, impelled by the outward urge to travel to all the corners of the Earth. Nearly as many, in fact, as those who were compelled to go by economic necessity – either their own, or someone else's.

Going a-roving and a-reiving have been Scottish specialities, celebrated in poetry, prose and song, since the days of Dál Riata. We have breenged, wambled and jouked across the globe, for god, king, and country, fun and profit, romance, revenge, science and spite. High roads and low roads, we've taken them all, and got in there early, too, most times. The first bootprints on the moon belonged to an Armstrong: no surprise to those who know the folk of Liddesdale.

In this issue, *The Bottle Imp* sniffs out the trail of some of our nation's greatest wanderers. John Burnside uses his acute sense for a frontier to walk some dusty and debateable lines in ***Borderlands***, finding beauty in the intersections. Kenneth Simpson, meanwhile, trots along with one of Scotland's most travelled writers, in _____, on a voyage that was powered by steam and impelled by love. A first-class writer but a third-class

passenger, Stevenson gives us our only clear first-hand impression of the true immigrant experience in late-19th century America.

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ones: Ronnie Young takes a _____, and traces out the true paths that underlie the fiction.

Maggie Smith _____ her way around the Scots word of the season, and Alison Grant takes the Gaelic **rathad**. Two new columns give our readers an _____ and provide a profile of the _____ in its 65th year. All this and more is crammed into *The Bottle Imp*'s backpack, as we humphle forwards towards the red channel with something very much to declare!

The Unreliable Narrator

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