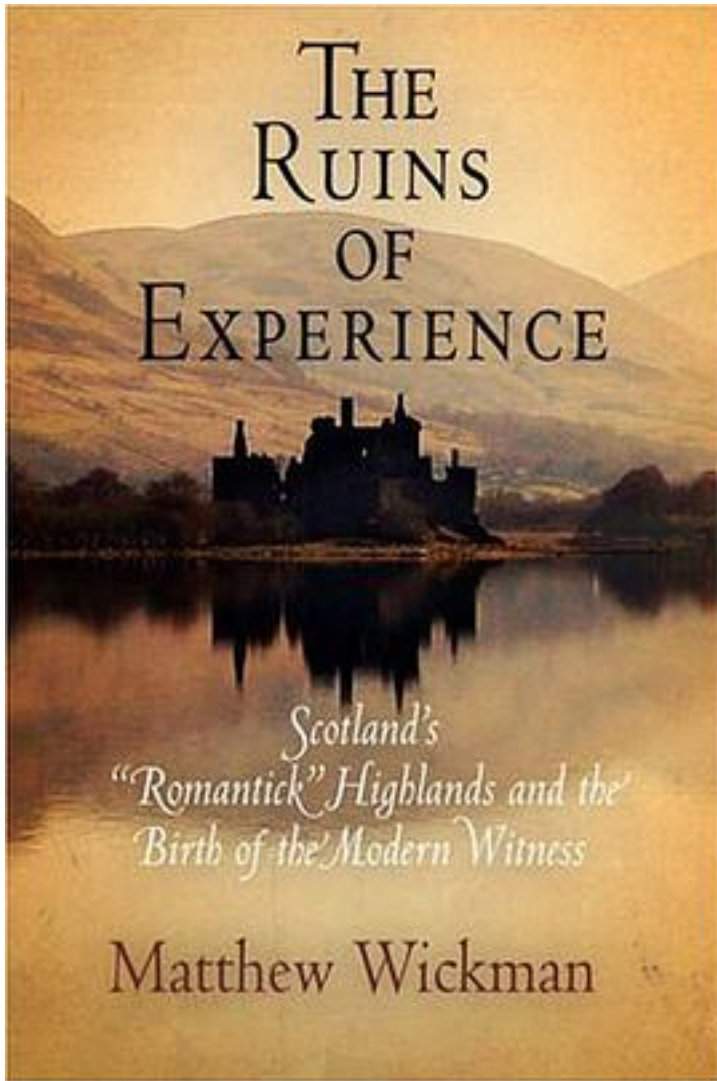


# The Ruins of Experience



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The Ruins of Experience Scotland's "Romantick" Highlands and the Birth of the Modern Witness Matthew Wickman "A brilliant study of legal events and of literary texts concerned with the Scottish Highlands in the late eighteenth to nineteenth century, which then provides a structure for exploring the decay of and nostalgia for experience in subsequent culture."--Tilottama Rajan, University of Western Ontario There emerged, during the latter half of the eighteenth century, a reflexive relationship between shifting codes of legal evidence in British courtrooms and the growing fascination throughout Europe with the "primitive" Scottish Highlands. New methods for determining evidential truth, linked with the growing prominence of lawyers and a formalized division of labor between witnesses and jurors, combined to devalue the authority of witness testimony, magnifying the rupture between experience and knowledge. Juries now pronounced verdicts based not upon the certainty of direct experience but rather upon abstractions of probability or reasonable likelihood. Yet even as these changes were occurring, the Scottish Highlands and Hebridean Islands were attracting increased attention as a region where witness experience in sublime and communal forms had managed to trump enlightened progress and the probabilistic, abstract, and mediated mentality on which the Enlightenment was predicated. There, in a remote corner of Britain, natives and tourists beheld things that surpassed enlightened understanding; experience was becoming all the more alluring to the extent that it signified something other than knowledge. Matthew Wickman examines this uncanny return of experiential authority at the very moment of its supposed decline and traces the alluring improbability of experience into our own time. Thematic in its focus and cross-disciplinary in its approach, The Ruins of Experience situates the literary next to the nonliterary, the old beside the new. Wickman looks to poems, novels, philosophical texts, travel narratives, contemporary theory, and evidential treatises and trial narratives to suggest an alternative historical view of the paradoxical tensions of the Enlightenment and Romantic eras. Matthew Wickman teaches English at Brigham Young University. 2006 | 272 pages | 6 x 9 ISBN 978-0-8122-3971-3 | Cloth | \$59.95s | GBP39.00 ISBN 978-0-8122-0395-0 | Ebook | \$59.95s | GBP39.00 World Rights | Literature Short copy: "A brilliant study of legal events and of literary texts concerned with the Scottish Highlands in the late eighteenth to nineteenth century, which then provides a structure for exploring the decay of and nostalgia for experience in subsequent culture."--Tilottama Rajan, University of Western Ontario

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