‘A Bastard Gaelic Man’: Reconsidering the Highland Roots of Adam Ferguson

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DEDICATION

In memory of Anna Sutherland
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Statement of Authentication

The work presented in this thesis is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, original except as acknowledged in the text. I hereby declare that I have not submitted this material, either in part or in full, for a degree at this or any other institution.

Denise Ann Testa

20 September 2007
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<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BL</td>
<td>British Library</td>
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<tr>
<td>CCG</td>
<td>Classical Common Gaelic</td>
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<tr>
<td>Correspondence</td>
<td>Correspondence of Adam Ferguson.</td>
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<tr>
<td>ed./eds</td>
<td>Edition, editor (s)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Edin. Rev.</td>
<td>Edinburgh Review or Critical Journal</td>
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<tr>
<td>EPG</td>
<td>East Perthshire Gaelic</td>
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<tr>
<td>Essay</td>
<td>Essay on the History of Civil Society (Ferguson)</td>
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<tr>
<td>EUL</td>
<td>Edinburgh University Library</td>
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<td>f.</td>
<td>folio</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fasti</td>
<td>Fasti Ecclesiae Scoticae.</td>
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<td>Fig.</td>
<td>figure</td>
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<tr>
<td>GB</td>
<td>Great Britain</td>
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<tr>
<td>Handbook</td>
<td>Handbook of the Scottish Gaelic World. (Michael Newton)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ibid</td>
<td>Ibidem – the same place.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IOR</td>
<td>India Office Record</td>
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<tr>
<td>JMH</td>
<td>Journal of Modern History.</td>
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<tr>
<td>JPs</td>
<td>Justices of the Peace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life</td>
<td>The Life and Letters of James Macpherson. (Saunders)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letters</td>
<td>Letters from a Gentleman in the North of Scotland. (Burt)</td>
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<tr>
<td>MA</td>
<td>Master of Arts</td>
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<tr>
<td>MP</td>
<td>Member of Parliament</td>
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<td>MS</td>
<td>Manuscript</td>
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<td>MSS</td>
<td>Manuscript(s)</td>
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<tr>
<td>NAS (formerly the SRO)</td>
<td>National Archives of Scotland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NLS</td>
<td>National Library of Scotland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OED</td>
<td>Oxford English Dictionary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principles</td>
<td>Principles of Moral and Political Science. (Ferguson)</td>
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<td>P/pp</td>
<td>page/pages</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pt.</td>
<td>Part</td>
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<tr>
<td>Records</td>
<td>Official Records of the Mutiny of the Black Watch. (MacWilliam)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflections</td>
<td>Reflections Previous to the Establishment of a Militia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Report</td>
<td>The Report of the Committee of the Highland Society of Scotland, appointed to Inquire into the nature and Authenticity of the Poems of Ossian. (Mackenzie)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAS</td>
<td>Statistical Account of Scotland. (Sinclair)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sermon</td>
<td>A Sermon Preach in the Ersh Language (Ferguson)</td>
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### Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>Sister Peg</td>
<td><em>Sister Peg: A Pamphlet Hitherto unknown by David Hume.</em> (Raynor) or <em>The History of the Proceedings in the Case of Margaret, commonly called Peg, only lawful Sister to John Bull, Esq.</em> (Ferguson)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sketches</td>
<td><em>Sketches of the Characters, Manners and Present State of the Highlanders of Scotland.</em> (Stewart)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPCK</td>
<td>Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSPCK</td>
<td>Society in Scotland for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vol. /Vols</td>
<td>Volume (s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VP</td>
<td>Verb phrase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VSO</td>
<td>Verb-Subject-Object</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WN</td>
<td><em>An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations.</em> (Smith)</td>
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<tr>
<td>www</td>
<td>World Wide Web</td>
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Idiosyncratic spelling encountered in quotations within this thesis corresponds to that found in the original texts or documents.
Abstract

This thesis attacks the neglected and unresolved historiographical problem connecting Adam Ferguson’s work, in particular, his *Essay on the History of Civil Society*, to his early life experience. During the 1960s and 1970s, the issue of Ferguson’s Highland background first came to the fore. A knowledge of Gaelic marked Ferguson out from his colleagues, denoting his status as a Highlander. Michael Kugler’s 1994 study examined how Ferguson and his contemporaries constructed an idealised representation of Highland society. My investigation takes a novel approach by concentrating on matters relating to the concrete reality of the locale, language and vestigial shame-honour culture. These were imbibed by Ferguson during his childhood and early adult life. During these phases, Ferguson became conversant in the Gaelic language which acted as a conduit for the mores, history and legends of Highland communities. The elements of the shame-honour culture, the neural pathways generated by Gaelic, and Highland orality, all left their mark on him.

Evidence of these component influences can be identified in his *Essay*, correspondence and other works. An analysis of Ferguson’s correspondence confirms his native-like control of the Gaelic sound system, indicating fluency from a young age. Ferguson experienced a traditional, communal way of life in transition. During his lifetime, there was an increasing drive to modernise the rural parts of Scotland. His insider-knowledge of two cultures, together with his familiarity of two naturally acquired grammatical systems, provided him with some unique intuitive perceptions. Ferguson’s works and his success as a university lecturer testify to his assimilation and integration into mainstream Scotto-British eighteenth-century intellectual culture. Nevertheless, his writing bears some hallmarks of alternating cultural loyalties and the occasional affirmation of his first culture. This thesis provides a new dimension to the understanding of Ferguson’s early enculturation, by inviting fresh explication of important passages of his writing.
INTRODUCTION

The contemporary Scottish sociologist David McCrone is not the first to propose that we all must give an account of our bias or personal reasons for being drawn to a topic.¹ When Adam Ferguson was suggested to me as a thesis topic, I was merely aware that Ferguson was a Scot, a major figure of the Scottish Enlightenment and the author of the Essay on the History of Civil Society.² As I began to read the related secondary literature, I found his works had often been examined from the perspectives of social science, politics or the history of ideas. However, I discovered that political theorists of some sophistication had largely ignored the finer details of Ferguson’s Highland linguistic and cultural background. I opted to retain the suggested subject matter and use my background in linguistics and Celtic studies to analyse what effect Ferguson’s early socialisation and young adult life had had on his mature thought.

This thesis will take a unique cross-disciplinary approach by attempting to link Ferguson’s recorded biographical details with the social and intellectual contexts of his era. In doing so I hope to offer some insightful clarification as to how his dual socialisation in Scotland’s mainstream and provincial cultures intermingled to affect his thought processes and literary output. Most of what we can glean about Ferguson’s past comes from biographical material rather than his own works, which were intended for an academic readership, or as an adjunct to his series of lectures. In one of the newest books to emerge about Adam Ferguson, David Allan believes the Scottish moral philosopher’s divergences from his contemporaries were prompted by some unique experiences during his formative years.³ Ferguson’s ‘Highlandisation’ is often alluded to by writers, yet proper recognition of this factor came only during the latter part of the twentieth century. It is thought that his socialisation in the Highlands was an experience that was remarkably disparate from those of any of his contemporaries. It is my belief that it affected him almost as much as his subsequent classical, academic education.

² See Appendix A, page 410–411 for portraits of Adam Ferguson painted at various stages of his career.
³ David Allan, Adam Ferguson (Aberdeen: AHRC Centre for Irish and Scottish Studies, 2006), 5, 56–57.
study by Michael Kugler, for example, concentrates on the manner in which Ferguson and his contemporaries idealised the eighteenth-century Highlands. Nevertheless, Kugler admits he was not attempting a ‘complete and exhaustive account of the Highland society’ which remained an influence on Ferguson’s mature concepts of civil society and man as a social animal. In order to attack the historiographical problem connecting Ferguson’s socialisation to his work, rather than examining constructed idealisations like Kugler, this thesis investigates the period, locale, language and the agonistic Highland culture using contemporary material and secondary studies. The experiences, insights and views engendered by this early Highland socialisation process may have determined, and even distorted, Ferguson’s perspectives on progress and modernity. The ‘Highland factor’ must have conferred certain idiosyncratic characteristics, which became manifest in Ferguson’s behaviour, mannerisms and worldview. I propose that Ferguson’s Essay and some of his other written works can be read in novel ways when the effect of his Highland socialisation is taken into account. Evidence from Ferguson’s corpus of writing and biographical material will be used to support this proposition.

Therefore, following an introduction to Ferguson’s background, I will outline what this thesis intends to explore. A brief review of literature, which is relevant to the thesis, will help to place it within the existing body of scholarly work. The thesis concludes with a précis of what each of the succeeding chapters contains within them. I hope that the thesis will bring clarity to the way in which Ferguson’s status and identity as a Highlander informed some of his philosophical viewpoints.

4 Michael Kugler, "Savagery, Antiquity and Provincial Identity: Adam Ferguson’s Critique of Civilisation" (Ph D, University of Chicago, 1994), 43.
5 Kugler, "Savagery, Antiquity and Provincial Identity", 47.
6 In the sense used above, culture refers to the ‘way of life’ or everyday life that existed in communities such as the Highlands. Culture is separate and differentiated from civilisation, and it does not refer to high culture such as art or literature. Even so, Ferguson makes the oratorical skills found in primitive societies his starting point for writing about high culture. More on this topic will be found in Chapter Six, pages 261–274. My approach to culture is multidisciplinary but leans toward anthropological notions of Highland culture. This includes knowledge about beliefs, art, morals, customs and law. This crossover of art, literature and everyday life in the anthropological or sociological sense is described by Alan Swingewood. See Alan Swingewood, Cultural Theory and the Problem of Modernity, (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hants: MacMillan, 1998), xi–xii.
It is often supposed that Ferguson fully assimilated into Lowland culture and that his early life was merely incidental. It is also often assumed that Ferguson’s support for the Church and state negated any claim he had to being a Highlander, as if politics, rather than cultural context or early socialisation, dictated his identity. To illustrate this point, Patricia Diane Nordeen repudiates the effect of Ferguson’s past on his philosophy, whilst also diminishing his status as a Highlander. She finds:

While these aspects of his thought are certainly important, it is unclear that this biographical information really sheds light on Ferguson's overall philosophical ideas. Ferguson was not a typical 'highlander', and was not a member of a clan. Ferguson was raised in Perthshire at the southern end of the highlands and was the son of a Protestant highland minister who deplored the Catholic Jacobite cause. Ferguson in turn stood firmly against the Jacobite uprising, going so far as to give a rousing speech in Gaelic to his troops detailing the evils of the Pretender Bonnie Prince Charlie. Ferguson, as a Protestant and a supporter of the Act of Union and a loyal subject of the British Crown, is more in line with lowland thinking of the time than highland thinking. He lamented the decline of the clan system and lauded the 'primitive' virtues of the highlanders. Forbes is right to point to Ferguson's adaptation of the noble savage theme to the highlanders. However, to make this the centre point of his philosophy and his thinking about society is just not accurate.7

The type of assessment like that quoted above assumes that ‘Highlandness’ rests solely in a geographic location or political or religious affiliation. However, Ferguson was no less a Highlander because he did not support the Jacobite cause, nor was he less of a Highlander because he was a Presbyterian rather than a Catholic or Episcopalian. Evaluations like this overlook the fact that Ferguson’s Highland identity ordained that he should serve exclusively within a Highland regiment and preferably as a minister in the Highlands. If Ferguson spent the first ten years of his life in a small Highland town, and later spent a similar period in a Highland regiment, then these periods in his life cannot be dismissed as insignificant, having little or no effect on what came afterward.

7 Patricia Diane Nordeen, "Adam Ferguson on Civil Society: Enlightenment, Community and the Market" (Ph D, Yale University, 2003), 143–144. This characterisation of the Highlands and its history is misinformed and simplistic.
It had not surprised me that two Scottish scholars, Duncan Forbes and Donald MacRae, were among the earliest to suggest that Ferguson’s Highland origins could be a key to understanding his work and, more specifically, the key to reading his *Essay on the History of Civil Society*. With the exception of Fania Oz-Salzberger, Lisa Hill and perhaps Dafydd Moore, the fact of Ferguson’s Highland descent is immaterial to many modern scholars who train their focus on his political or social thought, his moral philosophy or his place in the history of ideas, without considering how his early conditioning might have set him apart from his Scottish contemporaries. To comprehend Ferguson, and to unlock the guarded references to Highland culture in his *Essay* and other works, it is necessary to have more than a rudimentary acquaintance with Highland culture and language. The fact that he spoke Gaelic from a young age and therefore could have developed neural pathways that compelled him to place a premium on community, honour and martial vigour in defiance of more progressive values, then emerging in Enlightenment Scotland, has not been explained or explored in any depth. The socialisation that Ferguson underwent in the Perthshire village of Logierait where he spent his childhood, must have predisposed him to certain ways of thinking, even if it did not completely determine the entire body of his philosophical thought or later actions. I believe this enculturation process contributed to making Ferguson’s texts, particularly his *Essay*, multivalent – having many layers of meaning and ambiguity. It is possible elements of Highland culture informed his ideas on literature and the arts. While there are no explicit references to the Highlands in the *Essay*, Ferguson exhibited a familiarity with oral traditions that he could not have come by without personally encountering them. He also displayed an understanding of the dynamics of pre-literate, endogamous warrior cultures.

There have been various theories to account for Ferguson’s overall reticence regarding the Highlands in the *Essay*. Highlanders were viewed as backward embarrassments in the Scotland of his day. In his *fin de siècle* biography of James *Ossian* Macpherson, T. Bailey Saunders accounted for Ferguson’s reserve on Highland

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matters as being the ‘fashion of the times’. Ferguson made his notions cryptic and calculated so as to not cause offence or enrage readers. Ferguson’s ‘Highlands’ assumed the guise of Amerindian or Tartar societies. The political climate of the time necessitated this ploy. Lowlanders regarded pride in a knowledge of the Gaelic language with suspicion. Many of Ferguson’s fellow Scots probably saw the Highlands as a backwater filled with savages who had made repeated attempts to bring down the King and government. However, the English reception of the Scots was also less than warm at this period. In the early 1760s, the Scottish Lord Bute’s term of office as prime minister broke the Whig domination of the government. Bute’s prime ministership was short-lived due to John Wilkes’ sustained attack on all things Scottish (inclusive of Lord Bute) in the press. Riding on the tide of this anti-Scottish fervour, heated debate then erupted over the authenticity of Ossian, a collection of Highland lays written by a third-century hero and poet, and potentially the British Isles equivalent of The Iliad. Many critics rejected Ossian as a forgery. In this climate, Ferguson was probably cautious about the suitability of topics for inclusion in his Essay. He may also have wished to avoid heaping further scorn on his Highland compatriots, or drawing attention to his association with the Highlands, in case it had a detrimental effect on the course of his career. Fania Oz-Salzberger links Ferguson’s caginess on the subject of the Highlands to the Ossian fiasco. Certainly, as a man of enlightened mien, Ferguson would have been careful to eliminate any evidence of the provincial or particular from his work.

Adam Ferguson was born in the Highland village of Logierait on the twentieth day of June in 1723. Being exposed to Highland life, language and lore at a tender age probably made an indelible impression on his mind, so much so that a subsequent Lowland education could not completely eradicate residual Highland elements from his thought. Ferguson spent enough time in Logierait to fully assimilate and acquire some sense of belonging so that his interactions occurred there as unthinking responses.

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10 See Oz-Salzberger’s quotation on page 15 of this chapter.
would only have been on leaving Logierait that an awareness of ‘boundary’ and difference would have occurred to him. Clearly, this awareness allowed him to place certain values on the attributes of each of the cultures in which he functioned. In chapters designed to provide a background for this argument, I will present evidence that Ferguson was a fluent Gaelic-speaker from a young age, yet he was not permitted to learn to read Gaelic by the centralised power-base. The language was proscribed in the Highlands and earmarked to be replaced by English. I will argue that these circumstances may have had a profound effect on his ability to perform as a Highland preacher – the vocation his father hoped he would enter and – therefore give new insight and reasons as to why Ferguson may have avoided a call to a Highland parish.

Ferguson was no systematic dismantler of Highland culture and language. His own experiences with language and literacy, and those of his father, affirmed the need for prospective Highland preachers to be better acquainted with literary Gaelic. As an alternative to outright prohibition, he may have lobbied for the approval of Gaelic to be used as a means to teach children English. Ferguson’s own knowledge of the language was his passport into the Highland regiment of the Black Watch. This regiment was itself a pseudo-Highland community where he may have been instrumental in the conservation of its characteristic cultural elements and identity. Ferguson’s engagement with the regiment, following his classical education, allowed him to draw parallels between ancient martial valour and similar virtues that had been esteemed for centuries in the Highlands. This allowed him insights into classical texts that his contemporaries were unable to access quite so readily. They were distanced by generations from milieux that espoused similar virtues. Ferguson’s involvement with the Ossian episode demonstrated two aspects of his Gaelic inheritance. Firstly, his recruitment in an advisory capacity displayed his determination to equip Scotland with a ‘Gaelic vision’ in order to maintain its differentiation from its senior partner in the Union. Secondly, his involvement with Ossian — a contrived, anglicised and heavily sanitised interpretation of traditional oral lore — goaded Ferguson to supply in his Essay a detailed explication of the mechanism by which the native original came down to present-day Highlanders. This enculturation, I would suggest, triggered certain structural and memory pathways that were divergent from those developed by English literacy. I believe this early
exposure to the language and lore of the Highlands affected his ability to engage with modernity in quite the same way as Smith and Hume. However, this experience allowed him clear insights into man’s condition, primitive society, the ancient world, progress and imperial expansion, which he otherwise may not have had.

The most useful place to identify where aspects of Ferguson’s past have been dismissed or overlooked is primarily in biographical material. The most comprehensive present day biography written about Adam Ferguson is that by Jane Bush Fagg. She has devoted much of her academic career to uncovering additional facts about Ferguson’s life and has become the single international authority on the subject of the Edinburgh moral philosopher’s life. Her 1968 thesis uses an extensive range of sources. She presents the facts as they appear in the primary source material and largely refrains from supposition about her subject, choosing to defer to experts in the field of politics and the history of ideas, especially when writing on Ferguson’s major works.¹² For Fagg, the

¹² Jane Bush Fagg, "Adam Ferguson: Scottish Cato" (Ph D, University of North Carolina, 1968). For Ferguson’s Sermon, see Fagg, 23–24. Fagg covers the pamphlet war that erupted over John Home’s play Douglas. Fagg gives examples of contemporaneous comment on Ferguson’s Stage Plays. See Fagg p. 41–42. Adam Ferguson, The Morality of Stage Plays Seriously Considered (Edinburgh: 1757). Ferguson’s militia pamphlet, (Adam Ferguson, Reflections Previous to the Establishment of a Militia (London: printed for R. & J. Dodsley, 1756), is treated on p. 73–75, where his satire, (The History of the proceedings in the case of Margaret, commonly called Peg, only lawful sister to John Bull, Esq, (London, 1761), is given similar coverage. Fagg quotes the Reverend Ridpath’s reaction to its publication. See Fagg p. 76. The major works begin after the University of Edinburgh employed Ferguson, these are the Analysis of Pneumatics and Moral Philosophy: For the use of Students in the College of Edinburgh (1766). It was a student textbook. See Fagg p. 93–94. Fagg labels his most famous work, the Essay (1767), ‘rambling but eloquent’. See Fagg p. 95. She sets out the major conclusions which Ferguson arrived at, and then divuges the reaction of the literati. She also outlines contemporaneous, nineteenth- and twentieth-century criticism of the text. (Forbes and Kettler’s work was recent at the time Fagg was writing her thesis). See Fagg, p. 96–113. Fagg also alludes to the German reception of Ferguson’s work. The year before the publication of the Essay, Ferguson updated his Analysis textbook and renamed it The Institutes of Moral Philosophy: For the Use of Students in the College of Edinburgh, Facsimile of 1769 ed. (London: Routledge/Thoemmes, 1994). Once again, after stating the purpose of the book and Ferguson’s main intentions, Fagg turns to Bryson for a critique of it. See Fagg, p. 114. His next work was Remarks on a Pamphlet, Lately Published by Dr Price Intitled, Observations on the Nature of Civil Liberty... In a Letter from a Gentleman in the Country to a Member of Parliament (London: Printed for T. Cadell, 1776). Fagg deals with this on pp 142–155. As Ferguson’s pamphlet was about the American Revolution, Fagg obviously felt she had a greater authority in this area and comments extensively on it. Fagg’s interpretation of Ferguson’s History of the Progress and Termination of the Roman Republic begins on page 232. This also is given an extensive commentary. Fagg uses letters, period sources and authorities, to background the History. She comments on the main thrust of Ferguson’s work, his sources and historiographical style, backing it up with insights from Thomas Preston Peardon’s Transition in English Historical Writing, 1790–1830 (1933) and Willke’s 1962 dissertation. See Fagg, p. 237. See also Jean Carolyn Willke, "The Historical Thought of Adam Ferguson", (Ph D, Catholic University of America, c. 1962). Fagg looks at contemporary and future writers who drew inspiration from this work. See Fagg, 237–243. The last of Ferguson’s works was an updated and extended edition of his textbook.
fact that Ferguson spoke Gaelic is inconsequential. In a work of three hundred and forty
two pages, Ferguson’s role in the Ossian controversy is confined to a mere eight of
them. The Ossian controversy of the early 1760s was a watershed not only in the history
of literature, but also in the acceptance of Gaelic or Highland culture. Fagg ventures no
direct opinion about the Ossian affair other than to illustrate from a letter dated 30 May
1793 where Ferguson admits his Gaelic was imperfect. Given the sweep and tenor of
the work, the influence of Ferguson’s enculturation is relegated to a subsidiary role due
to the brief span of time it amounted to in Ferguson’s long life.

Fagg reprised her work twenty-seven years on when she was called upon to write
the ‘Biographical Introduction’ for Vincenzo Merolle and Kenneth Wellesley’s edition
of Ferguson’s correspondence in 1995.\textsuperscript{13} She includes a section devoted to the storm
over Ossian, although, as in her prior work, Ferguson’s early enculturation is relegated
to the background.\textsuperscript{14} Her final word on Ferguson and his Highland cultural experience is
contained in the following passage:

The ‘bastard Gaelic man,’ also made it clear that he did not regard himself as a
true Highlander, reared as he was virtually on the Highland line and sent off to school at
an early age. The son of a native-born Gaelic speaker who learned English in his teens
and served two Gaelic-speaking parishes, while working hard to promote the teaching of
English by the SSPCK,\textsuperscript{15} Adam Ferguson picked up enough Gaelic to preach to the
Black Watch and minister to the troops. After leaving the 42\textsuperscript{nd} regiment, however, he
avoided a call to a Gaelic-speaking parish, and, aside from a few visits to the Highlands,

\textsuperscript{13} Jane B. Fagg, "Biographical Introduction" in The Correspondence of Adam Ferguson, eds, Vincenzo
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., lxviii–lxxii.
\textsuperscript{15} There is a note (note 14) as superscript here in the text of Fagg’s introduction but no corresponding
endnote. This is a significant admission by Fagg, but she implies that Ferguson’s son Adam, did not have
the same enthusiasm for the quest. With Fagg’s research as a foundation, the Fergus(s)ons’ education and
endeavours to educate Highland children reveal a quite different perspective to a language-oriented
historian.
embraced Lowland life. His defence of Ossian and James Macpherson shows no special Highland passion.\(^{16}\)

This summary of Ferguson’s apparent stance on his Highland past could easily be taken at face value. However, a better acquaintance with Highland language, culture and history, reveals passages in Ferguson’s *Essay*, correspondence and other miscellaneous works that proclaim he had a much more ambivalent attitude to his cultural background. Whilst Ferguson certainly chose to embrace Lowland life and the English language, more than one set of circumstances would have influenced these choices. For instance, after his paralytic attack at age fifty-seven, Ferguson displayed an intense dislike of the cold. This would have given him sound reason to avoid his former Highland habitat of Logierait. Britain’s coldest region, a triangle comprising Blair Atholl, Braemar and Cairngorm, lies just to the north of there.\(^{17}\) Such a detail would have been irrelevant to Fagg’s brief of formulating a factual biography of Ferguson. Fagg later wrote a very detailed paper on the fortunes of Adam Fergusson, Ferguson’s father,\(^ {18} \) in his efforts during the post-revolution period to halt the spread of Catholicism in Braemar.\(^ {19} \) Fergusson became so frustrated and traumatised by his efforts to spread English, civility and the Presbyterian faith that he relished being released from the parish when he received the ‘call’ to Logierait.\(^ {20} \) Nevertheless, an historical account such as this glosses over the questions of language usage during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century in bilingual Gaelic-speaking areas like Logierait. Such issues are complex and nuanced and had their effect on both of the Fergus(s)ons to some degree.

Three years before Fagg began her memoir of Ferguson in 1968, David Kettler included a biographical chapter in his 1965 *Social and Political Thought of Adam Ferguson*. It functioned as a background to his analysis of Ferguson’s thought. Kettler

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16 Fagg, "Biographical Introduction", lxxii.
17 Cairngorm has Britain’s only alpine tundra-like landscape, while Braemar, on the other hand, has recorded temperatures of as low as –27°C. Braemar is just 49 miles from Perth. See Ryan ver Bermoes et al., "The Cairngorms" in *Britain* (Melbourne: Lonely Planet Guides, 2001), 884–885. This region may have been colder during the pre-industrial age. Logierait is in a strath surrounded on three sides by mountains.
18 Ferguson’s father retained the ‘ss’ in his name.
20 Ibid., 303–304.
is more willing to draw conclusions about Ferguson’s Highland past. From him, we get a picture of a Ferguson eager to escape the small university town of St Andrews\textsuperscript{21} for the exciting intellectual stimulus of an elite group of scholars in Edinburgh. Ferguson’s rare skill with Gaelic was engaged when he received the General Assembly’s dispensation to join the Black Watch. Kettler perceives the tension Ferguson underwent in weighing up the benefits of a ‘practical life’ with his desire for one of the intellect.\textsuperscript{22} However, he is not fully aware of the tensions in his assessment of this Enlightenment figure when it comes to the question of Ferguson’s Highland status. The same man who, Kettler claims, took the lead by supporting Macpherson against the sceptics\textsuperscript{23} also ‘retained a slightly patronizing identification with his Highland schoolmates and comrades-in-arms’.\textsuperscript{24} In Kettler’s estimation, Ferguson ‘never lost his command of their language; but he never shared their enthusiasm for “the good old cause” [presumably Jacobitism] and did what he could to secure the loyalties of the Highland troops’.\textsuperscript{25} Note here Kettler’s reference to the Gaelic language, which was ‘theirs’ (the ‘other Highlanders’) but not Ferguson’s. In Kettler’s rendition, it would seem that Highlanders, like Ferguson, who were loyal pro-Hanoverians and Presbyterians, were hardly Highlanders at all. This attitude, once again, encapsulates what is unsatisfactory about some of the scholarly perceptions of Ferguson. The term ‘Highlander’, it seems, only embraces the illiterate and superstitious folk who live in the mountains. It did not extend to men like Ferguson who had been educated in the ways of the Lowlander. For Kettler, the fact that Ferguson ventured south to the capital to engage in intellectual pursuits was evidence that he could not be one of the abovementioned folk of the rough bounds.

In the second half of last century, writers began making more allusions to Ferguson’s Highland past. Noticeably, Scottish writers began to credit that past for providing Ferguson with his characteristic insight into human nature and the science of man. Earlier in the twentieth century, scholars such as Gladys Bryson did not

\textsuperscript{21} Kettler, \textit{The Social and Political Thought of Adam Ferguson}, 44.
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid., 48–49.
\textsuperscript{23} Ibid., 56.
\textsuperscript{24} Ibid., 46.
\textsuperscript{25} Ibid., 46.
distinguish Ferguson’s Highland identity from a Scottish one. The stimulus for new interest into this dimension of Ferguson’s character, personality and writing was probably Kettler. At the close of his 1966 introduction to a new edition of Ferguson’s Essay, Duncan Forbes draws attention to the fact that Ferguson hailed from the Highland side of the Scottish divide, which at that time had been having a ‘dramatic confrontation’ with the Lowlands. Forbes labels Ferguson unique among the Edinburgh literati for his Highland association and his intimate knowledge of two civilisations (the Gemeinschaft of the clan or past, and the Gesellschaft of the progressive, commercial Lowlands). Forbes believes that, for Ferguson, the contrasts between the two types of society were deeply felt. Adam Smith, for instance, knew only the external elements of Highland society. According to Ferguson, Highland society was at the barbarian stage of development where some distinction of wealth and birth existed, yet there was little evidence of any social gulf within the society because of it. Forbes believes that Ferguson clothed the Highlands in fashionable garb such as that of classical antiquity or the exotic American indigenes. However, Forbes insists this should not obscure the fact of Ferguson’s origins. The early biographical record and memoirs of those who knew Ferguson found him to be ‘very much’ a Highlander. Such revelations have elicited a reassessment of Ferguson’s contribution to the foundation of the social sciences.

In 1979, another Scot, D.G. MacRae, wrote that although Ferguson’s life story was irrelevant in the light of his work and thought, three important facts should be kept in mind. Firstly, Ferguson was one of the literati of Enlightenment Edinburgh; secondly, he was an alien; and thirdly, he straddled two cultures. MacRae accepts that Ferguson’s marginality helped fashion him into one of the earliest social scientists. According to MacRae, Ferguson was one of the first to make sociological generalisations. What is more, he made these generalisations as abstract, rational constructs. He commended

26 Bryson, Man and Society, 1–29, and also 30–52. See her chapter on Ferguson and her introduction. They make no mention of the fact he was a Highlander.
27 Forbes, "Introduction", xiii.
29 Forbes, "Introduction", xxxix.
30 Ibid., xxix.
31 MacRae, "Adam Ferguson (1723–1816)", 19 and 24.
32 Ibid., 24.
Ferguson for his pioneering use of ancient documentary material as an aid to seeking out sociological and political clues and assertions, but censured him for excluding religion and kin structure. Cosmology, religion and kin structure may have been subjects that were too raw for Ferguson to consider especially in the light of the hostility exhibited by the Lowlanders and English in the aftermath of the 1745 rebellion. It was prudent for Ferguson to be unforthcoming about his past and his people.

In 1983, Charles Camic did a study comparing some of Scotland’s most influential figures, among them Hume, Smith and Ferguson. The chief aim was to determine if the experiences of these men in early life contributed to a cultural reorientation or psychological autonomy that catalysed the Scottish Enlightenment. Although it does not take into account Ferguson’s Highland past in any specific sense, it does hint that Ferguson’s past had affected him in a way that made him distinctly different from the others in the sample group. Camic concludes that Ferguson was weakly universalistic because of his early experiences. He argues that his past had resulted in Ferguson’s vacillation between dependence and independence, all of which made him a comparative latecomer to the universalistic orientation, evident only in his later, mature works. Camic finds Ferguson’s character blighted by provincialism, partisanship and patriotism. To be fair, Camic could not use Ferguson’s Highland

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Ibid., 21.

Charles Camic, *Experience and Enlightenment: Socialization for Cultural Change in 18th Century Scotland* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 143 and especially 149. Smith, Millar, Robertson and Ferguson were all products of the grammar school system. See also Camic, 226 and 229.

Camic, *Experience and Enlightenment*, 55 especially n. 3. Universalism is making a judgement based on general criteria, as opposed to particularism, where a judgement is made against a set of criteria unique to an individual case.


Camic wrote ‘Only in the case of Ferguson, however was the lingering provincialism sufficiently consequential to entail modification of the Enlightenment’s program to break down divisions between different religious, political and national groups. If Ferguson eventually subdued his early fulminations against Papists, and the French, and others unlike himself to become far more universalistic than Scottish Calvinism, he continually set himself apart from his fellow enlighteners by defending the principle and practice of patriotism and partisanship’. See Camic, *Experience and Enlightenment*, 69. Camic makes observations about Ferguson’s apparent Calvinist orthodoxy. For instance, see Camic pp 57, 61, 64, 67 and 69. He cites such examples as Adam Ferguson, *A Sermon Preached in the Ersh Language to His Majesty's First Highland Regiment of Foot Commanded by Lord John Murray, at Their Cantonment at Camberwell on the 18th of December, 1745* by Adam Ferguson; and *Translated by Him into English*
origin as a criterion of comparison because it was so unique. Therefore, the limited criteria he applies to his sample of Enlighteners automatically lessened the importance of Ferguson’s ten formative years spent in the Highlands, and the subsequent term he spent with the Highland Regiment. These experiences appear to be key elements in the formation of Ferguson’s divergences from Smith and Hume. Camic was probably unaware that Ferguson’s early career choices were governed by the Church which restricted him to serving among other Highlanders, primarily because he spoke Gaelic.

The changes in Church and Government policy actually exposed Ferguson to provincial culture and parochialism for a prolonged period. Since Highland society could be classified as pre-modern, it is only natural that a boyhood spent in such a society would result in some conformity to particularist and collectivist pattern variables. Indeed, Ferguson’s colleagues found him noticeably different from the rest of their contemporaries. Alexander ‘Jupiter’ Carlyle, a leading Moderate clergyman and a close friend of Ferguson, described him as ‘a very Different kind of Man’. Carlyle noted that, ‘He had the Pride and High Spirit of his Countrymen’, which is consistent with Camic’s findings regarding Ferguson’s partisanship and patriotism.


38 The pattern variables operating in Logierait (as Talcott Parsons devised them from Tönnies’ notion of Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft) would be of the following order: status would have been ascribed by birth, not merit. Relationships would have been diffuse, satisfying a large range of needs, as opposed to being specific to satisfy specific needs, as in a modern society. People would adapt behaviour to suit their relationship with people as opposed to behaving according to the norms of a modern society where laws are in place to elicit or prevent certain actions. In pre-modern societies, relationships would have been affective, that is, based on love, trust or loyalty. This is in opposition to modern societies where relationships are based on what people can do for others in particular situations – such as the relationship between a homeowner and a tradesman mending a washing machine. Finally, in pre-modern Logierait, primacy of interest would have revolved around the group rather than as it does in modern societies, where it revolves around the individual. For more explanation see Chris Livesey, Types of Pattern Variables [www] ((2003) 1998–2003 [cited 23 December 2006]); available from http://www.sociology.org.uk/p1mp5b.htm. Alternatively, see Talcott Parsons, On Institutions and Social Evolution: Selected Writings, ed., Leonard H. Mayhew, 1982 ed. (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1985), 106–116, but particularly 107–109.


40 Ibid., 148.
CHAPTER 1

Figure 1. Above.
The Roy Map 17/2e showing Logierait situated between the Tay and the Tummel Rivers upon the triangular peninsula. It is from a survey carried out in Scotland between 1747 and 1755.

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CHAPTER 1

Logierait – the Prelude: Setting and Daily Round

In the previous chapter, I outlined how I hope the insights presented in this dissertation will add to the present body of knowledge concerning Adam Ferguson. The point of this chapter will be to explore the setting and routines in the village and on the estate where Ferguson was born and where he lived for nine to ten years before he was sent to be educated in the grammar school in Perth. The greater part of Ferguson’s childhood was spent in the village of Logierait and the surrounding fields, forest and hills. His abilities to relate, plan, problem solve, attend, follow instructions and play games with complex rules would have been developing during this period of his life. Additionally, it is during this period up to the age of nine that children learn about group security and begin to develop empathy for others. For these reasons, such formative years in Ferguson’s life cannot be dismissed as immaterial. It is highly probable that being sent from Logierait to Perth was an emotional wrench, particularly from his family, peers and


2 In modern Gaelic Logierait is Lagan Ràit. Edward Dwelly, Dwelly's Illustrated Gaelic to English Dictionary, 10th ed. (Glasgow: Gairm, 1988), 1020. It is derived from Lagan – ‘hollow’, ‘pit’ or ‘dell’ p. 563 and ràite – ‘saying’. p. 747. The Gazetteer for Scotland lists its derivation as Lag-an-rath, which is taken to mean the ‘Hollow of the Castle’. It probably referred to a ring fort made of earth or stonework and not the castle remains built by Robert II on the promontory overlooking the village. See Francis H. Groome, ed., Ordnance Gazetteer of Scotland: A Survey of Scottish Topography, Statistical, Biographical and Historical, 6 vols, vol. 4 (Edinburgh: Thomas C. Jack, 1882–1885), 549. Rath can also mean a raft or circle. Indeed, this seems to be the modern definition—the hollow at the circular fort. This is indicative of the very early strategic significance of the area. A later attribute seems to be Lagan mo Chaid or mo Chuid, meaning ‘Chuda’s hollow’—see in link below for the current derivation which is probably also the most ancient ‘the hollow at the circular fort’. The accepted modern derivation of the placenames is listed in Iain Mac an Tàilleir, Ainmean-Àite [www] (Scottish Parliament, 2003 [cited 24 November 2006]); available from http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/vli/language/gaelic/pdfs/placenamesK–O.pdf, p.69. Because it was the seat of the regality court of the Dukes of Atholl its derivation has been Lagan rèite or Logan Reite, as Thomas Bisset rendered it, which means ‘hollow of arbitration’ or ‘hollow of reconciliation’. See Bisset in Sir John Sinclair, The Statistical Account of Scotland Drawn up from the Communications of the Ministers of the Different Parishes, 20 vols, vol. 5 (Edinburgh: William Creech, 1791–1799), 87. Hereafter, SAS. The incumbent of Logierait, Samuel Cameron, agreed with Bisset in the New Statistical Account (1834–1835). See The New Statistical Account of Scotland by the Ministers of the Respective Parishes, under the Superintendence of a Committee of the Society for the Benefit of the Sons and Daughters of the Clergy, 15 vols, vol. 10 (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons, 1834–1845), 685. As there is evidence of long habitation in the environs, the derivation of the placename listed in Ordnance Gazetteer of Scotland is probably nearest the mark.
the security of the village. Therefore, it is appropriate to discover as much as we can about the surroundings and milieu of Ferguson’s childhood in Logierait.

‘The Highlands’ is not a single homogeneous unit comprising part of Scotland’s landmass. Ferguson’s part of the Highlands was already significantly developed compared to other Highland regions of the day, yet there remained interesting and surprising survivals from former times. A better understanding of the society that produced Ferguson should ultimately lead to a more sympathetic or novel way of reading his Essay. This will be explored in more depth in Chapters Eight and Nine.

This chapter will examine the environs, history, housing and domestic arrangements and belief system that could have been encountered during the period when Ferguson knew the Atholl estate. Where appropriate, comparisons will be made with other parts of the Highlands to drive home the unique qualities of the area which shaped Ferguson. It will look at the running of the Atholl estates, what was expected of tenants, and the programmes set in place for the modernisation that was already under way by the turn of the eighteenth century. By examining the estate way of life and administration, the intention is to fill the void that exists in Kugler’s thesis3 – to render an account of the type of society in which Ferguson spent his first nine years of life and with which he later re-established links during his chaplaincy with the Black Watch. An account of Logierait, its living conditions and its mores, the physical environs and climatic conditions (including the political climate) of Ferguson’s birthplace is necessary in order to comprehend who Adam Ferguson was and what motivated him.

The Duke of Atholl was the major proprietor of these parts and had a sizeable estate covering much of Atholl, Strathtay and Balquhidder in one of Scotland’s largest and oldest counties, Perthshire.4 Much of what we know about Logierait postdates the period when Ferguson lived on the estate. However, these accounts are still useful because Ferguson visited Logierait frequently up until the time of a crisis with his

3 Michael James Kugler, "Savagery, Antiquity and Provincial Identity: Adam Ferguson's Critique of Civilization" (Ph D, University of Chicago, 1994), 47.
4 Perthshire borders nine other counties (Aberdeenshire, Angus, Fife, Kinross-shire, Clackmannanshire, Stirlingshire, Dunbartonshire, Argyllshire and Inverness-shire). It is approximately 2,500 square miles in size. See Figure 1 in Charles W. J. Withers, "A Geography of Language: Gaelic-Speaking in Perthshire, 1698–1879", Transactions of the Institute of British Geography, no. 8 (1983), 128.
health, following which it became necessary for him to avoid cold climates. He still kept ties with the people of Logierait, as did his sons and nephews, even after their father and uncle’s death. Much knowledge about the Highlands during the eighteenth century emanates from various tours to survey, report on, or seek pleasurable experiences in the Highland region – the hitherto unknown quantity in the province of North Britain. Numerous purposeful journalists and tourists visited Logierait, including Robert Heron, Thomas Pennant, and the Wordsworths.⁵ Even Ferguson’s friends, ‘Jupiter’ Carlyle and John Home, visited there on 4 September 1775. In recent times, there have been a few studies conducted on the Atholl estates. The most notable of these have been by Leah Leneman, James Stewart and Albert Bil. An earlier study by I. F. Grant focussing on a smaller estate in Inverness-shire is useful for making comparisons.

Logierait is situated in a fertile strath near the confluence of the Tay and Tummel rivers. Writing in the mid-nineteenth century, Adam Black located Logierait nine miles from Dunkeld between the tongue of the peninsula formed by the rivers.⁶ We learn a little more about the town and its inhabitants from the naturalist Pennant, who recorded his visit thus:

Enter the parish of Logierait, containing about 2,200 inhabitants. Go through the little town of Logierait, in feudal days the seat of the regality court, where the family of Athol had an extensive civil and criminal jurisdiction.⁷

As a tourist travelling in 1803, Dorothy Wordsworth recorded the Logierait stopover in her journal in the following manner:

At Logierait, the village where we dined, the vale widens again and the Tummel joins the Tay and loses its name; but the Tay falls into the channel of the Tummel continuing on its course and direction, almost at right angles to the former course of the Tay.⁸

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⁵ I exclude Boswell and Johnson’s travelogues, Burt’s epistolary account, the journal of John Knox and the travel literature of Martin Martin because they make no explicit mention of Logierait.


In 1775, Carlyle found it to be ‘very fine opposite to Logierait where the Tay joins the Tumble’ where ‘Fields appear’d to be rich with Corn almost ready for the Sickle’.

In 1796, Thomas Bisset, the parish minister, placed the village half a mile below the junction of the rivers, on the north side of the Tay and within the jagged triangular peninsular lying between the rivers. Bisset’s geographic depiction has Logierait bordered not only by farms but also by small lochs (Broom, Oishnic and Skiach). The rivers are prone to flood and a major one occurred in 1761, gouging channels and breaking the banks. The surrounds of the village are wooded. Beech and elm still overhang the road into the village. A rock a mile from the church gave a view over rich vales seeded with corn, pasture and woodland. Bisset judged the land to be moderately fertile, the air dry but not unhealthy, and the water pure. Other geological peculiarities mentioned by Bisset include fossilised wood from peat mosses, limestone rock and talc.

In the contemporaneous Scotland Delineated, Robert Heron indicated that the rivers were well stocked with salmon and trout. The environment and soil composition are just two components that contribute to the vale’s fertility. Another is the prevailing weather. The climate of the Highlands is variable, but A. J. Youngson suggests that anything east of a line drawn between Loch Katrine in the south and Loch Eriboll in the north receives approximately sixty inches of rain per year. Areas to the west of the line catch far heavier rainfall. The west also gets a greater share of gales and high wind velocities. Logierait mercifully falls to the east. Bil insists that records for climate were scanty during the eighteenth century, but modelling based on those that do exist suggest that Perthshire’s climate during Ferguson’s era was cold and wet, with thirty to

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9 Alexander Carlyle, "MS 23771" in Carlyle Papers (National Library of Scotland), 1775, 3, 5. This is a journal of a Highland tour taken by Carlyle and Home in 1775. Carlyle was apt to use terms like ‘noble prospect’, ‘grandeur’, ‘majesty’ and ‘beautifull’ as he travelled through Perthshire.
11 Bisset in S4S, vol. 5, 76.
12 Ibid.
sixty inches of rain a year. There was a minimum temperature of six degrees centigrade for at least six months of the year.\textsuperscript{15}

The productivity of the soil for cropping and grazing around Logierait was governed to some extent by climate and geophysics, even before consideration of improved agricultural practices. Early improvers and government agents imbued with the zeal for increased yields during the eighteenth century often based their programmes of improvement on the supposition that the conditions found in one or two places were uniform across the whole Highland region.\textsuperscript{16} Few improvers realised that, although Highlanders had enjoyed little contact with the Lowlands (or other regions of the British Isles) to influence their methods, their combination of cultivation and pasturage had been adapted to specific climatic and soil conditions over several centuries. Thus many regions of the Highlands were suitable for grazing, fewer parts were arable, and substantial tracts were only capable of low productivity. A few examples will illustrate this and establish the fact that of all parts of the Highlands, Perthshire was blessed with greater fecundity than most.

Perthshire was one of the most suitable regions for the production of flax. Perthshire, Strathspey and Deeside were the best locations in the Highlands for pine and larch plantations. Perthshire was also better placed for the practice of shieling cattle than, for instance, Skye. Other regions, like Cromarty, were less fertile and, depended on raising cattle and netting herring for later salting to be economically viable.\textsuperscript{17} Equally, the soil and climate of Dingwall made it suitable for growing wheat and hay, whereas Assynt was more suitable for the cultivation of oats.\textsuperscript{18} The type of small-scale mixed farming possible in Perthshire’s Strathtay was not practical for the north-west of

\textsuperscript{15} Albert Bil, \textit{The Shieling 1600–1840: The Case of the Central Scottish Highlands} (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1990), 43. Ferguson had a stroke around Christmas of 1780, just after his afternoon constitutional. He disliked cold thereafter and it is easy to see why he would have avoided the Highlands. This paralytic attack is mentioned in the following: Louis Odier, "Account of the Last Illness and Death of Professor H. Benedict De Saussure", \textit{Medico-Chirurgical Transactions}, 7, (1816), 230.


\textsuperscript{18} Youngson, \textit{After the Forty-Five}, 163.
Scotland, particularly in Barrisdale and north Inverness-shire. Further incidental features about the region will form the basis for subsequent chapters.

Aside from Logierait’s aspect and fertility, the town and county were well endowed with prehistoric, Roman and early Christian remains and artefacts. These facts cannot have escaped Ferguson, even though he once commented in a letter to Andrew Stuart that Scottish history was of no interest to him. Some inhabitants of the strath had used the stones from cairns, fortifications and ruins for walls or dykes to enclose land during the period of Ferguson’s residency there, and especially after the Enclosure Acts from 1760 onward. In the *Statistical Account of Scotland*, Bisset drew attention to the Pictish stones, Romish chapels and Roman urns found in the immediate vicinity of Logierait. George Chalmers, who sought Ferguson’s assistance for his history entitled *Caledonia*, maintained that Roman arrowheads were also found in the vicinity. A flint arrowhead found in the village was presented to the Duke of Atholl, while a Roman coin unearthed there was presented to Ferguson. The Roman associations of these parts of Perthshire did not go unmentioned by Pennant and Heron, although they were somewhat sceptical of their veracity. The following excerpt taken from Pennant places the Caledonians in nearby Dunkeld, not far from Logierait. The ‘old writers’ alluded to by Pennant below are the Scottish historians Boethius and Buchanan:

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20 Heron records that the skull of a prehistoric horned animal was found in a marl pit and was preserved at Atholl House. Heron, *Scotland Delineated*, 136. Perthshire was crammed with evidence covering centuries of human habitation. The region was filled with cairns, standing stones, wells, Roman remains, carved Pictish stones, and abbey and castle ruins.
21 Vincenzo Merolle and Kenneth Wellesley, eds, *The Correspondence of Adam Ferguson*, 2 vols, vol. 2 (London: William Pickering, 1995), 437. Letter dated Hallyards near Peebles, June 28 1798. Ferguson wrote, ‘And I am ashamed to say/that hitherto the History of Scotland has interested me less than almost any Other that is Commonly read’. Whether this was because of the outward–looking premise of the Enlighteners, seeking universals in the progress of mankind from rude to polished, or whether it was because Scotland’s medieval past was too violent to acknowledge, is difficult to ascertain. A third possibility is that Ferguson was uninterested in the dynastic history of Scotland.
22 See page 32, for photographs of the Logierait Stone. Caledonians of the Perthshire Highlands were thought to be the ancestors of the Picts see Nora Chadwick, *The Celts*, reprint ed. (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1991), 66–67.
The town of Dunkeld is seated on the north side of the Tay; is supposed to take its name from the words *dun* ‘a mount’, and Gael, the old inhabitants, or Caledonians, and to have been the Castrum Caledoniae, and the Oppidum Caledoniorum of the old writers.  

A nearby canal, four miles in length was attributed to the Roman’s building skills. There is a Roman camp situated near Comrie, between the Earn and the Ruchel rivers, which is about the same distance as Perth is from Logierait in a south-westerly direction. Somewhere between the rivers Forth and Tay, but possibly nearer Roman archaeological remains in Perthshire, the Caledonians, led by their chieftain Calgacus, may have faced the might of Rome in the Battle of *Mons Graupius*. The exact location of battle is uncertain and has been placed further north (for instance, Bennachie in Aberdeenshire has been a favoured site). Environ such as these were what men like James Macpherson, and especially Adam Ferguson, might have imagined as they read their Tacitus. The battle and the preceding speech of Calgacus were then well known to most grammar school boys in Scotland. The *Agricola* may have had special significance for Highland-bred boys like Ferguson. The Romans supposedly crossed the River Tay near the mouth of the River Almond in the Sma’ Glen. Heron suspected that the Roman army passed through this glen on the south side of the Tay, through which the road to Logierait now proceeds:

> It is thought, that the Roman army under the command of Agricola, in its progress northward, previous to the decisive engagement with Galgacus, crossed the Tay very near the mouth of the Almond, where there are still some remains of the wooden frame of a bridge.

As well as evidence of Roman occupancy, there are countless place names with *Fianna* associations linked to the lore of Ossian which will be featured in Chapters Six

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25 Pennant, *A Tour in Scotland and Voyage to the Hebrides*, 1772. Pt. 2, 428. Pennant gives the following references for Boethius, lib IX, 167; and Buchanan, lib II, Chapter 22.

26 Heron, *Scotland Delineated*, 146.


28 Galgacus or Galgachan are variations of Calgacus.


32 Heron, *Scotland Delineated*, 146–147.
and Seven. Perthshire, Argyll and Inverness-shire are replete with place names relating to the Ossianic legends. John Knox noted numerous occurrences of them during his Highland journey in the latter half of the eighteenth century.\(^\text{33}\) The name Killin on Loch Tay is derived from Cill-Fhinn (Finn’s cell or church).\(^\text{34}\) This was also purportedly Finn’s burial place.\(^\text{35}\) These place associations not only form the Scottish contexts of the Ossian affair and its vituperative exchanges over national identity and forgery, but along with the past Roman presence in Tayside, alert us to the possibility that Ferguson may have found the history and legend which was manipulated by the Macphersons credible. This tangential dispute and its implications will be discussed in Chapters Six and Seven.

The associations of Ferguson’s childhood district with the Romans, the early Celtic/Christian/Culdaic Church, the united Pictish\(^\text{36}\) and Scottish Kingdoms of Scotland, and latterly, the feats of the brigand Rob Roy MacGregor, are significant. St Cedd, a missionary from Iona, founded the church at Logierait in 650 C.E. The present church is built on those original foundations.\(^\text{37}\) Perth had at one time been the capital of Scotland, and its kings had once been enthroned at nearby Scone.\(^\text{38}\) The Birnam Wood made famous by Shakespeare’s Macbeth is not far from Dunkeld.\(^\text{39}\) As Dorothy Wordsworth discovered, the people of Perthshire and Logierait were not always ignorant of their history, despite their raiding of ancient structures to build their enclosure dykes. Wordsworth recorded an impromptu tour of what had once been the old Regality court. Her guide was a widow who served in the Logierait public house.\(^\text{40}\)

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\(^{34}\) Dwelly, *Dwelly’s Illustrated Gaelic to English Dictionary*, 1018.

\(^{35}\) Pennant, *A Tour in Scotland and Voyage to the Hebrides*, 1772, 393.

\(^{36}\) Robertson makes the now outrageous claim that the then Highlanders of Atholl were descendants of the Picts and that the Scots never came to this part of Perthshire. James A. Robertson, *Robertson’s Historical Proofs on the Highlands* (Edinburgh: William Nimmo, 1865), 151.


\(^{39}\) Birnam is opposite Dunkeld on the other side of the river Tay.

\(^{40}\) See page 32 below for a picture of the Logierait Hotel built on the site of the Old Regality court.

The village of Logierait as it was in 1903. The hotel to the right of centre was built on the site of the old court house visited by the Wordsworths. Dorothy Wordsworth was shown around these ruins by a young...
She took me out to the back-door, and said she would show me a place which had once been very grand, and, opening a door in a high wall, I entered a ruinous court-
yard, in which was a large old mansion, the walls entire and very strong, but the roof broken in. The woman said it had been a palace of one of the kings of Scotland. It was a striking and even affecting object, coming upon it, as I did, unawares,— a royal residence shut up and hidden, while yet in its strength, by mean cottages; there was no appearance of violence, but decay from desertion, and I should think that it may remain many years without undergoing any visible further change.  

This familiarity with and proximity to historical and mythical sites may or may not have been a source of pride or identity to men such as Ferguson. The notion that he abjured his Highland heritage completely, or dismissed it as being of little consequence, even in the light of both the intellectual and political climate of the time, needs to be reassessed. 

As Ferguson was born between the two most significant rebellions of the eighteenth-century these must be of some pertinence. The Forty-Five rebellion is claimed to be the breach through which the Highlander crossed into the modern world. Following this uprising, clan chiefs became purely landlords in the eyes of the law. In recent years, the notion that clanship (pre-1745) and commerce were incompatible has undergone reassessment. Most tenants on Highland estates adjusted to these new demands, or else they followed entrepreneurial tacksmen, who were now without their viceroy status as near relations of the chief, to the New World. Tacksmen were relatives of the chief who leased a ‘tack’ of land from him for the term of their lives. A tacksman sublet his tack to tenants. Traditionally, these tenants were trained in arms and rose, in the service of the chief if needed. Tacksmen may have farmed their tack of land or had it farmed by their tenants, living on the proceeds. 

The political affiliation of clan heads is no guide to their commercial aspirations. The chief of the Camerons, the clan first out in the Forty-Five rebellion,
owned the first commercial blast furnace in the Highlands. He also had business interests in England, the West Indies and America.\textsuperscript{48} Highlanders were viewed as barbaric in Edinburgh, but Ian D. Whyte observes that landowner debt after 1660 actually led to much of the conflict and aggression that became associated with the clan system in the Highlands.\textsuperscript{49} The problem cannot be blamed solely on the inhabitants. Rosalind Mitchison has found the central government was neglectful for having only ten JPs available to be stationed in Perthshire before 1715.\textsuperscript{50} As clanship was ostensibly linked to militarism, it is not surprising that the government opted for draconian measures in the Highlands following the last rising in 1745.\textsuperscript{51} Even so, Allan Macinnes finds that adherence to Jacobitism actually waned between 1689 and 1745.\textsuperscript{52} Perthshire suffered both disaffection leading up to the rebellion, and government retribution as a consequence of it.

The uprising contributed to the financial ruin of many of the old tacksmen families in Perthshire, and virtually forced the Duke of Atholl to continue to make improvements in agriculture, education and habitation on his estate.\textsuperscript{53} Many estates owned by the gentry were forfeited for their part in the unrest. These estates passed into the hands of commissioners who set out to make the forfeited estates models of improvement that landowners in the Highlands could replicate on their own holdings.\textsuperscript{54} On the Duke of Atholl’s estate the MacGregors and MacLarens opted to join the Stuart cause, hence Balquhidder’s environs were laid waste in reprisal.\textsuperscript{55} Even in Logierait,
Thomas Bisset claimed that the townsfolk of the 1770s were still Jacobite to a man. Although it might have been the case at the time of the last rebellion, it is problematic to place any faith in that opinion when thirty years had elapsed since the uprising; especially in the light of the Macinnes findings that Jacobitism was a spent force by this time.\(^{56}\) The House of Atholl was no less impinged upon by Jacobite disaffection:

The spectacular divergence of opinion within the ducal House of Atholl confirmed the equation of Jacobitism with civil war. John Murray, the first Duke, hedged his bet in 1689. He personally supported William of Orange but made no attempt to prevent the recruitment of his tenantry for the Jacobite cause.\(^{57}\) For that matter, the Duke could not even prevent the involvement of his own brothers in the strife. The first Duke’s brother, William, then Marquis of Tullibardine, supported the rebels in 1715 and 1719 and was attainted. Therefore, the third son of the Earl of Atholl, James Murray, became the second Duke of Atholl in 1724. The youngest son of the first Duke, Lord George Murray, commanded the Jacobite army in 1745. Following the Rebellion, he was attainted and died in Holland in 1760. Therefore, Lord George’s son, John, succeeded his uncle as Duke in 1764.\(^{58}\) A son of the first Duke by his second marriage, also called John, took command of the Highland Regiment and eventually appointed Adam Ferguson as its deputy chaplain.

The Duke of Atholl had factors and chamberlains to administer his vast estate. Ferguson lived during a most instructive phase in the development of it. His life in Logierait spanned the proprietorship of the first two Dukes of Atholl, and the period between the rebellions. The Atholl estates straddled both sides of the Highland line.

country as a whole. The Duke of Argyll counselled him against enacting punitive measures. In the first place, many loyal families were relations of others who had supported the rebellion; secondly, many of the gentry of Scotland holding heritable jurisdictions were among the King’s friends. In parliament, Argyll opposed the extension of centralised power. Incidentally, Smith is also of the opinion that the forces of change in the Highlands had begun well before Culloden. See Annette M. Smith, *Jacobite Estates of the Forty-Five* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1982), 1–2 and 238. Persecution was rife, especially if people were Catholic. Many islanders raised subscriptions to emigrate from South Uist where school children were forced to eat flesh during Lent. On other estates, Catholics were forced to choose between housing and their religion. Most chose to retain their houses. Others gambled by distilling whisky illegally in order to pay high rents. See Robert Clyde, *From Rebel to Hero: The Image of the Highlander, 1745–1830* (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 1995), 54–57.

\(^{56}\) Bisset in Sinclair, *SAS*, vol. 5, 81.

\(^{57}\) Macinnes, *Clanship, Commerce and the House of Stuart*, 198.

The Earls of Atholl once had the power of life and death over the people of the estate and, as landlords, the later Dukes still largely dictated the way people lived their lives. First and foremost, the Duke expected tenants to enclose their own land, build their own outbuildings (butteries, breweries) and send children to school until they could read and write English.\(^{59}\) The attractive terms of tenure he offered included payment of a nominal rent for the first few years of a lease, but these terms did nothing to prevent discontent in Perthshire up to 1745.\(^{60}\)

In the period leading up to the Forty-Five, the mainstays of the economy on the estate were black cattle and forestry. However, unlike other parts of the Highlands in the first half of the eighteenth century Perthshire was not totally dependent on these small long-haired beasts which had adapted to negotiating Highland bogs and grazing on heather.\(^{61}\) Tenants living on both sides of the imaginary Highland line on the Atholl estates signed comparable agreements.\(^{62}\) James Stewart is of the opinion that the years 1680 to 1718 were formative years on the estate where old ways were adapted to the changing economy with minimal trauma to the tenants. For instance, though rental forms were standardised by 1722, rent could still be commuted to payment in kind, though this was not encouraged from the 1660s onward.\(^{63}\) The transition to cash rents was not universally accepted at first. All vassal services to the Duke had been commuted to cash by 1717, but the locals of Logierait and Dunkeld were not averse to harassing the Duke when he passed their way.\(^ {64}\) The terms of leases prohibited the subdividing and subletting of land to other tenants (often family members) and had done


\(^{60}\) Bil, *The Shieling 1600–1840*, 266, 273.

\(^{61}\) Caroline Bingham, *Beyond the Highland Line: Highland History and Culture*, (London: Constable and Company Limited, 1995), 147–148. Cattle droving was a profession. After the Union, cattle drovers often drove Highland cattle to markets in England. By the early 1770s and again in the early 1780s the market collapsed. Droving was a dangerous business in the Highlands. Cattle had to cross rivers by ferries, or swam. It was a tradition among cattle drovers to wear fine silver buttons to pay their expenses should they die en route to market. I. F. Grant, *Highland Folk Ways* (London: Routledge, Keegan Paul, 1975), 70. See also Devine, *Clanship to the Crofter's War*, 345. It is interesting to note that Rob Roy’s legend began after Montrose reneged on an agreement for employing Macgregor as a drover.


\(^{64}\) Leneman, *Living in Atholl*, 47.
so from the mid-seventeenth century. Stewart is not concerned by the rental forms and believes that all tenancies concealed subtenancies which went unseen on paper. Nevertheless, there were consequences for not keeping to agreements.

The Duke’s tenants were obliged to enclose three tracts of land and to clear them of stones (which were to be re-used for enclosure dykes). One tract was to be kept under grass, another sown with corn, and the third part sown with pease, potatoes or turnips. Tenants were required to plant trees to be supplied on demand. In addition to rent, they had to pay tax and cess for the upkeep of schoolmasters and ministers and for other public burdens such as ferries and bridges. Those tenants living in cottar townships had to provide wages for herders, especially when shieling cattle. They also had to fund pest controllers and foxhunters. These facts signify there was some division of labour and rudimentary specialisation among Highlanders in the pre-Culloden period. In turn, tenants might have to play host to the Duke, supply aid for his deer hunt, or carry loads for him if required. While contracts of feu carried quasi-military obligations, it was tragic that Cumberland (accompanied by the second Duke of Atholl) destroyed an already advancing infrastructure in retribution for the rising of 1746. Those in the western part of Perthshire who came under the Forfeited Estates Commission did not submit to their new landlords’ improvements with glee according to James Stewart. Those tenants under the Duke of Atholl’s factors remained reasonably compliant. Stewart found that letters of instruction to distant tenants demonstrated the Duke to be a benevolent landlord. There were no substantial increases in rent until the 1770s, and Stewart disclosed that kinship structures as well as the older style runrig farming persisted into the 1780s. This blend of old systems and new developments was a unique feature of the Atholl Estate’s style of management.

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69 Ibid., 123.
70 Ibid., 152.
71 Ibid., 122.
72 Ibid., 146–147.
The failure of a tenant to comply with the lease terms (usually held for a period of between five and nineteen years)\textsuperscript{73} attracted a fine of twenty pounds in the regality court at Logierait or its branch at Balquhidder.\textsuperscript{74} Albert Bil claims that a few tenancy agreements were still ‘customary’ or verbal.\textsuperscript{75} Most tenants were smallholders with an acre of land and a further quarter acre for a cow. In east Perthshire (where Logierait was situated), the land alone was not enough for subsistence, therefore other means of making a living were required.\textsuperscript{76} To this end, the regality court forbade the export of wool from the estate, thereby creating employment for tenants’ wives who spun and wove plaid or tartan.\textsuperscript{77}

Enlightened estate management saw the Duke pioneer the planting of larch,\textsuperscript{78} Scots fir and spruce, which were well suited for craggy parts of the upper Tay around Dunkeld and Logierait.\textsuperscript{79} However, the most lucrative industry for the Atholl Estates as early as 1708 was flax, a commodity that enabled tenants to convert more easily to cash rents. This established trade on a more commercial footing, especially with the advent of large spinning wheels.\textsuperscript{80} Flax seed (or linseed) was grown, harvested and spun in order to sell the yarn at Moulin market by 1 March each year. By 1707, there were already close links between Dundee, Perth and the Highlands for the supply and

\textsuperscript{73} Bil, \textit{The Shieling 1600–1840}, 85.
\textsuperscript{74} Stewart, \textit{The Settlements of Western Perthshire}, 121.
\textsuperscript{75} Bil, \textit{The Shieling 1600–1840}, 98.
\textsuperscript{76} Stewart, \textit{The Settlements of Western Perthshire}, 153.
\textsuperscript{77} Ibid., 121.
\textsuperscript{78} Peter Womack, \textit{Improvement and Romance: Constructing the Myth of the Highlands} (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hants: Macmillan, 1989), 63, 67.
\textsuperscript{79} Bil, \textit{The Shieling 1600–1840}, 336.
\textsuperscript{80} Charles W. J. Withers, \textit{Gaelic Scotland: Transformation of a Culture Region} (London, New York: Routledge, 1988), 290. The distaff and spindle were still used in Scotland up until 1800. Adam Smith looked with favour on the improvements to production and profitability accompanying the introduction of the large Scottish wheel. Each country of Europe made its own enhancements and modifications to spinning wheels. See Marta Hoffman, “The Great Wheel in Scandinavian Life” in \textit{Studies in Folk Life: Essays in Honour of Iorweth C. Peate}, eds, Iorweth Cyfeiliog Peate and J. Geraint Jenkins, (London: Ayer Publishing, 1977), 283–284. The small wheel with a flyer and treadle was in use in Scotland when the great wheel came into use. Generally the great wheel was used for spinning wool and the smaller wheel for spinning flax; however, the great wheel was favoured by the city Scots for spinning cotton. In Europe the great wheel became known as the Scottish Wheel. Hoffman, 287–288. According to Carol Kroll, great wheels were used interchangeably to spin flax and wool. Carol Kroll, \textit{Whole Craft of Spinning from Raw Material to the Finished Yarn}, (New York, Courier Dover Publications, 1981), 6. I suspect where households could not afford both types of wheels, they either specialised in one type of yarn or used the one wheel for spinning all yarn.
marketing of lint, yarn and the finished woven products. Eventually spinning schools were set up on the estate and linen and yarn became staple articles of trade when local markets arose in Dingwall, Crieff, Callander, Logierait and Moulin. Linen was also marketed in Inverness. These markets were established before Ferguson’s birth, and more significantly, well before Adam Smith’s *Wealth of Nations* became what Charles W. J. Withers proclaimed to be the manual for many economic improvements.

Distinguished Scottish historian A. J. Youngson charges *Wealth of Nations* with generality – it has a handful of scattered references to the Highlands and makes no attempt to deal with intrinsic economic difficulties within the region. What Smith did perceive, however, was that no market existed for manufactures in the trackless wastes north of the Great Glen. Suppose that a Highland nail-maker set up in a small factory in that region, and turned out a thousand articles a day: Smith’s hypothetical nailer would be lucky to dispose of the produce of a single day’s labour in a whole year. Outside of Strathay, where Ferguson was raised, there are few regions in Scotland where timber for nailing was readily available. Clearly, Smith had done his research before making such

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81 Withers, *Gaelic Scotland*, 90–95.
82 Ibid., 291.
83 Ibid., 290 and 293. With regard to trade and industry, Adam Smith painted a backward picture of the Highlands, with its high birth rates offset by high infant mortality and poverty. Smith, *WN*, 79. According to Smith, Highlanders were poverty stricken because their day wages were low and they were so isolated. (See Smith, *WN* 79 and 76). Any surplus produce such as timber or cowhides could not be transported easily to market because of the lack of suitable roads, that is, until the military road building allowed easier access. (See Smith p. 151). Tenant farmers remained wholly dependent on the estate and its owner, often a clan chief, for their subsistence. Often estates did not turn a profit because the proprietor and his tenants consumed the entire produce. See Smith, *WN*, 261–262. The estate remained in the family, passing from father to son rather than being sold or broken up as occurred in commercial nations. Smith also claimed that Highlanders remained in family groups because they were without the security of law. However, the chief also meted out justice until the Hereditary Jurisdictions Act put a stop to this practice after the Forty-Five in 1747. (Smith, *WN*, 267). The editor of Smith, Kathryn Sutherland argued that neither justice nor industry were quite as ‘backward’ as Smith painted them. Lochiel, the supposed brigand who raised eight hundred Highlanders for Prince Charles, was a businessman, from whom, soldiers on the Government side actually had borrowed money. See the following: Smith, *WN*, See note * p. 267 and the editor’s note on page 541. See also John Sibbald Gibson, *Lochiel of the ’45: The Jacobite Chief and the Prince*, reprint ed. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995), 24–27.
84 Withers, *Gaelic Scotland: Transformation of a Culture Region*, 96.
85 Youngson is the author of many books on economic and Scottish history, notably on architecture and the Forty–Five and has written on the economy of China, America and Britain.
87 Smith, *WN*, 27. The nailer turned out a thousand nails a day. With over three hundred working days a year this would amount 300,000 nails per annum. A nailer in the Highlands would be lucky to sell a thousand nails in that period. The nailer could find a market in the Lowlands, but the cost of transportation might eat into profit margins. If he passed on transport costs to the consumer, this could make his product less competitive.
a statement. Smith was sure the Highlands had few resources that could be used in profitable industries. Nevertheless, Adam Smith would have seen the benevolence of the Duke of Atholl as creating dependency among his tenants rather than encouraging their independence and fostering their self-interest. He believed that Highlanders who had barely enough productive land were as dependent upon their proprietor as a child upon a parent. In good seasons in Logierait most tenants would have subsisted, becoming dependent on their proprietor only in flood or famine, as in 1784. During this lean year, it was confirmed that the fourth Duke still operated paternally when he sent 500 bolls of meal to the poor of Logierait at his own expense. It also confirmed that even fertile, alluvial valleys could not be relied upon to be productive in a poor season. The improving experiment may have been a relative success in fertile, temperate Perthshire, but this was not always so in other parts of the Highlands.

The penchant for improvement in Scotland, and for increased productivity and profitability of the land, probably stemmed from the fact that Scottish gentry had contact with their English counterparts in English educational institutions. English improvers such as Thomas Coke, first Earl of Leicester at his seat Holkham Hall, the Duke of Bedford at Woburn Abbey, Lord Egremont at Petworth and also the Duke of Portland, must have provided models for proprietors like the Scottish Dukes of Atholl and Argyll. Like English estate owners, the Scots tended to maintain a London residence. Whenever and wherever the experiment failed, Tom Devine suggests that the Highlander and his laziness were made the scapegoat for the failure of improvers to adapt their methods and ideas to the Highland landscape, soil and climatic conditions.

Having considered what was expected of estate tenants by the Duke, and what he felt were his obligations to his tenants, it is now appropriate to survey the housing, diet

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88 Strathspey, Strathtay and Deeside are well-wooded regions of the Highlands but in the West, North West, North East Highlands, and the Western Isles, wood is a scarce commodity.
89 Smith, WN, 79.
90 A boll is a ‘Scotch’ measure. It comprises 140 lbs avoirdupois for meal; or four Winchester bushels for wheat and beans; and six bushels for oats, barley, and potatoes. 500 bolls of meal would be 70,000 lbs, of meal.
91 Leneman, Living in Atholl, 117; Bil, The Shieling 1600–1840, 331.
93 Devine, Clanship to the Crofter's War, 50.
and customs which Ferguson may have been familiar with as people on the estate went about the chores of daily life. We begin by looking at the type of housing Ferguson would have known, as well as those of people above and below him on the social scale.

When Ferguson’s father was called to Logierait from Crathie in 1714 he found the existing manse ‘insufficient’. Therefore, the old manse was ‘razed to the foundation’ and a new one erected in its place, but not without much delay. It would appear that the delay arose due to Ferguson’s specific requirements. Therefore, many building quotations were required before the heritors of the parish would allow a wright or mason to commence work. It appeared that his ideal manse would have four fire rooms and chimneys, a garret, a closet and a staircase. It would be forty-two feet long, fifteen feet wide and fifteen feet high with fourteen or sixteen windows. Decisions had to be made with regard to the yard, dykes, kitchen and outbuildings. Once built, the new manse with its kitchen, pantry, brew-house, stable, byre, barn and yard dykes cost £790 16s. 3d. Scots. Ferguson was born nine years after the manse was built. On the Atholl estate, most tenants, including schoolmasters, ministers and innkeepers, worked a parcel of arable land and kept one or two cows or other animals. This would have been the case for the Fergussons.

Those above the Fergussons, like the Duke, would have lived in some style. Blair Castle had three dining rooms and three drawing rooms plus studies, bedrooms and servants’ quarters. A lesser member of the gentry, like Macintosh of Balnespick in Inverness-shire, had a three-roomed house with four pane windows. The majority of

94 "CH 2/106/3" in Minutes of the Presbytery of Dunkeld, National Archives of Scotland (1713–1714). f. 110.
96 "CH 2/106/3", f. 130. 12 August 1714.
97 Fagg, "Complaints and Clamours", 305.
98 Ibid.
99 Fagg, "Complaints and Clamours", 305.
100 Ibid., 306. After Ferguson senior’s death, the new minister Thomas Bisset also built a new manse in 1756. At this time he received £ 90 a year from the Church for his living and glebe. See Bisset in Sir John Sinclair, SAS, vol. 5, 80.
101 Bingham, Beyond the Highland Line, 158; Stewart, The Settlements of Western Perthshire, 157.
103 Grant, Every-Day Life on an Old Highland Farm, 90. This was unusual considering most houses in the Lowlands would have had three rooms during this period. Lawyers in Edinburgh tenements in 1760
the Duke of Atholl’s tenants built their own houses with unskilled labour and local materials. If materials were insufficient, the Duke would supply them with timber, heather thatch and stone for a chimney.  

This was part of the Duke’s improvement scheme on the estate: all new structures had to be permanent. Customary Highland housing was not of the permanent type. When they moved their cattle to the high summer pastures (the shielings) they lived a semi-nomadic life. Winter housing was more permanent than their summer shieling structures. The walls would be six to twelve feet thick, of in-filled dry stone wall or turf (flail-and-divot) construction. The summer houses were more likely to be turf or flail-and-divot-built. In these structures the roof would be timber and thatch, the floor earth, and there would be no chimney, just a central hearth. The more permanent Highland houses in Perthshire were of the ‘Dalriadic’ type with overhanging eaves and ridged gable wall ends supported on purlins. This type of house sometimes had a byre and separate entrance at the southern end. These houses were often clustered together in a community referred to as a ‘township’ or baile. The aim on the Atholl estate was to settle people in ‘proper’ towns and villages. From 1722 onward the Duke intended to have longhouses of the Dalriadic type replaced by cottages with glass window panes and timber joinery. In 1775, Alexander Carlyle recorded that the Duke built a new housing estate at Callander specifically to encourage the Highlanders to be ‘neat and cleanly’. From these examples it is easy to see that the housing which the heritors of the parish provided for the Fergussons was of a standard slightly better than that which housed the minor gentry. Nevertheless, as a youngster, Adam may have

would have lived in four rooms: a parlour, a consulting room in which business was done, a kitchen and a bedroom. The consulting room would have doubled as a bedroom for the maid and children at night or the maid would have slept in the kitchen. See Plant, *The Domestic Life of Scotland in the Eighteenth Century*, 21.

105 Grant, *Every-Day Life on an Old Highland Farm*, 142; Bingham, *Beyond the Highland Line*, 244; Bil, *The Shieling 1600–1840*, 244.
106 Bil, *The Shieling 1600–1840*, 244. Bil records no information regarding chimneys or windows. Stewart on the other hand says that in West Perthshire, on the Stewart of Glenbuckie’s estate in Balquhidder, an archaeological excavation confirmed the features of chimney and windows. See Stewart, *The Settlements of Western Perthshire*, 135.
109 Carlyle, "MS 23771", f. 5.
visited other forms of housing on the estate. Outsiders like Burt, Johnson and Pennant were horrified by the turfed hovels, each with a soot-blackened inner roof glistening with tar and worms. On the outside, the houses blended so well with the landscape that sheep would graze on the roofs. Burt recorded for posterity his vision of a Highland lodging:

The Skeleton of the Hut was formed of small crooked Timber, but the Beam for the Roof was large out of all Proportion. This is to render the Weight of the whole more fit to resist the violent Flurries of Wind that frequently rush into the Plains from the Openings of the Mountains; for the whole Fabric was set upon the Surface of the Ground like a Table, Stool or other Moveable.\(^\text{110}\)

Conditions inside the homes would have been consistent with the exterior house and the income of the tenant. Within the dwellings of Perthshire, tenants were seldom short of table linen, flax being a chief crop of the county and spinning and weaving being the chief occupation of the womenfolk. Many girls attended spinning schools set up and encouraged by the Duke of Atholl.\(^\text{111}\) By comparison bed linen was rare. Blair Castle would have contained bedchambers with extravagantly expensive beds and chairs.\(^\text{112}\) In contrast, the Duke’s tenants slept in box beds or curtained-off bunks. Poorer tenants may have had a sack mattress of chaff or straw and a blanket. The arrangement for beds at summer shielings was more makeshift, with fern or heather being used which, with the roots downward, was ‘soft as feathers’. In Lowland Ayrshire people slept on straw; so the Highlanders of East Perthshire were comparatively well-off. The Fergussons’ manse would have contained comfortable beds.\(^\text{113}\)

The other accoutrements to accompany daily life on the estate likewise depended on family income. In poor families everyone would have eaten from the same wooden

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\(^\text{111}\) Ibid., vol. 1, 18; Plant, *The Domestic Life of Scotland in the Eighteenth Century*, 41; Grant, *Highland Folk Ways*, 219–221, Grant wrote that many Highland families still had linen made in the eighteenth or early nineteenth centuries. See also Grant, *Every-Day Life on an Old Highland Farm*, 80; Leneman, *Living in Atholl*, 45–46.


bowl. Most utensils were made of wood or horn. Delftware, pewter and oriental punch bowls were rare, but not unheard of. Macintosh of Balnespick, representing the minor gentry, had some inherited silver. Tinkers from Perth peddled milk bowls and, since there was ample wood in Perthshire, many houses were furnished with at least a blanket kist, and better folk had cupboards and presses. Three-legged stools were common, but looking-glasses were rare. Most floors were earthen, thereby, the legs of furniture often decayed. The fiddle-back chair was popular and Perth became a centre for the crafting of furniture made of mahogany, laburnum and the local elm and beech.

For heating and light the common fuel was peat. For lighting, vagrants were often asked to hold aloft turpentine-filled fir candles (found in peat bogs) in return for a few morsels of food. Many households would have had a muckle wheel or a Saxony wheel and treadle for spinning. Others would have had looms. Houses were made secure by wooden locks of a latch and bolt type but, as most cottars had little worth stealing, theft was rare. Communications were poor: Strath Tay remained quite isolated in this day.

The most striking feature about life in Logierait compared to other rural areas, such as those in the Lowlands, was the fact that the Scottish Gaelic language was still spoken. Few have studied the changing demographics of Gaelic in this region better than C.W. J. Withers. He discusses the situation in the county of Perthshire with some authority:

Situated as it is in the heart of Scotland, Perthshire has for centuries straddled the ‘Highland Line’ or boundary between the Gaelic-speaking and English-speaking parts of Scotland. With mountainous, sparsely-populated and largely Gaelic-speaking parishes to the north and west and predominantly arable, densely-settled, and chiefly English-speaking parishes to the south and east, Perthshire parallels on a smaller scale the geography and linguistic divisions within Scotland as a whole.
The parish of Logierait until the late eighteenth century was regarded as predominantly Gaelic-speaking, whereas it has been predominantly English-speaking since the early nineteenth century. Logierait is bordered by the parishes of Moulin and Kirkmichael to the north and east, Clunie, Dunkeld, Little Dunkeld and Dowally to the south and south-east, and Dull and Weem to the south and south-west. In 1698, two parishes bordering Logierait, Dull and Dunkeld, were considered to be English-speaking. However, boundaries were difficult to define since language was labile in some areas, but then so were the criteria which determined what language became the dominant tongue. Withers suggests that forty-five percent of Perthshire’s inhabitants spoke Gaelic around the turn of the eighteenth century. In 1765–1769 Logierait bordered onto a single English-speaking parish (Clunie) and was buffered in the east by the Gaelic-speaking parishes of Dunkeld and Dowally. By 1806 this buffered zone had receded, placing Logierait at the edge of the English-speaking Lowlands. The matter of Ferguson’s linguistic competencies and how they impacted on his career and philosophy will be taken up in succeeding chapters.

Dress in Perthshire during this period included the hodden grey and blue bonnet for men and the coarse blue petticoat or plaid dress trimmed with ribbon for women. Silver buckled shoes and lawn headdresses were worn in the city of Perth. In the Highlands, men wore brogues made of hide, punched with holes so as to release water when they were walking over boggy ground. According to I. F. Grant, Macintosh of Balnespick had thirty-five strathspey linen shirts, but even Highlanders of the lowest class were careful of their appearance. Balnespick had a peruke and ‘shop’ cloth shirt for Sundays. Striped cotton vests were popular attire for the Lord’s Day. Men’s clothes were always tailored, while women made their own. Later, Bisset claimed that printed gowns, duffle coats, great coats, short-skirted coats (and watches) were becoming popular before the end of the century. Toward the latter half of the century Logierait’s minister Thomas Bisset wrote of Highland dress being the exception, but the philabeg (kilt) and tartan hose were still occasionally worn. Earlier in the century there had been

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120 Ibid., 128. See fig. 1, p 24. See also Appendix C, page 414, for a map pertaining to these demographics.
121 Ibid., 130.
122 Ibid., 132.
123 Ibid., 133.
a great attachment to Highland garb. Its embargo was unpopular even among loyal clans. The prohibition on Highland dress was eventually repealed in 1784.\(^{124}\)

The diet of Highlanders was more varied than one might suppose, ranging from milk, butter, cream, cheese and blood at summer shielings, to barley broth, nettle soup, oatmeal, gruel, bread and milk, sowens, pease and pease bannocks, or kale for the poorer folk.\(^{125}\) Turnips and potatoes became staples after their introduction.\(^{126}\) Country folk harvested wild berries in season. Flesh, usually mutton, was eaten only on the Sabbath. A labourer in Perth during the mid-eighteenth century would have had porridge for breakfast, boiled kale or pease for dinner and sowens or brose for supper.\(^{127}\) Estate tenants occasionally had access to game (venison, hare, grouse or ptarmigan) or game fish (salmon and trout) especially at Christmas.\(^{128}\) At this time, the whole community would hunt deer, something the Fergussons were eminently familiar with, but the practice ceased for the Duke’s tenants in 1761.\(^{129}\) Milk and water were the most common beverages, but Highlanders also brewed beer and distilled whisky, while the better-off drank claret. Tea was a luxury and rarely seen. Those who survived this period of Highland history did so in a ‘feast or famine’ style of sustenance.

Ferguson’s diet as a boy, and again following his ‘paralytic attack’, was high in vegetable matter. He commonly had tea, milk, bread and honey for breakfast; for dinner, he had broth made of mutton, lamb or beef with barley and cabbage; and for supper, root vegetables with a pudding afterwards. Some mention must be made of that most Highland of all beverages, whisky. It was thought by the inhabitants to have


\(^{125}\) Grant, *Highland Folk Ways*, 295–296. In addition, the Islanders or coastal folk would have had greater access to fish, shellfish and salt fish. They could also have made blancmange and flummeries from milk, seaweed and jam.


medicinal qualities. Indeed the water, of a ‘dirty yellowish Colour, from the Soil and Sulphur mixed’, was a key ingredient of Logierait whisky. Nevertheless, the distilling, peating and malting of whisky for commercial purposes employed very few men. Although they were following Montesquieu’s notions, like him, Hume and Ferguson write about spirituous liquors. Both these writers enhance their description with local knowledge and personal experience. In his Essay, Ferguson wrote:

> While spirituous liquors are, among Southern nations, from a sense of their ruinous effects, prohibited; or from a love of decency, and the possession of a temperament sufficiently warm, not greatly desired; they carry in the North a peculiar charm, while they awaken the mind, and give a taste of that lively fancy and ardour of passion, which the climate is found to deny.

In a copy of the Essay now in Edinburgh University Library which at one time belonged to Dugald Stewart, its original owner, Commissioner Edgar, has recorded waggishly in the margin beside Ferguson’s aforementioned passage, ‘A very handsome compliment to whisky’. In Ferguson’s case notes, Dr Black (Ferguson’s cousin) recorded that Ferguson drank nothing but tea, milk and water following his attack of hemiplegia. Prior to this affliction he had taken claret with his tavern meals. But Ferguson apparently misled both his physicians, Dr Black and Mr Mudie. Most secondary sources

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130 Burt, Letters, vol. 2, XV, 32. See also James Shaw Grant, who noted there was a lot of folklore surrounding whisky and its reputed medicinal qualities. James Shaw Grant, Highland Villages (London: Robert Hale, 1977), 140.

131 Youngson, After the Forty-Five, 111. About a thousand men were employed in Scotland’s 350 legal stills by 1790.

132 Montesquieu wrote: ‘In countries the aqueous part of the blood is very little evacuated by perspiration. They may therefore make use of spirituous liquors, without which the blood would congeal. They are full of humours; consequently strong liquors, which give a motion to the blood, are proper for those countries. The law of Mahomet, which prohibits the drinking of wine, is therefore a law fitted to the climate of Arabia…’ Charles de Secondat Baron de Montesquieu, Spirit of the Laws, trans. Thomas Nugent, Revised by J.V. Pritchard ed., (London: G. Bell & Sons Ltd, 1914). Book XIV, 15–16. Hume wrote: ‘The only observation with regard to the difference of men in different climates, on which we can rest any weight, is the vulgar one, that people, in the northern regions, have a greater inclination to strong liquors, and those in the southern to love women. One can assign a very probable physical cause for this difference. Wine and distilled waters warm the frozen blood in cold climates, and fortify men against the injuries of the weather, as the genial heat of the sun, in the countries exposed to its beams, inflames the blood, and exalts the passion between the sexes’. David Hume, Selected Essays, ed. Stephen Copley and Andrew Edgar, Oxford World's Classics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998). ‘Of National Characters’, 123.


135 Dr Black’s notes were drawn up in May 1797. P. Mudie, "Account of the Last Illness of Adam Ferguson", Medico-Chirurgical Transactions 7 (1816), 230.
state that Professor Ferguson was a teetotaller, citing Black’s medical notes as support. It now can be revealed that in a letter to John Macpherson written in 1789, Ferguson admitted to taking whisky before bed, saying that it had been a habit of two or three years’ standing. He claimed that his health had benefited from the practice. Macpherson, whose own grandfather was a nonagenarian, encouraged Ferguson during his illness with ‘You have a naturally good constitution; and I place every hope in your Highland stamina, your philosophy, and knowledge’. Ferguson died in his ninety-third year.

In the Highlands, luxury was thought to be effeminate – a word used by Ferguson no less than six times in his Essay. Indeed, the descriptions below are consonant with the whole of part two of Ferguson’s Essay, ‘On the History of Rude Nations’, but his consistent use of the word comes in ‘Of the Corruption incident to Polished Nations’. Here Ferguson has transported a value from traditional society and used it as a guide to evaluate contemporary civilised society. The examples below underscore the ruggedness of the Highland constitution. Locals vigorously opposed Wade’s road and bridge-building in the Highlands because it would make the common people ‘effeminate’. Rivers and streams were fast-flowing in Scotland, and most had to be forded or ferried at considerable risk to the boat occupants, rider or wader.

Michael Newton briefly picks up the theme of the Highlander being averse to luxury, then leaves the Bishop of the Isles to expand on the subject:

From early times, Scottish writers have commented upon the ruggedness of the Highlanders. A mid-sixteenth-century account by the bishop of the Isles is typical of these observations:

They have all, not only the greatest contempt for pillows, or blankets, but in general, an affection for uncultivated roughness and hardiness, so that when the choice, or necessity induces them to travel in other countries, they throw aside the pillows, and blankets of their hosts, and wrapping themselves round with their own plaids, thus

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138 Penny, Traditions of Perth, 26. Balnespick was able to buy in black and green tea, flour, claret and candles. Grant, Every-Day Life on an Old Highland Farm, 303–305; Ferguson, Essay. Ferguson uses the word in the following passages: Part II, Section III, ‘Of Rude nations under the impressions of property and interest’ p. 102; Part III, Section V, ‘Of National Defence and Conquest’, 148; Part VI, Section II, ‘Of Luxury’ p. 234. Then he uses it three times within one section. Part VI, Section III, ‘Of the Corruption Incident to Polished Nations’, pp 237, 238 and 239.
139 Ferguson, Essay, 74–94.
they go to sleep, afraid lest these barbarian luxuries, as they term them should contaminate their simple native hardiness.\textsuperscript{141}

Although he was writing of the Hebrideans rather than mainland Highlanders, Martin Martin noted, ‘Their simple diet contributes much to their state of health, and long life; several of my acquaintance arrived at the age of eighty, ninety and upwards.’\textsuperscript{142}

A factor that augured well for lengthy life was the protection cowpox generated against smallpox. Among agricultural peoples, especially in the cattle-oriented Highlands, it had long been known that exposure to cowpox protected milkmaids against the more virulent smallpox. Variolation was practised in the Highlands as early as 1715, and in 1791, Bisset recorded that since inoculation had been practised in Logierait, fewer people suffered from smallpox than previously.\textsuperscript{143} Incredibly, Edward Jenner’s \textit{An Inquiry into the Causes and Effects of the Variolae Vaccinae; a Disease Discovered in some of the Western Counties of England, Particularly Gloucestershire, and Known by the Name of The Cow Pox} was not published until 1798.\textsuperscript{144} This flies in the face of critics such as the Reverend Dr Watson who castigated Highland people for not being innovative. Nevertheless, the Highland practice of variolation for small pox actually put pressure on land due to population increases.\textsuperscript{145}

Despite the harshness of life in Logierait, there was some time for amusement. The people of the Highlands, who were often accused of idleness, made time for entertainment and tradition. Song accompanied many farming tasks, and for their amusement, in the evenings and at celebrations the hills often resounded with the sound of fiddle.\textsuperscript{146} The Duke of Atholl was a patron of Scottish fiddlers Neil and Nathaniel Gow and most villages had dancing masters or ‘dancies’.\textsuperscript{147} Ferguson mentions ‘Contre

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\item[141] Ibid., 263.
\item[142] Martin Martin, \textit{A Description of the Western Islands of Scotland, Circa 1695} (Stirling: Eneas MacKay, 1703), 237.
\item[143] Bisset in Sinclair, \textit{SAS}, vol. 5, 79.
\item[147] Bingham, \textit{Beyond the Highland Line}, 187. The Gows played at a wedding on the estate in 1780.
\end{thebibliography}
dance’ (country dancing) to John Macpherson. Tales of Fionn were still told around peat fires in ceilidh houses and Ferguson was among those who spearheaded the collection and preservation of these tales.

Some mention must be made of the rites and ceremonies surrounding life’s milestones. There were innumerable Highland customs and superstitions attached to birth, death and marriage. Many of these types of superstition were found throughout continental Europe, yet superstition in the Highlands remained entrenched until much later periods, due to the region’s isolation. Thomas Bisset recorded some of those popular in Logierait:

Immediately before the celebration of the marriage ceremony, every knot about the bride and groom (garters, shoe-strings, strings of petticoats &c) is carefully loosened. After leaving the church, the whole company walk round it keeping the church walls always upon the right hand.

All records of provincial marriage ceremonies postdate the period Ferguson lived in Logierait. He eschewed ritual and superstition like that recorded by Bisset above and chose to marry in the city of Aberdeen rather than at Logierait. As both a Moderate minister who had not demitted, and an eminent Enlightenment figure at the University of Edinburgh, it was no great wonder he informed his intended, ‘My mind is greatly to abridge formalities and points of ceremony. I like them not on any occasion … they are impertinent to a degree of abomination’. To his father-in-law he admitted, ‘I am averse to all solemnity’. The ordinary Highlander of Logierait, even at this late date, was still captivated by superstition; despite being outwardly converted to the Established Presbyterian Church. Ferguson must have been acquainted with the strange beliefs of Logierait’s inhabitants.

149 Bingham, Beyond the Highland Line, 160; Grant, Highland Folk Ways, 4; Grant, Every-Day Life on an Old Highland Farm, 129–130. Colonel Stewart questioned those who were dubious about Highland refinement. He insisted that it was Rizzio who had imported such music to Scotland. Mary Queen of Scots certainly influenced dancing introducing the refinements of the French ballet. It gave to Scottish dance, both Highland and Country, its graceful steps and ballet positions. Stewart, Sketches, vol. 2, Appendix N, xxvii.
150 This will be discussed in more depth in Chapter Six.
151 Bisset in Sinclair, SAS, 83.
This calls into question his understanding of the psycho-social functions of such beliefs in the maintenance of norms and sanity in traditional societies. However, he was quick to point out the fact that superstition was not confined to traditional or barbarian societies and that it was a feature of advanced civilisations as well. Nonetheless, superstition was one aspect of Highland life which must have been abhorrent to a man of science like Ferguson. For all the modernisation on the Atholl estates during the course of his life, the taint of superstition clung on in Logierait with tenacity if Bisset’s information was not overblown. Even the work of ministers failed to break the people’s reliance on their old charms and ingrained habits such as stirring sunwise instead of ‘widdershins’ (right to left). Fire, water, life and death still preoccupied many Highlanders. There were many fire-and-water festivals and rituals, too numerous to elaborate on here. One example is the Celtic fire festival known as Samhuinn which is celebrated throughout Scotland as Hallowe’en. The reformed Church also successfully used prior Celtic and Christianised tradition as a reminder to the sinner of their impending death. MacGregor recorded a tale of the minister of Kirkmichael (not far from Logierait) who was abducted by fairies as late as the 1850s. This shows just how persistent such beliefs were, even in the central belt of the Highlands. Moderatism (and even Ferguson’s father) had failed to displace the superstitions of the vulgar in Logierait. In order to illustrate their dependence on the old customs, Anne Ross writes:

The life of the Scottish Highlander was up to comparatively recent times hedged round by taboo – things to be done, things to be avoided. The whole of everyday life was circumscribed by the powers of good and evil, that were believed to be everywhere present, to be placated by ritual or exploited by magical powers.

Thomas Bisset devoted a disproportionate amount of space in his report for the Statistical Account of Scotland to the superstitions of the people of Logierait. Bisset

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154 Newton, *Handbook*, 255. For example, the birth of a handicapped child was explained by the ‘changeling’, thereby assuaging the parent’s guilt.
156 Some modern Hallowe’en traditions followed in America and Scotland today are based on charms to ward off evil spirits and fairies. These include many still practised today, such as bobbing for apples.
158 Anne Ross, *The Folklore of the Scottish Highlands* (London: B.T. Batsford Ltd, 1976), 12. The emphasis is by the present author.
puts these superstitions down to ignorance and Catholicism, even though at this period Bisset had only ten professed Catholics in his parish of 2100 souls. In 1755, Alexander Webster counted the number of Catholics as eight, in a total population of 2487 throughout the parish of Logierait. Yet there were superstitions surrounding all facets of life: from the date of marriage to the phases of the moon, the course of a fever and the propitiation of brownies. Many of these superstitions were associated with well rituals such as that of St Fillan’s well. Those unfortunate to be carted off to St Fillan’s were often the hapless victims of mental illness. The ill person was plunged naked into the water and roughly tumbled about. They were then tied to a wooden frame in the chapel in a particular manner, and a hollowed-out stone or the chapel bell was placed upon their head. If they survived the exposure and were found untied next morning, it spelt the promise of a full recovery. There are at least two other sites associated with St Fillan and curative stones in the district. During the 1790s, the people of Logierait still celebrated Beltane on 1 May with boiled milk, eggs and a cake fashioned with teats as a propitiation for the coming season.


162 Bil claims it was often associated with women and dairy products. The cakes had representations of teats or nipples made into them. See Bil, *The Shieling 1600–1840*, 206. Bisset in Sinclair, *SAS*. 84. See also Stewart, *Sketches*. Appendix, xxv. Stewart also speaks of the tying of knots. A generation after Ferguson, men were allowed to fire guns in the air and play the bagpipes. Weddings in Perth were slightly different, with the friends of the couple washing their feet for them and children throwing things at them as if they were being pilloried. There was a custom of riding the brose, a steeplechase in which the bridegroom exhibited his manliness by completing a steeplechase–like course. Penny, *Traditions of Perth*, 30. This author also writes of funerals. See p. 32–33. All these celebrations post-date Ferguson’s period in Logierait. However, traditions did not change a great deal over the course of his lifetime and must have been even more entrenched during his boyhood.
Despite superstition, Moderatism was said to work well in the Highlands. Nevertheless, by the 1790s Moderatism’s day in Atholl was numbered, as one by one, parishes fell to Evangelical incumbents, possibly because the imposition of refinement and English manners was dissonant with the Highland ethos.\(^{163}\) However, dislike and suspicion cut both ways: English was as harsh to the Highland ear as Gaelic was to the English one. The dearth of priests and preachers meant much amity existed between the denominations, allowing them to share facilities. But this amity was more likely to have arisen out of generations of community co-operation rather than the locals’ conception of Moderatism, as John MacInnes thought.\(^{164}\)

Communal labour was required at times such as winning the peats, harvest; or prior to 1761, hunting.\(^{165}\) The highly specialised manner of farming in the Atholl Highlands meant that it was impossible for individuals to attend to both the home pastures and the shieling pastures where cattle were separated from the rest of the stock by a considerable distance. As Bil noted, in the Perthshire Highlands the delegation of functions within a community produced a highly developed social structure and organisation already evolving toward a division of labour.\(^{166}\) It is probable that Ferguson was involved in these activities as a child or on extended visits to Logierait as an adult. Even so, Logierait had few shielings attached to its holdings. In such a small community land was often cultivated by groups. Three to four men might have been required to operate a plough on difficult terrain. Bisset gave an overview of practices in Logierait in the 1790s when there were possibly more ploughs available than there had been when Ferguson lived there.\(^{167}\)

About 200 ploughs are employed in the cultivation of our lands; on the uplands, the plough is drawn by 4 horses yoked a-breast, and the driver walks backwards. On the plains, when 4 horses are employed, they are yoked \textit{two and two}; and in some instances, 2 horses draw the plough without a driver.\(^{168}\)

\(^{164}\) MacInnes, \textit{Evangelical Movement}, 125.
\(^{165}\) Bil, \textit{The Shieling 1600–1840}, 87.
\(^{166}\) Ibid., 196.
\(^{167}\) Between 1760 and 1791 carts had increased in number in Logierait from as few as fifty to around four hundred. Bisset in Sinclair, \textit{SAS}, vol. 5, 77.
\(^{168}\) Ibid.
Nonetheless, this way of life required both co-ordination and co-operation.\(^{169}\)

Bisset approximates that by 1791, there were sixty artisans in Logierait.\(^{170}\) There would have been probably fewer when Ferguson was a boy, many would have been weavers, cobblers, coopers,\(^{171}\) tailors, blacksmiths, tanners and distillers.\(^{172}\) In 1802, over half a century after Ferguson had left for university and had been co-opted into the Black Watch, 1190 of Logierait’s 2890 inhabitants were involved in trade and manufactures.\(^{173}\) Some artisans, for instance shoemakers, lived rent-free on the estate in return for supplying their landlord with shoes. In Logierait, the division of labour, far from encroaching, already existed.

Over the course of his lifetime, Ferguson had ample opportunity to observe the advance of the division of labour and specialisation in the Highlands. Its aims were to maximise profits and increase efficiency. Ferguson had enough exposure to Highland life to understand that prior to social change, Highlanders were bound by their common intimate knowledge of locality, settlement and the natural rhythms of rural life.\(^{174}\) The rapidity of social change in the Highlands outpaced that in urban centres. New research confirms the psycho-social impact on the region:

> During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the people of the highlands of Scotland experienced a massive disruption of their lives. Pushed by debt and encouraged by the ideology of improvement, landlords evicted their tenants from the farming townships of the interior to make room for vast commercial sheep farms. Houses were burnt before the eyes of their occupants, elderly people and the sick flung indiscriminately out into the rain, and whole communities were forced into new lives on the coast, or else to emigrate outright.\(^{175}\)

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169 Newton, *Handbook*, 145; Grant, *Highland Folk Ways*, 44. Bil wrote that a plough might be owned among four families. They might own a horse each and all four horses would be yoked to the plough. One man would hold the horses, another would drive the horses, the third would steer the plough and the fourth would be required to remove rocks from the path of the plough. See Bil, *The Shieling 1600–1840*, 149.


171 Coopers were necessary tradespeople because they made implements and containers for dairies and butteries, such as churns. Most Highland families had milk cows.

172 Grant, *Highland Folk Ways*, 240. Balnagowan is from the Gaelic *Baile na Gobhainn* ‘town of the smith’. Smiths were armourers in times past and manufactured swords and mail. They were necessary in the Highlands, most obviously for shoeing horses, and supplying iron cart tyres. They also made farm implements such as peat shovels. See p 199. The Fergussons of Moulin (Ferguson’s grandfather) were a smithing family.

173 “Dr Adam Ferguson” in Annual Obituary and Biography for 1817 (London: 1817), 239.


175 Ibid., 139.
The upheaval of removing farmers to the unfamiliar surroundings of the coast, where they had no knowledge or fishing skills on which to draw, broke the continuity of their intimate local knowledge. While it was once thought the Highlanders accepted the situation, Michael Given has recently uncovered fifty acts where Highlanders defied the authority of their proprietors between 1780 and 1855. With the advance of modernisation and the coming forces of commercialism, status became tied to material success. If Chris Dalglish credits Ferguson with identifying the social problems of the commercial age, it was because Ferguson understood, better than any other Enlightenment figure in Scotland, the adjustments that Highlanders needed to make. In order for Highlanders to survive in the modernising world, they had to change their language, their mode of thinking, and also their way of life.

Having been raised in a co-operative environment, threw into relief for Ferguson the notion that the human faculty to communicate and co-operate was there to benefit society and not solely as a means for unending improvement. Duncan Forbes concluded:

…it was easier for Ferguson than for his Lowland friends, to grasp the point that the good life is not necessarily impossible without economic progress, as his friend Hume thought, and that real civility, depends on community, even perhaps at the expense of unity.

The love of the land remained with Ferguson for most of his life. He had probably experienced farm work as a child and continued to work the land during much of his adult life. Ferguson’s love of farming probably informed his knowledge of natural science. He bought Sciennes House so that he could have a farmyard near to the city and the University of Edinburgh. Here he could exchange dung and hay to help with his horse-breeding enterprise. In town, he had three mares going to a stallion, as well as a she-ass for carrying burdens to and from town. He first farmed at Bankhead, about twelve miles from Edinburgh.
rheumatoid arthritis. Ferguson’s second eldest son, James, also had this disease, which is hereditary, but uncommon in men.) See letter 23 of the collection in India Office Records in the British Library. Adam Ferguson, ”IOR MSS EUR F 291/97” in Sir John Macpherson: Private Correspondence – Adam Ferguson (British Library). Letter 10. By May 1795, Ferguson petitioned John Macpherson to be appointed Keeper of the Duke of Queensbury’s deserted Castle, Neidpath, on the banks of the Tweed. Merolle and Wellesley, eds, Correspondence, vol. 2, 364. Ferguson secured Hallyards which was around two miles from Neidpath in May 1796. The castle was not habitable for Ferguson, who felt the cold after his hemiplegia attack. Merolle and Wellesley, eds, Correspondence, vol. 2, 392.

183 The castle lies on the banks of the Tweed near Peebles and dates from the thirteenth century. Ferguson was one of the last to live in it before it became a ruin.
After his wife died, he tried his hand as warden of Neidpath Castle. He found the castle to be uninhabitable, so he decided to lease Hallyards. He paid £707 for the lease and £22 a month rent for Hallyards. The property comprised forty acres of rocky ground, some of it wooded. Ferguson had a small house and a small enclosed section of fine pasture. The latter two properties were both in the Borders.

Ferguson began to farm Hallyards in 1796 at the age of seventy-three. He wrote to Carlyle telling him he expected to cut a thousand stone of hay and a ‘Pinch of Backward grass.’ He had a grey mare due to foal pasture enough for twelve beasts and was negotiating with Carlyle for a colt. In September of 1796 he offered to kill a sheep from the hills to make puddings and sheep’s head haggis for Carlyle. He sowed oats during the autumn of 1797, but had difficulties getting carrots to survive in the heavy snows of winter, having far better luck with his turnips. Ferguson moved to St Andrews once he became too frail to farm.

This chapter functions as an introductory orientation to the type of society and way of life Ferguson would have encountered on the Atholl estates and in Logierait during the eighteenth century. It was compiled from contemporary sources and secondary studies undertaken on documents of the estate administration papers by leading Scottish scholars. Apart from a knowledge of farm practice and a love of working the land in order to entertain members of the literati with home produce, Ferguson took away from Logierait the awareness that, given a hospitable climate, fertile soils and easy access to markets, economic improvement could be highly successful. However, not all Highland regions were blessed with these necessities. Ferguson also realised that modernisation could be instigated without whole-scale eradication of a traditional lifestyle. Life on the Atholl estates combined modern farm and building techniques, enclosure of land, and the education of offspring. The safety net of paternalism remained in the event of flood or famine. In Atholl, other forms of employment were required apart from farming, an activity that could not always sustain a family. This meant that the inhabitants engaged in other occupations such as spinning.

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187 Ibid., 425. Letter dated around October 1797. For the snow problem, see p. 416.
or weaving in order to subsist. Ferguson was acquainted with the operation and effect of
the division of labour long before he set foot in Edinburgh. It was his education in
Perth, and then at university, that drove a wedge between his own early belief system
and that of the common folk of Logierait. They seemed to hold onto tradition in spite of
the education and opportunities provided for them on the Atholl estates. Even so,
Ferguson marvelled at their imagination and retained an empathy with those who
continued to live in small, pre-commercial or traditional communities such as the one
into which he had been born. However, he could also draw back and see them
objectively. The next chapter will look in depth at Ferguson’s probable knowledge and
competence in the Gaelic language and its consequent effects on his thinking.
CHAPTER 2
Adam Ferguson and Adhamh MacFhearghuis:
Ferguson and the Gaelic Language

In the previous chapter, I made some observations about the provincial Highland setting of Ferguson’s formative years. His housing and accommodation was relatively plush and well furnished in comparison even with minor Highland gentry of this era. He lived on a progressive and improving, Highland estate under the auspices of benevolent landlords who saw fit to provide a safety net for tenants during lean years. The community was co-operative, although an increasing amount of specialisation was present. Nevertheless, this community still retained many of its traditions, particularly its values and its belief system. Most people used their first language, Gaelic, despite the policies of church and government. The increase in business and trade, and the geographical location, near English-speaking parishes and the Lowlands, did not alter the belief system of the people of Logierait in any substantial way.

Ferguson was a man of the Enlightenment, but it is often forgotten that he was also a Highlander and subject to the constraints and strictures of fellow Highlanders during this time of rapid social change. That Ferguson spoke Gaelic is incontrovertible. It was the chief qualification for the position of deputy chaplain in the Highland Regiment to which he found himself posted. To a person unacquainted with the Gaelic language and its history, the fact that Ferguson spoke Gaelic for at least a portion of his life may appear to be not much more than a subsidiary element of his past. I suggest that it was anything but incidental and that it was in fact a force that not only shaped his path through life but, more importantly, one that at one time was a conduit of his thought. Gaelic did not completely recede into the background even when he became one of Britain’s leading eighteenth-century thinkers. The chapter will look at Ferguson’s

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connection with Gaelic and shed light on his language behaviour. As Chapter One described the community from which Ferguson sprang, so this chapter will provide a background for later chapters. The reason the Gaelic language was such an important factor will become more apparent as these chapters unfold. Language was a topic of debate during the Enlightenment. To dismiss Ferguson’s knowledge of a naturally acquired second language, Gaelic, dismisses the fact that it was for him a second tool with which to conceptualise the world.

The course this chapter will chart begins with the concept of language within the setting of the Scottish Enlightenment. In this chapter I hope to establish that Ferguson’s naturally acquired second language offered him a second way of interpreting reality. In contrast, Hume and Smith acquired second, third and even more languages artificially. Hume was fluent in French, but this language was still a foreign tongue. Smith, on the other hand, though competent in several languages, learned all of them artificially and used them to interpret texts rather than for spoken communication and human interaction. It is worthwhile to follow the available clues because they give a portrait of Ferguson within the milieu of eighteenth-century Scotland that is quite unlike anything hitherto recorded. Although respected for his small but crucial contribution to the history of ideas, Ferguson was at one time at the mercy of Scotland’s social and political circumstances. Since language functions as a marker of identity, it is a factor that cannot be ignored. I will endeavour to estimate Ferguson’s linguistic competence and assess the dialect he spoke. Through the analysis of an experiment designed to discover the most useful orthography for Gaelic, many clues exist with regard to the type of Gaelic Ferguson spoke. It also throws some light on his competence in the language. Finally, I will conclude the chapter with a look at how knowledge of a second, naturally acquired language gave Ferguson a slightly different perspective on glottogenesis (the origin of language in humans) from those of his contemporaries.

Questions of language are fundamental to all facets of society and its progress. According to Janet Sorensen, the issue of language as a conventional system of arbitrary signs was considered very seriously during the Enlightenment.⁡ Enlighteners puzzled over whether language was a prior necessity for human reasoning or whether reason was

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enough to form the compact necessary for the development of an artificial system of signs (language). Their interest in linguistic compacts arose because of the manner in which these men were educated. Dugald Stewart, once a student of Ferguson’s, observed that agreements were entered into by the dumb, but also by people in establishments where oral communication was restricted, such as convents and boarding schools, where ideas could not be disseminated via the natural language pathways without fixed meanings and mutual agreement. In such restricted environments, the temporal transference of ideas was improved through the successive augmentation of predecessors’ accomplishments. This gave men of the Enlightenment, like Stewart, who passed through such institutions, a starting point for debate. Their point of contention centred on whether language or glottogenesis was antecedent to society or a product of it. A further possibility was that language and society were coeval. Life history evolves in concrete verbal communication and not in an abstract linguistic system of signs; therefore, for scholars like V. N. Volosinov and P. N. Medvedev, the generation of language would appear to be sociological. Sorensen finds this in her study relating to the production of grammars in Britain during the Enlightenment. This interest in language is important since, in Scotland, the debate was conducted in Scots English, yet printed in emergent standardised English.

Apart from the glottogenesis debate, Scotland also had its own matters of contention surrounding the type of English spoken there. Provincial Scots dialects were deemed ‘vulgar’ and unintelligible to English ears. This produced a climate where perpetuating the Scots dialect (a variety of language spoken in a particular geographical location or social group) was also seen to be perpetuating provincialism. As Ernest Campbell Mossner noted, Scottish intellectuals desperately wanted and needed to be understood by their southern neighbours in England. For Edinburgh’s literati, this led to an obsession about the avoidance of Scotticisms (dialectal Scottish words rarely used

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4 Sorensen, *The Grammar of Empire*, 12. Sorensen seems to be quite unaware that Ferguson, and not Hugh Blair, was the Highlander among the Edinburgh literati. See also pages 8–10 of Sorensen.
outside Scotland), especially in print. The abhorrence of Scotticisms by the English arose partly from their hatred and fear of Jacobitism. Therefore, Scots sought to purge their speech and writing of telltale Scottish expressions. Fania Oz-Salzberger remarks in her introduction to Ferguson’s Essay that Hume had objected to the Essay on the grounds that it was in spirit and terminology ‘too Scottish’. However, on the subject of the Essay, another collector and avoider of Scotticisms, James Beattie, remarked ‘There are uncommon strains of eloquence in it, and I was surprised to find not one single idiom of his country (I think) in the whole work’. In fact, one of Beattie’s Scotticisms does appear in Ferguson’s Essay, although a survey of the work could find no others. Ferguson was just as careful about avoiding the use of Scotticisms as other members of the literati. He confessed to his publisher William Strahan, ‘I pant after propriety & purity more than I can ever reach. I have great confidence in your Ear accustomed to a better Dialect than my own & in your Eye accustomed to the minute inspections of the best writings’. Such a plea illustrates how dependent Scottish authors were on the

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8 Jacobitism was a movement intent on returning the absolutist Stuart dynasty to the British throne. English fears were compounded when the unpopular Tory, Lord Bute who also happened to be a Stuart and a Scot, assumed power in Britain (1762–63). This did little to aid the popularity of Bute’s compatriots during his brief tenure as premier. See Karl W. Schweizer, "Lord Bute: Interpreted in History" in Lord Bute: Essays in Re-Interpretation, ed., Karl W. Schweizer (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1988), 1–16.


11 See Adam Ferguson, Essay on the History of Civil Society, ed., Fania Oz-Salzberger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 132. It occurs in Part III, Section III ‘Of National Objects in general, and of Establishments and Manners relating to them’. The Scotticism is ‘summons’ in place of the more correct ‘summon’. It occurs in the context of the following sentence and is underlined, ‘The members of every community are more or less occupied with matters of state, in proportion as their constitution admits them to a share in the government, and summons up their attention to objects of a public nature.’ See also James Beattie, Scotticisms, Arranged in Alphabetical Order Designed to Correct Improperities of Speech and Writing (Edinburgh: William Creech and T. Cadell, 1787), 79. None of Hume’s list of Scotticisms was found in Ferguson’s Essay. See David Hume, Letters of David Hume to William Strahan: Part I (On Line Library of Liberty, 1888 [cited December 3 2005]); available from http://oll.libertyfund.org/Texts/Hume0129/LettersToStrahan/HTMLs/0223_Pt02_Letters1.html.

12 Merolle and Wellesley, eds, Correspondence, 284–285. Letter 206. Ferguson was happy to allow Strahan’s suggestions as long as they did not alter his meaning.
It also establishes that Ferguson was intent on avoiding Scotticisms. Unlike his colleagues, Ferguson knew a language even more closely linked to Jacobitism than Scots English.

These obsessions even went as far as amending family names. Scots were so fixated by the Englishmen’s exasperation with Scotticisms, that it led Hume and Ferguson to change the spelling of their own family names, albeit for slightly different reasons. Hume changed his family name from ‘Home’ because he failed to persuade the natives of England that the correct pronunciation of ‘Home’ was ‘hyoom’. It is possible that Hume’s reform prompted Ferguson to alter the spelling of his own name from Fergusson. The historians of the Fergusson family name wrote, ‘Professor Ferguson committed no crime when he dropped his father’s second ‘s’ on the grounds that it was unnecessary, therefore unworthy of a philosopher’. One might also include the possibility that Ferguson changed the spelling of his name in order to obscure its Gaelic origin. In Perthshire, patronyms underwent a gradual change where the Gaelic *mac* (son) prefix was converted to the Anglo ‘son’ suffix. The dropping of the second ‘s’ does somewhat obliterate the transparency of the derivation ‘Fergus-son’ from the Gaelic *Mac Fhearghuis* or *Mac Fhearghais* (son of Fergus). The Perthshire locale, and the patronymic’s derivation from the Gaelic language, situates this modification of ‘Fergusson’ to ‘Ferguson’ suggestively at the interface of Anglo-Gaelic culture and influence.

Along with the changed patronymic, the most notable characteristic of Ferguson’s Highland background was his apparent knowledge of the Gaelic language. This language propelled him into his early career as both a minister and an army chaplain. It would have confined him to the Highland world had it not been for friends, patrons and his own brilliance, but this will be dealt with in greater detail in subsequent chapters. Scholars such as Forbes and MacRae, and after them Fagg and Oz-Salzberger, have suggested that Ferguson’s thinking may have been influenced by his Highland

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13 This subject is discussed in detail in a forthcoming book by Richard B. Sher entitled *The Enlightenment and the Book: Authors and Publishers in Eighteenth-Century Britain, Ireland and America* to be published by Chicago University Press.
past. Ferguson’s engagement with Highland society has never been fully evaluated, partly because there is so little on record to follow up. Ferguson himself appeared to be uninterested or ambivalent about the matter. But this indifference might have been a ploy to deflect attention away from his Highland connection. Speaking Scottish Gaelic, however, was more than an association; it was a way of interpreting the world and describing a way of life.

Michael Newton emphasises that a Highlander was not just a person from a certain geographic location but one who also spoke the Scottish Gaelic language. Early travel literature from the eighteenth century period supports this condition. Non-Highlanders, such as the English soldier-surveyor Edmund Burt and Highland tourist Dr Samuel Johnson, have indicated that the Scottish Gaelic language rather than residential status was the most necessary attribute for being classed as a Highlander. Samuel Johnson’s remark confirms this:

Under the denomination of Highlander are comprehended in Scotland all that now speak the Erse [Scottish Gaelic] language, or retain the primitive manners, whether they live among the mountains or in the islands; and in that sense I use the name, when there is not some apparent reason for making a distinction.

Ferguson may not have hailed from the islands, but he lived in a fertile strath bounded by mountains, still fairly isolated during his childhood. Since Ferguson’s time, ‘Highland’ credentials have become far less definite than Johnson’s classification. For non-Highlanders it seems the Scottish Gaelic language has long been the chief marker of Highland identity. But since many Scottish Gaelic speakers are now raised in urban areas the question of Highland identity has become more indistinct. A recent study has thrown light upon the negotiation of Highland identity with reference to Scottish

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17 At the height of the era of insurgency, and between the Jacobite Rebellions of 1715 and 1745 and their immediate aftermath, it may have been prudent in polite circles to disown any association with the Highlands.


Gaelic.\textsuperscript{20} James Oliver’s survey found Scottish Gaelic to be the foremost marker of Highland identity, though some of Oliver’s respondents also awarded prominence to locality and heritage. The word ‘Highlander’ today is often used to distinguish a person who comes from the geographic location of the Highlands but who cannot speak Scottish Gaelic. ‘Gael’ has become the more accepted term for a Highlander who speaks the Gaelic language. However, many of Oliver’s fluent Scottish Gaelic respondents believed the term ‘Gael’ to be meaningless given that it is possible for a person of any ethnic background to learn the Scottish Gaelic language. Nevertheless, it would appear that there was, and still is, a continuum ranging between those who live in the Highlands, have Highland forbears and speak Scottish Gaelic at one end, and those who have none of these attributes at the other. Oliver’s survey found the element of ‘backwardness’ which attached itself to Scottish Gaelic speakers during the eighteenth century remains. For this reason, many of Oliver’s respondents expressed relief at being unable to speak Scottish Gaelic.\textsuperscript{21} All this being so, we can now consider whether or not Ferguson deserved the appellation ‘Highlander’.

Ferguson’s father was a native speaker of the Scottish Gaelic language and used it to conduct his parish church services. However, it would appear that Ferguson’s mother, Mary Gordon, spoke only Scots English. Mary’s father sprang from the main

\textsuperscript{20} Gaelic belongs to the Goidelic branch of the Insular Celtic languages. The Goidelic languages include Manx, Scottish Gaelic and Irish, which is also sometimes known as Gaelic. For more on this see pages 68–80 of this chapter. To make matters even more confusing, in the eighteenth century, Scottish Gaelic was known as Erse (a corruption of the term Irish). This is why Gaelic in Scotland is now known as Scottish Gaelic, to distinguish it from Gaelic in Ireland which is commonly referred to as Irish. For Scottish Gaelic being a marker of Highland identity see James Oliver, "Scottish Gaelic Identities: Contexts and Contingencies," [www] Scottish Affairs, no. 51 (2005) [cited 9 March 2007] Available From http://www.scottishaffairs.org/onlinepub/sa/oliver_sa51_spr05.html.

Oliver surveyed young people within and without the Highlands (i.e. in Glasgow) on how they identified themselves and others. This included such criteria as whether they were fluent or partial speakers of Gaelic, were learning Gaelic, or could not speak Gaelic at all. The range of people surveyed included those who had been born and raised in the Highlands among Highland families who spoke fluent Gaelic, to those who had been raised in the Highlands but spoke no Gaelic. Many Highlanders had to move into cities to continue education or find employment. Many married while in the city and remained there. Others returned to the Highlands to raise families. In many such cases only one parent spoke Gaelic. Within these marriages, the Lowlander husband or wife might or might not learn to speak Gaelic. This circumstance also applied to the children of the marriage. In Oliver’s survey no person claimed to be a Gael who could not speak Gaelic, or who was only learning the language. Of these people, 42 out of 45 could not speak Gaelic or were only learning it. This left three fluent speakers of Gaelic among those who did not identify themselves as Gaels. People such as this may have been born of Gaelic-speaking parents in Glasgow or Edinburgh and were raised speaking the Gaelic language at home.

\textsuperscript{21} Ibid.
scion of the Hallhead Gordon family. She was raised in Leochel-Cushnie parish in Aberdeenshire and by the time this area was surveyed in the 1790s Gaelic had ceased to be understood there. It is unlikely Mary ever spoke Scottish Gaelic. She was a daughter of a member of the minor gentry who came from non-Gaelic speaking parish. The relationship with the mother is the most important for a child’s acquisition of language. In Ferguson’s case, it is probable that his first words were English, but, since he lived in a predominantly Gaelic-speaking village for the first seven to nine years of his life, there is every reason to believe that in his case Scottish Gaelic was acquired naturally not long after he began to speak. Children generally acquire the language of whatever speech community they grow up in, irrespective of the language used by their parents. They often speak the second language with the same facility as that they acquire in the home. For this reason, some linguists argue that the length of exposure to a language is more important than any inborn facility in the child which determines future language competence. This linguistic competence must include knowledge of the following systems: sound (phonology), word formation (morphology), sentence formation (syntax), word meaning (semantics) and vocabulary (lexicon). Unlike his Enlightenment colleagues, Ferguson had the fortune (or misfortune, depending on how

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22 H Pirie-Gordon, “Wolrige Gordon of Hallhead and Esslemont” in Burke's Genealogical and Heraldic History of the Landed Gentry, ed., H Pirie-Gordon (London: Shaw Publishing Company, 1937), 924. N.B. Little is known about Ferguson’s mother, and there is no direct evidence she spoke Gaelic. There may be some clues to her life in the Gordon of Hallhead Papers located at King’s College, Aberdeen. However, I am sure Ferguson’s chief biographer, Jane Bush Fagg, would have found whatever had been available in this archive. Even genealogical details regarding Mary Gordon are not to be relied upon. A genealogical table of Ferguson’s family can be found in Appendix O on page 438.

23 In the 1790s, George Forbes, minister of Leochel parish in Aberdeenshire, reported no Gaelic was spoken within fifteen miles of his parish boundary. Sir John Sinclair, The Statistical Account of Scotland Drawn up from the Communications of the Ministers of the Different Parishes, 20 vols, vol. 6 (Edinburgh: William Creech, 1791–1799), 217 note *. Similarly, the minister of Cushnie parish, Mr Francis Adam, reported that English was the only known language in his parish and that Gaelic had ‘ceased to be understood.’ Sir John Sinclair, SAS, vol. 4, 177.

24 "Annual Obituary", 228.


one perceives it) to have acquired two languages (English and Scottish Gaelic). Both of these were learnt naturally at home and in the linguistic community of Logierait.

Like his colleagues Carlyle, Home and Robertson, Ferguson would later learn Latin, Greek and Hebrew in the controlled environment of the classroom or lecture hall. This was done through conscious effort and repetitive drills, and entailed declining nouns and adjectives, conjugating verbs and translating passages from one language into another. People learning languages in this manner rarely have the competence of the native. Quite often the drills equipped/enabled men to read a language, but only a relatively small percentage would have been able to hold or follow a conversation in the target language. Although they might attain some fluency, they rarely mastered the sound system and usually spoke with an accent. Once Ferguson reached school age, English and Latin would require his constant attention. Latin was a language that Ferguson learnt by conscious effort as opposed to English and Gaelic which were acquired subconsciously by continual exposure to these languages.\(^28\) Therefore, Ferguson fulfilled the requirements of ‘place’ and ‘language’ in the quest (and test) for Highland identity. We can dismiss his mother’s Lowland speech because of the long association of his father’s family and forebears with the Highlands. Ferguson was a Highlander, irrespective of his decision to reside and work in the Lowlands or to speak English out of preference. He retained the most important characteristic of being a Highlander – a native-like knowledge of Gaelic.\(^29\)

In his study of Ferguson as an alien Highlander among Edinburgh’s elite, Kugler avoided speculation about his language and enculturation.\(^30\) Nonetheless he noted that Ferguson continued to identify with Highland culture for the remainder of his life, and in doing so ‘contributed to the rehabilitation of the Highlands’ in his own unique way.\(^31\) In order to further our understanding of Ferguson within this Highland milieu and even

\(^{28}\) Rod Ellis does not try to separate learning from acquisition, because at school we all learn more about our already acquired first languages. However, most children acquire the language(s) of their community at a young age without apparent effort unlike an older child or adult, when they attempt to learn a second or third language. Rod Ellis, *Understanding Second Language Acquisition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 6.

\(^{29}\) Native has connotations of ‘resident’ and ‘inhabitant’.


\(^{31}\) Ibid., 362 and 158.
beyond it will be necessary to focus some attention on the role of language in society and culture.

From an early age, language is used for the purpose of interacting, expressing personal taste, expressing emotion, mediating in relationships, satisfying needs, and regulating the behaviour of others.\(^{32}\) Since it is also used to impart history, customs and values to succeeding generations, language is an instrument of culture.\(^{33}\) However – and this is important from Ferguson’s perspective – not all languages have the same conceptual categories or associations. For instance, Ferguson was probably aware from a young age that the colour spectrum of English and Gaelic do not exactly correspond.\(^{34}\) To be incorporated in an ethnic group, the group must provide the member with arrangements or apparatus they consider valuable. Such apparatus might include language, custom, myth, origin, ancestry, ideology, endogamy, or some definition of the group’s boundaries.\(^{35}\) To have known a language other than English from a young age was to envisage the world in a language other than English.

During the eighteenth century, Scottish Gaelic was known as Irish or Erse.\(^{36}\) During the first half of the eighteenth century Edmund Burt was astounded to discover that Highlanders seemed to consider the Erse language peculiar to their part of Scotland. Burt found that an Irish companion who was travelling with him and who had never before travelled to Scotland was able to converse with the Highlanders. The Irishman ‘was perfectly understood even by the common people; and several lairds took me aside to ask me who he was, for they never heard their language spoken in such purity before.

\(^{32}\) Fromkin et al., *An Introduction to Language*, 368.


\(^{34}\) Ibid., 236; Michael Newton gives a satisfactory explanation of difference between the English and Gaelic colour spectrum: ‘Languages belonging to distinct cultures have different means of classifying and expressing experience. The classical example is that of colour, for not every language has the same mapping from words to sections of the colour spectrum. The Gaelic word *gorm*, for example, is often interpreted in English as ‘blue’, ‘dark grey’ or ‘green’, but it is never used for the colour of grass or water. (See *Dwelly’s Illustrated Gaelic to English Dictionary*, p 517.) ‘There are many examples of unique cultural structures or categories reflected in the language, such as the calendar, kin systems, degrees of ownership and possession, animal taxonomies implicit in nomenclature, and so on, which cannot be directly translated into another language because of the nuances they contain’. Michael Newton, *Gaelic in Scottish History and Culture* (1997) [www] (An Clochán: Béal Feirste, 2000, 1997 [cited 5 Feb 2007]); available from http://www.rfs.scotshome.com/ See also Ronald Black, *Cothrom Ionnsachaidh: Gaelic Grammar and Exercises* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Department of Celtic, 1992), 108.


\(^{36}\) Variations of Erse occurred and include Earse, Irsh or Erst which are a corruption of ‘Irish’.
This gentleman told me that he found the dialect to vary as much in different parts of the country as in any two counties of England. Burt was understandably under the common misconception that Scottish and Irish Gaelic were identical languages. While a couple of Irish dialects are mutually intelligible to Scottish Gaelic speakers, the vast majority are not. In fact, Kenneth H. Jackson has argued that Scottish and Irish Gaelic began to diverge as early as the tenth century. Up until the late middle ages, Scotland and Ireland shared a standardised literary language. The rupture of those ties between them around the time of the Reformation ensured Scotland’s increasing colloquial divergence from the common literary standard. Throughout the later Middle Ages, this common language was studied by Scottish students at Irish Bardic schools until it was forbidden by law. As a result of these ruptured ties, Scottish Highlanders a few generations before Ferguson lost the ability to read the Irish character or Corr-Litir, a script like the half Uncial of the monastic scriptoria. Certain areas of the Scottish


38 Paul Russell, An Introduction to the Celtic Languages (London: Longman, 1995), 62. Donegal and County Mayo dialects of Irish are intelligible to Scottish Gaelic-speakers in the Central dialect belt.

39 Kenneth H. Jackson, "Common Gaelic," Proceedings of the British Academy 37 (1951), 71–97. The debate still rages with the Scots claiming Gaelic to be a separate language. The Irish sometimes still insist that Scottish Gaelic is a dialect of Irish Gaelic.

40 Up until the fifteenth century, literary Gaelic only existed in the written, but not printed form. According to Jane Dawson, only the major Scottish magnates were able to disseminate oral transmission of the literary culture. Classical Common Gaelic was in use until the middle of the seventeenth-century, but it was only available to the elite classes, who were often tri-lingual in Gaelic, English and Latin. Dawson, "Calvinism and the Gaidhealtachd in Scotland", 234 –235. Ferguson’s family, particularly his father’s line, was not of the elite group, and there were laws preventing the use of Gaelic in the public domain during Ferguson’s lifetime (with the exception of worship).

Highlands had considerable contact with the Norse language during the Dark Ages and this added to the lexicon of particular Scottish Gaelic dialects in the outer isles. This provides additional evidence to support the argument that Scottish Gaelic is a separate language rather than a dialect of Irish. By the time the New Testament came out in Scottish Gaelic, the year Ferguson’s Essay was also published (1767) there was considerable variance between the two languages.

In order to comprehend the significance of Ferguson’s dual language facility, it should be noted that Gaelic possesses several features which differ markedly from English. In the majority of cases, the verb precedes the subject in a Gaelic sentence. Thus, in Gaelic, the word order is generally Verb-Subject-Object rather than Subject-Verb-Object as it is in English.\(^\text{42}\) Gaelic does not have a single word equivalent for ‘yes’ or ‘no’. It uses particles with a verb for the interrogative. The affirmative answer is given by reiteration of the verb, whilst the negative is communicated by use of the particle of negation together with the verb.\(^\text{43}\) Other features of Scottish Gaelic include the lack of an indefinite article,\(^\text{44}\) and an inflected pronominal system.\(^\text{45}\) In addition to these differences, the sound system of Gaelic includes guttural, dental and nasal sounds which are foreign to English. A significant difference is that Gaelic’s two genders (masculine and feminine) are dependent on sound change. There are numerous lexical items which cannot be directly translated into English or other languages. Counting is accomplished in scores (twenties) rather than decades.\(^\text{46}\) Later we shall see that Ferguson considered it important to identify the distinguishing features of Scottish Gaelic accurately to people who were unfamiliar with it.

In the eighteenth century there was no standardised or written form of Scottish Gaelic until the translation of the New Testament that went to print in 1767. As I shall argue in the following chapter, Ferguson may have had a hand in getting this project off

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\(^\text{43}\) Black, Cothrom Ionnsachaidh, 27.

\(^\text{44}\) Gillies, "Scottish Gaelic", 201.


\(^\text{46}\) Black, Cothrom Ionnsachaidh. 108; Gillies, "Scottish Gaelic", 181.
the ground. Once published, the standard of the Scottish Gaelic language resided in the formality of the Gaelic Bible.\textsuperscript{47} During the period of Ferguson’s life, the Scottish Gaelic in his part of Atholl had its own unique properties. This factor may have exerted some influence on his later choice of vocation, as I will argue in the following chapter.\textsuperscript{48} The main dialect breakdown in Scotland is Central-Peripheral.\textsuperscript{49} In the eighteenth century, without a written standard, this range and variation was amplified. Each village, kin group, or community developed its own characteristic usages. The sound system of the language was one of the key areas where variance occurred, especially in the degree of lenition, velarisation and voicing among other phonologic qualities.\textsuperscript{50} Without a written standard, this was cause for some confusion and annoyance among Highlanders. Much of what is known about Ferguson’s East Perthshire dialect in the eighteenth century has been gleaned from the \textit{Statistical Account of Scotland} (1793). The informant for Logierait was the Reverend Bisset. The Reverend Adam Fergusson had arranged for Bisset to take over the parish in lieu of his son, just before his death in 1753.\textsuperscript{51} This survey, along with other data, helps to create a picture of the Gaelic language during Ferguson’s lifetime.


\textsuperscript{48} There is a strong continuity between Northern Irish and South-West Scottish dialects of Gaelic as has already been mentioned.

\textsuperscript{49} In Scotland, dialects exhibit an east-west and north-south variation. See MacAulay, "The Scottish Gaelic Language", 151; J.W. Gleasure, "Gaelic: dialects, principal divisions," Thomson, ed., \textit{The Companion to Gaelic Scotland}, 91 and 93. The Central dialect areas are located in the Central Hebrides, south to Mull and include Ross, Assynt, Western Perthshire and parts of Argyll. Peripheral dialects are said to include Caithness, Sutherland, Braemar and Eastern Perthshire, mainland Argyll, Kintyre, Arran and Moray. See J. W. Gleasure, "Gaelic: dialects, principal divisions", 91 and 93.

\textsuperscript{50} J.W. Gleasure, "Gaelic: dialect, principal divisions", 94. Lenition is a modification in sound which occurs under certain grammatical conditions in Gaelic. It is where a hard consonant is softened by breathing through it. This is represented by certain consonants followed by the letter 'h'. The consonant is then said to be lenited. It is known popularly as aspiration. An analogy in English would be the sound change of peasant to pheasant. See also Black, \textit{Cothrom Ionnsachaidh}, 21. Velarisation is the sound resulting from an articulation using the back of the palate. Voicing occurs through the vibration of vocal chords.

\textsuperscript{51} Bisset’s report for the \textit{Statistical Account of Scotland} featured in the last chapter. He died in 1800. Bisset’s son was the biographer of Edmund Burke and also wrote the following piece on Ferguson while Ferguson was alive. Robert Bisset, "Dr Adam Ferguson" in \textit{Public Characters of 1799–1800} (London: Gillet, and Cundee for R. Phillips, 1799), 325–346. Reverend Ferguson, who had been unwell from 1751, had his death announced to the Presbytery of Dunkeld by Mr Fergusson, the Minister of Moulin, 2 April 1754. "CH 2/106/7" in \textit{Minutes of the Presbytery of Dunkeld} (National Archives of Scotland: 1746–1754), f 258.
During this period, Perthshire Scottish Gaelic suffered increasing instability. However, it appears that this instability may have existed during the time the *Book of the Dean of Lismore* was compiled between 1512 and 1526. There was evidence of diachronic change in the region of Perthshire from that period. Ferguson therefore came from a region where the Gaelic language was unstable, but I would suggest that it was the instability, rather than his own inadequacy which contributed to his desire to remove himself from the Highland Church. This instability can be gauged by the fact that earlier in the seventeenth century the parishes of Dunkeld, Blair Atholl, Killin, and Logierait, as well as the seat of Ferguson’s father’s family, Moulin, were all monoglot Scottish Gaelic-speaking towns or villages. Eastern Perthshire was distinctive because the parish boundaries did not coincide exactly with the language boundaries. Therefore, monolingual speakers of both languages (English and Gaelic) sometimes lived in the same neighbourhood. Parishes such as Alyth, Kinlock, Blairgowrie and Caputh (the parish Ferguson had preferred) had been English-speaking for approximately three centuries. These pockets of language instability arose where English contact encroached upon Gaelic. It arose from two processes: firstly, the amount of variation within the dialects; and secondly, increasing English language contact. This contact arose due to trade but also due to the pressure brought to bear by Church and state to replace the Gaelic language with English. These influences increased bilingualism resulting in phenomena such as code-switching, borrowing and calquing. Simply put, code-switching could mean starting a sentence in one language and finishing it in another. It could also mean interspersing stock phrases from a subordinate language with the dominant one. Calquing is a form of borrowing by using a literal word for

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52 Diachronic change is linguistic change across time.
54 A monoglot or monolingual person is a person knowing only one language.
56 Ferguson applied to the Duke of Atholl for the English-speaking parish of Caputh and was refused it. This was likely to be in connection with a ruling of the General Assembly in the 1690s which stated that ministers who spoke Gaelic could not be annexed to an English-speaking parish while Gaelic-speaking ones remained vacant. See Chapter Three, pages 118–121.
word translation of phrases or idioms into the target language. Bilingualism and rapid change led to intergenerational language shift. This occurs between the first and second generations of families in regions where two languages are in contact, such as they were in East Perthshire. As this happens, it results in loss of skill within a language base. Language shift sometimes signifies that language extinction is imminent.

Ferguson’s ‘bastard Gaelic’ resulted in part because he was the youngest child of the Fergusson family. In a bilingual environment, the eldest children in families often develop greater proficiency at a native heritage language than their younger siblings. In the Highlands of this era, the domains for Gaelic usage were limited to home and Church. Ferguson would have used Gaelic within his village and at Church but not at school. Once he removed to Perth Grammar School he may have occasionally used Gaelic among friends from his locality after school and during his visits home. From that time onward English became Ferguson’s dominant language up to and inclusive of the periods he left to study at university. During the eighteenth century, the Scottish Gaelic language was dominant in domestic situations while English tended to become the language of business. This was due to the fact that Scottish Gaelic was cumbersome with quantities and figures. In situations where, of necessity, business was conducted in English, monoglot Gaels became the underclass. By the end of the eighteenth century

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58 Calquing is where both elements of a compound word are translated in a literal fashion into the second language. See Donald MacAulay, ‘Gaelic: calquing’ in Thomson, ed., The Companion to Gaelic Scotland, 91. Examples of ‘calquing’ include ne m’oubliez pas which became ‘forget-me-not’ in English, while Weltanschauung became ‘worldview’ in English. Calques or neologisms are commonly used for entities, which did not formerly exist within a linguistic community. See also Colm Ó Baoill, “The Scots-Gaelic Interface” in The Edinburgh History of the Scots Language, ed., Charles Jones (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997), 562–564.


60 Lelia Murtagh, "Retention and Attrition of Irish as a Second Language: A Longitudinal Study of General and Communicative Proficiency in Irish among Second Level School Leavers and the Influence of Instructional Background, Language Use and Attitude/Motivation Variables" (Ph D, Rijksuniversiteit Groningen, 2003), 24.


62 For example, the number sixty-seven in Gaelic literally becomes three twenties (score) and seven or tri fichead’s a seachd. While French reverts to count in scores from 80 to 99, Gaelic does this from 20 onwards. It became easier for Highlanders to use English for numerical and business purposes. It also must be remembered that French became a major unified language of a nation state, while Gaelic was always a minority language.
most people in Perthshire had some ability to comprehend English, even if they were not fluent speakers of it.\(^{63}\)

The people of Logierait spoke a distinctive Scottish Gaelic dialect. Writing as late as 1900, the Reverend Charles M. Robertson insisted that the supreme difference between East and West Perthshire Gaelic was the high number of borrowed English words in the Eastern dialect.\(^{64}\) Ó Murchú’s 1989 investigation was guided by the *Statistical Account of Scotland* and the *New Statistical Account of Scotland*. It found that the dialect of East Perthshire included the following manifestations: the intonation pattern of Gaelic in East Perthshire mimicked the pattern of Scots-English; there were instances of syncope (loss of the sound of the medial or middle vowel) and apocope (loss of the sound of the first or initial vowel).\(^{65}\) This made the Gaelic of East Perthshire difficult to understand, even for native speakers of the Central dialect belt. The reason for the difficulties of comprehension by other Highlanders was due to the number of reduced syllables in the East Perthshire Gaelic (hereafter EPG). As an example, the Gaelic word *a’ smaoineachadh* (thinking) /ə smy:n:jəχ:ʒ/ was reduced to *smaoineach* /smə:nəχ/ in the speech of East Perthshire natives. A simpler example is that of *duine* (a man) /du:n:jə/ which, in EPG, was rendered as /du:n/ or perhaps /də:n/. The syllable reduction resulted in a word sounding very much like the Scottish Gaelic for ‘mound’, ‘hill’ or ‘fort’ – *dùn*.\(^{66}\) Robertson’s study also found that the stem final suffix vowel had been lost, though it is possible that this feature may have been less prominent in Ferguson’s time.\(^{67}\) Simplifications with loss of markers like these are characteristic of a language in serious decline – as in the above example where *dun* (for *duine*) and *dùn* became a minimal pair. The only difference between what signified ‘man’ or ‘hill’ became a slight difference in vowel length due to the loss of the stem final suffix in what

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\(^{64}\) The Reverend Charles M. Robertson, "The Peculiarities of Gaelic as Spoken in the Writer's District, Being the First in Merit of Those Sent in under the Society's Special Prize to the Mòd of the Highland Association Held in Inverness in September, 1787. "Perthshire Gaelic," *Transaction of the Gaelic Society of Inverness* 22, no. 1897–1898 (1900), 4–5.

\(^{65}\) Apocope is also known as aphaeresis.


\(^{67}\) Robertson, "Perthshire Gaelic", 4.
signified ‘man’. This loss threw the burden upon listener who became more reliant on the word’s context for its meaning.

Charles Robertson found other problems with EPG. The consonants b and p were not always distinct in the medial location. EPG speakers often pronounced a ‘p’ as a ‘b’ and the medial Gaelic *bh* was sounded almost like an English w. Reduced syllables in the dialect such as those described above could be of significant consequence for people such as Ferguson who confessed to Macpherson that his ear ‘was an uncertain rule for pronunciation.’ This could be a clue that the changes described by Robertson and Ó Murchú existed in Ferguson’s day as intrinsic to the dialect rather than being evidence of approaching language death. In EPG there was also a simplification of the paradigmatic noun structure along with random lexical differences. Ó Murchú concludes that the speakers of this possibly dying dialect were not the best informants for a linguistic survey. But whether these findings are indicative of ‘death’ or simply indicate that EPG had suffered interference from close contact with English over a substantial period of time remains a subject of debate. Losses like the stem final suffix described above may have been of long standing. Similar characteristics are apparent in the dialect of Lewis, another non-Central dialect of Gaelic, yet this region boasts the highest proportion of Gaelic-speakers in present-day Scotland.

The features of EPG discussed above may have had profound effects on its speakers, Ferguson among them. Ferguson rated himself ‘a bastard Gaelic man.’ Although evidence from this period is scant, inter-language contact with English is suggestive of manifestations of linguistic change. East Perthshire folk like Ferguson had to contend with insults because their Gaelic was not a prestige form of the language. Patrick Graham, a writer contemporary with Ferguson, claimed that Perthshire Gaelic had been ‘corrupted’ by a loss of ‘expressive elegance.’ This ‘corruption’ was probably due to the presence of code-switching, as a result of increased levels of

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68 Ibid., 15–17.
71 Ibid., 49.
bilingualism. Thomas Bisset reported, ‘The language spoken here is a corrupted dialect of the Gaelic. The Saxon dialect of the lowlands is however, pretty generally understood here.’ The Reverend Allan Stewart, a minister from the nearby parish of Kirkmichael, indicates that code-switching may have been prevalent:

The prevailing language in the parish is the Gaelic. A dialect of ancient Scotch, also, is understood, and currently spoken. These two, by a barbarous intermixture, mutually corrupt each other.

The East Perthshire Gaelic dialect was often said to be ‘offensive to the ear’, even during the late eighteenth century. In parishes further west, such as Blair Atholl and Moulin, this ‘corruption’ is not mentioned by ministers in the *Statistical Account of Scotland*.

In parishes further west, such as Blair Atholl and Moulin, this ‘corruption’ is not mentioned by ministers in the *Statistical Account of Scotland*.

In Crathie, where Ferguson’s father had once been the minister, ‘corrupted’ Gaelic was not mentioned. Therefore, we can cautiously presume that this ‘intermixture’ of English and Gaelic reported by Stewart was prevalent in and around Logierait. The corrupt dialect was probably a key to why Ferguson declared himself to be a ‘bastard’ Gaelic man. Ferguson does not expand on what he meant by this self-labelling. However, given the information above, we can begin to surmise what the term ‘bastard’ actually meant. It was the dialect rather than Ferguson’s knowledge of it that was imperfect. Put another way, Ferguson was unlikely to be a semi-fluent speaker who had not fully internalised the grammatical structure of EPG. Centuries of English contact had interfered with the Gaelic of this region of Perthshire, causing the associated idiosyncrasies. However, it should be noted that these lexical importations from English did not in anyway affect the grammatical structure of Gaelic. Thus English importations might undergo the same changes as a marker of tense or mood as a natural Gaelic word.

East Perthshire Gaelic was regarded as ‘corrupt’ by Gaelic-speakers of the Central dialect belt where the language had the greatest similarity to the Irish of Donegal and

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74 MacAulay, "The Scottish Gaelic Language", 120. Code-switching is the transference of the elements, e.g. intonation pattern, lexical items, of the first language, into the second language. These phenomena occur often among bilingual people in regions where two languages are in contact, such as Perthshire. It also depends on the competence of the bilingual person, and how frequently the second language is used.

75 Sir John Sinclair, *SAS*, 82. Comprehension of language nearly always precedes the ability to converse in it.

76 Ibid., vol. 15, 516.

Mayo. This is why Perthshire lairds had remarked to Edmund Burt that his Irish companion had spoken the purest form of Gaelic they had ever heard.\textsuperscript{78}

Within the confines of their speech community, EPG speakers may have been unaware that others disparaged their speech. Ó Murchú finds that speakers of more conservative western dialects always disparaged that of East Perthshire.\textsuperscript{79} Nancy Dorian’s research on East Sutherland Gaelic concluded that there were also losses of linguistic markers within speech communities along Sutherland’s east coast.\textsuperscript{80} While these have no correspondence to those of EPG, Dorian’s findings support Ó Murchú’s conclusion that certain loss of markers could indicate the approach of language death. The linguist Terry Crowley suggests that language death occurs where two languages, like English and Gaelic, come into contact in such a way that one exerts dominance over the other. This dominance may be motivated by political, socio-political, social or demographic factors, or by a combination of all these forces.\textsuperscript{81} Widespread bilingualism in East Perthshire (and probably Logierait) together with Ferguson’s natural gravitation toward English indicates that the shift toward English was beginning to gain pace considerably. The anthropologist Malcolm Chapman insists that bilingualism automatically sets up structural binaries. This bilingualism resulted in Gaelic becoming associated with home, hearth, the elderly and all that was unfashionable. On the other hand, English became associated with industry, business, youth, fashion and ambition. Once the language has retreated to a position where it becomes the tongue of the minority there is a greater imperative for future members of the community to adopt the majority language.\textsuperscript{82}

Malcolm Chapman believes the educated among a population which exhibits varying degrees of bilingualism are often persuaded to make a romantic re-evaluation of

\textsuperscript{78} See pages 69–71 of this chapter. See especially notes 38, 39 and 40 on page 70.
\textsuperscript{79} The following evidence can be gleaned from the \textit{Statistical Account of Scotland} made between 1791 and 1799, even though it somewhat post-dates Ferguson’s upbringing in Logierait.
\textsuperscript{81} Terry Crowley, \textit{An Introduction to Historical Linguistics}, 2nd ed. (Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1994), 274.
\textsuperscript{82} Malcolm Chapman, \textit{The Celts: The Construction of a Myth} (New York: St Martin's Press, 1992), 144.
their dying language. The transition from one linguistic and cultural milieu to another is not an easy one. Newton insists that such change is fraught with tension, guilt, isolation, and disorientation. Bilinguals like Ferguson have mixed feelings of shame for disowning one language and culture. On the other hand they also experienced pride of their achievement of learning and adopting a new one. We can now look at what implications these changes may have had for Adam Ferguson.

As a second-generation bilingual, Ferguson’s Gaelic speech was possibly hallmarked by a high degree of code-switching as well as reduced markers for case, tense and mood. He may have combined Gaelic markers for tense or mood with English ones. This would have been due to a degradation of language within the community itself, rather than to personal inefficiency or inadequacy. Ferguson possibly had a Scots English pattern of intonation when speaking Gaelic. This may have left him with little of the lilt of the Highlands on his tongue. If that was the case, his accent may have been indistinguishable from that of the Lowlander. This would have aided his assimilation into school and university communities when the time came. It is important to remember there was no educative process to supplement or correct any of the deficiencies Ferguson might have acquired as a native bilingual speaker. As bilingualism increased, there would have been a concomitant decrease in the number of registers used in Gaelic. Its use became confined it to domestic or informal situations. As a result, native speakers of EPG would begin to compare their own linguistic competencies and internal grammars against those of fellow-native speakers from other Highland speech communities. Argyll and Western Perthshire Gaelic-speakers rated themselves superior to East Perthshire Gaelic-speakers.

These linguistic factors could have had a profound influence on Ferguson’s choice of career path. He attended university intending to become a minister in the Church of Scotland. If Ferguson pursued this path, the chances of him receiving a call

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83 Malcolm Chapman, *The Gaelic Vision in Scottish Culture* (London: Croom-Helm, 1978), 24. Ferguson was an early though not extensive collector of oral poetry. If Ferguson recorded any oral performance of Gaelic poetry which he had not already relinquished to James Macpherson, or if he harboured documents or letters in Gaelic, his sons probably destroyed them at their home at Hallyards in Peebleshire before Ferguson left to reside in St Andrews around 1810.


85 Fromkin et al., *An Introduction to Language*, 260. (See Section on Pidgins and Creoles).
to a parish with a high proportion of monoglot, elderly or conservative Gaelic dialect speakers was very small. A ‘corrupt’ dialect so ‘offensive to the ear’ would not endear a speaker of EPG like Ferguson to a parish full of Central dialect speakers. It is known that some Gaelic-speaking congregations within the Church reacted adversely to non Gaelic-speaking presentees. However, they were also intolerant of ministry candidates learning Gaelic, semi-fluent speakers, or those preachers who used an intermixture of Gaelic and English idiom. In Perthshire, it is known that the congregation of Little Dunkeld, a parish in the same Presbytery as Logierait, had complained of their minister’s poor Erse. It was reported, ‘What smatters he hath of Irish [Gaelic] cannot be understood by any who speak the language.’

Ferguson, whose father was associated with this Presbytery, must have been aware of the snobbery about language or dialect engaged in by Highland congregations. A speaker of a non-prestige form of Gaelic like that of East Perthshire would have been poorly received in the Western Highlands or Islands. It seems that having one’s Gaelic adjudicated by others was not uncommon at this time. Hector MacLean of Ballygrant, the Gaelic poet John MacCodrum and Captain Morison of Greenock were among the men who criticised James ‘Ossian’ Macpherson’s Gaelic. In fact, Morison claimed that Macpherson’s comprehension was ‘imperfect’, and like Ferguson, Macpherson foundered when trying to read Irish script.

As his powers declined, Macpherson wrote and spoke what was waggishly known as ‘Putney Heath Gaelic’ because he lived near Putney Common in London. This was a sign that English was interfering with Macpherson’s recall of the Gaelic lexicon. Ferguson possibly had encountered or feared such disparagement within the Highland community. He preferred and gravitated toward the English language in which he had received his formal education.

Ferguson received his licence to preach in July 1745 but decided to leave the active ministry in 1754 while still a chaplain to the Black Watch. In the intervening

88 MacLean, "Early Political Careers", xxxiv. Macpherson had a house near Putney Common in south London.
period, possibly in 1751, Ferguson’s preaching abilities in Gaelic were first showcased in a non-military environment. It seems that Ferguson proved unpopular at crowded, open-air Highland communion days. Robert Bisset, son of the Logierait’s incumbent minister, Thomas Bisset, was of the opinion that Ferguson did not have the necessary volume for large communion crowds. In exhibitions like communion days, ‘corrupt’ speech would not be something one would wish to broadcast loudly, and his inadequacy may have given him just cause to diminish the volume, especially if he had encountered ridicule or knew of the difficulties encountered by other ministers in the Highlands. In East Sutherland, Dorian found discomfiture was a common reaction for what she labelled ‘semi-speakers’ or those who were non fluent in East Sutherland Gaelic. Semi-speakers were uncomfortable among the more fluent speakers, even though they were able to follow conversation. Dorian found that stigmatisation of either a dialect or the Gaelic of an individual resulted in their increasing gravitation to the dominant tongue (English). Ferguson’s friends, the Macphersons had come from areas further west where there had been less interference from English. It appears that Ferguson was far less confident than either of the Macphersons, and being older, had lived through the years of proscription between the Jacobite Rebellions.

A practical assessment of Ferguson’s linguistic knowledge can be gleaned from his correspondence with James Macpherson, Henry Mackenzie and George Chalmers during the latter part of his life between 1793 and 1798. By that period it was more fashionable to admit to some knowledge of Gaelic. Nonetheless, Ferguson devalued what he did know about Gaelic – assailed as he might have been with negative feedback about his own particular dialect from Gaelic and non-Gaelic speakers alike. This diffidence is evident in his correspondence with James Macpherson. Ferguson usually deferred to what he believed was Macpherson’s superior knowledge. At the start of one letter, Ferguson made it clear that he would only mention what occurred under correction of Macpherson’s better judgment. The earliest of Ferguson’s

90 Bisset, "Dr Adam Ferguson", 330.
91 Dorian, Language Death, 98–113.
92 MacLean, "Early Political Careers", 14.
93 Merolle and Wellesley, eds, Correspondence, vol. 3, 353. See also Small, Biographical Sketch, 55–56.
correspondence with James Macpherson is probably the most revealing. Macpherson appeared to value Ferguson’s advice on matters of Gaelic, regardless of Ferguson’s reservations. The experiment he conducted on Macpherson’s behalf highlighted Ferguson’s perceptual ability with his own dialect. The experiment may also validate the fact of his early exposure to the sound of the Gaelic language, despite his own uncertainties about the accuracy of his ear. Macpherson’s letter and Ferguson’s reply detail an experiment that Macpherson designed in consultation with Ferguson. He carried it out in 1793 using John Home as the guinea pig.

This experiment gives a crude, early gauge of the phonology and orthography of Gaelic. It was designed to test whether an English-speaker (Home), reading Gaelic from a Greek orthography (written in Greek lettering), was intelligible to a native speaker of Gaelic. The English-speaker was also to read a parallel text of Gaelic in Latin orthography to see how it compared in intelligibility to that read from the Greek. The Gaelic text was taken from the second chapter of Exodus, verses one through ten. This comprises the story of Pharaoh’s daughter and how she found Moses in the bulrushes. Although the original letter describing the experiment has been lost, Small’s biography of Ferguson detailed its outline:

…a Scripture story – the finding of Moses by Pharaoh’s daughter – was copied from the Gaelic translation of the Bible, and on the opposite page the same words were written in Greek characters. This specimen of the proposed system was circulated by M’Pherson among his friends, who were requested to make the experiment of reading the specimens to some illiterate Highlander, with the view of ascertaining which of the two would be best understood.\textsuperscript{94}

Ferguson could see possibilities for the adoption of a Greek orthography for Gaelic. Small, using the now missing letter and experimental texts, delineated Ferguson’s suggestion as follows:

In answer to the objection, that the use of the Greek alphabet would be a great inconvenience and innovation, it was urged, that the Highland gentry do not generally read the Gaelic; that it would be but the labour of a few hours to master the Greek letters, and their \textit{use would smooth the way for those who wished to read and write the Gaelic language}. It was further expected, that the familiar use of the Greek letters would naturally lead to the study of the Greek language itself, then much neglected in Scotland; and that it would be ‘no degradation of its characters to

\textsuperscript{94} Small, \textit{Biographical Sketch}, 55.
express the compositions of a poet, which the taste and learning of Europe have long
since ranked among the admirable works of antiquity.95

In the letter acquainting Ferguson with the fact that the papers for the experiment were
on their way, Macpherson admitted that he had

resolved to follow the example of the old Druids, in writing the Celtic language in
Greek characters. I shall not, therefore, with Dr Blair agree, ‘That it is the opinion of
some of the learned in Earse that must determine the point, and that to them it must
be submitted.’ Where those learned men are I have never been able to learn. With
respect to the clergy, I would rather take their ghostly advice on matters of religion
than accept of their opinion about the manner of printing profane poetry. I
consequently request, that instead of submitting the decision to them you will be
pleased to return to me the specimen already in your hands, at your convenience.
And after you have weighed the observations at your full leisure, and at your own
time, you will please to put them also under a cover to me. You will easily perceive,
that this letter is meant only for your eye; for few men wish to know that they have
been so long deceived, on a point which the smallest attention might at once
ascertain.96

Macpherson’s scheme was born of the fact that in Gaelic, many letters, while
represented on the page, were not sounded in speech. This led to much confusion.
Therefore, Macpherson concluded that the present orthography for Gaelic was
inadequate.97 Saunders remarked that Macpherson

did not, as far as can now be determined, explain how the use of Greek characters
would obviate these linguistic embarrassments, or more accurately reflect the niceties
of Gaelic pronunciation; but by way of an experiment, he had a passage from the
Gaelic Bible printed in Gaelic and Greek characters side by side.98

95 Ibid. Current author’s emphasis.
96 Merolle and Wellesley, eds, Correspondence. vol. 2, 352. The italics are Macpherson’s. The letter is
also in Small, Biographical Sketch, 54, and T. Bailey Saunders, The Life and Letters of James
Macpherson Containing a Particular Account of His Famous Quarrel with Dr Johnson, and a Sketch of
the Origin and Influence of the Ossianic Poems by Bailey Saunders, 2nd ed. (London: Swan
Sonnenschein, 1895), 293–296.
97 Some examples of these phenomena, though by no means all, follow. Depending on their position in a
word the digraphs ‘sh’ and ‘th’ are often silent, while ‘mh’ sounds like a /v/ (voiced bilabial fricative).
‘Dh’ can be silent or may be sounded like a ‘gh’. When an ‘s’ comes before ‘i’ or ‘e’ it sounds like
English ‘sh’, but if ‘s’ comes before an ‘a’, ‘o’ or ‘u’ it will sound something like an English ‘s’ except
that it will be more dental (that is, with the tongue at the back of the teeth). Macpherson believed this
confusing orthography could be replaced. He got the idea from Caesar’ De Bello Gallico
in which the Druids, if they resorted to writing used the Greek character. (This also mentioned in his letter to Ferguson
21 May 1793 recorded in Merolle and Wellesley, and Saunders.) Saunders made Macpherson’s argument
for using Greek clear. ‘He had, of course, no difficulty in showing that the existing method of writing and
speaking Gaelic was unsatisfactory, as could not fail to be the case when the same letter represented
different sounds, and similar sounds were expressed by different letters; and, again, when many words
contained letters that were never pronounced.’ Saunders, Life, 292–293. Discussion of Macpherson’s
Gaelic with examples can be found in Appendix E, page 417–418, at the rear of the thesis.
98 Ibid., 293.
According to Saunders, Macpherson could not convince any but Ferguson that the use of Greek was feasible. The experiment served to demonstrate prevailing attitudes toward the Gaelic language among the Edinburgh literati. If Macpherson and Ferguson intended to give the Gaelic language some respectability by clothing it in Greek orthography they risked offending Hume and Blair by using an esteemed classical language to camouflage a barbarous one. Blair and Hume did not share Ferguson’s enthusiasm for the scheme. It went against all current policies on Gaelic language in the Church, a subject that will be dealt with in greater depth in the following chapter.

The immediate problem encountered by Macpherson and Ferguson was with Blair. Blair ‘took the greatest pains to discredit the proposal’ to use Greek orthography for Gaelic ‘as a piece of sheer affectation; and soon afterwards it was finally abandoned’. Macpherson insisted that Blair’s objections were totally unfounded, but unfortunately he fails to inform us of them. Macpherson considered Blair ‘was under much want of information on the subject’ of Gaelic. The discussions of the results of the experiment were to be kept from Hume and Blair. The reaction of Ferguson and Macpherson to obstructive and inexpert outside opinion was to close ranks. However, this harboured the danger of outsiders misconstruing their face-saving reticence as deception. Macpherson had never been exonerated for the Ossian furore thirty years beforehand.

Their project of publishing a Gaelic text in Greek and Latin orthography would not have given the Anglophone world any greater access to Macpherson’s poems. At best, it would have been an aid for the Anglophone voice to render a rough approximation of a Gaelic sound. Even in Greek letters, Gaelic might as well have been gibberish for an English-speaking reader. But in fact, the Greek orthography was intended for neither of these purposes. As shall be revealed, the scheme, far from being ‘affectation’, actually had some merit. Ferguson was convinced that Greek orthography

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99 Saunders, Life, 296.
101 Small, Biographical Sketch, 54; Merolle and Wellesley, Correspondence, vol. 2, 352 and Saunders, Life, 294.
102 John Semple Smart, James Macpherson: An Episode in Literature (London: David Nutt, 1905), 190. Smart points out that Macpherson admitted in the letter to Ferguson that he had no manuscript to follow Ossian, despite the testimonies of many Highlanders to the contrary. See Smart, 195–197.
represented the sounds of Gaelic more closely than the Latin alphabet. He intended to prevail upon Macpherson to produce a volume of the *Poems of Ossian* with the text in Gaelic on the verso, and the same text, preferably in Greek orthography, on the recto. Ferguson conjectured that a text of this type would be of inestimable value to a classically educated Highland minister. Ferguson thought that secular Gaelic prose in Greek orthography might encourage a resurgence of Greek scholarship among the clergy, introduce them to the fashionable trend for Homeric poetry, and give them polish enough to converse and socialise with the land-owning class. However, most Highland ministers were unable to write sermons in their native tongue, even though this was the language of preaching, prayer and catechism in the Highlands. Not all Highland parishioners could comprehend English, especially in more remote parts. Ferguson believed a secular text of this type would give struggling ministers another means of learning the orthographic conventions of Gaelic, as they were printed in the Scottish Gaelic New Testament of 1767. Ferguson knew this from his own bitter experience. Highland ministers were expected to preach in the language but forbidden to attain any degree of literacy. This circumstance will be expounded upon in the next chapter where the level of power the Church had over its ministers, Ferguson and his father included, will be revealed.

Nevertheless, this episode of the orthographic experiment actually gives us much information about Ferguson and his competence in Gaelic. It is important to establish the fact that Ferguson spoke Gaelic from a young age, and that he fully interiorised the language. In other words, he was not just a person living for a time in the Highlands who managed to pick up a smattering of Gaelic. Ferguson’s perception that Greek lettering represented the sounds of the Gaelic more faithfully is testimony to the fact his ear was more conditioned to the sound of Gaelic than he realised. Ancient Greek orthography would generate vowel lengths more akin to Gaelic than a Latin orthography, which would only generate English-like approximations of long Gaelic vowels. But neither Greek nor Latin (‘Saxon’) orthography could correctly represent the

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103 Small, *Biographical Sketch*, 55.
dental plosives or stopped consonants characteristic of Gaelic. Ferguson’s reply to Macpherson revealed much about his knowledge, and his own, and others’ attitudes toward Gaelic. Ferguson began by commenting on Macpherson’s idea:

Will it not be proper to prefix an alphabet, with notice of the power of each letter? If so, I think the two sigmas should be distinguished, the one s, the other sh. I think the alpha is sufficiently full and broad in the sound without an additional vowel, as (u), for instance; and I think the upsilon should have the power of the English (v), uniformly given to it. The modern Greeks always pronounce it so. The (γ) falsely numbered with the diphthongs, should always stand for the Italian (u), or English (oo), as in moon or boon, &c. To illustrate these remarks, I have ventured to mark the changes they would make in the specimen. Ἀκυς I see, you spell with a kappa, to my ear it is rather a (γ) gamma; however you know much better. Query, also whether the nasal sound, when the article precedes a word beginning with gamma or kappa, may not be marked with the double gamma, as in the tale of Pharaoh’s daughter (αγγχȠφα); so much for remarks which you will not make any use of, as you see cause.

Ferguson demonstrated knowledge of East Perthshire Gaelic phonetics and phonology. He was aware of the nature of ‘the two sigmas’ which he suggested Macpherson must distinguish from each other. He recognised that the quality of the ‘s’ sound changed in the environment of certain vowels. In Gaelic, ‘s’ fronting a broad vowel (a,o,u) approximates an English ‘s’, but in the environment of a narrow vowel (i or e) ‘s’ becomes a palatal fricative approximating English ‘sh’. In Gaelic this phenomenon is known as slenderisation. Slenderisation at the beginning of a word is allophonic, but at the end it may be a marker of gender and case. Therefore Ferguson was correct to insist that the two sigmas /s/ and /sh/ be distinguished because they are in binary opposition even though they are represented orthographically as /s/ in Latin orthography.


105 It is difficult to ascertain what Ferguson meant by giving upsilon the power of an English ‘v’. This may have been a transcription error as there are some discrepancies between the rendition of Merolle and Wellesley, and that of Small. In any case, the paper Ferguson sent back to Macpherson with his alterations has been lost or no longer exists. I cannot see how Ferguson would want to make the Greek letter upsilon, usually a rounded /i/ or /u/ vowel like English ‘oo’, stand for an English voiced bilabial fricative. However, perhaps it was an English /u/.

106 Merolle and Wellesley, eds, Correspondence, vol. 2, 353; Small, Biographical Sketch, 55–56. There is slight variation between the transliterations of the Greek lettering in these works. However, John Small’s work is the only place that Ferguson’s reply to Macpherson is on record. There is an extra ‘o’ in the Ἀκυς of the letter in Correspondence. This indicates there has been some confusion among transcribers of this letter. The transcription of the work which appears in Small, and Merolle and Wellesley shows that they were not duly familiar with the Gaelic language.

107 An example of slenderisation marking case occurs in Seumas the Gaelic for James. Since the first vowel is slender or narrow it affects the /s/, which is palatalised and pronounced Shay-mas. The final /s/ has a sound similar to an English /s/ but slightly more dental. In Gaelic there is a vocative case used to
In the letter referred to on the previous page, Ferguson also raised a point of distinction with Macpherson. Ferguson disputed with Macpherson about what was to his ear a ‘gamma’, referring to the velar stop in the word ‘Akus’ [akus]. In modern Gaelic orthography ‘Akus’ would be rendered agus – an equivalent to the English conjunction ‘and’. In Ferguson’s peripheral dialect, the velar stop of ‘Akus’ [akus] had become ‘voiced’ [agus] – a feature that is retained in modern Gaelic orthography and in some other peripheral dialects. Robertson confirmed that in EPG that /p/ /t/ and /c/ in the medial position had a tendency to become voiced. The /c/ is a hard ‘c’ as in cat and with the addition of voicing the first consonant of cat becomes gat. Ferguson’s agus with the voiced velar stop or gamma is a consistent marker which differentiates his dialect from the central dialect of Macpherson, who came from Inverness-shire, a region further north and west of Logierait. For Macpherson, the same stop in ‘Akus’ was ‘a kappa’. In other words, it was an unvoiced velar stop (as in English k for kettle). This voiced/voiceless alternation indicates a central/peripheral dialect marker. The central dialect pronunciation (a voiceless velar stop) is reflected in the derivation of the Scottish Gaelic agus from old Irish acus or ocus. This knowledge and the argument with Macpherson over the velar stop in ‘Akus’ is convincing proof that Ferguson had a native-like control of the sound system of his own particular dialect, signifying that he was exposed to it at a young age.

A further example of Ferguson’s native-like control of the Gaelic language occurs in the same letter. Ferguson drew Macpherson’s attention to the extra nasalisation which occurs when the Gaelic definite article (an) precedes a velar stop /k/. This occurred twice in the first ten verses of the second chapter of Exodus. The situation

call a person’s name. To mark this case Seumas becomes a Sheumas in the vocative. The changes occurring include the following: 1) the addition of the vocative particle before the name (a) if it begins with certain consonants, (i.e. this would not apply if the name began with a vowel). [Seumas > a Seumas] 2) Lenition. This is the insertion of an /h/ after the first consonant. [Seumas > a Sheumas] this makes the /s/ > 0 [s becomes silent]. 3) Up to this point, vocative case has been marked, but if the noun or name is masculine, it undergoes slenderisation of the final vowel. In the case of the name Seumas, it also slenderises the terminal /s/ so that it sounds like and English /sh/. [Seumas > a Sheumas] The vocative masculine form of the name Seumas has been anglicised to the Scottish name Hamish which is an approximation of the Gaelic pronunciation. In this case the two sigmas, as Ferguson described them here, are minus palatal for feminine gender and plus palatal for masculine gender. For allophonic versus phonemic difference see Peter Ladefoged, A Course in Phonetics, 3rd ed. (Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 1993), 26 and 39. It explains how allophones and phonemes are differentiated.

108 Robertson, “Perthshire Gaelic”, 15.
arose with *an cobhan* (koff ‘-an).

This translates into English variously as the ark, coffer, chest, reed basket, or most obviously, coffin. There is emphatic nasalisation when the article *an* comes up against the velar stop /k/ in *cobhan* [ŋ kʰ]. Rather than *αγ χόφαν*, as Macpherson rendered it, Ferguson suggested it should be *αγγ χόφαν* with a double gamma. This suggestion showcases not only Ferguson’s knowledge of Gaelic but also his competence with Greek. Where the γ (gamma) precedes χ (chi), αγ would be transliterated ‘an’ in English, but should be sounded as [ŋ] ‘eng’ if given the full value of Ancient Greek phonetics. In Ancient Greek, whenever a gamma (γ) preceded the following consonants (γ κ χ or ζ) the result is always nasalised [ŋ] ‘eng’.

Ferguson’s idea of doubling up the gammas would signal a more emphatic ‘eng’ sound to a Greek scholar unversed in Gaelic phonetics. Hopefully, a man as astute as John Home would read *an cobhan* as it was rendered in Greek *αγγ χόφαν*, and provide the extra nasalised sound necessary for a native Gaelic-speaker to comprehend him readily. In actuality though, *an cobhan* read using English phonetics is not far removed from the sound of either the Greek or the Gaelic version. Ferguson’s use of the double gamma actually shows that during his lifetime the ‘ng’ or η was still sounded in East Perthshire Gaelic. By the time of Robertson’s Essay in 1897, the ‘ng’ sound had become elided (lost altogether) or lenited (breathed through) so that a Gaelic word like *langan* became *lag-han* in EPG.

All this makes Ferguson’s suggestion of *αγγ χόφαν* to Macpherson illustrative of two things. Firstly, it demonstrates Ferguson’s interest in precision, particularly for the conveyance of Gaelic sounds; and secondly, it showcases his familiarity with sound perception and reproduction in his own particular Gaelic dialect.

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110 Someone unfamiliar with Gaelic orthography and pronunciation, who was reading *an cobhan* aloud as an isolated word, might still be understood by a Gaelic-speaker. The English speaker would probably voice both medial consonants and use little nasalisation. However, not all Gaelic pronunciation is quite so transparent in Latin orthography for those unfamiliar with the language. These are approximate renditions of what Home may have produced from the orthography in the Bible text. For example: English Representation: *æn kʰɒbhæn* (in Latin orthography).

Ancient Greek: *ŋ kʰɔpʰɑn* (in Greek orthography)
Scottish Gaelic: *ŋ kʰɔfʰɑn* (as rendered in spoken East Perthshire dialect)

111 Robertson, “Perthshire Gaelic”, 22.
This feature is of itself indicative that his use of Gaelic came before, or was simultaneous with, his acquisition of English. The earlier a child learns the sound system of a language, the more they speak the language like a native. Older people learning a second language tend to speak it with a foreign accent because their productive and perceptual capabilities either decline with age or become affected by their first language. Ferguson retained his bias for precision and order, and insisted that should the volume of poems ever be printed it ‘have prefixed an Alphabet in which the Power & Sound of every Letter will be ascertained as much as possible.’ Ferguson had too much knowledge about the sound system of Gaelic, a complicated one by any standards, to be a partial speaker of the language. However, he was constrained by speaking a low prestige peripheral variety of Gaelic and this will have motivated his gravitation toward English.

In the following chapter, I will look more closely at the role played by the Church in its attempt to root out the Gaelic language and the impact that this had upon the lives of the Fergu(s)sons. Despite learning Gaelic as a child Ferguson had to struggle to retain it, not only because he removed himself from the speech community, but also because achieving literacy in the language was never an option for him. Ferguson received a request from the antiquarian George Chalmers in January 1798 asking his opinion on Gaelic placenames in Perthshire. In his letter to Chalmers Ferguson admitted:

I certainly could interpret some of the names in the list you have sent me: but think I do better in referring you by the inclosed to My Friend Mr Bisset Minister of the Parish who by his daily use of the language and view of the places can much better connect the name and the description together.

112 Young children seem to be able to acquire two languages simultaneously without great difficulty. René Appel and Pieter Muysken, Language Contact and Bilingualism (London: Edward Arnold, 1988), 95.  
117 Ibid., vol. 2, 426.  
Ferguson preferred to defer to a friend who used the language daily than to be found inadequate. Despite an interlude of being ‘immersed’ in Highland language and culture with the Black Watch, almost forty years had elapsed since his retirement from the service. Signs of possible language attrition had been noticed by his son, Sir Adam, who recorded this waning of his father’s powers; ‘Loggierait is the place of his Nativity, and he still retains a little smattering of the Gaelic language – but it is now so long since he has visited his Native country that I am much afraid his memory may fail him a little.’

Ferguson was by then seventy-five and the automaticity of his Gaelic, his word retrieval, and fluency began to decline. Removal from one language community to a new one can have this effect on certain native speakers, especially if the spoken language has not been reinforced by literacy, which greatly enhances the ability to retain languages. There are other solid reasons why Ferguson would have experienced memory lapses. Natural ageing can impair memory. This happens even in monoglots who have remained within a single language community for duration of their lives. In addition, Ferguson had a paralytic attack (stroke) in 1780, aged fifty-seven. Although he made a miraculous recovery, the stroke could have caused some memory impairment. However, the stroke also had a secondary effect. Following the illness, Ferguson developed intolerance to the cold. This curtailed prospective trips to the unsuitable climate of the Highlands for periodic reconnection and revitalisation of his powers of Gaelic speech. Ferguson was not unique in having declining powers of recall of the

117 Merolle and Wellesley, eds, Correspondence, vol. 2, 428. See note 1 following letter.
120 Jaspaert, Kroon and Roeland have suggested models for research of language attrition that may be applied now but, naturally were unheard of in Ferguson’s day. However, we only have anecdotal evidence about Ferguson to assess. Koen Jaspaert, Sjaak Kroon, and Roeland van Hout, "Points of Reference in First-Language Loss Research" in Language Attrition in Progress, ed. Bert Weltens, Kees de Bot, and Theo van Els (Dordrecht, Holland: Foris Publications, 1986), 37–49.
121 Obler and Martin, "Language in Aging", 245.
122 Small, Biographical Sketch, 32. In a letter dated 13 January1781, his friend Sir John Macpherson wrote that Ferguson’s Highland constitution, philosophy and knowledge of nature would sustain him through his illness. See Small, p 33 and Merolle and Wellesley, Correspondence, vol. 2, 261.
123 P. Mudie, "Account of the Last Illness of Adam Ferguson," Medico-Chirurgical Transactions 7 (1816), 231–232. The account of the illness contains some case notes on Ferguson by Dr Black. After Ferguson
Gaelic grammar and lexicon set down in early childhood. Maclean the younger of Glensanda found that ‘both John and James Macpherson wrote crude Gaelic\textsuperscript{124} which deteriorated as they grew older’, and that while both men used the Gaelic language with confidence, their command of it declined for want of practice.\textsuperscript{125} Roger W. Andersen points out that in bilinguals who spoke languages with divergent grammars like those of English and Gaelic, which carried a low functional load (used infrequently), the less used language was more likely to become irretrievable with age.\textsuperscript{126} The withholding of literacy to Highlanders, together with diminishing domains of usage, aging and perhaps illness, were the signal causes of language attrition for Ferguson.

Nevertheless, at times it suited the Macphersons to communicate with each other and Ferguson using Gaelic as a code. If they wished to conceal their purpose from others, they would resort to writing in Gaelic. The word ‘Tua’, or ‘Tuath’ (\textit{tuath} – the Gaelic for north) was code for the politician, Lord North. James Macpherson commonly used it when writing to other Highlanders, Ferguson included.\textsuperscript{127} John and James designated Ferguson \textit{Erguis}, which was a phonetic rendering of \textit{Fhearghuis}, (the ‘Fh’ being silent). Their omission of the vocative particle \textit{a} and the initial and medial digraphs in ‘Erguis’ substantiates that their understanding of the Gaelic spelling system

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\textsuperscript{124} There are numerous pieces of correspondence between John and James Macpherson in the India Office Records of the British Library which are in Gaelic. There are also letters from Alexander MacAulay, which are in Gaelic. See Alexander MacAulay, \textit{Sir John Macpherson Bart. (1745–1821) – India: Bound Correspondence}, in "IOR MSS EUR F 291/116, 117" (British Library: 1782–1787, 1798). Other instances of Gaelic correspondence between the Macphersons include James Macpherson, "MSS EUR F 291/122" in \textit{Sir John Macpherson (1745–1821) India: Bound Correspondence (1770–1801) inclusive [1776] (British Library). There is also an Additional Manuscript which translates some of the correspondence of John and James into English. See also John Macpherson, "IOR MSS EUR F 291/217" in \textit{Macpherson Add. MSS} (British Library). This \textit{Add. MSS} was translated in circa 1985 by W. D. Macpherson, a retired clergyman living at Sleat in the Isle of Skye where John Macpherson’s father was minister. It was copied by Sir A. G. Macpherson.
\textsuperscript{125} Both Macphersons had come from areas in where, unlike Logierait, there had been far less interference to the Gaelic tongue through contact with English. James was born in the Strathspey region of Inverness-shire, while John was a native of Ostaig in the Isle of Skye. J.N. M. Maclean found that both John and James Macpherson had forgotten many nouns, used the wrong tenses for verbs, and used English nouns with Gaelic suffixes. James Macpherson often translated English idioms directly into Gaelic, rendering them meaningless or incomprehensible to monoglot Gaelic speakers. See MacLean, "Early Political Careers", xxxiv.
\textsuperscript{126} Murtagh, "Retention and Attrition of Irish as a Second Language", 29. Andersen, "Determining the Linguistic Attributes of Language Attrition", 83–115.
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was only partial. Warren Hastings, India’s first Governor-General, was aware, and mildly suspicious, of their ‘Gaelic’ cipher. Hastings called it the ““Celtic Strongbox” to which only the Macphersons had “the key”’. John Macpherson, who eventually assumed the title of Governor-General himself, betrayed his predecessor with what Hastings described as a ‘welter of Celtic flattery’. This could be a further indication that Ferguson felt uneasy about the language, or feared for his reputation by being associated with a language that the government wanted extinguished, but it does not exclude the possibility that he had time to destroy such evidence.

Ferguson’s only recorded attempt at written Gaelic appeared rather late in his life (1798, aged seventy-five). It is contained within a letter to Henry Mackenzie. In 1805, Mackenzie was the editor of the Report of the Committee of the Highland Society into the Ossian affair, and due to hand down his findings. As part of the enquiry the committee wished to know what Ferguson could recollect about Fingalian tales, and whether he could substantiate their existence. Ferguson cited hearing a tale declaimed in his father’s manse by a tailor named John Fleming as far back as 1740. He summoned up as much as he could remember:

The few words I can recall, are 1st, in relation to the hosts engaged:
Iomma colan, iomma skia, iomma tria, is lurigh gharibh.
And in relation to the chiefs who grappled, and in whose struggle
Bha cloghin agus talamh trom moscle fo bhonn an cos
The Committee will be so good as excuse my spelling, and guess at the words as they best can.

128 There is a little rhyme to help youngsters learning to read Gaelic overcome the difficulties of learning the conventions of its spelling. It translates roughly as follows: -
Leathann ri Leathann
Is caol ri caol
Leughar is sgriobhar
Gach facal san t-saoghal.
Broad to broad
And slender to slender
Is read and written
Every word in the world.

See Black, Cothrom Ionnsachaidh: Gaelic Grammar and Exercises, 24. Highlanders of the era when Ferguson lived received no instruction at reading and writing Gaelic. It is not surprising Macpherson was seeking a better orthography than the Latin lettering over which he did not have any mastery. A simple rhyme like the one above would have helped him to realise that ‘Erguis’ failed the spelling rule above by leading into the medial consonant group with a narrow vowel and following it with a broad one.

129 MacLean, "Early Political Careers", 509.
130 Ibid., 334.
The well-respected historian apologised to the committee. He recoiled at the poor, but imposed, state of his illiteracy in Gaelic. To put things into some perspective, Ferguson was by then a published author in the English language. Nevertheless, for a man unschooled in Gaelic, Ferguson’s above rendition is a respectable attempt, although he wrote phonetic Gaelic like the two Macphersons. The silent digraphs /dh/ and /th/ were stumbling blocks for many Highlanders. They had no opportunity to study their language, and therefore digraphs went unrepresented in Ferguson’s orthography. In the sample above, he wrote ‘iomma’ for *iomadh* (many), ‘colan’ for *còmhlann*, (a hero) ‘skia’ for *sgiath* (a target, targe or shield), ‘tria’ for *triath* (lord or chief), ‘cloghin’ for *cladhan* (trenches) and ‘luirigh’ possibly for *luireach* (beloved).

Ferguson typically recalled the rousing military content of his excerpt, which depicted columns of warriors and chiefs, their shoes heavy with mud. However, the above evidence is too slight to make an unequivocal judgment about his capacity and competence. It remains reasonable to believe that his Gaelic was less sophisticated than that of either James or John Macpherson.

By the end of the eighteenth century Gaelic had developed the reputation of being both ancient and interesting. In the same letter to Henry Mackenzie, Ferguson gave a succinct vignette of the fortunes of the Gaelic language over the period of his long life. In voicing his thoughts Ferguson showed that he was aware of some of the linguistic phenomena associated with language change and/or language death which I have outlined throughout the chapter, although the science to describe them adequately had yet to be developed when he penned the following:

> When I consider the late fashion of the times, respecting the contents of a language which is now thought so interesting, I am not surprised that the gleanings of Mr MacPherson has left so little vestige behind. It [Gaelic] was a language spoken in the cottage, but not in the parlour, or at the table of any gentleman. Its greatest elegancies were to be learned from herdsmen or deer-stealers. It was connected with

Society of Edinburgh, 1805, Appendix IV. From Adam Ferguson, Hallyards near Peebles, 20 March 1798. Ferguson was recalling an incident that happened nearly 60 years before. Ferguson’s script of the remembered verse translates as :

> ‘Many a hero, many a battle-shield, many a chief and (beloved) brave man
> Trenches and the earth were opening under their feet.’

My thanks for help with the translation of Ferguson’s phonetically-spelt Gaelic script goes to Mrs Katie Graham, co-author with Katherine M. Spadaro of *Colloquial Scottish Gaelic: The Complete Course for Beginners*, (London: Routledge, 2001).

132 Mrs Katie Graham assisted me with identification and translation of ‘colan’, ‘cloghin’ and ‘luirigh’.
disaffection, and proscribed by government. Schools were erected to supplant it, by teaching a different language. There were no books in it, but the manuals of religion, and these in so awkward and clumsy a spelling that few could read them. The fashionable world in the neighbourhood, as usual, derided the tone and accent of the Highlanders, believing their own models to be of elegance and harmony. It was more genteel to be ignorant than knowing of what such a language contained…

Ferguson here alludes to Gaelic’s narrowing domains, the gendering of Gaelic confining it to home and to the speech of women. He also mentions that the registers associated with the learned and the gentry had already been lost. Speakers of the dominant prestige language, English, circumscribed and sanctioned the use of Gaelic for religious purposes. Ferguson had observed these processes of attrition together with the successive changes in attitudes toward the Gaelic language. Recently Sorensen has investigated grammars and dictionaries published in the British Isles during the eighteenth century. Ferguson’s summary of the fortunes of Gaelic for Mackenzie confirms the gendering of Gaelic postulated by Sorensen. Women confined to the cottage or field had fewer opportunities and less need to learn English. Sorensen has also brought attention to the linguistic partitioning of the private (Gaelic) and public (English) domain of each language; an observation also made above by Ferguson. Gaelic was for the kitchen, but English was for the parlour. That was not to say high registers in Gaelic never existed, but the increased numbers of Scottish nobility being educated in the Lowlands or England meant that there was little use for high register Gaelic. David Stewart of Garth, who came from an area of Perthshire located to the south and west of Logierait, insisted that:

> The Gaelic language is singularly adapted to this colloquial ease, frankness and courtesy. It contains expressions better calculated to mark various degrees of respect and deference due to age or rank, or character, than can be found in any other language. These expressions are peculiar and untranslatable.

In Sorensen’s view for a time the Gaelic language became associated with the barbaric past, masculinity, excess, nature and the quality of the sublime. English was its

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134 David Stewart, "Appendix KK" in *Sketches of the Characters, Manners and Present State of the Highlanders of Scotland: With Details of the Military Service of the Highland Regiments* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1977), lvii. The usage of the plural form of personal pronoun ‘you’ (sibh) is used as a term of formal address to elders and betters. This usage bears similarities with that of the plural personal pronoun in both German and French.
counterpoint: the language of feeling and effeminacy, polite and refined. By Ferguson’s own admission it was safer to feign ignorance of Gaelic than to trumpet the fact that one was a bilingual Highlander. The accent of the Highlander had been scoffed at and was considered inelegant for much of Ferguson’s lifetime. Whether this derision was provoked at hearing Gaelic spoken or when English was spoken with a Highland accent, Ferguson does not make clear. Alexander Irvine observed that strangers to the Gaelic language taxed it with unwarrantable harshness. Therefore, it is safe to assume that both Ferguson and Irvine were probably referring to the sound of a Highland voice speaking Gaelic, not English. This abhorrence of a Highland accent, I would suggest, was more to do with the negative subtext associated with Gaelic – Jacobitism, rebellion and savagery – rather than the manner in which Highlanders spoke the English tongue. Contrary to popular belief, in speaking English, the Highlander was more intelligible than his Scots-speaking Lowland counterpart. The accent of the Highlander in English is similar to the accent heard in the south of Ireland. As John Lanne Buchanan asserted, Highland English was free from the Scotticisms that marred the speech of their Lowland brethren. Buchanan declared:

…in the whole shire of Inverness, Gaelic is the vernacular tongue of the inhabitants and spoken there with the greatest purity; and yet that English is also spoken there more properly than in any other spot in N. Britain. This will appear less surprising when it is considered, that all such as speak it are taught in the first seminaries of learning in Scotland; and such as are of inferior rank and in want of better opportunities are more immediately taught from the mouths of those instructed in it.

The Wordsworths would concur, as this recollection of meeting a Highlander validates:

William accosted him with, ‘Sir, do you speak English?’ He replied, ‘A little.’ He spoke however, sufficiently well for our purpose, and very distinctly, as all the

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136 Ferguson wrote, ‘It was more genteel to be ignorant than knowing of what such a language contained’. See the quotation on page 93–94 of this chapter.
138 John Lanne Buchanan, A Defence of the Scots Highlanders in General and Some Learned Characters in Particular: With a New and Satisfactory Account of the Picts, Scots, Fingal, Ossian and His Poems, as Also of the Maes, Clans, Bodotria and Several Particulars Respecting the High Antiquities of Scotland (London: Printed for J. Egerton, W. Stewart, and W. Richardson in reply to John Pinkerton, 1794), 18.
Highlanders do who learn English as a foreign language; but in a long conversation they want words; he informed us…

It is possible that Ferguson too was initially ignorant about a substantial portion of the ‘Scotch’ dialect used by the vulgar when he first arrived in St Andrews. For, as Temple stated, Highland men had ‘few words and little tone of the Scotchman’. Highlanders generally spoke in a clear, lilting English, which an Anglophone audience, like the Wordsworths and Warren Hastings, found quite appealing. This characteristic feature of English spoken with a Highland accent may even have inadvertently contributed to Ferguson’s success and popularity as a lecturer in moral philosophy at the University of Edinburgh. Although Ferguson had lost a Highland Church audience, he eventually gained an academic English one.

If Ferguson was ambivalent about Gaelic, a contributing factor must have been his embarrassment at speaking a hybrid or corrupt form of the language, which was scorned – even by other Highlanders. Sorensen believes that Highlanders who assimilated into the Lowland Anglophone culture were ambivalent about Gaelic. However, it was Highlanders like Ferguson and Macpherson who helped shape attitudes towards the Gaelic language. As Sorensen notes, in doing so, their input could never contain the purity of the parent culture. Even so, the legacy and significance of the acquisition of a second language in childhood and its effect on Ferguson’s ideas about glottogenesis and other linguistic questions have been overlooked in the past. I suggest

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141 Kathryn Temple, "The Author in Public: Literary Scandals, Legal Regulations and National Identity in 18th Century Britain (Copyright, Plagiarism, Great Britain)" (Ph D, University of Virginia, 1994), 99.
142 The reason for this soft lilt is because Gaelic, unlike English, has a high proportion of vowels, semi-vowels, and liquids unimpeded by stopped consonants. Since certain articulations were alien to Gaelic, Highlanders substituted an alveolar for the inter-dental fricatives which occur in English. This tends to soften certain consonants. For instance, in English the fricative ‘th’ (voiceless /θ/ or voiced /ð/) does not occur in Gaelic so they substitute /s/, making ‘Elizabeth’ sound like ‘Elisabess’, or ‘thing’ like ‘tsing.’ The misconception that Highlanders are unintelligible is still with us today. While I was in Scotland a relative from Cumbria came to stay with me. He had recently holidayed in Oban and was adamant that he could not understand ‘them Highlanders, even when they spoke English.’ He had probably encountered a Glaswegian who was in Oban on a short break rather than a Highlander.
143 This is, of course, if English had not substantially affected his speech. Ferguson was a successful lecturer. See John Lee, "Adam Ferguson," in *Supplement to the Fourth, Fifth and Sixth Editions of Encyclopaedia Britannica* (Edinburgh: Archibald Constable, 1824), 241. Principle Lee, who knew Ferguson well, said he trusted ‘to the moment of delivery to the expression of his sentiments’ and that no lecturer, with perhaps the exception of Dugald Stewart, ‘was ever more admired.’ See p. 241.
that Ferguson’s experience in acquiring Gaelic helped forge his outlook on language, giving him a different perspective altogether when compared to that of Adam Smith. It could not have escaped Ferguson’s notice that English and Gaelic grammar and syntax were divergent, yet both languages were acquired effortlessly by him in childhood.  

Language to Ferguson was instinctual and coeval with society, however ‘rude’ its members might be, but writing was a by-product of civilisation and the possession of comparatively few societies. He refrained from concerning himself with generalisations about grammar to the same degree as Hume, Smith, Millar or Robertson.

Lisa Hill composed and consolidated an outline of Ferguson’s recognition of the function of language. Firstly, language preserves the history of a society in its oral folklore which in turn arouses the passions and enhances communal cohesion. Secondly, language maintains community boundaries, forming a natural barrier between societies as a retardant to coalition and empire alike, but without preventing shared knowledge or invention. Thirdly, the mastery of foreign dialects conserves languages, customs and advances progress and man’s intelligence. Finally, language allows a symbiosis at the interface of language and artifice. By this, Hill surely means that language can be adapted for both intimacy and trickery, something John and James Macpherson employed in their underhand politics.

Ferguson did not concern himself with tortuous arguments about whether the conventions of an artificial sign system arose before or after society’s appearance. To Ferguson natural language arose first in gesture and tone. Even infants and animals could comprehend these, so much so that instruction and prior agreement were unnecessary. For Ferguson, ‘Such natural signs, and instinctive or conjectural interpretations, may be considered as the original stock which nature has furnished to man.’ However, Ferguson was as aware as his literati colleagues that speech had

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145 Adam Ferguson, *Principles of Moral and Political Science*, ed., Jean Hecht, facsimile of 1792 ed. 2 vols, vol. 1 (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 1975), 42. No single genius or inventor devised the intricacies of language, sound, or taught man the name of every subject or particular. It is a process natural to mankind in Ferguson’s opinion. See p 42–43.


147 Lisa Hill, "The Invisible Hand of Adam Ferguson", *History of European Ideas* 3, no. 6 (1998), 47.

148 Ferguson, *Principles*. vol. 1, 37, 40 and 41.

149 Ibid., vol. 1, 39.
distinct advantages over mute signs.\footnote{Ibid., vol. 1, 40.} He expounded upon the theme in the following passage:

In the use of articulate sounds, the variation of signs is effected with the greatest facility, and the greatest quickness of succession; the medium of the air in which sound is produced, is always present, and conveys it in every direction; the organ of hearing is ever open to receive the impression, has great sensibility and discriminating power; at the same time that the pronunciation of words may be accompanied with action, gesture, or visible sign of any sort: So that we may clearly perceive the ground of that preference which mankind have universally given to the practice of speech, without supposing it otherwise natural, than it is obviously expedient and recommended by its use.\footnote{Ferguson, \textit{Principles}. vol. 1, 41.}

Ferguson essentially concurred with Reid, and Dugald Stewart followed much of what Ferguson had taught him.\footnote{Ibid. See also Stewart, \textit{Collected Works of Dugald Stewart}, vol. 3, 6.} However, this was not the image of language conjured up by Rousseau, who has been likened to Ferguson as a primitivist and fellow provincial. For Rousseau, language was redundant in family groups because savages coupled and separated ‘fortuitously’. The mother was then left alone to rear the young of the mating. Rousseau thought that the child developed its own idiolect but departed before a language could be established between it and the parent. Rousseau argued that gesticulation and natural language could not express ideas and besides, gestures were useless in the dark.\footnote{Jean-Jacques Rousseau, \textit{A Discourse on Inequality} (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1984), 92–94.}

Ferguson did not preoccupy himself with such linguistic dilemmas in the same way. Dugald Stewart and Adam Smith both asked difficult questions about language. Rüdiger Schreyer suggests that the complexity of inflected languages compared to the simplicity of English were of paramount concern to Smith.\footnote{Rüdiger Schreyer, "'Pray What Language Did Your Wild Couple Speak, When They First Met?’—Language and the Science of Man in the Scottish Enlightenment" in \textit{The Science of Man in the Scottish Enlightenment: Hume, Reid and Their Contemporaries}, ed., Peter Jones (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1989), 167.} Ferguson marvelled at language but was not impelled to catalogue its developmental stages or the emergence of grammatical categories in the same fashion as Smith.\footnote{Ferguson, \textit{Principles}, vol. 1, 43; Ferguson, \textit{Essay}, 167.} Smith had studied several languages at Oxford. To the usual dead languages (Latin and Greek) Smith added the
living Italian, French and English tongues. The literati spent hours declining nouns and conjugating verbs in a bid to read and write the classical languages. Smith analysed grammar from the point of view of a man who had acquired new languages as an adult. This led Smith to a flawed conclusion regarding the age of Teutonic and Latin. Ferguson too was astounded at the ‘unfathomable depth’ and complexity of grammar, but realised that the ‘rude’ and insane could still apply grammar correctly. It was unnecessary to be a genius to use grammar yet, the grammarian’s study of grammar was incredibly laborious. Ferguson, who knew that the greatest ‘elegancies’ of Gaelic could be learned from unschooled herders, found that:

The peasant, or the child, can reason, and judge, and speak his language, with a discernment, a consistency, and a regard to analogy, which perplex the logician, the moralist, and the grammarian, when they would find the principle upon which the proceeding is founded, or when they would bring to general rules, what is so familiar, and so well sustained in particular cases.

The ancient languages, with their seeming latitude in word order due to their complex system of noun cases, were unlike modern languages with their syntactically limited scope. Smith ascertained that the more simple language became in form and composition the more so, its overall complexity increased. Smith believed that the more sentence level word order was complicated by unwavering laws, the closer it was in structure to the ‘originary’ language. Smith alleged that isolating languages like English appeared earlier than the inflected languages of ancient Europe, when in fact it was the modern European languages which had undergone morphological reduction from the inflected languages of past civilisations. The morphological reduction was a process of simplification where prepositions replaced noun declensions. Smith’s line of reasoning gave him to understand that Teutonic or German was the nominal originary

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158 Ferguson, Essay, 37.
159 Berry, "Adam Smith's Considerations on Language", 133–135.
160 Language change occurs cyclically. Inflected languages such as Greek and Latin go through morphological reduction to become isolating languages like French or Italian. In turn, isolating languages such as English undergo phonological reduction to become agglutinating languages. Agglutinating languages undergo a process of morphological fusion to become inflected languages. See Crowley, An Introduction to Historical Linguistics, 136–137.
language because of its simplified system of prepositions.161 As a disciple of Smith, Stewart refused to be convinced by Sir William Jones’ postulates regarding the relatedness of languages seemingly as diverse as Sanskrit, Greek, Latin, English and even Scottish Gaelic.162 Their scholarly study had led them to flawed conclusions. But Ferguson’s experience of both the old world and new worlds helped him to see that human language was, in the main, used for face-to-face communication, and as such it was subject to continual change. This prompted Ferguson to write, ‘Living languages, if they do not improve, are disposed to decline, and are not secured from change, even by the written monuments, which preserve to succeeding ages the records or productions of those who preceded them.’163

Nevertheless, he and Smith had some points of agreement, even if they arrived at them from totally different directions. Ferguson believed there was little to be gained or learnt by continual imitation of the ancients or the habitual recitation of the grammar of dead languages in schoolrooms. Latin, long the language of learning, had reached the limit of its usefulness in Enlightenment Scotland. Like Ferguson, Smith preferred a neat, plain, clear and clever style in which figures of speech were kept to a minimum. Ferguson’s own discourse was didactic: out to prove a proposition or inform but not to persuade or arouse an audience. The imagery crucial to rhetoric was of secondary importance in didactic discourse. Smith found that narrative served history, while didacticism was a more fitting style for science and philosophy.164 It was no accident that English replaced Latin as the language of education in Enlightenment Britain. Smith equated oratory and poetry with pleasures such as dancing, music, song, hymn and panegyric: something to be enjoyed during the hours of darkness.165 The daylight

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162 Jones delivered a speech in 1786 which hypothesised that the Greek, Latin, Sanskrit, Gothic and Celtic languages were all related, and had all developed from a single source. ‘The Sanskrit language, whatever be its antiquity, is of a wonderful structure; more perfect than the Greek, more copious than the Latin, and more exquisitely refined than either, yet bearing to both a stronger affinity, both in the roots of verbs and in the forms of grammar, than could possibly have been produced by accident; so strong indeed, that no philologer could examine all three, without believing them to have sprung from some common source, which, perhaps, no longer exists: there is similar reason, though not quite so forcible, for supposing that both the Gothic and Celtic, though blended with a very different idiom, had the same origin with the Sanskrit; and the Old Persian might be added to the same family.’ As quoted in Crowley, 1994, 24.
163 Ferguson, *Principles*, vol. 1, 45.
165 Ibid., 34 and 37.
was for work, and since the advent of print the English language had become ever more prosaic. For Ferguson, the danger of didacticism reiterated in print accelerated human withdrawal from the active sphere of life, a concern which would remain an overriding one for him throughout the remainder of his academic career. Ferguson was caught between these two worlds: having known both, he chose to relinquish one, but never entirely.

In the course of this chapter, I have explored Ferguson’s association with the Gaelic language. I suggested he had probably conversed in the Gaelic language from a young age. In what evidence remains to us, there are elements which demonstrate Ferguson’s native command of the sound-system of his own dialect. However, this dialect had suffered interference from English for centuries and was held to be corrupt by Highlanders in adjoining districts. Ferguson’s confession that he was a ‘bastard Gaelic man’ was an admission to Macpherson that he spoke a non-prestige peripheral dialect of Gaelic. Nevertheless, this dialect potentially narrowed his acceptability as a preacher to East Perthshire parishes. With the dialect branded inferior by Gaelic-speakers of nearby parishes it was little wonder that Ferguson gravitated to the more prosaic English language. If these experiences taught him little else, Ferguson’s mastery of two distinct grammars and lexicons in early childhood steered him away from boarding-school induced notions that language originated from a contract between two people concerning a system of signs. For Ferguson, his innate ability to acquire divergent grammatical systems without the effort of drills probably guided him to a position that human language was not only natural but also coeval with society. If we were to explain that experience simplified in binary oppositions, it would be a case of learning a modern isolating language (English) versus a language with inflected prepositions (Gaelic); a prosaic language fitted for philosophy, science and didacticism versus an oratorical language fitted for poetry, song and passion. This should have left Ferguson with a bifurcated worldview. Although his mastery of Gaelic dialect withered with age and lack of use, Ferguson did not delve with gusto into the mysteries of the grammatical categories to the same degree as his Edinburgh colleagues, all of whom acquired just the single language by natural means. Therefore, he did not fall into the same traps about language, but looked upon it as a faculty bestowed by nature.
In the following chapter, I will examine the way the Scottish Church meddled in the lives Ferguson and his father, dictating where and when they were employed. I will also expound on how each of them were affected by the Church’s prohibition on Gaelic in schools. The policy had consequences for Gaelic-speaking ministers like Fergusson and his son. Later in life he and his father quietly sought to alter the circumstances for Highlanders who wished to take full advantage of the opportunity for a sound education, an outcome, which the Church policy was inadvertently undermining.
CHAPTER 3
‘The Gosple according To Logyreat’:
Fergusson and Son: Highland Moderates in the Church of Scotland

In the first part of the thesis, it was established that Ferguson’s formative years between 1723 and 1732, were spent in a still reasonably isolated Highland community. Logierait at this time was beginning to adopt change and improvement, yet still clung to residual folk tradition. Ferguson was exposed to a society quite unlike anything that his Edinburgh contemporaries would experience in their entire existence. Logierait was where Ferguson constructed his earliest notions of belonging. In Chapter Two, I assessed how Ferguson had interacted enough with his community to acquire its language naturally. Thereby, the language helped to instil in him the community’s attitudes and worldview. Ferguson would thus have had some empathy with Highland people, even if it remained unspoken or unacknowledged. Ferguson could contrast elements of mainstream culture with the models and patterns of thinking and reacting that he had acquired during his boyhood in Logierait.

During his service as a minister between 1746 and 1754, Ferguson had to juggle competing moral frameworks in his interactions with other Highlanders, including those who were ordinary infantry soldiers. These encounters must have informed not only his attitude to the Church but also his attitude to Christianity and superstition. The Essay, however, is almost silent on the subject of religion and Christianity. This oversight was disappointing, according to William Lehmann, but may have arisen because Ferguson believed religion was subordinate to politics.¹ The separation of the polity from the economy and social life was beginning to break the cycle of interdependence between faith, power and society.² The process of the separation of the powers of church and state can be readily observed in eighteenth–century Scotland. Another reason for Ferguson’s reticence on religious matters may be due to the rebukes David Hume and

John Home received from the Church. Home had to resign his charge in 1757 over his involvement in the theatrical arts. This activity drew the ire of the Evangelicals because it was thought to be unbecoming for a man of God to participate in frivolities like theatre. Ferguson was among those who helped to orchestrate Hume’s defence when he was brought before the General Assembly in 1756 for his unorthodox views. Ferguson’s Essay was being gestated in this climate and he may have thought better than to raise controversial religious issues, given his ambition to become a college professor.

In this chapter, I want to present some less intellectual stimuli, all of which affected Ferguson and his father in the course of their profession. These included Church attitudes to education and Gaelic and the prevalence of localised conflict in the Highlands. Ferguson’s experience as a both Highlander and cleric heightened his awareness of the linguistic and cultural conflict in the Scotland of his day. In turn, this may have dictated some of the complexities of position adopted by him in his Essay. It may even go some way to explaining the non-intellectual and experiential influences that combined to provoke the many criticisms he levelled at civil society in his Essay.

To substantiate this claim, I will present evidence of the way in which Ferguson and his father, despite their support for the government and Church, were adversely affected by the policies implemented by these bodies. Furthermore, Ferguson’s boyhood and chaplaincy unfolded among a people who were often engaged in conflict. My findings suggest that it may be inaccurate to assume that Ferguson assimilated effortlessly into the predominant culture of the Lowlands. His Gaelic-speaking capabilities cemented his identity as a Highlander, making him a highly desirable candidate for the ministry and chaplaincy. Nevertheless, precisely because of this ability, it took Ferguson almost ten years to overcome institutional and administrative practices that were designed to confine his ministry to the Highlands and its communities. Fortunately, Ferguson had connections who believed he had valuable talents that went beyond an ability to speak Gaelic. Their faith in him was confirmed by his eventual success as an academician and a man of letters.

Harro Höpfl’s speculation that the critical undercurrent in the Essay has its foundation in adverse or unjust episodes of Ferguson’s life requires further investigation.
Certainly, Höpfl was not the first to read Ferguson’s Essay as a critique of civil society and progress. Writers like Varty, Benton, Kugler and Gellner, among others, maintain that Ferguson found fault with the growing tide of commercialism, specialisation and the separation of the citizen from the soldier. Höpfl notes that Ferguson could not readily appreciate the benefits that came through the advance of industry, knowledge or refinement, and suggests that conjectural history and stadial theory served as implicit justification for civilising the Highlands. He believes Hume, Robertson, Smith and Millar, whose watchwords were supposedly sympathy, fellow feeling and amiable virtue, were indifferent to the plight of Highlanders following the Government victory at Culloden in 1746. At a more personal level he suggests Hume’s objection to Ferguson’s Essay might be due to Hume’s guilt over these events. Höpfl points to a letter from Hume to Blair where it was indicated that Ferguson’s Essay ‘discredits his Class, which is at present in so flourishing a situation’.

If Ferguson had reason to harbour any resentment, one need look no further than the Church policy in the Highlands. His Gaelic-speaking ability qualified Ferguson to be a candidate for a Highland charge but it also made him ineligible for a Lowland one. This ineligibility for a Lowland parish and his probable antipathy to a Highland one curtailed his advancement in academic circles beyond the level of professor. Despite his eventual standing in Edinburgh circles, Ferguson was, initially at least, just another Highlander and, like all Highlanders, he was subject to certain restrictions. For instance, the Church curtailed the use of the Gaelic language in the Highlands to worship, and insisted on policing the mandatory use of English in schools. This had unforeseen consequences, not only for the Highland people as a whole, but also for Ferguson and

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4 Gellner, Conditions of Liberty, 75.
8 See note 57, p. 116 of this chapter for detail of the Acts governing Gaelic-speaking ministers.
his father. They overcame these strictures, and possibly arrived at the realisation that such restrictions on language were counter-productive.

Rather than enforcing the language policy of the Church, both Fergus(s)ons actually may have been working to circumvent it, if not individually, then certainly as ministers and elders of the Presbytery of Dunkeld. The pattern of illiteracy in the Highlands was already entrenched by the first half of the century. Eventually the Church and Charity Schools had to accept that English might best be taught as a second language through the medium of Gaelic in order to achieve its aim of implanting English. Very few children achieved literacy in English through attendance at parish schools. The Church then began to allow devotional material to be published in Gaelic, but by then it was too late to halt the erosion of the social fabric of the Highlands. The Church unwittingly enabled the association of spirituality, evangelicalism and worship with the Gaelic language. This, in turn, led to Highland congregations preferring the more democratic evangelical standpoint to that of Moderate ministers who supported the landed interest. This raises the question of whether the availability of more Highland ministers literate in Gaelic would have halted the trend toward histrionic ‘soughing’, a style of preaching loved by congregations, but in no way instructive in its content. In the Highlands, it was referred to as the duan or minister’s song.

I intend to use Ferguson and his father as cases which demonstrate why the Church was unsuccessful in achieving its aims of supplanting Gaelic with English, and to supply sufficient numbers of Gaelic-speaking ministers to its Highland parishes. Fergusson and son were not victims of the policies, although their voices of experience and persistent efforts to be heard, contributed to effecting an eventual change in policy.

Poor English literacy created a social underclass in the Highlands, fracturing the social structure, increasing poverty and creating even greater dependence on the Gaelic language for communication and worship. Without English literacy, few Highlanders had any hope of bettering their circumstances. The Church’s ‘English only’ policy, for

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instance, decreased the pool of educated candidates for the ministry. It also produced Highland ministers who were unable to read or write sermons in their native tongue, thereby partially reducing their effectiveness as ministers of the Gospel and inculcators of law and order – forcing them to rely on faith rather than deliberation and planning for the content of their sermons. The difficulties Church policies foisted upon the ministers contributed to the numerous disincentives for young Highlanders to enter the profession. While there was a dearth of Highland candidates for the ministry, the Church went to extraordinary lengths to try to obtain them. The Church intruded into the lives of suitably qualified men, such as Ferguson and his father, and imposed its will. The powerbase within the Church, the General Assembly, the Church’s Commission for the North and the Society in Scotland for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge (hereafter SSPCK), intended to increase levels of English literacy, which in turn might elicit compliance with the law, and instil order and prosperity in the Highlands. However, the Church steadfastly refused to listen to the advice of ministers who had successfully learnt English and refused to relax its policy and allow the Gaelic language to be used for instruction in schools. Adam Ferguson must have been familiar with the successes and difficulties of his father’s education, and probably suffered his own difficulty trying to prepare sermons in a language he could neither read nor write.

The power of the Church as a force in Scottish society during this era should not be underestimated. The work of the late Rosalind Mitchison and the late Leah Leneman can illuminate our understanding of the daily workings of the Church of Scotland and the way it functioned in ordinary society. During Ferguson’s young adulthood, the Church provided many services that secular or state bodies administered by the time Ferguson was an elderly man. These included provision of education, tax collection, policing and magistracy along with its usual services, such as burial of the dead.¹² The

¹² To the public, the Church building was not simply a place of worship, but also one where socialisation and business deals took place. The Lord’s Day was observed with solemn piety, and no parishioner attended the Lord’s Supper unless permitted by the minister, who, having examined him or her on the Catechism, would issue a communion token to admit him or her to attend the Lord’s Supper. Communion tokens were based on the tesserae on which sacred symbols of the early Roman Christian church were etched and which, in turn, had been based on pagan identity tokens. If a parishioner passed a coin by mistake, they could be rebuked by the session, see John Watson, *The Scot of the Eighteenth Century: His Religion and Life* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1907), 45 and 59. For a depiction of communion tokens, see Rosalind Mitchison, *Life in Scotland* (London: B.T. Batsford, 1978), 42.
elders had the responsibility of controlling the behaviour of parishioners.\textsuperscript{13} The Church so effectively controlled the movements of its parishioners that sinners could not escape penalty by removing themselves to a new parish.\textsuperscript{14} Church courts were overseen by the synod and the General Assembly.\textsuperscript{15} The additional duty for the Church in the Highlands was the inculcation of the Gospel, law and civility. To do this the Church first needed to install English as the chief language and root out Irish or Erse, which it believed kept the Highlanders barbarous.

The notion that Highlanders were savages has a history dating back to the Middle Ages with John of Fordun’s declaration that:

\begin{quote}
The highlanders and people from the islands, on the other hand are a savage and untamed nation, rude and independent, given to rapine, easy-living, of a docile and warm disposition, comely in person but unsightly in dress, hostile to the English people and language and owing to diversity of speech, even to their own nation, and exceedingly cruel.\textsuperscript{16}
\end{quote}

The precedent for the Church’s strategy to implant English in the Highlands began with the ‘Statutes of Iona’ (1609) which were implemented by Bishop Andrew Knox and King James I of England and VI of Scotland.\textsuperscript{17} The Statutes decreed that sons of Highland chiefs must be educated in English Schools. Later, in a further bid to implant English, the Scottish Education Act of 1616 prevented the use of Gaelic in Highland schools.\textsuperscript{18} The laws promoted the Anglicisation of the Scottish aristocracy, effectively driving a wedge between chiefs and their adherents, and severing Highland ties with the

\textsuperscript{13} The Church session sat in judgement and meted out penance to transgressors. Elders’ duties included delating parishioners to the session – issuing rebukes and keeping what was known as elders’ hours. This entailed patrolling village streets late at night, alert for signs of drunkenness or scandalous behaviour. Thomas Pennant, \textit{A Tour in Scotland and Voyage to the Hebrides}, 1772 (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 1998), 17.

\textsuperscript{14} A court session expected newcomers to have been issued with a testificate by their previous parish. These testificates functioned as both a letter of introduction and an insurance against parishioners leaving the district to avoid punishment. The new session would carefully scrutinise the paperwork of newcomers for any discrepancy in the handwriting or terminology. It then wrote to the old session for clarification if all was not to their liking. The only people not to be under Kirk control were soldiers and the land-owning class. See Rosalind Mitchison and Leah Leneman, \textit{Sexuality and Social Control: Scotland 1660–1780} (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), 35.

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., 21.


\textsuperscript{18} Durkacz, \textit{The Decline of the Celtic Languages}, 5, 27, 30 and 46; Mackinnon, \textit{Gaelic}, 48.
Irish parent culture. In order to bring the Highlands under the law, education in the Highlands centred on the Bible and its unifying prescription for righteousness. It was then but a small step to institute a comprehensive legal system and provide a framework for the development of commerce. Although neither Ferguson nor his father taught for, or were taught by, the SSPCK, the organisation had a profound influence on education policy in the Highlands. Charity schools were established throughout the Atholl estate. The Society collected money from donors, subscriptions, parishes and the Crown in order to set up its schools. The SSPCK was a replica of the English SPCK whose subscribers were wealthy landowners, lawyers and businessmen. After the union with England, the Society’s Scottish subscribers feared that the Highland component of Scotland would do irreparable damage to Scotland’s budding North British identity. Therefore, charitable works in the Highlands were aimed at improving the backward image of the Highlander in order to enhance Scotland’s image. But the SSPCK was even less flexible than the Church on the issue of classroom instruction in Gaelic.

Several acts were passed in the General Assembly between 1690 and 1717 to shore up the policies on the supply of ministers for the Highlands, which had been instigated in 1643. These articles of legislation remained set in stone whether Presbyterianism or Prelacy held sway in the Church. Ferguson’s own father is an outstanding example of how the language policy affected Highland youngsters of school age. Unlike Ferguson’s father however, the majority of school pupils were unable to surmount these obstacles.

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19 Sorensen found that the evangelicals wrested reformative powers in the Bible reading act and cites the fact that illiterate pilgrims at Highland revivals often hankered to become literate in the wake of their religious experiences. It indicates the investment and faith placed in the act of reading the bible on the part of the Church and its supposed ability to transform Highlanders into productive, upstanding subjects. See Janet Sorensen, *The Grammar of Empire in Eighteenth Century British Writing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 42–43.


21 In 1709, the SSPCK was awarded its Royal Charter.

22 Durkacz, *The Decline of the Celtic Languages*, 47.


The senior Fergusson went to a parish school where lessons were taught in English, a language that at the time he could neither speak nor comprehend. As a result, Fergusson struggled with Latin, so much so that his father removed him from school and resigned himself to the fact his son would never enter university. Fortuitously, the parish minister employed a new schoolmaster who had been tutoring children at a nearby country house. The new master, Duncan Menzies, a recent graduate, was an acquaintance of the Fergussons. Menzies impressed Adam Fergusson so much that he implored his father to return him to school at the late age of eleven. During the next four years, he studied Latin with help from the sympathetic Menzies. These private lessons probably occurred outside school hours when speaking Gaelic was permitted. In Fergusson’s final year at school, the youngest son of the Marquis of Atholl enrolled. The boy, Lord George Murray, spoke perfect English because his mother sprang from the ranks of the English aristocracy. Adam informally engaged Lord George to help him learn English. The resourceful boys soon worked out a sign language based on the English alphabet, which they surreptitiously used for communication in and outside the classroom. In a brief biographical piece written in the third person, Fergusson divulged the lengths he went to in order to gain command of English:

They both, in an afternoon, in a very private place, made by-signs with their hands and fingers for all the letters of the alphabet so exactly that by spelling words they could communicate their thoughts in company without the perception of any other, which was very prejudicial to Lord George’s studies.

Fergusson’s association with Lord George earned him beatings from his fellow scholars. His ‘swearing and cursing to frighten his schoolfellows, with who he was often in quarrels or blows,’ was far from unusual. In his study of Highland evangelicalism, John MacInnes records many similar instances of bullying. He claims

26 Ibid., 53.
27 Ibid., 54.
28 The mother of Lord George was a daughter of the Earl of Derby.
29 This was the type of activity that seduced many Enlightenment philosophers, Dugald Stewart among them, to believe that language arose as a compact. See Chapter Two, page 62 of this thesis.
31 Ibid.
32 Ibid., 52.
that the exclusive use of English outside of school hours was a badge of dishonour for a Highland child.\textsuperscript{33} Children were co-opted by masters to police their schoolfellows and to report any unsanctioned use of Gaelic.\textsuperscript{34} Therefore, children retaliated when they heard classmates speaking English during play. The anthropologist Malcolm Chapman has denied that monoglot or bilingual Highland children met with treatment such as Fergusson described in his autobiography.\textsuperscript{35} However, similar reports to his were common as late as the early twentieth century. In her \textit{Grammar of Empire}, Sorensen insists that this censure and chastisement of Highland children betrayed the colonising and missionary inclination of the Church.\textsuperscript{36} On the other hand, David Barton’s literacy paradigm suggests that the use of the rod in the schoolroom was an indication that speaking Gaelic in class was considered to be deviant behaviour.\textsuperscript{37} In other words, for Barton, the sole aim of corporal punishment was to induce conformity. Conformity would turn Highlanders into a resource – making them useful members of the Union as civil servants, educators, ministers, soldiers, mercers, consumers and ultimately taxpayers. Nevertheless, many Highland children may have been scarred by the beatings they endured in the classroom and schoolyard.

This episode in the elder Adam Fergusson’s early life underscores impediments in the education policy to which the Church was oblivious. He experienced being a Gaelic monolingual but overcame the barriers which arose in the classroom, firstly by being tutored in Latin through the medium of Gaelic and, secondly, by co-opting a young member of the aristocracy to teach him English. The knowledge acquired from that experience must have been invaluable on Church councils once these bodies resolved to listen. Children who had been exposed exclusively to Gaelic in their pre-school years were not automatically going to understand English upon entry to school.

\textsuperscript{34} Sorensen, \textit{Grammar of Empire}, 34–35.
\textsuperscript{35} Malcolm Chapman, \textit{The Celts: The Construction of a Myth} (New York: St Martin's Press, 1992), 101–102. Chapman was commenting on pieces by I. Mackay, 1969, and Angus MacNicoll, 1978, who wrote of their schooling experiences growing up as bilingual Gaels. Although Adam Fergusson was beaten for speaking English and Mackay for speaking Gaelic in the playground, their respective beatings still reflected the place of Gaelic in education.
\textsuperscript{36} Sorensen, \textit{Grammar of Empire}, 41–62.
The key to reading English lay in the mastery of the spoken language first. Reading, writing and speaking are functions that are culturally embedded. Therefore, monolingual Gaelic-speaking children had few if any referents for sound or meaning that could help them comprehend the English words on Bible pages open before them. In his Latin classes, Fergusson had used Dispanter’s Grammar but it was unintelligible to him before he had private lessons conducted in Gaelic. By comparison, Lowland English speakers would have attained some level of literacy in English, plus a measure of intertextuality, before beginning their Latin tuition. Fergusson became an exceptional case by actually managing to learn Latin before he could speak English. However, English, religion and civility were not being communicated to the majority of Highland children and this became frustrating for each party in the instructional transaction. Both the Church and the SSPCK continually failed to comprehend that, to a Highlander, English was a foreign language. This impasse appeared to substantiate the belief of the Church bureaucracy that Highlanders were indeed intellectually backward.

David Barton’s modelling of literacies and language learning can be applied on a continuum between conformity and rebellion. Sorensen raises the point that Alexander MacDonald, a Highlander teaching in SSPCK schools, used English technologies to further Gaelic literacy and identity. More importantly, Sorensen emphasises how conformity in literacy for Highland children became an exchangeable commodity. For success at mastering English, Highland children were plied with clothing, shoes and bursaries. If the Highland child went on to win a bursary and enter university, they could aspire to high value, high status jobs. Ferguson’s father readily grasped the benefits of conformity at the tender age of eleven, when he began studiously attending to his school work in the hope it would win him a bursary.

38 Barton, Literacy: An Introduction, 135.
40 Barton, Literacy, 13.
41 Ibid.
42 For more about Alexander MacDonald and how he compared with the Ferguson(s)ons on matters such matters as these, see Appendix G, page 422–423, at the rear of the thesis.
43 Sorensen, Grammar of Empire, 35.
Fergusson went to the University of St Andrews where he began a course of study with the intention of becoming a minister. At the age of twenty-one he graduated with an MA and taught for seven years at the parish school in Moulin. He emulated the achievements and lifestyle of his former schoolmaster, Duncan Menzies. However, the year Fergusson finished his degree, the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland established its Commission for the North to oversee Church business in the Highlands. The establishment of this committee was significant for the effect it had on the education of children as well as on the professional and family lives of ministers and schoolmasters. The conditions restricting the use of Gaelic in schools remained in place until well after his son Adam had gone through university, and were still in place several years after the elder Fergusson had died in 1754. Fergusson’s career is illustrative of the Church’s relentless and intrusive efforts to maintain the supply of Gaelic-speaking ministers to Highland parishes.

Newly-licensed Gaelic-speaking preachers like Fergusson were obliged to go to areas where the need for them was greatest. There were never enough Gaelic-speaking ministers to fill Highland parishes. Fergusson’s career path illustrates how the Church of Scotland used its power base in the immediate aftermath of the Union. Fergusson left the parish school and village of Moulin when he became a private tutor to the children of Sir Robert Laurie in Maxwelton, Dumfriesshire. While there, Fergusson was recruited for a Gaelic-speaking parish in Aberdeenshire. There, the Presbytery of Kincardine O’Neil eventually awarded him a temporary licence to preach. As Jane Bush Fagg notes, the Church found him at Maxwelton as it did a systematic sweep of the country

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44 Lorimer, *Edin. Rev.*, 54–56. Ferguson’s father failed at his attempt to win a bursary for Aberdeen, but in 1693 he was awarded a bursary to enter St Andrews.
46 Ibid., 10–11. The Church guaranteed there would be frequent missions to vacant, outlying parishes.
47 A famous Scottish ballad called *Annie Laurie* has a connection with Fergusson. ‘The story is that William Douglas (who allegedly wrote the poem) fell in love with Annie Laurie, a member of a rival clan some time between 1685 and 1705.’ The poem was reputedly set to music by Lady John Scott (b. 1810) and first appeared in print in Sharpe’s *Ballad Book* of 1823. If the story is correct, and this is doubtful, it would place Fergusson at Maxwelton around the time of the alleged tryst. The song’s first line reads ‘Maxwelton’s braes are bonny where early fa’s the dew, and it’s there that Annie Laurie gie’d me her promise true.’ See Robert Waltz and David G. Engle, *The Traditional Ballad Index: An Annotated Bibliography of the Folk Songs of the English-Speaking World* (California State University, Fresno, [cited 26 July 2006]). [http://www.csufresno.edu/folklore/ballads/FSWB150A.html](http://www.csufresno.edu/folklore/ballads/FSWB150A.html).
for Gaelic-speaking ministerial candidates.\textsuperscript{48} Parishes were obliged to keep records of the numbers and whereabouts of all Gaelic-speaking probationers, licencees and bursary holders within their boundaries.\textsuperscript{49} In 1700, at the age twenty-eight, Ferguson’s father was ordained as the minister of Crathie and Braemar, and there he remained until 1714, when he received the call to Logierait.\textsuperscript{50} The previous incumbent there had been an Episcopalian, but the first Duke of Atholl ‘was willing to give Presbitery access to supply the kirk of Logierait providing it be supplied with such as having the Irish Language’.\textsuperscript{51} Many of the Highland gentry were Episcopalian, but most of the tenants of the Duke’s estate were Gaelic-speakers. The Duke was willing to switch to a Presbyterian as long as the man could preach to his tenantry in Gaelic.

Fergusson’s father struggled at school because his first language was Gaelic. If it had not been for the concerned intervention of friends, he would not have succeeded in his bid to win a bursary and become a minister. His son, Adam faced a different but related problem deriving from the prohibition of Gaelic in classrooms. The ban still applied during Ferguson’s schooling, but unlike his father, he had the advantage of being a fluent English-speaker by the time he entered school. Nevertheless, the ramifications of the ‘English only’ policy may have contributed to Ferguson’s decision to withdraw from active ministry. However, he remained a member of the Church, acting in the capacity of an elder.

The Reverend Fergusson hoped his youngest son would fulfil his wishes to have a son follow him into the Church.\textsuperscript{52} Ferguson tutored his son in Latin and Greek in order for him to win a bursary to enter university. Adam, whose command of English provided him with a head start against his classmates at the parish school, was talented


\textsuperscript{49} Durkacz, The Decline of the Celtic Languages, 11.

\textsuperscript{50} Lorimer, Edin. Rev., 56–57; Fagg, "Complaints and Clamours", 291–293; Hew Scott, Fasti Ecclesiae Scotticane: The Succession of Ministers in the Church of Scotland from the Reformation, New and revised and continued to the present time under the superintendence of a committee appointed by the General Assembly, 1870 ed. 9 vols, vol. 4 [Synods of Argyll, Perth and Stirling] (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, Paterson, 1923), 188.


\textsuperscript{52} John Lee, "Adam Ferguson" in Supplement to the Fourth, Fifth and Sixth Editions of Encyclopaedia Britannica (Edinburgh: Archibald Constable, 1824), 239.
enough to enter the grammar school in Perth and then go on to win a bursary to the University of St Andrews in 1739.53

Nevertheless, while good English skills were essential for gaining a qualification in order to enter the clerical profession, English was not the stock-in-trade language of the Highland minister. Since the majority of people in the Highlands could only comprehend Gaelic, the Church continued to allow its congregations the use of the language for worship. The hope Ferguson had for a call to an English-speaking or Lowland parish, where he could still maintain a social life among his intellectual friends in Edinburgh, was extremely unrealistic. The 1699 Act was made to ensure the supply of Gaelic-speaking ministers for the Highlands. It put paid to any aspirations a Highlander trained for, or by the Church, had of obtaining a call to a Lowland parish.54

The Act stated:

That Ministers and Probationers, who have the Irish Language, be sent to the Highland parishes, and that none of them settled in the Low Country, till the Highland places be first provided.55

In other words, while Highland parishes had vacancies, a Gaelic-speaking minister could not be called to or remain in a parish where the majority of people spoke and understood English. To continue supply to Highland parts, the Assembly formulated a scheme to finance the university studies of talented Gaelic-speaking students. This scheme continued to be augmented until, finally, in 1710 a ruling that all such students who, ‘had the Irish language shall be any other way settled and disposed of but to the service of the Church as Preachers, Catechists, and Schoolmasters in Irish (Scottish Gaelic) congregations’.56 Therefore, to fulfil their calling, bilingual Highland students and probationers had no other option than to be settled in Highland parishes. They could only be settled in a Lowland parish if they had applied for vacancies in the Highlands for a least a year without receiving a call.57 No preacher could go to a Lowland parish.

53 Ibid; "Dr Adam Ferguson" in Annual Obituary and Biography for 1817 (London: 1817), 230.
56 As quoted in Durkacz, The Decline of the Celtic Languages, 11.
57 John Dundas, An Abridgement of the Acts of the General Assemblies of the Church of Scotland. Beginning with the General Assembly Held at Glasgow, in the Year 1698. And Ending with the General Assembly Held at Edinburgh, in May 1720. To Which Are Prefixed, Lists of the Noble and Honourable
without the consent or the appropriate papers being furnished by their presbytery. Nor could a Lowland parish call a minister from a Highland charge unless they had exhausted all other means of finding a suitable candidate. But if a Gaelic-speaking minister were settled in the Lowlands, a call from a Highland parish required their return, unless they could prove that returning to the Highlands would cause a substantial decrease in their standard of living. Those sent north who failed to perform adequately were suspended for a period of three months.\(^{58}\)

Once he had been awarded his MA from St Andrews, Ferguson removed to Edinburgh, where in 1743 he encountered a remarkable group of divinity students who would later form the nucleus of the Moderate party within the Scottish Church. His particular friend at the time was the soon to be renowned architect, Robert Adam. Adam was a cousin of William Robertson, the historian and future principal of Edinburgh University, who would go on to lead the Moderate Party and become Moderator of the General Assembly.\(^{59}\) However, Ferguson would be removed from his new circle of university friends for a special posting. Like his father, who had been seconded from his tutoring post and placed in a Highland Church living, Ferguson was rapidly installed as deputy chaplain to the regiment of the Black Watch. The Church did not even wait until he had completed his divinity studies. The General Assembly passed an extraordinary Act to allow Ferguson to proceed to trials and be granted a licence to preach. Shortly afterward, he was ordained as a full minister of the Church of Scotland by the Presbytery of Dunkeld.\(^{60}\)

Ferguson’s Gaelic-speaking ability was the most crucial qualification he possessed for both the Church and the army. The General Assembly records read:

> Upon a representation that Lord John Murray, Colonel of the Highland regiment in his Majesty’s service, inclines to have a chaplain of the communion of this Church,
having the Irish language, who must soon be ordained for that office; and that Mr. Adam Ferguson, student in divinity, son to the minister of Logierait, in the Presbytery of Dunkeld, is pitched upon for that purpose; the General Assembly, in respect of the ample certificates given of the said Mr Ferguson’s capacity and good character, and of the peculiar circumstances of the case, remitted to and appointed the Presbytery of Dunkeld, to take him upon trial and, in case they find him qualified, to ordain him, on his passing his first trials; And Mr MacLaggan is ordered to return thanks to Lord John Murray for his good disposition towards this church, and the interest of religion.  

Some further reasons behind the Assembly’s extraordinary act will be divulged in the next chapter.

It was while Ferguson was fulfilling his duty as a chaplain that he possibly became aware of the linguistic deficit which had been foisted upon him by the Church’s ban on Gaelic in schoolrooms. Ferguson, like many Highland ministers, remained almost illiterate in the language in which he was expected to preach from the pulpit. He may have discovered unexpectedly that a chasm existed between the literary English of the King James Version and the vernacular Gaelic he was expected to preach in. While translating a Bible text or sermon from English it may have been problematic to find corresponding denotative lexemes in the Gaelic tongue. Ferguson would have prepared written heads for his sermon in English, since he was severely limited in his ability to write in Gaelic. At best, translation from English into Gaelic would have given Ferguson little job satisfaction – effectively, it doubled the workload and his results may have left an audience confused or displeased. Men entering the Scottish Church received training in the literary and oratorical arts by taking Belles Lettres at university, but those who preached to a Gaelic-speaking congregation had to adapt these skills to fit vernacular Gaelic. There are enough clues in biographical pieces about Ferguson to indicate that these types of problems relating to the translation and transliteration from English to Gaelic may have marred his life as a clergyman.

After Ferguson was officially appointed chaplain of the Black Watch in April of 1746, the onus was on him to hold Gaelic services for men who, up until then, had had their worship and pastoral care conducted in English. Ferguson remained on active

62 Gideon Murray, the outgoing chaplain of the regiment was an Episcopalian. He went on to become Chaplain-General to the Army in 1749, and later became Prebendary of Durham Cathedral.
service for almost ten years before he resigned his commission in 1754. He had initially relished army life. After his resignation, it seems, Ferguson avoided all further pastoral duties. He made the following revelation in a letter to Gilbert Elliot regarding his repugnance with everything connected with the clerical life.

I am just now upon terms for disposing of My Chaplaincy which is but a precarious Possession to one who has tired of following a Regiment, & who in time of service can have little more than the name & chance of being suddenly called upon from Abroad. If I can get My Colonel to concur in this Affair I shall have little further connection with the Clergy of Scotland & be under no necessity of appearing in their Character & shall be very glad if that Circumstance is equally agreeable to My Lord Bute.

A further letter to Adam Smith requested that he be addressed in future ‘without any clerical titles, for I am a downright layman’. A clue to what made Ferguson uncomfortable about clerical life was exposed through his next move. Ferguson petitioned the Duke of Atholl for the living at Caputh, a village twelve miles south of Perth. Caputh was a monolingual English-speaking parish. The Duke refused him the living there but, given that Church policy at the time confined Gaelic-speaking ministers


Ibid., vol. 1, 25. Ferguson’s friend John Home was Bute’s secretary. Ferguson’s friends were trying to find him an occupation through their political patron’s who included Lord Bute.

Ibid., vol. 1, 10; John Small, Biographical Sketch of Adam Ferguson (from the Transactions of the Royal Society of Edinburgh vol. XXIII Pt. III) (Edinburgh: Neill and Company, 1864), 5; Alexander Crawley Dow, Ministers to the Soldiers of Scotland (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1962), 245. Ferguson’s nephew, James Stewart, succeeded him as regimental chaplain in 1757 but only remained in the position for two years before being presented to the parish of Dull in Perthshire. Few chaplains of this era had service careers as long as Ferguson’s.
to the Highlands, this refusal should have come as no surprise to Ferguson. His friend Robert Adam used his connections in a bid to settle Ferguson in a Lowland parish but it was all to no avail. Ferguson’s rejection for Caputh and his failure to apply for Logierait upon his father’s death prompted this opinion from Kettler:

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67 Fagg "Biographical Introduction", Merolle and Wellesley eds, vol. 1, xxiv and xxix. Michael Fry stated Ferguson was averse to any post requiring clerical attire. See Michael Fry, The Dundas Despotism (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1992), 180. The Presbytery of Dunkeld’s minutes reveal that a new schoolmaster, John Sandars, applied for the school at Caputh in 1746. The Presbytery of Dunkeld examined him, and found him competent to teach in any school where the knowledge of Gaelic was unnecessary. See "CH 2/106/6" in Minutes of the Presbytery of Dunkeld (National Archives of Scotland: 1731–1746), f. 280. Entry for 5 August 1746. Sandars’s case underscores the fact that Caputh was a parish where Gaelic was an unnecessary qualification. Kettler suggests that the Duke of Atholl snubbed Ferguson over Caputh because Ferguson had not completed his divinity training and had failed to sign the Confession of Faith. Kettler also feels that the Duke withdrew his patronage because his ‘Popular’ party parishes would have found Ferguson an ‘irreligious moralizer’. Kettler writes: ‘Although it seems strange that Ferguson would have been retained as a military chaplain if he was quite so abstruse, it is possible that the Duke hesitated to give too egregious an affront to the Popular congregations who despised the Moderate clergymen as irreligious moralizers, and that this consideration would not enter with regard to the Highland soldiers who, in all likelihood, were really Episcopalians or Catholics anyway’. David Kettler, The Social and Political Thought of Adam Ferguson (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1965), 48. It certainly seems that there was Evangelical activity on the Atholl estates from an early period. There are indications in Burt’s Letters (see this chapter, page 130–132, but especially 132) that there were signs of Evangelicalism appearing in the 1720s. Ferguson’s own father was not raised as a Moderate. See page 131 of this chapter. The Popular party, or Evangelicals, favoured the selection of ministers by the heritors and elders on behalf of a congregation, rather than by the enforcement of the law of patronage. The Duke of Atholl would not have installed Popular party preachers just to placate congregations. The first Duke of Atholl insisted on Gaelic–speaking ministers for the Highland areas of his estate and supported the Presbytery of Dunkeld in its efforts to lift the numbers of suitable candidates for the ministry who spoke Gaelic. See Leneman, Living in Atholl, 125. Furthermore, men ensconced in livings on the Duke of Atholl’s estate were more likely to have supported the Patronage Act and to have been adherents of Moderatism. The evidence pertains to the case of the Reverend Fisher, the minister of Kinclaven. Considerable pressure was brought to bear on the Kinclaven congregation to stop them dissenting with the seceders, the Erskine brothers. Ferguson’s father had cast the vote that initiated the secession of the Erskines and their associates from the Church of Scotland upon the Duke’s order. For the role of James, 2nd Duke of Atholl, and the Church, see Leneman Living in Atholl, 91–92. For the Patronage Act and the Erskine case see Leneman, 92–93. Leneman states: ‘It is difficult to imagine repeal of an Act which gave him the power – a power which he did not fail to exercise on every occasion possible – of placing the men he chose in the positions where he wanted them’. In 1731, the Synod of Perth and Stirling met with Ebenezer Erskine as its moderator. Erskine disagreed with the Assembly’s Barrier Act, so he preached a sermon attacking the Act as an opener to the Synod. Erskine refused to retract his words at the next Synod. When the General Assembly met that May, Erskine protested again and three other ministers supported him. They were all suspended from duty. Later all four seceded from the Church in 1733. See Drummond and Bullock, The Scottish Church, 40–41. See also John R. McIntosh, Church and Theology in Enlightenment Scotland: The Popular Party, 1740–1800 (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 1998), 27–29. Kettler’s explanation that the men of the Black Watch would better tolerate Ferguson’s moralizing sermons because they were Episcopalians or Catholics is nonsensical. Ferguson was engaged because most of the men were Presbyterians. See the next chapter of this thesis. 68 The Adams, the famous family of architects, continually petitioned patrons on Ferguson’s behalf in the vain hope of procuring him the living at Haddington, East Lothian. In any case, Haddington did not become vacant until 1771. Ferguson’s involvement in the Douglas controversy (fraternising with actors and theatre–going) put paid to his chances of receiving a call to Haddington. See Fagg, "Biographical
Ferguson’s departure from St Andrews, his failure to complete his theological studies, and his failure to apply actively for his father’s post argue that the prospect of a country preacher never really appealed to him. Perhaps the death of his father liberated him from the obligation to pursue such a career and gave him leave to try his fortune as a man of letters in Edinburgh.  

Ferguson may not have completed his divinity studies, but he had almost ten years of experience in a pastoral role, therefore Kettler’s analysis that his curtailed training disbarred him from a Church living is not wholly satisfactory.  Kettler identifies the fact that Ferguson had little intention of obtaining a church living. This was indicated in his letters to Robert Adam, Gilbert Elliot and Adam Smith.  Robert Bisset, whose father eventually obtained the living at Logierait, also confirmed that Ferguson made his intentions clear to his dying father:

His father, when he found his end approaching, from a knowledge of his son’s determination, urged Mr (now Dr.) Thomas Bisset, son of a deceased friend and brother clergyman, to make application, as a vacancy must soon take place. This was accordingly done; a promise was obtained from the Duke of Athol for the gentleman in question, who holds the living to this day. Dr Robert Bisset, of Sloane-Street, is that gentleman’s eldest son.

Indeed the Reverend Fergusson made arrangements with the Duke of Atholl to have Thomas Bisset installed at Logierait upon his demise.  However, when Bisset was

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69 Kettler, The Social and Political Thought of Adam Ferguson, 47.
70 Ibid., 47–49.  Kettler supplied these hypotheses as to why Atholl would have refused Ferguson a living. Jane Bush Fagg writes, ‘About the time of his visit Ferguson began to consider leaving the regiment and settling down in a parish church, perhaps because he was tired of the wandering military life. He decided to apply for the living at Caputh, a beautiful parish not far from Dunkeld and Logierait. Since this church was under the patronage of the Duke of Atholl, it seemed likely that it would be Ferguson's merely for the asking. His request was refused, however, and he returned to his regiment filled with chagrin’. Jane Bush Fagg, "Adam Ferguson: Scottish Cato" (Ph D, University of North Carolina, 1968), 30. If Kettler was correct, then it seems that Ferguson's failure to sign the Confession, on top of his truncated divinity training, made him ineligible to preach in an English-speaking parish, yet wholly suitable for a Gaelic-speaking one. Perhaps the Atholl Murrays wanted to keep him in the military to placate and interpret for potentially mutinous Highlanders.
71 Kettler, The Social and Political Thought of Adam Ferguson, 47–49.
72 Robert Bisset, "Dr Adam Fergusson" in Public Characters of 1799–1800 (London: Gillet, and Cundee for R. Phillips, 1799), 331. See Bisset’s note †.  Robert Bisset was the author of the piece, and the son of Thomas Bisset.  Up until the abolition of Heritable Jurisdictions, a man named Bisset had been the clerk of the Duke's regality court, seated at Logierait.  Robert Bisset, Thomas Bisset's son, became the biographer of Edmund Burke.  See Scott, Fasti, Vol. IV, 189.  Bisset wrote this brief biography of Ferguson, while Ferguson was still alive.
73 Ibid.  Thomas Bisset had married the daughter of a distant relative of the Fergussons, Adam Ferguson, the Minister of Moulin.  See Scott, Fasti, vol. IV, 189.  Ferguson sprang from the lines of the Fergussons of Ballyyoukan, Dunfallandy and Bellechandy from which the Minister of Moulin's family were also descended.  James Ferguson and Robert Menzies Ferguson, The Records of the Clan and Name of
presented to Logierait in 1754, it was in contravention of Church regulations. Bisset did not have a licence to preach. He went so far as to lodge an official protest against his presentation by the Duke of Atholl, because he lacked the position’s necessary qualifications. On the other hand, Ferguson, despite curtailment of his divinity studies and failure to sign the Confession, was a licensed, ordained minister with nearly ten years’ experience. Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that Ferguson was uninterested in becoming ‘a poor damned Droning presbyterian Bagpipe of the Gosple according to Logyreat’.

Both Bisset and Adam reveal clues about Ferguson’s reasons for avoiding a Highland charge. The more evident ones should have been given due consideration. Ferguson wanted to be involved in the intellectual and cultural life of Edinburgh. In a Highland charge his contact with the town would have been limited. A Highland parish would not have offered sufficient stimulation for a well-educated man like Ferguson. Even so, he was probably acquainted with the disincentives to a Highland charge having observed his father’s travails. He would have been aware of the long hours, long distances, and dangers Highland ministers contended with in order to catechise their flock. Some parishes were extensive, having six or seven places of worship. A minister might be catechising a family only to be summoned to comfort a dying parishioner who was half a day’s ride away. Ministers became so worn out with

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_Fergusson, Ferguson and Fergus_ (Edinburgh: David Douglas, 1885), 112. Thomas Bisset, the Duke’s chamberlain, was presented to the congregation of Logierait on 1 October 1754. At this juncture, Bisset had no licence to preach, yet the call was signed later that month. A replacement had to be arranged until Bisset could fulfil the preaching duties. Fergusson of Moulin preached at Logierait until Bisset was licensed. "CH 2/106/8" in _Minutes of the Presbytery of Dunkeld_ (National Archives of Scotland: 1754–1771). See the entries for 1 and 24 October 1754 and 4 and 20 February 1755.

After he was ordained on 20 February 1755, both Bisset and Thomas Mitchell protested against Bisset’s presentation by the Duke. Citing precedents, they contended that the Duke had presented an unfit and unqualified person to a vacant charge against Church law. See "CH 2/106/ 8" entry for 1 April 1755. On these grounds, if Ferguson had been available for the position, he would have saved the Duke, Bisset, the parish, and the Presbytery a lot of inconvenience. This adds further weight to fact that Ferguson was averse to being a minister any longer than he had to be.

"GD 18 4834" in _John Clerk of Penicuik Muniments_ (National Archives of Scotland: 1757). Robert Adam to Nellye Adam, 9 April 1757.

Ferguson would have known of the dangerous incidents involving his father during the rebellions. Many ministers carried firearms for protection. See Norman MacLeod, _Reminiscences of a Highland Parish_ (London: Strahan and Co., 1871), 154.

MacLeod, _Reminiscences of a Highland Parish_, 110–111. The author of this memoir, Dr Norman MacLeod (1812–1876), was one of the most distinguished preachers of his time. In addition to his work with Glasgow’s poor at the end of his life, he was chaplain to Queen Victoria (at Ferguson’s father’s first
travelling that they sometimes unintentionally profaned the Sabbath. They also had to contend with rough terrain, the inclement Scottish weather, and whisky-fuelled bloodshed and violence at Highland burials.

Even given the unappealing conditions of Highland service, Ferguson’s determination to avoid a Highland charge may have had a more complex origin. It is known that Ferguson wrote and composed sermons for his friends. Since his facility to read and write Gaelic was extremely limited, these sermons were probably composed in English. Bisset reported that sermons composed by Ferguson were well received by the congregations of his friends.

Ferguson was a member of some of Edinburgh’s foremost debating societies whose aims included philosophical enquiry, the development of eloquence, correct English pronunciation, and the elimination of Scotticisms. Indeed, he went on to become a revered lecturer at the University of Edinburgh. It stands to reason, then, that Ferguson had the wherewithal, training and attributes to become a respectable preacher. However, he was not at liberty to preach to an English-speaking congregation. Ferguson’s ability to write successful sermons and lectures raises questions about his competence, confidence, comprehensibility in the only language in which he was permitted to preach – Gaelic. Although Ferguson’s first publication was a sermon translated from the Erse or Scottish Gaelic language into English, there is no evidence that Ferguson was capable of reading or writing more than the most basic, phonetic Gaelic. I suspect Ferguson wrote the original sermon with English headings and notation, then delivered it to the troops in Gaelic, later transcribing post, Crathie). Queen Victoria thought so highly of him that she made him a Knight of the Thistle and presented two memorial windows to Crathie Church upon his death. MacLeod was well placed to write of a Highland minister’s life. His grandfather was the minister in Ossian’s country – Morven. His father was Dr Norman MacLeod (b.1783 in Morven), who saw the worst of the social change that the Highlands underwent. Like his son, MacLeod cared for poor Highlanders that flocked into Glasgow to find work. He was a strong advocate for teaching English by using the Gaelic language.

Andrew Fletcher, Lord Milton, “MS 17504” in Saltoun Papers (National Library of Scotland), f. 58.

MacLeod, Reminiscences of a Highland Parish, 21, 23 and 25.

Bisset, “Dr Adam Fergusson”, 332.

Ferguson was a member of the Select Society and the instigator of the Poker Club. "Adv. MS. 23.1.1" in Minutes of the Select Society (National Library of Scotland); "MS 25453" in Roll of the Select Society (National Library of Scotland), f. 35; Charles Rogers, Social Life in Scotland from Early to Recent Times, 3 vols, vol. 2 (Edinburgh: William Patterson for the Grampian Club, 1884-1886), 371–373.

it into a suitably literary style for publication in English. Ferguson was supposed to have taken down a Gaelic tale in 1740, but he only recalled two lines which were rendered in a phonetic form of Gaelic. Donald Meek found men of Ferguson’s era had a ‘lack of clerical confidence in the writing of Gaelic’. Gaelic homiletic material did not begin to trickle from the presses until the close of the eighteenth century. Although written Gaelic at the time had no standard form, Ferguson apologised to Henry Mackenzie for his crude rendition of the Gaelic. A passage written by Bisset allows further insights into the nature of Ferguson’s abhorrence of preaching in Gaelic:

Indeed, in point of popularity, Mr Fergusson was very far surpassed by commonplace declaimers of fanatical rant about faith and grace, to the exclusion of virtue; thunderers who could work on the fancy by terrible images, or flippant pretty spouters who could tickle the ears with melodious nonsense. There was, and we believe there is still, a practice in Scotland, that originated in the conventicles; at the administration of the Lord’s Supper, the clergy met in clubs at the place where the holy rite was performed. Their respective parishioners followed them; and, from ten in the morning, till six in the evening, were entertained with sermons delivered from a place which they styled a tent, viz. two sledges, covered with canvas, standing against each other, and joined by a cross bar. Standing at this bar, the ministers delivered sermons in which reason was of less consequence than roaring; the chief praise being bestowed on him who had the strongest lungs. Mr Fergusson not being eminent for the loudness of his voice, never distinguished himself at these exhibitions.

Bisset raises two issues regarding Ferguson’s competence as a preacher in the medium – unpopularity and lack of voice projection when faced with a large crowd.

There may have been several reasons behind Ferguson’s unpopularity. Some of these reasons related to homiletic style and content, while others were related to the prohibition of Gaelic in education. The style of preaching expected from a Highland

82 See Adam Ferguson, *A Sermon Preached in the Ersh Language to His Majesty's First Highland Regiment of Foot Commanded by Lord John Murray, at Their Cantonment at Camberwell on the 18th of December, 1745 by Adam Ferguson; and Translated by Him into English* (London: Printed for A. Millar, 1746). The sermon was preached in Gaelic and was purportedly translated into English. We only have Ferguson’s word for this. He showed little confidence in his ability with the language. Unlike John or James Macpherson, Ferguson did not regularly correspond in Gaelic with other Highlanders, including the Macphersons. Neither James nor John wrote a letter to Ferguson with more than the odd Gaelic phrase in it. See Appendix E, page 417–418. Ferguson always deferred to those he thought knew more about the language or who were more fluent. See Chapter Two, bottom of page 92, for the longest sequence of an attempt at written Gaelic by Ferguson.

83 Meek, "The Pulpit and the Pen", 101.


85 Bisset, "Dr Adam Ferguson", 331–332. The emphasis is the original author’s.
minister was not one that an educated Moderate minister would have been inclined to adopt. Ministers like Ferguson would have composed their sermons on paper, unlike their Evangelical counterparts, who preferred to trust in the inspiration of the Holy Spirit for their *ex tempore* orations. Two Englishmen, the army officer Edmund Burt and Dr Samuel Johnson, were perturbed at the emphasis given to preaching in Scottish worship. Burt disliked the soft chant-like intonation or ‘sough’ with which ministers prayed, and referred to Scottish preaching as cant. Burt felt that *ex tempore* preaching exposed congregations to a minister’s undigested thought. Likewise, Johnson found fault with the notion that it was minister’s duty to allow divine inspiration rather than reason to lead him in preaching and prayer. However, many Highland congregations demanded the informality of extemporised prayer and preaching and indeed, many would not even accept The Lord’s Prayer in worship. Meek confirms that homiletics were not merely about language, but also voice modulation, body language and inspiration. The use of *ex tempore* prayer and preaching in Presbyterian worship was laid down in the Westminster directory. Therefore, this decree necessitated the retention of Gaelic in Highland regions where a significant part of the adult population had a limited knowledge of English. Ferguson, apparently, did not want to become the droning Presbyterian bagpiper – an apt reference by Robert Adam to the Highland ‘sough’. Ferguson wished to use his faculties and training to discourse on questions of a more philosophical nature. Therefore, the style Ferguson refused to adopt, and the content he preferred to preach, would have made him unpopular at Highland communion fairs.

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88 Meek, "The Pulpit and the Pen", 103.

The factor of language competence also lay at the root of Ferguson’s unpopularity. In the previous chapter, I raised the possibility that Ferguson’s dialect rated poorly with Scottish Gaelic-speakers from other parts of the Highlands. This may have contributed to Ferguson’s reticence at communion days where six or seven parishes convened to hear a bevy of ministers preach. Ferguson’s lack of voice projection, noted by Bisset, may have been due to the stigma attached to his local dialect. However, Ferguson had to grapple with a further problem. His moralistic, technical sermon content and literary English style did not mesh readily with the Gaelic language. Because he was untutored in Gaelic, it left an abyss between the learned written English of the Bible and the vernacular Gaelic of the people which Ferguson seemed incapable of bridging. When these factors are taken into account, Ferguson’s preference for preaching and writing in the English with which he was more comfortable, becomes comprehensible.

If Ferguson’s functional illiteracy in Gaelic left him feeling ineffective as a cleric, he was not alone. Job-specific illiteracy and marginal literacy must have marred the preaching experience for numerous Highland ministers. The prohibition on Gaelic in parish and Charity schools produced a whole generation of Highland churchmen who struggled when confronted with the necessity of transposing their eloquent compositions into comprehensible Gaelic.90 A summary compiled from primary sources in Perthshire by John L. Wilson celebrates the arrival of the Gaelic Bible in 1767. However, it underscores the difficulties ministers had translating written English into spoken Gaelic:

Until 1767 there was no Gaelic Bible for use in the Highlands. This created enormous difficulties for the parish ministers. They were forced to read their Bibles to their congregations, either in English which was completely unintelligible to most, or to attempt an impromptu translation into Gaelic of each passage that they read.91

An eminent Scottish preacher researching the Gaelic Bible during the mid-twentieth century admits that it was common practice from the eighteenth century, right

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90 While there was, and is, a long tradition of extemporising prayer and sermon in the more evangelical sects of the Calvinist churches in Scotland, it is fairly clear Ferguson did not use this method of preaching. As a Moderate, he would not have approved of this type of sermonising. It is also clear that when he attempted to preach at Communion Fairs, he was not a success. The people preferred ministers who allowed the Spirit to move them, and believed their preacher’s words emanated from the Holy Spirit.

up to the present day, for ministers to translate from an English Bible into spoken Gaelic when addressing their Highland congregations. William Shaw, who went on to publish the first attempt at a Gaelic grammar, and who was acquainted with the practices and circumstances of ministers during this period, made this telling remark:

The taste, at this day, of the clergy, a lettered and respectable order, is to understand the English content with what Galic enables them to translate a sermon they originally wrote in English...

…There are not five ministers who can write in their own tongue.

Gaelic texts, such as did exist, were indecipherable to most ministers, including Ferguson. They were restricted by the ban on Gaelic and, therefore, young Highland probationers had nothing to guide them until Ewen MacDiarmid produced a volume of Gaelic sermons for new preachers in 1804. However, Meek finds:

Despite MacDiarmid’s volume, publication of sermons originally composed in Gaelic was not evident to any extent before 1830, and even after 1900 printed output was sluggish.

Educational and church policies skewed the average Highland minister’s language competence, lexicon and grammar toward written English. For ministers like Ferguson, the process of translation was never as straightforward as paraphrasing their ideas or words from English into Gaelic. There was a vast gulf between the abstraction, depersonalisation, elaboration, formality and lexical variety of the English language which could not always be conveniently reduced to vernacular Gaelic. Highland preachers were never trained to undertake this highly technical exercise, neither were they permitted to remedy the deficiency themselves. Lachlan MacLean insists that the illiterate Gael spoke his native tongue well enough and ‘with as much propriety as those who have received the advantage of education; and that as far as regards language

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94 Meek, "The Pulpit and the Pen", 100.

95 Goody lists no less than six lexical features and ten syntactic differences between the spoken and written English language. See Jack Goody, The Interface between the Written and the Oral (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 263–264. It is astounding that up to the present day, no advance has been made in the area of teaching homiletics in Gaelic. The Free Church of Scotland, which has a College in Edinburgh and turns out the vast majority of Highland preachers today, still has nothing better than a glossary of Gaelic divinity terms on its site, perhaps because it has an international intake of students.
merely, the common herd will understand the best orator’. However, Maclean’s statement is misleading. For while both minister and herdsman have parity in the fact that both speak and comprehend their native tongue, they also have parity in the fact that neither the minister nor the herdsman could read or write it. Where the disparity between minister and herdsman arose was where the minister could read and write English (and perhaps some Greek, Latin and Hebrew). Therefore, it is possible that partial literacy or illiteracy in the Gaelic was a contributing factor precipitating Ferguson’s withdrawal from the Highland clergy. Furthermore, the impact of these factors on a man intent on an academic career could have been quite demoralising.

Adam Ferguson and his father were far from isolated cases of men who struggled with language and literacy. They must have been aware of just what repercussions the continuing Church policies had for Highland society. Firstly, the anti-Gaelic policy denied Highland children the ability to comprehend their lessons. The children often remained illiterate: able to speak and comprehend Gaelic but unable to read or write it. The schooling they received enabled them to reproduce English sounds, rhythms and symbols but they could not comprehend or interpret them. School inspectors erroneously believed that hearing English parroted back at them by Highland children was evidence of their scheme’s success; but the fact was that the vast majority of Highland children remained illiterate in English, as well as Gaelic. Although the reason for their incomprehension was realised late in the seventeenth century, all requests to teach the children English in the same manner most clerics had learned Latin and Greek, that is, as a second or foreign language, fell on deaf ears. Attempts to communicate these impediments to non-Highland churchmen were frustrated and met with little or no action. Adam Ferguson’s own father had experienced these same difficulties and overcame them, but only because he had extramural help where he was taught second and third languages through the medium of the one he knew best – Gaelic.

96 Lachlan MacLean, The History of the Celtic Language Wherein it is Shown to Be Based Upon Natural Principles, and, Elementally Considered Contemporaneous with the Infancy of the Human Family-Likewise its Importance in Order to the Proper Understanding of the Classics, Including the Sacred Text, the Hieroglyphics, the Cabala, Etc. Etc., 2nd ed. (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1840), 260.
97 Durkacz, The Decline of the Celtic Languages, 63 and 161.
98 MacInnes, Evangelical Movement, 247.
99 Durkacz, The Decline of the Celtic Languages, 63–64.
The deficit in English and Gaelic language skills in the Highlands had flow-on repercussions for the children, the Highland economy, and the Church. Highland people with a low level of English comprehension began to be positioned lower down the social scale. This left them few opportunities to better their economic circumstances and confined most to a life of poverty in the Highlands. The only hope of avoiding that fate was to endure the upheaval of emigration or risk dying in the service of Great Britain.

The language policy of the Church had catalysed this social fracturing; the Gaelic ban actually decreased the number of Gaelic-speaking students returning to the Highlands as ministers and schoolmasters. The only hope of change for the better as far as the ordinary Highlander was concerned was the Church’s assurance of an afterlife. This made Highlanders ever more dependent on the Gaelic language to provide spiritual sustenance in the wake of the failure to teach them English successfully. While the Church wanted Highlanders to embrace the Gospel message, this, in combination with their poverty, helped bring about a trend toward Evangelicalism in the Highlands that culminated in the Disruption crisis over patronage in 1843. Ferguson and his father, despite appearances to the contrary, not only suffered the faults of the education system, but also witnessed what it did to other Highlanders.

With their personal experiences of dealing with illiteracy and second language acquisition behind them, Ferguson and his father both knew that there were correct channels to go through in order to effect change in Church and SSPCK attitudes toward Gaelic. Their goals as churchmen were possibly twofold. Firstly, Highland children should become literate in English and take their place as useful subjects of the King. To achieve this, English would need to be taught through the medium of Gaelic, as

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100 Withers, *Gaelic Scotland: Transformation of a Culture Region*, 166. Some might say it foreshadowed the Disruption of the Church in 1843.

101 Durkacz, *The Decline of the Celtic Languages*, 99. With regard to the Disruption, by 1834 the Evangelical Party had gained a majority over the Moderates in the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. They passed the Veto Act, which for the first time gave parishioners the choice to reject the minister nominated by their patron. Fundamentally, it was an issue about the Church’s spiritual independence from the state. Intervention by the state in Church matters was deemed by the Evangelicals to be in contravention of the Westminster Confession of Faith. If parishioners refused to ordain and induct a minister presented by a patron, a court could rule that the patron’s rights had been infringed. However, this was the state meddling in spiritual matters (over which only God had jurisdiction). The General Assembly and courts put pressure on parishes to accept preachers they thought of as unsuitable. As matters came to a head, Thomas Chalmers led four hundred and fifty ministers out of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland to form the Free Church of Scotland in 1843. This movement became known as ‘the Disruption’. 
Alexander MacDonald suggested in the preface of his glossary of divinity terms compiled for the SSPCK. This measure would increase the number of suitable Highland candidates for the ministry and at the same time give those candidates some ability to read and translate the scriptural texts in both Gaelic and English.

Ferguson and his father quietly worked to get these changes implemented through their work on the Presbytery of Dunkeld and in the General Assembly. Adam Fergusson served as the moderator of both the Presbytery of Dunkeld and the Synod of Perth and Stirling. His son, Adam, became a ruling elder who represented the Presbytery of Dunkeld at the General Assembly, albeit once a year, but he was fully briefed by other members of the Presbytery before taking his place there. The Presbytery of Dunkeld was renowned for objecting to the policies of the Church and the SSPCK, especially with regard to the exclusive use of English in Highland schools. It was one of the foremost Presbyteries offering bursaries to educate prospective ministers. The Presbytery’s agitation for change in permitting Gaelic-medium English language instruction for Highland children cannot and must not be underestimated, in Leah Leneman’s view:

The irony is that throughout this period there was a chronic shortage of men trained for the ministry who spoke Gaelic. The General Assembly was aware, even if the SSPCK was not, of the difficulties in preaching and ministering to a people without being able to speak its language. So while the Society was forbidding its schoolmasters to teach Gaelic, Dunkeld presbytery were handing out bursaries to encourage boys who spoke it.

In this work, the aim of Ferguson and his father was not a crusade for the sentimental preservation of Highland life and language. They still adhered to the Church’s civilising and Gospel-centred agenda, but their own experiences taught them that these bodies

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103 As a measure of the Church’s recalcitrance on the matter of schoolroom Gaelic, by 1833 Kincardine O’Neil Presbytery, where the elder Fergusson had been ordained, had over 83,000 people six years of age and older who could neither read nor write English or Gaelic. MacInnes, *Evangelical Movement*, 259.
104 "CH 2/106/8", f. 257, entry 8 April 1767; f. 310. Entry 14 April 1769 and f. 327, entry 3 April 1770.
105 Leneman, *Living in Atholl*, 125. Even before the Reverend Fergusson came to Logierait, the Dunkeld Presbytery was enquiring about Irish Bibles for supplying to poor students of its parish, even though very few men had the ability to read Irish script. See "CH 2/106/2" in *Minutes of the Presbytery of Dunkeld* (National Archives of Scotland: 1706–1712), f. 2, entry 25 March 1707.
106 Leneman, *Living in Atholl*, 124. This region was closer to Edinburgh than other Highland areas. Ministers from the Western Isles or west coast only made sporadic appearances at the General Assembly.
were going about the processes in a manner unhelpful to Highland communities.\textsuperscript{107} The Church and the SSPCK initially refused to heed the word of men like the senior Adam Fergusson who knew the difficulties faced by Highland youngsters only too well. Unfortunately, the rebellions hardened the Church’s resolve against Gaelic language, but eventually it had to admit that many children learning to read the English Bible could not comprehend ‘the plainest historical parts of it’.\textsuperscript{108} Durkacz, who made one of the pioneering studies into language decline in the Highlands, comments:

> Before long it was apparent that pupils who were taught to read the English language without first being prepared by graduated exercises in translation, learned to read with scarcely any comprehension. As its minutes reveal, some S.S.P.C.K teachers discovered this for themselves.\textsuperscript{109}

Durkacz identified Moderate party policies as the chief cause of the decline of the Gaelic language in the Highlands. Rounding on the Moderates he claims, ‘Because of their inability to dissociate Christianity from society and culture, and from English society and culture at that, the Moderates supported the educational tradition of anglicising all Gaelic speakers’.\textsuperscript{110} Despite the fact that Ferguson and his father were Moderates, they knew the hardship dealing with linguistic deficits at a social as well as at a personal level.

In rural centres, like Logierait, Moderatism found less favour among the ordinary people. They clung to superstitions which had come down through the generations to them.\textsuperscript{111} Jane Dawson has noted that the Calvinism introduced into the Highlands after

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\textsuperscript{107} The Church would not extend to the teaching of reading in Gaelic, even to allow the children to read the Bible in Gaelic for their non-English-speaking parents. Durkacz, \textit{The Decline of the Celtic Languages}, 62–63.

\textsuperscript{108} Ibid., 63.

\textsuperscript{109} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{110} Ibid., 99.

the Reformation was adapted to Gaelic culture. She claims that Highland ministers were not only good Calvinists but also good Gaels.\textsuperscript{112} Ferguson’s father was no exception to this trend. He was born in nearby Moulin, was raised in an Evangelical sect. However, he tempered his unchosen faith, as is often the case with the younger generations born into religious austerity.\textsuperscript{113} At the Synod of Perth and Stirling in 1732, Ferguson’s father was the first Moderate to move a motion against Ebenezer Erskine, who eventually seceded.\textsuperscript{114} James Sheets interpreted this action as the first blow for Moderatism in the Moderates’ rise to power in the General Assembly.\textsuperscript{115} In the Presbytery of Dunkeld, where the Duke of Atholl and his factor elders presided, Ebenezer Erskine was denounced as ‘enthusiastical’.\textsuperscript{116} Enthusiasm was a characteristic of the Evangelical sect. It was a type of religious mania where adherents were so self-assured in their relationship to the deity; no intermediary was necessary.\textsuperscript{117} Religious dissent among congregations on the Atholl estates initially subsided.\textsuperscript{118} However, the spectre of this


\textsuperscript{113} Steve Bruce, God is Dead: The Secularization of the West (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), 23–25.

\textsuperscript{114} The Erskine brothers just happened to be raised on the same estate as David Hume, and may account for some of Hume’s repugnance for enthusiasm or zealousness. Drummond and Bullock, The Scottish Church, 92.

\textsuperscript{115} James Steven Sheets, "Adam Ferguson: The ‘Good Preceptor’ of Empire", (Ph D, University of Rochester [GB], 1993), 89.

\textsuperscript{116} Leneman, Living in Atholl, 93. The Kinclaven congregation on the Atholl estate actually seceded with the Erskines.

\textsuperscript{117} Hume believed enthusiasts were independent, imaginative, freedom-loving types who eschewed ceremony, but tended toward being prideful, fanatical and violent. Nevertheless, the term ‘enthusiast’ was never intended by Hume to be derogatory. See David Hume, Selected Essays, eds, Stephen Copley and Andrew Edgar, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 38–42.

\textsuperscript{118} Leneman, Living in Atholl, 95.
‘enthusiasm’ was ever present, and may provide yet another clue as to why Ferguson wished to avoid a Highland charge.

Recent scholarship, such as that of Ned Landsman and Liam McIlvanney, suggests that the dichotomy between pious Evangelicals and enlightened Moderates was rather less pronounced than first thought.\(^{119}\) This may have been because ministerial candidates, whether Moderate or Evangelical, received essentially the same education. The differences which opened between the parties appeared driven by the preferences of congregations. Edmund Burt, the soldier-surveyor engaged with General Wade’s construction team, found that Highland congregations in Perthshire were as severe on their ministers as the ministers were on them, especially when it came to behaviour and appearances. Burt recorded these restraints on Highland ministers in his letters:

They seem to me to have but little Knowledge of Men, being restrained from all free Conversation, even in the Coffee-house, by the Fear of Scandal, which may be attended with Loss of their Livelihood; and they are exceedingly strict and severe upon one another in every Thing which, according to their Way of Judging, might give Offence.\(^{120}\)

Pious congregations ensured ministers were unable to take their place in polite society as freely as the Moderates of Edinburgh, because such congregations feared ministers might indulge in scandalous behaviour. Therefore, ministers feared losing their Church livings. Evangelical congregations applied the tenets of the Westminster Confession assiduously, incorporating it into the pre-existing honour-shame culture of their localised

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\(^{119}\) There have been hints and suggestions to support the notion that the gulf between the Moderates, or liberal Calvinists, and their less liberal Evangelical brothers was not the chasm it was once thought to be. Liam McIlvanney and Ned Landsman are examples of scholars who have discovered a commonality between the two sets of churchmen. Landsman comments: ‘It has long been commonplace to characterise the eighteenth century as an age divided between advocates of religiosity and reason, or evangelicalism and enlightenment. In recent years a number of writers from diverse fields have suggested that the simultaneous development of what have been called ‘enlightened’ modes of thinking on the one hand, and pietistic or ‘evangelical’ on the other may have had more in common than historians hitherto supposed’. Ned C. Landsman, "Presbyterians and Provincial Society: The Evangelical Enlightenment in the West of Scotland, 1740–1775", *Eighteenth-Century Life* 15, Feb–May (1991), 194. See also Liam McIlvanney, "Robert Burns and the Calvinist Radical Tradition", *History Workshop Journal* [GB], no. 40 (1995), 133–149.

communities. These restrictions imposed by Highland congregations limited the flow of new ideas into the Highland community, condemning it to conservatism. With censure in the offing, the Highland minister had few opportunities following the period of his education to acquire the habits or polish of a gentleman. Perhaps his knowledge of these practices helped Ferguson to orchestrate his own removal from both Logierait and the active ministry.

As discussed in Chapter One, besides enthusiasm, superstition in the parish of Logierait was rife. As a man of reason, Ferguson may have found his patience worn thin by the irrational beliefs of ordinary parishioners. However, the experience of knowing people who held fast to such beliefs acted as further non-intellectual influence on his views. These beliefs were a Highland mixture of pagan and Christian influences. Nevertheless, Ferguson’s own father failed to eradicate superstition during his incumbency as minister. Ferguson manifested a great aversion to ceremony, superstition and enthusiasm, objecting to them on similar grounds to David Hume. Hume believed superstition led to servility and abuses of priestly power that were born of ignorance, weakness and melancholy. Ferguson discussed superstitions of rude populations in his Essay, probably recalling at the time those he encountered in Logierait:

Their superstitions are groveling and mean: and did this happen among rude nations alone, we could not sufficiently admire the effects of politeness; but it is a subject on which few nations are intitled to censure their neighbours. When we have considered the superstitions of one people, we find little variety in those of another. They are but a repetition of similar weaknesses and absurdities, derived from a common source, a perplexed apprehension of invisible agents, that are supposed to guide all precarious events to which human foresight cannot extend.

Notwithstanding, Ferguson recognised superstition in and of itself was innocent. For him superstition was not incompatible with political and military prowess or even with civilisation. He remained concerned that superstition could ‘create an order of men, who, under the title of the priesthood, engaged in the pursuit of a separate interest, by their union and firmness as a body, and by their incessant ambition, deserve to be

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121 See Chapter One, pages 51–53.
122 Hume, Selected Essays, 39.
reckoned in the list of pretenders to power’. Nonetheless, despite these views, as a chaplain and Churchman Ferguson experienced discrimination and the adversity of the civilising process at firsthand.

Considering these factors, Ferguson and his father were at one with the Church in their goal to educate the Highlanders and disabuse them of their irrational beliefs. The Moderate notion of God was of a distant, non-interventionist intelligence, exercising power over forces in the natural universe, whereas the Evangelicals stressed the need for a personal relationship with the Saviour. Ferguson believed religion was necessary to give secular law moral authority. When man transgressed, the ‘Lamp of God’ instructed the conscience through such emotions as remorse, shame and despair. This made God’s governance more comprehensive than deterrents or penalties imposed by the government because it reached into the minds and emotions of men. In a land that had been a battleground during the previous century, the Moderate party of the Church of Scotland prized civility and reason. However, Moderate social engineering in the Highlands could only work if the Church would relent and allow the use of Gaelic as a step toward the implantation of English literacy. Michael Kugler claims that Ferguson supported the policies of the SSPCK. In a general sense, this may have been so, yet the failure of so many children to learn English under the Gaelic ban resided in the ignorance of bodies like the SSPCK. The Fergus(s)ons experienced the problem from both sides.

The Presbytery of Dunkeld, on which both Ferguson and his father sat, faced an inordinate struggle against the ignorance of people who, unlike themselves, had never experienced barriers to learning in the schoolroom or had to translate from one language into another from the pulpit. Leneman underscores how these barriers set back the spread of English in the Highlands:

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124 Ibid., 123.
126 Adam Ferguson, Principles of Moral and Political Science, Jean Hecht, ed., facsimile of 1792 ed., 2 vols, vol. 1 (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 1975), 183. See also Adam Ferguson’s, Lectures, "Dc.1.86", vol. 3, Section 8, Edinburgh University Library.
127 Ibid. This concept seems to be an amalgamation of moral philosophy and Highland communal shame-honour culture which will be broached in detail in the chapter to follow.
At about the time the Gaelic translation of the New Testament appeared, the SSPCK reversed its policy and recommended that in Gaelic-speaking areas both English and ‘Erse’ be taught. The reason for this was the realisation that many of the children who had been taught to read the Scriptures aloud in English hardly understood a word they were reading. Although this may have been an important motive for altering regulations, the Society could easily have discovered that this had been going on for years if its members had not so persistently closed their minds to the matter.\textsuperscript{129}

Charles Withers, who has made an exhaustive demographic and geographic study of the retreat of Gaelic in the Highlands, emphasises the lack of funds and wherewithal that led to the Church’s predicament. It had a poor return of graduates to continue its mission in the Highlands:

The Scottish Church had, since the mid-1600s, provided schemes for Gaelic-speaking university students to train as clergy for the Highlands. Such plans sought to use Gaelic as a missionary medium by which to foster Presbyterianism rather more than they were concerned to foster the language itself. In fact, the schemes to use Gaelic as a religious language were largely failures, due to a lack of finance by which to implement such plans and a constant shortage of linguistically-able clergy for the Highlands. The effect was that despite a Highland-wide preference for Gaelic as a spiritual medium and the language of religious administration, that language was never fostered through the very social medium in which it was so deeply treasured. These two mechanisms of language change – outright anti-Gaelic educational policies and lack of support from the one usage in which Gaelic was widely preferred – were important elements behind the decline of that language in Perthshire.\textsuperscript{130}

In this light, the affiliation of the Fergussons (both father and son) to Moderatism and Gaelic is complex. It required them to work in subtle ways in case their objectives became misconstrued. Given their experiences and predicaments in the past, and given that they sat on one of the most outspoken and innovative presbyteries in Scotland engaged in agitation for change, it is difficult to believe that they were not involved in some way in the process of gaining acceptance for Gaelic in the schoolroom. The Presbytery of Dunkeld fostered the talent of prospective Gaelic-speaking ministers\textsuperscript{131} during the period from 1767 when Adam Ferguson\textsuperscript{132} represented them on the General Assembly.\textsuperscript{133} By then Ferguson was Professor of Moral Philosophy at Edinburgh and

\textsuperscript{129} Leneman, Living in Atholl, 127. (My italics)
\textsuperscript{130} Withers, "A Geography of Language: Gaelic-Speaking in Perthshire, 1698–1879", 136.
\textsuperscript{131} "CH 2/106/8", f. 181. The Presbytery parishes instigated collections for Gaelic-speaking students and made sure there were bursars who would go on to take their place in Highland parishes as ministers.
\textsuperscript{132} Ibid. Ferguson was appointed by the Presbytery of Dunkeld to represent them at the General Assembly on April 6 1767. See f. 257; April 14 1769, see f. 310 and April 3 1770, see f. 327.
\textsuperscript{133} Ferguson first sat on the General Assembly as a lay elder for the Presbytery of Cairston (Orkney) in 1762; North Isles in Orkney in 1765; and for Lady Yester’s Kirk in Edinburgh in 1763. Ferguson also
his major work, the *Essay*, either had been or was about to be published. Nevertheless, an accomplishment of the lobbying by this innovative presbytery was to help win approval for the printing of the New Testament in Scottish Gaelic by the SSPCK during 1767.

Gaelic-speaking ministers had once struggled with the Bedell’s Bible, an Irish translation of the Old Testament printed in Irish character or *Corr-Litir*. This Bible had been indecipherable to most Scottish Gaelic-speaking clergymen. The Irish *Corr–Litir* typeface used in Bedell’s Bible was nothing like the Roman character used in printed English or Scottish Gaelic works. It used a dot above certain letters to signify lenition rather than the ‘h’ character used in Scottish Gaelic texts. It looked more like the Celtic uncial of an early medieval manuscript, than the character used in the English texts Highland ministers had learnt to read. However, Bedell’s Bible became the most common book of scripture used in the Highlands before 1767. Its use was limited, even after Robert Kirk, the minister of Aberfoyle in Perthshire and the man responsible for the Gaelic Psalter, transcribed the *Corr-Litir* of Bedell’s Irish Bible into Roman type.


136 Patrick Graham, *Sketches of Perthshire*, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: James Ballantyne and Co., 1807), 253. Robert Kirk (1641–1692) was a seventh son. Seventh sons were reputed among Highlanders to be gifted with a visionary capacity. Kirk was interested in Highland lore and wrote a dissertation called *The Secret Commonwealth of Elves, Faunes and Fairies* (1691). Coincidentally, Kirk died upon the supposedly fairy-infested Doon Hill on 14 May 1692, aged 48. Local legend says he is not dead, but imprisoned in an old Scots pine, which, to this day, people still tie strips of cloth to it, exhibiting the tenacity of superstition. Thomas Bisset, the minister of Logierait, cited 14 May as the unluckiest day in the calendar. Whatever day of the week 14 May fell on would be unlucky for the remainder of the year. This inauspicious date, which pops up often throughout the thesis, ironically happens to be the author's birthday. It is also the date of the Black Watch’s mutiny in 1743. See Sir John Sinclair, *The Statistical Account of Scotland Drawn up from the Communications of the Ministers of the Different Parishes*, 20 vols, vol. 5 (Edinburgh: William Creech, 1791–1799), 173.
During the late medieval period, spoken Scottish Gaelic had progressively drifted away from the common written standard used in Ireland and Scotland. By the eighteenth century, Irish broadly resembled the Gaelic spoken in Argyll or Inverness, but was less comprehensible in more remote regions such as East Perthshire where English had a substantial influence; and Sutherland or Lewis, where Norse influences had endured since the ninth century. In a letter to James Macpherson, cited in the previous chapter, Ferguson confessed that he had never learned to read ‘that barbarous orthography’. The plethora of Irish Bibles made available in Scotland was testimony to the anglophones’ misconception that Scottish Gaelic was indistinguishable from Irish.

In his reply to Macpherson, Ferguson suggested that the shortest route to Gaelic literacy for current Highland Churchman was through ancient Greek. Most Highland ministers had learnt the Greek language at divinity school. In his letter, Ferguson insisted that:

I have conformed to your former injunction exactly in consulting persons. There are few persons of any education in the Highlands, whether clergy or laity, that do not know the Greek alphabet; and perhaps will have easier access to your Ossian in that alphabet than they would in the barbarous orthography which few, and I among the rest, never learned to read. I know that this would make many a learned man stare.

As discussed in the previous chapter, Ferguson made the suggestion that Highland clergy might have ready access to Gaelic orthography through a secular text like Macpherson’s *Poems of Ossian*. This work could be printed in Gaelic using Greek orthography on the verso with the Gaelic in printed in a Latin typeface on the recto.

In the letter partially quoted on the previous page, Ferguson betrayed some embarrassment at his inability to read the Irish character. Merolle and Wellesley...
propose that this was a reference by Ferguson to a Milton sonnet.\textsuperscript{141} It would appear that their suggestion has some foundation. The reference to the partial sonnet line (line eleven) appears to be a poignant allusion by Ferguson to his inability to read and write Gaelic. Ferguson’s words were unlikely to have been random given the sonnet’s subject matter. Milton’s reference to the Scottish Gaelic patronymics (Gordon, Colkitto, Macdonnel and Galasp [Gillespie] – ‘rugged names’) in the sonnet suggests that although they were once foreign and difficult to pronounce for English people, they had since become names on everyone’s lips.\textsuperscript{142} From his own tribulations and attempts to preach in Gaelic, Ferguson knew the problems faced by Highland ministers, which is why he showed interest in a scheme where Macpherson would translate his Fingalian poetry into Gaelic and print it in Greek character. To discern if this was viable the two men conducted the experiment mentioned in the previous chapter.\textsuperscript{143} Nevertheless, it must have been of some discomfort to an educated man like Ferguson to know he was functionally illiterate in the Gaelic language – a language with which he was once expected to earn a living in the Church.

The exclusion of Gaelic from the schoolroom, except for its use in cross-translation of the Catechism, was lifted in 1766.\textsuperscript{144} Prior to this, the SSPCK had employed censors who were placed in schools to ensure its rules were not flouted. The censors also decided whether children were conversant in English. Those who spoke English well were removed to Lowland schools and supported as future prospects for the


\textsuperscript{142} Sonnet 11 - John Milton.

\begin{tabular}{ll}
Stand spelling fals, while one might walk to Mile - & 7 \\
End Green. Why is it harder Sirs then Gordon, & 8 \\
Colkitto, or Macdonnel, or Galasp? & 9 \\
Those rugged names to our like mouths grow sleek & 10 \\
That would have made Quintilian stare and gasp. & 11 \\
Thy age, like ours, O Soul of Sir John Cheek, & 12 \\
Hated not Learning, wors then Toad or Asp; & 13 \\
When thou taughtst Cambridge, and King Edward Greek. & 14 \\
\end{tabular}

A more complete explanation is in Appendix H, pages 424–425 at the rear of this thesis.

The sonnet is quoted in the fifteenth chapter of Scott's \textit{A Legend of Montrose}. Scott believed that Galasp or Gillespie was actually George Gillespie, a Westminster divine and one of the Apostles of the Covenant, one of Scotland's most remarkable preachers.

\textsuperscript{143} For this experiment see Chapter Two, pages 81–88.

ministry. Ferguson had one possible further connection with this long-awaited change. When the General Assembly lifted the exclusion of Gaelic for teaching and commissioned a New Testament to be produced by the SSPCK, a Perthshire minister on the Presbytery of Dunkeld was selected for the task. The man chosen was James Stewart, the minister of Killin, none other than Adam Ferguson’s brother-in-law.\textsuperscript{146}

Once the Church comprehended the reason for the continual entreaties from its Highland ministers and schoolmasters to supply the Christian message in a form accessible for Highlanders, it spawned a Christian revival movement by escalating the connection (and identification) between God, spirituality and Gaelic the language.\textsuperscript{147} Biblical Scottish Gaelic became the new high culture Gaelic, as Dr Johnson, who also had lobbied for a Gaelic Bible, predicted.\textsuperscript{148} Ironically, by championing the Gaelic language, the once orthodox Presbytery of Dunkeld sowed the seeds of dissent that future generations of Highlanders would reap during the patronage and land disputes of the nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{149}

\begin{itemize}
  \item Withers, "Education and Anglicisation", 37–56.
  \item James Stewart, minister of Killin, was the eldest son of Robert Stewart, also a Minister of Killin. His brother, Duncan Stewart of Blackhill, married the eldest daughter of Adam Ferguson, the minister of Logierait. Mary Ferguson Stewart was Professor Adam Ferguson's eldest sister. Duncan and Mary had a son, James, who took over the position of chaplain to the Black Watch after Ferguson left the regiment. He later received a call to the parish of Dull in Perthshire. James Stewart of Killin's son, James Stewart, became the minister of Luss. He completed the work of his father by translating the New Testament into Scottish Gaelic. The New Testament was published in 1801. For evidence of the connection between Adam Ferguson and James Stewart of Killin see George Edson, "The Reverend Robert Stewart of Killiechassie", Stewart Clan Magazine 12, no. 7 (1935), 103. The famous Gaelic poet, Dugald Buchanan, helped Stewart with the printing and translation of the work, but it too was purported to be ‘too Irish’. It would be 1832 before a Scots Gaelic Bible arrived on the scene completely free of Irish idiom. MacIntyre, "Outlines of Lectures on the Bible, Part 6 – the Gaelic Bible" In Free Presbyterian Magazine vol. l 9 1904–1905" ([cited). Buchanan was a son of Mary Ferguson of Ardandamh, and doubtless related to all the Fergussons of Dunkeld’s Presbytery. See Ferguson and Ferguson, The Records of the Clan and Name of Fergusson, Ferguson and Fergus, 222.
  \item This had the effect that in the Highlands, the people used their own culture to interpret Christ’s work. Catholic Highlanders on the other hand kept Christ separate from culture, allowing the sacred and the secular to exist separately. Meek, "God and Gaelic: Highland Churches and Gaelic Cultural Identity," 40. Dr Johnson lobbied the SSPCK for Highlanders to have a Bible. ‘Their language is attacked on every side. Schools are erected, in which English only is taught, and there were lately some who thought it reasonable to refuse them a version of the holy scriptures, that they might have a monument of their mother tongue’. Chapman, ed., Journey/Journal, 46.
  \item For example, see The Defence of the Address of the Dissentients from the Committee of the Perthshire Bible Society. While this does not pertain directly to anti-landlordism, it does portend the evangelicalism that went hand-in-hand with burgeoning anti-landlordism. The land debate in the Highlands began around
\end{itemize}
With the advent of the Gaelic Bible, the Church in the Highlands became increasingly evangelical; widening the distance between it and the established Church of Scotland. The endowment of literacy and religion in the Highlands contributed to the Moderate loss of control within the General Assembly. This was especially the case once the established Church became linked with Highland landlordism. However, if Leneman’s view is taken into consideration, then Ferguson’s role as member of the Moderate literati who wished to see the stringent language policy remain in place needs to be reassessed. Leneman states:

In 1760 James Macpherson’s translation of the so-called Gaelic epic, *Fingal*, first appeared, and it had an overwhelming impact on attitudes toward the Highlands and Highlanders. The fact that it was in the 1760’s that the SSPCK’s reversal of policy took place (and the Gaelic New Testament appeared) is surely not coincidental, even if it is impossible to prove a specific cause.

Nonetheless, Highland parishes began to prefer candidates from the Evangelical party. Many of the ensuing difficulties may have been averted if the Church and SSPCK had relented and allowed Highlanders to be taught English through the medium of their native tongue at an earlier date. The Reverend Fergusson was able to find a middle way between Evangelicalism and Moderatism that was tolerated by his congregations. His son, on the other hand, had mixed with the elite of Edinburgh’s literati, philosophers, lawyers and scientists. He was unable to make the compromises necessary for him to succeed, and preferred the company of educated men like himself, although he never completely lost touch with his past.

Apart from conducting worship in Gaelic, Highland ministers were often called on to arbitrate in disputes which could easily escalate into violence in the Highlands. This is where Ferguson probably made his first observations on human conflict. Ferguson’s remarks regarding the value and benefit of conflict and dissent in the this time and culminated in legislation changes around the end of the nineteenth century. In the *Defence*, the Perthshire ministers were opposed to the inclusion of the Apocrypha in the Bible published by the British and Foreign Bible Society. They contested that the apocryphal additions to the Bible were absent in the original Hebrew. Some of the dissenting ministers were sons and grandsons of those present in Perthshire during Ferguson’s lifetime; for example, Adam Ferguson and James MacLagan. Perthshire Bible Society, *Defence of the Address of the Dissentients from the Committee of the Perthshire Bible Society: In Reply to the Vindication of That Committee*. (Edinburgh: William Whyte & Co., 1829).

Hunter, "The Emergence of the Crofting Community", 99.

development of communities was probably informed by his own experiences, and those of his father. These provided him with an experiential reference point that was later augmented by what he gleaned from classical sources. Early exposure to conflict could be traced to his father’s involvement in parish disputes. The personal experiences of Ferguson and his father in the social, political and religious disputes which interrupted daily life left Ferguson with what appeared to be a novel and subversive view on the role of conflict. Lisa Hill is one of the first to take an in-depth look at Ferguson’s ideas on conflict and struggle. Writing of Ferguson’s Essay, she suggests:

In it he [Ferguson] challenges the false dichotomy promulgated by contractarians of tranquil society on the one hand and violent, isolated chaos on the other; rather, he argues, we are social beings with belligerent tendencies. He also confronts the Aristotelian (and later Hobbesian) premise that the key purpose of society is stability and social harmony. Instead, Ferguson lays great stress on the positive benefits of competition and conflict in our social development and in the maintenance of community.

One way in which the Moderate party sought favourable outcomes was through the encouragement of polite letters. Polite learning would create a tolerant atmosphere leading to a relaxation of rigid Church doctrine. It also enabled ministers to act as mediators between poverty-stricken tenants and indifferent landowners. Hill believes that Ferguson’s experience as a Highlander, especially in the Black Watch, predisposed him to formulate his unique views on the positive aspects of conflict. In the Black Watch, Ferguson was exposed to formal militarised conflict, but in the Highlands the outbreaks were often impromptu, especially before the law had a significant reach there. Common triggers of conflict in Highland hamlets included religion, politics, tenancy disputes, neighbourhood and domestic issues. Experiencing and witnessing these types of events may have been just as crucial and influential in the formation of Ferguson’s theory concerning conflict as those of the civic humanist tradition and

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153 Ibid. Hill, who ascribes a classical or civic humanist foundation to Ferguson’s ideas, notes Ferguson believed conflict was natural to the disposition of humankind and denied that harmony was a goal of society. See also Hill, "Eighteenth-Century Anticipations of the Sociology of Conflict", 281.
154 Sher, Church and University in the Scottish Enlightenment, 151–165.
155 Ibid; Kettler, The Social and Political Thought of Adam Ferguson, 45.
156 It is misleading, however, to imagine Jacobitism was exclusively the province of Catholics, or that Presbyterian Highlanders were rarities. Most of the people in Atholl had been Protestants for two or three generations by Ferguson’s time.
classical antiquity. The rising quality of education in Scotland did not prevent ministers becoming involved in parish violence. They received little aid from the centres of power, and even risked their lives in the cause of justice.\textsuperscript{157}

During Adam Ferguson’s youth, the Highlands were almost as volatile a region as they had been in his father’s adulthood. In the Highlands, vociferous people turned to force if necessary. Ferguson once staved off an attempt on a schoolmaster’s life which was led by irate village women who found the master’s conduct unsatisfactory.\textsuperscript{158} Ferguson once also found himself remonstrating with the famous Highland brigand, Rob Roy Macgregor, who attended Church at Logierait more than once during Adam Ferguson’s boyhood days.\textsuperscript{159}

However, most of the violence that Ferguson and his father confronted was that concerned with Jacobitism, the movement that sought to place the Stuart line back on the throne. Parts of Perthshire had a long association with the Stuart line going back to its foundation.\textsuperscript{160} Many of the inhabitants may have preferred the government and Calvinist

\textsuperscript{157} As a newly-ordained minister, the Reverend Ferguson found himself competing with Catholic missionaries for the souls of his parishioners at Crathie and Braemar. Fagg, "Complaints and Clamours", 291. He was often obliged to intervene in disputes where Catholics, Episcopalians and Presbyterians were all living in the same household space. As he received almost no support from his patron, the Earl of Mar, he eventually resigned his charge. The elder Ferguson's estimation of missionary activity in Crathie and Braemar was probably exaggerated to impress Mar and Grange. There were very few Gaelic-speaking miss

\textsuperscript{158} Fagg, "Complaints and Clamours", 301.

\textsuperscript{159} W.H. Murray, \textit{Rob Roy Macgregor: His Life and Times} (Edinburgh: Canongate, 1995), 256. See also Sheets, "Adam Ferguson: The 'Good Preceptor' of Empire", 77–78. Walter Scott must have heard references to the brigand, Rob Roy, in the Ferguson household. Macgregor was operative in the south-east and west of Perthshire.

\textsuperscript{160} After Queen Anne, the last Stuart monarch died, the throne passed to the Protestant Elector of Hanover in preference to a further Catholic Stuart as the 1701 Act of Settlement had guaranteed. Association of the Stewarts with Perthshire traces to the days of King Robert II and his steward Walter, who married the daughter of Robert the Bruce. George Edson, ed., "Lines of Noble Descent in Scotland (Stewarts)"
religion of their time, but were still angered to see the Royal descendants of Perthshire Stewart blood under threat.

Adam Fergusson was threatened during both Jacobite rebellions and took a leading role in seeking justice for the Church – and it could have endangered his life and the lives of his family. After the rebellion in 1715, the elders of the Presbytery of Dunkeld admitted that their ancestors fought ‘even unto blood’ in order to assent and subscribe to Presbyterian principles and obey their rightful sovereign. However, events in Atholl contradict the fallacy that all Jacobites were Catholics or necessarily wanted the Stuart line to retain the throne. Each minister within the Presbytery of Dunkeld’s jurisdiction considered the Hanoverian, George I, his rightful sovereign, but few were capable of honouring their pledge to the King when confronted with a cocked pistol.

Atholl was a region steeped in Stewart blood and many of its populace saw the Royal Stuarts as kin. These blood ties rather than politics or religion motivated many Atholl men to take up arms during the rebellions. In early 1716, the incumbent minister of Fortingall, George Robertson, interrupted a service at Logierait and prayed in a distressed manner for the Old Pretender (James Francis Edward who would have been styled James III and VIII). Robertson allegedly stirred the people to rebellion, then upbraided them for running from the Battle of Sherrifmuir (September 1715). The Robertsons fought with the rebel army at Sherrifmuir, and delivered the proclamation that began the insurrection. The Dunkeld Presbytery ordered that the Robertson brothers

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161 "CH 2/106/3" in Minutes of the Presbytery of Dunkeld (National Archives of Scotland: 1712–1717), 19 March 1716, f. 136–137.
162 George I succeeded Queen Anne. George was the son of Sophia, Electress of Hanover, who was next in line to the throne after Anne. However, Sophia predeceased Anne therefore, her son became heir. More than fifty Roman Catholic relatives had a prior claim to the throne; however, the Act of Settlement ensured the Protestant succession.
163 The Robertsons were not descended from the Stewart line, but traditionally supported the Royal Stuarts.
164 "CH 2/106/3", f. 135. The Robertsons fought with the rebel army at Sherrifmuir, and delivered the proclamation that began the insurrection. Many proprietors compelled their tenantry to rise and fight regardless of their politics or personal convictions. In 1746, William Murray, brother of the Duke of Atholl, forced the Robertsons of Lude to fight for the Jacobite cause. A. Mackillop and Steve Murdoch, Fighting for Identity: Scottish Military Experiences c. 1550–1900 (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 192.
should be given up to the law.\footnote{165} George Robertson and his brother, who was minister of Kirkmichael, were discharged by the Presbytery.\footnote{166} It fell to Ferguson’s father to meet the need for supply at Kirkmichael until a minister could be found to fill Robertson’s place. When Fergusson went to Kirkmichael on the pretext of declaring the parish vacant, he was ambushed and almost killed by a mob of over two hundred of Robertson’s parishioners. Robertson’s sisters had whipped them into a frenzied state. All Fergusson received for his courage was a vote of thanks from the Presbytery.\footnote{167} On February 5 the following year, the Presbytery minuted that the Kirkmichael rabble had been placed on the porteous rolls.\footnote{168} Mr Fergusson and Mr Stewart were ordered to attend to the process of law for Kirkmichael during the following months.\footnote{169} It would not be the last time Fergusson faced danger.

In 1745, rebels held the minister of Moulin, a relative of the Fergussons, hostage.\footnote{170} In spite of the danger to his person, this man was brought before the Presbytery to face a charge of not praying for King George during a service. The Presbytery found ‘that he was highly Censurable’ and appointed that he be severely rebuked by the Moderator, and made an example of as a warning to others.\footnote{171} The same day, the Presbytery heard a comparable allegation against Adam Fergusson, whose son Adam was by then in London serving with the Black Watch. Fergusson also stood accused of not praying for King George, having used the ambiguous, ‘His Majesty’, while being ‘threatened for it both with respect to his life & family’. Consequently, ‘the Presbytery considering & finding also that he had both in the Present Rebellion likewise during the late Rebellion’, given ‘remarkable Proofs of his Loyalty and steadfast affection’ to King, State, Constitution and Church, Fergusson was nevertheless admonished for not naming the King.\footnote{172}

\footnote{166} Ibid., ffs, 184, 185, 209 and 226.
\footnote{167} “CH 2/106/3”, f. 39. October 15 1718.
\footnote{168} Ibid., f. 50. Entry dated February 5 1719. Porteous rolls are lists of persons who are summoned to the justiciary courts. The court of Justiciary founded in 1672 is now Scotland’s High Court.
\footnote{169} Ibid., f. 52. Entry dated March 3 1719.
\footnote{170} Ferguson and Ferguson, The Records of the Clan and Name of Fergusson, Ferguson and Fergus, 112.
\footnote{171} In a letter to his daughter, Fergus Ferguson stated: ‘Professor Fergusson is your relation, not only as springing from the same stem, but also by a later connection’.
\footnote{172} “CH 2/106/6”, f. 274, 6 August 1745.
Other ministers of the Presbytery were not as loyal, and Adam Ferguson’s father played a key role in bringing the Reverend Thomas Man to justice. Man was accused of having supper with the Marquis of Tullibardine (the Jacobite Duke of Atholl, brother to the legitimate Duke), and omitting King George’s name from public prayers. Ferguson steered a committee of enquiry into Man’s conduct, but found there was equally strong evidence on both sides. Witnesses saw Man threatened by rebels with pistols. Others confirmed Man had named King George in prayer. However, Man was also seen being ferried across the river at Blairgowrie with Lord George Murray, the Duke of Atholl’s brother, who happened to be the leader of the ragtag Jacobite army. Man was found guilty and deprived of a minister’s privileges. The Presbytery deliberated longer over the accusations regarding his association with Tullibardine and Lord George Murray. Man was officially suspended from duties in the July of 1747 for having consorted with the rebels.

Ferguson’s father was not a man to compromise. When Colonel Yorke, the aide-de-camp of the Duke of Cumberland (who headed the Government forces against the Jacobites) met Fergusson, he recorded it in a letter to his brother the Earl of Hardwicke. Like the Presbytery minute books of the era, Yorke’s letter captured the fractured social fabric and distrust inherent in Highland society, where an opponent could easily be a relative, friend or neighbour. Fergusson exhibited an understandably hardened attitude to those who were against the Hanoverian succession.

The melancholy part of all the story is that there is no trusting to any people in this whole country to give intelligence; for they all abuse each other to indifferent people but hold together in the national part of being Jacobites, or at least lukewarm, which I look upon in the same light exactly. The presbyterian ministers are the only people we can trust, and to give you an idea of one small part of the country, I mean the county of Athole, the minister, one Ferguson of Loggeritte, told me, that if you were to hang throughout all that county indiscriminately, you would not hang three people wrongfully. I am grieved to say it is mostly so through the whole country of the

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173 Ibid., f. 274.
174 "CH 2/106/6", f. 1. 6 August 1746.
175 Ibid., f. 18. 4 November 1746.
176 Ibid., f. 43. 6 July 1747.
177 Colonel Joseph Yorke was the brother of the Earl of Hardwicke, who was the Lord Chancellor from 1737.
hills, and if it is not rooted out now, you’ll have another insurrection in two years time…. 178

Adam Ferguson was also drawn into the Jacobite melee, but this will be the subject of the following chapter. The conflict and dissent which arose in the early-to-mid-eighteenth century was apparently rampant in Atholl. This possibly informed much of Adam Ferguson’s stance on conflict. In this passage from his Essay, Adam Ferguson could be describing the ferment that accompanied much of his father’s adult life.

In the most pacific situation there are few who have not their enemies, as well as their friends; and who are not pleased with opposing the proceedings of one, as much as with favouring the designs of another. Small and simple tribes, who in their domestic society have the firmest union, are in their state of opposition as separate nations, frequently animated with the most implacable hatred. 179

This passage shows that Ferguson was acquainted with the turmoil that beset static communities. His knowledge of Highland conflict, even if not from his own first hand experience, fleshed out his ideas of the barbarian stage prior to the institution of property. In the passage which follows, Ferguson uses the term ‘clans’ with its obvious Highland associations. Clan is the anglicised version of the Gaelic word clann, which literally means children. His use of the word conjures a domestically oriented society with its amity and enmity, uproar, dissent and hatred, examples of which are recorded in the minutes of the Presbytery of Dunkeld. 180

Even so, Ferguson did not condone the Highland way (vengeance), although he knew its dynamic well, as the following passage from the Essay confirms:


179 Ferguson, Essay, 25.

180 If the minute books are examined, the issues cannot be reduced to the easy opposition of Catholic Jacobite against Protestant Hanoverian. As an example of the complexity of the issue, the Church punished normally loyal Hanoverian and Presbyterian ministers without taking into account the extenuating circumstances of their duress while they were held hostage. When the sisters of the Robertson brothers incited the parish to revolt it was necessary to bring an entire parish to justice.
In territories of considerable extent, subject to one government, and possessed of freedom, the national union, in rude ages, is extremely imperfect. Every district forms a separate party; and the descendents of different families are opposed to one another, under the denomination of tribes or clans: they are seldom brought to act with a steady concert; their feuds and animosities give more frequently the appearance of so many nations at war, than of a people united by connections of policy. They acquire a spirit, however, in their private divisions, and in the midst of a disorder, otherwise hurtful, of which the force, on many occasions, redounds to the power of the state.\footnote{Ferguson, \textit{Essay}, 209.}

Ferguson shows an awareness that the Highlands needed to be brought under the control of a centralised power. While he found fault with Highland disorder,\footnote{As Spadafora noted, Ferguson did believe order and authority were necessary to the maintenance of civil society. David Spadafora, \textit{The Idea of Progress in Eighteenth-Century Britain}, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 262. Ferguson could not conceal his admiration for the martial virtue exhibited in parts of the Highlands.} he admired the spirit, tenacity and love of freedom that drove people there out of complacency. Nonetheless, the above passage also contains a caveat. Should the desire to effect order be lost, or if the State relaxes its vigilance, the situation could revert to chaos. It is a tacit warning to avoid the dangers which might be born of political refinement. The many-layered meaning in the above text exhibits a warning not only to the government, but also to the governed. Initially injustice and error might be corrected by a centralised power, but over-correction can stultify all action or dispute, however potentially productive this process might have been.\footnote{Ferguson, \textit{Essay}, 209.} For Ferguson, government without some opposition had the potential for despotism. Ferguson found that ‘Men of superior genius sometimes seem to imagine, that the vulgar have not title to act, or to think’.\footnote{Ibid.}

Nonetheless, it was neither the Church alone nor the Highlands that would have the most lasting effect on the Fergus(s)ons’ lives: it was the intersection of the two that caused each of them both consternation and fulfilment. This experience and knowledge of two different worldviews ultimately bred ambivalence. On the one hand, Ferguson was committed to the Moderates’ programme of inculcating English, while on the other hand, he realised language immersion for children who had no other referents but Gaelic, did not further the Moderate party aims. Ferguson’s notions regarding conflict were probably informed by his experiences in the Highlands or among
Highlanders, while his model of martial virtue came in the shape of his father, who repeatedly risked his life to bring others to justice.

The sense that Ferguson was critiquing civil society, as writers such as Höpfl suggest, could well be traced to some of his dealings with the Church of Scotland. The Church restricted the compass of its Highland ministry to other Highlanders. Ferguson and his father were uprooted and placed in Church appointments with little notice. Both men found fault with, fell victim to, and overcame the English prohibition initiated in parish and SSPCK schools. The system failed to teach the elder Fergusson Latin and English. It failed his son by giving him all the finesse and knowledge to preach in English, when it expected him to preach in Gaelic, a language he could barely read or write.

Moderate ministers like the Fergus(s)ons have often been portrayed as systematic destroyers of Highland language and culture. However, both father and son were aware of the shortcomings of the educational system and actively sought to effect a change in Church attitudes. They went through the channels of successive Church courts and complied with directives, doing nothing that could be seen as subversive in an environment still reeling from repeated, abortive insurrections. The Church’s insensitivity to men like the Fergus(s)ons, who had been through the system themselves and knew it from the perspective of both pupil and master, probably aroused their frustration at times. Ultimately, their wisdom and knowledge proved to be correct, but it is unlikely that they intended the publication of the first Gaelic Bible and the relaxation on Gaelic to become the grounds of ousting Moderatism from the Highlands.

In next chapter, I will look at further reasons for Ferguson’s frustrations with the civilising process, this time within a British rather than Scottish context, in his role as conscripted regimental chaplain. Here, Ferguson’s Highland influences meshed with his classical education as he played his part to re-educate Highlanders in order to assimilate them into the modernising British nation and defend it.
CHAPTER 4

Figure 7. Above.
A soldier of the Black Watch armed with musket, bayonet, pistol, broadsword and dirk. He wore twelve yards of tartan held on with a leather belt, a red coat with lace and buff facings and a blue bonnet. This uniform would have been familiar to Ferguson.

Figure 8. Above.
One of the mutiny’s three executed ringleaders, Farquhar Shaw. He spoke no English.

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CHAPTER 4

‘In the garb of old Gaul with the fire of old Rome’. Ferguson, the Military and Highland Scotland

The preceding chapter looked at how Ferguson and his father, despite their modern outlook and desire for improvement, were affected by laws and policies designed to eradicate Gaelic and civilise the Highlands. Between the 1715 and 1745 rebellions the Highlands was a place of internecine strife. This aspect of Highland life gave Ferguson a different outlook to his literary acquaintance in Edinburgh toward conflict. Ferguson’s father often placed his life on the line: while mediating in disputes or attempting to obtain justice, and even just carrying out his ordinary duties as a minister. In Leah Leneman’s view there was little evidence of martial valour left in Atholl by 1745, although further west a spark remained. However, Ferguson’s father seemed to exhibit sufficient martial virtue for his son to emulate. Adam Ferguson senior was not the kind of a man to back away from confrontation whether the combatants were angry women, defiant parishioners, Jacobite rebels or thieves like Rob Roy Macgregor. Human conflict was woven into the fabric of life in the Perthshire Highlands. Nevertheless, Ferguson was still not so far removed from the views Hume, Smith, Carlyle or Robertson to be at odds with them on the topic of conflict. As Lisa Hill points out, Tacitus and Machiavelli had already raised many of the same ideas.

Taking her lead from Duncan Forbes, Hill comments:

As a highlander, Ferguson was well acquainted with the realities of conflict… and it seems likely that his unique views on the positive aspects of opposition were reinforced by this experience.

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2 The Garb of Old Gaul has been the slow regimental march of the Black Watch until quite recently. The march and accompanying lyrics are roughly contemporary with Ferguson. Peter Womack believes the lyrics are charged with Latinity and the metalinguistic presence of the governing body. Peter Womack, Improvement and Romance: Constructing the Myth of the Highlands (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Macmillan, 1989), 32. See Appendix I, page 426–427 and especially at the rear of this work.

3 Leah Leneman, Living in Atholl: A Social History of the Estates 1685–1785 (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1986), 135 and 140. Leneman detected an aversion to military service in the records at Blair Castle. Many Highlanders emigrated or left the glens to avoid military service. Economic pressure and physical threat may have forced others into the service.


Ferguson was a man born on the cusp between an agonist and a commercial culture, who knew the best and worst aspects of each. He found commercial culture devoid of ‘will’ (action) or ‘being’ (identity) and his slogan might well have been: ‘Civil and military rank were never disjoined’. Ferguson became a chaplain of the regiment that has become known as the Black Watch. The words to their regimental march, *The Garb of Old Gaul*, captures the essence of what this chapter is about – the similarity and relationship of classical and Highland militarism as Ferguson interpreted it. The overriding concern of this chapter will be to suggest that Ferguson took the once-martial ethos of the Highlands and read it back into the martial achievements of Sparta and Rome. Ferguson admired martial virtue, having some knowledge and experience of conflict. His love of the classical authors and their descriptions of militarism were, for him, heightened by his experience of Highland life. The Highland and classical cultures were so similar that Ferguson was one of the first to look at contemporary cultures and use that knowledge to understand the past, just as modern archaeologists look to the Bushmen of the Kalahari when faced with the artefacts of ancient hunter-gatherers. Ferguson’s nine-year tour of duty with the Highland Regiment gave him a more visceral appreciation of combativeness in an honour-shame contest culture than he could have gleaned from the pages of classical texts or their commentaries. The sphere of his service following his ordination immediately widened its scope to that of Great Britain, not just Scotland or the Highlands. What was distinctive about his situation was that his regiment had begun its life as an artificial Highland community within the legitimate...

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1966), xxxix. Hill comments that women are invisible in Ferguson’s conception of conflict, but this was allied to the fact that he was pitching to a masculine audience. See Hill p 284–285. I am sure Ferguson was well aware of female dissent and violence in the Highlands. Two cases, which spring to mind from previous chapters, include the women who almost battered a schoolmaster to death, and the Robertson sisters who led a mob of parishioners in their attack on Ferguson’s father after the presbytery suspended their brother, the Reverend Robertson. In fact, women were ‘out’ in the ‘45. ‘Colonel’ Lady Anne Mackintosh’s quick thinking convinced a body of soldiers to turn and run by giving them the impression they had come upon a whole army when there were just four armed men. See A.J. Youngson, *The Prince and the Pretender: Two Views of the ‘45* (Edinburgh: Mercat Press, 1996), 139, 243–4.

6 Ferguson, *The History of the Progress and Termination of the Roman Republic*, 24. Incidentally, slogan is one of the few Gaelic loanwords which have come into the English lexicon. A slogan was originally a battle cry or rallying call, but in English it has become synonymous with motto, jingle or watchword.

7 John Home, Ferguson’s friend and colleague, saw service as a volunteer during the rebellion and was captured at the Battle of Falkirk. His captivity gave him an enduring interest in Highland culture and he later wrote a *History of the Rebellion of 1745*. Likewise, William Robertson joined the volunteers in Edinburgh, but when the rebels entered the city, he defiantly repaired to Haddington to do what he could.
British army.\textsuperscript{8} The characteristic Highland elements that shaped Ferguson’s views have been largely overlooked in favour of examination of classical and political influences on his work. What follows forms a backdrop for these influences.

There was more to Ferguson’s sudden appointment as deputy chaplain of the Black Watch than is at first apparent. There are some considerations regarding the treatment of the regiment before Ferguson was posted to it, which may even have contributed to his criticism of the civilising process. First, I will outline the conditions of Ferguson’s secondment. I will then look briefly at his military career and the uniqueness of the regimental culture of the Black Watch during this period. Following this, I will reconsider and tease out the specific cultural reasons behind Ferguson’s secondment, before comparing Highland culture and the warrior cultures of classical antiquity. Further on, I will examine some peculiar Highland elements and traits within his militia pamphlets and other writings that were probably directly influenced by his service with the Black Watch. Ferguson’s input went some way toward earning Highlanders’ acceptance within Scottish mainstream society.

Around July of 1745, Ferguson was barely half way through his divinity studies at Edinburgh. A chance meeting between his father and Lord John Murray on the road to Perth put an end to his prospect of completing them. In the early 1990s, James Steven Sheets discovered some remarkable new information at Blair Castle regarding Ferguson’s annexation to the Black Watch. According to Sheets, Lord John Murray, the regiment’s new colonel, met Ferguson’s father on his way to Perth to report the death of a fellow minister.\textsuperscript{9} As eighteenth-century Perthshire was a dangerous region, Adam Fergusson senior had armed himself with pistols in contravention of the both the 1716 and 1725 Disarming Acts.\textsuperscript{10} Instead of seeing this as a breach of the law, Lord John Murray was impressed by Fergusson’s initiative and display of martial virtue.\textsuperscript{11} Lord

\textsuperscript{8} A. Mackillop and Steve Murdoch, \textit{Fighting for Identity: Scottish Military Experiences c. 1550–1900} (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 188.
\textsuperscript{9} Although Reverend Fergusson had been chaplain to the Duke of Atholl, Lord John was a product of the Duke’s second marriage. The children of the second marriage may not have known the Fergussons quite as well as the children of the first marriage.
\textsuperscript{10} The 1716 Disarming Act permitted only the Black Watch and those in the regular army to bear arms in Scotland.
\textsuperscript{11} Lord John was gazetted Colonel on 25 April, and the letter mentioning the meeting of Lord John and Adam Ferguson’s father was written on the 27 May. See James Steven Sheets, “Adam Ferguson: The
John, and his mother, the Dowager Duchess of Atholl finally thought they had found a man with the right credentials to install as chaplain of the Highland regiment. The only shortcoming was Fergusson’s advanced age (seventy-three). With age disqualifying Fergusson, the Murray family hoped to engage his son, Adam. Lord John believed that a well-educated minister of the established Church and an Atholl man would be a more agreeable prospect for his men than the present Episcopalian chaplain, Gideon Murray. The young Adam Ferguson had excellent testimonials from his professors. His approval by Gideon Murray helped to win him the General Assembly’s consent to proceed to his trials. In the official records this was rendered as follows:

Upon a representation that Lord John Murray, Colonel of the Highland regiment in his Majesty’s service, inclines to have a chaplain of the communion of this Church, having the Irish language, who must soon be ordained for that office; and that Mr. Adam Ferguson, student in divinity, son to the minister of Logierait, in the Presbytery of Dunkeld, is pitched upon for that purpose; the General Assembly, in respect of the ample certificates given of the said Mr Ferguson’s capacity and good character, and of the peculiar circumstances of the case, remitted to and appointed the Presbytery of Dunkeld, to take him upon trial and, in case they find him qualified, to ordain him, on his passing his first trials; And Mr MacLaggan is ordered to return thanks to Lord John Murray for his good disposition towards this church, and the interest of religion.

The approval of the Assembly was necessary for Ferguson to gain his licence to preach. The Presbytery of Dunkeld took him on his ‘extempore Tryals’ between 3 April and 2 July of 1745. Once he passed all his examinations, ‘Mr Adam Ferguson

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12 Sheets, "Adam Ferguson: The 'Good Preceptor' of Empire", 88. Jane Bush Fagg noted that the Duchess Dowager's letter supposedly recommending Ferguson for the position of chaplain was dated 27 May 1745, just a day before the motion passed in the General Assembly to expedite Ferguson's appointment to the regiment. Fagg believes that this is a discrepancy. Jane B. Fagg, "Biographical Introduction" in The Correspondence of Adam Ferguson, eds, Vincenzo Merolle and Kenneth Wellesley (London: William Pickering, 1995), ci, See n. 3.


16 "CH 2/106/6" in Minutes of the Presbytery of Dunkeld (National Archives of Scotland: 1731–1746), f. 267.
was set apart for the Holy Ministry by Prayer and the Imposition of hands’. The Presbytery unanimously awarded his licence to preach upon his promise to give himself to prayer and meditation. An extraordinary Act of the General Assembly expedited his ordination and annexation to the Black Watch.

David Allan considers Ferguson’s tour of duty with the Black Watch to have been “a powerfully-formative.” Little is known about Ferguson’s time with the Black Watch because the regiment’s records were lost at sea. However, there is a famous anecdote about Ferguson’s conduct upon joining the regiment which is widely held to be spurious. An argument has prevailed over whether Ferguson ever made a charge from the ranks at Fontenoy because the battle pre-dated his ordination. Nevertheless, according to Walter Scott, Ferguson’s commanding officer ordered him to retreat to the rear with the wounded and dying where a man with his commission more properly belonged. Ferguson allegedly reacted with ‘Damn my commission!’ Taking it from his pocket, he threw it in the general direction of his commanding officer Sir Robert Munro. A less swashbuckling account of Ferguson’s heroics predates Scott’s better known one. Colonel David Stewart of Garth recorded:

At this period the celebrated Dr Adam Ferguson was chaplain to the Highland regiment. When the regiment was taking its ground in the morning of battle, Sir Robert Munro perceived the chaplain in the ranks, and, with a friendly caution, told him there was no necessity for him to expose himself to unnecessary danger, and that he ought to be out of the line of fire. Mr Ferguson thanked Sir Robert for his friendly advice, but added, that, on this occasion, he had a duty which he was imperiously

19 David Allan, Adam Ferguson (Aberdeen: AHRC Centre for Irish and Scottish Studies, 2006), 8.
20 Jane B Fagg, Email, 22 April 2002. All the Black Watch records dating from Ferguson’s era went down with a ship in the Irish Sea.
21 Jane Bush Fagg was alerted by Lorimer to a discrepancy in the dating of Ferguson’s ordination (2 July Old Style) and that of the battle of Fontenoy (11 May New Style/30 April Old Style.) Old Style pertains to the Julian calendar. This discrepancy in dates prompted Fagg’s rejection of the idea that Ferguson was at Fontenoy. Fagg, "Biographical Introduction", xxiv. See also her note 9, ci. Britain adopted the Gregorian calendar in 1752. Despite the inconsistency in dates, certain incidentals support Scott and Stewart. Ferguson would not perpetuate such a falsehood since there must have been numerous contemporary witnesses who could confirm or deny his presence there. The anecdote is typical of the type that would do the rounds of the glens.
called upon to perform. Accordingly, he continued with the regiment during the whole of the action, in the hottest of the fire, praying with the dying, attending to the wounded, and directing them to be carried to a place of safety. By his fearless zeal, his intrepidity, and his friendship towards the soldiers (several of whom had been his school-fellows at Dunkeld,) his amiable and cheerful manners, checking with severity where necessary, mixing among them with ease and familiarity, and being as ready as any of them with a poem or heroic tale, he acquired an unbounded ascendancy over them. 23

Although Scott and Stewart’s versions differ in tone and content, it is somewhat premature to dismiss outright their claim about Ferguson’s heroics. Whether the story is true or not, it illustrates the typical martial virtue ingrained in an agonistic contest culture like that of the Highlands. A tactic such as Ferguson’s alleged charge would have served as encouragement for the more timorous members of the company. 24 It was the type of action befitting a Highlander. Jane Dawson believes that martial virtue and honour were more important to Highlanders than their language. 25 Demonstrably, Highlanders had an insult sensitivity which had once brought this regiment to the point of mutiny. Regardless of the anecdote’s veracity, Ferguson took to military life with relish, as his first letter to his friend John Adam attests: 26

I’m extremely happy in my Colonel, nor would I change him or his regiment for any in the Service, I preached to them yesterday over a Couple of Drums, and tho it was my first I had no more fear or concern than if it had been my hundredth and nineteenth time. A few days after I came we had a General Review of all the Troops, they were all drawn out in their lines, and his Highness rode from one end of the


24 A further support to the notion that Ferguson was at Fontenoy includes the following premise. Ferguson befriended John Douglas, the linguist and Scots Guard, who also served at Fontenoy. See Alexander Crawley Dow, *Ministers to the Soldiers of Scotland* (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1962), 231. The Scots Guards and Black Watch (and therefore Ferguson and Douglas) returned to England to quell the rebellion in 1745. See Merolle and Wellesley, eds, *The Correspondence of Adam Ferguson*, vol. 2, page 269, note 1; Dow, *Ministers to the Soldiers of Scotland*, 231. In later life, Ferguson visited John Douglas, by then Canon Douglas, at Windsor. See Fagg, "Biographical Introduction", lxiii.

25 This virtue and honour were derived from the Irish hero tales of Cu Chulainn and Finn. Recitation of these tales kept that virtue and honour alive across the generations. Jane Dawson, "The Gaidhealtachd and the Emergence of the Scottish Highlanders" in *British Consciousness and Identity: The Making of Britain, 1533–1707*, Brendan Bradshaw and Peter Roberts, eds, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 260.

26 Philip Howard, *The Black Watch: The Royal Highland Regiment, the 42nd Regiment* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1968), 27. Howard records the ‘charging chaplain’ story in a history of the regiment, but does not directly name Ferguson.
Line to tother end and myself be sure\(^{27}\) in his Retinue, you cannot imagine how much I was roused by the Spirit Stirring Drum and the ear piercing fife with all the Pomp & Circumstance of glorious War. In the evening we had a fire of Joy on account of the Election, which was the Grandest noise I ever heard. The Dutch began upon the Left and from thence the fire came roaring and flashing thro the whole line, for near ten or twelve Miles, that being the length of our present camp.

I am mightily pleased with everything in this way of life…\(^{28}\)

Ferguson served with the regiment at Port L’Orient, Quiberon, Flanders and Cork.\(^{29}\) By all accounts he was a highly successful chaplain.\(^{30}\) He conducted regular prayer services for the regiment, remaining with them to be gazetted as full chaplain on 30 April 1746.\(^{31}\) He was held in awe by the men and kept bad language, drinking and gambling to a minimum.\(^{32}\) Ferguson’s reputation as a chaplain remained unparalleled for the remainder of the eighteenth century.\(^{33}\) Robert Bisset, his earliest biographer, believed that Ferguson’s acquired military knowledge enlivened the battle narratives in his *History of the Progress and Termination of the Roman Republic*.\(^{34}\)

Ferguson served for nine years with this distinctive regiment. At the time, it was the only regiment in which the vast majority of the men were Highlanders. During the mid-eighteenth century, the Black Watch was effectively an artificial Highland community. According to Womack, later it became a ploy of the British Army to pass

\(^{27}\) With ‘myself be sure’ Ferguson was translating a Gaelic construction, which suggests in his earlier days at least, he still occasionally thought in Gaelic, or had sufficient exposure to Gaelic that it affected the syntax of his English.


\(^{30}\) Stewart, *Sketches*, vol. 2. Appendix KK, ivii; Bisset, "Dr Adam Fergusson", 329.


\(^{34}\) Bisset, "Dr Adam Fergusson", 329; "Annual Obituary and Biography", 238; "Biographical Sketch of the Life of Adam Ferguson LL D and FRSE, formerly Professor of Moral Philosophy in the College of Edinburgh", *The Scots Magazine and Edinburgh Literary Miscellany*. 78 (1816), 419; Lee, "Adam Ferguson", 243.
off Highland regiments as ersatz clans for recruiting purposes. The majority of the men in the regiment were Presbyterians and most men were monoglot Gaelic-speakers. In the regiment’s early years, Lord John Murray set out to win regiment’s confidence and there is little doubt Ferguson, as the new deputy chaplain, would have assisted in this venture.

Few, if any, of Ferguson’s biographers have questioned the precedent of the General Assembly’s waiver before his secondment to the Black Watch. Most Highland candidates for the ministry studied divinity for six years following their Master of Arts degree. Ferguson was hastily ensconced as deputy chaplain after hurried trial and cursory examination by the Presbytery. By not questioning this haste, scholars have tended to disregard the culturally specific context of his engagement with the regiment. Ferguson had the valuable wherewithal to mediate between the officers and men because of his bilingual capabilities. General Wade, who engineered the roads and bridges in order for troops to occupy and police the Highlands after the 1715 rebellion, had recommended that the Black Watch be commanded by Gaelic-speaking officers. Colonel David Stewart of Garth insisted many problems with the regiment would have been averted if Wade’s advice had been followed. It is quite likely that Ferguson’s Gaelic-speaking skills were keenly sought at a time when few of the rank and file understood English.

There were other features operating within the Black Watch that set it apart from other outfits in the army at the time Ferguson joined it. In other circumstances gentlemen in a regiment could have purchased commissions and had them approved by the Crown. The Black Watch had several men from well-connected Highland families.

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38 The idea that the dowager Duchess wanted Ferguson there to keep his eye on her son Lord John Murray is less plausible than the idea of Ferguson being in the regiment to help keep the men in line. With his knowledge of Gaelic, he would be able to translate and convey information between the officers and men, thereby, keeping the peace. MacWilliam, ed., *Records*, xcvi.
However, they were unable to purchase or have commissions granted because of the entrenched distrust of Highlanders. As a concession, the Highland gentry were permitted batmen to carry their kit and weaponry.\textsuperscript{40} Even this compromise bears parallels with Athens and Ancient Sparta where Helots carried the weaponry and armour of Hoplites.\textsuperscript{41} Blood and affinal relationships were prevalent among the regiment.\textsuperscript{42} The officers of the Black Watch treated their men with unusual kindness. Unlike normal military practice, the ranks were addressed by their given names.\textsuperscript{43} Within the outfit, duty, rosters and tasks were allocated in a democratic fashion.\textsuperscript{44} In order to keep up morale, Lord John Murray kept floggings and punishments to an absolute minimum, which was an unusual concession during this era. As a further concession to the men, Murray retained the regiment’s distinctive tartan, and as all attempts to put the men into breeks (trousers) had been met with protest, he also retained the philabeg (or kilt).\textsuperscript{45}

The method used by the Black Watch to engage their enemy was unlike that of most regiments they fought alongside. Rather than firing musket volleys in ranks, then kneeling behind the front rank to reload like other foot soldiers, the Black Watch were permitted to fire, then hurl themselves into a prone position.\textsuperscript{46} When it was safe, the men leapt to their feet and fired again.\textsuperscript{47} Sir Robert Munro, their Lieutenant-Colonel, had to obtain special dispensation from the Duke of Cumberland, the army’s chief commander, to continue this practice.\textsuperscript{48} The Black Watch’s manner of engagement was

\textsuperscript{40} Howard, \textit{The Black Watch}, 28.
\textsuperscript{43} Howard, \textit{The Black Watch: The Royal Highland Regiment, the 42nd Regiment}, 28; Coghlan, \textit{42nd Royal Highland Regiment, Am Freiceadan Dubh, "The Black Watch"} ([cited]. See above.
\textsuperscript{44} Leneman, \textit{Living in Atholl}, 141.
\textsuperscript{45} Lieut-Col. Percy Groves, \textit{The History of the 42nd Royal Highlanders – "The Black Watch" now the First Battalion "The Black Watch" (Royal Highlanders) 1729–1893} (Edinburgh: W & A. K. Johnston, 1893), 5. Sir Robert’s famous ‘Clap to ground’ order came from this practice. Information regarding this special dispensation granted to the Black Watch was originally contained in a biography, \textit{The Life of Colonel Gardiner} by Doddridge.
\textsuperscript{46} Howard, \textit{The Black Watch}, 26.
\textsuperscript{47} Groves, \textit{The History of the 42nd Royal Highlanders}, 5.
best suited to guerrilla and shock warfare, but was unsuitable for smooth terrain or against fortifications. The virtue of the regiment resided in its ability to engage the enemy in close combat, the charge being its traditional mode of attack. Stewart argued that the men of the Black Watch were steadier at the approach of sharp weaponry than any regiment in Europe. Lord John Murray remained at its head until his death in 1787. Murray cared for his fighting men, providing them with a house, land and a free passage to Perth. Married men received two guineas, and the wounded were sent to Chelsea and given enough money to drink the King’s health. The military men of the House of Atholl seemed convinced that Highlanders, on account of their habits, language and provincial attachment, needed to remain a separate body of men within the British Army. Highland soldiers had temperaments which required strong management, but also delicacy.

Andrew Mackillop and Steve Murdoch find this apparent cultural sensitivity was calculated to make the military attractive to Highlanders. Only in the army were Highlanders permitted elements of their culture. The regiment contained numerous bards and musicians who composed bagpipe laments and marches to enliven the unique cultural life of the unit. Ferguson occasionally entertained the men with poems and tales, indicating that his spoken Gaelic was more than rudimentary. Weaponry, dress and martial music were denied to Highlanders elsewhere in Britain until 1782. Allowing these concessions eased Highlanders into accepting, not only a military hierarchy that mirrored that of the clan, but also the idea of being British. This in turn made the Highlander more acceptable to his British compatriots.

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50 Stewart, *Sketches*, vol. 1, 238.
53 Ibid.
54 Leneman, *Living in Atholl*, 143.
57 See quotation page 154–155 of this chapter.
58 Mackillop and Murdoch, *Fighting for Identity*, 188–189. They state, ‘Thus the Gael could fight for regiment, king and country in a seamless, mutually reinforcing framework with no inherent contradictions or tensions’. This may have been the ideal but numerous regimental mutinies to do not bear this out.
Ferguson’s first publication was a sermon delivered to the Black Watch during the crisis of the Jacobite Rebellion. The sermon constituted what John Small described as denunciations of Charles Edward Stuart in Ersh (Gaelic). The tone of the sermon is uniformly didactic, although parts of it are evocative of Ferguson’s enduring interest in the foundations of society and his concern with heroic virtue. The Scottish Calvinist notion of Scotland as the ‘new Israel’ perpetuating linear ‘sacred history’ was underpinned by Ferguson’s notion of perfectibility or continuing improvement. In his pamphlet he acknowledged and extolled the reformed faith. The rebellion threatened to return Scotland to a time when Episcopacy (King as head) vied with Presbytery (Christ as head) for Church governance. The invasion of the Pretender was seen as God’s judgment upon the British nation’s immorality. Ferguson’s sermon did more than call for penitence and humility.

His appointment as deputy chaplain could have set him up as a compliant tool and mouthpiece in the pay of both Church and state. The content of his published sermon suggests this. The sermon attempted to educate the Highland recruits about their right to security under the law. Bruce Lenman has drawn attention to the way Scottish intellectuals ‘became spokesmen tacitly or overtly’ for the Whig Hanoverian establishment. In Ferguson’s case, he was appointed by an aristocratic landholding family who supported the Protestant succession and the constitutional supremacy of Parliament over the King. The sermon was directed at men who were engaged to fight for a culture manifestly divergent from their native one. This was why Ferguson’s instruction was so necessary. He takes trouble to explain the difference between the British as opposed to Highland notion of ‘country’ as the object of patriotism:

In the first Place; By a Man’s Country is meant that Society or united Body of Men of which he is a Member, sharing all the Advantages that arise from such a Union.

59 Small, Biographical Sketch of Adam Ferguson, 4.
60 As Mackillop and Murdoch point out, the men engaged in Highland regiments were often young and impressionable, making them more accepting of reinterpretation of old ideas such as Dùthchas. See Mackillop and Murdoch, Fighting for Identity, 208–209.
61 Adam Ferguson, A Sermon Preached in the Ersh Language to His Majesty's First Highland Regiment of Foot Commanded by Lord John Murray, at Their Cantonment at Camberwell on the 18th of December, 1745 by Adam Ferguson; and Translated by Him into English (London: Printed for A. Millar, 1746), 9–12.
Not merely the Soil or Spot on which he was born, as it is too often understood by many. [Dùthchas] On this Supposition, the Love of one’s Country, which has always been esteem’d the most manly Virtue, might be rejected as a mere Whim or Prejudice. No: The Name of Country bears a Meaning more sacred and interesting. It was not for the place of their Nativity that Jacob [sic] exhorts the Israelites to play the Men: it was for the sake of the People and the Cities of their God.63

At first glance, and for someone unfamiliar with Highland culture and language, Horace, Cicero and even Antony’s speech from Shakespeare’s Julius Caesar spring first to mind. The ideas in his piece are reminiscent of Horace’s line – that it is sweet and fitting to die for one’s country.64 Judging from context in which Ferguson uses the word ‘country’ in the above passage, it would appear he originally used the Gaelic term Dùthchas. Dùthchas does not have an exact cognate in English. It signifies an area of land settled by a kin-based society. In other words, it conveys the sense of a collective heritage or customary right to work the land.65 Dùthchas once gave clansmen hereditary rights to the occupancy and the resources of clan lands. A clan chief had a moral obligation to his people to protect their possessions, and they in turn were duty bound to protect the chief and their community. Dùthchas helped define the Highlander’s identity and sense of belonging while it also influenced the individual’s way of life and worldview. It was once a powerful element in traditional Highland society. However, with the introduction of a cash economy, the affiliation between chief and clansmen became converted into a transaction between landlord and tenantry.66 The Highland idea of ‘country’ took no account of Crown or state. In the Sermon, Ferguson is careful to explain that ‘country’ in the British sense did not signify the soil connected with birthplace or customary and community rights to land. In common with many shame cultures, Highlanders

63 Ferguson, Sermon, 6. The Ferguson’s text has Jacob but he undoubtedly meant Job. See 2 Samuel 12: 10.
64 Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori. From Horace’s Odes (iii. 2. 13).
65 See also the text of the Sermon, this page, above. Ferguson is endeavouring to explain the difference in meaning between the Anglicised connotation of ‘country’ and its Gaelic approximation Dùthchas.
66 Chris. J. Dalglish, Rural Society in the Age of Reason: An Archaeology of the Emergence of Modern Life in the Southern Scottish Highlands (New York: Kluwer/Plenum, 2003), 5, 153–154. See also John MacAskill, We Have Won the Land: The Story of the Purchase of the North Lochinver Estate, (Stornoway: Acair, 1999), 24. Some people mistakenly see Dùthchas as merely a form of allodial title, a type of property ownership common in northern Europe. Allodial title is a form of property title owned by an individual freely of encumbrances. However, Dùthchas is something quite different. For a start, it encompasses collective tenure of land in community ownership. There is also a spiritual element of ‘belonging’ to Dùthchas, in that the land, geographical location, ‘belonging’ and heritage shape a Highlander’s identity and worldview. The fallout from changes brought by landlordism, improvements and enclosure in the Highlands are still palpable, in not only the Highlands and Islands, but in Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the USA.
traditionally had no economic sense of ownership. Under Highland custom, a man belonged to the land.\textsuperscript{67} Highlanders believed that a spurious charter granted by the Crown gave their chief or landlord ownership of lands they once had unrestricted access to.\textsuperscript{68} Such concepts were undergoing a slow modification in the Highlands, but they had by no means disappeared, and still have some resonance for the contemporary Highlands.

In the sermon, Ferguson sets out to impart to the men of the regiment just what they were supposed to be defending. It meant redefining terms, giving them new taxonomies for ‘place’ and ‘country’. He informed them that their concept of ‘country’ had to be broadened to include the kingdom of Great Britain. This new ‘more sacred and interesting’ meaning comes remarkably close to that developed during the period of the English Civil War. It also bears a similarity to later imperial notions of ‘God, King and Country’. Irrespective of the period, this sacralisation of nationhood was inextricably bound up with the socio-politics of ancient Israel. These were laid down in both books of Samuel from where Ferguson took his text. As 2 Samuel records, King David began his reign over the kingdom of Judah, but eventually reigned over a united kingdom of Judah and Israel. The northern tribes of Israel revolted, but the southern tribes of Judah and Benjamin remained loyal. The corruption of sin and greed divided what David had united. With the tribes of North Britain in revolt against the south, Ferguson could not have chosen a more appropriate text for the times.

Ferguson emphasised that the defence of ‘country’ implied the people of British society under the regulations of its legislature and Crown.\textsuperscript{69} He had a timely warning for the regiment:

\begin{quote}
The Disturbers of its [Britain’s] Peace are now advanced into the very Heart of the Kingdom, and would direct their Course towards the Metropolis, which you, with others, are appointed to defend; and I am persuaded, when you have occasion to act, you will not be wanting to your Religion, your King, your Country and yourselves; which will effectually wipe away any Reproach that may be thrown upon you, on their account.\textsuperscript{70}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{69} Ferguson, \textit{Sermon}, 7–9 and 11–15.
\textsuperscript{70} Ibid., 22.
As the rebel army advanced toward the capital, Ferguson wished to ensure that the Black Watch were good ambassadors for the Highlands. Their moral rectitude could rescind the bad name that Jacobitism had foisted upon all those who spoke the Gaelic language. Ferguson’s concluding remarks held a chilling reminder of the prospect that the Black Watch could face their own relatives and neighbours in a pitched battle. Colonel Stewart of Garth recorded that more than three hundred Black Watch soldiers had close relatives, such as brothers, engaged in the Jacobite force. As an instance, the regiment’s colonel Lord John Murray was a half-brother of the Jacobite leader, Lord George Murray. Ferguson exhorted the men to defend their king and country under God:

> Remember, you are Men sworn to defend your Country: Take Courage, and play the Men, for your People, and for the Cities of your God. If you oppose your Acquaintances, it is to prevent their Ruin: If you oppose your Relations, it is to save them and their Posterity from Slavery forever.

He reminded the regiment that they were fighting for freedom: to bring about a better world for those whom they would defeat as well as themselves. Their steadfastness would assure the security of the Protestant Succession and faith, restore peace and guarantee continued progress. Ferguson’s education of the men in their duties, as Stewart observed, had ‘the most beneficial effects … on their minds and conduct’. The Black Watch went on to become an admired icon of Scotland’s martial tradition.

Murray’s benign leadership had a significant affect on Ferguson’s later blueprint for the Scottish militia. Like his former commanding officer, Ferguson eschewed corporal punishment. By adopting certain concessions to Highland culture, Lord John Murray produced a unique but effective fighting machine. As chaplain, Ferguson helped

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72 Stewart, *Sketches*, vol. 1, 279. Fortunately, the regiment did not have to face relatives in pitched battle because the Jacobites retreated from Derby back to Scotland.
73 See also Chapter Three, pp145 of this thesis. Lord John Murray was half-brother to the leader of the Jacobite Army, Lord George Murray. Lord George Murray was also father to John Murray, who became the 3rd Duke of Atholl. John Murray had to petition the Government for his title because of his father, Lord George’s, role in the Rebellion. This initially disqualified him from inheriting the title.
75 Ferguson, *Sermon*, 4.
76 Stewart, *Sketches*, vol. 1, 292.
77 Devine, *Scotland's Empire 1600–1815*, 305.
to have the men meet and sustain the regiment’s unique cultural needs. Mackillop charges Ferguson with founding the link between Scottish regiments and clanship:

This presumed link between the British military service and clanship has proved so durable because it emerged very early on in the evolution of Highland regiments. During the 1745 Jacobite Uprising, Adam Ferguson, Chaplain to the 42nd Highland regiment, preached a sermon best remembered as an exhortation to ‘play the men for our people’. In one sense the troops were being assigned a role which has been ascribed to Highland soldiery ever since. In essence, they were to represent the cutting edge of the region’s reconciliation with the British Union. Yet more subtle is the impression given by Ferguson’s sermon that these men were innately representative of Highland society, and that as regular, full time soldiers of the British Crown they were involved in an activity which was a privileged and yet entirely natural function of a militaristic northern population.9

This is typical of Ferguson’s stance: having one foot firmly planted in the past, but with an eye to the future.80 Womack believes that ‘feud-torn’ Highland life is unexpectedly revealed in the Essay, and Ferguson paints Highland militarism as something the government could either encourage or allow to decline.81 It would appear that the Hanoverian clans like the Murrays of Atholl adopted the cultural values of clannish militarism more readily, using it as a positive force for recruiting, often from their own estates.82 Ferguson’s chaplaincy during the period of the Seven Years War and a tour in Ireland coincided with the Duke of Argyll’s tenure as the army’s military director.83 The Duke developed policies that reputedly enabled Highland participation in commercial ventures; while at the same time ensuring that the Highland region’s unique manners were not eradicated. It is not inconceivable that Ferguson quietly advised Milton and Argyll on Highland custom so that they could use their influence to moderate government policy in the aftermath of the rebellion. Argyll and Milton were known to

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9 Andrew Mackillop, 'More Fruitful Than the Soil': Army, Empire and the Scottish Highlands (East Linton, East Lothian: Tuckwell Press, 2000), 6. Generally speaking, much contemporary mainstream scholarship does not acknowledge the influence of Ferguson’s Highland enculturation – however, Highland Scotland has also largely ignored it. The Companion to Gaelic Scotland does not even list Ferguson’s most influential text, his Essay. This perhaps indicates that Gaelic Scotland does not consider Ferguson a ‘real’ Highlander either. Conceivably, this is because there is little evidence left relating to his Highland past. Perhaps Gaelic Scotland considers him to be too much of a ‘collaborator’ with the authorities of the time, whose policies sought to eliminate Highland language and culture altogether. See Derick S. Thomson, "Ferguson, Adam" in Companion to Gaelic Scotland, ed., Derick S. Thomson (Oxford: Blackwell Reference, 1983), 71.
80 Womack, Improvement and Romance, 40.
81 Ibid.
83 Stewart, Sketches, vol. 1, 292.
oppose Cumberland’s retributive justice as well as the inefficient management of the Forfeited Jacobite estates. They were also opposed the wholesale annihilation of the Gaelic language.  

Ferguson finally wearied of following the regiment and settled back among the literati of Edinburgh to live the life of an intellectual, his military experience possibly served to drive his agitation for a Scottish militia. Ferguson’s service with the Black Watch is an incontestable fact, but none have really considered why it was necessary to engage someone with Ferguson’s credentials as chaplain for the regiment. It could not have been merely be to modify the behaviour of the young, headstrong commanding officer on behalf of his mother, as Alexander Carlyle and Ferguson’s Victorian biographer, John Small suggested. As Gaelic-speaking officers were out of the question, it is possible Ferguson served a role as a go-between. On the one hand, he was a Highlander who spoke Gaelic and understood Highland custom and manners. On the other hand, he was also amenable to the established powers and a member of the Presbyterian faith. He was there to educate Highland soldiers about Lowland governance and to stave off any further cross-cultural misapprehensions which might erupt in violence, dissent or mutiny. His operating knowledge of the two cultural perspectives involved was a key to the Black Watch becoming established as one of the British Army’s most renowned fighting units.

To understand why Ferguson’s secondment was of such import, we need to look at how the regiment came into being, and also its early history. During Ferguson’s childhood, companies of men had been raised locally to police disarmament in the Atholl region. This peace-keeping-cum-citizen-militia force allowed Highlanders the privilege, otherwise forbidden to them between the 1715 and 1745 Jacobite rebellions, to legally bear arms and wear Highland dress. The Black Watch or Am Freiceadan Dubh as they became known, were also used to deter cattle theft and the levying of ‘Black

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84 Michael James Kugler, "Savagery, Antiquity and Provincial Identity: Adam Ferguson's Critique of Civilization" (PhD, University of Chicago, 1994), 81.
85 See pages 117–119 in Chapter Three of this thesis.
86 Small, Biographical Sketch of Adam Ferguson, 3.
87 Am Freiceadan Dubh is the Gaelic name for the Black Watch. They were called that to differentiate them from Wade’s occupying forces, or Red Coats, who were known as saighdearan dearg or ‘red soldiers’.
mail’. To prevent further rebellion and give troops better access to the Perthshire Highlands, General Wade had constructed forts, roads and bridges.  

The internal threat was not the only one faced by Britain at that point in time. With the prospect of war in Europe, the government could not afford to overlook any source of men in a bid to fill its regiments. In 1739, the Black Watch was made the Forty-Third regiment of the line in the British Army under its new colonel, the Earl of Crawford and Lindsay. However, this change in the terms of enlistment was withheld from the men. The regiment’s Highland personnel, who stemmed from a primary oral face-to-face culture, were nonplussed by the deception that was perpetrated on the regiment by their officers. This type of deception was not tolerated in the Highlands and would not have gone unpunished, although it was a rare occurrence in small face-to-face communities. A contemporary pamphlet by a Highlander named John Campbell described the warlike propensities of his compatriots and advocated that these tendencies ought to be cultivated for Britain’s defence:

They are a warlike People, delighting in the Use of Arms even from their Infancies, and a broad Sword, Target, Pistols, Durk and Powder Horn, are a part of their paternal Heritage, and without these Accoutrements they seldom or never stir abroad; they have hearts like Lions, capable to Surmount the greatest Difficulties, and they embark in, and will rush into Danger as the Horse into Battle.

However, Campbell also warned that Highlanders did not forget injuries, revenging insult with the claymore. He did not condone the violence of Highlanders but argued

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88 General Wade was responsible for laying two hundred and fifty miles of road, including forty bridges, between Dunkeld and Inverness.
89 In 1749 the Black Watch was designated the Forty Second regiment of the line in order of precedence.
90 A Letter from Will Yonge at the War Office to Lord Sempill, commander of the Black Watch, was sent 5 March 1743. It contained the order in the name of the King for the Highland Regiment ‘to go on foreign service.’ MacWilliam, ed., Records, 5.
91 John Campbell, A Full and Particular Description of the Highlands of Scotland, Its Situation and Produce, the Manners and the Customs of the Natives, through Their Various Periods of Life, from Their Births, to their Graves to Which is Annex'd a Scheme, Which, If Executed According to the Author's System Will Prove Effectual in Bringing in the Most Disaffected Amongst Them, and Those of England and Ireland, and Render Them, in All Time Coming Zealously Affected to His Reigning Majesty, and His Descendants to the Latest Posterity: And Which Have So Long Prevailed in These Kingdoms through Their Intestine Divisions, and Render Them the Admiration and Glory of Christendom. Humbly Address'd to the Brave and Worthy Inhabitants of Great Britain and Ireland (London: Printed for the Author, 1752), 17–18.
92 Claymore actually refers to the large basket-hilted broadsword rather than the medieval Highland weapon known as the claidheamh mor, meaning ‘great sword’.
that its cause was ‘the foundation and superstructure of their honour’. \(^{93}\) Campbell’s attempts to apprise Lowlanders of their cultural misconceptions about Highlanders went unheeded. \(^{94}\)

In mid-1742, the dispute over the Austrian Succession escalated and a decision was made to send the Black Watch to Flanders. \(^{95}\) Brigadier-General Lord Sempill took command of the regiment in 1743. This same year, Ferguson’s prospective regiment became involved in a widely-publicised mutiny. The causes of it included the language barrier, unrealistic expectations on the part of the officers, mistrust on both sides, and mismanagement. The significant language barrier aroused mistrust between the men and their officers which might have been averted had General Wade’s advice been followed. Fearing that the Highlanders would desert or mutiny, the officers withheld the information that they had become a line regiment bound for overseas service. \(^{96}\)

Although the Black Watch drilled by the Tay for fifteen months, mastering the forty movements for priming, loading and firing muskets and firelocks, no officer read the men the Articles of War, \(^{97}\) nor disclosed the purpose of their drill. Archibald Forbes disputes any conspiracy of silence but admitted that much information was concealed from the men. \(^{98}\) In May of 1743 they had orders to march south to London. \(^{99}\) The regiment were not told that they were going to Flanders to fight, only that the King would review them. \(^{100}\) Unbeknown to the regiment, this was the usual routine for troops about to embark on active service. \(^{101}\)

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\(^{93}\) Campbell, *A Full and Particular Description of the Highlands of Scotland*, 26–27. Campbell also held that the Highlanders had no concern with dogma of either a civil or religious type.

\(^{94}\) Womack, *Improvement and Romance*, 41.


\(^{100}\) Stewart, *Sketches*, vol. 1, 256. One wonders whether superstition could have played a part in the mutiny. 14 May happens to be the most inauspicious days in the calendar. See Chapter Three page 136, n. 136 of this thesis.

In Highland terms, the fact that they were not informed of these things was a grave breach of faith which offended their honour.\footnote{Michael Newton, \textit{A Handbook of the Scottish Gaelic World} (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2000), 145.} An underlying consequence of this lack of communication between the officers and men allowed fear and rumour to spread unchecked. In Perthshire, General Wade’s occupying forces had often used the threat of transportation to the West Indies in order to gain Highlanders’ compliance with the disarmament laws.\footnote{Prebble, \textit{Mutiny}, 46. The West Indies or ‘Fever Islands’ were the most dreaded posting in the army. This was because fever contracted there had a fifty percent mortality rate.} Therefore, when the regiment was ordered to march south to London they feared it was to be placed on prison hulks, like common criminals and sent to the ‘fever islands’.\footnote{Forbes, \textit{The Black Watch}, 14, 18; Wauchope, \textit{A Short History of the Black Watch}, 6. To make matters worse, the Black Watch passed a party of Royal Scots who were on their way back to Scotland to recruit more men for their own regiment. The men of the Royal Scots were hollow-cheeked and jaundiced. They revealed to the Highlanders that their regiment had been decimated by fever in the West Indies.}

The regiment also had genuine grievances to be addressed. Problems had compounded under Lord Sempill’s command. Sempill was guilty of the penny-profiteering indulged in by many colonels of this period.\footnote{Prebble, \textit{Mutiny}, 38.} He reduced the allocated money for uniforms and, as a consequence, the inferior cloth caused chafing while the regiment’s footwear was also sub-standard. Many of the men carried outmoded heirlooms as weapons while they waited for government-issue replacements. When the regiment arrived in London on 14 May, General Wade and the Duke of Cumberland reviewed them at Finchley Common.\footnote{Groves, \textit{The History of the 42nd Royal Highlanders}, 3; Forbes, \textit{The Black Watch}, 17. The regiment also paraded before one thousand spectators and the English were impressed by the orderly deportment and comely appearance of the purportedly 'savage' clansmen.} They had been led to believe they were going to London to be reviewed by the King. The King’s absence was the final breach of faith. A large body of the men assembled near Highgate to attempt the long march home to Scotland.\footnote{Forbes, \textit{The Black Watch}, 18–19.} Lord Sempill was roused from his quarters at Westminster and told of the desertion. Those men who remained behind were addressed by Sempill’s twelve-year-old adjutant who promised the regiment new uniforms and swords before they embarked for Flanders.\footnote{Prebble, \textit{Mutiny}, 53.} Sempill arrived at Finchley Common to see what remained of his
regiment, already under guard. However, they were still able to point their loaded muskets in his direction.\textsuperscript{109}

The deserters were taken into custody at Oundle in Northamptonshire eight days later on 22 May.\textsuperscript{110} These men were escorted to the Tower under guard and court-martialled.\textsuperscript{111} When the news of their predicament spread, the deserters won the sympathy of their warders as well as the London public.\textsuperscript{112} Of the one hundred and four men charged, only twenty-four could follow the court-martial proceedings conducted in English.\textsuperscript{113} The three ring-leaders were sentenced to death. They were shot in front of their comrades at Tower Hill on 12 July 1743. The rest of the men were dispersed to regiments bound for Georgia, Minorca, Gibraltar, Jamaica and the feared and infamous Leeward Isles.\textsuperscript{114}

It was necessary for officers commanding Highland regiments during the early years of their integration into the British force to win their regiment’s trust. They also needed some understanding of the Highland concept of ‘honour’. Writing around 1822, Colonel David Stewart of Garth offered this advice:

Officers who are accustomed to command Highland soldiers, find it easy to guide and control them when their full confidence has been obtained. But, when distrust prevails, severity ensues as its necessary consequence, and, by a continuance of this misunderstanding, the men become stubborn, disobedient, and, in the end mutinous. The spirit of a Highland soldier revolts at any unnecessary severity; but he may be led to the mouth of a cannon if properly directed, and will rather die than be unfaithful to his trust. But if instead of leading, his officers attempt to drive him, he may fail in the discharge of the most common duties.\textsuperscript{115}

Earlier incidents had presaged the mutiny to come and gave a clue about the degree of insult sensitivity Highland men were subject to. In 1743, the King ‘expressed a strong desire to see some specimens of these wild animals’.\textsuperscript{116} Men chosen from among the Black Watch went to London and performed martial exercises with swords and

\begin{footnotes}
\item[109] Ibid., 60.
\item[111] Forbes, \textit{The Black Watch}, 19.
\item[114] Forbes, \textit{The Black Watch}, 18; Samson, \textit{Concise Account}, 3
\item[115] Stewart, \textit{Sketches}, vol. 1, 237.
\end{footnotes}
Lochaber axes. The King paid the men a guinea for their entertainment. However, the Highlanders handed the King’s fee to the porter on their way out.\(^\text{117}\) They were incensed that the King thought them so indigent that they needed his charity or deserved his pity.

One man who may have known something of the honour culture of the Highlanders was Lord John Murray,\(^\text{118}\) who was then stationed at the Tower of London with the Scots Guards. He witnessed the lead up to the court martial and executions. A letter contained in MacWilliam’s *Official Records of the Mutiny of the Black Watch* divulged Lord John’s interest in the misfit regiment.

Dear Brother,

I wrote last post of the Highland Deserters having surrendered themselves to Brig: Blaikney in Sudberry Wood in Northamptonshire, and L^4^ Semple told me he would be extremely glad to have an other Regt, which he has asked for, and belive he will get, as there is two vacant at present. They have been so much spirited up for some reason or other, tho’ their complaints have appeared very frivolous, that he says he can never have any satisfaction in commanding them again. I have therefore, by good advice, made application to the Duke of Newcastle and Mr Pelham to succeed his Lop: as I am an elder Lieutenant-Colonel then Sir Robert Munro, and your interest in the Highlands is superior to his. I must therefore beg the favour of you to write to Gen’ Clayton to Recommend me for that Regt, whose opinion will have great weight.\(^\text{119}\)

Lord John possibly believed he would have more sway with the men of the Black Watch, being a close relative of their landlord in Atholl. Murray stated that their complaints ‘appeared very frivolous’. This may well imply that he had a suspicion that at least some of the Highlanders’ complaints were justified.\(^\text{120}\) As an indication of this suspicion, he had portraits painted of the three mutinous ringleaders.\(^\text{121}\) The portraits

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\(^\text{118}\) Lord John Murray was the youngest of the Duke of Atholl’s half-brothers.

\(^\text{119}\) MacWilliam, ed., *Records*, lxxvii. The letter from Lord John Murray to his brother the Duke of Atholl was dated London 26 May 1743.

\(^\text{120}\) Lord John must have been aware that on the estate, when the Black Watch was commanded by estate tacksmen, each company tried to outdo each other in drill and turnout. At that time they had been supplied with better quality materials. The army and its commanders were prepared to cut corners in order to profit by supplying the new regiment with inferior materials.

\(^\text{121}\) The executed mutineers were Samuel Macpherson, Malcolm Macpherson and Farquhar Shaw. Samuel Macpherson had a curious connection with James Macpherson. Samuel was a nephew of Macpherson of Breakachie and related to James Macpherson’s mother, while another brother of Samuel Macpherson later became a guardian of James Macpherson’s illegitimate daughter. See J.N.M. Maclean, "The Early Political Careers of James "Fingal" Macpherson (1736-1796) and Sir John Macpherson Bart. (1744–1821)" (Ph D, University of Edinburgh, 1967), 298. Farquhar Shaw was the son of a famed Celtic warrior who was compelled to enlist in the Black Watch when the estate was annexed to that owned by the Campbell Earl of Breadalbane. Shaw was immensely strong and could twist horseshoes in his bare hands or plunge a dirk up to its hilt in a log. See Forbes, *The Black Watch*, 20.
hung in Murray’s dining room for reasons known only to him, though perhaps to remind
him that this tragedy could have been averted, and to ensure it was never repeated.\textsuperscript{122}

Lord John Murray waited almost two years to take command of the Black Watch, on 25
April 1745. He decided to enlist a Gaelic-speaking Presbyterian chaplain for his new
outfit. Thus Ferguson became part of the remedial action taken to insure against a
recurrence of mutiny. His appointment would keep the peace and allay the fears of the
regiment’s men, whose grasp of English was poor.

Living and working with men from such a society enabled Ferguson to educate us
about the shame-honour system:

\begin{quote}
Man too is disposed to opposition, and to employ the forces of his nature against an
equal antagonist; he loves to bring his reason, his eloquence, his courage, even his
bodily strength, to the proof. His sports are frequently an image of war; sweat and
blood are freely expended in play; and fractures or death are often made to terminate
the pastimes of idleness and festivity. He was not made to live forever, and even his
love of amusement has opened the path that leads to the grave.\textsuperscript{123}
\end{quote}

Ferguson’s recognition of the technicalities of the honour system is clearly defined in the
necessity that the antagonists be equal. Before he arrived among the men of the Black
Watch, the behaviour of the men showed the agonist and shame culture was still
operative among them. Honour lay behind the regiment’s mutiny. This brings us to the
crux of this argument. Iron Age Greece and Republican Rome existed merely in the
pages of a book for the Edinburgh literati. They had no experience of the shame or
agonistic cultures depicted in classical histories. If Scotland’s educated elite viewed the
Highlands through classical lenses,\textsuperscript{124} then Ferguson viewed classical texts through
Highland eyes. Even though Hume, Home and William Robertson had seen brief
military service around the time of the Forty-Five Rebellion, unlike Ferguson they had
never served alongside Gaelic-speaking Highlanders. Even Home’s brief imprisonment
by Highlanders,\textsuperscript{125} which left him fascinated by their manners, could not approach

\textsuperscript{122} David Stewart of Garth suggested that Lord John wished to preserve their resemblances because they
were men of a remarkable size and handsome figure. Stewart, Sketches, vol. 1, 261.
\textsuperscript{123} Adam Ferguson, An Essay on the History of Civil Society, Fania Oz-Salzberger, ed., (Cambridge,
\textsuperscript{124} Kugler, "Savagery", 91 and 96.
\textsuperscript{125} Richard B. Sher, "The Favourite of the Favourite: John Home, Bute and the Politics of Patriotic
Poetry" in Lord Bute: Essays in Re-Interpretation, ed., Karl W. Schweizer (Leicester: Leicester University
Ferguson’s level of awareness of the phenomenon of honour. Nevertheless, some of Ferguson’s relish for honour rubbed off on the literati.¹²⁶

According to Michael Newton, warfare once had been the cultural focus of the Highlands. Highlanders believed that to conquer all their enemies was to eradicate the means of maintaining their fame. A man’s honour had to be guarded against insult. There was a continual necessity to elevate one’s status by outdoing rivals in feats of strength or hospitality. Here the warrior ethos was directed toward winning status and honour rather than material gain or political power.¹²⁷ The fame of past ages was perpetuated by means of bardic verse, song and tale-telling.¹²⁸ This Highland system of honour held in balance with shame was known as nàire. Nàire, or public shaming, affected status by lowering a person’s standing. During Ferguson’s time, Highland culture was modernising but its values and morality were changing at a far slower rate.¹²⁹ These regulating tensions still had currency even after Ferguson’s death. Comments made by Stewart of Garth in 1822 specify that ‘Instances are common in the Highlands, even to this day, of the influence of public opinion operating as a powerful restraint on crimes, nay even as a punishment, to the extent of forcing individuals to exile’.¹³⁰

In Gaelic society, each rank had its own system of honour and conduct. This system designated battlefield positions, the seating-order at feasts and the strict order of

¹²⁶ See page 180–183 of this chapter for the way the Edinburgh literati embraced and perhaps modified Ferguson’s concept of honour for their own purposes.
¹²⁷ Newton, Handbook, 139. Material gain or power could be achieved through marriage and alliance more easily than war. See also p. 149.
¹²⁸ Ibid., 139.
¹²⁹ The traditional structure of society in Gaeldom began with the chief or ceann-cinnidh (this translates roughly as ‘head of the nation’). At the next level were the aos-dàna, or the poets, bards and artisans. Their job was to praise the chief and ensure his continued fame. In return, they gained his gifts, and prestige of their own. At the next level of society were the buannachan. These were the warriors whose sole role was to protect the chief and his people, or to wage war against others for the spoils. Their relationship to the chief was similar to the aos-dàna. Below the warriors were the fir-bhaile, which roughly translates as ‘men of the village or town’, but it is usually translated ‘tacksmen’. The tacksmen were administrators who collected rents from the ordinary folk or tuath. By the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries this society had been dismantled by the Stuart Kings, James V and James VI of Scotland. Under them, the chief became a peer of the realm and the aos-dàna and buannachan were banished for perpetuating the violence of clan society. This left the tacksmen, who were often close kin of the chief, together with the general population or peasantry. Many tacksmen emigrated to America when further restrictions on Highland culture appeared following the 1745 rebellion. Some tacksmen took their tenants with them. See Newton, Handbook, 148. For a diagram of the structure of the society see p 148.
processional place behind coffins at burials. These protocols often brought commotion. Even in Ferguson’s time, burials often ended in bloodshed. Ferguson recognised that the ‘judicial challenge’ was prevalent among the Celtic nations of Europe. Uncontrollable rage or destructive behaviour usually saw the culprit banished from the community. Colonel Stewart indicated just how powerful these attitudes toward shame, exile and superstition were among Highland society during both his and Ferguson’s lifetime.

The implied punishment of treachery was a kind of outlawry or banishment from the beloved society, in which affection and good opinion were of vital importance. While the love of country and kindred, and dread of infamy which inevitably followed treachery, acted thus powerfully, the superstitions of the people confirmed the one and strengthened the other.

Highland men were expected to withstand temptation with honour. Their other virtues included firmness, self-devotion, devotion to family, chief, clan and country, and the willingness to sacrifice their life for the good of the community. It was a disgrace for a Highland man to die in his bed just as it was a disgrace to be stooped rather than active and erect. In these qualities the Highlander was similar to his aggressive, self-aggrandising Roman counterpart. When the Gael was not engaged in tests of strength he pursued game over vast distances. The testing and proving of character and virtue was of no less importance in the Highlands than it had been in Greece or Rome. After the breakdown of clanship in Scotland, the former ideals remained and became adapted to the new justice-based system beginning to operate during Ferguson’s day. As Newton observes, even as late as the close of World War II, Highlanders wished to be thought of as soldiers first. The fear of ridicule and ostracism extracted many a victory from Highland regiments fighting in continental Europe. To avoid

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131 See Chapter Three, page 122 of this thesis.
132 Ferguson, Essay, 194.
134 Stewart, Sketches, vol. 1, 62-68, 64.
135 Ibid., 59 and 235.
136 Newton, Handbook, 140.
138 One only has to think of organised Highland games, with their contests of lifting and tossing all manner of weighty objects over different heights and distances.
139 Newton, Handbook, 140.
exclusion from the company, defeat with honour, or dying in the attempt of victory were the sole options for Highland soldiery until well into the mid-twentieth century. Emulation of the heroic acts of others was the norm. In the light of these cultural imperatives, Ferguson’s broadsword charge, irrespective of whether it occurred at Fontenoy, seems even more plausible.

It is more than probable that Ferguson’s insight into classical warrior cultures was given clarity because he lived among a people raised on the legends of the Fianna (Finn’s band of warrior heroes) and Cuchulainn. Newton reminds us that fian, the root of Fianna, is derived from the same Indo-European root that gave us the Latin venari (to hunt) and the English verb ‘win’. In warrior cultures, gender is insufficient proof of masculinity. In order for a male to be considered a man or vir he must survive an ordeal or give a show of strength. In Roman culture, a vir faced death or torture squarely. The Gaelic word for ‘man’, fear (pl. fir), has the same root as the Latin vir from where virtu, virtus and the English word virtue have been derived. Such linguistic similarities point to a pan-European culture somewhere in the distant past.

Ferguson emanated from a shame culture in transition. In the shame–honour culture there is a preoccupation with the opinion and conduct of others. As Bourdieu states, ‘The sentiment of honour is lived out openly before other people.’ Thus, no one is free from the dictates of honour. If a code is breached and others believe that a person was the perpetrator, then that person is shamed irrespective of his or her guilt.

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140 Ibid. Newton cites a Gaelic proverb which illustrates this idea. It also demonstrates the qualities of an aides memoire, the keynote of orality in pre-literate societies. Is beo duine an deidh a sharachaidh, ach cha bheo e an deidh a narachaidh. This translates as, 'A person may live after harassment, but he will not survive after disgrace'.


142 Ferguson quoted from a tale in a letter to Henry Mackenzie. See Chapter Two, page 92 of this thesis or Merolle and Wellesley eds, The Correspondence of Adam Ferguson, vol. 2, 430. Ferguson encouraged Macpherson to collect oral tradition. See the following chapter.


144 Fir and vir have a similar pronunciation; the only difference being the + or – voicing of the first consonant. Virtus, probably derived from vir (a man). In Roman terms virtus amounted to valour, courage, or manliness.


146 Ibid., 212.

When communities expand and become more complex, the sanction of public opinion or the dishonour of shame transforms to become the private guilt of conscience and the public system of justice. However, the devolution of censure to the individual self does not make the shame and guilt systems dichotomous. A continuum between shame and guilt endures to this day even in civil society, an example being the need for peer group approbation in adolescence.  

In the pages of classical texts, Ferguson would have found many elements that were reminiscent of Highland culture. The ethos of Ossian and Homer had many commonalities. Their mythologies were similar in theme; each was redolent with mythical beasts such as bulls and horse-like creatures (for example the centaur and water horse or eich-uisge). Furthermore, cattle were a signal source of wealth in both cultures and remained a source of wealth in the Highlands of Ferguson’s day. Both cultures (among many others in Europe) shared comparable beverages of fermented honey. 

Greece and the Highlands shared similar rituals concerning newborns and the hearth. Honour and shame played a significant role in regulating the behaviour of the Iron and Bronze Age communities. Honour was hierarchic and an exclusive preserve since only one victor could emerge from a contest between equals. Winners derived status and could expect deference from others in return. The principle of subordination among

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150 Like mead drunk by the Irish and Welsh, the Greeks also made a beverage, which contained wine and fermented honey. The Greek version also contained barley and goat’s cheese. There is a reference to such a beverage in Homer: ‘She first moved up a table for them, a beautiful polished table with feet of dark blue enamel, and on it she placed a bronze dish with an onion as accompaniment for the drink, and fresh honey, and beside it bread of sacred barley-meal … It was in this cup that the woman, beautiful as the goddesses, mixed them their drink out of Pramnian wine, over which she grated goats cheese on a bronze grater, and sprinkled white barley…’ Homer, The Iliad, edited and trans, Martin Hammond, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1987), 181–182. (Bk. 11: 592–632.)
151 Bryant, Moral Codes and Social Structure in Ancient Greece, 33; 156 and 254.
152 In most honour cultures it is dishonourable to enter a contest with a person who is not one’s ‘equal’ in liberty, standing or strength. See Bourdieu, "The Sentiment of Honour in Kabyle Society", 198, 228.
153 Hans Van Wees, Status Warriors: War, Violence, and Society in Homer and History (Amsterdam: J.C. Gieben, 1992), 67–69. This was certainly so in Homeric society. Other qualities and abilities given high esteem, apart from military prowess, might be sporting prowess, seamanship, dancing, eloquence, looks, or faithfulness. See p. 72. For women in Homeric Greece it was complexion, spinning, weaving or fine
humankind in the passage from savage to barbarian lay in this system. As Ferguson noted, ‘Members of the same community enter into quarrels of competition or revenge. They unite in following leaders, who are distinguished by their fortunes and the lustre of their birth.’ Fear of shame induced Homeric heroes to great feats of strength or courage. They were entirely dependent on the good opinion of others and were forced continually to compete for honour. In these small face-to-face cultures, mutual trust and goodwill compensated for the divisive emotions of others. Warriors defended the community but they were unpredictable, aggressive and self-interested. This aggression was destructive. The community either tolerated maverick behaviour or ostracised their warriors completely at the risk of leaving the community vulnerable to outside attack.

In Homeric culture, the warrior’s behaviour was usually deemed to be irrational or out of character. However, the warrior’s irrational rage served to overcome fear. This made battle easier to wage, but resulted in an increased sensitivity to insult. Studies of Greek verse and drama have found that warrior’s thoughts appeared to be implanted from beyond by fate or the gods. The impulsive behaviour of warriors in Greek poetry and drama prompted an investigation by E. R. Dodds. Dodds found the emotional complexity and sophistication of Greek poetry and drama grew with the passage of time. Nevertheless, growth of trade and imperial expansion during the

embroidery that were valued highly. Logierait was involved in linen and wool cloth production, so there are parallels to be drawn here yet again.

Ferguson, Essay, 97.

Van Wees, Status Warriors, 67.

Barton, Roman Honor, 214, 268. Japan had a shame-honour culture, wherein, if shamed one sought forgiveness. Seeking forgiveness reinforces group cohesion and creates dependency, especially between a parent and child. In some shame cultures, anger is not encouraged. Japan and India are two which discourage expressions of anger. The shamed in India expiate it in ritual, prayer, fasting, isolation, confession, meditation or forgiveness. Michael Lewis, Shame: The Exposed Self (New York: The Free Press, 1992), 202.


Van Wees, Status Warriors, 65–67. Yamagata states this was especially so, insofar as it related to Homeric Greece. In her book, she also broaches the resentment of insult in shame cultures. See Yamagata, Homeric Morality, 32.

E. R. Dodds, The Greeks and the Irrational (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), 1–27. This work urged Julian Jaynes to posit that consciousness of a ‘self’ had not yet fully evolved in Iron Age Greece. According to Jaynes, the Iliad was composed at a time of man’s development prior to the two hemispheres of the brain working in an integrated manner. Therefore, the thoughts which arose in the
Hellenistic era brought increased contact with foreign cultures, loosening the ties of the old order. Small communities grew and became more complex in organisation but the combative element in Greek society remained. Pursuit of wealth was still deterred by shaming.

During the time of Alexander the Great, the Greeks experienced the loss of bonding within military units because mercenaries replaced citizen militias. Warring had once been the ancestral function of certain segments of Greek society. Greek culture became orientalised as literacy began to spread. Literacy produced a rise in individualistic viewpoints, the development of which can be traced through their poetry from Homer to Hesiod. The social changes under way during the Hellenistic period in Greece and the civil wars in Rome required similar social adjustments to that which had to be made in the Highlands of Scotland during the eighteenth century. These social changes paralleled those that occurred in the classical cultures as they metamorphosed from republics or democratic city-states into empires. Because of his provincial background, but also because of his love for classical history, these changes had a particular resonance for Ferguson. He conceived the ‘Warrior Statesman’ to be the pinnacle of manly and heroic virtue. On face value this notion of Ferguson’s would appear to owe more to classicism and civic humanism than the conflict and reciprocity of the Highlands.

right hemisphere were interpreted as coming from outside the self, as from a god. See also Julian Jaynes, The Origin of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind (New York: First Mariner/Houghton Mifflin Company, 2000), 67–69. Perhaps literacy helped to integrate the two hemispheres of the brain.

Ferguson, Morals and Values in Ancient Greece, 18–19, 34–35.

Ferguson is usually identified as a man who espoused civic humanist ideas. These ideas began in Florence during the flowering of the Renaissance. There, texts were unearthed wherein Cicero encouraged active participation in politics, the development of wisdom gleaned from a study of moral philosophy, and the cultivation of eloquence in order to sway public policy for the common good. There are two aspects to the concept. Firstly, the practical side modelled on the political activism of Cicero; and secondly, the philosophical and educational programme designed to produce men capable of leading society. Humanism was grounded in a programme of education in which at least some of the seven liberal arts were studied. A main point of difference between a humanistic and Scholastic education was in the treatment of logic. Humanists did not embrace the use of syllogism and absolute truth. By the time of the Enlightenment, humanists had introduced a modicum of scepticism into questions of what it was possible to ‘know’. Along with elements of humanist learning, civic humanism also aligned itself with classical republicanism. Its basis lay in the exercise of virtue and public spirit in support of the common good, and an active life in the politico-legal sphere. In addition, republicanism upheld the need to accept justice and procedure. It also upheld the right to bear arms. In its other incarnations, classical republicanism had
The expansion of empires in the ancient world brought an influx of people from diverse ethnic groups into trading centres, which contributed to social change on unprecedented scales. The codes of behaviour which held the shame-honour culture of pre-trading communities in equilibrium were annulled because of a plurality of behaviours and mores introduced by newcomers. In shame cultures, as Bourdieu states, ‘the challenge itself and the offence are like a gift in that they presuppose the choice of playing a set game in conformity with certain rules’. Without the checks and balances of shame, statutory regulation of the growing population became a necessity. Adaptations to similar changes that occurred in ancient civilisations were paralleled in eighteenth-century Scotland. A consequence of population change, growth and redistribution was a loss of distinctive identities. Stoicism was just one adaptive measure to the transformations that Greece and Rome underwent as they extended their boundaries. Cosmopolitanism appears to be an outgrowth of Stoicism. The concomitant effect of cosmopolitanism and empire-building was the decline of the martial and agrarian ways of life.

In Rome, as in Greece, social change encroached as the habit of trade increased. Wealth rather than honour determined status, while war was waged for expansion, but increasingly peace became the preferred state. There was a similar unravelling in the discipline of the legions. However, in less organised cultures like that of the earlier Republic, men fought for status, rivalry, prestige and the approval of their community.

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164 Bourdieu, "The Sentiment of Honour in Kabyle Society", 204.
165 For Stoicism, cosmopolitanism and their influence on eighteenth-century Enlightenment Scotland, together with the resonances they had for Adam Ferguson, see Appendix J, page 428–430 at the rear of this thesis. A good introduction to Stoicism and Ferguson can be found in David Allan, Adam Ferguson (Aberdeen: AHRC Centre for Irish and Scottish Studies, 2006), 21–42.
167 Ibid., 467–468.
The cult of the ancestor flourished in ancient Rome, where the *gens* roughly equated with the Highland clan. The Republican community relied on ritualised practices and tomb offerings designed to secure its preservation. Many similar practices had disappeared from the Highlands by Ferguson’s day, although, if we are to believe Bisset, many still lingered. Ferguson noted that the ancient Romans sang of their ancestors’ deeds just like Highlanders. Ferguson was most familiar with examples of Roman agonistic shame culture commonly found in the histories of Livy and Tacitus. Within these histories, Ferguson would have found examples of shaming familiar to those encountered in Highland culture. To have one’s honour impugned in ancient Rome aroused one’s *ira* (rage). Carlin Barton concurs with both M. I. Finley and Hans Van Wees regarding the threat that the enraged warriors posed to their communities. The fact that Barton’s archetype of the maverick warrior was neither Greek, nor Roman, but the Irish and Scottish Highland hero Cuchulain is of great significance. The insult-sensitive maverick warriors of antiquity, and Romans of the late republic, like Cato the Younger, were connected through the sacrifice of their lives for honour or the greater good of their communities.

Nevertheless, Philip Carter suggests that Ferguson is less sympathetic to barbarity in ancient mythology than literati like Thomas Blackwell or Lord Monboddo, who

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169 Ferguson, *The History of the Progress and Termination of the Roman Republic*, 69.
171 Barton, *Roman Honor*, 265.
172 Ibid., 240.
were over-fulsome in their praise for the callousness displayed in Homer’s texts. Ferguson recognised that Christianity was the mechanism which ‘injoined meekness and compassion to barbarous ages’, then in Medieval France transformed masculine honour and virtue into feminine chastity. In Ferguson’s view, Christianity had not altogether tempered the ferocity of mankind. In the conduct of war, although the traditions of chivalry appeared to ameliorate ferocity, religious war seemed to have significantly increased atrocities. In this passage from the Essay Ferguson details the excesses in Homer:

Our system of war differs not more from that of the Greeks, than the favourite characters of our early romance differed from those of the Iliad, and of every ancient poem. The hero of Greek fable, endued with superior force, courage, and address, takes every advantage of an enemy, to kill with safety to himself; and actuated by a desire for spoil, or by a principle of revenge, is never stayed in his progress by interruptions of remorse or compassion. Homer, who of all poets knew best how to exhibit the emotions of a vehement affection, seldom attempts to excite commiseration, Hector falls unpitied, and his body is insulted by every Greek.

Dafydd Moore concedes that modern readers may find Ferguson’s emphasis on violence and his attitude to warfare alien. Yet Ferguson condemned the ferocity of the ancients although he demonstrated a thorough understanding of the warrior’s motivation and independence. He realised the ‘amiable plea of humanity was little regarded by them in the operations of war’. Ferguson’s compatriot Adam Smith wrote that soldiers called upon to give no quarter became inured to unsavoury duty. In hardship, one can learn to exercise virtue, but few are willing to habitually expose themselves to brutality. War stifles humanity when austere virtue and self-command hardens men against all sense of justice. For reasons such as these, the Greeks were undeserving of their ‘first rank

176 Ferguson, Essay, 194.
177 Ibid., 191. Homer’s characters went without the faculty of Smith’s ‘impartial spectator’, the independent witness acquainted with the facts of a situation, but not emotionally connected to the actor in either a positive or negative manner. If the ‘impartial spectator’ justifies the action in the circumstances then the actor is free to act. If Hector is dead, we may find it barbaric that the Greek’s insult his body, but this is often a consequence of war. The point Ferguson makes here is that there was a world of difference between Homeric Greece and Enlightenment Britain.
179 Ferguson, Essay, 189.
among nations’ in Ferguson’s estimation. In the passage below he outlines the qualities which separate not only the ancient from the modern, but also the ‘shame’ community from the ‘guilt’ civilisation.

If their animosities were great, their affections were proportionate: they, perhaps loved, where we only pity; and were stern and inexorable, where we are not merciful, but only irresolute. After all the merit of a man is determined by his candour and generosity to his associates, by his zeal for national objects, and by his vigour in maintaining political rights; not by moderation alone, which proceeds frequently from indifference to national and public interests, and which serves to relax the nerves on which the force of a private as well as a public character depends.

He defends the ancients for their clemency and active participation in community life. Yet, at the same instant, he finds their barbarity abhorrent.

Few would dispute that, being an advocate for the active participation of citizens in the political life of their community; Ferguson was influenced by classical republicanism. Serving in citizen militia was one mode of participation barred to Scots during the mid-eighteenth century. Many elite Scots, such as Carlyle, Robertson and Ferguson, believed a militia would link Scotland with its illustrious martial past – most notably with the era of the Wars of Independence – and in the process strengthen communal bonds to achieve a measure of equality with England. Ferguson’s visceral knowledge of honour fed his desire to see the institution of a Scottish militia. Ferguson saw the militia as an antidote to self-interest, corruption and indifference to safeguarding political freedoms. John Robertson finds that the issue for Ferguson was not about instituting a militia in practice, but rather a ploy to demarcate Scottish selfhood. The Militia Bill passed in 1757, but it excluded Scotland. This rejection imputed the dissent of a Jacobite minority to the majority of the loyal Scottish populace. It also left Scotland vulnerable to invasion from the east. Scotland’s exclusion from the militia raised debate

181 Ferguson, Essay, 189.
182 Ibid.
183 Daniel Wells, "Scottish Literati and the Problem of Scottish National Identity (David Hume, William Robertson, Adam Smith, Adam Ferguson, James Macpherson)" (M. A. University of Western Ontario, 1997), 77.
184 Ferguson, Reflections, 8–9, 12–13; Richard B. Sher, Church and University in the Scottish Enlightenment: The Moderate Literati of Edinburgh (Princeton, N. J: Princeton University Press, 1985), 219–221. Ferguson frequently uses the word ‘honour’ and the phrase ‘love of honour’.
over the type of defence Scotland should mount in its place. This debate assumed a nationalistic flavour.\(^{186}\)

The intricacies of the militia debate have had much ink expended on them but they can be succinctly summarised. Adam Smith and David Hume\(^{187}\) apparently opposed Ferguson by advocating a standing army, but not to the exclusion of a militia.\(^{188}\) Smith was a more strident supporter of a standing army than Hume. He considered the militia to be the standing army’s equal only after several long campaigns in the field under specially appointed professional officers.\(^{189}\) For Smith, a militia man was a carpenter first and soldier second, whereas the soldier of the standing army was a full-time professional.\(^{190}\) In April of 1776, upon reading Smith’s *Wealth of Nations*, Ferguson found himself offended by Smith’s continual insistence that professional armies were always superior to militias and he let him know it by penning:

> The gentlemen and peasants of this country do not need the authority of philosophers to make them supine and negligent of every resource they might have in themselves, in the case of certain extremities, of which pressure, God knows, may be at no great distance.\(^{191}\)

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\(^{187}\) Hume certainly supported the militia while swigging claret at Ferguson’s Poker Club. The club was inaugurated in 1762 especially to keep ‘astir’ the fires of patriotism. Hume once jocularly alleged that the main object of the Poker Club was the consumption of claret and conviviality, but as John Robertson observes, this conviviality at least kept the issue before Scotland’s power brokers. See Robertson, *The Scottish Enlightenment and the Militia Issue*, 188. For more on Hume and the Poker Club see the following: John Hill Burton, *Life and Correspondence of David Hume*, 2 vols, vol. 2 (New York: Burt Franklin, 1967), 88, 456; Carlyle, *Anecdotes and Characters of the Times*, 214–215. The Poker Club lasted until 1793. Its rod of office was a poker as was the emblem used on stationery. Charles Rogers, *Social Life in Scotland from Early to Recent Times*, 3 vols, vol. 2 (Edinburgh: William Patterson for the Grampian Club, 1884–1886), 371–373; Merolle and Wellesley, eds, *The Correspondence of Adam Ferguson*, vol. 2, 533. Letter 418 from Adam Ferguson to Lord Shelburne dated 3 February 1762.

\(^{188}\) In his essay entitled ‘The Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth’, Hume wrote, ‘without a militia, it is vain to think that any free government will ever have security or stability’. David Hume, *Selected Essays*, Stephen Copley and Andrew Edgar eds, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 311. To be maintained, standing armies depended on trade and industry. Ferguson, *Essay*, 60, 62, 132, 195, 197, 257 and 262. He sets this down in the following terms, ‘When by conquest and annexation of every rich and cultivated province, the measure of empire is full, two parties are sufficient to comprehend mankind; and that of the poor, the rapacious, and the fierce, who are inured to depredation and war’. Ibid., 262.


\(^{190}\) Ibid, 401, 403.

\(^{191}\) Merolle and Wellesley, eds, *The Correspondence of Adam Ferguson*, vol. 1, 143. Letter 89 to Adam Smith from Adam Ferguson, 18 April 1776.
There was a failed attempt to reintroduce a Militia Bill in 1759, but after the defeat of the Earl of Bute, the installation of a militia in Scotland seemed hopeless. Some Scottish peers raised fencible units (units for home defence) to stave off the fear of a French invasion. As a social case, the militia issue was important enough to involve the Church (which usually declined to comment on secular matters). Like Ferguson, William Robertson believed that the institution of a militia was not the object of their remedial social activism. It became a goal of the Edinburgh literati to restore Scotland’s national pride after the embarrassment of the rebellions. A militia would block the Crown from upsetting the constitutional balance, and avert the obfuscation of the civic personality by the political economy. In Ferguson’s more formal works, his references to the militia debate are usually indirect. According to Richard B. Sher, Ferguson lectured on the subject of a militia between 1776 and 1785. Sher believes that at this time young Scots would have been far better acquainted with the militia debate from Ferguson’s perspective than from Adam Smith’s.

Ferguson’s militia pamphlets reveal just how predisposed he was to the shame-honour system which operated, not only in Logierait, but also while he was in the Black Watch. Whenever Ferguson tried to exercise the value system of commercial civilisation, an ambivalent tension arose. Ferguson appears to believe that the customary sanction of the shame culture is neither better nor worse than the justiciary. He mused, ‘Where men enjoy peace, they owe it either to their mutual regard and affections, or to the restraint of law’. In Ferguson’s case, building on his experience

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194 Robertson, *The Scottish Enlightenment and the Militia Issue*, 183. Saint Garbett commented to Alexander Carlyle that the Militia was ‘a child of your Church’, which needed nursing since ‘it will be a weakly Infant untill another war gives it strength’. See *Carlyle Papers*, MS 23761–23930 (National Library of Scotland), f. 149. Letter to Alexander Carlyle dated Gloucester, 16 December 1769.
196 Sher, *Church and University*, 219. This may be more Fletcheresque but it probably was a concern of Ferguson’s as well.
197 Sher, *JMH*, 266.
199 Ferguson, *Essay*, 150. Ferguson gives law and custom equality, but according to Bourdieu, Montesquieu did not. Montesquieu saw that what was forbidden by honour was more forbidden when laws did not forbid it. Honour is obligation. Bourdieu, "The Sentiment of Honour in Kabyle Society", 230.
in the closed community of the Black Watch it is understandable that many Highland attributes and qualities filter through to his model of a militia, particularly notions regarding the sanction of shame and dishonour as behaviour modifiers.\textsuperscript{200}

Ferguson’s first pamphlet, \textit{Reflections previous to the establishment of a militia}, was published in December of 1756.\textsuperscript{201} One feature of this pamphlet was his regret of the loss to the military of the most able sons of the aristocracy (usually the better-educated eldest sons). These men preferred to make careers in parliament, the law, or commerce. Younger sons, who opted for military careers, were often less talented.\textsuperscript{202} He deplored the declining civic virtue among Scotland’s aristocratic families, who seemingly put profit and interest above distinction and honour.\textsuperscript{203} If we cast our mind back to the Black Watch of Ferguson’s day, it was replete with well-connected Highland gentry. Ferguson’s inclusion of the better-ranked is often taken to be an answer to the criticism of Hume and Smith, who were concerned by the threat to internal liberty posed by a militia. Ferguson excluded labourers, cotters, servants and convicts in order to curry favour with Hume and Smith and minimise the disruption to manufacturing and commerce.\textsuperscript{204} Harking back to an earlier period he harboured a nostalgia for valour and birth rather than wealth to be the key factor in determining rank.\textsuperscript{205}

In \textit{Reflections}, he outlined not only how he saw the militia’s inception, but also its operation. It seems that Ferguson may have borrowed much from the mild, democratic command he witnessed under Lord John Murray. Ferguson felt imprisonment, pecuniary fines and corporal punishment would make militia participants dutiful from a principle of fear.\textsuperscript{206} He rejected these methods as the precursors of despotism in stating:

\begin{quote}
We would render Men brave from a Principle of Fear or magnanimous from a mercenary Motive. If the Cry of Shame from a dishonoured Nation cannot break the
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{200} This was in opposition to the motivating forces within the standing army: payment, drill and corporal punishment.
\textsuperscript{201} Sher, \textit{Church and University}, 218.
\textsuperscript{202} Robertson, \textit{The Scottish Enlightenment and the Militia Issue}, 204–207; Sher, \textit{JMH}, 253.
\textsuperscript{203} Ferguson, \textit{Reflections}, 8, 10 and 13; Sher, \textit{Church and University}, 218–219.
\textsuperscript{204} Ferguson, \textit{Reflections}, 50–51; Sher, \textit{Church and University}, 220.
\textsuperscript{205} Ferguson, \textit{Reflections}, 10.
\textsuperscript{206} Sher, \textit{Church and University}, 220.
Heart of an Offender; nor the Applause which attends an honourable Action fire and stimulate the Mind, we have Reason to be sollicitous for the Fate of our Country.\footnote{Ferguson, \textit{Reflections}, 42–43.}

It is clear that shame and dishonour were foremost in his mind. Ferguson considered remuneration and discipline a poor substitute for national spirit in a military unit. He spelled this out in the passage below:

They who have the greatest share in the division of fortune, and the greatest interest in defending their country, having resigned the sword, must pay for what they have ceased to perform; and armies, not only at a distance from home, but in the very bosom of their country, are subsisted by pay. A discipline is invented to inure the soldier to perform, from habit, and far from fear of punishment, those hazardous duties, which the love of the public, or a national spirit, no longer inspire.\footnote{Ferguson, \textit{Essay}, 146.}

Here Ferguson is blurring the margins of national spirit and Highland \textit{Dùthchas}. He was more aware than Smith of the exemplary public spirit, sacrifice and ties which bound primitive societies together. He agreed with Smith to some extent: after all, Cumberland’s force had triumphed over the Highlanders at Culloden because of their bayonet drill; but Ferguson also understood that men of rude nations were more accustomed to adversity and want than their civilised counterparts, despite the civilised world’s technological superiority:

For want of these advantages, rude nations in general, though they are patient of hardship and fatigue, though they are addicted to war, and are qualified by their stratagem and valour to throw terror into armies of a more regular enemy; yet, in the course of a continued struggle, always yield to superior arts, and the discipline of more civilised nations.\footnote{Ferguson, \textit{Essay}, 93–94. Ferguson believed those inured to depredation and war, can hold out much longer than the idle rich. Ferguson was of the opinion that the rich would rather build conservatories; design landscaped gardens, draw, or paint, than serve their country. See also page 186–187 of this chapter.}

Modern justice, commerce and luxury had diminished these qualities in the civilised, but a primitive band could be a match for a modern standing army on any battlefield, as the Jacobite force proved in the early part of its campaign. While Ferguson did not condone the actions of these Highlanders, he remained captivated by the manner in which violence rubbed along with great warmth and intimacy among them. In the passage from his \textit{Essay} following, Ferguson reproached the civilised world for its lack of honour...
and lack of warmth, but also for its prejudice and inability to see any merit in Highland culture.  

Every tribe of warlike barbarians may entertain among themselves the strongest sentiments of affection and honour, while they carry to the rest of mankind the aspect of banditti and robbers. They may be indifferent to interest, and superior to danger; but our sense of humanity, our regard to the rights of nations, our admiration of civil wisdom and justice, even our effeminacy itself, make us turn away with contempt, or with horror, from a scene which exhibits so few of our good qualities, and which serve so much to reproach our weakness.

Although he does not specify who the banditti were, it is almost certain he was thinking in terms of Highlanders. Unlike most of the British populace, Ferguson was aware of their more redeeming qualities. Ferguson sent a stark warning to the civilised world by implying that primitive enemies should not be underestimated. They were dangerous because of their indifference to thirst, hunger, cold, pain, danger and even death. For Ferguson, there were lessons to be learnt from the primitive world that moderns dismissed at their peril. Ferguson had witnessed, and still admired, the honour, affection and hardiness of the Highlander with whom he once served. The passage above also signals Ferguson’s ambivalence. On the one hand, Ferguson sees civil society as being replete with humanity, wisdom, justice, rights and privileges. However, it has become so over-refined that manly vigour has almost been negated. On the other hand, his barbarians, who rob or wreak havoc on their refined yet horrified neighbours, remain vigorous and affectionate. Ferguson experienced both these worlds, and while he prefers the justice and humanity of the first, he is scornful of the overrefinement prevalent in civilised cultures. He remained nostalgic with regard to the warmth generated among small communities like Logierait.

In Reflections, Ferguson exhibited a Highland disdain for those who thought firearms were dangerous to anyone but an enemy. The importance of this notion lay in the fact that it linked Ferguson once again to the agonistic culture of the Highlands, rather than to the polite modern world which eschewed such devices. His own father had carried pistols as Sheets’ research unearthed. In the contest culture of the

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210 For details regarding Ferguson’s reaction to the eventual instigation of the Scottish Militia in 1793, see Appendix K, page 431–432 at the rear of this thesis. Evidence that Ferguson’s own offspring were also imbued with a similar sense of duty and service as their father can be found in Appendix L, page 433–434.

211 Ferguson, Essay, 149.

212 Ferguson, Reflections, 15. All Ferguson’s sons served their country in the military. For a précis of their careers see Appendix L, page 433–434 at the rear of the thesis.
Highlands, the musket and pistol had once been scorned as non-heroic weapons. By contrast, a man could demonstrate his strength and skill with a sword.\textsuperscript{213} Even as the firearm had been initially disparaged, Highlanders now mocked those afraid of the musket’s noise, flash, recoil, or potential to cause personal injury.\textsuperscript{214} Nonetheless, weapons in the Highlands were considered a necessity. Not only were they used for self-defence, but they had become an integral part of male dress as well as being used for sourcing food. Weapons did not vanish completely, even with government prohibition.\textsuperscript{215}

One of Ferguson’s unpublished essays recorded an imaginary excursion into the Highlands with Robert Adam, David Hume, Hugh Cleghorn and William Wilkie.\textsuperscript{216} Ferguson armed each of them so that they would appear like either locals or sportsmen. He fired rounds under their windows to wake them at an early hour, and then chided them for their inexperience with firearms:

\begin{quote}
My low country friends thought it became them as persons [who] come from a [civili[zed]] country to complain of those rugged assents and barbarous regions and but for shame some of them would have thrown their guns being little used to such implements of sport.\textsuperscript{217}
\end{quote}

The passage locates the polite literati in Ferguson’s world of barbarism where a rugged landscape nurtured a rugged people well accustomed to the use of guns. He placated their discomfiture by explaining that shooting game tested the faculties just as much as the limbs.\textsuperscript{218} Ferguson had no patience with a man so fastidious as to find firearm use abhorrent. Nevertheless, firearms of the period were crude and unsafe in the hands of novices. In contrast, the polite world had moved away from confrontation and violence, or as Ferguson put it, had discarded (thrown) their guns.

\textsuperscript{213} Newton, \textit{Handbook}, 139. Newton remarks on a Gaelic proverb regarding the emergence of guns and gunpowder among Highlanders. \textit{Tha latha a' ghaisgich seachad: tha an duine lag a-nis cho math ris an duine laidir}. ‘The warrior's day is over: the weak man is now as good as the strong’. See Newton, 139.
\textsuperscript{214} In other words, when swords were used the strong won the fight but the advent of firearms removed strength from the equation.
\textsuperscript{215} Ferguson’s father was armed when Lord John Murray met him on the road to Perth. In being armed, he contravened the disarming act. See pp 152–153 of this chapter, especially note 10.
\textsuperscript{216} David Hume needs no introduction, Wilkie was the poet who wrote the \textit{Epigoniad}, Robert Adam was the renowned architect and designer, and Hugh Cleghorn was a former Professor of Moral Philosophy at Edinburgh University and Ferguson’s teacher.
\textsuperscript{217} Yasuo Amoh, ed., \textit{Collection of Essays by Adam Ferguson} (Kyoto: Rinsen Book Company, 1996), 40. The brackets in the above are Amoh’s.
\textsuperscript{218} Ibid., 41.
Similar themes of honour, shame, and martial virtue, with particular familiarity and understanding of Highland life and history can be found in his next pamphlet on the militia which appeared around Christmas of 1760. This next pamphlet, *The History and Proceedings in the Case of Margaret, Commonly called Peg, only Lawful sister to John Bull, Esq.*, has also been attributed to David Hume, especially since Hume laid claim to it in a letter. Nevertheless, despite Hume’s light-hearted claim of authorship, plenty of contemporary evidence points to Ferguson being *Sister Peg’s* creator. The pamphlet is a satirical piece that, according to Carlyle, was written after the style of Arbuthnot. The author’s performance still has the ability to raise a smile over two hundred and forty years after its initial publication.

*Sister Peg* is an allegorical tale about ‘John Bull of Bull Hall’ (England), and his sister ‘Peg of Thistledown’ (Scotland). Sister Peg and John Bull live on the same estate (the British mainland) but in separate houses. ‘MacLurchar’ (The Highlands/Highlanders) live(s) in Peg’s garret. MacLurchar comes to the aid of ‘Squire Geoffrey’ (the Pretender) while ‘Sir Thomas’ (George III) is at war with ‘Lewis Baboon’ (Louis of France). Peg wishes to raise a guard (militia) for her defence while

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220 Carlyle maintained that only twelve or so people knew that Ferguson had authored the piece. Hume was so poor at keeping secrets that they had not shared the information with him. Letter to Alexander Carlyle of Inveresk – Letter 182 dated 3 February 1761 from Hume. Greig, ed., *The Letters of David Hume*, vol. 1, 341–342. The text reads: ‘I am inform’d, that you have receiv’d a Letter from London, by which you learn that the Manuscript of *Sister Peg* has been trac’d to the Printer’s, and has been found to be in many Places interlind & corrected in my hand-writing. I cou’d have wish’d that you had not published this Piece of Intelligence before you told me of it. The Truth is, after I had compos’d that trifling Performance, and thought I had made it correct as I cou’d, I gave it to a sure hand to be transcribed, that, and in case any of the London Printers had known my hand, they might not be able to discover me: But it lay by me some Weeks afterwards, I cou’d not forbear reviewing it; and not having an Amanuensis at hand, I was oblig’d in several Places to correct it myself, rather than allow it to go to press with Inaccuracies of which I was sensible’. Richard Sher, among others, disputes David Raynor’s introductory essay to *Sister Peg*. See Richard B. Sher, “Reviews–History of Philosophy – Raynor, D. R, ed., *Sister Peg*,” *Philosophical Books* 24, no. 2 (1983), 86. Raynor ignores the Fergusonian motifs (such as foppish Lowlanders and their fear of firearms).

221 *MacLurchar* is always in the singular but it refers to ‘Highlanders’ or ‘The Highlands’. *Mac* is the Gaelic prefix for ‘son of’. The other part of the name ‘Lurchar’ probably alludes to the type of sight hound, or hunting dog, which had been bred by the Irish tinkers or Gypsies since the 1600s. The lurcher is like a greyhound, one of the main breeds from which the crossbreed is often derived. Salukis, Collies, Irish Wolfhounds, Scottish Deerhounds and Golden Retrievers are other breeds with which greyhounds
Sir Thomas is waging war with Lewis Baboon, but John Bull will not permit it. In the pamphlet, Peg is eventually granted permission for her guard, and John Bull and Sister Peg live happily together once again.

David Raynor justifies a claim for Hume’s authorship because, in his opinion, Ferguson would not use pejorative terms with regard to Highlanders. However, the treatment of the Highlands in the pamphlet is quite balanced, neither effusive in praise nor overly disapproving. For the author of *Sister Peg*, these rustics were combative patriots, and as such, proved their worth as soldiers even if they were not making a contribution to the economy:

Their mistress[Peg] seldom got any rent from them, except a day’s work now and then in harvest, or the use of their children to keep the crows from the barley. But the true secret of her liking them was, that they were excellent fellows at a brawl, and you had as good put your head in the fire, as meddle with their mistress when they were by. But Peg could never get them to agree among themselves.

The contest mindset of the Highlands is captured in the satirist’s reference to the numerous brawls and disagreements MacLurchar became embroiled in. The pamphleteer was aware that subversiveness among Highlanders was unusual: most Highlanders were loyal, honourable men, who merely had the misfortune to be born in a harsh climate and barren landscape. The above quotation alludes to the Highland foot soldier’s easily-aroused ire, a necessary attribute in a warrior culture. Here MacLurchar defends his mistress Peg; a key function of warriors in many shame cultures such as the Highlands Ferguson knew, and the ancient world he so admired. The author has tempered the positive attributes, such as the ferocity of Highland fighters, with negative

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224 Ibid., 50–51. As Hume had little interest in the Highlands, he probably did not know, as the author of the pamphlet did, that many Highlanders paid rent in kind, needed all hands at harvest, or used children to frighten hoodie crows off their crops. The pamphlet reads as if someone well acquainted with the ebb and flow of Highland life had written it.
realities, such as their idiosyncratic attitude to property and the law.\footnote{225} This harks back to Ferguson’s \textit{Sermon}, where he endeavoured to explain to his regiment the difference between the notion of land owned by a chief or lord and heritage clan lands.\footnote{226} The MacLurchar metaphor alludes not just to Highland feuding but also to the rift between the Highlands and Lowlands.

The pamphlet satirist displays Ferguson’s contempt for the effeminacy of the upper ranks, especially with regard to weaponry. Ferguson’s ideal militia would be restricted to the better-educated upper ranks in order to decrease the threat to the social order. Such men should have the state’s preservation foremost in mind.\footnote{227} Only people of a certain status (nobles, gentlemen and freeholders who were able to afford to equip themselves) would be acceptable in his militia.\footnote{228} Ferguson was roundly disappointed by the British aristocracy when it came to either the profession of arms or voluntary service. He hoped the militia would be motivated by the same principles of honour and disgrace which he saw at work in the Black Watch. In \textit{Reflections}, Ferguson couches his notion of what the aristocracy ought to be in the terms of a shame-honour system. He wrote, ‘Men of high Mettle, who are formed for the Profession of Arms, are likewise fond of Honour; and if we separate one from the other, that profession is instantly thrown among the Dregs of the people’.\footnote{229} Ferguson was disappointed to find many to be men without backbone – aristocrats who filled their free time with painting or playing music – were not the type of men to be relied on to defend the country. Firearm phobia was a common theme in Ferguson’s militia pamphlets. He wrote, ‘The Feeling of a Man unaccustomed to use a Weapon, is a Fear that it may hurt himself: that of a Man familiar with the Use of it is a Confidence that it will hurt his enemy.’\footnote{230} In \textit{Sister Peg}, the pamphleteer presents a picture of a foppish noble, raised and cosseted by a nurse, kept

\footnote{225} Bourdieu says that even in modern honour cultures, such as that of the Kabyle, ‘everything takes place as if this society refused to face up to economic reality’. Bourdieu, "The Sentiment of Honour in Kabyle Society", 230.
\footnote{226} See page 160–162 of this thesis.
\footnote{227} Ferguson, \textit{Reflections}, 9, 25; Sher, \textit{JMH}, 252–253. Under Ferguson’s militia scheme, a refusal to serve would incur a revocation of the right to serve, unless one produced and financed a substitute. See also Ferguson, \textit{Reflections}, 51–52; Sher, \textit{Church and University}, 220–221.
\footnote{228} Ferguson, \textit{Reflections}, 50–51; Sher, \textit{JMH}, 260.
\footnote{229} Ferguson, \textit{Reflections}, 35.
\footnote{230} Ferguson, \textit{Reflections}, 15.
from engaging in juvenile rough and tumble, so that even the women in his life become ashamed of him. The section illustrating this is worth quoting in full.

From this hopeful maxim, he even neglected sending his children to school, locked up their cudgels and cricket-batts, and would not let one of them touch a gun, for fear they should hurt themselves. He had got by heart all the stories that his nurse had told him, about accidents which happen at rough play, or in handling firelocks, and would repeat them sometimes, till his wife and mother were quite ashamed of him.231

Even so, Lisa Hill remarks that Ferguson’s attitude toward arming the Scottish populace bordered on naïveté. 232 This was yet another sure indicator of Ferguson’s provincialism.

The standing army in *Sister Peg* is characterised as ‘purse-proud’, lazy and spiritless.233 This is in accordance with Ferguson’s concept that the citizen-soldier who fights for the love of his country defends it better than the over-drilled, downtrodden mercenary. In contrast, the professional soldier is portrayed as dishonourable and requiring constant corrective discipline.234 The pamphleteer lambasted the regular soldier who behaved in stark contrast to the men of Black Watch.

These fellows did nothing from morning to night, but first turn upon one heel, and then upon another, put a gun sometimes to their hip, sometimes to their nose, sometimes to their shoulder; and, in short, played so many antic tricks with a musket, that few or none could remember or distinguish its real use. But they bilked their landlords, cursed, swore, and bullied wherever they went, and in many houses where such fellows were kept, nobody durst say his life was his own for them.235

This image above is compatible with the depiction of regular soldiers drawn by Ferguson in *Reflections*.

He learns indeed to handle his Arms with Ease and Quickness; but is not inspired with a love of Arms: on the contrary, they become his Aversion, from the Drudgery and tiresome Hours which they occasion. He acquires no Confidence in the Use of them, because no part of the Exercise tends to shew their Effect. He learns to fire with the Multitude without seeing an Enemy, and can scarcely ever be brought to reserve his Fire till he can apply it to most Advantage. The Skill and Confidence

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231 Raynor, ed., *Sister Peg*, 54. The reference to cricket bats here is not unusual for a Perthshire man. Perthshire is the primary, if not the only, cricket-playing county in Scotland. English soldiers garrisoned under General Wade introduced the sport to Scotland.


234 Furthermore, the soldiery are a threat to the general populace. Within *Sister Peg* there is also a riposte to Smith’s argument that if ‘an artificer, a smith, a carpenter or a weaver, for example quits his workhouse, the sole source of his revenue is completely dried up’. Such men ‘must be maintained by the publick as long as they are employed in its service’. See Smith, *WN*, 397. In the satire it was couched in the following terms which, can be read in the quotation on page 192 or see Raynor, ed., *Sister Peg*, 97. Ferguson believed that the Highlander was uninterested in the commercial arts, as Tom Devine has pointed out. Devine, *Scotland’s Empire 1600–1815*, 312.

derived from the Use of Arms in Sport or Trials of Dexterity are very different, and if united with some Degree of the former, our Militia would soon become a Strength to the Country.\textsuperscript{236}

The pamphlet indicated that the Jacobite Rebellion had tarnished Scotland’s reputation with its neighbour. All Highlanders, and therefore all Scots, became suspect because, ‘they had the misfortune to be born in her (Peg’s) house (Scotland)’.\textsuperscript{237} The satirist believed that Scots, including the majority of loyal Highlanders, through no fault of their own, were punished for the misdemeanours of a few activists, whose most harmful effect, apart from winning a few skirmishes, had been to cause panic in London.\textsuperscript{238} The writer of Sister Peg sums up the negligible effect of the whole Jacobite episode on England by declaring that John Bull was ‘more afraid than hurt’.\textsuperscript{239} In fact, the writer’s tone is critical of the Lowlands for their lack of preparation to fend off the rebellion at an earlier stage. The writer recognised that hardiness and dedication enabled the Jacobite force to occupy town after town. This state of affairs reflected the growing effeminacy and refinement of the population who were forced to recall the professional soldiers from Flanders to inflict the final defeat upon the Jacobites. Based on the pamphlet’s content, Ferguson is the obvious author.\textsuperscript{240}

The pamphleteer argues that the Jacobite Rebellion was cause for opposition to a Scottish militia. In his previous militia pamphlet, Ferguson referred to the Jacobites as ‘a few Banditti from the mountains’;\textsuperscript{241} intimating that, had a militia been in place, the

\textsuperscript{236} Ferguson, \textit{Reflections}, 17–18.
\textsuperscript{237} Raynor, ed., \textit{Sister Peg}, 59.
\textsuperscript{238} Macleod, \textit{Highlanders}, 172–173.
\textsuperscript{239} Raynor, ed., \textit{Sister Peg}, 58.
\textsuperscript{241} Ferguson, \textit{Reflections}, 24–25. In defence of Raynor, he believed Ferguson would not use pejorative terms when writing of Highlanders. Ferguson, however, knew not all Highlanders were Jacobites. This did not prevent Ferguson from being caught up in the suffering designed to oppress Jacobitism. In fact, Hume commonly used the term banditti in his \textit{History of England}. It appears in Chapter lxx ‘barbarous banditti’; Chapter lxix, ‘obscure banditti’; Chapter lxviii, ‘popish banditti’ and Chapter lxxii, ‘banditti of the mountains’. See David Hume, \textit{The History of England from the Invasion of Julius Caesar to the Revolution in 1688}, Foreword by William B. Todd (Indianapolis:1983) [www] (Liberty Fund, 1983 [cited 14 November 2006]); available from http://oll.libertyfund.org/Texts/Hume0129/History/0011-6_Bk.html. Hume describes Whigs as fanatical conventiclers. (VI. lxvii) His view of the deposition of James II is that both parties wanted him off the throne but animosities between the parties continued because the Royalists (Tories and Jacobites) did not want a breach of the royal line.
Jacobites would not have occupied Edinburgh with such ease. Sister Peg downplayed the rebellion by suggesting that the Jacobites were a minority group, even in the Highlands. The fact that, ‘MacLurchar was tired, and went away to his garret’, refers to the ill-equipped and weary Jacobites’ retreat from Derby back to Scotland. The writer also alludes to Cumberland’s overzealous reprisals through John Bull’s insistence that his men ‘set fire to Peg’s house, and all her vermin’. 242

Sister Peg’s writer was more than familiar with the Highland condition, both pre and post Rebellion, whereas Hume showed little interest in the region. Further allusions in this satirical tour de force lampoon the post-Culloden prohibition on kilts and tartan. It includes a reference to MacLurchar’s obligation to put on his breeks (trousers). The decision to convert MacLurchar’s garret into a stable, coach house, coal store, or brewery was a figurative nod by the satirist to Highland improvements. 243

With a degree of cynicism, the writer of Sister Peg insinuates that Highland ferocity was useful to the government. The piece comments on Pitt’s policy of employing Highland regiments for Continental campaigns where they proved to be ferocious combatants. 244 In Sister Peg, Jowler (Pitt) ‘sent a gun to MacLurchar’, lampooning Pitt’s plan to recruit in the Highlands. 245 Hume, Smith and Ferguson all agreed that Highlanders, with their renowned strength and devotion to their native soil would be better employed at home than exported. 246 Nonetheless, the English refused to forgive the rebellion and well Ferguson knew it. 247 Due to the mutiny of his regiment in

242 This included slaying innocent bystanders, women and children in the aftermath of the battle. The government forces also gathered the wounded together in one place, then fired cannon at them to finish them off. General ‘Hangman’ Hawley burned down over seven thousand cottages. See Murray G. H. Pittock, Jacobitism, (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998), 113. The Government forces, including Hawley, pillaged the house of the Gordons of Hallhead, Ferguson’s kin, prior to the Battle of Culloden. See page 146, note 178 of this thesis.
243 For improvement schemes see Macleod, Highlanders, 185–287. MacLurchar was made to carry dirt up to the roof top in order make a vegetable garden on the leads – an image evocative of improving the barren soils in Scotland’s north. Such improvements in the Highlands included planned towns, agriculture, industry and perhaps emergent tourism.
244 The King and Cumberland disagreed with Pitt. See, Devine, Scotland’s Empire, 309–311.
247 Between 1777 and 1800, twenty line regiments were raised in the Highlands. This does not count fencibles or volunteer regiments. By 1798, only fifty-one percent of men in the Black Watch were
1743, and the subsequent rebellion in 1745, whenever Highland troops embarked for the American War they left from Irish ports. Robert Clyde notes that if Highland regiments were shipped from England they remained unarmed until they were under sail. The next excerpt from Sister Peg raises the spectre of English mistrust of the armed Highlander, notwithstanding their usefulness in overseas campaigns.

He commended MacLurchar extremely, and said it was a pity to take him off his loom, except he was to be transported; that giving him arms would spoil his hand as a weaver, and hinder his fighting, in which he had behaved so gloriously, that he did not deserve to be discouraged, much less annihilated, till John made up matters with Lewis Baboon. He pointed at many consequences, that would attend employing MacLurchar for the defence of the house, such as spoiling a good weaver, and the like, but he insisted, that no distinction should be made between him and anybody else, by pushing a line, or any other method that could separate the house into two parts.

Sir Thomas (King George) praised MacLurchar (the Highlanders), a fair number of whom had been Geoffrites (Jacobites). However, MacLurchar had not quite acquitted himself by fighting on behalf of John Bull (Britain) against Lewis Baboon (France). In the passage above, although the writer acknowledges Adam Smith’s argument against the part-time militia man, with the inevitable disruption to production the militia would entail, there is an insinuation that MacLurchar was useful, but also expendable.

It is almost an acknowledgement by the writer of that he was aware of the government’s notion that it would be wrong to discourage the natural war-like tendencies of the Highlanders, or expose them to situations where the natural attrition of war could thin their ranks while France still posed a threat to Britain. Nonetheless, thinning the ranks of Highlanders certainly lessened the threat they presented to Britain’s internal security. This may seem an absurd allegation; but Robert Adam feared Ferguson might become a victim of this very process. Adam divulged his fear in a letter to his sister Peggy, ‘I suppose he (Ferguson) will be going with the Regiment in which case we may bid an eternal adieu to his loggy-reat soul for he will be slain as sure as

Highlanders and only forty percent of men in the Gordon Highlanders were actually Highlanders. Devine, Scotland's Empire 1600–1815, 294. This dearth arose possibly because of mass emigration from the Highlands. See also Devine, p. 305.


he’s a highlander’. It is an admission by Adam that he was aware of unfavourable attitudes toward Highlanders in eighteenth-century Scotland and that one way of disposing of the savages was to ship them off on active service. Once again, Ferguson almost became a casualty of the government measures which he himself apparently condoned, but careful reading of his works reveals a less cut-and-dried viewpoint.

This chapter began by outlining Ferguson’s career in the Black Watch where he moved between the combative Highland shame culture and the more organised guilt culture of Lowland Scotland. Ferguson spent at least eighteen of his ninety-three years among Highland people. Coming from a primary culture where the motivating forces were action, contest, combat, honour and hospitality allowed Ferguson to identify with aspects of the histories of Herodotus, Tacitus and Livy, which his polite contemporaries might have dismissed or overlooked. His service with the Black Watch made Ferguson more appreciative of classical history. His posting to the Black Watch as servant in the pay of the British Crown helped turn a mutinous regiment’s reputation around so that by 1800 it had attained the status of a Scottish icon.

As a man from the same region of Perthshire as most of the Black Watch personnel, Ferguson revealed in his Sermon to them that one of his functions was to re-educate the men and make them acceptable, loyal citizens and soldiers of George II. He demonstrated a degree of ambivalence by tutoring the men of the Black Watch in justice and law, then comparing it with, and differentiating it from Highland custom. He understood the Highland mentality primarily because he used the Highland language.

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251 “GD 18 4800 84” in John Clerk of Penicuik Muniments (National Archives of Scotland: 1756), f. 15. Letter from Robert to Peggy Adam, dated Rome, February 1756. See also John Fleming, Robert Adam and His Circle in Edinburgh and Rome (London: John Murray, 1962), 201. The notion of Scots being British cannon fodder is a long entrenched one, still prevalent today. For instance, Scots formed forty per cent of the British force in Vietnam. Scotland’s losses per head of population during World War II were higher than those of any other nationality apart from the Serbs and Croats. The 51st Highland Division was left without supplies to fight the Germans while the rest of the British army removed to the flotilla off Dunkirk. Scots were disproportionately represented in losses when the Japanese took Singapore, and one in four men killed in Korea was a Scot. Even in the current Iraqi conflict, the Black Watch are being recalled for a further tour of duty. There have been accusations that other Scots regiments have been poorly supplied. Malcolm Chapman denies that this was ever the case and claims that similar notion of ‘cannon fodder’ persists in Breton culture. Chapman believes that young Highland men actually went abroad to war for the purpose of the sidelights of exploration, travel and broadening the mind. Malcolm Chapman, The Celts: The Construction of a Myth (New York: St Martins Press, 1992), 256. The Black Watch mutinied in 1743 because it did not want to leave the Highlands.

252 Mackillop and Murdoch, Fighting for Identity, 200.
(Erse or Gaelic). Ferguson played an integral part in the formation of the tradition of Highland military service. This became central to British perception of Highlanders up to 1815.\textsuperscript{253} The manner in which the Black Watch were treated by their commanders probably informed Ferguson’s notions of how a militia should be instituted and trained.\textsuperscript{254}

Ferguson saw the positive aspects of primitive and ancient cultures others missed entirely, but he also recognised the depth of the ferocity and callousness contemporaries like Thomas Blackwell praised. He harboured some nostalgia for the honour culture:

> But every age hath its consolations, as well as its sufferings. In the interval of occasional outrages, the friendly intercourses of men, even in their rudest condition, is affectionate and happy. In rude ages, the persons and properties of individuals are secure; because each has a friend, as well as an enemy; and if the one is disposed to molest, the other is ready to protect; and the very admiration of valour, which in some instances tends to sanctify violence, inspires likewise certain maxims of generosity and honour, that tend to prevent the commission of wrongs.\textsuperscript{255}

With his insider’s knowledge of warrior cultures, his militia agitation sought to give Scotland the identity and will that was depleted by its union with England. But was it a futile attempt to reunite social bonds or knit together two disparate communities? He has been called to account by contemporary Highlanders for manipulating Highland pride and depopulating the glens with recruiting on the pretext that the regiment in some way paralleled the Highland clan.\textsuperscript{256} Ferguson was not unaware that many government policies had a damaging effect on the Highlands and its people which, it should be remembered, he and his father had encountered. Ferguson’s republican stance did not spring in its entirety from the pages of Livy, Tacitus or Machiavelli: these texts were weighed against the values of a dying Highland culture which shared many characteristics with those described in the ancient texts.\textsuperscript{257}

\textsuperscript{253} Mackillop and Murdoch, \textit{Fighting for Identity}, 187.
\textsuperscript{254} A militia was finally instigated in Scotland in 1797, but it was far from popular. Ferguson found it a disappointment – for further detail see Appendix K, page 431–432 at the rear of the thesis.
\textsuperscript{255} Ferguson, \textit{Essay}, 103–104.
\textsuperscript{256} Leneman, \textit{Living in Atholl}, 132; Mackillop, \textit{More Fruitful Than the Soil}, 4, 7, 9, 10, 15, 57, 58, 64, 98, 129, 166, 201, 205, 209, 224 and 225.
\textsuperscript{257} Ferguson not only straddles traditions, integrating primitive and polite elements, but he also straddles the tradition between civic humanism and socio-anthropology. Hill, "Eighteenth-Century Anticipations of the Sociology of Conflict", 281; Brewer, "Adam Ferguson and the Theme of Exploitation", 473. This argument will be explored further in the final chapter.
The upcoming chapter will reveal yet another Fergusonian methodology to integrate Highland culture into Scottish identity in order to preserve and heighten its distinctiveness from England. The chapter will explore Ferguson’s involvement with James Macpherson, John Macpherson and Dr John Macpherson who collaborated with him in the venture.
In first three chapters I explained how Ferguson’s Highland origins, initially at least, imposed certain limitations on him during the course of his young adult life. If it had not been for influential people like the Adams, the Robertsons and David Hume, Ferguson’s ethnic origin and his ability to speak Gaelic had the potential to confine him in the Highlands indefinitely. However, as this thesis intends to demonstrate, these origins went some way to providing Adam Ferguson with a superior understanding of both historical and social change. His attitude to change was a mixture of rational acceptance overlaid with a cautiousness probably induced by his early experiences within a static Highland culture.

The crux of this chapter will be to suggest what may have motivated Ferguson to involve himself with James Macpherson and Ossian. In the past, Ferguson’s role in the Ossian controversy has chiefly focussed on the rejection of Ossian as genuine by Thomas Percy and Dr Johnson. Much has been written about Macpherson’s deception, and the vilification it earned him. A subsequent and related fracas involving Percy broke out in the press nearly twenty years after the publication of James Macpherson’s *Fragments of Ancient Poetry, Collected in the Highlands of Scotland and translated from the Gaelic or Erse Language*. I will argue that Ferguson, being a pragmatist, saw Macpherson’s Ossian as an opportunity. Firstly, such a venture could restore honour to Highlanders and make them more acceptable to their Lowland brethren. Secondly, public acceptance of Ossian could soften the Church’s objections toward the Gaelic language and thereby hasten the implantation of English on which, it was thought, the inculcation of religion and law were dependent. By furthering English and religion

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1 T. Bailey Saunders, *The Life and Letters of James Macpherson Containing a Particular Account of His Famous Quarrel with Dr Johnson, and a Sketch of the Origin and Influence of the Ossianic Poems by Bailey Saunders*, 2nd ed. (London: Swan Sonnenschein, 1895), 146. The quotation in the chapter title is from a letter dated 27 October 1760, from James Macpherson at Ruthven to James MacLagan, Minister of Amulree in Perthshire. The minister of Amulree was also a collector of Highland lore.
among the peasantry and, Gaelic and Greek among the clergy, it would become easier to ensconce Moderate principles in the Highlands.

The second function of the chapter is to delineate where Ferguson agreed with and diverged from both Hume and Macpherson on the topic of the emergent history of the British Isles. If nothing else, Ossian showcased the fact that passion ruled the intellect and sparked disagreement amongst many of those who found Ferguson’s theories on such matters nonsensical.

Recently, there has been a growing acceptance that Ferguson’s role in the production of Ossian was far greater than once realised.2 The Ossian affair, and Ferguson’s experiences because of it, served to substantiate his observations on conflict and enmity within the human species:

...every nation that was of a race, and spoke a language, different from their own, became a term of indiscriminate contempt and aversion. Even where no particular claim to superiority is formed, the repugnance to union, the frequent wars, or rather the perpetual hostilities, which take place among rude nations and separate clans, discover how much our species is disposed to opposition as well as concert.3

While this statement shows Ferguson drew on ancient histories and probably his own personal experience and knowledge of Highland disputes, he also found Ossian’s detractors directing some of their hostility toward him.4 As Andreas Kalyvas and Ira Katznelson correctly observe, conflict, the crossing of value systems and social diversity are actually fundamental to the eventual modernisation of societies. Ossian brought attention to these factors operating within Scotland. The Ossian episode in Ferguson’s life proved better than any other he experienced that antipathy, prejudice and jealously were ‘not justified rationally’.5 Considering these factors, Ferguson’s notions on such issues look far less outmoded when compared with those of his contemporaries.

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4 The disputes I refer to are those which were outlined in Chapter Three.
It is almost impossible to discuss Ferguson’s role without first supplying some background about James Macpherson and the legitimate tradition which he modified and augmented. Macpherson, whose name has arisen regularly throughout this thesis, was born in the Highland county of Inverness-shire. Although he initially collected traditional ballads for his own amusement, once he received encouragement from Adam Ferguson and John Home, he soon realised he could turn the quest to his advantage. It gave him the opportunity to meet people of influence. James, who had possibly witnessed the 1745 rebellion’s aftermath as a boy, still seethed inside. On balance, even though he harmed and caused affront to numerous people along the way, Macpherson was otherwise successful. He achieved riches, a fine estate, became the MP for Camelford, and was buried in Poet’s Corner in Westminster Abbey upon his own request.

The Edinburgh literati, including Hume, Ferguson, Home, Chalmers, Carlyle, Blair, Monboddo and Kames among others, sponsored Macpherson’s first expedition to the Highlands to locate an ancient Gaelic epic, translate it into English, and have it published. The first expedition was so successful that Macpherson was encouraged to go on a second journey to collect more oral lore and manuscripts. This expedition spawned two further volumes for publication. These subsequent works sold well, but they were not without their detractors. The efforts of Macpherson’s own imagination filled lacunae in the original material. Macpherson made an outrageous claim that a blind poet, Ossian, had penned the verse in the third century. Ossian’s or Oisin’s authorship of the works was an integral part of the mythology, not merely Macpherson’s

6 J.N.M. MacLean, "The Early Political Careers of James 'Fingal' Macpherson (1736-96) and Sir John Macpherson Bart. (1744–1821)" (Ph D, University of Edinburgh, 1967), 86.
8 James Macpherson, "A Dissertation concerning the Antiquity, &c. Of the Poems of Ossian" in Howard Gaskill, ed., The Poems of Ossian and Related Works (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1996), 47. Macpherson tells us that the Caracul character in Fingal was Caracalla, the son of the Emperor Severus who died in 211 A.D. Thereby, Macpherson dates his tales to the third century. However, this third-century date is inherent within the folk tradition itself. See note 9 below.
Having established a third-century derivation for the material, Macpherson was obliged to omit the stories featuring the fifth-century St Patrick, which he thought to be spurious. However, this omission was perceived as a ploy to cover the deceit of his claim for the third-century origin.

It is probable that the omitted tale of Ossian and Tir na n’Og had its origins in Ireland before it spread to the Western Isles and Scottish Highlands. It may have been unfamiliar to Macpherson, who came from the central uplands rather than Scotland’s western seacoast where it was well-established. A failure to produce Gaelic manuscripts for his critics saw Macpherson accused of forging the poetry outright, although later scholarship has revealed that he had relied on some manuscript material dating from the twelfth to the sixteenth centuries. Macpherson’s life and works have always polarised people’s opinions. There are those who accept the judgement of people like Hume and Dr Johnson, who found him an irredeemable fraud. Many

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9 Macpherson claims, ‘Fion Mac Comal flourished in the reign of Cormac, which is placed by the universal consent of the seanachies, in the third century’. See ‘A Dissertation’ in Gaskill, ed., The Poems of Ossian, 219.


11 Macpherson appears to be unfamiliar with the tale incorporating St Patrick. He fully believes that Ossian and St Patrick could not have been contemporaries, because it would have made Ossian two hundred and fifty years old already. He does not seem to be aware that Ossian (or Oisin) dwelt in the land of Tir na n’Og (Irish) or Tir nan Og. (Scottish Gaelic). Oisin leaves the Isle of Tir na n’Og, the land of youth, only to find that epochs have passed since he departed from the mortal world. He had left Tir na n’Og on Niamh’s white horse. He then did what Niamh warned him not to do; he dismounted from her horse in the mortal world. The tale varies as to why Oisin chose to dismount, but most versions of the tale end by his being converted to Christianity by St Patrick. After St Patrick baptises Oisin, he dies, as two hundred and fifty years take their effect on his body. Oisin ages, dies and disintegrates before St Patrick’s eyes. See Macpherson, ‘A Dissertation’ in Gaskill, The Poems of Ossian, 219. Then compare Ward Rutherford, Celtic Mythology: The Nature and Influence of Celtic Myth – from Druidism to Arthurian Legend, (London: Aquarian/Thorsons, 1987), 21, 63, 65. The pagan Oisin accepts Christianity and becomes a mortal. See a very accessible version of the tale ‘Oisin and the Land of Youth’ in Frank Delaney, Legend of the Celts (London: Grafton Books, 1991), 85–98.

12 Malcolm Chapman found that, ‘Neither Johnson nor Hume could accept that an unlettered peasantry was capable of producing an ordered work of art’. Malcolm Chapman, The Gaelic Sources of Macpherson’s Ossian, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, Folcroft Library Editions, 1973), 11.

Highlanders were dismayed by Macpherson’s changes to proper names and tales in order to accommodate an English-speaking readership, but other Highlanders were quick to rally to Macpherson’s defence. Current revisionist scholarship has been less condemnatory. In her introduction to Gaskill’s edition of the Poems of Ossian, Fiona Stafford notes that political criticism, colonial and post-colonial theory, as well as input by Gaelic scholars such as Meek, Gillies and Thomson, have made Macpherson’s work look ‘less and less like the quaint hoax of a few decades ago’.

Let us now consider the foundations of Ossianic or Fenian legend upon which Macpherson’s Ossian was based. According to tradition, Ossian, the blind son of Fionn purportedly circulated the tales around the time of the third century. In actuality, most of the Fianna stories precede this timeframe even though they were not recorded until later in the seventh to ninth centuries. They were part of an oral tradition passed down through the generations and reveal social patterns that probably predate the age of Christianity in Ireland around the fifth century. This cycle of Irish mythology encompasses the legend of Fionn mac Cumhaill from which Macpherson’s Fingal is based.
derived. Like Homer’s heroes, Fionn and his band of warrior-poets, the Fianna, underwent ordeals and tests of their prowess. This Fenian or Ossian Cycle, as it is known, belongs to one of the four Cycles of the Heroic Age of Irish Mythology. These were respectively the Mythological Cycle, the Fenian/Ossian Cycle, the Ulster Cycle, and the Historical Cycle. The Ulster Cycle remains the most popular in Ireland, while the Ossian cycle predominated in Scotland as a shared tradition. Unlike the other Cycles, the Ossianic Cycle was notable in that it tended to be in a form of verse that was sung or chanted. In Scotland, these were known as lays or Laoidhean. This form made it easier to memorise and reproduce orally.

The Ossianic component that appeared in Macpherson’s Fingal, described the invasion of Ireland by Swarthan (Swaran), the King of Lochlann (Scandinavia). The Scandinavians defeated Cuchulainn, the chief of the Irish tribes. Subsequently, Cuchulainn was driven off by Fingal, the King of Scotland. The period of Scandinavian incursions into Scotland occurred between the ninth and thirteenth centuries. In Fingal’s case, Macpherson was accused of appropriating Irish lore to Scotland. However, Derick Thomson has demonstrated that the entire Ossian canon did not have exclusively Irish provenance. In fact, the Viking raids of the eighth century became integrated into the legends in Scotland, making these versions characteristically Scottish. In particular, there are four elegies (lays) to warriors that are known only in the Scottish tradition. Nevertheless, it has not prevented both contemporary and modern scholars from lambasting Macpherson for his indiscretions with allegedly Irish

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18 Jackson, ed., A Celtic Miscellany, 17. Jackson writes of the Scottish–Irish heritage in his preface. From the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries, books were written in Scotland, ‘by Scottish authors but in the language of literature which, though common to the poets of Ireland and Scotland at the time, is regularly regarded as Irish. They are certainly not in Scottish Gaelic, and could not be so described, and to call them Irish would conceal their Scottish origin’.

19 Stafford, Sublime Savage, 89–90, 155.


21 Thomson, The Gaelic Sources of Macpherson’s Ossian, 11.

source material. For instance, the Irish parliamentarian Edmund Burke informed David Hume that most Irishmen had known the Ossianic legends from their infancy. Burke claimed he knew of no one who remembered any part of Macpherson’s obviously specious work. Since this particular part of the canon originated in Scotland, it was apparent that Burke was not familiar with it. Nevertheless, Burke’s opinion perpetuated the notion that Macpherson had rifled Irish culture for his tales. Another accusation levelled at Macpherson was that he had made the Táin Bo Cuailnge from the Ulster Cycle a sub-plot of his Fingalian (Fenian) concoction. This intensified accusations that he had taken liberties with the source material. However, Derick Thomson finds the Táin emendation occurred prior to Macpherson’s lifetime. This further distinguished the Scottish evolution of the Cycle from that familiar to the Irish. The differences in the material, which grew up either side of the Irish Sea, have led to much confusion and have been a source of unjust accusation against Macpherson, even though he was a rogue in many other respects. A common knowledge of these traditions may explain why Ferguson had few reasons to doubt Macpherson’s collections were genuine.

23 Some of what Macpherson incorporated into Fingal was of Scottish provenance. Macpherson may have been as unaware as many of his Scottish contemporaries about the original source of Ossian.
24 John Young Thomson Greig, ed., The Letters of David Hume, 2 vols, vol. 2 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1932), 400; Saunders, Life, 205. With reference to the provenance of Ossian, the Irish poet Yeats wrote: ‘They are far better known, and we may be certain of the antiquity of incidents that are known in one form or another to every Gaelic-speaking countryman in Ireland or in the Highlands of Scotland’. By the time Yeats wrote this in his preface to Lady Augusta Gregory’s book in 1904 it was certain that the tales had been known in Scotland as well as Ireland and that Macpherson had not purloined them. See Lady Augusta Gregory, Gods and Fighting Men: The Story of the Tuatha De Danaan and of the Fianna of Ireland, Arranged and Put into English by Lady Augusta Gregory with a Preface by W. B. Yeats (London: J. Murray, 1904), ii.
26 Thomson found that, ‘From very early times, on the other hand, motifs from the Cu Chulainn or Ulster Cycle were incorporated into Ossianic stories’. Thomson, The Gaelic Sources of Macpherson's Ossian, 11.
27 For a less sympathetic view of James Macpherson’s political and financial machinations, see "The Early Political Careers of James ‘Fingal’ Macpherson (1736–96) and Sir John Macpherson Bart. (1744–1821)", 84. Macpherson had a selfish regard for his reputation as a scholar. He was driven by ambition to make his fortune and his name. The investigating committee into Ossian concluded that it was difficult to tell if Macpherson took liberties with the text, since there were no inviolable rules governing translation. Some recitations omitted what others included. See Henry Mackenzie, The Report of the Committee of the Highland Society of Scotland, Appointed to Inquire into the Nature and Authenticity of the Poems of Ossian, Drawn up, According to the Directions of the Committee by Henry Mackenzie Esq., Its Governor and Chairman (Edinburgh: Printed at the University Press for Archibald Constable and Co., 1805), 13; Barry Cunliffe, The Ancient Celts (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 13.
Ferguson in fact set the stage for James Macpherson to become involved in the *Ossian* mêlée. Without going into unnecessary detail, Ferguson’s involvement in the *Ossian* fiasco had three phases. The first phase began in 1759 when he was visited by James Macpherson in his father’s manse at Logierait. Macpherson showed the Fergus(s)ons Highland verse he had collected in his travels with his young charge, Graham of Balgowan, to whom he was tutor. Ferguson encouraged him to continue collecting and gave him a letter of introduction to his friend, John Home. Home had first encountered Highlanders while imprisoned during the Jacobite rebellion in the Castle of Doune in Perthshire. Since that incident, Highland manners and customs had fascinated him. During the 1745 rebellion, Home had served alongside the poet William Collins who penned for him the verse, *Ode on the Popular Superstitions of the Highlands Selected as a Subject for Poetry* (1749). This was indicative of the level of interest Home developed. Ferguson very likely had been cross-examined by the curious Home on all facets of Highland manners in the past. Ferguson commented in a letter to Henry Mackenzie that he and Home frequently discussed the ‘subject of reported traditionary poetry in the Highlands’. There is little doubt that Ferguson was familiar with the tradition in childhood because in the appendix to Blair’s *Critical Dissertation on the Poems of Ossian* Blair penned:

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28 Saunders, *Life*, 64. Saunders wrote that the evidence of the visit of Macpherson to Logierait is given on the authority of a writer in the *Celtic Magazine*, volume 311. The periodical appears to have existed but it never reached a volume corresponding to that given by Saunders.


Mr Adam Fergusson, professor of moral philosophy in the University of Edinburgh, and many other gentlemen natives of the Highland counties, whom I had occasion to converse with on this subject, declare, that though they cannot now repeat from memory any of these poems in the original, yet from what they have heard in their youth, and from the impression of the subject still remaining in their minds, they firmly believe those which Mr. Macpherson has published to be the old poems of Ossian current in the country.\textsuperscript{34}

It is significant that Adam Ferguson recorded a Gaelic tale while still a student at St Andrews. In 1740, he took down a recitation by a tailor called John Fleming at his father’s manse.\textsuperscript{35} It should be noted that Ferguson’s proclivity for collecting Gaelic tales arose six years before the reprisals and corrective measures following the Jacobite defeat at Culloden in 1745. This was also some nine years before Jerome Stone published the first English translation of Gaelic verse in the \textit{Scots Magazine}; and it was a full twenty years before Macpherson’s \textit{Fragments} were eventually published.\textsuperscript{36} However, Ferguson, who was a functionally illiterate Gael, knew that Macpherson’s competence with written Gaelic surpassed his own. Therefore, he offered Macpherson encouragement to gather and record traditional works that were disappearing fast.

Both men were alerted to the adverse affects Government measures were having on both the language and culture in the Highlands. While both may have outwardly agreed with policies for supplanting Gaelic with English, they knew that certain aspects of the culture, such as its proverbial lore, would be permanently lost if steps were not taken to ensure its preservation. Derick Thomson finds it difficult to believe that the involvement of Macpherson and Ferguson, together with the subsequent participation of Home and Blair, was purely chance. Ferguson’s act of writing for Macpherson a letter of introduction to Home ignited the Ossianic fuse.\textsuperscript{37}

The second phase of Ferguson’s involvement occurred after Macpherson arrived home from his expedition funded by the Edinburgh literati.\textsuperscript{38} Macpherson took up lodgings directly below Blair’s in Blackfriars Wynd, where he often recited segments to

\textsuperscript{36} Mackenzie, \textit{Report}, 65.
\textsuperscript{37} Thomson, \textit{The Gaelic Sources of Macpherson's Ossian}, 20.
\textsuperscript{38} Saunders, \textit{Life}, 92–93.
Blair as he worked. At this stage, Ferguson was a frequent visitor. Writing of Ferguson’s contribution to the project, Gaskill indicates that it was possibly of greater importance than Blair’s input:

The same applies in equal, if not greater measure to Adam Ferguson, who was the only Gaelic-speaker and was in and out of both Blair’s and Macpherson’s doors during the period in question and was able to peruse Macpherson’s materials. Since Macpherson had had these transcribed from Gaelic Corr-litir into a hand and a spelling which he could read, I find it inconceivable that, however illiterate he claimed to be in the language, Ferguson was incapable of doing so too.

John Home ‘never ceased soliciting Mr Macpherson, till he insensibly produced that small volume which has been published’. Further expeditions produced Fingal, 1761–2, and Temora, 1762. Macpherson was an extremely reluctant participant up to that point and numerous letters to Blair stand as testament to his discomfiture about being involved with the project. Prior to his encounter with Blair, Macpherson had never intended to publish his collection in Gaelic, let alone English. Stafford thinks that Macpherson was in a quandary about whether to make public the tradition of the Gael to the Lowlander. Nevertheless, if Macpherson had published his collection in Gaelic, while it may have gained greater acceptance among scholars, the public at large would not have received his work quite so well (nor would the venture have been so lucrative for Macpherson). The success of the Fragments resulted in such a clamour for more Macpherson was compelled to fabricate sections within later works to satisfy his readership.

The third and final phase of Ferguson’s involvement in the affair occurred around 1781, several years after a new and corrected edition of the entire three works, The Poems of Ossian, appeared in 1773. Moore notes that, ‘Certainly some of Ossian’s

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39 Ibid., 149. See also the quotation in Saunders on page 199, and note 41 below pages 199–200, and also Gaskill, ed., Poems of Ossian, 406.
42 Stafford, Sublime Savage, 79 and 92.
43 Ibid., 80.
44 R. Tombo, Ossian in Germany (New York: 1901), 70.
45 Mackenzie, Report, 2.
46 This brought the entire collection together in one edition that comprised Fragments, Fingal and Temora. The first edition came out in 1765.
most vitriolic critics of the 1770s and 1780s had no doubt about Ferguson’s involvement as a significant level’. Richard B. Sher and Jane Bush Fagg have written accounts of the squabble between Percy and Ferguson, so no more than the briefest outline need be given here. Thomas Percy, an English clergyman and collector of antiquarian English verse, insinuated that Ferguson had perpetrated a literary hoax by coaching John Macpherson to recite a verse of *Ossian*. Ferguson was hauled into the fracas in a disgraceful manner, but his reputation and name remained virtually unsullied. Richard B. Sher, however, disagrees and believes the incident may have caused people question Ferguson’s integrity. Nevertheless, Ferguson’s obituaries and short biographies do not raise this altercation with Bishop Percy.

The Percy altercation erupted over an alleged incident involving John Macpherson in Ferguson’s home. Percy was well aware of John’s link to James Macpherson’s *Ossian* and Adam Ferguson, but he nevertheless made certain assumptions based on appearances and hearsay. John Macpherson came into Ferguson’s household in the following manner. Due to his involvement with the *Ossian* project, Hugh Blair had become acquainted with John’s father, Dr John Macpherson, then the minister of Sleat in Skye. At the time his son was about to begin studying at Edinburgh University. Blair suggested that Ferguson could provide Dr Macpherson’s son with superior tutelage and guidance. That same year, Dr Macpherson died before John could return to Skye to see his father one last time. Consequently, the grieving student became a permanent ward of the Fergusons.

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49 Gaskill, "Ossian at Home and Abroad", 14.
50 Sher, "Percy, Shaw and the Ferguson 'Cheat'", 236.
51 There is no mention of the Percy incident in the short piece in *Chambers Biographical Dictionary*. The anonymous writer of Ferguson's obituary for the *Scots Magazine* does not mention it, nor does Lee, author of the piece for *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. Lee happened to be a close friend during Ferguson's twilight years. Bisset, another friend of the Ferguson family from Perthshire, does not record it in his piece for *Public Characters of 1799–1800*. Bisset’s piece was written and published prior to Ferguson's death.
52 MacLean, "Early Political Careers", 97 and 120. John Macpherson and Adam Ferguson remained close. Their father-son relationship endured throughout their lives and indeed, Adam named his youngest son, John Macpherson Ferguson after John. John and James Macpherson, who were not related, also became firm friends, even though there was a ten-year age difference between them.

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John Macpherson was central to Percy’s distrust of Ferguson. One October evening in 1765, after Blair had preached in St Giles, he and Bishop Percy went to high tea at Ferguson’s house. The conversation turned to the topic of Gaelic verse and, in particular, Ossian. According to Percy’s various accounts of that evening, John Macpherson sang, spoke or hummed a verse of Fingal in the Gaelic language. Sixteen years later, Percy believed Ferguson had played him for a fool by coaching John to reproduce part of Macpherson’s Fingal in order to prove its validity. What John had sung for him was probably not Macpherson’s version of Fingal but rather, the traditional one. In spite of Percy rallying the likes of Dr Johnson, Horace Walpole and William Shaw to his cause, Sher finds that Percy’s recollection of the alleged incident varied on three separate occasions, as his account of John’s part in the evening indicated. What initially made Percy suspicious was an encounter with a Scottish-born, London physician, Sir John Elliot. He informed Percy that James Macpherson had disclosed that Fingal and Temora were his own inventions. At the height of the row during the early nineteenth century, the elderly Percy threatened to make this claim public. According to J. N. M. Maclean, Percy also received information that James Macpherson had supplied John with the Fingalian verse he sang at Ferguson’s house in 1781. Percy’s informant was of dubious reliability. The informant told Percy that John had never been heard to sing or recite poetry before. In fact John was an accomplished balladeer with a fetching voice. Percy was also informed that John had never seen any of James Macpherson’s published work. Therefore, Percy concluded that either James or Ferguson had coached John Macpherson that evening.

Eventually, a row broke out in print where Ferguson denied all knowledge of Percy’s visit to his home. Unbeknown to his accusers at this time, Ferguson was recovering from a stroke, and may genuinely have had no recollection of the event. Moreover, sixteen years had passed since Percy’s visit to Edinburgh. Percy refused to print Blair’s letters regarding the incident, as they only served to lessen his case. But Percy and Walpole were not easily mollified. Upon hearing of Percy’s reluctance to go

54 Sher, "Percy, Shaw and the Ferguson 'Cheat'", 227–237, but especially 227.
55 Ibid., 230–231.
56 See Chapter Six p. 271.
57 MacLean, "Early Political Careers", 102.
to press with Blair’s letters, Horace Walpole stated: ‘This timidity [Percy’s] sets those Scotch impostors and their cabal in a still worse light than their forgeries, as it shows their persecution of all who oppose them’.\(^{58}\) This jibe was unquestionably aimed at Ferguson and Blair. Walpole knew of two letters Percy received from Blair which mention ‘the lad’s (John Macpherson’s) recitation in Ferguson’s house and presence’.\(^{59}\) Percy also connected young John Macpherson, to the publication of *Critical Dissertations* about the ancient Caledonians.

The association between the Macphersons deserves further explanation. James Macpherson visited the manse of the Reverend Dr John Macpherson in Sleat during his expedition to the Highlands. Dr Macpherson was a renowned Gaelic scholar who had penned his *Critical Dissertations* in Gaelic. Edward Gibbon considered Dr Macpherson a great authority on Caledonian antiquity and believed that the evidence raised to refute his hypothesis was feeble.\(^{60}\) Furthermore, Gibbon believed that James Macpherson’s *Ossian* actually furthered Britain’s superiority.\(^{61}\) Indeed, Sir John, the son of the *Dissertation’s* author, later stayed with Gibbon in Lausanne, proving that the connection and goodwill endured toward John even after Dr Macpherson’s death.\(^{62}\)

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\(^{60}\) Gibbon wrote, ‘In the dark and doubtful paths of Caledonian antiquity, I have chosen for my guides two learned and ingenious Highlanders, whom their birth and education had peculiarly qualified for that office. See Critical Dissertations on the Origin and Antiquities, &c., of the Caledonians, by Dr. John Macpherson, London 1768, in 4to; and Introduction to the History of Great Britain and Ireland, by James Macpherson, Esq., London 1773, in 4to, third edit. Dr. Macpherson was a minister in the Isle of Sky: and it is a circumstance honourable for the present age, that a work, replete with erudition and criticism, should have been composed in the most remote of the Hebrides’. Edward Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire with an Introduction by W.E.H. Lecky*, vol. 4 of 12 vols (1776) [www] (Fred de Fau and Co, 1906 [cited 24 December 2006]); available from http://oll.libertyfund.org/Home3/Book.php?recordID=0214.04. See Gibbon’s note 110.


"British Museum Additional Manuscript 38,886" in *Gibbon Papers*, (British Library: 1755–1794), f. 222, dated 1 November 1791.

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James Macpherson relied on Dr Macpherson’s scholarly assistance for corroboration of the textual material he had collected. He then used the late Dr Macpherson’s manuscript as a foundation for his introductory dissertations for each of his own works – *Fragments, Fingal, Temora, The Poems of Ossian* and his *Introduction to the History of Great Britain and Ireland* (1771).\(^{63}\) In 1768, on behalf of young John Macpherson, James used the printer of his own works (Becket) for the posthumous publication of Dr Macpherson’s *Critical Dissertations*. Fiona Stafford suggests that James could have had a hand in shaping Dr Macpherson’s work.\(^{64}\) There is some evidence to support her conclusion. Dr Macpherson wrote that the etymon ‘Gael’ was derived from the Gallaeci of Spain, the Galatae of Europe and the Galatians of Asia.\(^{65}\) This etymon, Gael or Cael, underwent a change called metathesis when it was adopted into Latin. In other words, ‘ael’ became ‘ale’, as in Caledonian. This is a rare, but not improbable, sound change. Dr Macpherson admitted that:

> This observation was first suggested by the translator of Ossian’s poems; and is so obviously the original of *Caledonia*, that it is a matter of some surprise it never was observed before.\(^{66}\)

Whether the above statement was Dr Macpherson’s or a later emendation by James is not verifiable. James probably had some influence on the final format of Dr Macpherson’s work.

The Macphersons’ works promoted Scottish eligibility for entry into the British state by maintaining that Highlanders and Lowlanders were originally descendants of the


\(^{65}\) This theory was raised by Edward Lhuyd, and before Lhuyd, by George Buchanan who introduced it in his *Rerum Scoticarum historia* (1582). New evidence based on genetic patterns of migration through the examination of distribution patterns of mitochondrial DNA and Y-Chromosomes supports rather than detracts from Dr Macpherson’s hypothesis. Stephen Oppenheimer believes there were regional genetic identities in the British Isles by the Mesolithic period. These peoples arrived in the British Isles having survived glaciations in the Basque refuge. The people of Cornwall, Scotland and Spain have similar patterns of genetic inheritance. See Stephen Oppenheimer, *The Origins of the British: A Genetic Detective Story* (London: Constable, 2006), 21, 66–69, 87–88, 91, 143–154, 408–410 (for Buchanan’s contribution see Oppenheimer, 24.) Bryan Sykes concurs, believing the original inhabitants of the Isles, particularly those of Ireland and Wales, but also those of Scotland arrived from the Iberian Peninsula. Bryan Sykes, *Blood of the Isles: Exploring the Genetic Roots of our Tribal History* (London: Bantam Press, 2006), 280–283.

\(^{66}\) John Macpherson, *Critical Dissertations on the Origins of Antiquities, Language, Government, Manners and Religion of the Ancient Caledonians, Their Posterity, the Picts and the British and the Irish and the Scots* (Dublin: Boulter Grierson. Printer to the King's most Excellent Majesty, 1768), 90.
Caledonians who had inhabited Scotland at the time of the Roman occupation. In Caledonian blood might later have been diluted with the blood of the Gaels, Anglians and Danes, but the Caledonians were the foundation stock on which Scotland was built. Thereby, Macpherson reasoned all eighteenth-century Scots were descendants of the Caledonians. In his now notorious piece on the invention of Highland tradition in Scotland, Hugh Trevor-Roper accuses James and John Macpherson of falsifying Dark Age Scottish history and perpetuating the errors of the historians who preceded them. In fact, James Macpherson saw himself as a corrector of the errors of previous historians. Whether Ferguson had any bearing on Macpherson’s reasoning needs further investigation. Due to his dual socialisation, Ferguson was possibly pulled in two directions by Macpherson’s hypothesis, but he probably did not want to appear too provincial in cosmopolitan Edinburgh among men like Hume and Robertson.

Ferguson possibly did not entertain James Macpherson’s historical theories in their entirety. Hume and Ferguson believed the Revolution of 1688 made the English and Scottish origin myths obsolete. Rather than drawing on myth or an ancient constitution, Ferguson and Hume were far more pragmatic about the development of British institutions and sovereignty. Each implied that English prominence had been arrived at through unintended consequences, or the laws of spontaneous order. It was their view that a nation’s laws arose naturally rather than by being imposed from without by a specific person or persons. This argument was a ploy by the two Scots to separate human decision and consequent effect. This idea was already implicit in Stoicism (fortuna) and in its modern guise – orthodox Calvinist determinism. Nevertheless,
both Hume and Ferguson insinuated that English ‘greatness’ was a geographic, economic and historical accident determined by natural and contingent factors or causes. Concerning England’s break with Rome and the Act of Supremacy in 1534, Hume made the following comment: ‘And on the whole, there followed from this revolution many beneficial consequences; though perhaps neither foreseen nor intended by the persons who had the chief hand in conducting it’. Hume’s *History of England* endeavoured to point out that England’s mixed government was arrived at through trial, error, accident and innumerable human transactions, but neither by design nor intent.

An example of Hume’s stand on this point opens his essay, ‘Whether the British Government Inclines More to Absolute Monarchy, or to a Republic:’

> It affords a violent prejudice against almost every science, that no prudent man, however sure of his principles, dares prophesy concerning any event, or foretell the remote consequences of things. A physician will not venture to pronounce concerning the condition of his patient a fortnight or a month after: And still less dares a politician foretell the situation of public affairs a few years hence.

In concert with Hume, Adam Ferguson’s model of unintended consequences was one of the most explicit of the Scottish Enlightenment. He made his position on the rise of the English institutions clear in the statements that follow:

> If Cromwell said, That a man never mounts higher, than when he knows not whither he is going; it may with more reason be affirmed of communities, that they admit of the greatest revolutions where no change is intended, and that the most refined politicians do not always know whither they are leading the state by their projects.

Consequence is that of the division of labour. This was a utility developed to bring about higher production and output. Its by-products were specialisation and the accumulation of wealth. Allan, p. 215. Smith's doctrine of the ‘invisible hand’ is where man, intent only on personal gain, is directed by an invisible hand. This quest for personal gain actually promotes a favourable outcome for society in general. See Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, 1776 ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 291–292. ‘Instinct, passion and not reason guide men to preserve life or beget life: outcomes that may have been forfeited if left to reason alone’. However, some literati admitted conversely that foresight did have some role to play. See Allan, 216–217.

71 Kidd, *Subverting Scotland's Past*, 211.
73 Allan, *Virtue, Learning*, 216.
If we listen to the testimony of modern history, and to that of the most authentic parts of the ancient; if we attend to the practice of nations in every quarter of the world, and in every condition, whether that of the barbarian or the polished, we shall find very little reason to retract this assertion. No constitution is formed by concert, no government is copied from a plan. The members of a small state contend for equality; the members of a greater, find themselves classed in a certain manner that lays a foundation for monarchy. They proceed from one form of government to another, by easy transitions, and frequently under old names adopt a new constitution. Hume and Ferguson agreed, ‘nations stumble upon establishments which are indeed the result of human action, but not the execution of human design’. Hume’s *History of England* and Smith’s *Wealth of Nations* also use examples of this principle, although it was not the exclusive preserve of Scottish thinkers. Hume endeavoured to point out that the only true rule of government was that used and practised in the current age. Hume surmised that the royalists of the seventeenth century were within their rights to fight for the ancient constitution, but at the same time the puritans had a right to fight for liberty. Therefore, in Hume’s eyes, England’s ancient constitution came to be inconsistent with liberty because civilization had progressed and political knowledge had increased. Nevertheless, Hume’s attempt to present a non-factional history of the early Stuart period up to the Glorious Revolution inevitably became interpreted as Tory or Jacobite. The ability to rise above party, prejudice and friendship was a distinctly Humean characteristic. Nonetheless, Hume may have interpreted Macpherson’s work as factional and parochial. Even so, Hume would have defended Highlanders’ rights to have access to the same privileges as other British subjects. Hume also set the Gothic liberties of the Anglo-Saxons and Magna Carta...

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78 Duncan Forbes, "Scientific Whiggism: Adam Smith and John Millar", *Cambridge Journal* 7, no. 11 (1954), 655. Millar and Robertson also subscribed to ideas on the subject of unintended consequences similar to those of Hume, Smith and Ferguson. Forbes used Millar’s example of the Magna Carta to make clear his point about the heterogeneity of ends. The great charter was designed to establish the privileges of a few, but in time it came to promote the interests of the whole community. See Forbes, p. 667. Others, who examined the rise of social institutions, were Montesquieu and Edward Gibbon.
80 Ibid., 291.
81 Ibid., 136. Hume had friends on both sides of politics. Not only was Hume a friend of Wilkes, he was also a friend of John Home, who was at one time the detested prime minister Bute’s secretary.
82 Ibid., 301.
within a wider European context. However, he put the dawn of the commons influence in government down to chance and present necessity.83

While Ferguson stood with Hume on the redundancy of ancient national claims and the efficacy of modern political circumstances, he also found common ground with Macpherson on areas where Hume had insufficient cultural knowledge. Scholars who have been without a background in Highland history and culture have often turned to Hume’s record of the Ossian affair. Hume was among those who initially encouraged Macpherson to collect more verse after the success of the Fragments but later, he became far less complimentary toward him.84 He disagreed with Macpherson’s theory of origins, believing that the ancestors of the current crop of Britons were ‘all plainly Danes or Saxons’.85 Hume was pleased that there was no religious iconography86 in Macpherson’s works, but found it strangely devoid of monsters, magic and giants.87 He also mistakenly believed that the reference to a harp in the text indicated Ossian’s Irish, rather than Scottish, provenance.88 Unlike Johnson, Hume’s chief criticism of Macpherson’s Ossian was not its authenticity,89 but rather Macpherson’s claim of its great antiquity.90 Although what Macpherson eventually produced was patently modern, the material from which it was originally derived was probably medieval. If it had passed through many transcriptions and oral transmissions, it may have been older still as social structures described in the tales seem to indicate. However, Hume had no way of accessing what modern scholars now know. He did not appreciate the attempts of a provincial like Macpherson to curry favour with the rest of Britain by falsifying an ancient tradition.

83 Ibid., 306–7.
84 Mossner, The Forgotten Hume, 85–87. Hume was involved in raising money to fund a further Macpherson excursion.
87 Ibid., 474 and 476.
88 Ibid., 475. The harp, although associated with Ireland, is also an instrument of the Scottish Highlands, where it is known as the clarsach. Hume thought that bagpipes would have been a more appropriate instrument for Scotland.
89 Mossner, The Forgotten Hume, 88.
90 It is possible that Macpherson lifted this notion of a third-century provenance from Jerome Stone. See “La. III. 251” in Laing Collection, (Edinburgh University Library).
Macpherson attempted a rehabilitation of the Scottish Highland Gael by restoring Scotland’s ancient Gaelic constitution which had been debunked by the Jacobite cleric, Father Innes. Macpherson appeared to sever ties with the Irish parent culture. In the introductory dissertations to his reworking of the Ossian Cycle, Macpherson attempted a reinvention of Scottish originary history. Nevertheless, Colin Kidd, William Ferguson and Michael Lynch cast Macpherson at the end, not the beginning, of a line of Scottish historians who, since the time of John of Fordun, were engaged in a damage limitation exercise. William Ferguson observes that many historians after Macpherson persisted in their denial of the fifth-century Dal Riatic (Irish Scota) invasion of Scotland right up until the time the Irish Free State was created in 1922.

If the argument has filled out Kidd’s claim that Macpherson’s politics are a study in ‘ambiguity, combining conventional Hanoverian Whiggism with sentimental Jacobitism, Scottish identity with a wider British patriotism, traditional conservative values with radical and liberal ideas,’ it has also made clear some of the costs of this venture (‘Macpherson’, 25). In particular Macpherson severed the bond between the cultures of Ireland and Scotland in order to create a polite Scottish Celticism.

Trevor-Roper has called the Macphersons’ rewrite of Scottish and Irish history ‘sheer effrontery’ and ‘two distinct acts of bold forgery’. However, Trevor-Roper was mistaken about Macpherson’s reclamation of Irish legends to Scotland. Macpherson did not deny the tales were common to both Scotland and Ireland.

92 Kidd, Subverting Scotland's Past, 219–246; 294; Michael Lynch, "A Nation Born Again: Scottish Identity in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries" in Image and Identity: The Making and Re-Making of Scotland through the Ages, eds, Dauvit Broun, R. J. Finlay and Michael Lynch (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1998), 82–98. See also Macpherson, "A Dissertation ", 206. Here, Macpherson charges Fordun with turning to Ireland’s Annals in order to augment Scottish history. This history had been robbed from Scotland’s institutional repositories and abbeys by marauding Danes, Norsemen, the troops of Edward I, and later, the reformers.
93 Ferguson, The Identity of the Scottish Nation, 294.
96 Trevor-Roper was referring to the work of James Macpherson and the Dissertations by Dr John Macpherson.
97 Macpherson, "Preface to the 1st Edition of Fingal" in Gaskill, ed., The Poems of Ossian and Related Works, 37. The Macphersons placed Irish-speaking Gaels in Scotland four centuries before their apparent historical arrival so, on this point at least; Trevor-Roper might have a case. However, Trevor-Roper charges James Macpherson with the assignment of a third-century provenance to his Ossianic tales in order ensure that his legends predated the Dal Riatic incursions during the fifth century.  See Trevor-
In *Ossian* and the *Dissertations*, by the Macphersons’ reckoning, the majority of Scots then present in Britain were descendants of the Caledonians. Most grammar school-educated boys in Scotland who had read their Tacitus would have known about the Caledonians and the battle of Mons Graupius. These Caledonians who contested this battle against the might of Rome were early inhabitants of Perthshire, Fife and the Lothians. They were wheat growers who took advantage of the more fertile east coast of Scotland. They were known as the *cruithneach*, a word which literally means wheat-eater or Briton in old Gaelic, but Pict in modern Gaelic.\(^98\) The crux of Macpherson’s preliminary essays to each of his *Ossian* volumes and Dr Macpherson’s *Dissertations* was to re-orient Scotland from its Highland/Lowland rift toward unity. This was a matter they thought would be made easier by demonstrating that all Scots, though of intermixed blood, had a common ancestry. Nevertheless, by claiming descent from the Caledonians, Macpherson appeared to disavow the Irish provenance of the Gaelic language, which had been brought to Scottish shores in the fifth century by the Dal Riatans. The break with Ireland demonstrated Macpherson’s support for preserving Protestantism in Britain, while, at the same time this alignment expunged the allied taint of Jacobitism. It also overturned the argument of Thomas Innes, who showed the succession of Scottish Kings from Fergus Mor mac Erc, the first Dal Riatan King of Scots, to be fallacious.\(^99\)

In the two hundred years or so that Scotland was disconnected from the Irish parent culture there were not only changes in Scotland’s vernacular Gaelic, but also divergences in the Ossian tradition. When Macpherson chided the senachies of Ireland for not being sufficiently well acquainted with their antiquities to derive honour from Fingal’s Caledonian extraction, he was not claiming Fingal for Scotland but was

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probably unaware that the two once-identical traditions diverged over time. Even Blair’s Dissertation informs us that most Highlanders were unacquainted with the Hibernian extraction of the Scottish nation.

It is necessary to stress that the inversion of the mother culture from Ireland to Scotland was not a concoction of either John or James Macpherson, as Trevor-Roper thought. This inversion had its basis in John Toland’s work, The Critical History of the Celtic Religion and Learning (1740). Michael Lynch and William Ferguson trace this line of thought back even further, to George Mackenzie of Rosehaugh. It was also evident in the work of David Malcolme:

> Ireland, and the Irish Language, have been now frequently mentioned; it makes no small Figure in History. It is not farther from Great Britain, than Britain is from France; and next to it is perhaps the most remarkable Island in this Part of the World. It has been already hinted, That, very probably, it received its first Inhabitants from Great Britain, and it is now Subject to the same Crown.

In brief, the succession of writers whose ideas were precursors to those amplified by the Macphersons began with Mackenzie (1685), whose ideas were further refined through Toland (1726), Malcolme (1738) and, finally, Stone (1756).

Ferguson and Macpherson were in accord about certain circumstances with regard to Highland myth and history. While Ferguson may not have subscribed to all of Macpherson’s ideas, he at least recognised that past historians like Geoffrey of Monmouth, Hector Boece and George Buchanan all exploited national myth for political purposes. Every nation had its origin myth or conjecture about past ages. Ferguson realised myths were altered in transmission or tailored to the need of each succeeding

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100 Ibid., 36. For the differences in the Scottish and Irish Ossianic traditions, see Meek, "The Gaelic Ballads of Scotland: Creativity and Adaptation", 19–48.
101 Blair, A Critical Dissertation, 244.
103 Porter, "Bring Me the Head of James Macpherson", 406. Toland was an Irish-born scholar who studied at Edinburgh and Leiden Universities.
104 Michael Lynch, "A Nation Born Again", 89 and 93; Ferguson, The Identity of the Scottish Nation, 209. Mackenzie, who was once Scotland’s Lord Advocate, wrote his influential piece, A Defence of the Antiquity of the Royal Line of Scotland in 1686. The lineage of Ossian can be traced from Mackenzie through to Toland.
105 Rev. Dr Malcolme, Letters, Essays, and Other Tracts Illustrating the Antiquities of Great Britain and Ireland. Together with Many Curious Discoveries of the Affinity Betwixt the Languages of the Americans and the Ancient Britons to the Greek and Latin & C: Also Specimens of the Celtic, Welsh, Irish, Saxon and American Languages (London: J. Millan, 1744), 19. Letter headed, To the Right Honourable &c
106 Kidd, Subverting Scotland’s Past, 117.
generation. However, he also admitted that such myths had some semblance of truth in them, their purpose being the inculcation of national character.\footnote{Ferguson, \textit{Essay}, 76.} For Ferguson, myth and fable was a prelude to enlightening reason. Writing of the Greeks, he portrayed the fable’s worth accordingly:

\begin{quote}
It was no doubt of great advantage to those nations, that their system of fable was original, and being already received in popular traditions, served to diffuse those improvements of reason, imagination, and sentiment, which were afterwards, by men of the finest talents, made on fable itself, or conveyed in its moral. The passions of the poet pervaded the minds of the people, and the conceptions of men of genius being communicated to the vulgar, became the incentives of a national spirit.\footnote{Ibid., 77.}
\end{quote}

Ferguson, like Macpherson, exhibited a degree of scepticism regarding the historical record, particularly if it had been recorded by clerics prior to the Reformation. He was aware that Latin was \textit{not} the native tongue of the monks of the Mediaeval British scriptoria. This, he felt, may have had some bearing on their ability to record, translate and transliterate fact and fiction of past ages and other cultures. If Latin was not the usual language in which clerics did most of their thinking, this could make their chronicles all the more questionable.\footnote{Ong remarks with regard to Latin that it was gender-linked; learned by males outside the home in a ‘tribal setting’ and, in effect, Latin became male rite of puberty. Latin had no direct connection with anyone’s unconscious mind in the way that a vernacular language did. It was removed from the psychic roots of childhood. Latin may not have been mutually intelligible as a spoken language however, it was always written the same way. There was power in the written Latin language because it unified people, particularly churchmen, and this aspect remained potent even while, as a language, the use of Latin was in decline. Walter J. Ong, \textit{Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word}, 1982 ed., (London: Routledge, 1995), 112–113.} Like Macpherson, Ferguson regretted what may have been lost in the monastic processes of transliteration, transcription and censorship. Furthermore, the clerics’ segregation from the world around them made them untrustworthy adjudicators of human action and character. Writing of the chroniclers, Ferguson’s scepticism is evident in the paragraph below:

\begin{quote}
They were ill succeeded in this task by the early historians of modern Europe; who, generally bred to the profession of monks, and confined to the monastic life, applied themselves to record what they were pleased to denominate facts, while they suffered the productions of genius to perish, and were unable, either by the matter they selected, or the style of their compositions, to give any representation to the active spirit of mankind in any condition.\footnote{Ferguson, \textit{Essay}, 78.}
\end{quote}
Ferguson’s distrust of monkish records takes on new significance when seen in the light of Ossian. Dr John Macpherson thought it actually possible that Ossian’s tales could have been recorded in monastic scriptoria a century or so earlier than the third-century usually ascribed to them. Dr Macpherson surmised, ‘The period, moreover, to which Ossian is fixed, is not so much beyond the production of letters into the North, but their assistance might have very early been received to perpetuate his compositions’. Dr Macpherson charged the Irish with recording ‘the strange mass of absurdity’ and ‘idle tales’ such as the Irish origin myth, instead of lore like that of the heroes Ossian and Fingal. In a letter solicited from him by Hugh Blair, Dr Macpherson hypothesised that if Ossian had lived until the beginning of the fourth century, then it was possible that somewhere his poetry had been recorded:

But most certain it is, that we had men of some learning among us from when almost every other part of Europe was overspread with ignorance and barbarity. If so, it must be allowed that we had men capable enough of writing manuscripts. In these manuscripts, the works of Ossian might have been easily preserved.

Although he was obviously dealing with mythological subjects, it has not prevented scholars from speculating about Macpherson’s ulterior message. Murray Pittock alerts us to the fact that in collecting his material, Macpherson had contact with numerous contemporary Gaelic poets who had been imbued with Jacobite politics. A strain of their influence and quality has emerged in parts of Ossian. Pittock also draws our attention to the analogy between the dying Highland culture and Ossian, who was the last of the Fianna. Pittock finds an association between Macpherson’s work and Stuart symbolism. He also believes there were messianic elements in Fenian lore which

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111 Macpherson, Critical Dissertations, 84.
112 Ibid.
113 Ibid.
114 Dafydd Moore, ed., Ossian and Ossianism, 5 vols. vol. 3 (London: Routledge, 2004), 142. See also pages 200–204 and especially 218–219 of this chapter.
115 Highland poets who were in contact with Macpherson included Lachlan Macpherson of Strathmashie and John McCodrum. Murray G. H. Pittock, "James Macpherson and the Jacobite Code" in Gaelic to Romantic: Ossianic Translations, eds, Fiona Stafford and Howard Gaskill (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1998), 42. With the exception of his fellow clansman, Macpherson’s Gaelic was found to be lacking by native islanders like John MacCodrum who toyed with Macpherson’s deficiencies. See John Mackenzie, ed., The Beauties of Gaelic Poetry and Lives of the Highland Bards or Sar-Obair nam Bard Gaelach (Edinburgh: John Grant, 1907), 157.
later emerged in Arthurian legend. More recently, Colin Kidd has outlined a more satisfying model of Macpherson’s use of the Ossian Cycle, by reassessing the evidence to conclude that Macpherson was more Celtic Whig than sentimental Jacobite.

James Macpherson’s Celtic Whiggism was the culmination of a tradition of whig responses to the destructive scholarship of Father Innes which sidestepped the weak ground of diplomatic scholarship for alternative scholarly terrain, most notably linguistics.

One has to enquire what useful purpose Macpherson’s tactic would serve. If Macpherson set out to deceive, his motivation could perhaps be found in the manner in which the inhabitants of Scotland’s Highlands were constantly excluded for being ‘Irish’. Up until the time of John of Fordun, the Scottish Gaelic language had been known as *Scottis*. Ossian, with backing from Dr John Macpherson’s *Dissertations* on the ancient Caledonians, redefined what it was to be a Highlander. Highlanders were no longer descendants of Irish invaders who spoke Erse, but descendants of an indigenous people who spoke an indigenous language that existed even before the Roman invasion. By making this claim, the Macphersons circumvented the necessity to prove that Gaelic had come to Scotland with the Dal Riatic kingship. Educated Highlanders like James Macpherson and Adam Ferguson turned their critical minds to the examination of what history had recorded about their own culture and found it had many faults. Fordun turned to Irish Annals to augment lost Scottish records. Once he set the historical and political precedent, the notion of Highland savagery became entrenched in the minds of the other inhabitants of the British Isles. This oversight on the part of Fordun, and his condemnation of Highlanders, spurred Macpherson’s

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117 Ibid., 42.
119 From the medieval period, *Scottis* became the appellation for the Anglian-derived dialect spoken in the Lowlands.
121 Although Ferguson would never have entertained the idea, it is amusing to consider that the Macphersons were also conserving Ferguson’s own familial origin myth by opposing the ideas of Innes. Men of the name of Fergusson, as legend had it, were descended from Fergus mor MacErc, the first King of Scotland. The Fergusson name is the earliest recorded Scottish family name remaining in use today. It was first listed in a tenth–century Gaelic manuscript, the *Senchus fer nAlban*. See James Ferguson and Robert Menzies Ferguson, *The Records of the Clan and Name of Fergusson, Ferguson and Fergus* (Edinburgh: David Douglas, 1885), 1–2; Dauvit Broun, "Scotland and the Scots before the Wars of Independence" in *Image and Identity: The Making and Re-Making of Scotland through the Ages*, edited by Dauvit Broun, R. J. Finlay and Michael Lynch (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1998), 10.
mission. Overall, Macpherson’s sentiments were characteristic of his period, as one of the newest leading commentators on pan-Gaelic relations, Wilson McLeod corroborates this:

On the Scottish side, nationalistic distortions were probably at their strongest in the eighteenth century, when denial of linguistic and cultural connection to Ireland was convenient for a range of reasons, not least the politics of the newly created British state, while in Ireland, their impact has probably been most profound from the late nineteenth century onwards, when the Scottish dimension has been of little relevance to the project of imagining and building a nation and a state, and of locating Gaelic tradition within them.

Colin Kidd also identified a purpose for Macpherson’s rearrangement of Scotland’s history, one that would appear to be in tune with the work of the Fergus(s)ons in the Presbytery of Dunkeld, as discussed in Chapter Three. This restructuring of Scottish history supplied a certain cadre in the Scottish Church with a renewed acceptability to spread Christ’s message in Gaelic, the only language most Highlanders understood. Men like Malcolme, Stone and Macpherson were scholarly Churchmen who understood the necessity to teach and preach initially through the medium of the Gaelic language. Jerome Stone, another Lowland scholar of the Gaelic language, was a schoolmaster licensed by the Presbytery of Dunkeld. He supplied Macpherson with the template for his own attempt to translate Gaelic lays into English. Stone had even taught himself Gaelic for these purposes. Kidd insists, ‘As a Kirkman John Macpherson was familiar with Malcolme’s Gaelic missionary schemes. Scholars have detected the influence of Stone’s poetry on James Macpherson’. In fact, Dr Macpherson assented to David Malcolme’s research toward the instigation of teaching Gaelic and English concurrently. He had assembled a Gaelic to English dictionary the year of James Macpherson’s birth (1736). This same Presbytery had licensed Adam Ferguson. Ferguson’s own father once sat as Moderator of this church court. In Chapter Three, I mentioned the progressive nature of the Presbytery of Dunkeld. Their aims were underpinned by the need to reach out to Highland people (pupils and parishioners)

123 See also Chapter Seven, p. 281–282.
125 Kidd, Subverting Scotland’s Past, 227.
126 Malcolme, Letters, Essays, and Other Tracts. See Letter XII dated June 5, Edinburgh, 1736. (The pages in this book are not numbered consecutively.)
through the medium of the Gaelic, rather than the English language. Indeed, the Duke of Atholl, as a ruling elder of Dunkeld, was signatory to the Act of the General Assembly giving remit to David Malcolme to develop an Irish (Scottish Gaelic) to English dictionary as ‘tending to promote learning’. Malcolme however, was an Edinburgh minister and, despite his keen interest in philology, he was unable to work as speedily on the project as a native Gaelic-speaker. Most of the men who made up the Presbytery had learnt English as a second language and understood the pitfalls of learning an essentially foreign tongue. Such facts make it even more probable that Ferguson approved of Macpherson’s mission to rehabilitate the Gaelic language, if only for the advantage of winning acceptance to use Gaelic in order to teach Highlanders English and expedite their assimilation into the British state.

Indeed, there were similarities between Macpherson’s work and Ferguson’s *Essay*. For instance, Macpherson and Ferguson both subscribed to a three-stage theory of man’s development (savagery, barbarism, polished or civil society). More recently, Dafydd Moore has examined the recurrent theme of the primitive within the works of Macpherson and Adam Ferguson. He found that while both disparaged luxury, Macpherson outdid Ferguson in his ambivalence toward the savage past. Macpherson went further, by exploiting the system in order to retire from public life as a benevolent property owner. However, as Maclean notes, Macpherson still operated in the manner of an affronted clansman, when he settled a score by having Badenoch MacDonalsds evicted from the former Cluny estate by the factor of the Forfeited Estates’ Commission. This showed Macpherson’s loyalties functioned at a tribal, rather than at an overtly Highland level, whereas the tribal perspective was already redundant for Ferguson, despite his early socialisation in a Highland community.

128 The Dunkeld Presbytery supported the use of Gaelic and one of its numbers eventually translated the Bible into Gaelic.
131 Ibid., 8, 19.
132 Ibid., 9.
133 MacLean, "Early Political Careers", 213 and especially 233.
A further correspondence exhibited by Ferguson and Macpherson was in their agreement that indigenous legend was commensurate with imported mythologies. Macpherson was more strident on this matter than Ferguson:

The vanity of the Romans induced them to consider the nations beyond the pale of their empire as barbarians; and consequently their history unworthy of being investigated. Some men otherwise of great merit among ourselves, give into this confined opinion. Having early imbibed their idea of exalted manners from the Greek and Roman writers, they scarcely ever afterwards have the fortitude to allow any dignity of character to any other ancient people.  

Ferguson entertained similar sentiments in calling for Britons to embrace and accept their barbarous past and stop depending on the literature of an alien people (the Greeks and Romans) as the basis for their culture. Ferguson felt there had been an oversight when he wrote, ‘We therefore willingly quit the history of our early ancestors, where Caesar and Tacitus have dropped them…’ Instead of relying on Greece and Rome for archetypes and philosophy, Ferguson suggested that modern Britons might seek out home-grown models of philosophy and mythology, hitherto ignored. He noted that the testimonies of Tacitus and Caesar tended to depress rather than promote national esteem. The idea that ancestral Britons were barbarians who had been civilised by the Romans, only to revert to a barbarian state once more after the Roman withdrawal, was neither uplifting nor inspirational. The chagrin exhibited by Ferguson in passages such as the one following may be a personal reaction to the rebuttal of James Macpherson’s published works. A statement in the same vein as that of Macpherson’s above contained similar concerns:

Our very learning, perhaps, where its influence extends, serves, in some measure, to depress our national spirit. Our literature being derived from nations of a different race, who flourished at a time when our ancestors were in a state of barbarity, and consequently when they were despised by those who attained to the literary arts, has given rise to a humbling opinion, that we ourselves are the offspring of mean and contemptible nations, with whom the human imagination and sentiment had no effect, till the genius was in a manner inspired by examples, and directed by lessons that were brought from abroad.

While he paid tribute to the mythology and traditions of Greece and Rome as a source of fancy and poetic allusion, like Macpherson, he believed people should look toward

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134 Macpherson, "A Dissertation", 205.
135 Ferguson, Essay, 78.
136 Ferguson, Essay, 77–78.
137 Ibid., 111.
the positive aspects of their ancestors’ characteristics. Note also that, like Macpherson, Ferguson believed in a general descent from the ancient inhabitants of Britain, although he avoids naming the Caledonians outright:

It is from the Greek and Roman historians, however, that we have not only the most authentic and instructive, but even the most engaging, representations of the tribes from whom we descend. Those sublime and intelligent writers understood human nature, and could collect its features, and exhibit its characters in every situation.138

He and Macpherson found it necessary to remind their contemporaries that what these ancient historians saw was not all bad. It also might be a tacit acknowledgement of Dr Macpherson’s ideas on the early inhabitants of Scotland. Unlike Hume, Ferguson did not see Britain’s ancient tribes purely as uncivilised barbarians.139 The tribes of the Caledonii were like Fionn’s warriors, freedom-fighters who resisted the Roman advance into their territory. Hume, however, envisaged post-Roman Britain as a state of chaos:

The abject Britons regarded this present of liberty as fatal to them; and were in no condition to put in practice the prudent counsel given them by the Romans, to arm in their own defence. Unaccustomed both to the perils of war and to the cares of civil government, they found themselves incapable of forming or executing any measures for resisting the incursions of barbarians.

The Picts and Scots, finding that the Romans had finally relinquished Britain, now regarded the whole as their prey, and attacked the northern wall with redoubled forces. The Britons, already subdued by their own fears, found the ramparts but a weak defence for them; and deserting their station, left the country entirely open to the inroads of the barbarous enemy. The invaders carried devastation and ruin along with them; and exerted to the utmost their native ferocity, which was not mitigated by the helpless condition and submissive behaviour of the inhabitants.140

To Hume, the southern half of mainland Britain was peopled by a subservient race entirely dependent upon the Romans for defence and civil government. When the Romans pulled out, they were left at the mercy of invaders, and being incapable of mounting a defence, cowered in fear while the Saxon hordes overran them.141 However, progress in archaeology and genetic anthropology are shedding new light on the accounts of Gildas and Bede.142 Hume derived much of his evidence from them, and it

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138 Ibid., 78. Author’s italics.
141 Ibid.
142 Bede tells us that there were five languages present in Britain. These were English, British, Irish, Pictish and Latin. The Picts arrived from Scythia to settle first in Ireland, and then mainland Britain.
is now thought that civilisation in Britain did not collapse in on itself in such a spectacular fashion after the Romans withdrew.\footnote{143}{The work of Dr Mark Thomas of University College, London, is involved in determining the ancient demographics of Britain using gene alleles, mitochondrial DNA and Y– chromosome inheritance patterns. See for example, Cristian Capelli et al., “A Y Chromosome Census of the British Isles”, \textit{Current Biology} 13, no. 11 (2003), 978–984. Stephen Oppenheimer has also tracked migration patterns of Y– chromosome inheritance in the British Isles. The work of these men, in some ways, actually support notions that Scottish Highlanders were not invaders from Ireland during the Dark Ages, but were ancient inhabitants of the Highland region as the Macphersons insisted. Ferguson probably also supported their position, notionally at least. See Oppenheimer, \textit{The Origins of the British}, 4, 19–50, 123–4, 361–2, 406–421. This reappraisal of population replacement by invasion has sparked the writing of numerous popular books on Britain’s prehistory which include Francis Pryor’s, \textit{Britain BC: Life in Britain and Ireland before the Romans} (Hammersmith: London: Harper-Perennial, 2004) and also Norman Davies, \textit{The Isles: A History} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).}

The hostile reception of \textit{Ossian} following Ferguson’s close involvement with Macpherson during the writing phase may have provoked extensive alterations to the \textit{Essay’s} precursor – the \textit{Treatise on Refinement} (circa 1759). Perhaps inclusions, like the passage from the \textit{Essay} on the previous page, regarding the positive traits of past inhabitants of the British archipelago, incurred Hume’s disapproval. Hume had acknowledged the \textit{Treatise} with favour, but in contrast, he received the \textit{Essay} (1767) with quiet horror.\footnote{144}{Hume to Adam Smith, London, 12 April 1759. Hume wrote, ‘Ferguson has very much polished and improved his Treatise on Refinement; and with some amendments it will make an admirable book, and discovers an elegant and singular genius’. See Burton, \textit{Life and Correspondence of David Hume}, vol. 2, 56. Hume begged Ferguson’s friends to try and persuade him not to publish the \textit{Essay}, as he feared it would damage Ferguson's reputation. See Burton, \textit{Life and Correspondence of David Hume}, vol. 2, 385. See also Hume to William Robertson, 29 May 1759 in R. Klibansky and E.C. Mossner, eds, \textit{New Letters of David Hume} (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1954), 57.}

Perhaps Hume took umbrage when Ferguson sought to criticise the civilising process, with its inevitable ‘moral consequences for the life of communities’.\footnote{145}{Kidd, \textit{Subverting Scotland's Past}, 236.} Moore is one of the first to acknowledge these uneasy bicultural tensions, which, though not of the order of those of Macpherson, still constrained Ferguson’s thinking:

\begin{quote}
\ldots Ferguson appears to demonstrate both the affinity to Gaelic culture and the condescension towards it that characterises Macpherson’s own work: Ferguson understands the difficulty of the Gael in the 1750s while still characterising him as a ‘deer-steeler’.\footnote{146}{Dafydd Moore, "James Macpherson and Adam Ferguson: An Enlightenment Encounter", 8.}
\end{quote}

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\footnote{143}{The work of Dr Mark Thomas of University College, London, is involved in determining the ancient demographics of Britain using gene alleles, mitochondrial DNA and Y– chromosome inheritance patterns. See for example, Cristian Capelli et al., “A Y Chromosome Census of the British Isles”, \textit{Current Biology} 13, no. 11 (2003), 978–984. Stephen Oppenheimer has also tracked migration patterns of Y– chromosome inheritance in the British Isles. The work of these men, in some ways, actually support notions that Scottish Highlanders were not invaders from Ireland during the Dark Ages, but were ancient inhabitants of the Highland region as the Macphersons insisted. Ferguson probably also supported their position, notionally at least. See Oppenheimer, \textit{The Origins of the British}, 4, 19–50, 123–4, 361–2, 406–421. This reappraisal of population replacement by invasion has sparked the writing of numerous popular books on Britain’s prehistory which include Francis Pryor’s, \textit{Britain BC: Life in Britain and Ireland before the Romans} (Hammersmith: London: Harper-Perennial, 2004) and also Norman Davies, \textit{The Isles: A History} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).}

\footnote{144}{Hume to Adam Smith, London, 12 April 1759. Hume wrote, ‘Ferguson has very much polished and improved his Treatise on Refinement; and with some amendments it will make an admirable book, and discovers an elegant and singular genius’. See Burton, \textit{Life and Correspondence of David Hume}, vol. 2, 56. Hume begged Ferguson’s friends to try and persuade him not to publish the \textit{Essay}, as he feared it would damage Ferguson's reputation. See Burton, \textit{Life and Correspondence of David Hume}, vol. 2, 385. See also Hume to William Robertson, 29 May 1759 in R. Klibansky and E.C. Mossner, eds, \textit{New Letters of David Hume} (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1954), 57.}

\footnote{145}{Kidd, \textit{Subverting Scotland's Past}, 236.}

\footnote{146}{Dafydd Moore, "James Macpherson and Adam Ferguson: An Enlightenment Encounter", 8.}
\end{quote}
Ferguson became something of an apologist for Macpherson. Dwyer believes Ferguson allowed his home to be used to proselytise unbelievers who lacked faith in Ossian’s translator.\textsuperscript{147} Despite Hume’s later objections to Ossian, his judgement may have been clouded by his personal dislike of Macpherson whom he found prickly, sullen and vain.\textsuperscript{148} A remark made by Hume in letter to Blair betrays an attitude that went beyond dislike. Hume wrote, ‘I advise him [Macpherson] to travel among Chickisaws and Cherokees, in order to tame and civilize him’.\textsuperscript{149} Hume had thought Macpherson a sensible, modest fellow and a very good scholar in 1761, but by 1763 he had become perverse and unamiable in his eyes.\textsuperscript{150} That year, Hume urged Bute to find Macpherson a distant post so he could no longer cause embarrassment to the Scottish literati. Macpherson was sent to Florida to be secretary to Governor George Johnstone.\textsuperscript{151} It appears it was only after Hume had been to London that he became convinced of Macpherson’s dishonesty. Hume appeared to be one who needed some convincing, although Ferguson held that Hume never formally affirmed or denied the authenticity or imposture of Macpherson’s text.\textsuperscript{152} In a letter to Henry Mackenzie, then engaged in research for a work about John Home, Ferguson wrote:

David Hume was not at Moffat when these interviews with M’Pherson took place; he was, you know, a professed sceptic, and cannot properly be said to have ever formally affirmed or denied the authenticity or imposture of the poetry in question. He began and continued to call for evidence – perhaps for more evidence than the circumstances of the case could admit; but this, you know, is the essence of scepticism; – to most men, day-light is sufficient evidence that the sun is rising or is risen; but the sceptic would always have more, even if the rays are vertical.

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\textsuperscript{148} In a letter to Blair, dated 19 September 1763, he wrote: ‘The absurd pride and caprice of Macpherson, himself, who scorns as he pretends, to satisfy anybody that doubts his veracity, has tended to confirm the general scepticism’. Burton, \textit{Life and Correspondence of David Hume}, vol. 1, Appendix C, 465–466; Saunders, \textit{Life}, 203.
\textsuperscript{149} Burton, \textit{Life and Correspondence of David Hume}, vol. 1, Appendix C, 470–471. Letter to Blair dated 6 October 1763.
\textsuperscript{151} MacLean, "Early Political Careers", 84, 86 and 89; Stafford, \textit{The Sublime Savage}, 181. The anti-Scottish fervour Bute ushered in was aggravated when he oversaw the appointment of his fellow Scots to key positions in the East India Company and West Florida. See Linda Colley, "Britishness and Otherness: An Argument", \textit{Journal of British Studies} 31 (1992), 128.
As to the project and subscription which afterwards took place, to dispatch M’Pherson to collect more poetry in the Highlands, I was not then in Scotland, nor heard of it till some time afterwards.

Mr Home certainly never entertained any doubt that the original of Mr M’Pherson’s translations was traditionary in the Highlands. 153

Instead of appeasing the English by separating the Highlanders from the Irish parent culture, Ossian merely served to reignite debate over the Gothic liberties, which Hume had shown to be irrelevant after 1688. James Macpherson had anti-Irish prejudices which are evident in the preambles to his poetical works. Macpherson’s suspicions about the Irish records necessitated his vigilance to ensure his redactions were ‘secure of not being contradicted by an illiterate, and may I say irreligious race of men, assumed to themselves the dignity of being the mother nation’. 154 Dafydd Moore found Macpherson’s two histories (A History of Great Britain from the Restoration to the Accession of the House of Hanover (1775) and Original Papers, containing the Secret History of Great Britain, from the Restoration to the Accession of the House of Hanover; to which are prefixed Extracts from the life of James II, as written by himself (1775)) to have:

…whipped up a storm not only for the anti-Irishness of its history (which was in itself nothing new to the reader of Ossian) but for its overt Anglophobia; and various works of contemporary history. It is worth noting these as they are indicative of Macpherson’s concerns and interests. 155

However, Ferguson’s nemesis, Thomas Percy, was every bit as blinkered as James Macpherson. In translating Paul-Henri Mallet’s Introduction a l’Histoire de Dannemarc (1755-56), Percy replaced every occurrence of the word ‘Celtic’, with ‘Gothic’. 156 Furthermore, Kidd charges Percy with undermining the text for his own political purposes:

Percy subverted the very text he was editing. Indeed, he refined Mallet’s work by replacing its ethnological scheme with the first attempt to break up the indiscriminate septentrional yoking of Celt and German. Percy felt obliged to puncture ‘an opinion

153 Ibid., 522.
156 Moore, Enlightenment and Romance in Macpherson’s Ossian, 38.
that has been a great source of mistake and confusion to many of the learned writers of the ancient history of Europe, viz., that of the ancient Gauls and Germans, the Britons and Saxons, to have been all originally one and the same people; thus confounding the antiquities of the of the Gothic and Celtic nations’. Percy spelt out the fact that ancient Britain, Germany, Scandinavia and Gaul had not been ‘inhabited by the descendants of one single race’.  

After that, one is left to conjecture whether Percy’s persecution of Ferguson was motivated as much by his obvious suspicion of superstitious Celts, as it was by the knowledge that Ferguson was a participant in bringing Ossian to the public’s attention.  

The irony in all this is that Macpherson exhibited as much distrust of Catholic superstition and priestcraft as Thomas Percy. Any favour Macpherson garnered by denying the Highland link with Ireland was dashed with his references to druidism. Many Englishmen, Percy among them, looked upon the druids as the harbingers of Catholic superstition in Ireland and the Highlands. Kidd goes as far as to insist that it was the remarks on the druids that led to the final separation between Celt and Goth. Percy followed earlier historians like Pelloutier in declaring Celts to be ‘priest-ridden’ and superstitious. The alliance of druidism with Celtic superstition lent further weight to the belief that the Highland and Irish people were immersed in Papist superstition and were therefore, ethnically inferior. Macpherson’s decision to include a discussion of druidism in his Dissertation almost completely sabotaged his mission to win inclusion and acceptance for Highlanders. Even so, Macpherson was obviously read, or rather misread, with calculated prejudice since the remarks in his Dissertation were both anti-druidic and anti-clerical. Macpherson was adamant that druidic power was never abused and never broke out into violence or oppression. However, Macpherson also saw the druids were ‘a cunning and ambitious tribe of men’. Macpherson indicates the druidic office with its legislative power and supremacy in war had become an hereditary one.

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158 Indeed, even Richard B. Sher has his suspicions about Percy. He suspects prejudice against Ferguson’s Highland background. See Sher, "Percy, Shaw and the Ferguson 'Cheat', 223, but especially p. 235.
159 Kidd, British Identities before Nationalism, 208.
161 Macpherson, "A Dissertation Concerning the Antiquity, &c. Of the Poems of Ossian", 44.
Refusal to resume election of the office escalated into civil war.\textsuperscript{162} As Moore notes, Macpherson’s druids became marginalised.\textsuperscript{163} In effect, Macpherson was paying tribute to Britain’s constitutional monarchy, where the power of the monarch was limited by the parliament. There again, whether Ferguson was following Macpherson, or vice versa, is uncertain. In his \textit{Essay} Ferguson credits the druids with giving Britons their first taste of civil government:

\begin{quote}
In this wild and lawless state, where the effects of true religion would have been so desirable, and so salutary, superstition frequently disputes the ascendant even with the admiration of valour; and an order of men, like the Druids among the ancient Gauls and Britons, or some pretender to divination, as at the Cape of Good Hope, finds, in the credit which is paid to his sorcery, a way to the possession of power: his magic wand comes in competition with the sword itself; and, in the manner of the Druids, gives the rudiments of civil government to some, or, like the supposed descendant of the sun among the Natchez, and the Lama among the Tartars, to others, an early taste of despotism and absolute slavery.\textsuperscript{164}
\end{quote}

Due to his prejudiced reading of Macpherson’s text, Percy had Ferguson in his sights. Nevertheless, Ferguson did not seem to bear any grudge against Macpherson for Percy’s attempt to besmirch his character. Fagg insists that Ferguson showed ‘no special Highland passion’\textsuperscript{165} in his defence of \textit{Ossian} or Macpherson, but with detractors like Percy discretion and diplomacy were a necessity. Ferguson wrote to Sir John Macpherson after the death of James in February 1796. He encouraged John to take up the project James had failed to complete during his lifetime:

\begin{quote}
I find in the Edinburgh news Paper \textit{The Death of a very Remarkable man & much in your Thoughts as well as in Mine James McPherson.} The Reviver of Ossian. You certainly know if true what I was told that he had made out a fair Copy of the original Poems. Mr McKenzie Secretary to the Highland Society of London told me he had the Manuscript in this Possession and that a fund was already provided for the expence of Printing it: That it was deferred merely upon a question which had not been determined whether it should be printed in Greek or Roman/Character. I had a Specimen sheet sent me two or three years ago, in the Roman & Another in the Greek Character. With a Literal Latin translation word for [word] on the opposite page, the form in which I was told it was intended to print the Whole. I now see or Suspect the whole load will fall upon you. The question relating to the Character is a Trifle & whether the Greek or the Roman be employed, James McPhersons orthography differing much from that employed in the Bible \&c will require to have prefixed an Alphabet in which the Power & Sound of every Letter will be ascertained as much as possible. You will be able to inform yourself fully how the matter stands & I most earnestly entreat that you will take it up Seriously & earnestly: for if we die
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{162} Ibid., 45.
\textsuperscript{163} Moore, "James Macpherson and the Adam Ferguson: An Enlightenment Encounter", 9.
\textsuperscript{164} Ferguson, \textit{Essay}, 103.
\textsuperscript{165} Fagg, "Biographical Introduction", lxxii.
also before it is done I doubt the Papers will be lost & and the fund provided for Printing remain unaccounted for.\footnote{Merolle and Wellesley, eds, \textit{Correspondence}, vol. 2, 381–382. Letter to Sir John Macpherson dated Nidpath [Neidpath] Castle, 29 February 1796. Current author's italics. This letter indicates that Ferguson was concerned that the phonics of the Gaelic language were communicated in as close an approximation as was possible to English-speakers. To that end, he urged his friend to undertake the task of producing the work. It also indicates that Ferguson was possibly interested enough to own a Gaelic copy of the New Testament (published 1767), translated into more modern Scottish Gaelic by a member of the Presbytery of Dunkeld (James Stewart of Killin). It was the Gaelic version of \textit{Ossian} that irrevocably unmasked Macpherson as an apparent fraud. However, he had triggered an interest in Celtic scholarship as a result of \textit{Ossian}'s introduction to the world at large.}

The letter placed Ferguson squarely in the centre of the \textit{Ossian} project. Although the diplomatic Ferguson was aware of the strong bond between John and James, his words in this letter are not those of an indifferent man. In his final sentence, the word ‘earnestly’ is used twice. In Chapter Three, evidence was produced to demonstrate that Ferguson supported the publication of a Gaelic/Greek or Gaelic/Latin translation of \textit{The Works of Ossian} as a textual aid for Highland ministers.\footnote{See also Chapter Two, pages 82–88, and Chapter Three, pages 137–138.} He had always wanted Macpherson to produce a Gaelic/Greek version of the \textit{Poems of Ossian} in order to stimulate the clergy’s interest in classicism and assist them to compose their sermons in Gaelic rather than English. Ferguson may have seen this venture as furthering the interests of Moderatism in the Highlands. Although the project never came to fruition, it seemed that James Macpherson had as much, if not more, respect and affection for Ferguson as Ferguson had for him. It prompted Macpherson to write in September 1774:

\begin{quote}
You know McErguis [Mac Fhearghuis, Gaelic for Ferguson] is the man who drew me from obscurity. His politeness to me… are debts and claims on me that oblivion itself can scarcely obliterate.\footnote{As quoted in MacLean, "Early Political Careers", 98.}
\end{quote}

Without Ferguson, there may not have been an \textit{Ossian}. Its publication had numerous positive effects. It inspired true collectors of Highland lore, Celtic scholarship, and increased interest in Gaelic as a language among educated Highlanders.\footnote{Josef Bysveen, \textit{Epic Tradition and Innovation in James Macpherson's Fingal} (Stockholm: Uppsala University, 1982), 51.} One of the positive outcomes included the realisation among Scottish intellectuals, such as Kames, that creativity, originality and genius existed in primitive
societies as well as in polished ones.\textsuperscript{170} Caroline Bingham claims that \textit{Ossian} succeeded where Martin Martin’s journal of a tour in the Western Isles and Lhuyd’s scholarship had failed to arouse sufficient public interest.\textsuperscript{171} \textit{Ossian} also helped Lowlanders come to terms with their northern neighbours and their strange language.\textsuperscript{172} It helped with the assimilation of Highlanders, the acceptance of their language and culture, and lay the groundwork of a tourism industry which has thrived in Scotland ever since.\textsuperscript{173} It brought Highlanders and Gaelic to the attention of an international audience. \textit{Ossian} also launched an interest in the sublime and heralded the Romantic Movement in literature. It also led to the Germany’s \textit{Sturm und Drang} movement, which engaged many of Germany’s finest intellects, Goethe among them.\textsuperscript{174}

Unfortunately, \textit{Ossian’s} detractors, despite their use of research and erudition, were largely driven by their passions. This merely confirmed Ferguson’s theories about conflict and its role in the politics of identity. Several Scots found Macpherson’s \textit{Ossian} fantasy and his re-working of Scottish history in order to rehabilitate the Highlands distasteful. In Scotland, the Picts (Macpherson’s Caledonians) were pivotal to this explosion of hostile Teutonism. Teutonism prized certain aspects of the Germanic character over those of Britons who were pushed to the western parts of the isles following the alleged Saxon influx. These attributes included the Germanic love of freedom, industriousness and the inclination toward Protestantism and enthusiasm in contrast to druidic superstition. Celts were thought to be prone to superstition and slavery as well as being lazy and backward. This attitude prevailed despite the fact that

\textsuperscript{170} Stafford, "Introduction: The Ossianic Poems of James Macpherson", xvi.
\textsuperscript{174} Stafford, \textit{The Sublime Savage}. 177
Macpherson had taken pains to link the Caledonians, Celts and Germans to each other in a rather bewildering manner:

Tacitus was of opinion that ancient Caledonians were of German extract. By the language and customs which always prevailed in the North of Scotland, and which are undoubtedly Celtic, one would be tempted to differ in opinion from that celebrated writer. The Germans, properly so called, were not the same with the ancient Celtae. The manners and custom of the two nations were similar, but their language different … The Celtae, it is certain sent many colonies of that country, all of whom retained their own laws, language, and customs; and it is of them, if any colonies came from Germany into Scotland, that the ancient Caledonians were descended … But whether the Caledonians were a colony of Celtic Germans, or the same with the Gauls that first possessed themselves of Britain, is a matter of no moment at this distance of time.  

Macpherson is non-committal. The people in Scotland may or may not be descended from Gauls, Celts or Germans. The customs of the Celts and Germans are similar but their languages differ. Macpherson implies that although Highland Scots now speak a Celtic language, they were descended from the Caledonians who were probably of Germanic stock. Tacitus certainly thought the Celts appeared like Germans, and indeed Macpherson’s work ignited the search for a national identity in German-speaking principalities. The allocation of identity by Macpherson is so complex that even modern scholars like Colin Kidd find it difficult to ascertain whether James Macpherson thought of himself as a Celt or a German. However, people in Britain who believed they were descended from Germanic tribes like the Angles and Saxons wished to

\[175\] Macpherson, "A Dissertation Concerning the Antiquity, &c. Of the Poems of Ossian", 44.  
\[178\] This notion of Kidd’s possibly relates to the fact that those of the Macpherson family name were a member of the Clan Chattan confederation. Clan Chattan claimed descent from the Catti tribe of Caithness who were reputedly of Germanic origin. See Kidd, *British Identities before Nationalism*, 201. It is also convenient for Macpherson to have a foot in both camps. By being a descendant of Tacitean Caledonians (resembling Germans) one can share in the Gothic freedoms of the Anglo-Saxons when detractors begin their invective against the Celts.
differentiate themselves from the inferior Celtic race. This all needs further explanation before its relevance to Ferguson can be revealed.

The two key figures in this Teutonist retaliation were John Pinkerton (1758–1825) and Malcolm Laing. Pinkerton argued against prevailing German scholarship by insisting the Celtic languages bore no relation to Greek because word initial mutations did not occur in Greek.\(^{179}\) Pinkerton argued that the Gaelic and Welsh languages merely *appeared* related, due to Roman contact in Wales and Christian Latinity in Ireland.\(^{180}\) At one point, he contradicted himself by declaring Celtic to be ‘half-Gothic’ or half-Teutonic.\(^{181}\) Pinkerton was incensed that Macpherson had lowered Scotland’s tenor by writing ‘the most diseased dreams into the history of Scotland’\(^{182}\). He alleged that, ‘Mr McPherson knew that his own dear Celts are and have ever been regarded as, a weak and brutish people’.\(^{183}\) The debate ended on a sour note, as Kidd indicates here:

> In the great Pictish debate that ensued, scholars such as George Chalmers and the Northumbrian Joseph Ritson established the case that the Picts were Brythonic Celts. Nevertheless, Pinkerton had his supporters and some influence on the emergence in nineteenth-century Scotland of a racist ideology celebrating the common Teutonic origins of Britain’s core England and Lowland Scots nations. By a delicious irony, this version of Teutonic racialism took its rise from a confused appropriation by Gothicists of a shadowy Celtic past.\(^{184}\)

The book which furnished Pinkerton with much of his argument, *De Situ Brittaniae* by Ricardus Corinensis (Richard of Cirencester) circa 1335, was even more spurious than

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\(^{179}\) Mutations are such as when/c/ mutates to /ch/ at the beginning of a word in certain grammatical environments. The work of pioneering Celticist, Edward Lhuyd (1660–1709) had built on the philological efforts of the Latinist and Gael, George Buchanan. Buchanan had been first to differentiate the Celtic languages of the British archipelago. In 1754, Johann Schoepflin demonstrated that the Celtic and Germanic languages were related. Kidd, *British Identities before Nationalism*, 196–197, 208 and 187.

\(^{180}\) John Pinkerton, *Dissertation on the Origin and Progress of the Scythians or Goths: Being an Introduction to the Ancient and Modern History of Europe: With an Enquiry into the History of Scotland Preceding the Reign of Malcolm III, or the Year 1056* (London: John Nichols, George Nichols and sold by B. and J. White ... and I. Herbert, 1787), 121 and 67. Pinkerton must have known, but refused to admit, that the Irish were instrumental in the re-introduction of civilised cultural values to a barbarous European continent after the void left by the break-up of the Roman Empire. This fact, as a defence, was now off-limits to Macpherson because he deliberately obscured the connection between Scotland and Ireland. See Colin Kidd, "Gaelic Antiquity and National Identity in Enlightenment Ireland and Scotland", 1197, 1199 and 1203.

\(^{181}\) Pinkerton, *Dissertation on the Origin and Progress of the Scythians or Goths*, 67.

\(^{182}\) Ibid., 91.

\(^{183}\) Ibid.

Ossian. B. B. Woodward and J. E. B. Mayer exposed *De Situ Britanniae* as a forgery by Charles Bertram (1723–1765) in 1866.\(^{185}\)

The other great Scottish critic of *Ossian* was Malcolm Laing (1762–1818).\(^{186}\) Laing resented Macpherson’s alleged promotion of the Celt over the Teuton.\(^{187}\) Yet, Laing and Pinkerton misinterpreted Macpherson, who, in declaring Highlanders’ descent from the Caledonians, was also claiming descent from tribes which Tacitus believed were of German extraction.\(^{188}\)

From this Teutonist backlash came yet another connection, albeit tenuous, to Adam Ferguson. Like Scott, Ferguson was only a Teutonist in so far as he also supported the type of constitutional monarchy which had come about as a result of the Glorious Revolution.\(^{189}\) Saxons were held to be the adopters of constitution, law, commerce and industry.\(^{190}\) However, Pocock believes that the Anglo-Saxon possession of law and parliament does not necessarily constitute Teutonism.\(^{191}\) Scott chose to make

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\(^{186}\) Laing delighted in argument and evidence, having trained as a lawyer. Laing was convinced that, in writing *Ossian*, Macpherson had plundered over a thousand sources, including the Bible, the *Iliad*, and Milton’s *Paradise Lost*. Other texts Laing alleged he plagiarised included Home’s *Douglas*, Young’s *Night Thoughts* and Gray’s *Elegy*. See John Dwyer, “The Melancholy Savage”, 166. According to Saunders, over a hundred sources were cited by Laing. Laing found these thousand instances of plagiarism from at least eighty-eight authors. See also Saunders, *Life*, 304–5.

\(^{187}\) Laing may have been disgruntled because, as an Orcadian, and therefore by Macpherson’s reckoning, as a Goth of Scandinavian origin, he fell outside what he thought of as Macpherson’s exclusive Celtic set. The Orkney Isles off the tip of Scotland’s Caithness have been inhabited by humans for over five thousand years. There were Pictish settlements in Orkney, but over the centuries, there has been cultural augmentation from Danes, Norse and Lowland Scots. Dwyer brands Laing acerbic, while Price holds that he was spenetic rather than critical. See Dwyer, *Melancholy Savage*, 165; and also John Vladimir Price, "Ossian and the Canon in the Scottish Enlightenment" in *Ossian Revisited*, ed., Howard Gaskill (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1993), 121.

\(^{188}\) Tacitus, *The Agricola and the Germania*, 61. The Caledonians as Tacitus described them were large-limbed and red-haired, like the German tribes which fringed Roman territory. This Teutonic factor in Tacitus and Macpherson’s *Ossian* may have ultimately contributed to the success of *Ossian* in Germany.


\(^{190}\) How ironic, then, that these Germans, Goths, Aryans and Saxons (or Celts if you were actually German) oppressed the Highlanders, who were notionally Celts, but likened to Goths, Huns and Vandals (barbarians) by Teutonists. Howard D. Weinbrot, *Britannia’s Issue: The Rise of British Literature from Dryden to Ossian* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 500–509. The waters of Gothicity (Teutonicity) and Celticity were truly muddy.

the Teutonist dispute a central theme for one of his Waverley novels. Ferguson had catalysed this debate by involving Macpherson with Home and Blair. Scott’s novel was an indication that the argument had caught the attention and imagination of the Scottish reading public. The novel, titled The Antiquary, centres on the questionable authenticity of the ancient regnal lists that once buttressed Scotland’s ancient constitution and claim to sovereignty. Scott’s main character, Jonathon Oldbuck, is a Teutonist who is sceptical about the ancient constitution’s legitimacy. Macpherson’s role in sparking the debate is worked into Scott’s plot. The premise has two of the characters, Lovel and Oldbuck, speculating about the exact site of the ancient battle of Mons Graupius. Oldbuck’s friend Lovel researched and penned a poem in honour of the Caledonians which he entitled The Caledoniad. In contrast to Macpherson’s case, Scott’s novel ends with Lovel encouraging the public to view his research notes. Arguments over the respective merit of Gothic Pict and inferior Celt pepper the novel’s pages.

Arthur Melville Clark, a biographer of Scott, surmised that Ferguson may have provided the model for Oldbuck’s character, if only for his comparable querulous nature and fondness for Stoic maxims. The novel was published in 1816, the very year of Ferguson’s death. Scott had been an almost lifelong friend of Ferguson’s son, Sir Adam Ferguson, and therefore he was a frequent guest of the Ferguson household. Ferguson’s pupil, Dugald Stewart, had taught Scott, and shared with Ferguson a mutual interest in the science of man. Forbes sees Ferguson’s influence on Scott deriving from

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193 Sir Walter Scott, The Antiquary, Collins Illustrated Pocket Classics (London: Collins, 19-- originally published in 1816), 534. This copy was undated.
194 Ibid., 50, 60–63. See also 78–79 for an example of the argument.
Stoicism and Montesquieu. This common interest in the science of man allied to history is most evident in Scott’s first chapter on civilisation in Tales of a Grandfather. Scott’s Waverley is also thought to be illustrative of Ferguson’s Essay in the way it charts the transformation of a barbaric Highland society as it encounters polished or commercial values. Penny Fielding notes that Scott entered into the same reason/passion and active/passive dualism that also interested Ferguson. Finally, the influence of the Fergusons, who once arranged billets for him in Perthshire, on Scott’s knowledge of Highland culture and language, cannot be underestimated. Scott would eventually write Ferguson’s epitaph.

To conclude, it must be conceded that Ferguson was engaged in setting the Ossian wheel in motion when he introduced Macpherson to people of influence like Home and Blair. Ossian was unquestionably about finding a common ground between the Highlands and Lowlands. Sher gives a great deal of responsibility for this to Ferguson. He writes, ‘Not surprisingly, it was Adam Ferguson, the person who bridged

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197 Duncan Forbes, "The Rationalism of Sir Walter Scott", The Cambridge Journal 7, no. 1, (1953), 23. Forbes wrote, ‘In his interests and in the turn of his mind he takes his place naturally in the great succession from Montesquieu and Adam Ferguson and the other founding fathers of sociology in eighteenth-century Scotland. When Adam Ferguson died in 1816, Scott described him as ‘my learned and venerated friend… whom I have known and looked up to for thirty years and upward’. This veneration is not surprising. There is in Ferguson, as in Montesquieu and in Scott, a vein of Stoicism. He taught that life was a dangerous game of hazard, in which happiness cannot be a matter of calculation because it ‘arises more from the pursuit, than from the attainment of any end’. For Forbes quotations see H. J. C. Grierson, ed., The Letters of Sir Walter Scott, 1771–1832, 12 vols, vol. 4 (London: Constable & Co. Ltd, 1932–1937), 181. See also Ferguson, Essay, 51, for the quotation within Forbes’ quotation.

198 Penelope Fielding, "Walter Scott and Eighteenth Century Thought" (Ph D, Oxford University, 1991), 12, 190, 247–249. Stewart was influenced by Reid and Shaftesbury as well as Ferguson. See also John Peter Bradwell, "Sir Walter Scott, the Scottish Enlightenment, and British Romanticism" (Ph D, University of Virginia, 1993), 62, 64. And see also Forbes, "The Rationalism of Sir Walter Scott", 22 and 27.

199 Bradwell, "Sir Walter Scott, the Scottish Enlightenment, and British Romanticism", 166; Forbes, "The Rationalism of Sir Walter Scott", 21. Waverley was the most obvious of the novels which bring barbaric Highland society into contact with polished societal values. Forbes cites Rob Roy, The Fair Maid of Perth, The Two Drovers and Anne of Geierstein as others which have this theme. See Forbes, 22.


201 See Appendix M, page 435–436 at the rear of this thesis for Ferguson’s epitaph and memorial at St Andrews.
the gap between the Highland and Lowland worlds more successfully than any other eighteenth-century man of letters, who did most to bring the two sides together’. Ferguson had no reason to question Macpherson’s sources because he was familiar with the material and its mode of oral transmission. He possibly thought Macpherson’s Gaelic epic might make the majority of the population more accepting of Highlanders and their language. The Ossian affair meshed well with a possible scheme to raise the acceptability of Gaelic among Church authorities. The only way to teach English to Highlanders (as educated Highlanders knew) was through the Gaelic language. Within three years of Temora’s publication, the Gaelic ban in schools had been lifted and the Bible had been translated into Gaelic. Ferguson and Macpherson realised Ossian’s potential as a tool to help Highland ministers attain Gaelic literacy and create interest in classical literature which polite, secular country estate owners delighted in. The accomplishment of these objectives would sustain the Moderate Party’s strength in the Highlands. Despite Ferguson’s prescience to have Gaelic acquire a body of secular texts, this did not come to fruition. Highlanders increasingly identified Gaelic with spiritual matters, rather than science or art.

At a more personal level, Ferguson probably encouraged Macpherson to collect Highland verse and lore for several reasons. Firstly, it may have been something he would have wished to do himself but his knowledge was limited. Secondly, he hoped that Macpherson’s collecting would shed light on earlier phases of society in the British Isles. It served to supplement Ferguson’s personal and professional interest in the science of man. Finally, because Ferguson could not completely divorce his own Highland past from his present persona, perhaps he hoped the collection of Highland lore by Macpherson might be an undertaking replete with the expectation of reconciliation between Lowland and Highland Scotland. At the very least, it was an attempt to get a measure of recognition from the rest of Britain that there was more to Highland life than poverty, violence and insurgency.

While time and recent scholarship have shown many of the blots placed against Macpherson’s name in the eighteenth century were due to ignorance, prejudice and

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misconception, it was unfortunate that Ossian’s arrival coincided with the term of the objectionable Lord Bute at Britain’s helm. This contributed to anti-Scottish fervour. Nevertheless, the Ossian episode unearthed the fault lines in Ferguson’s historical thinking. In the evolution of humankind’s institutions, particularly forms of government, Ferguson was firmly in Hume’s camp. However, on matters relating to the early history of Scotland, Macpherson and Ferguson were even more sceptical than Hume of records derived from Irish monasteries. The disavowal of the Irish provenance of their language and history was provoked by a crisis of identity. Scots knew Highlanders as wild savages who spoke the Irish language, yet Highlanders like Ferguson were aware their ancestors had been settled in the Highlands for centuries. It was here Ferguson displayed his ambivalence. For Ferguson, since the advent of a constitutional monarchy and the Union with England, all origin myths had become superfluous. He saw myth served the purposes of moral education, developing identificatory structures within a target culture and delivering clues about past ways of life. Ossian opened up new lines of debate, new lines of historical and scientific enquiry, and new literary and artistic avenues of expression. The controversy over it also confirmed Ferguson’s ideas on conflict and the diversity of value systems as a feature which modern societies had to overcome if they were to be successful.

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204 Bute, who became the King’s chief minister in 1761, had a particularly disastrous term in government. John, the third Earl of Bute, was both a Stuart and a Tory. While he was in power, the British people were anxious about losing the liberties they had secured at the time of the accession of William and Mary. Lord Bute, who had also been George III’s erstwhile tutor, became a dreaded influence on the King because of his Tory inclinations. The British populace feared power would be devolved from Parliament back to the monarch because of George III’s adherence to a belief in Divine Right and the infallibility of the monarch. See Alexander Murdoch, ‘The People Above: Politics and Administration in Mid-Eighteenth-Century Scotland’ (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1980), but especially p. 132.

In the next chapter, I intend to go beyond the mechanics of Ferguson’s involvement in the *Ossian* controversy to probe parts of the *Essay*, which may have been a restrained attempt to answer the backlash and scepticism which met *Ossian* upon its publication. These prejudices resided in the impenetrability of oral transmission by literate society.
In the previous chapter, we explored Ferguson’s role in the genesis of *Ossian* and some of the repercussions it had for himself and his nation. James Macpherson was one among the numerous Scots who denied the Irish origins of the Gaelic language. These Scots were either Highlanders, or Lowlanders who had strong connections with the Highlands through their work. Macpherson went a step further than most by transmitting the message that all Scots, both Highland and Lowland, were descendants of the Caledonians whom Tacitus regarded as Germanic (like their Saxon cousins).

Even so, the idea that all the inhabitants of Scotland were Scots was nothing new in the Highlands as the somewhat unbalanced view of a contemporary writer like James Hunter illustrates:

> Although Lowlanders – in a complete overturning of historical realities – were sometimes to insult Highlanders and Hebrideans by implying that they were not Scottish, that particular affront was not reciprocated. The Gaels, being more aware than their tormentors of how the Scottish Kingdom was originally put together, always regarded the Lowlander as Albannach, Scottish. And that sense of underlying unity, on the Highland side at least, was strong enough to survive the persecution, massacre, military repression and eviction. To none of these did the Gaels respond by endeavouring to develop a sense of national identity over and above that which they felt themselves to share with the many Lowlanders – from James VI to Patrick Sellar – who devoted so much effort to their effective elimination.

This modern expression of the way Highlanders perceived their identity demonstrates little had changed since James Macpherson and his predecessors, Malcolme and Stone, neither of whom were Highlanders, sought to emphasise the fact that Highland Scots, though they may have spoken a different language, were Albannach and not Eireannach, as the Lowlanders continuously mislabelled them.

The brief of this chapter logically follows, but does not directly derive from, the last. This chapter will explore Ferguson’s knowledge of the oral culture and mindset of the Highlands at its intersection with the classical basis of British society in the

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1 See the Ferguson quotation, this chapter, around the centre of page 254.
eighteenth century. The fact that Ferguson provides evidence of this knowledge in his *Essay* supports the case for his Highland past having prevailing influences on his manner of thinking. It took two Scottish scholars, Donald G. MacRae\(^3\) and Duncan Forbes, who perhaps knew more about Highland culture and history than their colleagues in other parts of the world, to raise the suggestion that his early enculturation affected his mindset.\(^4\)

I will argue that Ferguson demonstrated a familiarity and understanding of the many oral techniques that were beyond the comprehension of literate men like Hume and Johnson. Ferguson’s knowledge of the mechanics of primary orality set him apart from the literary world in which he moved. Community and primary orality are linked and often co-dependent. They generate a particular worldview. Since Ferguson spent his most formative years in such an environment, it is probable that his brain was hard–wired by oral mechanisms. I hope to demonstrate how this oral past influenced Ferguson, and how literacy changes but does not obliterate orality. Ferguson seemed to connect the purpose of historical method and ancient oral lore to the inculcation of morality.

In the first instance, I will explore how the Moderate literati, Blair, Home and Carlyle, embraced and were comfortable with the inferences drawn by Macpherson about Highland orality and ancient rhetoric. In producing *Ossian*, it was necessary for Macpherson to mediate between the oral and literate worlds. Later in the chapter, I will examine how Ferguson defended and understood oral mechanisms in his *Essay*. His intimate knowledge of this mode of existence enabled him to calculate and comprehend the losses modernisation would inflict on the Highlands through specialisation. A comparison of the oral and literate mindset will follow. This will include consideration of the way literacy alters thinking and how specifically English literacy orders the mind and elevates consciousness. I will move on to a discussion of Hume and Johnson’s

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\(^3\) MacRae was born in Cathcart, Scotland in 1921. He studied at Glasgow and Oxford before being attached to the London School of Economics. See "Donald G. MacRae", *Contemporary Authors (Biography)* published by Thomson Gale (2004). Forbes came from an Aberdeenshire family. See the prefatory note on him in David Hume, *The History of Great Britain : The Reigns of James I and Charles I* ed., Duncan Forbes (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970).

devaluation of orality and privileging of literacy, a position prompted directly in response to Macpherson’s *Ossian*. Finally, I hope to show that the skills Ferguson and his contemporaries brought from their primary oral communities remained with them throughout the rest of their lives, even after English literacy was attained and interiorised.

During the mid-eighteenth century Calgacus, who led the Caledonians in their battle against the Romans, became a Scottish icon. This was chiefly due to the powers of speech attributed to him by Tacitus. The Moderate literati embraced this link between ancient rhetoric, Roman history, Scottish pride and Belles Lettres. College students often took the subject of Belles Lettres to supplement their vocational courses – law, teaching or divinity. Belles Lettres was intended to refine the arts of preaching, lecturing, disputation and advocacy. Ferguson was aware that Belles Lettres was underpinned by rhetoric, and in turn, rhetoric had its origin in primary orality. In its archetypal form, rhetorical talent was usually a component of an active political or military life lived within a community or city-state. The art of rhetoric was developed out of superior oral communication skills, which were later organised, formalised and made inflexible by the imposition of rules, the very fixity of which was made possible by the arrival of literacy.⁵ Penelope Fielding, a specialist in the field of Scottish literature, was particularly alert to the paradoxical relationship of orality to Belles Lettres.⁶

The Moderate literati admired Cicero, but the Caledonian Calgacus had exercised eloquent public leadership at the time of national crisis (an attempted annexation of North Britain by the Romans).⁷ Importantly, Calgacus was an indigene of Scotland. He had gone on record as the first Scot to extemporise in the course of his vocation as a military leader, just as the Presbyterian minister was expected to extemporise in prayer. For the Moderate literati, it was but a step from Calgacus the Caledonian to the Highland

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bard, whose extempore dexterity enlivened winter evenings. Interestingly, men such as the Reverend Donald MacNicol, Alasdair MacMhaighstir Alasdair (Alexander MacDonald) and Dr John Macpherson, all in one way or another connected with the revival of Highland poetry and history, identified themselves as descendants of the Caledonians. Blair, Home and Carlyle appeared to need little convincing that the ancient Caledonians were their predecessors. Perhaps their friendship with Ferguson and John Macpherson, along with their abiding interest in Highland poetry and manners, encouraged them in their acceptance of these views. Carlyle and Blair maintained almost as close a relationship with John Macpherson as Ferguson. Carlyle delighted in entertaining John’s relatives, Macleod of Bernera and the Macleods of Colbeck. The Moderate literati’s attitude toward James Macpherson and Ossian contrasted markedly with that of Hume.

Ferguson knew that the function of lore in the Highlands was to create identity and produce social cohesion, but he also probably realised that Macpherson’s tales would not find favour in the polite world in their native format. For Ossian to be successful, the chasm between the oral and literate cultures of Scotland’s two halves would have to be spanned. This difficulty lay behind Macpherson’s initial reluctance to furnish Home and Carlyle with what they wanted – a Gaelic epic translated into English. The difficulty arose because Highland tales were never intended to be read, much less rendered into a foreign language. As Chapman noted, Highland tradition was complex, it ran together places, times and people, had no known author, and no particular timeframe. Highland lays are devoid of a linear plot, a climax, or any

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9 MacDonald was an anti-Hanoverian poet, who in 1741, had written a Gaelic and English vocabulary for use in Charity Schools. However, he is most renowned for his *Ais-Eiridh na Sean Chanoin Albannaich* - 'The Resurrection of the Ancient Scottish Tongue' (1751). MacDonald is regarded as Gaeldom's finest poet of the post-classical era. It is unlikely Ferguson would have been in the least bit interested in MacDonald's work because of the poet's pro-Jacobite sympathies.


11 Hugh Blair, "IOR MSS EUR F 291/83" in *Sir John Macpherson: Correspondence with Hugh Blair* (1797), Alexander Carlyle, "IOR MSS EUR F 291/87" in *Sir John Macpherson: Correspondence with Alexander Carlyle*.

12 "IOR MSS EUR F 291/87", Macpherson to Carlyle from Calcutta, 29 October 1783.


structural organisation. They contain little that would be familiar to a literate mind.\textsuperscript{15} Despite Macpherson’s attempt to make the \textit{Poems of Ossian} more comprehensible to the non-initiated, Dafydd Moore could still distinguish \textit{Ossian}'s non-linear outline.\textsuperscript{16} Macpherson’s academic training may have convinced him that these faults had come about through sixteen centuries of oral transmission. Richard Bauman and Charles L. Briggs argue that the construct of tradition, having weathered the encroachment of modernity, justifies the purification of corrupt remnants in the restorer’s mind.\textsuperscript{17} Despite Macpherson’s native knowledge of orality, his subsequent training encouraged him to augment, expunge and alter the orally transmitted material which he documented in the course of his expedition.\textsuperscript{18} Thomas McKean finds that Macpherson’s use of mixed sound and sight metaphors were indicative of some sort of dichotomy.\textsuperscript{19} This apparent dichotomy probably resulted from Macpherson processing material from oral and written sources. Furthermore, it was necessary for Macpherson to alter the oral artefact in order to make his work acceptable to Lowland academia. The Gaelic folklorist J. F. Campbell claimed, ‘Highland stories then, have been despised by educated men, and they are as yet unchanged popular tales’.\textsuperscript{20} This gives the clue as to why Macpherson’s tampering may have been a necessary evil: he could not avoid it.

Macpherson made the adjustments to bring the lays into line with polite standards. He used a similar methodology to the Grimm bothers, who omitted bawdy details and

\textsuperscript{16} Dafydd Moore, \textit{Enlightenment and Romance: In James Macpherson’s 'the Poems of Ossian'} (Aldershot, Hants: Ashgate, 2003), 147 and 158.
added Christian components to their collected fairytales.\textsuperscript{21} He wished to make his fragments of ancient poetry work together as a viable and intelligible epic, whilst retaining a suggestion of the bizarre and primordial. To do this he mimicked the verb-subject-object syntax of Gaelic,\textsuperscript{22} which inverted the normal word order in the English translation. This made his prose both abrupt and exotic.\textsuperscript{23} He modified Gaelic proper names (Tara became Temora) out of a regard for English ears (and English ignorance of the Gaelic language).\textsuperscript{24} In Macpherson’s mind he was not doing anything untoward, but to the literate section of the population, there was no evidence to suggest that the Ossianic lore he had produced was anything but a conjuration devised by a fevered imagination. This presents us with one of the issues \textit{Ossian} raised. How does one prove the existence of oral material and its transmission over time? Whether Macpherson fabricated \textit{Ossian} is independent of the existence of a Gaelic oral tradition and the mechanisms by which this tradition was perpetuated.

Oral tradition became a battleground in the eighteenth century for several reasons. Firstly, eighteenth-century literati felt orality and oral tradition was inferior to writing and the historical record. Orality fostered cohesiveness, sentiment and stirred the emotions. The qualities cultivated by orality were good reasons for a government to counteract them. Secondly, primary oral societies were cohesive and had strong senses of identity. If aroused, the people could behave as one body. The verbomotor (primary oral) and literate lifestyles promoted entirely different characters and worldviews, and I would submit that this oral ‘programming’ set Ferguson’s life experience in stark contrast to those of his contemporaries Smith and Hume. The verbomotor programming primed a person for action within a specific community and this is


possibly why Ferguson criticised the reflective, studious ‘monastic’ who spent much of his life confined to a cell in a walled community.  

Before we can begin to understand how dissimilar the oral mind is from the literate mind, we need to consider the way English literacy orders the human mind to react in specific ways. The written word has longevity and visual fixity. It encourages autonomy and homogenises disparate dialects and class groups. As the English language grew and assimilated words and ideas from diverse regions and cultures, dictionaries became a necessity. As the English lexicon grew, so did the synonyms and choice of alternative words, thus increasing the possibility of incomprehensibility to others. Literacy also interferes with memory processes because it generates a reliance on the visual word. The word becomes a mere representation of action. For Fielding, orality is sensation, while literacy is representation. Writing’s singular drawback is that without its paralinguistic adjuncts, communication can be fraught with ambiguity.

It must be stressed that more societies have existed without writing than have existed with it. Nevertheless, such societies needed a means to store knowledge in lieu of pen, scroll or tablet. Certain devices were employed by primary oral cultures to preserve knowledge, law, wisdom, ethos, identity and history. Literate culture is not devoid of such phenomena but, as Eric Havelock insists, primary orality in its purest form died with the birth of the Greek alphabet. Since this development, few cultures have remained completely uninfluenced by literacy. In essence, primary orality and full literacy provide the two ends of an oral/literate continuum.

It should be remembered that the complexities of grammar were developed prior to the advent of literacy. Spoken language is often more grammatically complex than

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26 Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, 83.
27 Fielding, *Writing and Orality*, 199.
29 Ibid.
written language. In turn, spoken language is also more personal and immediate. In verbomotor cultures, formulae lurk behind all thought and expression, including those of many Mediterranean cultures where literacy was never fully interiorised, such as in Greece. Cliché, proverbs and formulaic expression abound in verbomotor cultures, carrying the received wisdom of a people and signifying their shared knowledge. Extemporaneous rhyming was a favourite pastime of Highlanders, as well as a means of passing down traditional laws and dividing property or gifts. Martin Martin recorded these capacities among Hebrideans when he toured the islands in 1695:

Several of both sexes have a quick vein of poesy and in their language (which is very emphatic) they compose rhyme and verse, both which powerfully affect the fancy. And in my judgement (which is not singular in this matter) with as much great force as that of any ancient or modern poet as I have ever heard read. They have generally very retentive memories and see things at a great distance.

Donald Campbell, a Highlander who defended Ossian, documented the processes of Gaelic poetry that strengthened the memory. One line of poetry would introduce the next, making it possible to remember the first line and almost impossible to forget the last. Many Highland work songs and puirt-a-beul (literally mouth-music) use this device. Peter Womack claims that the organic qualities of Gaelic made it ‘physically easier to recite a poem correctly than get it wrong’. Metrics and tempo often determined the exact word to use in compositions, and the metrical form became a type of mnemonic itself. In most oral cultures, particularly in the Highland culture with which Ferguson was familiar, orality and literacy became superimposed on each other so that the devices of both came to be used in their appropriate settings. Within circumstances like this, a prominence became attached to literacy in education that

33 Tannen, *Spoken and Written Language*, 1–2 and 5.
34 Martin Martin, *A Description of the Western Islands of Scotland, Circa 1695* (Stirling: Eneas MacKay, 1703), 46. It was Martin’s book that fascinated Dr Johnson and inspired him to undertake his Highland odyssey in 1773. Martin was also a Highlander.
37 A puirt-a-beul or mouth music displaying the classic repetition of the type mentioned above can be accessed in Appendix N, page 437, at the rear of the thesis.
automatically devalued the orality of the Highland culture. The role of the Church of Scotland in promoting English literacy in parish and SSPCK schools has been discussed. In this environment, orality becomes synonymous with illiteracy, which of itself was a by-product associated with socially inferior classes.\textsuperscript{40}

Members of Highland communities who were incapable of hard manual labour contributed to the life of the community with entertainments of moral value.\textsuperscript{41} In contrast to literate society, the music and poetry of the Highlands was functional, not aesthetic. It served to induce well-being, ward off evil and educate youngsters. Work such as reaping, rowing or waulking cloth was often accompanied by rhythmic song. Music and poetry accompanied all facets of living – work, home life, deaths, weddings, and other entertainments and celebrations.\textsuperscript{42} Here, Michael Newton summarises the importance of oral/aural entertainment in the Highland community:

As the \textit{cèilidh} was a local institution, based in a community, run by and for the members of that community, it was automatically tailored to the needs, concerns, and environment of that community. People told stories regarding their ancestors, sang songs about significant events in their own communities, created proverbial lore relevant to their own flora, fauna, and a sense of place, and engendered an ethos of self-reliance.\textsuperscript{43}

According to Newton, the focus of such gatherings was invariably centred on the singular community.

This is where the interchange between orality and community come together as one organism. Chapter One established that the Highlands was a vast region varying in terrain, aspect and climate. Parts of Perthshire were heavily wooded, while parts of the Western Isles were treeless. Peculiar regional characteristics were reflected in the local store of folklore. Additionally, there were distinct regional dialects of Gaelic and locality was often reflected in the lexicon.\textsuperscript{44} Communal gatherings like those outlined

\textsuperscript{40} Fielding, \textit{Writing and Orality}, 43. Primary orality became the domain of Highland women and small children who were confined to the home and mixed less within the community. The confinement of orality to women and children had the effect of ‘gendering’ the Gaelic language.

\textsuperscript{41} Stafford, \textit{The Sublime Savage}, 14.

\textsuperscript{42} Ibid., 13.

\textsuperscript{43} Michael Newton, \textit{A Handbook of the Scottish Gaelic World} (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2000), 104–105.

\textsuperscript{44} Communities on the west coast have a high proportion of borrowed Norse words for seafaring, boating terms and place names. Vocabulary varies regionally. For instance, in parts of the mainland the Gaelic
above by Newton may have been familiar to both Ferguson and Macpherson, if not by
direct experience,\textsuperscript{45} certainly indirectly through village acquaintances. A younger
Ferguson may have been present in the Atholl household at more formal entertainments
where the famous Gows played fiddle as the company danced jigs and reels.

This firm sense of place and community still exists in more isolated parts of the
Highlands to this day, though it is gradually being eroded. Peter G. Mewett’s
contemporary study of Clachan, a village in Lewis, has shown that its expatriates are
still included in community proceedings.\textsuperscript{46} Members who marry or work outside the
community are rarely forgotten, even in their absence.\textsuperscript{47} Mewett found ancestry was still
of importance in Clachan\textsuperscript{48} for the practical purposes of second cousin exogamy, but
also for identity.\textsuperscript{49} As Walter Ong asserts, ‘Primary orality fosters personality structures
that in certain ways are more communal and externalised, and less introspective than
those of literates’.\textsuperscript{50} I submit that Ferguson’s particularist and communitarian
propensities, recognised by Lisa Hill, Duncan Forbes, James Sheets, David Kettler and

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\textsuperscript{45} Although the Church frowned on ‘entertainments’, it could not always enforce its wishes. Moderates
such as Ferguson and his father may have been more tolerant, especially since the Duke of Atholl was a
patron of the Scottish fiddlers, Neil and Nathaniel Gow.

\textsuperscript{46} Mrs Katie Graham, who was originally a native of Lewis in the Western Isles, informed the author that
Mewett actually interviewed people from three different villages. He then combined his findings from
these interviews under the fictitious name of ‘Clachan’ (which is Gaelic for village or hamlet).

\textsuperscript{47} Peter G. Mewett, "Exiles, Nicknames, Social Identities and the Production of a Local Consciousness in
a Lewis Crofing Community" inBelonging: Identity and Social Organisation in British Rural Cultures
MacMhaighstir Alasdair was a nickname given to Alexander MacDonald. It combines the patronymic
with another form of identity, in this case, the profession of the father. Thus, MacDonald’s Highland
identity became Alexander, the son of Alexander the schoolmaster. Another Gaelic poet was known in
Gaelic as Máirí Nighean Alasdair Ruaidh (Mary the daughter of red-haired Alexander). Their ancestry,
profession, a dominant physical characteristic or a combination of features, identified people in the
Highlands.

\textsuperscript{48} Peter G. Mewett, "Associational Categories and the Social Location of Relationships in a Lewis
Crofing Community" in Belonging: Identity and Social Organisation in British Rural Communities

\textsuperscript{49} See also Peter G. Mewett, "Boundaries and Discourse in a Lewis Crofing Community" inSymbolising
Boundaries: Identity and Diversity in British Cultures, ed., Anthony P. Cohen (Manchester: Manchester
Relationships in a Lewis Crofing Community", 113.

\textsuperscript{50} Ong, Orality and Literacy. 69.
Norbert Waszek, were formed in Logierait where there was a high degree of consanguinity and primary orality or Beul-Aithris. As Daniel Wells notes:

The awareness of the nation as a community distinct from, and in some cases defined in opposition to other communities permeates the work of Adam Ferguson.

Nor is there any indication he would have it any other way.

Ferguson belonged to a linguistic group without any formal boundaries. During his young adulthood, Highland Gaelic-speakers were perceived as a threat to the Union. Their detractors realised that the spoken word promoted a strong sense of unity among them. This created an additional need to implant English literacy and extinguish Gaelic.

There is little doubt that Ferguson imbibed some knowledge of orality, given that he sprang from a small, interrelated community which fostered an interest in ancestry and ancestral history. As Blair explained, Highland people still displayed a strong attachment to the memory of their ancestors. As a testament to the power of formulaic expression to lay down retrievable memory pathways in the brain – Ferguson, aged eighty-three, used a Gaelic proverb translated into English to begin a letter to fellow Gael, John Macpherson. The proverb – ‘He who does not sow in cold weather will not...”

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52 Daniel Wells, "Scottish Literati and the Problem of Scottish National Identity (David Hume, William Robertson, Adam Smith, Adam Ferguson, James Macpherson)” (M. A. University of Western Ontario, 1997), 51.


54 Many English proverbs also use formulaic language that pre-dates mass literacy. For example, ‘A stitch in time saves nine’.
reap in Warm Weather’.\textsuperscript{55} survives in Gaelic as \textit{Am fear nach dèan cur ri latha fuar cha dèan e buain ri latha teth.}\textsuperscript{56} Ferguson had much closer ties to his Highland community than a future fellow countryman who displayed a similar understanding of verbomotor cultures. Andrew Ross maintains that David Livingstone had contact with Highland oral tradition through the influence of his Gaelic-speaking grandmother. It left him with a distinct affinity for the pre-literate tribal societies which he had encountered in Africa. Ross claims, ‘It (Livingstone’s exposure to Highland orality) provides a clue to his ability to sympathise with and enter into the different African societies with which he later came into contact’.\textsuperscript{57} Ferguson lived much nearer the Highlands than Blantyre, where Livingstone was exposed to the oral tradition. Furthermore, Ferguson had a parent, rather than merely grandparent, who was a native-speaker of Gaelic. Despite being a valued member of Edinburgh’s literati, Ferguson remained conscious of the pre-literate Gaelic past. This oral ‘past’ was more difficult for him to leave behind than is supposed. It is not something that can be completely reversed by attaining literacy. As Ong points out:

\begin{quote}
This awareness is agony for persons rooted in primary orality, who want literacy passionately but who also know very well that moving into the exciting world of literacy means leaving behind much that is exciting and deeply loved in the earlier oral world.\textsuperscript{58}
\end{quote}

Adam Ferguson demonstrated a familiarity with the qualities, devices and rhythms employed by verbomotor or oral cultures that only a cultural insider could possess. However, he also realised that his reputation might be damaged and his Highland connection emphasised if he defended \textit{Ossian} or Macpherson directly. Instead, he was able to launch an indirect defence with an explanation of oral tradition within the \textit{Essay}. Ferguson wrote of the delight taken in verse composition by oral cultures. Ferguson appears to be familiar with devices such as rhythm; line replication, assonance and rhyme that were engaged to preserve or enhance memorisation. Most


\textsuperscript{56} See Douglas Clyne, \textit{An English–Gaelic Dictionary of Expressions, Idioms and Phrases} (Glasgow: Gairn, 1985), 342. This translates as ‘He who will not sow on a cold day, will not reap on a warm one’. Many English proverbs performed a similar function, perpetuating and disseminating folk wisdom. They were composed in such a way so as to heighten recall ability.


\textsuperscript{58} Ong, \textit{Orality and Literacy}, 15.
significantly, he mentions bringing the ear in to assist the memory. Although his references to primitive societies are sweeping, there is little doubt Ferguson had Highlanders in mind when he penned the following:

*They delight in verse-compositions*, either because the cadence of numbers is natural to the language of sentiment, or because, not having the advantage of writing, they are obliged to bring the ear in the aid of memory, in order to facilitate repetition, and insure the preservation of their works.

When we attend to the language which savages employ on any solemn occasion, it appears that man is a poet by nature. Whether at first obliged by mere defects of his tongue, and the scantiness of proper expressions, or seduced by a pleasure of the fancy in stating the analogy of its objects, he clothes every conception in image and metaphor.\(^{59}\)

The preceding passages from the *Essay* display both an inside knowledge of orality and a literate trait – the ability to become detached and analytical. Ferguson surmised that in rude ages there was little need for guardedness in expression. The rude did not wince over grammatical errors, their nouns were fixed and they were at liberty to break constructions in order to find agreeable cadences. This allowed the barbarian freedom to be creative.\(^{60}\) Ferguson even defended primitive language from an oft-levelled criticism – that of being so immersed in figure and metaphor as to render abstraction impossible. He mused:

If a language, even that of a savage nation, contain the generic terms of animal, vegetable, or universal terms of substance, quality, quantity and so on; so far, may we be assured that the people who speak that language, even the most rude, have abstracted; and, so far, the direct operation is familiar to every one: Although the reflex act of the mind, in recollecting and stating what the mind itself had done, is reserved for men of speculation and science.\(^{61}\)

Ferguson suggested that everyone, including the pre-literate, had the capacity to abstract, but because so much energy is diverted to formulaic and regimented thought, abstraction becomes the exception rather than the rule. Ferguson then went on to depict the change of consciousness that occurs once the mind can signify meaning externally in a permanently representative manner (writing). In writing, the signifier and signified become detached and separated, wherein the signifier becomes aware of their prior act


\(^{60}\text{Ibid., 166–167.}\)

of consciousness. It had occurred to Ferguson, long before Goody and Watt, that writing was a significant step towards objectification, individualisation and, in particular, an increase in personal awareness. The act of writing separated the written from the person who performed it, thus enabling the examination, modification, re-codification and improvement of the original written text. It also allows the opportunity for originality and ultimately incremental progress. Ferguson noted that this manner of thought had become a reflex response for literates and men of science. Ancient poets, by comparison, moved the heart and had charms to entrance, even while the works of contemporary prose writers languished on the bookshelf. He articulated this in an oblique reference to Ossian and Homer:

The most admired of all poets lived beyond the reach of history, almost of tradition. The artless song of the savage, the heroic legend of the bard, have sometimes a magnificent beauty, which no change of language can improve, and no refinements of the critic can reform.

Despite being unschooled, the ancient poets use the best subject matter for poetry, which include trials and quests, tribulation, violence, mayhem, intrepid bravery and generosity, all of which touch the truths, traditions, or spring from the sentiment of one folk mind. They are not a pastiche from the mind or culture of another. As Ferguson noted regarding this type of bard, ‘He delivers the emotions of the heart, in words suggested by the heart: for he knows no other.’

Other observations Ferguson had to make regarding the difference between oral and literate cultures further set him apart from his literate peers. Despite living in an era where Johnson found it necessary to codify, standardise and fix the language, Ferguson appreciated that it was impossible to stem the rate of linguistic change. This betrayed a pressure to lift language out of that barbarous oral stage of jargon into the print world of fixation. This concern to ‘civilise’ English came via knowledge that the

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63 Ferguson, Essay, 167.
64 Ibid., 166.
65 Ibid.
66 Kathryn Temple, "The Author in Public: Literary Scandals, Legal Regulations and National Identity in 18th Century Britain (Copyright, Plagiarism, Great Britain)" (Ph D, University of Virginia, 1994), 91.
French and Italians had formed academies to standardise their languages. Ferguson argued that even the written word was not immutable; language was subject to diachronic change. Ferguson asserted that:

The sacred text of religious instruction; favourite and popular compositions of genius, like those of Homer in Greece, and Shakespeare in England, have a tendency to arrest the fleeting nature of language, but do not, as was formerly experienced in some of these instances, and is now felt in the others, secure it from change.

Dr Johnson also knew language was not immutable. It tended to follow fashion, and had a natural proclivity to degenerate. Since orality always precedes literacy, Johnson contended that orality was fleeting and unstable. Critics like Johnson charged oral transmission with conservatism. However, Chapman notes the conservatism arising from oral transmission was no more radical than that which arrived with the concretisation of the written word. Goody claims that oral cultures still have some interiorised processes, even though they are thought to be inferior to literates. It needs to be stressed that composition and learning among oral cultures are not accomplished by rote learning – the manner in which a literate person would attack a task like the memorisation of a poem for recitation. The learning and composition of oral forms are a private process, but the final expression of the work is always public.

English literacy had some modifying effect on the thought patterns of both Ferguson and James Macpherson. To some extent, both men had lost the ability to conceive sound as action, an ability common to pre-literate cultures. Chirographic or print cultures see names as mere labels, whereas in verbomotor cultures names have

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68 Diachronic change is change over time. The synchronic is a description of language at a particular point in time.
69 Ferguson, Principles of Moral and Political Science, vol. 1, 45. The current author's italics.
71 Chapman, Gaelic Vision, 212.
72 Goody, The Domestication of the Savage Mind, 26–27.
supernatural power. An example of the power once vested in words can be seen in the opening verses of the Johanine Gospel.

Ferguson’s perception of his native culture had been altered somewhat by his formal education. Macpherson admitted that Highlanders who left the mountains in search of their fortunes or warmer climes ‘imbibed enough of foreign manners to despise the customs of their ancestors’. Fiona Stafford notes that Anne Grant of Laggan, a neighbour of James Macpherson, observed that educated Highlanders automatically acquired Lowland prejudices. Nonetheless, the formative years of men like Ferguson were spent in Gaelic-speaking communities and this was sufficient to leave its effect. However, attempting to acquaint literate men like Johnson and Hume with the oral worldview was something of an exercise in futility. Although it was penned before Dr Johnson’s excursion to the west of Scotland, Ferguson’s Essay states that genius in the arts is not confined to those who can read and write and that each successive culture had modelled itself after those that had gone before it. Ferguson made it clear in the preamble to his section on the literary arts that many refinements like writing came about through sheer accident and circumstance. Thus, like England’s matchless constitution, the advent of literacy had also been a matter of chance. Ferguson was in a far better position to judge the performative powers of literate and non-literate peoples than Dr Johnson, having been steeped in the knowledge of both. Johnson was literate in several languages from early childhood, and his denunciation of Ossian in the Journey was irretrievably bound up with his disparagement of oral transmission.

This raised the issue surrounding the elevation of literacy over orality which stood for the triumph of modern culture, polite society and technology over that of the traditional, static or barbarian society. The nature of this will be explored in the coming

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74 ‘In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God.’ John 1: 1–2.
76 Stafford, The Sublime Savage, 7.
77 Ferguson, Essay, 161.
78 Ibid., 162.
pages. The incredulity of people such as Johnson, Percy and Hume about the existence of oral transmission and a chain of tradition, further fuelled animosity between English and Scot, and Lowlander and Highlander. We will now determine why they were incredulous and then explore what compelled them to take that line of thought.

Men like Hume and Johnson could not resist the temptation to impose literary criteria on oral material. However, Hume and Johnson cannot be faulted for being ignorant of something they could never have experienced first hand as Ferguson had. The incredulous Hume was prompted to write the following piece on Highland oral lore:

And they were composed, you say, in the Highlands, about fifteen centuries ago; and have been faithfully transmitted, ever since, by oral tradition, through ages totally ignorant of letters, by the rudest, perhaps, of all European nations; the most necessitous, the most turbulent, the most ferocious and the most unsettled.

Although Hume correctly questioned the date of Ossian, it is plain that he believed that print was the only vehicle for preserving knowledge. In the aftermath of the rebellion, Hume wrote to Boswell and pointed out to him that a starving people trying to avoid the hangman had no time to transmit poetry to the next generation. Hugh Blair, however, continued to believe in the oral transmission of Highland verse, so for his sake Hume suppressed the publication of his Essay on the Genuineness of the Poems (of Ossian) until after his own death. In another broadside at Macpherson, Hume wrote, ‘Such is the Erse Epic, which has been puffed with a zeal and enthusiasm that has drawn ridicule on my countrymen’. Here again, the lack of written evidence from what was ostensibly an oral culture aroused his scepticism. As one who supposedly detested faction this once, major sponsor of Macpherson had had a reversal of opinion, although Raynor considers the ‘cosmopolitan Hume’ to be a myth created by the man and his admirers.

Dr Johnson held a similar opinion to Hume regarding the imprecision of orality and oral transmission. For Johnson, a language was only cultivated when it ‘teemed

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82 Burton, Life and Correspondence of David Hume, vol. 1, Appendix C, 471.
with books’, which implied that Gaelic, having few books, was naturally inferior. Johnson noted, ‘As no man leaves his eloquence behind him, the new generations have all to learn’. With regard to the Highland poetic tradition, Johnson was inclined to believe that all Highland bards were illiterate and, as a result, could be neither knowledgeable nor eloquent:

That the Bards could not read before the rest of their countrymen, it is reasonable to suppose; because; if they had read, they could probably have written; and how high their compositions may reasonably be rated, an inquirer may best judge by considering what stores of imagery, what principles of ratiocination, what comprehension of knowledge, and what delicacy of elocution he has known any man attain who cannot read. The state of Bards was yet more hopeless. He that cannot read, may now converse with those that can; but the Bard was a barbarian among barbarians, who, knowing nothing himself, lived with others that knew no more.

Johnson presumed that few men heard an oral composition often enough to retain it, let alone repeat it. This led a Gaelic-speaker like Donald Campbell to remark, ‘Dr Johnson forgets he is a man of letters’. What Campbell was getting at was the fact that Johnson assumed that Highlanders memorised a tale, poem or set of objects in the exact same way that he would set about it himself – verbatim. Johnson was therefore suitably unimpressed when the illiterate poet Duncan Ban MacIntyre recited four thousand lines of verse for him. It was enough to fill a small volume of over one hundred and fifty pages. Johnson attributed MacIntyre’s feat to rote learning, a technique a non-literate Gael like MacIntyre would never have employed. In oral cultures, there was no expectation for recitations or songs to be identical, even when performed repeatedly by the same person. Johnson denigrated Macpherson’s verse as ‘a mere unconnected

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85 Ibid.
86 Johnson, *A Journey to the Western Isles*, 96.
89 Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, 32 and 61. It has been acknowledged in recent years that oral epics such as Homer’s were not composed to be reproduced by verbatim memorisation. Milman Parry noted there were characteristics common to Homeric epic and the Slavic material he was studying. This has become known as the Parry–Lord hypothesis. See also Goody, *The Domestication of the Savage Mind*, 114. One protest of the many Highland ministers who defended Ossian was that the *Iliad* was also composed of detached fragments that were not cohesive or chronologically ordered. See Katie Trumpener, *Bardic Nationalism: The Romantic Novel and the British Empire* (Princeton, N. J: Princeton University Press, 1997), 90.
rhapsody, a tiresome repetition of the same images’. He had unwittingly stated precisely what lengthy oral poetry was, yet he failed to recognise the significance of his observation. He did not realise that in oral cultures verse was literally ‘stitched together’, using cliché and formulaic expression, just as the word ‘rhapsody’ derived from the Greek root *rhapto*, meaning ‘to stitch’. Lettered men like Johnson had no need for mnemonic devices like rhythmic repetition, or formulaic image. For literate men like Johnson, such mechanisms were not only redundant, they were long forgotten. The differing techniques used to store facts and fiction in oral and literate cultures bears out Sorensen’s argument that English was a space for disinterested scholarship. However, it was not literacy *per se* but English itself that promotes this disinterest. This factor will be discussed forthwith when we have dispensed with the problem Johnson found with orality.

At a recital of an oral composition such as those met with in the Highlands, Dr Johnson, like most literate men, would counter the virtues of the paralinguistic performance with a suspension of emotion and an amplification of analytical logic. He comprehended oral tradition purely in the terms common to his objective, literate mindset, as the following statement establishes:

In an unwritten speech, nothing that is not very short is transmitted from one generation to another. Few have opportunities of hearing a long composition often enough to learn from it, or have inclination to repeat it so often as is necessary to retain it: and what is once forgotten is lost forever.

Johnson alluded to the effort and drudgery that the process conjured up from his literate perspective. To the eighteenth-century polite mind, oral tradition was transitory, uncertain and impure and it was thought to pose a threat to the transmission of

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91 Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, 21–22. Rhapsody is from the Greek *rhapto-* for 'stitch' and *-oide* for 'ode'.
93 Ian Duncan, “The Pathos of Abstraction” in *Scotland and the Borders of Romanticism*, eds, Leith Davis, Ian Duncan, and Janet Sorensen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 39–40. Ian Duncan appears to argue that modernity also depersonalises reciprocity because the main vehicle of exchange became currency.
95 Johnson, *A Journey to the Western Isles of Scotland*, 97.
literacy. Nevertheless, within a few generations, literacy disengages people from the natural world, as scholars of Aboriginal languages in Australia, such as Colin Bourke are quick to point out. Primary oral communities encourage particularity. Their lore and entertainment revolve around their neighbourhood, their ancestors and their characters, which gives a clue as to why such entertainment would have been of little interest to men like Johnson or Hume.

As the acquisition of literacy tends to alter consciousness, Johnson and Hume remained resistant to advocacy or explanation regarding the nature of orality. Writing is a device which enables listing, tabulation, rearrangement, syllogism, symbolisation and history, all of which fundamentally alter patterns of thought. These allow the literate mind to become analytical so that it comes to prefer sequence, linearity and coherence. With this technology, it became easier to record history and law and to explore philosophy, science and art. Writing makes it possible to attempt to explain language itself. The objectification and detachedness promoted by literacy not only permit criticism, they also enable consciousness of consciousness. Most importantly, English is more adept at this re-ordering of the mind than many older languages. Modern cross-cultural analysis has determined that English literacy initiates a tendency toward listing facts and recalling fine detail. Deborah Tannen set up an experiment with Greek and English-speaking women. She showed each group the same short film clip and asked them to recount it. Tannen finds that modern English-speaking women use sequence and time as their primary organising principles. In contrast, the Modern Greek women used theme and human action. The experiment demonstrated that speakers of the Greek language have not interiorised literacy to the same degree as English-speakers. Modern Greek retains the organising principles that were present before literacy. Therefore, Greece’s early literature retained many features of orality.

Before the alphabet was perfected in Greece, it became the last culture free of all literary contact. Since the development of the alphabet, few societies have been

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97 Ong, Orality and Literacy, 174–179 and 24; Tannen, Spoken and Written Language, 2.
100 Tannen, Spoken and Written Language, 4.
completely free of contact with literacy, and this includes the culture of the Highlands. Ferguson recognised that, ‘The language of early ages, is in one respect, simple and confined; in another, it is varied and free; it allows liberties, which, to the poet of after times are denied’. Ferguson goes to great lengths to impress on his readers that rude nations performed song, music and poetry to assist their retention of substance, be that content fable, law or instructions:

…every tale among rude nations is repeated in verse, and is made to take the form of a song. The early history of all nations is uniform in this particular. Priests, statesmen, and philosophers, in the first ages of Greece, delivered their instructions in poetry, and mixed with the dealers in music and heroic fable.

The only explanation for this insight is that Ferguson recognised the similarities between aspects of orality in Highland culture and the manifestations of orality evident in early Greek texts. This knowledge helps us to comprehend the disparity between the literate and oral mindsets and to see how the conditioning of these practices created prejudices in men like Ferguson and Johnson.

Ferguson’s formal introduction to ancient texts came when he attended grammar school in Perth. As members of a verbomotor culture during childhood, Highlanders like Ferguson would have readily recognised the pre-literate manifestations within the texts they studied. The transliteration and translation exercises young men were required to perform in school were a derivative of the mainstream culture’s preoccupation with book learning. Reacting to this realisation, Ferguson launched into what can only be described as a very early accusation of Eurocentricity. This next passage betrays some resentment at the admiration of Greek fabula while those of the British Isles were ignored, disparaged or rejected:

It is peculiar to modern Europe, to rest so much of the human character on what may be learned in retirement, and from the information of books. A just admiration of ancient literature, an opinion that human sentiment, and human reason, without this aid, were to have vanished from the societies of men, have led us into the shade, where we endeavour to derive from imagination and thought, what is in reality a matter of experience and sentiment: and we endeavour, through the grammar of dead languages and the channel of commentators, to arrive at the beauties of thought and

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103 Ibid., 165.
elocution, which sprang from the animated spirit of society, and were taken from the living impressions of an active life.104

At face value, this might read as a goad to the active political life. Put in the context of Ferguson’s Highland enculturation, it reads as a validation of orality. In Ferguson’s mind, sentiment and reason appeared long before the alphabet. Moreover, three or four thousand years of record have concealed from the English literate intellect the way of life, the manner of thinking and the living impressions of the society which made that record. For Ferguson, a language such as Latin exists independently from the society that invented it. It is not only a dead language, but also a foreign one. No amount of transliteration and reliance on commentaries can convey the contextual elements known to the Greek or Roman author or his original readership. Moreover, young British men have already had their mindset totally reconfigured by literary English. They were distanced by many generations from their texts in a way Ferguson was not. Ferguson belonged to a generation that was in cross-cultural and linguistic transition. The more that Greek and Latin became an intellectual exercise in transliteration, the more disengaged students of the language became from the human sentiment and experience expressed in their texts. Ferguson’s community would be more at ease with the structure and spirit of early Greek texts than many educated Lowlanders. Greek texts were more analogous to spoken performance than English texts. Even the English language was strained through the colander of Latin grammar and made to conform as best it could.

Now alerted to the fact that Ferguson carried with him a knowledge about the apparatus of oral societies, we might see how Ossian could be modified to appeal to the contemporary readership and yet still function in the way it was intended to in its target oral community. Ferguson was aware that texts, whether fable or history, were instructive in the moral sense because both fable and history involved the actions of men. Therefore, Ferguson could not only experience literacy and orality in their purest format, he could also clearly determine where they overlapped and met. Lisa Hill has ascribed Ferguson’s divided loyalties to his knowledge of two philosophies that arose from each of his distinct cultural backgrounds.105 Ferguson’s grounding in orality

104 Ferguson, Essay, 33–34.
caused his gravitation toward the oral and active life rather than the literate and reflective one. This could help to explain his distrust of ancient chroniclers and annalists. Clerics, who were distanced from the lives of men and nature, to Ferguson’s mind, were ill-equipped to record men’s actions, much less evaluate them. This reinforces Ferguson’s already sceptical attitude to the monastic scribe that was discussed in the previous chapter:

To speak or to write justly from an observation of nature, it is necessary to have felt the sentiments of nature. He who is penetrating and ardent in the conduct of life, will probably exert a proportional force and ingenuity in the exercise of his literary talents: and although writing may become a trade, and require all the application and study which are bestowed on any other calling; yet the principal requisites in the calling are, the spirit and sensibility of a vigorous mind.\(^\text{106}\)

For Ferguson, the cleric was the archetypal literate engaged in reflection, word-smithing and unquestioned transliteration who was devoid of knowledge or experience of the world surrounding him. During the mediaeval period, Church control discouraged both genius and science. This aversion of Ferguson’s is not due merely to the anticlericalism of the age, but is also rooted in the verbomotor nature of his early enculturation. Ferguson reiterates his message about a life of solitude devoid of human action, emotion and experience in stern fashion in the following paragraph:

We may be satisfied, from the example of many ages, that liberal endowments bestowed on learned societies, and the leisure with which they were furnished for study, are not the likeliest means to excite the exertions of genius: even science itself, the supposed offspring of leisure, pined in the shade of monastic retirement. Men at a distance from the objects of useful knowledge, untouched by the motives that animate an active and a vigorous mind, could produce only the jargon of a technical language, and accumulate the impertinence of academical forms.\(^\text{107}\)

Ferguson argues that if leisure allowed time for scientific research, then there could be no reason for man’s advance stalling during the medieval period. The monks preserved knowledge, yet undertook comparatively few empirical scientific investigations. Ferguson could not deny that the advent of writing led to subsequent improvement, specialisation, and classification. The minutiae of each occupation compelled the need for even more reclusive study, productive of ever-more specialisation. Here he spells this out in the next passage:

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\(^{107}\) Ibid.
In this scene, matters that have little reference to the active pursuits of mankind, are made subjects of inquiry, and the exercise of sentiment and reason itself becomes a profession. The songs of the bard, the harangues of the statesmen and the warrior, the tradition and the story of ancient times, are considered as the models, or the earliest production, of so many arts, which it becomes the object of the different professions to copy or improve. The works of fancy, like the subjects of natural history, are distinguished into classes and species, the rules of every particular kind are distinctly collected; and the library is stored, like the warehouse, with the finished manufacture of different arts, who, with the aid of the grammarian and the critic, each in his particular way, to instruct the head, or to move the heart.\textsuperscript{108}

When the nature of the verbomotor culture is understood, it is easier to see why Ferguson was more aware of the effects of specialisation. The introduction of specialisation into a formerly static, verbomotor community would have obvious and devastating effects. By specialisation I mean the separation of tasks and roles in a cooperative fashion to increase efficiency, productivity and output. Adam Smith noted that this had the attendant effect of increasing the skill of the labourer at his specified task.\textsuperscript{109} However, if that task was either laborious or repetitive, it might result in the mental mutilation of the worker, which Smith believed might be remedied by education.\textsuperscript{110} In the Highlands, where workers engaged in many varied tasks from shepherding and smithing to weaving, the community grew apart and lost its sense of common heritage. Thus, its shared history and culture, which it celebrated in song and story, became one of specialisation’s first casualties, as fewer opportunities arose for people to gather as one and share their local knowledge of flora, fauna, ancestors, people and place. Once this ability and opportunity was lost, the audience was also lost. Perhaps the audience was lost en masse, as they moved to find work in towns or emigrated. Any preserved remnant itself then became the subject of specialised knowledge.

Thus, the consequences arising from an increase in specialisation in skills and trades were most apparent to a Highlander like Ferguson. With new industries like spinning and weaving gaining a hold in the Highlands, idle periods in working life of Highlanders began to decrease. James Macpherson also made this fact plain in his \textit{Dissertation}:

\textsuperscript{108} Ibid., 180.
\textsuperscript{110} Smith, \textit{WN}, 435.
The genius of the highlanders has suffered a great change within these past few years. The communications with the rest of the island is open, and the introduction of trade and manufactures has destroyed that leisure which was formerly dedicated to hearing and repeating poems of ancient times.\textsuperscript{111}

Ferguson also recognised the effects that specialisation would have on the production and transmission of verse. Norbert Waszek draws attention to Ferguson’s unique vantage point, one often ignored because of Ferguson’s wider contribution to the fields of social science and politics. The necessity to quell the instincts and desires of the mind\textsuperscript{112} while engaged in repetitive labouring tasks would eat into the time a community once spent together. Even before Smith, Ferguson concluded:

Many mechanical arts, indeed, require no capacity; they succeed best under total suppression of sentiment and reason; and ignorance is the mother of industry as well as superstition. Reflection and fancy are subject to err; but a habit of moving the hand, or the foot, is independent of either. Manufactures, accordingly, prosper most, where the mind is least consulted, and where the workshop may, without any great effort of imagination, be considered as an engine, the parts of which are men.\textsuperscript{113}

According to Waszek, Ferguson noticed that specialisation also crippled the ability to tap into sentiment because it promoted a plurality of lifestyles and occupations among people. This resulted in the decrease of their ability to empathise with one another.\textsuperscript{114} When this occurs the poet or storyteller of the community is less able to tap into the sentiments of his audience, as Ferguson suggested:

In rude ages men are not separated by distinctions of rank or profession. They live in one manner, and speak one dialect. The bard is not to chuse his expression among the singular accents of different conditions. He has not to guard his language from the peculiar errors of the mechanic, the peasant, the scholar or the courtier, \textit{in order to find that elegant propriety, and just elevation}, which is free from the vulgar of one class, the pedantic of the second, or the flippant of the third. The name of every object, and of every sentiment, is fixed; and if his conception has the dignity of nature, his expression will have the purity which does not depend on his choice.\textsuperscript{115}

This was no acknowledgment of Hobbes, but rather a recognition by Ferguson that primitive language, such as Scottish Gaelic with which he was familiar, was purer and simpler in comparison to English with its lexical imports from Latin, Greek and Norman French. The clue to Ferguson’s concern and insight again stems from his knowledge of

\textsuperscript{111} Macpherson, "A Dissertation Concerning the Antiquity, &c. Of the Poems of Ossian", 51.
\textsuperscript{113} Ferguson, \textit{Essay}, 174.
\textsuperscript{114} Waszek, "Adam Ferguson on the Dilemma of the Modern Poet", 57.
\textsuperscript{115} Ferguson, \textit{Essay}, 166–167. Italics are the present author’s.
Highland culture and oral tradition. A key feature of Macpherson’s Ossian was its sentiment and romantic melancholy. This joy of grief, or spontaneous melancholic reaction – as Kenneth Simpson characterised it – is usually thought of as a questioning of, or reaction against, Enlightenment rationalism.\textsuperscript{116} Shared emotion, whether excitement or melancholy, were experiences which cemented the bonds of the community. Ferguson, like Macpherson, was also acquainted with the ‘joy of grief’. It is encapsulated in this following excerpt from his Essay:

> There is a kind of affliction which makes an agreeable state of the mind; and lamentation itself is sometimes an expression of pleasure. The painter and the poet have laid hold of this handle, and find, among the means of entertainment, a favourable reception for works that are composed to awaken our sorrows.\textsuperscript{117}

This melancholia may have been contrived in Macpherson’s Ossian, but such sentiments were an inherent feature of Highland song and tale. Verbomotor culture, like that of the Highlands is performance-based and pleasure-oriented.\textsuperscript{118} When groups gathered together to hear a tale or recitation they could act and feel as one body. Fear of this phenomenon lay in part behind Plato’s objection to poetry.\textsuperscript{119} Furthermore, in seventeenth-century Scotland, this power to move the passions lay behind the opposition to the bardic order by James VI and the Scottish Church, which continued into the eighteenth century. This opposition spelt an end to the common high Gaelic culture shared by Scotland and Ireland, which at that time was also a literate culture. The severance of these ties propelled the general populace of the Scottish Highlands back into sole reliance on oral forms.\textsuperscript{120} In Ferguson’s parlance, this ability to move and be moved was essentially a national spirit. In the post-medieval period, Highland music,

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{117} Ferguson, \textit{Essay}, 46.
\textsuperscript{118} Havelock, \textit{The Muse Learns to Write}, 77.
\textsuperscript{120} John Macleod, \textit{Highlanders: A History of the Gaels} (London: Sceptre, 1997), 117–118. Macleod claims that it was during the reign of James VI that the monarchy began to purge the Gaelic elements of the Dal Riatic inheritance.
\end{footnotesize}
dance or work songs were deeply embedded means of achieving well-being within that community. Ferguson asserted that societies without the book were not necessarily lacking in life, imagination, beauty, or art, all of which existed before the ability to record them, and he refuted the claim that art, beauty or poetry coincided with the appearance of the written word. Notwithstanding, writing became the basis of all public speaking, enhanced as it was by organisation and structure. Rhetoric had derived from orality, but with the advent of writing, analysis and codification of it were made easier. Ong claims rhetoric became the paradigm of legal and academic discourse. Ferguson continually reminded his readers that the literature of Greece and Rome that they so admired came from active and interactive leadership in society. This oral/active – literate/reflective opposition must have been more forceful and apparent for Ferguson than for men who had lived in literate society their entire lives. While Ferguson was literate in English, and could read and write Greek and Latin, he remained able to speak but not read or write Gaelic with any facility. This added a unique dimension to his perspective on language and literacy. Being a formally educated man, Ferguson also knew that when men became preoccupied with policy and the commercial arts, they wished to be informed and instructed, rather than just moved by emotion or fancy.

While Ferguson was prepared to operate within the code of eighteenth-century historical methods, he also believed it was possible to go beyond them. He knew that there was much we could learn from and depend on in oral history. He went as far as to suggest that accounts of the origins of various tribes should be collected, albeit only after they were civilised. It is only recently that professional Scottish historians have deigned to look upon oral tradition as a source of material. Oral history is often used

122 Ferguson, Essay, 34. See also Ferguson’s quotation, top of page 253 of this chapter.
123 Ong, Orality and Literacy, 9.
124 Ferguson, Essay, 169.
125 Ferguson, Essay, 168.
126 Ibid., 164. See also the middle quotation on page 261 of this chapter.
127 Ibid., 80.
128 The Isle of Tiree in the Inner Hebrides is a prime example of an area with no written historical record. The only available source of material in either the modern or the ancient sense was what the islanders had
as a complement to archaeology or the classical authors to flesh out the near or distant past. Ferguson’s close connections with a Highland community convinced him of the worth of such history and of the reliability of memory, something most of his contemporaries would have viewed with disdain. Ferguson still insisted that the historian’s job was to state fact in order to allow the reader to pass judgement. The use of metaphor in history was an abuse to Ferguson and, above all sentiment had no place in historical writing, even though eloquence was allowed. Ferguson believed the premise of history, like lore, was a tool for moral instruction:

If it be allowed that example instrucks, such instruction is not peculiar to history. It may be obtained in poetry, novel and fable or any sort in which the good is contrasted with the bad and lights chosen the most effectual to conduct the readers choice....

For Ferguson, the study of history performed the same function in a polished, chirographic or literate society that fabula performed in primitive or verbomotor cultures. Ferguson was conscious that a shared history, like a shared mythopoeia, strengthened communal ties. However, unlike history, the moral instruction of fable belonged to discrete ethnic groups. It served to furnish a people with the mores of their society or province, and foster a unique sense of identity. Such a poet did not just originate from among a people, Ferguson argued. Rather, the poet helped shape them, as he here implies:

In this manner fiction may be admitted to vouch for the genius of nations, while history has nothing to offer that is intitled to credit. The Greek fable accordingly conveying a character of its authors, throws light on an age of which no other record remains. The superiority of this people is in no circumstance more evident than in the strain of their fictions, and in the story of those fabulous heroes, poets, and sages, whose tales, being invented or embellished by an imagination already filled with the

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subject for which the hero was celebrated, served to inflame that ardent enthusiasm
with which this people afterwards proceeded in pursuit of every national object.134

This bond and national spirit were the wellspring of the poet’s inspiration. It was also
the reason behind the audience’s appreciation of the poet.135 Ferguson stressed these
sentiments throughout his Essay, though it would seem Waszek has been the first to
realise the complexity of Ferguson’s argument that without friendship and intercourse
with our fellow creatures, we cannot fully appreciate art, nature or heroism:

The disposition on which friendship is grafted, glows with satisfaction in the hours of
tranquillity, and is pleasant, not only in its triumphs, but even in its sorrows. It
throws a grace on the external air, and, by its expression on the countenance,
compensates for the want of beauty, or gives a charm which no complexion or
features can equal. From this source the scenes of human life derive their principle
felicity; and their imitations in poetry, their principle ornament. Descriptions of
nature, even representations of a vigorous conduct, and a manly courage, do not
engage the heart, if they be not mixed with the exhibition of generous sentiments,
and the pathetic, which is found to arise in the struggles, the triumphs, or the
misfortunes of a tender affection…The pathetic of Homer consists in exhibiting the
force of affections, not in exciting mere terror and pity; passions he has never
perhaps, in any instance, attempted to raise.136

Ferguson believed that the character of a people and what they valued could be
recovered from their mythology, and that a society’s fables threw just as much light on
their culture and genius as any written history. For Ferguson, traditional tales bore the
marks of national character while at the same time being edifying. Wells was to remark
that, ‘Though Ferguson does not expressly state it, such a mythology serves as both an
instructor in the ways of virtue and as a glue or a chord by which the community is
bound together’.137 However, when such lore, tale and myth are committed to script,
Ferguson felt its force was lost due to decontextualisation, censoring, or a succession of
transmission errors:

When traditionary fables are rehearsed by the vulgar, they bear the marks of national
character; and though mixed with absurdities, often raise the imagination, and move
the heart: when made the materials of poetry, and adorned by the skill and the
elocution of an ardent and superior mind, they instruct the understanding, as well as
engage the passions. It is only in the management of mere antiquaries, or stript of
the ornaments which the laws of history forbid them to wear, that they become even
unfit to amuse the fancy, or to serve any purpose whatever.138

134 Ferguson, Essay, 77.
136 Ferguson, Essay, 40.
137 Wells, “Scottish Literati and the Problem of Scottish National Identity, 81.
138 Ferguson, Essay, 76
Ferguson realised that the objectivity created by written English to some extent disengaged a person from the subjective oral world. Rendering *Ossian* in English removed it from its ethnic context and subjective audience. Unless it was adapted, *Ossian* would have little meaning or purpose for its new readership. As Hill understands, the Macphersons (with Ferguson’s approval) were recovering and re-inventing a tradition with *Ossian* that:

…Ferguson recreated from ancient historical records as well as ‘relics of the past’. Its purpose, it appears, was to somehow prepare the social fabric (or ‘bands of society’) ravaged by progress. Ferguson’s enthusiasm for these cultural relics, particularly the Highland clans he identified so strongly with, reached its high point in his support for (and possible involvement in the production of) James Macpherson’s reproduction of Ossian’s (a third century bard) epic poems.  

If the Macphersons, Ferguson and Blair had done nothing else, they had drawn on a primitive native tradition to reinterpret and reinject the Scottish rhetorical tradition with vigour.

Ferguson had acquired two methods of storing cultural wisdom and knowledge. To some extent, the orality of rude ages still applied in Logierait during Ferguson’s lifetime. There, everyone spoke an unschooled dialect that each comprehended in turn. The local dialect had a more confined choice of terminology for fixed objects. It was permissible to express sentiment freely with little self-censorship. By contrast, in Edinburgh there was greater distinction between the ranks and professions. In such company, language and mien had to be monitored. People deferred to rank, appeared seemly, suppressed anger or annoyance, and above all avoided Scotticisms. One of the crucial differences between each of Ferguson’s cultures was the method by which knowledge was transmitted. Among close-knit Highland communities, where gossip was rife, news was eagerly awaited from passing strangers. In Logierait, one’s trade or livelihood were mastered by imitative behaviours and oral direction. Orality for Ferguson as a youngster was contextualised within the familiar setting of home (particularly with his mother) but also within the communal setting of the village. By

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139 Lisa Hill, "Two Eighteenth Century Visions of the New Civil Society on the Effects of Modernity" (paper presented at the Australasian Political Studies Association Conference, University of Tasmania, Hobart, 2003), 8. See also Womack, *Improvement and Romance*, 43–44.


contrast, Ferguson’s literacy was learned in the decontextualised setting of the classroom, away from familiar surroundings, and in an all-male environment.\textsuperscript{142} Once literacy intervenes, oral performance is somewhat hindered. Therefore, it was clear for Ferguson that poetry and oratory existed before letters, but he believed the achievement of literacy actually threatened the very existence of the poetic strain in man. Good storytelling did not require the aid of print or scientific knowledge. To engage one’s audience, all that was necessary was a knowledge of the locale, the people and their way of life. This Ferguson made plain:

Before many books are written, and before science is greatly advanced, the productions of mere genius are sometimes complete: the performer requires not the aid of learning where his description or story relates to near and contiguous objects; where it relates to the conduct and characters of men with whom he himself has acted, and in whose occupations and fortunes he himself has borne a part.\textsuperscript{143}

This engagement with oral tradition in their past lives served Highlanders like Ferguson well in their chosen professions. James Macpherson flexed his oral muscles as an MP, while he continued to give Gaelic poetry recitals at his dinner parties.\textsuperscript{144} Sir John Macpherson was a noted ballad singer whose sister, Isabel, entertained Dr Johnson on his tour of the Highlands and Islands in 1773.\textsuperscript{145} His native propensities to balladry saw John Macpherson take an avid interest in Sir William Jones’ collection of Hindu, Islamic and Persian verse.\textsuperscript{146}

The inborn love for language and verse in verbomotor cultures could also accommodate the English language. This resulted in a charming narrative facility which many Highlanders cultivated, or at the very least were familiar with from childhood.\textsuperscript{147}

\textsuperscript{142}Tannen, \textit{Spoken and Written Language}, 3.
\textsuperscript{143}Ferguson, \textit{Essay}, 164.
\textsuperscript{144}Stafford, \textit{The Sublime Savage}, 7.
\textsuperscript{145}John’s sister Isabel was staying at the manse of their brother, the Reverend Martin Macpherson of Ostaig in Skye. She entertained Johnson in an hospitable manner, with Erse songs (even though he was unable to obtain a translation of the works because the Highlanders were not used to ‘scholastick’ questions). Johnson, \textit{A Journey to the Western Isles of Scotland}, 43, see note 4 p. 179, n. 4, p. 63 and p. 87.
Warren Hastings wrote that John Macpherson had an ‘elegant and unceasing flow of words’ like a ‘golden fount’. Ferguson was similarly gifted. He was famed for filling the lecture halls of the College of Edinburgh with students and auditors from all sectors of society, but most notably men of rank. Principal Lee wrote that Ferguson was perhaps the most admired lecturer of his time. A student of Ferguson remarked that, ‘The doctor’s mode of communicating knowledge was firm, manly, and impressive, but mild and elegant’. According to Jane Bush Fagg, Dr Thomas Reid, the moralist and philosopher, declared that Ferguson had a very uncommon flow of eloquence. Ferguson’s method of teaching revolved around the use of an outline (heads) which he wrote in advance then developed. Since Ferguson’s students had the outline, it permitted him to elaborate and improvise as his mood, current events or recent study dictated. This method combined both the extempore preaching of his training, which Belles Lettres had been devised to aid, and his native Highland narrative and tale-telling background.

This native proclivity for narrative extended beyond Ferguson’s generation. Therefore, it is more than probable that Ferguson exposed his children to the Logierait community where they may have heard lore and riddles first-hand from its elders. There, they probably absorbed the rudiments of storytelling techniques. It is known that Ferguson’s sons, John and Adam, still hunted in the Logierait woods following their father’s demise. This indicates that familial ties to the region remained strong. Sir Adam, Ferguson’s eldest son, had a superb narrative facility. He had the ability to

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148 John Lee, "Adam Ferguson" in *Supplement to the Fourth, Fifth and Sixth Editions of Encyclopaedia Britannica* (Edinburgh: Archibald Constable, 1824), 241. Hutcheson was Irish. Principal Lee collected much information on Ferguson at the suggestion of the son of Ferguson’s lecturer, Hugh Cleghorn.


151 Jane Bush Fagg, "Adam Ferguson: Scottish Cato" (Ph D, University of North Carolina, 1968), 86.


reduce a room of people to laughter or tears. When he spoke, the room hushed. Sir Adam had wonderful voice modulation, with the ability to generate a suspension of disbelief in his listeners. His anecdotes were said to be full of the marrow of human nature. Being a great observer, he would often relate things others had missed. Highland relatives could have taught him these superior skills of observation, an ability that is prevalent among verbomotor societies the world over.\(^{154}\)

Sir Adam entranced his boyhood friend, Sir Walter Scott, with his stories, and could summon up a narrative to fit any occasion without the need for preparation. Lockhart, Scott’s biographer, was witness to many of Sir Adam Ferguson’s tales and the captivating quality they had on Scott and his visitors. Lockhart also insisted, ‘The influence of Adam Ferguson on the *Waverley* Novels needs not be told. Adam Ferguson’s hints were neither few nor lean’.\(^{155}\) All of Ferguson’s children influenced Scott’s novels, which, for good and ill, would define Scotland for the international community.

To conclude, the question of the automatic elevation of literacy over orality by English speakers had a number of implications for Ferguson. Firstly, there was some frustration that his peers were unable to see the connection between the orality of the Highlands, and the pre-literacy and the rhetorical arts of the ancient world. However, since few of his contemporaries could understand Gaelic, Ferguson was virtually alone in recognising this link. Secondly, Ferguson’s recognition of the aforementioned connection gave him insights into ancient texts which others would have missed. Thirdly, Ferguson saw a connection between the applications of oral lore in static society and written history in progressive society.

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\(^{154}\) In cultures where orality has been primary over many generations, such as in the Australian aborigines, videoconferencing is in great favour. It allows face-to-face communication with the accompanying extra verbal gestures that primary oral people have relied on for generations. See Eric Miller, *Videoconferencing and Memory of Previous Media* [Website] (University of Pennsylvania, Eric Miller, 1998 [cited 21 May 2004]; available from http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/~emiller/v_and_memory.html. This is the type of communication approximates the kind that Ferguson and his children were exposed to early in their lives. The exhibition of skilled observation and outstanding memory points to the fact that Adam Ferguson's son, Adam was mnemonically socialised within a verbomotor community. That was likely to have been the Highland community of Logierait. The fact that people like Scott and Lockhart thought to mention his exceptional skills as an anecdotist, was because the skill made him stand out as being ‘other’. He, in turn, influenced the literary art of Scott.

\(^{155}\) Ferguson and Ferguson, *The Records of the Clan and Name of Fergusson*, 187–189. See page 271 following for a painting of a gathering at Abbotsford including Sir Adam Ferguson.
Figure 9. Above. This painting by Thomas Faed is of Sir Walter Scott and his friends in discussion at Abbotsford. Among them are Sir Humphrey Davy, Sir David Wilkie (the painter) and the poets William Wordsworth and James Hogg. Their entertainer, Sir Adam Ferguson, son of the Professor of Moral Philosophy, is seated on the chair in the front with his legs crossed with a white napkin or kerchief on his knee.

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Figure 10. Above. A positive calotype of Ferguson’s son, Sir Adam Ferguson, in later life by portraitists Hill and Adamson.

© Special collections, Glasgow University Library/Licensed via www.scran.ac.uk
Each was employed to induce moral rectitude and social cohesion. Next, Ferguson recognised the effects that specialisation would have on the Highland community’s legend and verse, but he could see it extending to the art of poetry within polished society as well. Finally, at a personal level, Gaelic orality had the effect, for want of a better term, of ‘hardwiring’ Ferguson’s brain for an active, communal life. Only the most astute Scot (Hume) saw through Ferguson’s polite veneer that veiled the absurdities and subjectivity of a verbomotor acculturation. Hume feared the loss of Scotland’s hard-won literary reputation, which Ferguson’s *Essay* quietly appeared to threaten. Ferguson claimed:

I imagined that evidence of its [oral poetry and lore] power might have been found in every country if collected before language and manners had so far changed as to obliterate or efface its productions. There being any remnants of it in the Highlands of Scotland, I imputed to the manners and the language having changed less than they have done elsewhere in equal periods of time.\(^{156}\)

This admission implies that Ferguson could discern more qualities and features of ancient literature than his colleagues. He also prefigured the work of Herder and the Grimms in the discipline of folkloricism. However much he tried to suppress his past, the verbomotor way of life of his early years played a bigger role in his thought processes than has hitherto been acknowledged. It took Scots like MacRae and Forbes, who knew more about Highland culture than most, to alert us to these the possibilities. To a large degree, the Highlands informed Ferguson’s ideas about community and conflict, action and reflection, orality and literacy, story and history, particularity and universality. Most of his insights into these manifestations of humanity can be traced to his ability to contrast the static society he knew in childhood and contemporary modernity. The next chapter investigates how Ferguson integrated his folk knowledge with that he encountered in the eighteenth-century Edinburgh academy. This allowed him to identify some pathological elements in modern society and write a contentious theory of progress.

The last chapter centred on Adam Ferguson’s involvement with James Macpherson who had attempted to retain something of Highland culture and at the same time gain acceptance for the Highlands within the wider Scottish community. At this time, interest had developed in what was rapidly disappearing under the threat of improved mobility, transport and rising levels of literacy. This growing interest in bygone days encouraged people to revitalise the past or commit it to record. Jacob W. Gruber characterised this process as ethnographic salvage.\(^1\) In the latter part of the eighteenth century, an interest in preservation developed around the same time as the cult of sentiment. This sentimentality produced a nostalgic literary cast, the most famous Scottish exponent of which was James Macpherson.\(^2\) Ferguson unquestionably had some connection and input into the process which culminated in the publication of the *Fragments of Ancient Poetry Collected in the Highlands of Scotland and translated from the Gaelic or Erse Language*. 

Up to this point, the chief focus of this thesis has been upon the influence of Ferguson’s Highland past, including his time with the Black Watch. Conceptualisation of the world in a language other than English during his childhood and early adulthood may have induced some of the conservatism in his thought. This conservatism is a hallmark of static or non-progressive societies such as those once found in the Highlands. One purpose of this chapter will be to reveal how Ferguson integrated the knowledge developed in his formative years at Logierait with the knowledge of mainstream culture that he acquired formally in education and informally through socialising. The influences upon Ferguson from his education modified, but never quite

obliterated, the native knowledge he acquired among the children and families of Tayside. These influences of his later education and socialisation were composed of some of the following elements: scientific methodology, Stoicism, polite learning and sensibility — all of which became mingled together with the folk knowledge he had learnt as a child and later looked back on with some objectivity. Later influences were disseminated through ‘book-learning’ and education. I hope the chapter will function to orient Ferguson’s relationship to the discourse of primitivism and progress. Within this discourse politeness, itself a vehicle of and for progress, assumes an ambiguous role as an incubator of sensibility. This sensibility then became a departure point for a sentimental, but futile, literary primitivism which spawned the likes of Ossian.

Ever since Duncan Forbes categorised Ferguson’s *Essay on the History of Civil Society* as belonging to ‘‘histories’, pre-histories, ‘historismus’, historical materialism, sociology, romanticism but not to the history of the idea of progress’, a flurry of attempts to refute this opinion have materialised. Many contemporary academics have labelled Ferguson ‘primitivist’ or ‘progressivist’. Others place him on a continuum between these poles. While sources and influences on Ferguson cited by modern scholars cannot be denied their due weight, the wisdom that came from Ferguson’s intimate knowledge of two competing societies is often submerged under the weight of political and social theory to such a degree that the simple insights he made can be overlooked. My remit is not to assess whether Ferguson was a primitivist or a progressivist — after all, as Whitney points out, it is possible to be both simultaneously. I suspect that Ferguson’s dual enculturation possibly sharpened his acuity with regard to the necessity of maintaining cohesive relationships within a given society. When these relationships falter, a society may be imperilled. With his knowledge of two distinct societies, he came to the realisation that polished societies had endogenous mechanisms in their political and economic structures which were a danger to social cohesion.

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order to ascertain how Ferguson reached such a conclusion we need to examine how eighteenth-century Scots conceived progress.

One of the key functions of Ferguson’s natural history of humanity was to demonstrate that institutions such as government, property and law evolved spontaneously over time through a myriad of social interactions. For example, the first human to appropriate a field in order that it might benefit his son following his demise was unaware he was laying the foundations for the establishment of civil law and order. Another key idea recognised during the Enlightenment was that man was merely the first among animals, subject to similar drives and passions. Ferguson insisted man’s technological improvement was fundamental to his nature yet this did not divorce man from the animal kingdom. The chief means by which the trajectory of human progress was catalogued by Enlightenment scholars was through developmental stages. With each stage of development societal complexity increased. This stadial evolutionism was one of the pivotal ideas of eighteenth-century thought. I wish to pay most attention to Ferguson’s first two stages because these have most resonance with his Highland connection.

Ferguson’s evolution of humankind had three stages. These were savagery, barbarism and polished society. Polished or commercial society stood at the apogee of societal development. Within these stages, Ferguson traced the materialization of institutions such as property and government, as well as the concomitant effect of these institutions on the society’s members. For Ferguson, even the savage stage of society was social, and therefore, by Ferguson’s definition, ‘civil’. The first stage of

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5 See also page 281 of this chapter for a quotation from the Essay. See also note 14, page 280 and note 78, pages 291.
7 Fania Oz-Salzberger, "Introduction" in An Essay on the History of Civil Society by Adam Ferguson, ed., Fania Oz-Salzberger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), xviii. Hegel's conception of civil society is the intermediary between family and state; this postdates Ferguson's view. Civil society was not a synonym for political society in the eighteenth century. For more in-depth information see Norbert Waszek, The Scottish Enlightenment and Hegel's Account of "Civil Society" (Dordrecht: The Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publications, 1983). Ferguson's tripartite stadial theory differed from that of his Scottish colleagues who generally adhered to a four-stage theory of societal development. However, there was no consensus among the Scots regarding the constituents of their stadial theories, nor was stadial
Ferguson’s tri partite system of human progression was savagery. The term savage came into the English lexicon from Italian and French via the Latin *silvaticus* (woodland). Savages generally lived in loose bands which hunted or fished to subsist. A warrior class, which held honour in high esteem, defended them. Ferguson emphasised the fact that man was a creature of nature like other animals but with faculties that rendered him ‘superior to brutes.’ The savage supposedly lived without any formal government (anarchy) in a state of nature. Ferguson’s chief quibble in relation to conjecture about humankind’s natural state was that it was too far in the distant past to contemplate. This ‘natural’ state, if it ever existed, occurred before the institutions familiar to the civilised were established. Ferguson also repudiated Rousseau’s asocial savage state. Lois Whitney underscores how Ferguson departed from his contemporaries on this issue. For instance, Kames and Rousseau assumed humankind’s technological advance was evidence that humans had departed from their primordial animal state.

In contrast, Ferguson insisted that progress continued in man to a greater extent than other animals. To Ferguson’s mind, the principle of progression and the desire to reach perfection was inherent in humankind. The technologies people devised to enhance life along the way were for him neither artificial nor unnatural. He wrote, ‘The state of nature, relative to man, is also a state of progression equally real, and of greater extent’. Thus to Ferguson the distinction between man and beast became the ‘greater extent’ of man’s progress. He claimed, ‘nothing that the human species ever attained, in the latest period of its progress, was altogether without a germ or principle theory unique to Scotland. See Christopher J. Berry, *Social Theory of the Scottish Enlightenment* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997), 315.

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11 Ibid.
12 Ibid., 7; Whitney, *Primitivism and the Idea of Progress*, 97. Ferguson, *Essay*, 7. He also wrote, ‘But the establishments of men, like those of every animal, are suggested by nature, and are the result of instinct, directed by the variety of situations in which mankind are placed’. See p. 174.
13 Ibid.
14 Ferguson saw progress as an instinct in man gifted to him by God. In the creator’s vast plan, mankind’s artifice was no less natural than the termite nest, beehive or beaver dam. Adam Ferguson, *Principles of Moral and Political Science*, ed., Jean Hecht, facsimile of 1792 ed. 2 vols, vol. 1 (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 1975), 193.
from which it is derived, in the earliest or most antient state of man.\textsuperscript{15} For Ferguson, sociability and distinction between right and wrong were innate capacities. In the \textit{Essay}, he declares:

\begin{quote}
If we admit that man is susceptible of improvement, and has in himself a principle of progression, and a desire of perfection, it appears improper to say, that he has quitted the state of his nature, when he has begun to proceed; or that he finds a station for which he was not intended, while, like other animals, he only follows the disposition, and employs the powers that nature has given.\textsuperscript{16}
\end{quote}

Nevertheless, the principle of progression in humankind outlined by various stadial histories could be used to justify colonial policies. Between 1650 and 1788 as exploration and colonisation accelerated, the word ‘savage’ came to designate the type of wild, uncultivated peoples found in the far-flung expanses of the New World.\textsuperscript{17} Kate McCarthy notes the role of Scottish stadial theory in the disqualification of indigenous Australians from property because of their failure to cultivate the soil and lay claim to land.\textsuperscript{18} However, this attitude did not just apply in remote parts of the world; it was well-established in Scotland. During the 1380s, the Scottish chronicler John of Fordun described the then-current crop of Highlanders as being ‘a savage and untamed race, rude and independent’.\textsuperscript{19} Fordun’s history has continued to influence the way Highlanders have been viewed. As Tom Devine observes, ‘It is significant, for instance, that both Fordun and later commentators placed considerable stress on the savagery of Highlanders’.\textsuperscript{20} The emergence of stadial theory became another justification for civilising Highlanders who seemed entrenched in an inferior stage of social and economic development. Colin Kidd’s comparison of the effect of stadialism on Scotland and Ireland brought about divergent constructions of Gaeldom because in Ireland, stadial theory had minimal impact. The Irish myth of the polite and civilised Milesians,

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{15} Ferguson, \textit{Principles of Moral and Political Science} vol. 1, 196, 300.
\item \textsuperscript{16} Ferguson, \textit{Essay}, 14.
\item \textsuperscript{17} Simpson and Weiner, eds, \textit{OED}, 2nd ed. 20 vols, vol. 14, 522–523 def. 1, 2, 3, 4c and 8.
\item \textsuperscript{18} Kate McCarthy, "Agrarian Discourse in Imperial Context: Landed Property, Scottish Stadial Theory and Indigenes in Early Colonial Australia", \textit{Australian and New Zealand Law and History E-Journal} (2005), 64.
\item \textsuperscript{20} T.M. Devine, \textit{Clanship to the Crofter's War: The Social Transformation of the Scottish Highlands} (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), 3.
\end{itemize}
together with the Hibernian concept of the island of saints and scholars which recivilised the West after the fall of Rome, stood firm against criticism in Ireland.\textsuperscript{21} However, as Highlanders continued to raise and steal cattle, they perhaps more properly belonged to Ferguson’s next stage, barbarism.

Barbarism was the second of Ferguson’s three stages. The babbling unintelligibility of sound emitted by Non-Greeks earned them the label ‘barbarian’ from Greek writers like Herodotus. The inception of property, subordination and rudimentary government occurred during this phase of societal development.\textsuperscript{22} Barbarian faculties were tested not only in the struggle for subsistence and shelter, but also in their burgeoning political life.\textsuperscript{23} Ferguson maintained that nations were formed for the expediency of securing themselves from an enemy. However, any consequent discord would strengthen internal societal bonds against any distinct outsider or alien group.\textsuperscript{24} Distinctions, such as differing languages, could arouse the contempt or aversion of other people. War and hostility was common among barbarian nations. Ferguson described barbarians as being prone to concert as well as conflict.\textsuperscript{25} His admiration for barbarian honour, selflessness and sympathy outweighed for him the deviousness and self-interest he found in polished society.

According to Malcolm Jack’s reading of Ferguson, within the unit of the tribe or clan, politics was instinctively cultivated, meaning people were followed for innate courage or authority.\textsuperscript{26} Ferguson tells us that in barbarian societies political institutions came about by gradual processes.\textsuperscript{27} Power was no more than the natural ascendency of

\textsuperscript{21} Colin Kidd, "Gaelic Antiquity and National Identity in Enlightenment Ireland and Scotland", \textit{English Historical Review} 109, no. 434 (1994), 1198, 1199, 1204. \textit{Ossian} appealed to the vogue for the sentimental but also served to reinforce the idea that Highlanders were stagnating at a lower level of development. See Kidd, 1214.

\textsuperscript{22} Ferguson, \textit{Essay}, 81.


\textsuperscript{24} Ferguson, \textit{Principles}, vol. 1, 33–34.


\textsuperscript{27} Ferguson, \textit{Essay}, 74.
mind or the exercise of character in the discharge of duty. Tribal elders had natural authority when disseminating advice, while military leaders were followed because of their valour, confidence and manly bearing. In barbarian societies, a shift in generosity from the private realm into the public arena arose when a relationship between client and protector developed. George Alan Smith interprets Ferguson to mean that clients provide patrons with material contributions and fidelity in return for the generosity of violence (protection) toward the client’s enemy. As arrangements such as this had once been common in the Highlands, Ferguson possibly knew of them from the tales and anecdotes of childhood. In societies, like that of the medieval Highlands, this type of fidelity was not always voluntary. In this type of society, the chief was rarely distant like a monarch, choosing to live among his fellows. Emulatory behaviour was a feature of barbarian societies. This became apparent as men desired to excel, or feared being excelled by others. George Alan Smith and John Andrew Bernstein both understood Ferguson to mean that emulatory behaviour led to disputes if equals were maligned or indulged by their superiors. Reciprocity operated. Tasks once performed voluntarily might become subject to obligation. Ferguson found disputes over these obligations were usually referred to the sword. For this reason, Ferguson’s contemporaries, Smith and Hume, saw the relaxation of this duty-bound relationship between clients and patrons that once existed in the Highlands as a great plus. The dynamic in this type of society turned on the love of honour, which in turn institutionalised social progress. This love of honour may be the reason why Ferguson turned to Plutarch’s Life of Agesilaus for his rendition of a hypothetical Ancient Sparta in his Essay. The subject of honour in the Life of Agesilaus is raised no less than

28 Ferguson, Essay 84.
29 George Alan Smith, "The Political Philosophy of Adam Ferguson Considered as a Response to Rousseau: Political Development and Progressive Benevolence" (Ph D, Yale University, 1980), 208.
30 Ferguson’s journalist in Sparta would find this to be so. See page 326 of Chapter Eight.
32 Ferguson, Essay, 118.
eighteen times. Ferguson’s passage will be examined in greater depth in the next chapter.

In barbarian society, a rudimentary form of government unfolded alongside a brand of retributive justice. However, the selfless regard for community engendered in these societies was one reason Ferguson’s heart lay with the republican form of government. Smith and Hume thought blood ties and dependency on family in society would attenuate over time, but Ferguson counselled that specialisation actually created interdependency and lack of self-reliance. The seeds of virtue, benevolence, candour and fortitude were a characteristic of barbarian societies Ferguson saw exhibited in the uncultivated folk around Logierait. However, such virtues needed to move beyond the small arena of the clan or tribe to achieve maturation.

Many of Ferguson’s compatriots adhered to a four-stage theory that progressed from hunting or fishing, to herding, then agricultural settlement, and finally commercial society. These theories had their basis in modes of subsistence, although subsequent scholarship has revealed many levels of greater complexity underpinned them. For instance, according to Duncan Forbes and Michael Dey, Smith’s stadial theory was not based solely on the mode of production. On the other hand, according to Christopher Berry at least, Ronald Meek and Roy Pascal thought Smith’s four-stage theory had a proto-Marxian resonance. Ferguson’s barbarian stage equates roughly with Smith’s herding and agricultural stages.

For Smith and Kames, property came with agricultural settlement. Use of land for subsistence was a prerequisite and precursor to the idea of land as property. For Rousseau, the inception of the idea of property came about when humanity discovered uses for iron and wheat, after which the fruits of the earth no longer belonged to all

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36 Ferguson, Essay, 208–209.
37 Forbes, "Introduction", xxii; Michael Dey, "Adam Smith and Adam Ferguson: Philosophy, Change and Class Limitations in 18th Century Scotland" (Ph D, University of Aberdeen, 1984), 202
38 Berry, Social Theory of the Scottish Enlightenment, 315.
The discovery of the use to which wheat and metal could be put was accidental and without intention. Nevertheless, these breakthroughs increased the temptation to satisfy new and unnatural wants. Agricultural settlement occurred toward the end of Ferguson’s barbarian stage and was dependant upon the quality of the soil and climate. In the barbarian stage, Ferguson believed the private or personal property of the hut or wagon accrued to the women. In his opinion, cattle were a form of wealth and a spoil of war (cattle being more readily purloined than a field of wheat). Landed property afforded some security of subsistence to the following generation, but it is inevitably productive of inequalities. Inequality in power and wealth develop because men have varying degrees of talent and ability. Smith wrote that for every rich man, there must be at least five hundred poor. Ferguson, however, reminds us constantly throughout the Essay that ‘men were originally equal’. In his lectures delivered at the College of Edinburgh, and within his Essay, Ferguson concurred with Rousseau on this count at least. For Ferguson, subordination only arose after the separation of the arts and professions. Hobbes sanctioned the right of the individual to property; however, for that property to be secured it was necessary to unite the community in the interest of the common good. He insisted that a man should only have a right to property if he came by it fairly or under contract. However, for justice to prevail, in Ferguson’s view, this original equality must always be acknowledged.

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40 Jean-Jacques Rousseau, A Discourse on Inequality (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1984), 118–119.
42 Ferguson, Essay, 96.
43 Ferguson, Essay, 82; Smith, "The Political Philosophy of Adam Ferguson", 212–213; Dey, "Adam Smith and Adam Ferguson", 211.
44 Ferguson, Essay, 96–97.
45 Ibid., 95.
46 Rousseau, Discourse, 118–119.
50 Ferguson, Essay, 118, 96–7.
52 Ferguson, Essay, 63, 72 and 97.
The inception of property in Ferguson’s barbarian stage would eventually subvert the distinction of rank which arose from natural but invisible talents such as courage, superiority of mind or wisdom. Rank became vested in visible signs of authority and wealth, which were made manifest in possessions and finery. As Smith commented:

They are, however, invisible qualities, always disputable, and generally disputed. No society, whether barbarous or civilized, has ever found it convenient to settle the rules of precedency, or rank and subordination, according to those invisible qualities; but according to something that is more plain and palpable.  

Ferguson, however, did find wealth a matter to dispute in relation to rank.

If the disparities of rank and fortune which are necessary to the pursuit or enjoyment and luxury, introduce false grounds of precedency and estimation; if, on the mere considerations of being rich or poor, one order of men are, in their own apprehension, elevated, another dejected; and every rank in its place, like the tyrant, who thinks that nations are made for himself, be disposed to assume on the rights of mankind: although, upon the comparison, the higher order may be least corrupted; or from education, and a sense of personal dignity, have most good qualities remaining, yet the one becoming mercenary and servile; the other imperious and arrogant; both regardless of justice, and of merit; the whole mass is corrupted, and the manners of a society changed for the worse, in proportion as its members cease to act on principles of equality, independence or freedom.

During Ferguson’s declining years, the matter of inequality was still a bone of contention for him, as the following excerpt exhibits. It is taken from an unpublished piece attributed to him:

Property unequally distributed, becomes a source of subordination more palpable and obvious to ordinary capacities than any of the original differences arising from disparities or genius of mind.

Property was a vexed issue for Ferguson because the inequalities arising from its inception weakened social bonds. Barbarian chieftains realised they could gain status and loot by raiding neighbouring territories, ostensibly ‘to possess in property, what they learned to prefer even to the ties of affection or of blood’. Ferguson felt this behaviour indicated a swing toward individuality and self-interest. His early conditioning led him to mourn the loss of cohesive societal bonds, which he saw being attenuated by things

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53 Smith, WN, 408–409.
54 Ferguson, Essay, 237.
55 Yasuo Amoh, ed., *Collection of Essays by Adam Ferguson* (Kyoto: Rinsen Book Company, 1996), Appendix 1, "A Little Boy", pp 287–299. It is not in Ferguson's hand, but it is attributed to him. It was dictated between 1799 and 1810. See p. 293.
such as commerce and standing armies in the final polished stage of development. This prompted the extreme views recorded in his Essay:

To the ancient Greek, or the Roman, the individual was nothing, and the public every thing. To the modern, in too many nations of Europe, the individual is every thing, and the public nothing.\(^57\)

Man is, by nature, the member of a community; and when considered in this capacity, the individual appears to be no longer made for himself. He must forego his happiness and his freedom, where these interfere with the good of society.\(^58\)

In barbarian cultures, a person who had brought shame on himself or herself was sometimes ostracised by the community.\(^59\) This was a matter of some danger, as exiles would have to fend for themselves. The fact that Ferguson clung to these ancient values is perhaps a measure of the depth of his own early socialisation. However, this was so even in other more advanced parts of Scotland. One should bear in mind that between 1750 and 1770 the older part of the city of Edinburgh still had many of the features and trappings of a community, such as a measure of proximity, hospitality and equality.\(^60\)

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\(^57\) Ferguson, Essay, 57.
\(^58\) Ibid., 59. By comparison, Rousseau believes one should harden oneself for the inevitable struggle between the public and private, as well as between the individual and social domain of life’s activities. He was as ambivalent about progress as Ferguson, believing modernising society would be humane, but on the other hand, it held the possibility of suffering if one removed oneself from the social dimension of life. Mark Cladis, Public Vision, Private Lives: Rousseau, Religion and Twenty-First Century Democracy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 3, 4, 6, 8 and 214–229. See also Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Emile, trans. Alan Bloom (New York: Basic, 1979), 235. Like Smith and Hume, who both lost fathers at young ages, Rousseau sees the modern decrease of filial attachment as a plus. As attachments loosen, so we should be theoretically more resigned to death. However, modern society seems more squeamish, and more in denial of death than possibly that of any other period in humankind’s history. Cladis, Public Vision, Private Lives: Rousseau, 159. See also Simon During, "Rousseau's Patrimony: Primitivism, Romance and Becoming Other" in Colonial Discourse/Postcolonial Theory, eds, Francis Barker, Peter Hulme and Margaret Iverson (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), 48. During claims, ‘we work in institutions designed to weaken the degree to which our ancestors’ position determines our own…’ Filiation was far from a dead issue in Ferguson and Rousseau’s day.

\(^59\) With regard to shame and guilt cultures see, Chapter Four of this thesis, pages 172–179.

\(^60\) The nature of housing in the old town almost forced people into close proximity with their neighbours because of the structure of its closes, tenements or ‘lands’. Therefore, sociability and neighbourliness, as well as a measure of equality prevailed. Concerning life in the old town of Edinburgh, A. J. Youngson remarks, ‘The business of the day was over; its events were still fresh in everyone’s mind; the approach of night enhanced the sociability of the hour. Similar customs prevailed in less fashionable circles. Friendship and neighbourliness at all levels of society were widespread, and they were freely expressed. In addition, the attachment of relatives to one another, and their sense of duty towards one another, were much warmer, and extended more widely than nowadays. The expression of the relationship was an easy flow of informal hospitality. Many looked back in later life to such evenings as the ideal expression of a truly social existence’. A. J. Youngson, The Making of Classical Edinburgh: 1750–1840 (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1966), 244–245.
Ferguson continually reminds us that the institution of property, though a matter of progress, was a threat to communal ties.\textsuperscript{61} He was resigned to the fact that the division of labour was an inevitable contingency of the continuity of progress.\textsuperscript{62} Separation of the arts and professions, also known as specialisation, was necessary in order to speed production. Even so, while this specialisation enabled certain goods to become affordable, it also complicated bureaucracies. The increase in legislation necessary to secure property was also a matter of progress. The advantages accruing from the division of labour, such as its benefits for social and economic improvement, concealed hazards in Ferguson’s eyes. These included subordination due to the natural differences in capacity that resulted in the unequal division of property. For example, the habits acquired by lawyers might be counter to those acquired by mechanics, eliciting competing interests between the two groups and leading to a frank class system. This led Ferguson to compare vice-ridden city-dwellers with uncultivated savages:

In every commercial state, notwithstanding any pretension to equal rights, the exaltation of a few must depress the many. In this arrangement, we think that the extreme meanness of some classes must arise chiefly from the defect of knowledge, and of liberal education; and we refer to such classes, as to an image of what our species must have been in its rude and uncultivated state. But we forget how many circumstances, especially populous cities, tend to corrupt the lowest orders of men. Ignorance is the least of their failings. An admiration of wealth unpossessed, becoming a principle of envy, or of servility; a habit of acting perpetually with a view to profit, and under a sense of subjection; the crimes to which they are allured, in order to feed their debauch, or to gratify their avarice, are examples, not of ignorance, but of corruption and baseness. If the savage has not received our instructions, he is likewise unacquainted with our vices. He knows no superior, and cannot be servile; he knows no distinctions of fortune, and cannot be envious; he acts from his talents in the highest station which human society can offer, that of the counsellor, and the soldier of his country. Toward forming his sentiments, he knows all that the heart requires to be known; he can distinguish the friend whom he loves, and the public interest which awakens his zeal.\textsuperscript{63}

The division of labour permitted an increase in the dexterity of workers at the expense of the exercise of their intellect as well as their social and martial virtue.\textsuperscript{64} The


\textsuperscript{63} Ferguson, \textit{Essay}, 177–178.

restriction to one task often obfuscated a worker’s relationship to the commonweal.\textsuperscript{65} Workers were hindered by an inbuilt incapability in their circumstances which limited any determination of state policy on their behalf.\textsuperscript{66} Moreover, workers lost control over decisions affecting their labour. At the same time, property owners saw a rise in their power which they had the potential to abuse.\textsuperscript{67} As Ferguson saw it, the savage and barbarian lifestyle was superior to that of a humble drudge who became a tool in the hands of his employer.\textsuperscript{68}

As inclination developed and opportunities presented themselves, occupations grew into utilities that resulted in specialisation.\textsuperscript{69} Eventually, communities had no common affairs to transact, except those of trade.\textsuperscript{70} Group connections became eroded by transactions in which probity and friendship remained, yet where national spirit could not be exerted. Members of communities, like the inhabitants of a conquered province, could lose all sense of connection, bar those of kindred or neighbourhood.\textsuperscript{71}

Ferguson believed increasing complexity began with the trade of peacetime, but he did not consider that economic relationships were sufficient to sustain the existence of a cohesive community. Government becomes a necessity when communities grow because of trade. Ferguson and Hume were in accord about how government arose. Men did not reach the polished state by their own intention. Ronald Hamowy has described Ferguson’s conjectural history as arguably the ‘most significant and lasting contribution’ to the ‘formulation of the theory of spontaneously generated orders and the application of this theory to a whole range of complex social phenomena including law

\textsuperscript{65} Pascal, "Property and Society", 174.
\textsuperscript{67} Ferguson asked, ‘How can he who has confined his views to his own subsistence or preservation, be entrusted with the conduct of nations?’ Ferguson, Essay, 178; John D Brewer, "Conjectural History, Sociology and Social Change in Eighteenth-Century Scotland: Adam Ferguson and the Division of Labour" in The Making of Scotland: Nation, Culture and Social Change, eds, S. Kendrick, D. McCrone, and P. Straw (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press in conjunction with the British Sociological Association, 1989), 120.
\textsuperscript{68} Ferguson, Principles, vol. 1, 251.
\textsuperscript{69} Ferguson, Essay, 172.
\textsuperscript{70} Ferguson, Essay, 208; Hill and McCarthy, "Hume, Smith and Ferguson: Friendship in Commercial Society", 44.
\textsuperscript{71} Ferguson, Essay, 208–209.
Ronald Meek refers to Ferguson as the most advanced proponent of the law of unintended consequences in the first half of the eighteenth century and commends him for expressing it ‘with clarity and force’. Ferguson was unique in his insistence that human progress and development were as much a part of the natural world as any other biological entity:

Those establishments arose from successive improvements that were made, without any sense of their general effect; and they bring human affairs to a state of complication, which the greatest reach of capacity with which human nature was ever adorned, could not have projected; nor even when the whole is carried into execution, can it be comprehended in its full extent.

But his clearest rendition of the doctrine is in this excerpt:

We are therefore to receive, with caution, the traditionary history of ancient legislators, and founders of states. Their names have long been celebrated; their supposed plans have been admired; and what were probably the consequences of an early situation, is, in every instance, considered as an effect of design. An author and a work, like cause and effect, are perpetually coupled together. This is the simplest form under which we can consider the establishment of nations: and we ascribe to a previous design, what came to be known only by experience, what no human wisdom could foresee, and what, without the concurring humour and disposition of his age, no authority could enable an individual to execute.

Ferguson is seldom acknowledged for the economic dimension of his stadial theory. However, the institution of property and its relations were the keystone of it. Ferguson determined that the instruments of production and labour were also a form of property. Ferguson’s focus was more on forms of government or, as Oz-Salzberger found, his configuration of the stages was based on a moral scale that distinguished technological progress from moral progress.

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73 Meek, *Social Science and the Ignoble Savage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 150. To illustrate these phenomena, Höpfl cites the example of the Puritans who established liberty despite no conscious intent to do so. It demonstrates how Scottish conjectural historians made sense of the past in a disinterested way. They did this in order to isolate that which was natural or universal. Ferguson devised a principle of the way non-empiric history evolved ‘naturally’ because of human action, but not necessarily human design. See H.M. Höpfl, "From Savage to Scotsman: Conjectural History in the Scottish Enlightenment", *Journal of British Studies* 17, no. 2 (1978), 22, 30 and 32. See also Chapter Five pages 213–214 of this thesis, where unintended consequences are also discussed.


75 Ibid., 120.

76 Dey, "Adam Smith and Adam Ferguson", 210–211.

77 Oz-Salzberger, "Introduction", xix–xx.
Ferguson’s stadial theory has more in common with continental versions than with those of his fellow Scots. Ferguson’s divergence from the other Scots was partly due to his greater reliance on Montesquieu’s magnum opus, *De l’esprit des lois.* Ferguson received some of Montesquieu’s papers from his cousin, Dr Joseph Black. However, Ferguson’s admiration of Montesquieu went beyond this tenuous association. He and Montesquieu had an abiding interest in government, constitution and the history of the Roman republic.

From this précis of societal evolution as Ferguson saw it, the key feature to recall is the slow evolution of government institutions with landed property. More complex politico-legal institutions and cultural achievements arose only toward the end of the barbarian stage. The purpose of these stages of man’s development for the Scottish stadial historians, and particularly Ferguson, was not to delineate obvious technological, material and intellectual progress; rather, the intent was to demonstrate how humankind arrived at these developments without the involvement of human will or creativity.

Nevertheless, humankind evolved social structure and institutions without the help of

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78 Hellmut Pappe states that the starting point of modern thought was the three humiliations of humankind. These were that the Earth was not the centre of the universe; man was not created in the image of the Divine but was a creature of nature like other animals, and finally, that man was a creature subject to unconscious urges and passions. From this starting point, man could seek truth, find happiness within viable society and find that order imposed by the Divine was not immutable. Man was a product of his history. Hellmut O. Pappe, *Enlightenment*, ed., Philip P. Weiner, 5 vols, vol. 2, *Dictionary of the History of Ideas: Studies of Selected Pivotal Ideas* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1973–1974), 91–92.


80 John Black, who was Joseph Black’s father, was a friend of Montesquieu. See Adam Ferguson, "Minutes of the Life and Character of Joseph Black M. D." *Transactions of the Royal Society of Edinburgh* V (1997), 101–103. See also Whitney, *Primitivism and the Idea of Progress*, 351. Black’s father, a wine merchant, was a long-time friend of the Bordeaux philosopher. See Mason, "Ferguson and Montesquieu: Tacit Reproaches," 193. Ferguson was related to Joseph Black on his mother’s side through the Gordons of Hallhead. Ferguson’s mother was aunt to two sisters, one of whom had Joseph Black. The other sister married James Russell who became professor of Natural History and the University of Edinburgh. Ferguson later married the daughter of one of Black’s siblings. Therefore, Ferguson’s wife was Joseph Black’s niece. To see how Black and his sister are related to Ferguson and his wife, see Appendix O, page 438.

81 Like Ferguson, Montesquieu was at one time a Calvinist. Montesquieu later converted to Catholicism. In other respects, too, Ferguson had more in common with Montesquieu than his Scottish colleagues. Both men were born into marginal societies. Although a member of the provincial aristocracy, for the first three years of his life Montesquieu was wet-nursed by the wife of a local miller. Montesquieu spoke his first words while living with the miller’s family and the rustic accent he acquired there remained with him for life. See Judith Shklar, *Montesquieu* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 1, 2 and 49.
innovative or legendary lawmakers – purely on native instinct, with no ability to foresee the positive or negative consequences of their actions.\textsuperscript{82}

From his understanding of Highland life, Ferguson would have known that there was no abrupt movement from herding to agriculture, where one mode of production ended in preference for the other. In the Highlands, and even around Logierait, a few Highlanders still lived a semi-nomadic lifestyle in summer when they removed their cattle to higher pastures. Their summer dwellings were temporary, made of turf and heather, whereas their permanent housing and fenced pastures might be fashioned from stone, earth or timber.\textsuperscript{83} Ferguson insisted more than others that humankind’s manipulation of their environment through technology was in keeping with the propensities nature gave them. This technological control improved agricultural efficiency and yields. For many people, this brought better produce and thereby, a greater level of comfort. The improvement was not just material either; people had evolved in manner and intellect. As once illiterate savages, who survived by mother-wit, manual dexterity and brute strength, humankind eventually became refined, literate beings of sensibility – capable of reason, benevolence, virtuosity, and the ability to both discern and appreciate beauty.

Nevertheless, Ferguson seemed outwardly more ambivalent about progress than his colleagues were. He saw the potential for decay and dissolution. Harro Höpfl pinpoints the sympathy Ferguson had for barbarous peoples, which led to his set of unique considerations.\textsuperscript{84} Some of these possible reflections will be observed in the final chapter when we look at the way Ferguson’s dual cultural knowledge urged some criticism of mainstream society’s monocular worldview. Those who find Ferguson ambivalent blame his reliance on the Roman Stoics.\textsuperscript{85} Malcolm Chapman, a social anthropologist specialising in the bilingual Celtic regions of Europe, believes the Essay

\textsuperscript{82} Pappe, "Enlightenment", vol. 2, 93.
\textsuperscript{83} See Chapter One, pages 41–45, but especially page 42–43, where housing is also discussed.
\textsuperscript{84} H.M. Höpfl, "From Savage to Scotsman", 28.
\textsuperscript{85} Bernstein, "Adam Ferguson and the Idea of Progress", 99; Dey, "Adam Smith and Adam Ferguson", 364. Bernstein also factors in Ferguson’s ability to see multiple sides of an argument, but his overall faith in progress countermanded his concern for primitive societies. See p. 99. Roman Stoicism was ultra moral. See Arthur O. Lovejoy and George Boas, Primitivism and Related Ideas in Antiquity (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1935), 276. This adds weight to Pocock’s argument that Ferguson was more moralist than historian.
expresses the ‘duality of primitivism’. By this, Chapman possibly means the metaphorical criticism of the formalities and conventions of contemporary society in binary opposition to the idealised primitive culture – its complement. These binary opposites: science and sentiment, progress and primitivism, and reason and passion became the signal dualities of Enlightenment Scotland.

I would like to place the primitivist/progressivist debate and Ferguson’s ambivalent position within it into the perspective provided by his early Highland enculturation. Ferguson’s idea of progress was not continuous unimpaired development; since he in fact allows for degeneration in civilised humankind – witness the following passage:

In every age, whether destined by its temporary disposition to build or to destroy, they have left the vestiges of an active and vehement spirit. The pavement and the ruins of Rome are buried in dust, shaken from the feet of barbarians, who trod with contempt on the refinements of luxury, and spurned those arts, the use of which it was reserved for the posterity of the same people to discover and to admire. The tents of the wild Arab are even now pitched among the ruins of magnificent cities; and the waste fields which border on Palestine and Syria, are perhaps become again the nursery of infant nations. The chieftain of an Arab tribe, like the founder of Rome, may have already fixed the roots of a plant that is to flourish in some future period, or laid the foundations of a fabric, that will attain to its grandeur in some distant age.

Ferguson ascertained that from each dying imperium in which the human species reached the apogee of their attainments, there was enough good material remaining for a succeeding society to build on, and then surpass the efforts of all before it. Yet while one society was in regress, at the same instant, another might be progressing. It was not essential that progress arose in one state, nation or region and then continued uninterrupted. Progress continued inexorably as dying civilisations overlapped with rising ones. Progress to Ferguson was concurrent. His use of the word ‘progress’ simply means ‘not stationary’ rather than being indicative of forward movement.

Ferguson noted that civilisation was set on a course, ‘but is not stationary, perhaps in

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88 Ferguson, *Essay*, 108. Ferguson’s words here are portentous, and Sheila Mason is one writer who has pointed to Ferguson’s relevance in the current scheme of world events. Mason, “Ferguson and Montesquieu: Tacit Reproaches”, 202. This will be touched on again in my final chapter.
89 Ferguson, *Principles*, vol. 1, 190.
any period of their [humankind’s] existence’. Ferguson makes a further qualification in *Principles* by stating that, ‘In every progression, it is true, may be conceived a point of origin, and a point of termination, to be collected from the direction in which the progress proceeds’. Here, he indicates that universal progress of the species is a relay, and that each discrete episode of progress ends. For Ferguson, empire equated with ‘ruinous progress’. His account of progression is linear and there are indications that direction was not uniformly confined to either the positive or the negative orientation. Moreover, Ferguson tells us that the principle of progression is a law that avails of our ‘chusing the direction to follow’.

However, there is an aspect of Ferguson’s use of the word ‘progress’ which may have a direct connection with the Gaelic language. I admit this is purely conjectural, but it may be of interest that there appears to be no solitary term for the concept of progress in the Gaelic language. The very fact that in Ferguson’s day there was no singular term equivalent to progress in the Gaelic language underscores the static nature of the society from which he came. Most of the correlates in this language pertain to growth or imply a journey. To indicate positive or forward direction from a fixed point, the addition of a further word, *aghart* (forward), is necessary. Thus in Gaelic, unless it is stipulated, movement can be in a positive or negative direction from a fixed point.

This is uncannily like Ferguson’s concept of progress from an origin, regardless of direction. Ferguson may have unconsciously integrated this ‘alien’ knowledge with what he had acquired more formally in his Lowland education. In another respect, Ferguson had intimate knowledge of societal regression and its overarching relationship to progress. The society which Ferguson knew as a boy (and as a young adult in the Black Watch) was in a state of flux. It appeared to be on the brink of extinction, while at the same time it was under pressure from without to conform to the dominant culture.

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90 Ibid.
91 Ferguson, *Principles*, vol. 1, 198.
94 The terms used to imply progress in Gaelic would be *turas* or *cúrsa*, which pertain to innovation or courses. The words *astar*, *imeachd*, *siubhal* and *tríall* pertain to travel or journeys.
95 To indicate movement in a positive direction one would need to use *a dol air aghart* (*aghartach*), or *teach air aghart*. *Aghart* indicates forward.
Ferguson possibly encountered ways in which regression within a discrete society could come about through the more subtle processes of assimilation, acculturation, encroachment, migration and diffusion, all of which were probably under way in Logierait during his lifetime. Thus, for Ferguson, regression and progression were processes which were not only interlocked, but which could occur simultaneously. Ferguson’s origins in a rural region and his continual desire to farm to an advanced age probably encouraged his incorporation of Montesquieu’s soil-borne limitation of progress into his own work. He gave climate more weight than either Hume or Smith.  

For Ferguson, geography and climate, indeed climate change, could be precipitators of decline. These could become limiting factors to development, just as they were in Ferguson’s Highlands, as revealed in Chapter One. However, as Ferguson indicates in the examples below, even a severe climate could harbour some seed of future advancement.

The torrid zone, everywhere round the globe, however known to the geographer, has furnished few materials for history; and though in many places supplied with the arts of life in no contemptible degree, has no where matured the more important projects of political wisdom, nor inspired the virtues which are connected with freedom, and required in the conduct of civil affairs.

It was indeed in the torrid zone that mere arts of mechanism and manufacture were found, among the inhabitants of the new world, to have made the greatest advance: it is in India, and in the regions of this hemisphere, which are visited by the vertical sun, that the arts of manufacture, and the practice of commerce, are of the greatest antiquity, and have survived, with the smallest diminution, the ruins of time, and the revolutions of empire.

Ferguson assumed the activation of social regression came from within societies. Regression could come about by human agency (despotism and corruption) with some other contingency, military aggression, or a colossal natural disaster, delivering the coup de grâce. While Ferguson was less optimistic about progress than either Smith or Hume, he was no forerunner of Oswald Spengler. Spengler denied a notion which Ferguson patently embraced; the assistance and cumulative effect built on existing knowledge.

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97 The harshness of the Highland climate and topography were outlined in Chapter One. These features have been among those which have held the Highlands back economically.

gleaned from dead or dying civilisations. Furthermore, unlike Spengler, Ferguson affirmed that cultural and linguistic differences were not barriers to advancement or the sharing of scientific knowledge.99

In anthropological terms, progress has been characterised variously as being analogous to growth, as a cyclic progress of growth and regression, or a linear historicist progression of gradual moral and physical improvement.100 Ferguson’s conception of progress probably fits into the latter. Some scholars have actively sought out elements of Ferguson’s Essay which champion progress.101 Not all researchers agree. Some believe like Forbes that Ferguson’s work has a pessimistic or primitivistic cast. Pocock and Malcolm Jack are but two who fall into this category.102 Ferguson was unable to solve what Pocock referred to as the problem of the individual at society’s boundary – a fundamentally modern concept.103 However, Ferguson’s earliest conditioning did not fit

99 Neil McInnes, "The Great Doomsayer", The National Interest, Summer, 1997 [database on-line]; available from Questia, http://www.questia.com/PM.qst?a=o&d=5000467781; www; accessed 7 October 2006. Oswald Spengler’s fame arose during the inter-war period after his publication of Decline of the West. Spengler postulated a cyclical rather than linear theory of history. This cycle was characterised by the birth, maturation, slow decline, decay and end of world high cultures; the West being the last of them. With its wealth, democracy and media, civilisation is eventually confronted by the rise of a monarch or Caesar, returning it to a state of subjection. Spengler predicted World War II but died before it began in 1936. He had little time for Hitler and the Nazi Party.


101 Sher traces Ferguson’s ambivalence to Montesquieu. See Richard B. Sher, "From Troglodytes to Americans: Montesquieu and the Scottish Enlightenment on Liberty, Virtue and Commerce" in Republicanism, Liberty and Commercial Society, 1649–1776, ed., David Wootton (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1994), 394. Lisa Hill compares Ferguson with Smith and Hume, who were far less ambivalent about continued progress. See Lisa Hill, "Adam Ferguson and the Paradox of Progress and Decline", History of Political Thought [GB]. 18, no. 4, (1997), 685. Hill characterises Ferguson as a ‘cautious progressivist’; one who welcomes commerce, but both lauds progression and fears it. See Lisa. Hill, "The Puzzle of Adam Ferguson’s Political Conservatism", Eighteenth-Century Scotland, no. 16, Spring, (2001), 12, and Hill, "Adam Ferguson and the Paradox of Progress and Decline", 677. Hill claims that Ferguson believed that while technical knowledge aided wealth creation, it was inferior to wisdom and this was why technical knowledge could bring mankind to the brink of degeneration. See Hill, "Adam Ferguson and the Paradox of Progress and Decline", 692–704. Hamowy insists that Ferguson rejected progress in its most extreme form while maintaining that man progressed naturally through his inclination to perfect his lot and his circumstances. Hamowy, "Progress and Commerce in Anglo-American Thought", 69 and 86. Kettler was of a similar opinion. See David Kettler, The Social and Political Thought of Adam Ferguson (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1965), 219–220, 236.

102 Malcolm Jack sees the Essay as a warning against the threat of decay since, like Rousseau, Ferguson was concerned with the collapse of Machiavellian virtù in commercial societies because these societies pursued material interests. See Jack, Corruption and Progress, 115.

103 Pocock sees Ferguson as inclined to moralise. This roots him in a more primitivistic or ancient worldview and therefore makes him less capable of accepting modernity with optimism. J. G. A. Pocock, The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), 501. In the Pocockian approach to Ferguson, virtue lies in
him for the individualist mould. Nevertheless, warrior societies always permitted individuality in their protectors so long as they did not harm those they were sworn to protect. Ferguson admired republican and barbarian societies because they were often socially cohesive ones. These societies not only have similar values, attitudes and beliefs, but also similar goals. Striving toward a common goal helped these societies maintain their ascendant trajectory. The energy harnessed by such societies has little to do with barbaric vigour or violence, other than the fact that such vigour exercised against an opponent helped to weld societal bonds.  

Ferguson appeared to embrace progress with some reservations, but this did not necessarily qualify him as a primitivist, despite his apparent understanding of less developed societies in all eras. Primitivism can signify a pursuit of a way of life which counteracts technological advance. Alternatively, chronological primitivism asserts that the highest degree of human happiness occurred in some past Golden Age, or Garden of Eden. The idea that man passed through stages to reach his current stage of polished development (civilisation) automatically tends to devalue previous stages. The idea of primitiveness is often defined in opposition to civilisation.  

Ferguson rarely used the term ‘primitive’ in the Essay, preferring instead the word ‘rude’ to refer to societies with low-level political organisation and few, if any,
social institutions. Originally, the expression ‘rude’ came into English usage to suggest a person or people lacking in book-learning. The word was in use in Scotland by the late medieval period. At a slightly later point in time, ‘rude’ took on the connotation of ‘ignorant’ or ‘unskilled’. It was also used to indicate that a people lacked rationality, or it was used as a descriptor for behaviour which might be regarded as ‘uncivilised’ or ‘barbarous’. Finally, the term came to designate people who were unmannerly, uncivil, impolite or offensive. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, all the above definitions and variations arose between 1366 and 1400. Rude variously connoted everything from uneducated, ignorant and irrational to uncivilised, barbarous and impolite. Ferguson’s Scottish contemporaries, notably Smith and Robertson, also commonly used the term to designate what we might now refer to as primitive, folk or indigenous cultures.

The word ‘primitive’ came into English from Medieval French via Latin to mean ‘primary’, ‘originary’ or ‘basic’. This term still causes disagreement among contemporary anthropologists. According to Stanley Diamond, ‘primitive’ indicates primary human potential. Diamond has since attempted to reinstate ‘primitive’ as an analytical term in anthropology. He sees knowledge of primitive societies as an adjunct to help define human potential and identify human pathologies. A primitive culture for Diamond displays a stable communal economy with collective patterned leadership. These societies often show signs of some form of religion and use rudimentary healing techniques. In Lucien Lévy-Bruhl’s conception of primitive society, primitive peoples have little or no understanding of causation. The members of these societies exhibit strange relationships to names, shadows or totem animals. In addition, they display signs of alien reasoning in their application of magic, ritual, religion or

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108 Ferguson uses the term ‘rude’ on twenty-two occasions.
109 Simpson and Weiner, eds, OED, 2nd ed. 20 vols, vol. 14, 209ff. (See definitions 1. a, b, c and d. 2. a and b. 3 a, b, c and d and definition 4.)
110 Diamond, In Search of the Primitive, 116–176.
totemism. In no other European language except English is there a pejorative significance attached to the word ‘primitive’. Early naturalists from France and Britain believed the indigenes of the southernmost continents to be the most savage and original humans. During the Age of Enlightenment, especially after 1760, discoveries of new societies in the New World and Oceania challenged the European model of stadial history.

In anthropological circles, a primitive culture is one that has remained at a primitive level of growth and social organisation, often through isolation. Ferguson’s terminology of ‘rude’ or ‘rudeness’ corresponds in our understanding with what Ferdinand Tönnies labelled Gemeinschaft, or what Robert Redfield might designate ‘folk’ society or culture. These descriptions and ideas are in keeping with the type of rude society which was once uppermost in Ferguson’s mind. The Highland society, however, was not quite as isolated as the antipodean societies described by the likes of James Cook and Joseph Banks. More technologically advanced, less isolated provincial cultures, like those of Logierait and Western Europe in general, could be labelled folk cultures to differentiate them from less technologically advanced cultures of America, Australia and the Pacific. Peasantries described by Tönnies also tended toward technological simplicity.

In the introduction to an English edition of Tönnies’ Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft, the editor, Jose Harris, finds some affinity between the thought of Ferguson and Tönnies:

Another key authority was the Scottish enlightenment theorist Adam Ferguson, whose dualistic vision of ‘civil society’—as both the prerequisite of peace and prosperity and the harbinger of psychic atomism, corruption and moral decline—closely prefigured Tönnies’s own characterisation of large-scale Gesellschaft.

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114 Diamond, In Search of the Primitive, 124–125.
116 Ibid., 12.
117 Simpson and Weiner, eds, OED, vol. 12, 483ff. (See def 2b.)
119 Ferdinand Tönnies, Community and Civil Society, ed., Jose Harris, trans. Jose Harris and Margaret Hollis (first published as Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft, Leipzig, 1887) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), xxi–xxii.
Thus, while Tönnies made no direct reference to Ferguson’s work, the Scottish moral philosopher first raised many of the ideas later expounded upon by Tönnies. In 1887, Tönnies outlined how a unity of human wills, sentiment and common blood ties welded a people to a place and imbued that place with their spirit. In the Scottish Highlands, these ‘sentiments’ and ‘ties’ described by Tönnies were known as Dualchas and Dùthchas. Tönnies maintained that honour and faith in such societies often rested in a common ancestor, as was certainly the case in the once-patriarchal Highlands. High consanguinity among small folk communities was a feature that fostered concord, family spirit and mutual understanding. These situations and sentiments helped to develop tacit agreements on duty and privilege. Other features of European folk communities included the coexistence of Christianity with pagan traditions. There were often tensions between the stability of traditions and the outside forces of acculturation. I have presented evidence in previous chapters (particularly in Chapters One to Four) of these features occurring in Ferguson’s Logierait. For this reason, stadial history relates to progress by virtue of its demonstrable progression from a primitive to an advanced set of social institutions and technologies. On the other hand, stadialism constitutes some form of primitivism, if it is considered that earlier stages of man’s development were more virtuous, less deleterious to the psyche, or uncluttered by the complexity of institutions, art, science or toil.

During the Enlightenment, a pseudo-scientific quest for man’s original character arose in parallel with a literature that both reflected this search and voiced an attendant loss of man’s originary innocence. Michael Bell comments that the conscious heuristic emphasis on primitive motifs augmented the rise of the social sciences. In some

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120 Tönnies’ chief influences had been Comte, Marx, Schlaeffle, Hume, Hobbes and Spinoza. Among the classical writers he relied on were Aristotle, Plato, Cicero and Seneca. Others to influence Tönnies ideas were Sir Henry Maine, Otto Gierke, Herbert Spencer, G. H. Lewes and Adolph Wagner. See Jose Harris, "Introduction" in Community and Civil Society, ed., Jose Harris (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), xxi.

121 Tönnies, Community and Civil Society, 22 and 32.

122 Ibid., 43.

123 Ibid., 34.


125 Michael Bell, Primitivism (London: Methuen & Co Ltd. 1972), 7–8, 11 and 69.
senses, literature and the science of man were focused on the same subject matter. In this way, and this way only, are pre-evolutionary philosophy and anthropology connected to literature. Literary primitivism remains distinct from its philosophical and scientific forms. While Ferguson was engaged in the science of man, he also dabbled in primitivist literature through his encouragement of Macpherson to collect remnants of Gaelic remnants, his discovery of Burns, and his abiding interest in Homer. Sinéad Garrigan Mattar feels primitivism is one of the most difficult of all concepts to pin down and explain. In simple terms, it is the process of self-referential comparison and idealisation of the primitive as constituted in an ideology, religion, social contract or many other things beside. In this case, I wish to focus on this process in literature. Sinéad Garrigan Mattar asserts that in the Romantic form of literary primitivism, the writer idealises primitivist culture by reflecting the values of the civilised culture in a more innocent, pure or natural context. Fiona Stafford remarks that this association was always expressed in the language of the non-primitive central culture. The representative of the peripheral or primitive culture remains silent and has no right of reply. Literary primitivism expresses a contrast between the subject and object, or between the writer and narrator. Often the narrator or observer is civilised, while the subject of the narration is from the primitive, provincial or ‘other’ culture. The primitive vessel becomes the receptacle of civilised values. Writers of such verse expressed satisfaction, security and sophistication by contrasting this with the primitive community’s poverty and ignorance. Stafford posits that a conscious duality suffuses primitivist literature which is generated by a desire for self-definition. However, it should be well noted that in the case of both Ferguson and Macpherson this contrast was

130 Garrigan Mattar, Primitivism, Science and the Irish Revival, 4.
131 Ibid., 5; Stafford, "Primitivism and the Primitive Poet", 90. Michael Bell notes that primitivism is a by-product of civilisation, resulting from the interplay between the civilised ‘self’ and the desire to transform, or reject components of civilised life. Bell, Primitivism, 7.
132 Stafford, "Primitivism and the Primitive Poet", 81.
not merely a contrast of the self with another, it was a contrast of two selves. In each case, these men compared a boy raised in a provincial setting with another language ringing in his ears, and a classically educated adult.

*Ossian* became one of the earliest and most famous examples of literary primitivism. In *Ossian*, the Highlands were the object of interest. Nonetheless, *Ossian* was no example of a genuine Highland voice. For that to be the case, Macpherson would have had to remain within his Highland setting and write *Ossian* in the Gaelic language. If that had been so, then *Ossian* could not have been classified as literary primitivism. Macpherson’s main barrier to working in Gaelic was that the language had no standardised orthography or grammar. However, the first modern authentic Highland literature emerged at roughly this period, but some of it contained perfidious material, which earned it the ignominy of being burnt by the common hangman in Edinburgh. Even so, few men in the town could have read or understood it. As an instigator of Macpherson’s collecting, and as an admirer of Homer, Ferguson evidently developed a taste for the primitivist genre. Concise examples of the primitivist vein include Robert Burns’ *Cottar’s Saturday Night* and Wordsworth’s *Solitary Reaper*.

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133 Stafford, "Primitivism and the Primitive Poet", 81, 82 and 88. Leneman is of the opinion that Macpherson may have seen his contribution to literature as part of a continuing Gaelic tradition. Leah Leneman, "Ossian and the Enlightenment", *Scotia: American-Canadian Journal of Scottish Studies*, no. 11, (1987), 14.

134 Alexander MacDonald produced the first modern volume of Scottish Gaelic vernacular poetry. This book was burnt because of its Jacobite sympathies and content. However, not all Alexander MacDonald’s poetry related to the Jacobite cause, he also wrote descriptive poems and love poems. Nor was he the only Jacobite poet to have his poems published. John Roy Stuart, Duncan Ban MacIntyre and Rob Donn also wrote poetry in Gaelic. John MacCodrum, who made fun of James Macpherson’s Gaelic ability when Macpherson visited Skye, was also a Gaelic poet of some repute. Nevertheless, between the Reformation and the Jacobite Rebellion, hardly any Gaelic literature was produced with the exception of devotional works. See Magnus Maclean, *The Literature of the Scottish Highlands*, New and Extended Edition (London: Blackie and Son Limited, 1903), 1–21. Furthermore, Dugald Buchanan, who helped Stewart translate and print the Bible into Gaelic, was a poet whose subject matter was predominantly religious, He produced much devotional material. See pages 113–137. Mary Macleod of Harris represents the high point of Highland poetry before the Jacobite era. See also John Stuart Blackie, *The Language and Literature of the Scottish Highlands* (Edinburgh: Edmonston and Douglas, 1876), 67–194.

135 The *Solitary Reaper* is a piece of verse composed by Wordsworth, written upon his Highland excursion. For the text of this poem see [http://www.bartleby.com/101/528.html]. This poem is a good example of Stafford’s point. It depicts a Highland girl singing a plaintive tune as she reaps grain. It moves the listener’s heart but the listener receives no answer to the rhetorical question regarding the meaning of what the reaper sings. The answer was both unnecessary and unwanted. There was no right of reply.
SCIENNES HILL HOUSE – THE HOME OF FERGUSON 136

Figure 12. Above.
This is a carved oak panel of the Hardie painting by Frank McNichol of Glamis, which dates from the early twentieth century. The carving is on loan to the Burns Cottage Museum from the Grants of Blairgowrie

© Courtesy of the Trustees of Burns Monument and Burns Cottage/licensed via www.scran.co.uk/

Figure 13. Above.
The rear of Sciennes Hill House before its restoration in 1988.
The rear of the house was originally the front. It is mentioned in Hutton’s Literary Landmarks of Edinburgh. Joe Steele of The Scotsman took this photograph on 30 March 1988.

© Courtesy of the Scotsman Publications Ltd/licensed via www.scran.co.uk

Figure 14. Above.
This is a view of the front of Sciennes Hill House after its restoration. The photograph was taken from Sciennes House Lane in September 2003 by the author of the thesis.

Figure 15. Above.
A closer view of the commemoration tablet on the façade of Sciennes Hill House. It commemorates the meeting of Scott and Burns. Ferguson is not mentioned. The photograph was taken by the author of the thesis in 2003.
Within *The Cottar's Saturday Night*, the lines of Standard English (as opposed to Ayrshire dialect) help to define the contrast between the dominant culture and the primitivist image of rural Scotland depicted in the poem. Burns resorted to Standard English to impart dignity and truth, marking a contrast between the language and the rustic image evoked by his words.¹³⁷ The impact of this contrast was identified by Ferguson. Before he read *The Cottar’s Saturday Night*, Ferguson had ignored Burns’ poetry, the consequent reception of which, he later conceded, did honour to their country. Ferguson entertained the poet on his visit to Edinburgh in the winter of 1786–7. Afterward he regaled John Macpherson with his own personal assessment of Burns’ *Cottar*:

> Worthiness & Greatness of mind are brought to view under a great Variety of Aspects without the momentary stop of a supposition that they could break forth with more lustre and produce more happiness or have a better effect in the Palace of a King at the head of an Army or in dispensing inexhaustible treasures than they have at a Cottars fire side. This to me is the true Genius of Heroic Poetry & right is ascerted by the Noble Peasant with a Correctness and a truth which is admirable.¹³⁸

In works of a similar tone to Burns’ poem, poets may lambast primitive culture, yet be possessed by an affection for bucolic folk. By asserting the writer’s membership of the non-primitive group, Burns essentially turns the poem into a mark of decency. The cottar subjects, on the other hand, live in respectable poverty. Stafford finds the poet was motivated by a need to memorialise, atone for, or exorcise the past. The poet may even be motivated by a need to castigate himself for being a member of a primitive culture.¹³⁹ In Germany, Macpherson’s work fuelled discussion about irrational elements of man’s character. The *Sturm und Drang* movement had its origin in these elements of the irrational. These, in turn emanated from the debate concerning *Ossian* and Homer.

Like its Scottish counterpart, German primitivism extolled the virtues of noble ancestors, but very rarely did these movements promote the return to savage ways, or

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¹³⁸ Adam Ferguson in a letter to Sir John Macpherson from Sciennes, Edinburgh, dated 31 March 1787, "IOR MSS EUR F 291/97" in *Sir John Macpherson, Unbound Correspondence* (British Library). It is an un-numbered letter.

even to a pre-civilised state. This same desire to uncover origins suffuses the science of man, at the state where it was developing and emerging from the moral sciences. Thomas Blackwell initiated the revival of Greek language and literature with his *Inquiry into Homer’s Life and Writings* (1737). Homer, Pindar and Theocritus became the exemplars followed by writers in the Scotland of this day. Blackwell had modelled his own work on that of Shaftesbury, of whom he was a devotee. Therefore, Blackwell became one of the founders of polite learning in Scotland. Of signal interest to Adam Ferguson was the importance Blackwell gave to the environment that inspired Homer’s works. The Greek language had lost much of it barbarous edge as the pace of life in Greek society sped up and became more complex. Blackwell believed only a true bard like Homer would refuse to relinquish fabula entirely for mere prosaic instruction. Blackwell thought Homer more akin to the troubadours of Provence than to the Highland bards of former days, although the bards, like Homer, also extemporised their works. For Donald M. Foerster, Blackwell heralded the historical point of view which emerged in Scotland after 1750. Blackwell had been one of James Macpherson’s professors. It could not have escaped either Macpherson or Ferguson that Homeric compositions revolved around martial prowess and ancestry. Ferguson’s knowledge of conflict, status and reciprocity in static societies made possible his engagement with the images in classical texts like Homer. The revival of interest in Homer was one of several influences beginning to converge in Scotland at the time Macpherson published his *Fragments of Ancient Poetry*. It marked the commencement of a rapid growth in the textualisation of oral lore in Scotland.

During the course of the eighteenth century, there were other influences that Ferguson found necessary to incorporate with the native knowledge from his past. The

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141 Blackwell was the first ever professor of Greek appointed at the University of Aberdeen.
143 Ibid., 29, 34.
144 Ibid., 37.
Moderate Churchmen of the Enlightenment, Ferguson among them, sought to make secular ethics appeal to the higher impulses of the elite.\textsuperscript{146} The Moderates formed an eighteenth-century ‘community of the wise’. These were amalgamated with Christian principles in order to encourage self-command, duty, order and beneficence.\textsuperscript{147} Richard B. Sher believes Ferguson wholly adopted Hutcheson’s Christian Stoic principles.\textsuperscript{148} These principles had much to do with the statesman-like virtue of models like Cicero whose works gained popularity at this time. Ferguson’s brand of Stoicism was far from passive or contemplative.\textsuperscript{149} He, like Cicero, believed men should participate in the active political life of the community and share in its administration.\textsuperscript{150} This active life might require agitation, opinion, passion, rivalry or even war. Complacency and suppression of debate portended corruption and despotism.\textsuperscript{151} Lisa Hill insists, ‘…it should be noted that Ferguson’s published inspiration comes from the Stoic absorption with \textit{sympathia}, social intimacy and communitarianism, which he then applies to the contemporary condition’.\textsuperscript{152} Ferguson’s Stoicism was a Ciceronian form which fell short of perfection so as not to remove the statesmen from the scene of political action, or hamper his oratory with Stoic exercises.\textsuperscript{153} His brand of liberal Stoicism was held in tension between the civil, moral and sociological, while Smith and Hume had a slightly different outlook on modernity. They prescribed politeness and correct behaviour for the new commercial world as a modern surrogate for virtue.\textsuperscript{154} Stoicism, as it aligned
with the unintended consequences of self-interested action, can be traced back to Epictetus.\textsuperscript{155}

The conditions in Enlightenment Scotland resembled the conditions that gave rise to Stoicism in antiquity. Improved transport, communication and new discoveries abroad brought a flood of new ideas, possibilities and social change. The Scottish people were involved in negotiating new identities for themselves as Britons, at the same time as Britain was forming colonies and prosecuting wars upon distant continents. Just as the barbarian fringe had made the Romans uneasy, Highland Scotland became a cause of distress to its neighbours. The world Scotland then found itself in was unpredictable and uncertain. In David Allan’s words, ‘Stoicism seemed the philosophy perhaps best able to offer causal determinism in the external world without actually allowing men to overlook the obligations of virtuous conduct – a fatalistic tendency encouraging precisely that private seclusion whose taint they seem most to have feared.’\textsuperscript{156}

Previously, in Chapter Four, I discussed how citizens of pre-Imperial Rome employed Stoicism as a coping mechanism or adaptation to the relaxation of citizenship and identity, the plurality of religions, and the influx of conflicting morals and customs resulting from colonialism.\textsuperscript{157} As the scene of moral action, the city-state or republic was destroyed by the imperial aspirations; the whole world necessarily became the Stoics’ seat of moral action. Stoicism bore within it the seeds of a form of cultural primitivism, which initially derived from Cynic roots and later became syncretised with Christian doctrine by the early Church Fathers (\textit{contemptus mundi} or contempt for the world).\textsuperscript{158} Certain types of Stoicism encouraged indifference to all events outside the direct control and concern of the actor in order to achieve \textit{eudaimonia} (happiness). By living a life freed from wants, desires and passions, the Stoic would become a virtuous man.\textsuperscript{159}

\textsuperscript{156} Allan, \textit{Virtue, Learning and the Scottish Enlightenment}, 212.
\textsuperscript{157} See Chapter Four, pp 177–179, but especially Appendix J, pp 428–430.
\textsuperscript{158} Boas, "Primitivism" in \textit{Dictionary of the History of Ideas}, vol. 3, 585. The contempt for the world of the monastic had some resemblance to the asceticism of the Stoics whose goal was autarky.
The cultural primitivist, not unlike the Stoic, advocated a simple life lived in accord with nature, eschewing all that was unnecessary to maintain life. Within the Stoic movement there was an ingrained strain of cultural primitivism. It may have given the Scots philosophers some pause, despite their approval of modernisation and new technologies aimed at taming, altering or controlling the natural world. Ferguson avoided this antinomy by declaring that man was always an artificer, inventing and contriving from his first age. Another facet of Stoic philosophy that had significance for Ferguson was the fact that it transmitted an underlying cosmopolitanism that was inconsistent with a sense of place – and ‘sense of place’ was prevalent in the ethos of Highland communities. For this reason, Ferguson’s sermon addressed to the Highland Regiment stressed that ‘sense of place’ no longer mattered in the modern world. The Highlanders’ former ‘place’, expressed in the sense of Duthchas, had ultimately become property under the regulation of law. This showed Ferguson had embraced modernity but retained his comprehension of the static mindset. More evidence of this will be revealed in the final chapter. The universal brotherhood proposed by Stoic philosophy under a rational cosmos was an ideal often undermined by colonialism and its attendant civilising process. Such notions sat side by side with the search for causation and origins that became signal features of post-Renaissance enquiry.

The influence of politeness, moral sense and benevolence were a vital component of Ferguson’s second enculturation process. The relationship of politeness to the Enlightenment was the idea that understanding should override human passions, thus setting the civilised man apart from savages who remained slaves to the intensity of their emotions. During the Enlightenment in Scotland, a great debate arose over whether benevolence, virtue, sympathy and empathy were innate, intuitive or learned. I will outline each briefly before summarising some features of Ferguson’s reactions to them.

160 Cultural primitivism is a belief that anything additional to what is supplied by nature, God, or the gods is deleterious. There was no firm consensus on what ‘nature’ and ‘natural’ constituted among the early and late Stoics. See Boas, "Primitivism" in Dictionary of the History of Ideas, vol. 3, 577. See also Lovejoy and Boas, Primitivism and Related Ideas in Antiquity, 7.

161 Ferguson, Essay, 10–12, but especially 12.

162 See Chapter Four, pages 161, especially note 66.

Ferguson’s exposure to these ideas and debates contrasted with the aural/oral means by which he acquired his native Highland knowledge.

Politeness and refinement emerged as an antidote to the barbarism of religious intolerance, hatred and war of the previous century. It became a barometer of progression, improvement and optimism following the low point of seventeenth-century violence and inhumanity. Politeness began its emergence in England during the latter part of the seventeenth century.\footnote{Lawrence E. Klein, \textit{Shaftesbury and the Culture of Politeness: Moral Discourse and Cultural Politics in Early Eighteenth-Century England} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 5.} It became central not only to the era’s cultural ideology, but also to its cultural organisation and practice.\footnote{Ibid., 5 and 10.} All learning, both scientific and humanist, was fashioned around this new mode of conduct and civility. In part, politeness also amounted to the accommodation of others within a social group.\footnote{Klein, \textit{Shaftesbury and the Culture of Politeness}, 20–23.}

Francis Hutcheson (1694–1746), was the chief disseminator of ‘politeness’ in eighteenth-century Scotland. Hutcheson, who had come under the sway of New Light theology, was once a student of Antony Ashley-Cooper, the third Earl of Shaftesbury (1661–1713).\footnote{Mirayes, ‘The Prejudices of Education: Educational Aspects of the Scottish Enlightenment’, 107.} While Calvinism had emphasised humankind’s depravity, Hutcheson went against the grain by teaching that man was a fundamentally benevolent creature guided by a moral sense. The manifest ultra-refinement and delicacy which evolved from Hutcheson and Shaftesbury’s principle of benevolence was sustained in opposition to Hobbes, who thought men were motivated by self-interest and egoism. For Shaftesbury and Hutcheson, the conscience rather than the fear of God’s wrath became the final arbiter of morality.\footnote{James E. Crimmins, \textit{Introduction}, ed., James E. Crimmins, \textit{Religion, Secularization and Political Thought: Thomas Hobbes to J. S. Mill} (London: Routledge, 1989), 7.} Moral philosophy, as devised by Hutcheson, became a means to educate and order the mind. This acquired understanding of the human faculties could be applied to control the passions and moderate behaviour. During this time, the rise of the middle classes to positions of power was accompanied by a diminution in power of both Church and King. Scottish gentlemen were expected to possess moral and civic virtue, but they also needed to be well versed in philosophy and...
the arts. Shaftesbury supported what Lawrence Klein refers to as the ‘hegemony of gentlemen’. 169

Politeness emerged into a climate of tolerance which had been orchestrated by jurisprudence, right, procedure and precedent. It was also a virtue appropriate to the public realm. By interweaving associated aspects of morality, politeness and faith, Mure of Caldwell claimed whosoever pleased God also resembled him in goodness and benevolence, but ‘those who had it not must affect it in politeness and good manners’. 170

Adam Ferguson, like Dr Johnson, saw this masking of intent as a sign of degeneracy and wrote:

The period is come, when, no engagement remaining on the part of the public, private interests, and animal pleasure, become the sovereign objects of care. When men, being relieved from the pressure of great occasions, bestow their attention on trifles; and having carried what they are pleased to call sensibility and delicacy, on the subject of ease or molestation, as far as real weakness or folly can go, have recourse to affectation, in order to enhance the pretended demands, and accumulate the anxieties, of a sickly fancy, and enfeebled mind. 171

Ferguson was even more succinct about his interpretation of politeness in the following passage:

In this condition, mankind generally flatter their own imbecility under the name of politeness. They are persuaded, that the celebrated ardour, generosity, and fortitude, of former ages, bordered on frenzy, or were the mere effects of necessity, on men who had not the means of enjoying their ease, or their pleasure. They congratulate themselves on having escaped the storm which required the exercise of such arduous virtues; and with that vanity which accompanies the human race in their meanest condition, they boast of a scene of affectation, of languor, or of folly, as the standard of human felicity, and as furnishing the properest exercise of a rational nature. 172

Therefore, it would appear that manners, civility and politeness were topics with which, unlike Ossian, Dr Johnson and Ferguson finally found reason to agree. For Ferguson, civility was the virtue of avoiding offence. To Dr Johnson politeness as a general cultural principle, rather than an ascription of Shaftesburian doctrine, was a fictitious or surrogate virtue – a stand-in for benevolence, where benevolence was undesired or superfluous.

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169 Klein, Shaftesbury and the Culture of Politeness, 20–23.
170 Mure of Caldwell, "MS 5003 (I)" in Mure of Caldwell – Family Papers, (National Library of Scotland), f. 9.
172 Ferguson, Essay, 242–243. The italics are Ferguson’s own.
Even while a modern commentator, like Philip Carter, suggests that sensibility became an alternative discourse of refinement to politeness, there was a great deal of interaction between them. It seems politeness evolved into sensibility through generational change. A greater laxity and latitude was adopted which had not been allowed to the previous generation. Politeness regulated carriage and conversation while sensibility lessened the social strictures and allowed men the expression of their emotions.\(^{173}\) Men were encouraged to gain social polish through conversation with women. G. J. Barker-Benfield, among others, finds that there was a distinct feminising aesthetic around the mid-point of the century.\(^{174}\) Eventually, a negative reaction to this process was incurred as fears multiplied over the possibility that female company dandified or emasculated men.\(^{175}\) Ferguson recognised that there was as much to be lost as there was to be gained by the pretensions that were expected to be adopted in the civilising process.

Sensibility comprised a reassertion of the passions, laying the foundations for an ethics of taste, beauty, and virtuosity and preparing the ground for the primitivism that ushered in the Romantic Movement in British literature.\(^{176}\) A debate over ethics erupted between Smith and Hume, who both found Stoicism inadequate for the modernising world. However, Smith retained the concept of Stoic self-command in his model of spectatorial sympathy.\(^{177}\) He developed a system of propriety to restrain people from conflict within the company of strangers and non-intimates.\(^{178}\) Sensibility itself marked a retreat from a world of corruption, politics and sexuality to a more private world of sociality where heightened perceptions and communication were aimed at the promotion of some sense of solidarity.\(^{179}\)

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\(^{178}\) Phillipson, "Adam Smith as Civic Moralist", 187.

\(^{179}\) Brady et al., *Dictionary of Sensibility* ([cited). See also pp 306–309 of this chapter.
During this period, the word ‘sensibility’ took on new connotations. The innumerable connotations of sensibility were indicative of the same imprecision associated with words such as ‘virtue’ and ‘benevolence’. Sensibility could indicate extreme delicacy of feeling, yet conversely, it could elicit notions of Stoic or scientific detachedness in other usage. These differing uses of terminology were indicative of tension between the public and private worlds and the active and passive spheres of operation. The consequent confusion paralleled the reconfiguration of words like virtue and benevolence from their ancient denotation to more modern connotations.\textsuperscript{180}

Dwyer traces the origins of sensibility to the pathos of French sermons and their influence on Scottish preachers like Hugh Blair.\textsuperscript{181} William Cowper believed that as men’s bodies became less robust and athletic, so too their delicacy of feeling increased.\textsuperscript{182} During the latter part of the century, strong emotional reactions were aroused by even the slightest provocation.\textsuperscript{183} Lois Whitney believes these years were marked by not only expansive egocentricity and aimless sentimentality, but also by an unhealthy morbidity.\textsuperscript{184} A maudlin spate of suicide and pining marred the last years of the eighteenth century.

This cult of sensibility produced a derivative known as the ‘Man of Feeling’. The chief proponent of this fashion was Henry Mackenzie who, like Ferguson, had Highland connections. The difference between the Enlightenment’s ‘Man of Reason’ and the new ‘Man of Feeling’ was the method by which they each arrived at the same hypothesis. The ‘Man of Reason’ discarded his false vision if the facts proved untenable. On the contrary, the ‘Man of Feeling’ preserved an illusion by appealing from the facts to the supernatural, faith, insight or inspiration.\textsuperscript{185} A cult of suicide was encouraged by the

\textsuperscript{180} Brady et al., \textit{Dictionary of Sensibility} ([cited]). See "Terms List" in note 163, page 309 of this chapter, for ‘benevolence’ and ‘virtue’.
\textsuperscript{181} Dwyer, \textit{Virtuous Discourse}, 52.
\textsuperscript{182} Carter, \textit{Men and the Emergence of Polite Society}, 91.
\textsuperscript{185} Fairchild, \textit{The Noble Savage}, 501.
publication of Goethe’s *The Sorrows of Young Werther* in 1774. This work contains a significant and lengthy quotation from *Ossian*. In Goethe’s work the chief protagonist, Werther, dies by his own hand after he becoming involved in an unfulfilling relationship.

The ironic and attendant effect of this cultural movement was that ‘an ethics of benevolence based on feeling led directly to a sentimental type of primitivism’. Moreover, an ethics based on Enlightenment principles also led to a nationalistic form of primitivism (if any kind of primitivism at all). Chapman labels sensibility the language of primitivism. Initially, the cult of sensibility was not in any way overtly connected with Ferguson’s Highlands. During the succeeding century, however, Highlanders would become creatures of pre-history and ancient custom, who were thought to be imbued with a particularly acute form of sensibility.

Womack believes ‘the primitive’ Highland community appeared worthless and ineffective when assessed against the progress in the sciences found in civilised regions of Britain. This was especially evident when communities and cultures were measured against the stages of man’s development from savage to polished, or from hunting to commerce. Improvement and progress were beginning to be seen as artificial, especially where man’s technologies were taming the natural world. The exponents of technology and artifice believed humankind was careening on a course through history while, simultaneously, time for men in agricultural communities appeared to stand still – the landscape surrounding them appearing timeless and primordial. In the Highlands, natives and improvers alike wrestled with systematic knowledge, planned villages, change and opposition to traditional ways. Womack claims the Highland inhabitants were cast as either children who must be forced to change and adapt or non-rational beings that were unable to effect change. People who belonged to static, agricultural and peripheral societies, as opposed to progressive, improving and urbanising ones, were automatically admitted to the category ‘other’. This was not just because the Highland

187 Ibid.
190 Ibid., 175.
community seemed filled with myth and poetry, but also because the Highlands became idealised just as much by those intent on its destruction, as it was by those who promoted its preservation. As Womack contends, the Highlands became condemned to the marginality of fiction at the same instant it was admitted to the privileges of being a part of the British state. Sensibility eventually became associated with Highlanders, because it was a quality thought to be innate among them. The Highlanders themselves believed this notion as much as their later detractors, who represented this quality as proof of Highland irrationality. Sir John Macpherson, Ferguson’s student and foster son, despite reaching the office of Governor-General of India, had a Highland turn of “mind” imbued in him by his families from the Isles of Skye and Raasay. He revealed in a letter to Alexander Carlyle in 1783 that the Indian sun, the attentions of servants and the responsibility of high office could not expunge this Highland frame of mind.

Womack suggests that part of the general appeal of the Highlands was that it married a distinct linguistic community with what was universal about humanity. As Womack reflects, the Highlands became an idealised nation within a larger state. Like Rome, the Highlands became more a way of life based on the sentiment of home, family and patria than cold, political reason. The region also became a repository for the imagery of Gemeinschaft, which has been retained, or only recently lost. By comparison, the political system of the state had to effect, or suggest by using imagery, an imaginary but non-existent kinship with which to weld together diverse groups.

194 Womack, *Improvement and Romance*, 176–7. This set up a dichotomous relationship in that the nation in which one lives is not necessarily the same as the idealised nation of imagined, lineal kinship for which one dies. Political affiliations like kin are not chosen, but unlike kin, political entities have a position in a global system. Anderson’s imagined communities are those in which the living have a link with the ancestors of the past who died defending the nation-state. As the nation and nation-state do not always coincide, the buried ‘unknown soldier’ representing all war dead for the nation-state remains unidentified and unidentifiable. Far better that the soldier be unknown to Britons, than known to be a Scot, Welshman or Englishman, nationalities his name might betray and which could lead to division instead of cohesion. This factor would be less of an issue in more modern states like America or Australia. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991), 9–10. Womack claims because the Highlands were never a state, the ideal of the Gemeinschaft was never tainted by political affiliation, leaving the imagined and imaginary community free to flourish. It
Pagden argues that Stoic cosmopolitanism was well suited to the spread of empire, but unlike the Romans, modern European states had to justify their expropriation of land far from their borders. Experimental method and observation, such as Locke and Bacon’s idea of sensory and experiential proof, were followed and disseminated by the Enlighteners. However, a relativist opposition to ‘universal’ characteristics was bound to emerge at some stage, a notion that will be taken up in the next chapter.

Unfortunately, the devisers of stadial theories, including Ferguson, had their ideas misapplied. Indiscriminate users of stadial development tended to grade societies, communities and civilisations according to their institutional complexity, mode of production, or means of subsistence. Using this criteria and scorecard tended to provide confirmatory evidence that Ferguson’s Highlands were indeed backward, and had made little progress since the medieval period.

Ferguson’s ambivalence about progress is partly due to his location at this cultural crossroad, but this is seldom factored into analyses of his work, or is believed to be immaterial to it. While it is true his ambivalence may be traced to both the Roman Stoics and Montesquieu, Ferguson had the unique opportunity of observing a culture on the wane. Highland society had been at its zenith at the opening of the millennium. It had been dying since before the era of the Stuart Kings, who believed the Highlands were not only a threat but also a rival power. Since the early seventeenth century, the processes of acculturation and assimilation had taken a further toll on Highland culture. Ferguson was a participant in an ascendant civilisation at the same instant he observed the culture of his childhood in its death throes. This sharpened the Edinburgh moral philosopher’s acuity and insight regarding societies in general. Unlike Ferguson, Smith and Hume observed the demise of Highland society as external witnesses with no emotional attachment to the process. Observation of such processes brought home to Ferguson what classical history had taught him second-hand. Progress was a relentless relay where dying civilisations transfer the baton of knowledge to those on the rise.

also extended its appeal beyond its own locality and was able to be appropriated by descendants of Scots everywhere, or even the Japanese. See Womack, Improvement and Romance, 178–9.

building on the foundations of dying ones.\textsuperscript{196} Discrete civilisations have an origin and terminus; they cannot remain perpetually in the vanguard. For Ferguson, stadial theory was a point of origin from where divergences in the character of man’s temperament, manners and environs could be described and studied.

While Ferguson could not solve the problem of why static societies blossom into new civilisations, he identified the role which social cohesion played in ascendant societies. He also identified the roles which specialisation and property played in endangering that cohesion.

For Ferguson, the prospect of progress held within it inevitable losses: loss of community, loss of cohesion, loss of language, and loss of orality – all features which once aided and contributed to the cohesion of a society like Logierait. It is impossible to embrace all values universally, as Pagden contends. To do so would be to have none at all. Yet, tolerance of the values and beliefs others is not only necessary in a multicultural society – modernity itself is a product of multiculturalism. Commerce had not installed the permanent state of peace and amity it once promised.\textsuperscript{197} For Ferguson, there was some consolation and compromise in consigning the primitive past to art and poetry where it could still play some subordinate role in the moulding of identity.

Ferguson feared the bright future would eventually fade as comfort and complacency induced a lack of vigilance on the part of the nation’s citizenry, leaving the door open to invasion or despotism. In the following chapter, I hope to explore what may have been missed of Ferguson’s perceptive enquiry into the human personality and discover ways in which he attempted to enlighten us about the minds of men in static cultures. Like his contemporaries, he had studied such minds, but Ferguson had the advantage of intimate, first-hand knowledge.

\textsuperscript{196} For an example of this from Ferguson’s writing, see the middle quotation on page 293 in this chapter.

\textsuperscript{197} Pagden, “Stoicism, Cosmopolitanism, and the Legacy of European Imperialism”, 4.
CHAPTER 8
‘The peculiar genius of nations’¹
Ferguson as proto anthropologist: concluding reflections

Much of the thesis has centred on the impact of Ferguson’s Highland enculturation. The rationale behind this final chapter will be to show in greater detail how these several streams of knowledge were integrated by Ferguson. The outcome of this integration gave him a unique viewpoint on the human species. Ferguson’s intimate knowledge of two disparate cultures fitted him for questioning the Enlightenment mission, much of which was devoted to the unearthing of humankind’s universal mores and disposition. In other words, the Enlighteners were eager to determine what aspects of human behaviour were pan-cultural. From his vantage-point as a cultural hybrid, Ferguson realised that the general principles of human behaviour, as developed via stadial theory, were merely a springboard for further investigation. Factors like time, geography, geology, climate, language, isolation, war, type of government, all affected ways in which societies subsisted and survived. Ferguson admired, yet also disliked, certain aspects of eighteenth-century British existence. This showed his personality structure had been indelibly affected by Gaelic language and verbomotor culture.

Ferguson became alert to the consequences of the changes wrought by modernity, not only to primitive or ‘rude’ cultures, but also to mainstream culture. Like Rousseau, Ferguson exhibited an inclination toward proto-anthropological enquiry. I would suggest that Ferguson’s seeming partiality for ‘rude’ peoples stemmed from his earliest experiences of social cohesion in Logierait. Nevertheless, his position as a writer with a cross-cultural perspective has been undervalued and under-utilised. Ferguson’s education in Perth, St Andrews and Edinburgh had steered him toward the view that the universe was governed by a mathematical regularity. However, his experiences in Logierait would have taught him that the process of observing colour² was culturally and locally mediated, and that manners likewise differed significantly between nations and

² Chapter Two of this thesis, specifically note 34, page 69.
tribes. In other words, people appeared diverse in their manifestations of human society language and culture.³

In the course of this chapter, I hope to recapitulate how Ferguson’s experience during his Highland childhood developed his ability to observe and comprehend culture, whether it was in the distant past, or in distant lands. Once again, Logierait was the key community – the yardstick and archetype to which Ferguson turned to make his comparisons. Therefore, it will be of some importance to revisit this Perthshire village and construct an anthropological profile of it. With a clear picture of Logierait firmly in place, one can gain a better appreciation of Ferguson’s hypothetical time-travelling journalist who visits a Spartan village. This hypothetical situation and place becomes an allegorical criticism by Ferguson of traveller-journalists who draw incomplete, superficial and flawed conclusions on the assumption that all humankind ought to think, perceive and behave in exactly the same manner they themselves do. In order to clarify Ferguson’s position, I will tender a couple of examples from Edmund Burt’s Letters, wherein Burt recorded his experiences among Highlanders of Perthshire during the time of Ferguson’s adolescence. Burt’s observations manifested misconceptions about the observed culture of Ferguson’s Highlands similar to those made by Ferguson’s eighteenth-century visitor to Sparta. I conclude by suggesting that Ferguson still has much to teach us about others as well as ourselves. This is especially so regarding the troubled political climate of our time.

Before that, we need to look at Logierait from a more modern anthropological perspective, in order to comprehend some of the cross-cultural comparisons Ferguson automatically and instinctively once made. The American anthropologist Robert Redfield identifies book-learning among key characteristics which are “deficient” in what he termed ‘folk’ society and cultures. He found folk societies had distinctively different patterns of belief and were structured in a fashion unlike civil society. Redfield

³ Although both Hume and Montesquieu had observed that social, geographic and political conditions combined to shape a people, for Ferguson, the variation between life in Logierait and life in Edinburgh was not an abstraction, but a reality he had experienced. For Hume’s notions on climate and politics, see his essay ‘Of National Character’ in David Hume, Selected Essays, eds Stephen Copley and Andrew Edgar, Oxford World’s Classics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 123–124; Adam Smith also makes comments about climate. See Adam Smith, An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations, 1776 ed. (Reading: Oxford University Press, 1998), 14.
found a consensual subordination of the technical to the moral order among folk societies. These societies were morally well-integrated.⁴ Other qualities of this type of society included several that could also apply to primitive societies. These include economic self-sufficiency, intimate social ties, rituals, traditions and a certain amount of isolation. His findings are significant when considering Ferguson’s origins.

Almost certainly, Redfield would have recognised Ferguson’s Logierait as a folk community. The word ‘folk’ first appeared in English around 1297 to refer to a discrete people – ‘the Brytones’. Later ‘folk’ came to distinguish the commonality from their Royal overlord. Still later, the term was applied to the anonymous, non-literate, culturally conservative, ethnically distinct and subordinate peoples living in rural districts.⁵ One clear distinction which set the small, economically self-sufficient and somewhat isolated rural peasant community apart from its civilised counterpart was the manner in which knowledge was transmitted. This transmission usually occurred by word of mouth and imitative behaviours.⁶ Past chapters have described and submitted evidence of many of these features occurring in and around Logierait throughout Adam Ferguson’s lifespan.

In his search for primitive characteristics, the American cultural anthropologist Stanley Diamond found that primitive societies tended to be conservative compared to cultures dominated by technology. Expression and conflict are often structured in this type of society. Organisation and definition of conflict and ritual help to strengthen the social fabric, while allowing the basic needs of the community to be satisfied in a communal and non-exploitative fashion.⁷ Diamond’s criteria relating to the characteristics of primitive societies fit the patterns of lifestyle in Logierait at the time Ferguson knew it. For Logierait, little had changed since the reign of James VI, who became King James I of Great Britain. During James I’s reign, Bishop Andrew Knox set in train the last major step toward altering Highland mores with his Statutes of Iona.

⁶ Ibid., 36.
in 1609. The Statutes stigmatised the Erse language and compelled the sons of clan chiefs to be educated in English institutions, thereby dissolving the linguistic and cultural bond between the ordinary folk and their cultural leaders.\(^8\) However, even during Ferguson’s lifetime, the first and second Dukes of Atholl – although of Lowland rather than Highland extraction – still saw fit to step in to provide for the people of Logierait in time of flood or crop failure.\(^9\)

While in many ways Logierait remained isolated and backward, it should be remembered that new technologies were beginning to make their influence felt there throughout Ferguson’s life. The locals had even happened upon some technologies of their own, such as inoculations against smallpox, fir candles and peat shovels. If by technology – itself a seventeenth-century neologism – we mean the application of an experimental methodology, then it will be apparent that the people of Logierait had little need for the technical application of physics or mechanics.\(^10\) In areas like the Highlands, new technologies coexisted for some time with remnants from the past. The villagers of Logierait were unencumbered by the intricacies of seventeenth and eighteenth-century conceptions or debates regarding teleology, final causes, technics, metaphysics, anthropocentrism and anthropomorphism. However, they certainly had the plough, the cart and small implements. They also had the income from the products of the spinning wheel and loom, which they supplemented with the produce from small allotments.

Apart from limited technologies, Logierait villagers had other characteristics that slotted them into Redfield’s ‘folk’ classification. One outstanding feature of life in Logierait touched on in earlier chapters was the incidence of superstition in the locale. Ferguson would have found these superstitions indefensible on the ground that they did not emanate from rational thought processes. Nevertheless, superstition coexisted with

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\(^9\) For life in Logierait – see Chapter 1.

\(^10\) This sort of methodology culminated in the discovery of latent heat by Ferguson’s friend and cousin, Joseph Black. This in turn allowed James Watt to construct the first viable steam engine. For Ferguson’s relationship with Black see Joseph Black, *Correspondence of Joseph Black* in "Gen 874/V", 1766, f. 19. (Edinburgh University Library). Kate, Ferguson’s wife, was Black’s niece. For the technology of latent heat and the steam engine see D. S. L. Cardwell, "Technology" in *Dictionary of the History of Ideas: Studies of selected pivotal ideas*, ed. Philip P. Wiener (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1973–1974), vol. 4, 364.
established Calvinism. Ferguson was surely familiar with lore surrounding St Fillan’s Well and its curative powers.\(^{11}\) Nevertheless, if Bisset’s report is at all reliable, superstitions were prevalent in Logierait because the people had a limited understanding of the nature of causality. Furthermore, the superstitions had support from custom and tradition, such as those surrounding marriage and newborns. Bisset recorded traditional celebrations of the Celtic feast of Beltane in Logierait during the 1790s.\(^{12}\) While he countenanced none of them, Ferguson may have been somewhat aware that myth and taboo (as opposed to superstition) once underlay the maintenance of social norms. For the city-dwelling intelligentsia, the pervasiveness of this superstition confirmed a level of backwardness. The inculcation of Protestantism and attempts to teach the youngsters of the parish to read, to write and to speak English were central to this process. Therefore, it is likely that forces were in operation to create tension between the stability of traditions and the changes imposed by acculturation processes. Redfield was one of the first to observe objectively this tension between tradition and the forces of acculturation in the 1930s.\(^{13}\) Yet, it is probable that Ferguson was aware of similar tensions in Logierait as early as the 1730s or 1740s. It was the knowledge of these processes that made Ferguson radically different from other Enlightenment moralists.\(^{14}\)

As Claude Lévi-Strauss lauds Rousseau’s proto-anthropological insight, surely Ferguson also should be credited with similar perceptiveness. In the following pages I hope to demonstrate how Ferguson’s ‘insider’ knowledge of Highland society gave him the wherewithal to realise that in order to conceptualise primitive societies, an observer had to do far more than just interpret signs and symbols. It is not enough to record history or catalogue artefacts when such items have little meaning except within the social consciousness of the people who have produced them. For this very reason, modern anthropologists choose to live among the people they are studying for months or even years. They do this to reproduce a native-like account of the social system in order

\(^{12}\) Ibid. See Thomas Bisset’s account of the rites of Beltane.
\(^{14}\) For example, the myth of ‘the changeling’ perhaps explained infant abnormalities and sudden infant death. It also served to minimise parental guilt by removing the adverse outcome from their control. See Michael Newton, *A Handbook of the Scottish Gaelic World* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2000), 249, 254–253.
to validate their own interpretations. As the eighteenth century progressed, exploration brought encounters with new societies that challenged the accuracy of stadial models of human development.

Long before the time of Stanley Diamond, Ferguson seemed to realise that ‘historical understanding is a reading of systematic meaning into the behaviour of others’. He was keen to remind his readers that history, even as it was written by the likes of Herodotus, Thucydides, Homer, Tacitus, Livy or any of the chroniclers of classical civilisations, ought to be treated with scepticism. History is always a construct or fabrication. What we perceive, reading about other cultures or other periods of history, is a conceptualisation that is often based on indirect evidence.

Ferguson’s perceptions of ‘rude’ society deserve to be trusted far more than they are. In an ultimate ‘grand tour’, he deposits a traveller from the eighteenth century into an encounter with the inhabitants of a village in Ancient Greece. Ferguson’s purpose was to oblige his readers to consider the cultural context. His time-traveller holds a mirror up to the present, which was no doubt why Ferguson chose to use this device. When Ferguson’s traveller was engaged in a communicative transaction, he expected common meaning. However, in cross-cultural communication, the symbols, signs and contexts are alien and, therefore, prone to be misinterpreted by the parties engaged in the exchange. An examination of the sketch of Sparta from Ferguson’s Essay with subsequent illustrations from Burt’s Letters will establish that rank appeared to be one of the chief stumbling blocks in the cross-cultural debate.

Although Ferguson’s stadial theory demonstrates social evolutionism similar to Montesquieu, Ferguson was aware that climate and topography exerted some influence on the way of life and subsistence practices of the human species. Roberto Romani suggests Ferguson abandoned his complex analysis of national character and confined himself to the degree of virtue displayed by a nation’s citizenry which, in turn, would

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15 Diamond, In Search of the Primitive, 212–213.
17 Ibid., 211.
18 The precedent for this type of situation drawn by Ferguson in the Essay possibly lies with Montesquieu and this is taken up in more detail later on page 329.
determine their type of government. In spite of Ferguson’s own persistence in searching for generalities in the behaviour of the human animal, it was always with a view to a future, more detailed study of cultural diversity. Furthermore, Ferguson insisted the existence of ‘rude’, pre-literate confederations of people did not necessarily suggest lower intelligence or reduced capacities to adapt or create. The following excerpt makes this most apparent:

That extensive tract of the earth, containing so great a variety of situation, climate, and soil, should, in the manners of its inhabitants, exhibit all the diversities which arise from the unequal influence of the sun, joined to a different nourishment and manner of life. Every question, however, on this subject is premature, till we have first endeavoured to form some general conception of our species in its rude state, and have learned to distinguish mere ignorance from dullness, and the want of arts from the want of capacity.

The nascent anthropological sensitivities motivated by the dual enculturation processes that Ferguson underwent are seen to best effect in the next passage from his Essay. Within this passage, Ferguson not only illustrates cross-cultural pragmatics, but he also gives us an object lesson in observation and recording. He does this through his hypothetical, time-travelling journalist who, upon his arrival in Ancient Greece/Sparta, encounters members of an Iron Age culture. This particular segment of the Essay may have drawn the attention of scholars like Duncan Forbes and Dafydd Moore because the depiction therein shares numerous features with that of life in the Scottish Highlands.

James Steven Sheets’ thesis also carries an analysis of this passage. Within it, Sheets also saw parallels with Highland figures, history and travel literature. In particular, Sheets draws attention to the similarity between the observations of Ferguson’s time-traveller and those contained in the eighteenth-century journals of Robert Pennant and Edmund Burt, each of whom spent time in the Scottish Highlands. The new genre of travel and journal writing also had some influence on Ferguson’s content and format.

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22 Sheets claims that Ferguson mingled the broader Scottish tradition with Highland tradition. This is well observed, since it probably had been Ferguson’s overall intention, especially given what may have been his ploy with *Ossian* that was outlined in Chapter Five of this thesis. James Steven Sheets, "Adam Ferguson: The ‘Good Preceptor’ of Empire" (Ph D, University of Rochester [GB], 1993, 74.
23 Ibid., 50, 74, 76.
He used parts of Plutarch’s *Life of Agesilaus* for the broad brushstrokes of his imaginary journalist’s record.²⁴

The moral of both the report of Ferguson’s journalist and Plutarch’s *Life of Agesilaus* is that judging from appearances can be fraught with error. Ferguson drew the distinction between a written history of factual detail and fashioning a picture of the character and manner of a people. In Ferguson’s two competing cultures, manners were gathered from mythopoeia and history respectively. To illustrate this point, he introduces his traveller/journalist to us in the following selection:

> It would, no doubt, be pleasant to see the remarks of such a traveller as we sometimes send abroad to inspect the manners of mankind, left, unassisted by history, to collect the character of the Greeks from the state of their country, or from their practice in war. ‘This country,’ he might say, ‘compared to ours, has an air of barrenness and desolation. I saw upon the road troops of labourers, who were employed in the fields; but no where the habitations of the master and landlord. It was unsafe; I was told, to reside in the country; and the people of every district crowded into towns to find a place of defence. It is indeed impossible, that they can be more civilized, till they have established some regular government, and have courts of justice to hear their complaints. At present, every town, nay, I may say, every village, acts for itself, and the greatest disorders prevail. I was not indeed molested; for you must know, that they call themselves nations, and do all their mischief under the pretence of war.’²⁵

Ferguson’s observer instantly made a comparison with his own civilisation. Moreover, the mistake that Ferguson warns us against is still being made in the passage above. The contemporary classicist, Victor Davis Hanson, made the following observation on this point:

> Obviously, then, I do not believe that we should imagine classical Greek society frozen in time and space, as a cultural standard maintained over the millennia, for a small elite. Humanists in our universities who look back to the fifth century B.C. to find solace in the excellence of Greek literature, art, or philosophy, all too often conceive of an image of a society that never existed. They picture writers, artists, philosophers, and other men of genius, but they do not picture them as related to the vast majority of Greek people and their ‘petty’ concerns and, worse yet, they divorce them from the very physical landscape they inhabited. In their hands, classical studies have grown only more rarefied and isolated from those who surely need its guidance now more than ever: all serious and hardworking citizens of our polis. All too many scholars – as any visitor to the learned societies’ conventions can attest – have somehow convinced themselves that classical Athens was a community similar


to their own universities, a notion that is not only demonstrably false but also
dangerous: this attitude has virtually ensured that only scarce resources are invested
in their own limited interests, which in turn casts a further veil over the Greeks and
removes them yet a further generation away from the rest of us.26

Ferguson uses his time-travelling journalist to illustrate these same pitfalls. In
Ferguson’s passage, the journalist automatically assumes institutions of his state are
more civilised and more advanced than those of the Greeks before him. He supposed
the Greeks were without regular government, which on his terms amounted to being
uncivilised. Ferguson’s hypothetical traveller went on to compare the Greek ‘nation’ –
its two kings, its territory, armies, revenue and treaties – with those of his own
civilisation. He estimates the Greek leaders to be at the level of a church constable or
warden in stature. He notices the Greeks must group together for defence, and indeed
this is how and why their towns were formed. The finest house in Greece would not
lodge the meanest labourer in the journalist’s country. Furthermore, the journalist could
not account for the fact that men with the outward appearance of beggars could dine
together in the hall with the king who had ‘scarcely cloaths to his back’.27

In a brief paragraph, Ferguson, through his journalist highlighted what
civilisation possessed which the Spartan town lacked. Civilisation had justice,
distinctions of rank, central government and a market economy, all of which combined
to deliver a better standard of living to its citizens. However, as lawlessness flourished,
those who lived beyond the boundaries of the Greek village remained without
protection. Within these boundaries, people lived in slavery, forced to labour, or they
were condemned to a life of poverty. Ferguson’s depiction of the Greek town is
reminiscent of the manner in which the Highlands were perceived in eighteenth-century
Britain. This poverty is illustrated in detail by Ferguson’s journalist:

They have not a single farthing of money; and I was obliged to get food at the public
expence, there being none to be had in the market. You will imagine, that there must
have been a service of plate, and great attendance, to wait upon the illustrious
stranger; but my fare was a mess of sorry pottage, brought me by a naked slave, who
left me to deal with it as I thought proper: and even this I was in continual danger of

26 See Victor Davis Hanson, The Western Way of Warfare: Infantry Battle in Classical Greece, 2nd ed.
(Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 6. Arguably, the rarefication of Greek history, art and
life became a product of the era in which Ferguson lived. He was prevented from falling into a similar
trap as those described by Hanson because of his direct knowledge of Highland society and his ability to
identify similarities to it within classical texts.
27 Ferguson, Essay, 186. See Ferguson’s note.
having stolen from me by the children, who are as vigilant to seize opportunities, and as dextrous in snatching their food, as any starved greyhound you ever saw.\textsuperscript{28}

The townsfolk appeared to subsist on a poor quality diet. Nevertheless, they supplied the observer with food, although to him it was most unappealing. While attempting to eat these unsavoury victuals, Ferguson’s traveller was surprised by the attempts of children to steal them. The traveller concludes that these children were undernourished. However, the most telling of the traveller’s evaluations is the one he makes about the inhabitants’ state of mind. Because the location of the village, its food and its people made the traveller miserable, he naturally assumed that the villagers were likewise miserable.\textsuperscript{29} Ferguson’s journalist had failed to realise that the Greeks knew no other existence other than their own and, unlike him, could make no comparison. Having established that the Greeks were uncivilised, the observer then went on to make further presuppositions about their manners and lifestyle.

The abiding picture we get from the traveller is that distinction of ranks has not yet emerged to any significant degree within this Greek society. Poor food, few clothes, a king without the trappings of status, all suggest a state of misery to this civilised traveller from eighteenth-century Britain. However, when the journalist acquired an informant who was able to explain that the king did not care for stately show, preferring to live among his people where he could find company and contentment, there is a slight change in the journalist’s attitude. With the aid of the informant, the traveller began to build a slightly more detailed picture of the Greek village.

The traveller was appalled by the poor housing and could not understand why the Greeks’ churches were constructed so crudely. His informant asked, ‘What would you be then [, says he,] if you found religion in stone walls?’\textsuperscript{30} Here the traveller encountered a key quality of primitive and traditional societies – that of spirituality. The journalist imagined his readers would find the Greeks as tedious and charmless as he did himself. This demeanour is evident in the journalist’s following remark: ‘This will suffice for a sample of our conversation; and sententious as it was, you may believe I did

\textsuperscript{28} Ferguson, Essay, 186.
\textsuperscript{29} Ferguson’s journalist recorded that, ‘The misery of the whole people, in short, as well as my own, while I staid there, was beyond description’. Ibid.
\textsuperscript{30} Ibid., 187.
not stay long to profit by it’.\textsuperscript{31} However, the traveller discovered that the inhabitants were not quite as dim-witted as he first thought. By making contact with them, they became more human and less alien to him. Furthermore, they divulged that the town had a market place, buildings, and barks and lighters with which to ply their trade. If the town were threatened, their trading barks could form the foundation of a navy.

Nevertheless, taken overall, Ferguson’s journalist formed a fairly low opinion of the Greek town and its inhabitants. The place was ‘a wretched country’ which he could not wait to ‘bid farewell to’.\textsuperscript{32} Nonetheless, the traveller managed to collect some data which is furnished in the segment below:

\begin{quote}
I have been at some pains to observe their ceremonies of religion, and to pick up curiosities. I have copied some inscriptions, as you will see when you come to peruse my journal, and will then judge, whether I have met with enough to compensate the fatigues and bad entertainment to which I have submitted.\textsuperscript{33}
\end{quote}

It should be noted that while Ferguson’s hypothetical observer collected signs and inscriptions among the society, he still interpreted these by the characteristics of his own superior civilisation. At no time did the traveller construe what he observed in terms of the society’s own intrinsic signs or symbols, which had applications solely within their society’s bounds.

The traveller failed to comprehend why the townsfolk appeared so self-important when to him their outward appearance precluded pride. In the traveller’s estimation, they were poor, dirty, ragged and uncongenial company:

\begin{quote}
As for the people, you will believe, from the specimen I have given you, that they could not be very engaging company: though poor and dirty, they still pretend to be proud; and a fellow who is not worth a groat, is above working for his livelihood. They come abroad barefooted, and without any cover to the head, wrapt up in the coverlets under which you would imagine they had slept.\textsuperscript{34} They throw all off, and appear like so many naked cannibals, when they go to violent sports and exercises; at which they highly value feats of dexterity and strength. Brawny limbs, and muscular arms, the faculty of sleeping out all nights, of fasting long, and of putting up with any kind of food, are thought genteel accomplishments.\textsuperscript{35}
\end{quote}

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{31} Ferguson, \textit{Essay}, 187.
\textsuperscript{32} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{33} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{34} This has some resemblance to the Highland article of clothing known as the \textit{fileadh mor}. The \textit{fileadh mor} was a large plaid, almost like a blanket, which was pleated around the waist and fixed in place by a large belt while the wearer was lying on the ground. The excess cloth was cast over the shoulder and pinned, or alternatively, could be used to cover the head.
\textsuperscript{35} Ibid.
\end{footnotes}
The observer found the most revered people of this imaginary Greek society were the warrior class. The warriors tested their strength, exercised naked, fasted and slept in the open at night. To the traveller, it appeared that violence in this society was preferred to riches. Although poor, they appeared to do nothing to better themselves or their living standards. Ferguson’s Greeks could not be further from the social round of clubs and conversation, at the time, an expected component of eighteenth-century European society.

There are some startling similarities in the traveller’s depiction of the Grecian town with Highland villages of Ferguson’s day. The Highland Scottish and Ancient Greek societies shared certain characteristics: the barrenness of their topographies, the poverty and dirt, the masculine sports, the gruel-like victuals, and the lawlessness which existed outside village confines. There are a couple of features in Ferguson’s passage which are most reminiscent of the Highlands. The barefooted men for instance, sleeping out in coverlets, bent on robbery and pillage, are evocative of a party of Highlanders on a mission to rustle cattle. Men in such parties would dress in the fileadh mor (or large kilt) which could do double duty as a blanket at night.36

The journalist was appalled at the rudimentary nature of the Greek government, where a man with no accomplishments other than a loud voice could rise to be a leader.37

They have no settled government that I could learn; sometimes the mob, and sometimes the better sort, do what they please: they meet in great crowds in the open air, and seldom agree about anything. If a fellow has presumption enough, and a loud voice, he can make a great figure. There was a tanner here, some time ago, who, for a while, carried everything before him. He censured so loudly what others had done, and talked so big of what might be performed, that he sent out at last to make good his words, and to curry the enemy instead of his leather. You will imagine, perhaps, that he was pressed for a recruit; no; – he was sent to command the army. They are indeed seldom long of one mind, except in their readiness to harass their neighbours. They go out in bodies, and rob, pillage, and murder where-ever they come.38

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36 See also footnote 34 of this chapter on the previous page 328.
37 Bisset claims Ferguson was not suitable to be a preacher in a Highland village because he did not have a loud enough voice. Therefore, it is rather revealing that Ferguson should advance a ‘loud voice’ as a criterion for leadership here. See the quotation of Bisset in Chapter Three, page 123. See also Robert Bisset, "Dr Adam Ferguson" in Public Characters of 1799–1800 (London: Gillet, and Cundee for R. Phillips, 1799), 330.
38 Ferguson, Essay, 187–188.
The most striking trend in the passage is the development of the civilised/uncivilised and universal/particular contrasts drawn by the journalist. Invariably he favours his own familiar civilised society whilst levelling criticism at the alien Greek one. The time-traveller from Britain failed to recognise the embryonic origins of his own pre-eminent civilisation in the squalid Grecian town. Ferguson was careful to point out this failing in the following passage containing a quote from the great Thucydides:

So far may we suppose our traveller to have written; and upon a recollection of the reputation which those nations have acquired at a distance, he might have added, perhaps, ‘That he could not understand how scholars, fine gentlemen, and even women, should combine to admire a people, who so little resemble themselves.’

It is somewhat of a paradox that Ferguson’s travelling journalist was unaware that the people of the town he so despised had produced some of the art, literature and history which were the foundation of the same arts of his own civilisation. The traveller wished to repudiate the fact that men more seedy and wretched than the menials and beggars of his own civilisation had produced the works of art he had learnt and translated while at school and university.

It seems one of the messages Ferguson wished to promulgate through his hypothetical time-traveller and journalist, was that in spite of the fine history, character analysis and art produced by the Ancient Greeks, and despite their raft of eighteenth-century admirers, the Greeks were far from being an advanced culture, even by the standards of Ferguson’s era. The Ancient Greeks of his passage were actually far closer to the Amerindians, Tartars or even Highlanders in their manners and lifestyle than men of the academies would admit. According to Ferguson, these Ancients Greeks were actually a savage and violent people, ready to use the sword and dagger in dissent, or be provoked to butchery and mutilation in war. Ferguson deftly held up a mirror to polished men’s past and showed they conveniently failed or refused to recognise what they once had been.

By illustrating the misconceptions and expectations of his traveller about the lifestyle and contextual timeframe of the Greek town, Ferguson believed it might be of assistance to rectify the perceptions of his uninformed contemporaries, who imagined

39 Ferguson, Essay, 188.
that people everywhere thought, felt, reacted and perceived in the exact same manner as them. Ferguson outlined the character of the townsfolk as his imaginary journalist saw them:

When viewed on this side, the ancient nations have but a sorry plea for esteem with the inhabitants of modern Europe, who profess to carry the civilities of peace into the practice of war; and who value the praise of indiscriminate lenity at a higher rate than even that of military prowess, or the love of their country. And yet they have, in other respects, merited and obtained our praise. Their ardent attachment to their country; their contempt for suffering, and of death, in its cause; their manly apprehensions of personal independence, which rendered every individual, even under tottering establishments, and imperfect laws, the guardian of freedom to his fellow-citizens; their activity of mind; in short, their penetration, the ability of their conduct, and force of their spirit, have gained them the first rank among nations.40

There are more than a few purposes which can be inferred from Ferguson’s exercise of having a contemporary man travel back in time two or three thousand years to visit a society with simple technologies and institutions. Firstly, Ferguson wished to jolt readers out of their sentimentality regarding Homeric society and the false perception that, in being a precursor to their own, it was ‘refined’. The second and less apparent inference which might be drawn from Ferguson’s passage is: if Homeric Greece was so revered, why then were the Highlands so maligned? Macpherson’s Ossian had been launched on the pretext that (for Macpherson and Ferguson at least), there were many similarities between Gaelic mythology and Greek mythology. Unfortunately, Ferguson was the only one for whom the similarities were plain and apparent among the Edinburgh literati. Ferguson insisted smaller, less complicated societies had retained qualities which the refinements of civilisation had withered in us.

There is yet another implication that Ferguson raises in this exercise, although it seems at odds with the universalistic sweep of his stadial theory. Stadial theory, which was discussed in the previous chapter, tracks within its stages the development of the growth of institutions, changes in the means of subsistence, or adaptations from nomadism to sedentism. Even so, it remains possible for the evolutionism encountered in stadial theory to exist alongside cultural relativism in the same system.41 Cultural relativism, in this particular sense, signifies that religion, politics, ethics and aesthetics are dependent on a cultural construct, environment or situation. While the stages of

40 Ferguson, Essay, 189.
41 Diamond, In Search of the Primitive, 109.
humankind’s progression might be uniform and universal, the forces of climate, topography and fortune affects the way people adapt to the limitations imposed by their environment. The dilemma which stemmed from this search for universal attributes in human society promoted tolerance by stressing common uniting elements. Nevertheless, it could also spark discord by positing an absolute truth from which no deviation was tolerated, like that which fuelled the religious wars in seventeenth-century Europe.

Rousseau, Montesquieu and Ferguson shared similar provincial enculturations processes. This made them more sensitive to, and tolerant of, cultural and linguistic differences in others.  

Stanley Diamond observes that Rousseau was aware of what would be now termed Eurocentrism.  

Despite the travel literature available, as Europeans colonised and discovered new continents and archipelagos, Rousseau had noticed that the only groups of humans actively ‘studied’ were the people of European countries. In the *Persian Letters*, Montesquieu’s Persian characters, Uzbek and Rica, are made to feel that there was something unnatural about not being European.  

Moreover, as well as being a criticism of the French monarchy and aristocracy, and a psychological exploration of race, class and gender, Montesquieu’s *Persian Letters* addresses how ‘Impenetrability thus haunts the face-to-face relations between all strangers’.

This was precisely the situation which Ferguson’s journalist illustrated among the Greeks. Montesquieu, Rousseau and Ferguson had each had enough of a provincial upbringing to see the major flaws of their respective centralised cultures. Rousseau had been familiar with Geneva’s republic; while Ferguson’s traditional Highland society bore a resemblance to the primitive republics of antiquity. The prior assumptions carried by men such as Ferguson’s journalist, obfuscated a truthful representation of the manners and characteristics of the society they observed. On these

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43 Quoting from Rousseau’s *The First and Second Discourses*, ‘For the 300 or 400 years since the inhabitants of Europe have inundated the other parts of the world, and continuously published new collections of voyages and reports, I am convinced that we know no other men except Europeans … under the pompous name of the study of man, everyone does hardly anything except study the men of his own country’. See Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The First and Second Discourses*, ed. R. D. Masters (New York: St Martin’s Press, 1964), 210. See also Diamond, *In Search of the Primitive*, 101–102.

44 Ibid., 101–102.

grounds Ferguson believed that European admiration for the ancients was misplaced.\textsuperscript{46} The ancient tribesman’s ardent love of country was merely the same ardent love of country which the next tribe along the valley possessed. Ardent love of country was commonplace in the barbarian world.

In this respect the ancient historians were no different. For example, Herodotus and Thucydides displayed scant interest in the languages of barbarian tribes they described.\textsuperscript{47} Difficulties with interaction between tribes shaped the belief that strangers were little better than animals, because like animals, foreigners appeared to lack the power of intelligible speech. Herodotus found that the Scythians hated all foreigners.\textsuperscript{48} Every civilisation has its barbarian fringe, which it opposes, yet by which; it also defines its virtues.

In most of the classical histories, war was one of the few occasions, apart from trade, where two nations came into contact. War was not the ideal situation in which to begin to understand the human condition, nor was it conducive to the observation and study of culture.\textsuperscript{49} As Ferguson had already noted, the contact of war was insufficient to

\textsuperscript{46} See quotation on the previous page 331, of this chapter.

\textsuperscript{47} The derivation of the word barbarian lies in the ‘baa-baa’ babbling sound emitted by non-Greeks.

\textsuperscript{48} They punished any and all foreign language usage or custom found in their midst. See Herodotus, \textit{The History of Herodotus Translated by George Rawlinson [www]} (Internet Classics Archive, 440 BC [cited 3 April 2006]); available from http://classics.mit.edu/Herodotus/history.html

\textsuperscript{49} It is difficult to build a picture of the material culture and customs of a society based solely on battlefield contact. Nevertheless, on the battlefield, there can be a high degree of intercultural agreement between combatants concerning what constitutes things such as engagement, battle, defeat, victory, avoidance of confrontation, or unrestrained slaughter. See John Keegan, \textit{A History of Warfare} (New York: First Vintage Books, 1994), 78–80, 98–99, 110, 332. Culture is as powerful a determinant as politics in the choice of military tactics and weaponry. See Keegan, 19. Incidentally, Keegan also confirms the tenets which were raised in Chapter 4 regarding warrior cultures and their separation from the rest of their society. Keegan’s study finds that the warrior world runs parallel, but remains apart from, the world of politics, diplomacy and civil society or civilian life. The culture of the warrior can never be that of civilisation. Warrior cultures kept their societies and the defenders of their societies partitioned. See Keegan, xvi. Another great military writer of our time, Victor Davis Hanson, who has studied militaria from Ancient Greece to the modern day, also reflects much of what Ferguson had to say about warfare. Western militarism derives from the civic militarism of the ancient world which Ferguson so admired. Hoplite militias created the Western way of warfare through their infantry battles that were waged by free men for property and local autonomy. Western society is however, developing some of the traits Ferguson warned it would develop, therefore Hanson echoes Ferguson by stating that, ‘As products of the Enlightenment, we in the West must not forget the tragic view of history and our heritage from antiquity. Our modern Western societies must not become so educated, so wealthy and so moral that we lose our resolution to use arms in order to protect ourselves’. See Victor Davis Hanson, "Ways of War:
build a picture of the customs, habits and character of the opposing nation. We cannot assume classical texts were free from modifications, nor can we discount the fact that classical authors may have been misinformed or misled by their foreign interpreters. To gain a clearer picture of the manners and values of a people, Ferguson realised that it was necessary to live among them for some time and make systematic observations.\(^5^0\)

In contrast to his hypothetical traveller-journalist, Ferguson described the Greek/Spartan society as a vigorous one which prized equity above all else. However, he was aware that quarrels within the society, or with neighbours, were sometimes carried to extremes. These quarrels might end in exile, bloodshed, execution or proscription. The society valued military prowess and strength, and with that goal in mind, its warriors exercised regularly. They also valued eloquence. Eloquence was highly valued by ancient societies. It was used to persuade people to new points of view, or to win arguments. Nevertheless, occasionally, speeches degenerated into invective or splenetics.\(^5^1\) Given time spent in the society, another observer might come across redeeming features that were missed entirely by Ferguson’s imaginary journalist.

Rousseau and Ferguson possessed a vague awareness of the unsatisfactory nature of their own and others’ works, specifically books like those of Lafitau or Charlevoix. Their books documented distant lands and cultures or existed as attempts to explain mankind’s temperament or history. Ferguson saw an emerging necessity for some scientific rigour being brought into such proceedings. At this stage during the eighteenth-century, what we now know as the social sciences remained in an undifferentiated state.\(^5^2\) Margaret Hogden describes Ferguson’s sources as meagre but, at the same time, it could be argued that Ferguson resisted placing the European society of his period at the top of the hierarchy unquestioningly. He believed there was an unexamined acceptance of Greek society to be the equal of the advanced societies of eighteenth-century Britain and Europe. For example, Greek poetry, with its evidence of

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50 Ferguson, *Essay*, 188.
51 Ibid., 188–189.
pathos, deceived the unsuspecting moderns into ascribing to the Greeks a veneer of refinement.  

Ferguson has made an attempt to explain the dynamics of warrior cultures in segments of his Essay. He exposed in the ancient texts similarities with contemporary rude societies, particularly the one that still existed in legend and tale in the Scottish Highlands. However, he disguised this by using similar examples from the literature of other travellers. The feats of the last genuine Highland warrior-heroes lingered in living memory well into Ferguson’s boyhood and their threat had not yet been erased in mainstream British society. Macpherson and Ferguson responded to socio-economic change and its inevitable consequences for fringe-dwellers like the Highlanders with a compulsion to collect verse. Still later, in the nineteenth century, cultural extinction was the main impetus fuelling anthropological enquiry, and remains one of the signal reasons for the continued study of humankind today. Ferguson reproached men like his hypothetical travelling journalist with the following comments:

> We are ourselves the supposed standard of politeness and civilization; and where our own features do not appear, we apprehend, that there is nothing which deserves to be known. But it is probable that here, as in many other cases, we are ill qualified, from our supposed knowledge of causes, to prognosticate effects, or to determine what must have been the properties and operations even of our own nature…

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53 Margaret Hodgen, *Early Anthropology in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1971), 507–510. During the mid-eighteenth century, renewed interest in Greek and Homer fed the Querelle, charting the rival claims and achievements of the ancients in comparison to the moderns. Ferguson had no qualms about demonstrating the ferocious nature of Iron Age Greece.

54 I refer here to Coll Ciotach, father of Alasdair MacColla, and Alasdair MacColla himself who fought with Montrose during the Civil Wars. He died in battle in 1647. Those men, who were boys at this time may have survived long enough to recall the deeds, lore and infamy surrounding MacColla and pass his history on to succeeding generations such as Ferguson’s. For more information, see David Stevenson, *Alasdair MacColla and the Highland Problem in the Seventeenth-Century* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1980). MacColla is suspected of being the first to harness the tactic of the Highland charge which caused devastation in battles on British soil between 1640 and 1746. MacColla was committed to a Pan-Gaelic independence and any political association, including that with Montrose, was purely in order to achieve his own aims. The old battles, rivalries and warriors were part of living memory during the lifetime of David Stewart of Garth according to his biographer. Stewart was born in 1768 and died in 1829. If it was a fact of Stewart’s existence, then Ferguson had probably had similar exposure to these historical deeds. Stewart was bilingual in the same way Ferguson was bilingual, acquiring the language playing with children on the estates. See James Irvine Robertson, *The First Highlander: Major-General David Stewart of Garth CB Author of Sketches of the Character, Manners, and Present State of the Highlanders in Scotland, with Details of the Military Service of the Highland Regiments* (East Linton, East Lothian: Tuckwell Press, 1998), 5, 14.

These notions of ethnocentric superiority that Ferguson, Montesquieu and Rousseau complained about were not entirely banished until the work of Franz Boas in the twentieth century. Aside from determining that human culture was indeed diverse, Boas established that race, language and culture were not historically or functionally related.\(^{56}\)

Ferguson had endeavoured to point out that estimations of other societies by outsiders were not value free. His traveller accounted the Ancient Greeks to be poor and miserable essentially because the association of their art and history were disengaged from his knowledge.\(^{57}\) If these associations had been revealed to the journalist beforehand, the knowledge would have set him to wonder at how such a primitive and violent society could produce poems which remained the acme of the art in his own age. Ferguson’s journalist valued the art but, on contact with the people, he rejected their customs, belief system, diet, knowledge and political arrangement – the art alone was deserving of his praise. As David Blaney and Naeem Inayatullah have noted, the device of time travel confirms the status of the more advanced society with its scientists and purveyors of practical wisdom.\(^{58}\)

As an educated man, Ferguson had another perspective. Not only did he have the opportunity to acquire and adjust to unique patterns of social life in both a polished society and a ‘rude’ community, he also understood the unique belief systems, values and thought patterns of each. He knew these aforementioned beliefs differed considerably. Moreover, Ferguson must have been aware of the product of certain journalists who had traversed the eighteenth-century Highland landscape, and was probably familiar with both Boswell’s and Johnson’s efforts in that domain, even though their published accounts of the journey post-dated his Essay. These divergences created difficulties in cross-cultural communication as the tragedy of the Black Watch mutiny, just prior the Ferguson’s engagement with them, established.

Ferguson did not hold with the all belief systems of his fellow Gaels. Some Highlanders believed in charms, chants, formulae, divination, second-sight, water-horses, fairy folk and other forms of the irrational. In contrast, Ferguson embraced

\(^{56}\) Diamond, *In Search of the Primitive*, 110.
\(^{58}\) Blaney and Inayatullah, "The Savage Smith and the Temporal Walls of Capitalism", 159.
rational religion and science. Ferguson would have been aware, from either his own experience, or that of his father – that dissent within small communities was often expressed with violence, and women were not excluded from such proceedings. From this knowledge, Ferguson could develop a better blueprint of the form and triggers of violence in Bronze or Iron Age cultures. Nevertheless, in many ways, the Essay appears to be a reaction to the misapprehension by the mainstream culture about ‘rude’ localised communities, and not just their worth.

We can clearly see what Ferguson may have been objecting to when we delve into the preconceptions of a man working in the Highlands during the period of Ferguson’s adolescence. The examples come from the published letters of Edmund Burt. If we compare Burt’s eighteenth-century depictions of housing in the Highlands, we will see, as Sheets did, that there were certain similarities with the housing of Ferguson’s Ancient Greeks. Here, Burt accepts a billet with a Highland family:

My next care [after the horses] was to provide for myself, to that End I entered the dwelling-House. There my Landlady sat, with a Parcel of Children about her, some quite, and others almost, naked, by a little Peat Fire, in the Middle of the Hut; and over the Fire-Place was a small Hole in the Roof for a Chimney. The Floor was common Earth, very uneven, and no where Dry, but near the Fire and in the Corners, where no Foot had carried the muddy Dirt from without Doors.

Burt saw housing as a gauge of wealth and social standing. However, in static societies like those of Ancient Greece or the Highlands, housing was chiefly for shelter and protection. Display in these communities to advertise superiority was not transmuted to inanimate objects, like structures or superfluous trinkets. Superiority resided in character, merit or ancestral standing. However, lack of finery did not prohibit ‘that the naked savage would be a coxcomb and a gamester? that he would be proud and vain,

59 The violence of the Scottish Highlands went with Highlanders who emigrated from Scotland to the Carolinas where there was much violence and unrest before, and during, the American Civil War. See Chapter Three, pages 141–147.
60 Sheets, “Adam Ferguson: The ‘Good Preceptor’ of Empire”, 74.
without the distinctions of title and fortune?\textsuperscript{62} After reading the journalist’s account of ancient Sparta, Sheets incorrectly concluded that Ferguson valued poverty and damned labour.\textsuperscript{63} This estimation of Ferguson’s position on labour and poverty is altogether too monolithic and misses Ferguson’s point entirely. Ferguson was not giving the example in order to promote poverty, but rather he was using it as an example to illustrate how lines of communication became confused in cross-cultural encounters because of certain expectations people carry with them. Blaney and Inayatullah see Smith’s stadial theory as a confirmation that the working poor were in a far better position to obtain creature comforts than savage hunters.\textsuperscript{64} This does associate the stigma of poverty with the unindustrious or the past, although this was precisely the way Burt and Pennant envisaged Highlanders.\textsuperscript{65} Sheets compared Ferguson’s hypothetical account from Greece with those of Burt and Pennant. However, Sheets does not take into account the fact that Ferguson had lived within the confines of Highland society and kept contact with it throughout his life, whereas Burt, who was English, and Pennant, who was Welsh, were both complete outsiders. They made an assessment of Highland life based on their own system of values, beliefs and attitudes. They found Highlanders were idle\textsuperscript{66} (though not uniformly so),\textsuperscript{67} and prone to robbing cattle (like Rob Roy Macgregor).\textsuperscript{68} As observers, they made suppositions about Highland society based on the social structures and manners familiar to them. Outside of their own society, Burt and Pennant had scant knowledge of the values, beliefs and activities commensurate with Highland society when they first met with it. A couple of examples cited from Burt’s \textit{Letters} can easily illustrate this.

\textsuperscript{62} Ferguson, \textit{Essay}, 75.
\textsuperscript{63} Ibid., 74.
\textsuperscript{64} Blaney and Inayatullah, "The Savage Smith and the Temporal Walls of Capitalism", 166–169. It is ironic that the rich landowners of Scotland cleared their estates of tenants in order to stock them with game so that they could live an ‘affluent’ lifestyle once known only to savage hunter-gatherers.
\textsuperscript{65} Ibid., 169–170.
\textsuperscript{66} Sheets, "Adam Ferguson: The ‘Good Preceptor’ of Empire", 74.
\textsuperscript{67} Burt explained: ‘It is a received Notion (but nothing can be more unjust) that Highlanders are an indolent, lazy People: I know the contrary by troublesome experience’. Burt had so many Highland volunteers for paid work he had to constantly turn men away. Burt, \textit{Letters}, vol. 2, 124. On the other hand, Pennant stuck to the ‘received’ view stating that, ‘The manners of the native Highlanders may justly be expressed in these words: indolent to a high degree, unless roused to war’. Thomas Pennant, \textit{A Tour in Scotland 1769} (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2000), 127.
\textsuperscript{68} Sheets, Adam Ferguson: The ‘Good Preceptor’ of Empire", 76.
Burt was in the environs of Atholl, Loch Tay and Braes of Balquhidder during the period 1737–38. Burt’s *Letters* provide a credible, albeit not unbiased, picture of the Perthshire Highlands at this time. Burt depicts Highland manners at the point of their adaptation to the dominant culture. This first vignette illustrates how Highlanders had no conception of the way British society conceived of rank. Since his Highland landlord treated each person in a similar manner, Burt felt strangers would be greatly offended by the Highland landlord’s inability to conceive of rank:

My Landlord comes into the Room uninvited, and though he never saw you before, sits himself down and enters into Conversation with you; and is so sociable as to drink with you; and many of them will call, when the Bottle is out, for another…

This Behaviour may have been made, by custom, familiar to their own Countrymen; but I wonder they do not consider that it may be disagreeable to Strangers of any Appearance, who have been used to treat their *Landlords* in quite another Manner, even permitting an Innkeeper, worth Thousands, to wait at their Table and never show the least Uneasiness at his Humility; but it may be said he was no *Gentleman*.  

Because the landlord treated his customers with equality, the above segment is illustrative of a clash of cultural assumptions. In Burt’s eyes, the Highland landlord was not acting according to his rank, nor was he treating others according to their rank. Although this Highland landlord was a man of means, he happily waited on tables and even sat to converse with his clientele. Burt implied that landlords of means in London employed people to wait on tables. Furthermore, a London landlord would have insisted that his employees treated guests according to their rank. English gentlemen would expect to be treated with esteem by lesser folk and menials. The dress and accoutrements of London gentlemen would shout their success, entitling them to deferential treatment. Moreover, in England, the relationship between landlord and tenant or customer was purely a contractual agreement, and they otherwise remained strangers. For an exchange of funds, the customer was provided with refreshment. By contrast, in the Highlands sitting down to drink with a stranger was an act of hospitality and generosity on the landlord’s behalf. On the other hand, their English clients perceived this Highland hospitality as overtly and overly familiar.

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69 Burt, *Letters*, vol. 1, 153–154. Burt’s depictions show that there was already a move in Perthshire away from Moderatism and toward Evangelicalism. The italics are Burt’s.

However, we must further qualify the situation depicted in Burt. Hostelry in the Highlands was still a new concept. In earlier periods, strangers and travellers were often billeted with locals for not much more than an exchange of news being expected in return. It took a while before the custom of hospitality died out after the imposition of trade in Highland inns. For instance, clients were still seen as guests to be entertained by their Highland landlords, rather than mere consumers. From the perspective of a Highlander, commerce actually served to dampen traditional hospitality, reducing the serving (or purchase) of refreshment to a mere business transaction between strangers, where once it had been offered freely as an act of kindness or even Christian charity. The introduction of commerce to the Highlands provided an antidote to the undercurrent of hostility in the region, but people remained as familiar and hospitable with strangers as they had been before the establishment of trade.

In the next example from Burt, once again, we see illustrated the cross-cultural misconceptions regarding rank and standing. Burt ascertained that family pride should stem from the amount of goods and fortune one had amassed, whereas in the Highlands a person’s genealogy conferred rank. Burt believed Highlanders used genealogy as a substitute for the fortune and possessions they lacked. This next excerpt amply demonstrates Burt’s misapprehensions:

Pride of Family, in a mean People, is not peculiar to this Country, but is to be met with in others; and indeed it seems natural to Mankind, when they are not possessed of the Goods of Fortune, to pique themselves upon some imaginary Advantage. Upon this Remark I shall so far anticipate (by Way of Postscript) my Highland Account as to give you a low Occurrence that happened when I was last among the Hills.

A young Highland Girl in Rags, and only the Bastard Daughter of a Man very poor and employed as a Labourer, but of a Family so old that, with respect to him and many others, it was quite worn out. This Girl was taken in by a Corporal’s Wife, to do any dirty Work in the Officer’s Kitcken [sic], and, having been guilty of some Fault or Neglect, was treated a little roughly; whereupon the Neighbouring Highland Women loudly clamoured against the Cook, saying, ‘What a Monster is that to maltreat a Gentleman’s Bairn!’ and the poor Wretch’s Resentment was beyond Expression upon that very Account.  

Burt was incapable of grasping the reason behind the clamour of the Highland women because, from his own experience, he supposed that the descriptors ‘poor’, ‘rags’, ‘bastard’ and ‘menial’ were not characteristics connected with being the daughter of a

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gentleman. To Burt’s mind, a gentleman’s daughter should be tidily and prettily dressed. Furthermore, the daughter of a gentleman ought to be legitimate, and normally would have servants to wait upon her. However, in the Highlands, gentry were demarcated by their blood relationship and its distance to the chief of a clan or clan sept. In many ways, this was not unlike the aristocratic families of England. Nevertheless, in the Highlands, the lesser gentry were rarely men of means, despite their connection or title. Yet they were still given due deference by other Highlanders. As a native of a society that paid less attention to this type of display, Ferguson offered an explanation of its absence in the society of Ancient Greece in his *Essay*:

> Individuals stood distinguished by their personal spirit and vigour, and not by the valuation of their estates, or the rank of their birth. They had a personal evaluation founded on the sense of equality, not of precedence.\(^72\)

No critical or impartial detachment is engaged in by Burt, nor does he make any attempt to imagine what it might be like to be in a similar situation to the Highlanders. That is because men like Burt have no comparable experiences or referents to fall back on. Similarly, the Highlanders have no experience of the commercial polity and therefore can not exercise Smithian propriety. Here mutual sympathy, and even empathy, failed to enter the equation. In such situations Smith’s theory could not work in any but the commercial world among like-minded persons.\(^73\) But the commercial and provincial worlds were in increasing contact. It would take a generation or two to adjust and adapt to the change.

Adam Ferguson was able to ascertain that the human species was fragmented into a series of groups that were distinctive, but only up to a point. His experience led him to see this distinctiveness, but his education and the circles in which he moved led him to make generalisations. Despite this preoccupation, by the first quarter of the nineteenth century, the notion of universality in human thought became increasingly untenable, as the study of languages suggested an extensive degree of grammatical and lexical variation among the world’s linguistic groups.\(^74\) Ferguson suggested that some caution should be applied when interpreting the manners of one society by the standards of

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\(^{72}\) Ferguson, *Essay*, 188.

\(^{73}\) Phillipson, "Adam Smith as Civic Moralist", 179, 180, 182, 183, 185, 186, 192 and 195.

\(^{74}\) Gruber, "Ethnographic Salvage", 2.
another. The following statement could almost be Ferguson’s riposte to the likes of Burt and Dr Johnson:

Our manners are so different, and the system upon which we regulate our apprehensions, in many things, so opposite, that no less could make us endure the practice of ancient nations. Were that practice recorded by the mere journalist, who only retains the detail of events, without throwing any light on the character of the actors... we should never have distinguished the Greeks from their barbarous neighbours, nor thought, that the character of civility pertained even to the Romans, till very late in their history, and in the decline of their empire.\(^{75}\)

Ferguson made a similar point in an unpublished essay. It was written at a time when the protagonists in his account were all deceased. The short essay was probably an imaginary rather than factual account of a Highland excursion enjoyed by Ferguson and his peers.\(^{76}\) The piece recounting this event is incomplete, but in its opening, Ferguson implied that mutual unintelligibility and disrespect of each other’s cultures operated both ways. In it, Ferguson claimed he had dressed his friends to pass them off as gun-toting huntsmen so that the locals of Logierait would not look upon them as ‘madmen’.\(^{77}\) In this unusual piece, again, with echoes of the previous quotation, Ferguson insisted:

So prone are mankind to interpret a difference of any kind against foreigners and in their own favour. I am not sure but the most learned are apt to espy barbarity in everything different but themselves. And something like the Chinese map of the world is to be found in every European head.\(^{78}\)

The implication in the example above is that rank in polished and traditional societies differs in both how it is determined and how it is signified. This has intercultural as well as intra-cultural consequences. For years, sociologists and historians have focussed on the effects of this in civilised society, often overlooking the

\(^{75}\) Ferguson, *Essay*, 185.

\(^{76}\) In it, he ventured into the Logierait hills accompanied by Hugh Cleghorn, his moral philosophy professor from Edinburgh, his renowned architect friend, Robert Adam, the poet William Wilkie and his dear friend the philosopher David Hume. This unpublished essay is also mentioned in Chapter Four, pp 187.

\(^{77}\) As the party set out, the four men complained to Ferguson of the rigours of the ascent. However, while rambling, the four men discovered that Highland life had its compensations – soft grass, cool streams, cream, oat cakes and buxom milkmaids, all supplied from a nearby bothy. See Yasuo Amoh, ed., *Collection of Essays by Adam Ferguson* (Kyoto: Rinsen Book Company, 1996) Essay 5, page 40.

\(^{78}\) Ibid. This statement could be read as another gibe by Ferguson at Eurocentrism. Chinese maps were not accurate representations of the world, since they included what the Chinese thought to be auspicious, rather than what was actually present. In other words, they might include a non-existent hill or waterfall in order to conform to rules of *Feng Shui*. It was also difficult to determine where China ended and the rest of the world began on Chinese maps. China was often centrally located, and the world was flat; nevertheless, the Chinese were pioneer cartographers.
cross-cultural implications of specialisation and class. However, Ferguson, like Rousseau and Montesquieu, was alert to cross-cultural barriers and misconceptions. Stanley Diamond’s critique of progress does not feature Ferguson, although the anthropologist admits that the notion of progress lies behind Western civilisation’s rationale. According to Diamond, the progress which has been enabled by specialisation and the division of labour continually mediates humankind’s alienation. Yet as early as 1767 Ferguson warned that specialisation and the division of labour went against the nature of the savage ‘to whom the community is the sovereign object of his affection’ and for whom his natural state ‘does not qualify him for any station whatever’. Ferguson’s savage, ‘flies to the woods with amazement, distaste and aversion’. The constraints of civil society’s institutions appeared to be quite detrimental to humankind.

This was not a suggestion from Ferguson that we revert to live as savages. Nevertheless, Ferguson exhibited awareness that specialisation could threaten the life of communities. Specialisation imposes social divides by creating a divergence of interests within the community as well as a range of incomes and social standings. The experience of living in a close-knit, face-to-face community like that of Logierait or the Black Watch may have heightened Ferguson’s sensitivity to the symptoms of the amelioration and atrophy of social bonds, but this does not imply he was a primitivist. Diamond notes that, ‘by comprehending the attitude of primitive people about excommunication from the web of social and natural kinship we can, by analogy, understand their repugnance and fear of civilisation’. Lisa Hill is another who notes that Ferguson had the wisdom to realise that human degeneration was being risked by the technological advance that had become attainable following of the division of labour. Ferguson was simply alerting people to the pathologies societies might encounter by removing from the communal state to a civilised one – a process he had witnessed in the

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79 Diamond, In Search of the Primitive, 10, 12, 39, 47–48, 239, 300, 131, 314 and 315.
80 Ferguson, Essay, 173.
81 Ibid., 173.
82 Philip J. Kain notes that in Greek society there was no discrepancy between principle and feeling or duty and inclination, which was, for the most part, spontaneous. This allowed wholeness and not fragmentation. Kain, Schiller, Hegel, and Marx: State, Society, and the Aesthetic ideal of Ancient Greece (Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1982), 7–9.
83 Diamond, In Search of the Primitive, 207.
Highlands, where rapid technological advance was imposed rather than being a welcome or natural evolution. Diamond believes pathological personality disorders are more prevalent in civilised peoples when ‘the primitive’ aspects of human nature, such as spirituality, leisure and a sense of belonging, are abandoned or thought superfluous. Ferguson’s dual enculturation processes gave him the astuteness to realise that man’s plight could not be rectified by either primitivism or progression but by a dialectic between the two. Progress and primitivism interact and can easily be incorporated within the same system. Lois Whitney captured the enigmatic and elusive quality of the problem of primitivism and progression most aptly:

That either group, primitivists or progressivists, should ever have thought that they could look, Janus-like, both directions at once, hold both their primitive simplicity and evolutionary diversity within the same system, cling to permanence and change at the same time, would seem to be an impossibility outside a logician’s nightmare. But popular thought has a hardy digestion and does not recoil from a diet of mutual incompatibles that would send an epicure of fine philosophical distinctions to his grave.

Between the thesis of primitivism and the antithesis of civilisation somewhere there could be a wholesome synthesis – it is not a question of either/or – there was a third possibility by which a future course could be plotted without great detriment accruing to humankind.

Through his intimate knowledge of the working and manners of two separate societies, Ferguson realised there was a feature, common to both, but more readily apparent in smaller communities, city states and republics – social cohesion. Mark Widdowson argues that successful societies, whether highly organised or primitive, are cohesive. He finds societies in the ascendant are usually cohesive while those in decline generally suffer from internal disunity. Cohesion is favoured when the majority of the members of society share similar values, attitudes and beliefs. Cohesive qualities are marked by moral and right behaviours, conservatism, loyalty and civic responsibility. All of these traits must accord with the values and beliefs of people, who then contribute to the active maintenance of cohesion within their society. Nonetheless, cohesion

84 Diamond, In Search of the Primitive, 173.
demands constraint. Law and order, which is productive of some constraint, helps to foster cohesion in civil society. Notwithstanding this fact, Ferguson still recognised how specialisation created a situation wherein the values of those at the top of the hierarchy of a society began to vary from the values of those at the bottom. For this reason, polished society is unfavourable for the maintenance of cohesive qualities because specialisation creates divergent needs and biases. I submit that Ferguson was also alerting us to the lessons that a polished society could take from the naturally more conservative and, therefore, more cohesive barbarian and savage societies.

Ferguson, on the one hand, came from a traditional folk culture where identity and individuation were mediated and developed locally. The small size of a community like Logierait disposed its members to high levels of participation in the organisation of the community and the achievement of its goals. In communities like Logierait, a place to live was often provided by the immediate family. Sons often followed fathers into trades, teaching, the church, weaving or small-scale subsistence farming. The community consolidated its values, attitudes and beliefs over generations and shared its wisdom in language, tale and verse. Persons within the community who broke social taboos and codes were often cast adrift. Violence was tolerated so long as it was expressed on behalf of the entire community for its protection.

On the other hand, Ferguson had also been acculturated into modern Scottish society through a classical education and a Calvinist upbringing. He was an adherent of the Moderates who supported patronage and the landed elite, often to the detriment of spiritual and everyday needs of average parishioners. The Moderates seemingly tolerated and socialised with sceptics, atheists and Jacobites. They courted damnation by dancing, drinking, attending the theatre, playing cards and golf. It appears that Ferguson conformed to the values of the Moderate party. However, it was odd that he also saw the worth of belligerence as a cohesive influence. It set him in opposition to the pacific strains within both Stoicism and Christianity. As Hill claims, Ferguson

87 On these terms, cohesion is not inconsistent with polished society.
88 Diamond, *In Search of the Primitive*, 222.
appeared to champion the community at the expense of unity, yet that very dissent and disharmony seemed to cement community bonds. These peculiarities become less puzzling once it is acknowledged that Ferguson’s Highland background had a greater influence in his life and thought than is usually allowed. Because this aspect and period of Ferguson’s life has been given less prominence in past scholarship, he has often been automatically assimilated into the liberalist tradition. Sheila Mason is among a growing number of scholars who acknowledge the importance of Ferguson’s anthropological leaning:

As one would expect from a thinker whose anthropological sensitivity builds a bridge with the Romantic Nationalism of nineteenth-century Germany, Ferguson invests the idea of the *Spirit of the Laws* with even richer meaning, meaning both poignant and challenging for a Scotland bereft of its constitution and, after the humiliation of Culloden, suffering the demographic and economic attrition of Highland pacification.

The men from ‘the edge’ – Montesquieu, Rousseau and Ferguson – have much yet to impart to us. As rational beings, we should be able to adopt ways of integrating technical education while retaining healthy socialisation patterns. Rousseau and Ferguson were perfectibilists who evolved a mature idea of ‘the primitive’. But they were not advocates for a return to the pre-civilised natural state. Ferguson had experienced enough of Logierait to know that it was no pre-capitalist utopia. However, he also knew Logierait was not a place where fantasies of libidinous behaviour or violence could be indulged in with impunity. The static community was a place of sanction and shame where licentious behaviours or wanton violence resulted in a perpetrator’s exclusion. The reality of these behavioural restraints and the emotional tensions they aroused in individuals went unappreciated by late-eighteenth-century

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93 Ibid., 202.


95 Ibid.
civilised people, who imagined noble savages lived an idyllic life in their south sea island paradises.

Ferguson had no quibble with societal change. He saw no shame in Highland society being incorporated into the new British ascendency, providing its roots were to be remembered as a rallying point for identity, and an aid to social cohesion. If the ties were obliterated, there would be nothing to stir people to protect what they had. This was his uppermost concern:

The manners of rude nations require to be reformed. Their foreign quarrels, and domestic dissensions, are the operations of extreme and sanguinary passions. A state of greater tranquillity hath many happy effects. But if nations pursue the plan of enlargement and pacification, till their members can no longer apprehend the common ties of society, nor be engaged by affection in the cause of their country, they must err on the opposite side, and by leaving too little to agitate the spirits of men, bring on ages of languor, if not decay.  

At the same time Ferguson was aware that progress and societal change inexorably required the destruction of habitat, ways of life, languages, cultures and species.

Ferguson is often looked upon as the first sociologist. However, Ferguson’s historicist bent anticipates writers like Herder. Herder admired Ferguson, but never formally acknowledged a debt to him. In parts of his Essay, as I have tried to show, Ferguson gives prefigurative glimpses of cultural relativism from his vantage point as a product of two cultures. His hypothetical Greek time-traveller offered an explanation of how transactions between persons of two divergent cultures could falter due to assumptions each representative had about reality, truth and custom. From acquisition of these dual knowledge systems, he realised why it was necessary to study societies by prolonged observation. This type of study permitted the placing of symbols and character within a context of social meaning. By way of illustration, the Englishman Burt’s misapprehensions about Highland society in the 1730s, exhibit points of distinction and disorientation similar to those that were revealed in the pronouncements of Ferguson’s time-traveller to Greece. During this period, the discovery of new land masses and isolated societies challenged the basis for European society as the universal

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96 Ferguson, Essay, 208.
model. Like Rousseau and more especially like Montesquieu, Ferguson challenged this model.

The attitude of Lowland Scots to the Highlands and its culture during the eighteenth-century was a complex one. As Kenneth Simpson explains, it was possible for an individual Lowlander to identify the Anglicisation of the Highlands with progress. However, when the same Lowland individual encountered resistance from Highlanders, it initially provoked hostility, but later aroused guilt. This same individual came to realise that the change he had initiated inevitably resulted in loss. To add to the difficulty, Lowland Scots were faced with the prospect of losing face in the eyes of their English counterparts if they did not instigate change in the Highlands.

As human beings were susceptible of improvement, so the Highland savage was mutable as men like Ferguson and Macpherson proved only too well. As Ferguson removed from Perthshire to St Andrews, then Edinburgh, London and abroad, he used his early socialisation as a template with which to compare each new environment and its people. The chief lesson of his upbringing was that the habits of home were not a universal guide to behaviour elsewhere.

Ferguson may not have been able to solve the problem of society and the individual, or determine why static societies blossomed into civilisations. However, he recognised much of what the modern pattern-finders and auguries of decline, such as Arnold Toynbee, Mark Widdowson and Phillip Atkinson, identified in declining civilisations. All agree that loss of social cohesion is a major precursor of decline. Social cohesion pertains to the properties of co-operation and interaction as well as the core values which operate within a social group. For Ferdinand Tönnies and for Ferguson this sense of value and co-operation was underpinned by a shared sense of

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place, purpose, network, and identity. The shared experiences were reinforced and sentimentalised in song and story. By comparison, shared principles based on the law and the market, were comparatively more impersonal and superficial. Ferguson compared the static, traditional society with the modernising growth of the ascendant one and identified that specialisation, toleration and expansion led to a plurality of aims that disrupted the bands of society and heralded decline. In fact, the very need Smith identified for a new system of morality based on sympathy, and especially propriety, attested to the fact that the values and beliefs of his society were no longer homogeneous. This reflected the fact that people no longer had the ability to predict behaviour or manners, or knew how to behave themselves.¹⁰¹ Social instability and the aforementioned inability to correctly predict or read reactions arose because of imperial expansion in the ancient world.

In Scotland, the gradual change from a rural to an industrial economy brought steady flow of people into the cities from rural areas like the Highlands. This often occurred when tenants were evicted after being unable to pay high rents. This influx of people introduced new diversity into social groups. This diversity necessitated a level of tolerance which, in turn generated the modernising world’s growing partiality for democracy. These new social conditions harboured inherent tensions between property rights and inequality that were often difficult to resolve. Wealth was now being made in commercial ventures.¹⁰² However, half of Scotland’s land mass was held by around a hundred members of the nobility.¹⁰³ This growth in wealth not only furthered democracy but also the political economy. A signature of the Scottish Enlightenment was the stress it placed on natural law and property rights going hand in hand with legal

¹⁰¹ See pages 308–313, but especially 312 of Chapter Seven, and 339 to 341 of this chapter. See also Nicholas Phillipson, "Adam Smith as Civic Moralist" in Wealth and Virtue: The Shaping of Political Economy in the Scottish Enlightenment, eds, Istvan Hont and Michael Ignatieff (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 87. See also Phillipson, note 36, same page.
and moral restraint. However, the Popular party in the Church insisted on the right of congregations to choose their minister who was usually appointed by estate owners. These landowners traded the extension of voting rights to the newly wealthy in order to secure their own property rights into the future. These tensions and inequalities in Scotland were not always conducive to social cohesiveness and remain a bone of contention in Scotland to this day.

Cohesion was not just the preserve of conservative and static societies; it existed in civil society where it was under constant attack from forces working to undermine it. One reason Ferguson was alerted to the effect of these destabilising elements was because they were so radical in their effect upon Highland society as he knew it. This did not make Ferguson a primitivist; however, his dual enculturation enlivened anthropological sensitivities in conjunction with sociological propensities. This gave him a tendency toward an eclectic, but inert, philosophical position.

Ferguson was better placed than either of his fellow marginals, Montesquieu or Rousseau, to comment upon the deficits and benefits change would bring, because his early life was more pervaded with rusticity. Bearing this firmly in mind, in regard to people who originate from this type of communal traditional society, Diamond remarks ‘The primitive, then, is a conservative: his society changes its essential form only under the impact of external circumstances or in response to drastic changes in the natural environment’. As I pointed out in the earlier chapters on language and oral tradition, this laid down determinant neuro-physical and neuro-chemical structures and pathways in Ferguson’s brain that no subsequent acculturation could completely reverse or alter. If Ferguson appeared conservative for having a bifurcated view of progress, for permitting the institution of property, allowing the effects of the division of labour while incorporating ‘rude’ elements like martial virtue or honour and shame, it was not just because Ferguson’s conservative Gael wished to gainsay everything that Ferguson’s

105 Horne, Property Rights and Poverty, 75–76.
108 Diamond, In Search of the Primitive, 238.
urban academic proposed. Ferguson’s study of human nature was based on the experiential evidence of having lived in both a traditional and modernising society. Neither Smith nor Hume could boast such an experience.

Looking to the future, the significance of Ferguson’s early adult experiences and how they may have been subtly integrated into his Essay deserves more serious consideration, especially in the light of the current global political climate. David Allan is one scholar who has been quick to seize on Ferguson’s “potential contemporary applicability”. Ferguson provides us with an early window into the psyche of a traditional warrior-based society predicated on codes of shame and honour, which was in the process of adjusting to the modernising world. It often goes unacknowledged that the warrior tradition that had made its mark on Adam Ferguson was set squarely in the Western barbarian conventions which dominated Europe up until the end of the first millennium. In his Essay, Ferguson reminds us that these western barbarian traditions became tempered by the Christian sentiments of meekness and compassion. These in turn became the foundation of the polite and civilising influences found in the burgeoning modernity of Ferguson’s day which, Ferguson admitted, excelled the celebrated, yet ferocious qualities found in antiquity. As Mark Salber Phillips observes, these civilising influences were around long before the polite effects of commerce.

Ferguson underwent an enculturation process that was grounded in oral lore and morality. Its effects can be found in his texts championing a Scottish militia, his support for the Poker Club, James Macpherson’s Ossian and, in particular, his own Essay. The process he had undergone in childhood was designed to nurture the qualities desirable in a warrior race. These included virtues like selfless heroism, great physical strength and the subordination of the individual’s need to that of the community. It became a hallmark of Ferguson’s militia campaign that ‘our ancestors were unacquainted with

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109 David Allan, Adam Ferguson (Aberdeen: AHRC Centre for Irish and Scottish Studies, 2006), 143.
111 Ferguson, Essay, 192–193.
standing Armies; that the People were once, not only sufficient for their own Defence, but often carried War with Success into their Enemy’s Country’. Ferguson believed these qualities were ‘magnified’ when a people were intent on the defence of their own territory.114

Since the end of the Cold War in the late twentieth century, the world has witnessed the rise of new warrior societies that deem fighting honourable, war glorious and death preferable to shame or humiliation.115 Ferguson was conversant with the values and skills of this type of society, and provides for us an early explication of the way they operated. In this new world climate, some military experts are predicting that, despite technological advances in precision weaponry, wars may become more savage as neo-warrior cultures resort to low technology arsenals.116 A comparable mentality exists today in the Middle East where occupation appears to be a motivator of resistance. This type of resistance stems from the apparent inability of the society to perpetuate and determine special national characteristics. This resistance survives on wide community support which subordinates the wishes of the individual for the wider group needs. With community support, resistance movements are easily able to replenish volunteers and avoid detection by the forces occupying their territory.117 In our time, the advent of suicide terrorism has been a disturbing trend. One side sees its moral superiority over the other, justifying murder and self-sacrifice in the one act. The antagonist counters with the restraint of its superior firepower, unwilling to spill the blood of innocents.118 The suicide terrorist who sees his or her self-sacrifice as a step toward victory and one of moral strength over firepower and strategy is still every bit the warrior, however much an opponent sees him or her as merely a murderous foe.119 Ferguson reminds us that the polished have often fallen prey to the rude. He was also aware that while rude nations easily endure hardship and fatigue they ‘are qualified by their stratagem to throw terror

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113 Adam Ferguson, Reflections Previous to the Establishment of a Militia (London: printed for R. & J. Dodsley, 1756), 5.
114 Ibid.
116 Ibid.
117 Robert Pape, Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism (Melbourne: Scribe, 2005), 39, 81–84, 88.
119 Pape, Dying to Win, 36–37.
into armies of a more regular enemy; yet, in the course of a continued struggle, always yield to the superior arts, and disciplines of more civilised nations’. Indeed, the superior bayonet drill of the Duke of Cumberland’s forces at Culloden silenced the blood-curdling Highland charge that had once put many of his men to flight. Ferguson saw the standing army as a necessary compromise, where the many resign the sword to the few, who subsisted by pay, perform their duty from habit or fear of punishment rather than the inspiration of national spirit. One thing Ferguson and military historian John Keegan may have agreed on is that the maverick warrior of Iron Age myth and today’s modern fighting man remain separated from the societies they were called to defend. Each live in a parallel world outside civilian life, politics and diplomacy. The culture of the warrior is incompatible with civilisation. It might be well to heed that although Ferguson may have espoused liberal views, he could not fully extricate himself from static, warrior, non-commercial past which valued honour in a similar way to the currently perceived enemies of the West. Adam Ferguson was a product of his past.

120 Ferguson, Essay, 93–94.
121 Ibid., 146.
122 Keegan, A History of Warfare, xvi.
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APPENDICES
APPENDIX A
INTRODUCTION
Portraits of Adam Ferguson through various stages of life

Figure A–1.
Adam Ferguson in his prime by Sir Joshua Reynolds.
© Scottish National Portrait Gallery/Licensed via www.scran.ac.uk

Figure A–2.
Ferguson by an artist after Sir Henry Raeburn.
© National Galleries of Scotland/Licensed via www.scran.ac.uk
Figure A–3.

Ferguson in his ninetieth year by an unknown artist. (Painted 1813).

© University of St Andrews/Licensed via www.scran.ac.uk
APPENDIX B
INTRODUCTION
The Fergusons’ close ties with Sir Walter Scott’s family

Figure B–1       Sir Adam Ferguson by William Nicholson

Sir Adam Ferguson (1771–1855) eldest son of Professor Adam Ferguson, who became one of Sir Walter Scott’s closest friends. He had a captivating personality and was a great raconteur. The portrait was painted around 1817, by William Nicholson.

© Scottish National Portrait Gallery/Licensed via www.scran.ac.uk
Figure B–2  The Abbotsford Family by Sir David Wilkie

The above portrait includes Wilkie the portraitist and Sir Adam Ferguson, who is standing next to the seated Scott with a feather in his hat. Other members of the family include Scott’s daughter and son-in-law, Mr and Mrs John Gibson Lockhart. It also includes his wife, Marguerite Charpentier, and the rest of the Scott children Anne, Charles, Charlotte Sophia, Thomas and Walter.

© Scottish National Portrait Gallery/Licensed via www.scran.ac.uk

Figure B–3  The Edifice of Huntly Burn.

Scott provided a home for Ferguson’s unwed daughters, whom he affectionately called the Weird Sisters, after the death of their father, Professor Adam Ferguson. Huntly Burn was then part of Walter Scott’s Abbotsford estate. The house now stands as part of the Borders General Hospital near Melrose where it is used as a drug and alcohol detoxification centre. The photograph is by the present author.
APPENDIX C
CHAPTER 1
Encroachment of English on Logierait.¹

Figure C–1. Logierait, showing surrounding parishes and the encroachment of English.

¹ Map adapted by the author from three geographic maps in Charles W. J. Withers, "A Geography of Language: Gaelic-Speaking in Perthshire, 1698–1879", Transactions of the Institute of British Geography, no. 8 (1983), 129. Fig. 2, p. 132, Fig 4 and p. 133, Fig 5. The parishes from left to right are: Dull, Weem, Logierait, Little Dunkeld, Moulin, Dunkeld and Dowally, Kirkmichael and Clunie.
Appendix D
Chapter 2
Further characteristics and features of the Gaelic Language

- Emphasis in Gaelic is achieved by word placement in a sentence, or by the use of a suffix on a pronoun or prepositional pronoun. This is differs from English which uses a pattern of intonation.
- The intonation pattern of Gaelic is simple with stress placed on the sentence initial syllable.
- Gaelic differs from English by having an inflected pronominal system.¹
  - To express such things as a state of being, like ‘having’, it is necessary to use a form of the preposition ‘at’.²
- Gaelic is a difficult language in which to express abstractions. For instance, the term ‘development’ would need to be expressed by using more concrete terminology such as ‘growth’.
- Gaelic constructs the genitive case by noun apposition.
- Before modern linguistics developed, Gaelic mutation appeared to be random and seemed unfathomable to the uninitiated.
- The initial mutations (or morphophonological lenition and nasalisation)³ are integral to Gaelic’s complex phonological system and are triggered after the article, the pre-verbal particle of negation, and with feminine singular nouns.⁴
- The language features verbal nouns and an incomplete infinitive.⁵
- It also has numerous guttural, dental and nasalised phonemes that are foreign to English. Vowels are also more prevalent in Gaelic than English.⁶

² For example, ‘Jim has a dog’ in Gaelic becomes – ‘A dog is at Jim’ or ‘There is a dog at Jim’ = Tha cù a'g Seumas.
⁴ Ibid., 8–10 and 14–15.
⁵ Ibid.
• Early Gaelic grammarians and commentators raised arguments for the antiquity of the language’s alphabet.

• There are only seventeen letters - three broad (back) /a/, /o/, /u/ and two narrow (front) /e/, /i/, vowels and what is sometimes referred to as ‘the aspirate’ letter /h/.\(^7\)

• Gaelic also has a facility to convey poetic ideas through noun apposition. It has a tendency toward onomatopoeia.

• These features taken together appeared to qualify the Scottish Gaelic language as primordial.\(^8\)

• It was presumed by early philologists of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries that the human race was united under a single language until the Tower of Babel was destroyed and races dispersed.\(^9\)

• Early grammarians assumed all other languages evolved from Hebrew.\(^10\)

Scottish Gaelic has a diminutive vocabulary compared with Welsh or Irish.\(^11\)

\(^7\) Modern Gaelic has a complex but regular structure. Digraphs designate fricatives (mh, bh, gh, ch, ph), reduced fricatives (sh, th) or lost intervocalic fricatives. (bh, gh, mh). Ibid., 175. Compare the number of letters in the following alphabets: Gaelic 17, Brahmin 19, Italian 20, Latin and Hebrew 22 each, French 23, Greek 24, English and Dutch 26 each, Spanish 27, Arabic 28 and Turkish 33. Gaelic does not contain letters that occur in the English alphabet and these are: j, k, q, x, v, w, x, y and z.

\(^8\) Lachlan MacLean, *The History of the Celtic Language wherein it is Shown to be Based Upon Natural Principles, and, Elementally Considered Contemporaneous with the Infancy of the Human Family: Likewise its Importance in Order to the Proper Understanding of the Classics, Including the Sacred Text, the Hieroglyphics, the Cabala Etc. Etc* (2nd Edition, (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1840) 36; Donald Campbell, *An Essay on the Authenticity of Ossian's Poems* (Ayr: M'Cormick and Carnie, 1825), 11. Campbell supplies an example of the strength of the language to convey poetic ideas such as *Bein Neimhais* (Ben Nevis) which he translates as ‘the mountain next to heaven’ or ‘pilot of the sky’. See p. 11. This is an example of genitive case and noun apposition.


\(^10\) An example of this type of thought can be found in the work of Gloucester curate, Edward Davies. See Edward Davies, *Celtic Researches on the Origins, Traditions and Language of the Ancient Britons with Some Introductory Sketches on Primitive Society* (London: Printed for the author, 1804), 90–92.

\(^11\) John Macpherson, *Critical Dissertations on the Origins of Antiquities, Language, Government, Manners and Religion of the Ancient Caledonians, Their Posterity, the Picts and the British and the Irish and the Scots* (London: 1768), 112. Irish monks taught the Anglians their fine hand, and it is almost impossible to tell provenance of manuscripts from the calligraphy, therefore it is given the name 'Insular', whether Anglo-Saxon or Irish clerics produced it. Irish was thought to be a more ‘polished’ language because the monks of Irish scriptoria borrowed words from both the Greek and Latin languages. See p. 60 and also Kathleen Hughes, "The Early Irish Church: From the Coming of Christianity to the End of the Viking Era" in *The Irish World: The History and Cultural Achievements of the Irish People*, Brian de Breffny, ed., (London: Thames & Hudson, 1986), 47–70.
John and James Macpherson were more prolific writers of Gaelic than Adam Ferguson was. They used Gaelic in their communications when they did not want to divulge their movements or ideas to others. Even though their Gaelic was quite idiosyncratic, they were confident of their own abilities, and had suffered fewer effects of the prohibition on Gaelic usage in schools than Ferguson, who was thirteen years older than James (born 1736). J. N. M. MacLean the Younger of Glensanda describes the Macphersons’ Gaelic as crude. He found their orthography was variable and they wrote phonetically (writing as it sounded to their ear, using English orthography as a guide). James actually adopted an orthography much nearer to the standard Gaelic of today than Sir John Macpherson, in spite of the fact that his father, the Reverend Dr John Macpherson, was a leading Gaelic scholar. Both John and James believed they emanated from a scion of the MacMhuirich family, branches of which were once the hereditary bards to the MacDonals of Clanranald and at one stage the Macleods of Dunvegan. The Reverend Dr John Macpherson had been admired by no less a writer and historian than Edward Gibbon. This connection with the bards of old may have encouraged James Macpherson’s endeavours with Ossian. However, John was more likely to be descended from that branch of the MacMhuirichs than was James.

James Macpherson’s letters were replete with examples, which showed that his Gaelic bore some likenesses to the Irish parent language. He wrote ‘ata’ instead of the

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1 Correspondence from James to John Macpherson can be found in the British Library. He also wrote in Gaelic to another Highlander called Alexander MacAulay. See A. MacAulay in Sir John Macpherson Bart. (1745–1821) – Letters from Alexander MacAulay to James and John Macpherson [partly in Gaelic], IOR MSS EUR F 291/116, 1782–1787, 1798 (British Library), especially f. 252.

Scottish Gaelic *tha*, and ‘u Nduine mòr’ for *an duine mòr*.\(^3\) In contrast, John Macpherson’s phonetic spelling was rudimentary. John wrote such things as ‘ha’ for *Tha*, ‘an a’ for *anns a* or *ann an*, and ‘chuina me’ for *chunnaic mi*.\(^4\) When John resorted to phonetic spelling, he sometimes even introduced ‘Saxon’ characters which do not feature in Gaelic. For instance, he would write ‘bu vall’ for *bu bheil*. This introduced the character ‘v’, a letter non-existent in the Gaelic alphabet, to signify the digraph ‘bh’. This digraph happens to approximate the sound of the English letter v.\(^5\) Therefore; John’s writing reflects his pronunciation. Overall, John demonstrated poor control and comprehension of the orthographic rules governing initial mutation.\(^6\) Despite his partial literacy, John was able to make himself intelligible to James. Following is an example of Sir John’s orthography with a translation.

\[Dhinsi na firin duitse, bu choir dhuilse beggona airgid a dhiann a ‘Ta mi faicin ga cinteich nach urrin shin do thogail suas ‘gu cean a Ghrinich gad a thuggagh ‘n Tuach agus a Chairdin ‘stigh.\]

To tell you the truth, you ought to make a little money for yourself. I see quite clearly that we cannot lift you up to the highest office though North and his friends should come in…”\(^7\)

\(^3\) MacLean, "Early Political Careers", 252. (*an duine mòr* ‘The big/great man’)

\(^4\) *Tha* ‘is’ or ‘am’; *anns a’, *ann an* ‘in’; *chunnaic mi*, ‘I saw’.

\(^5\) There is no ‘v’ in the Gaelic alphabet. However a ‘b’ when lenited → ‘bh’, sounds like the English consonant or voiced labial fricative ‘v’.

\(^6\) Macpherson Add. MSS "IOR MSS EUR F. 291/217" (copied by Sir Arthur Macpherson, translated from the Gaelic by W. D. Macpherson, retired minister, circa 1985) (British Library), f. 70. John's letters to James were full of items such as 'urrin' (*urrainn*) and 'chardin' (*chairdean*), which do not conform to modern spelling conventions. A broad vowel with intervening consonants should have a broad vowel to follow it and not a narrow vowel as in these instances. This 'broad to broad' and 'narrow to narrow' rule is also a feature of the Irish language. The Macphersons, especially John, would write U for *Thu*. Thus: *tu* (you) when lenited → /h/ → *thu* (you) when it would become silent /Ø/, so John transcribed it as ‘u’. Lenition was rarely represented in their orthography.

\(^7\) Macpherson, "IOR MSS EUR F. 291/217". The manuscript was copied by Sir Arthur Macpherson from that translated by W. D. Macpherson.
APPENDIX F  
CHAPTER 2  
Comparison chart of consonants and vowels in Australian English, Ancient Greek and Gaelic  

KEY  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place of Articulation – across top</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ID</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Voicing – across top</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>u</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Manner of Articulation – down side</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asp. Stp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nas. Stp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fricative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affricate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tap</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cl. Lat.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dk. Lat.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Vowel Length  

: indicates long vowel  
Absence indicates short vowel
## CONSONANTS

### Table F–1. Australian English

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>BL</th>
<th>LD</th>
<th>ID</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>P</th>
<th>V</th>
<th>G</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stop</td>
<td>p</td>
<td>b</td>
<td>t</td>
<td>d</td>
<td>k</td>
<td>g</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asp. St</td>
<td>pʰ</td>
<td>tʰ</td>
<td>kʰ</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nas. St</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>n</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fricative</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>v</td>
<td>θ</td>
<td>δ</td>
<td>s</td>
<td>z</td>
<td>j</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affricate</td>
<td>tʃ</td>
<td>dʒ</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glide</td>
<td>r</td>
<td>j</td>
<td>w</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cl Lat.</td>
<td>l</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dk Lat</td>
<td>l</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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### Table F–2. Ancient Greek

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<th>V</th>
<th>G</th>
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<td>b</td>
<td>t</td>
<td>d</td>
<td>g</td>
<td>k</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asp. St</td>
<td>pʰ</td>
<td>tʰ</td>
<td>kʰ</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nas. St</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>n</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>s</td>
<td>z</td>
<td>h</td>
<td>ks</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>Affricate</td>
<td>j</td>
<td>dʒ</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Trill</td>
<td>r</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cl Lat</td>
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</table>

### Table F–3. Scottish Gaelic

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<th>LD</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>P</th>
<th>PA</th>
<th>V</th>
<th>G</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stop</td>
<td>p</td>
<td>b</td>
<td>t</td>
<td>d</td>
<td>tʰ</td>
<td>dʰ</td>
<td>kʰ</td>
<td>gʰ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asp. St</td>
<td>pʰ</td>
<td>tʰ</td>
<td>kʰ</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>n</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fricative</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>v</td>
<td>s</td>
<td>j</td>
<td>ç</td>
<td>ʝ</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>tʃ</td>
<td>dʒ</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trill/Tap</td>
<td>r</td>
<td>r</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dk Lat</td>
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## VOWELS

### Table F-4. Australian English

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<td>Rounded</td>
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<tr>
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<td>( iː )</td>
<td>( uː )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MID</td>
<td>( ɛ )</td>
<td>( ɛ̃ )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OPEN</td>
<td>( æ )</td>
<td>( a )</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Table F-5. Ancient Greek

<table>
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<tr>
<th>LONG</th>
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</tr>
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<td>Rounded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLOSE</td>
<td>( iː )</td>
<td>( yː )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Close-mid</td>
<td>( ɛ )</td>
<td>( ɔ )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open-mid</td>
<td>( ɛ )</td>
<td>( ɔ )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OPEN</td>
<td>( a )</td>
<td>( aː )</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table F-6 Scottish Gaelic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SHORT</th>
<th>FRONT</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unrounded</td>
<td>Rounded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLOSE</td>
<td>( iː )</td>
<td>( uː )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Close-mid</td>
<td>( ɛ )</td>
<td>( ɔ )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open-mid</td>
<td>( ɛ )</td>
<td>( ɔ )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OPEN</td>
<td>( a )</td>
<td>( aː )</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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APPENDIX G

CHAPTER 3
Alasdair MacMhaighstir Alasdair and the Gaelic prohibition in Highland Schools

The former Episcopalian turned Presbyterian SSPCK schoolmaster, Alexander MacDonald, better known as the Gaelic poet Alasdair MacMhaighstir Alasdair, was aware that Church directives for teaching English (at the expense of Gaelic) were not advancing levels of English literacy in the Highlands as the Church had hoped. MacDonald produced a glossary that became the first secular text printed in the modern Scottish Gaelic language. Within this text, Sorensen believes MacDonald adopted the SSPCK’s rhetoric. MacDonald made statements to the effect that the SSPCK charity schools were producing Highland children who would become useful subjects of the King.

However, MacDonald was actually sublimating his Jacobite sympathies while doing so. In his preface, MacDonald lauded the SSPCK’s members as noble, public-spirited and virtuous, then praised the way the Society had effected a miraculous change in the temper and habits of Highlanders, who were now civilized and happier than in former times. MacDonald warned, however, that Highland children could be useful only if they spoke English and MacDonald was to show this inculcation of English was not being speedily accomplished. He suggested that English should be taught to Gaelic-speaking children in the same manner as Latin was taught to English-speaking children – as a foreign or second tongue. This advice went unheeded. Sorensen concludes that while MacDonald had learned and taught English under the charity schools system, the

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4 Alexander MacDonald, A Galick and English Vocabulary, with an Appendix of the Terms of Divinity in the Said Language. Written for the Use in the Charity-Schools, Founded and Endued in the Highlands (Edinburgh: Robert Fleming, 1741), iv.
5 Ibid., v.
SSPCK could not control the uses to which MacDonald put the English language. 6 MacDonald was a rare Highlander, one who had attained literacy in his own tongue to become a superior Gaelic scholar and renowned poet, in spite of the Church’s policies.

MacDonald appropriated English technologies for his glossary, coining and borrowing words from English, such as *aingeal* for ‘angel’, *spiorad* for ‘spirit’ and *Diabhal* for devil. However, he retained some of the conventions of Gaelic spelling. MacDonald’s system was a step on the way to modern standardised Gaelic. If one checks the list below, we find that not all MacDonald’s terms conform to the spelling conventions of modern Gaelic.

Table G–1. Examples from MacDonald’s Glossary comparing Modern Gaelic and English 7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MacDonald’s Glossary</th>
<th>Modern Gaelic</th>
<th>Modern English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>na cruighuighthoir</em></td>
<td>an Cruitréar</td>
<td>The Creator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>crois</td>
<td>crann-ceusaidh</td>
<td>cross</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>a ghairm eifeachdach</em></td>
<td>a’ghairm eifeachdach</td>
<td>effectual calling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>toil-shaor</td>
<td>saor-thoil</td>
<td>free will</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gras</td>
<td>gràs</td>
<td>grace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fireunnachadh</td>
<td>fìreanachadh</td>
<td>justification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ladh</td>
<td>an lagh</td>
<td>The law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>freasdl</td>
<td>freasdal</td>
<td>providence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>naomh-thughadh</em></td>
<td>naomhachadh</td>
<td>sanctification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>slánuighóir</em></td>
<td>Slánaighear</td>
<td>Saviour</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6 MacDonald appropriated English technologies for his glossary, coining and borrowing words from English, such as *aingeal* for ‘angel’, *spiorad* for ‘spirit’ and *Diabhal* for devil but he retained the Gaelic spelling conventions. Ibid., iv, 1–2. Sorensen, *The Grammar of Empire*, 45. These conventions were explained in Chapter Two, page 89, note 390.


7 Compare with a ‘Modern Glossary’ see, Principal Donald MacLeod, *Glossary of Gaelic Theological Terms* [www] (Free Church College) [cited December 24 2005]); available from http://www.freescotcoll.ac.uk/Gaelic_glossary.shtml.
Milton’s eleventh sonnet lamented the passing of the ‘Golden Age’ of Greek learning in England upon the death of Sir John Cheke (1514–1557), first professor of Greek at Cambridge, and erstwhile tutor to Edward VI. In the sonnet, Milton hints at the recent unification of the crowns of England and Scotland. The ‘rugged names’ that would make Quintilian ‘stare and gasp’ were Scottish Gaelic patronymics. Milton lists them in the sonnet as ‘Gordon’, ‘Colkitto’, ‘Macdonnel’ and ‘Galasp’. The Gordon, in Milton’s line eight, was possibly a reference to the Catholic Marquis of Huntley. In the line following, ‘Colkitto’, ‘Macdonnel’ and ‘Galasp’ refer to a single man - Alexander Macdonnell, also known as Coll MacGillespie (the son of Gillespie or Galasp).¹ Highlanders knew Macdonnell as Coll Ciotach (Colkitto or the ‘Coll the left-handed’).

In line ten of his sonnet, Milton made it plain that these Scottish names were on everyone’s lips: “Those rugged names to our like mouths grow sleek”. Milton’s reference to Quintilian² inferred that these Gaelic names and Scottish words now might

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² ‘The followers of Quintilian believed that the introduction of foreign words into any national language was a threat to the purity of it. His Institutiones Oratoricae is one of the foremost Latin works discussing oratory and rhetoric.’ Ibid. ([cited). Luxon.
threaten the purity of the English language.\textsuperscript{3} Coll Ciotach was the father of Gaeldom’s last great warrior, Alasdair MacColla. MacColla raised not only the spectre of renewed clan rivalry, but also an attempted restoration of Clan Donald’s pan-Gaelic Lordship of the Isles, which was subsumed under Scotland’s crown in 1492.\textsuperscript{4} Milton insinuated that Scotland’s Highland component was a threat, not only to England, but all things English.

In his reply to Macpherson, Ferguson draws parallels between Milton’s Sonnet and the state of linguistic affairs in the \textit{Gaidhealtachd}. It would not have been lost on Macpherson that Coll Ciotach was key figure in the last flowering of Scottish bardic poetry before constraints were placed on it by the centralised power in Scotland. Ferguson seized upon the irony, that Gaelic was less a threat to English than Milton supposed; rather English posed a greater threat to Gaelic. It was also ironic that Gaelic had had less effect on English in England, than English had had on Gaelic in East Perthshire, even though Scots English had borrowed quite extensively from Gaelic over the centuries.\textsuperscript{5}

\textsuperscript{3} Ibid.,([cited). Luxon.
\textsuperscript{5} The borrowings include: clan, loch, glen, galore, brogue, twig, cant, croon, brisk, shamrock and slogan. Even Tory, as in Tory party, has been borrowed into English from Irish. See Ronald Black, \textit{Cothrom Ionnsachaidh: Gaelic Grammar and Exercises} (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Department of Celtic, 1992), 29.
APPENDIX I
CHAPTER 4
Preamble and text of The Garb of Old Gaul

The inspirations for the words of the slow march date to the generation following Ferguson, but clearly encapsulate the history and thinking at the period when the Black Watch was made a line regiment. The tune for The Garb of Old Gaul remained the slow regimental march of the Black Watch and the Scots Guards for many years. It is currently the slow march of the Scottish Regiments in the British Army. The music was composed by the son of Alexander Robertson of Straloch, Perthshire, who later took his mother’s maiden name of Reid. Major Reid (later General Reid) was one of the chief flautists of his era. Upon his demise in 1806, he left a significant sum (£52,000) to his alma mater, the University of Edinburgh, in order to set up a chair of music. The Garb of Old Gaul is Reid’s best-remembered tune. The endowment left by Reid’s daughter enabled medieval manuscripts to be shelved in the Old College’s Reid Room. Reid helped fund the Chair in Music, even though it was not established until 1839. Every year on the 13 February, (Reid’s birthday) the College of Music performs an annual concert when several of Reid’s compositions are played (including The Garb of Old Gaul). The words to the Garb of Old Gaul were written in 1762 by the commander of the Scot’s Greys, Lt. General Sir Henry Erskine Bart., the second son of Sir John Erskine of Alva. The words first appeared in Wood’s Songs of Scotland, edited by G. F. Graham in 1848. The first Gaelic version of the song in print was by a Highlander named Morrison and appeared in 1765; although it was thought to exist in an earlier version at about the time the regiment became a regiment of the line. The best Gaelic version is by Captain McIntyre and it first appeared in print in Am Filidh, A Gaelic Song Book, edited by James Munro, in 1840.

The versions of the Garb of Old Gaul over the page are those by Captain McIntyre and Sir Henry Erskine. It would seem that the Gaelic words and the music both predate the English translation by Sir Henry Erskine.¹ The words in Gaelic with English translation to this work are supplied over the page.²

² Ibid. My thanks to Mrs Katie Graham for her help with correcting the modern translation.
### The Text of *The Garb of Old Gaul*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Corresponding Gaelic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>In the Garb of Old Gaul</strong></td>
<td><strong>Ann an éideadh nan Gàel</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the garb of old Gaul with the fire of old Rome,</td>
<td>Ann an éideadh nan Gàel, le tein’ – àrdain na Ròimh’,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From the health-cover’d mountains of Scotia we come,</td>
<td>‘S ann o hraoch-bheannaibh Alba a dh’fhalbh sinn a chum gleòis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where the Romans endeavoured our country to gain,</td>
<td>Tir a shtribhich na Roinbhich, le foirmeart thoirt uainn,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>But our ancestors fought, and they fought not in vain.</td>
<td>Ach ar sinnsearra chìomhraig, ‘s mar sheòid thug tad buaidh!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHORUS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Such our love of liberty, our country and our laws,</td>
<td>Mar so, ar Lagh’s ar Righeachd gu’n dionar leinn gu bràth;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That, like our ancestors of old, we stand by freedom’s cause;</td>
<td>Agus cath air taobh na saorsa gu’m faoghluiuim sinn d’ ar n-àl;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We’ll bravely fight like heroes bright for honour and applause.</td>
<td>Gus an diong iad fòs an seanairean ‘ am fearalas ‘s an cáil,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And defy the French, with all their arts to alter our laws.</td>
<td>‘S gus an cuir iad eis gun taing air an Fhraing ‘s air an Spàinn.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No effeminate customs our sinews unbrace,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No luxurious tables enervate our race;</td>
<td>Le sòghalas no fèisdeachas ar fèithean lasgair fàs;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our loud-sounding pipe breathes the true martial strain,</td>
<td>Cha toir ròic no ruidht oirnn strioacadh chum’s gun diobair sinn ar cáil;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And our hearts still the old Scottish valour retain.</td>
<td>‘S i a’ phiob a’s àirde nual a bhios g ‘ar glusad gu blàr;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As a storm in the ocean when Boreas blows,</td>
<td>Sin an ceòl a chumas suas annainn cruadal nan Gàel.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>So are we enraged when we rush at our foes,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We sons of the mountains, tremendous as rocks,</td>
<td>Mar a shéideas a’ghaoth tuath air a’chuan as gairge toirm,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dash the force of our foes with our thundering strokes.</td>
<td>‘S ann mar sin a ni sinn brùchadh air ar naimhde ‘nàull gu borb;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We’re tall as the oak on the mount of the vale,</td>
<td>Mar chreaga trom a’ türîng on’ thig ur-shiol nam beannata,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are swift as the roe which the hound doth assail;</td>
<td>G’an caithseamh as le’n tréuntas, ‘s le gètread an lann.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As the full moon in autumn our shields do appear,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minerva would dread to encounter our spear.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quebec and Cape Breton, the pride of old France,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In their troops fondly boasted till we did advance,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>But when our claymores they saw us produce,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Their courage did fall, and they sued for a truce.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In our realm may the fury of faction long cease;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May our councils be wise and our commerce increase,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And in Scotia’s cold climate may each of us find,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That our friends still prove true and our beauties prove kind.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Then we’ll defend our liberty, our country and our laws,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And teach our late posterity to fight in freedom’s cause,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That they like our ancestors bold, for honour and applause,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May defy the French, with all their arts, to alter our laws.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure I–1. Engraving of a soldier of the Black Watch, then known as Sempill's Regiment*  
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APPENDIX J
CHAPTER 4
Stoicism, shame-honour, Enlightenment and Ferguson

Stoicism, in Grecian apparel, had the potential to blunt any keenness for progress or change. ¹
This Greek species of Stoicism known as apatheia was thought to be inconsistent with Ferguson’s militaristic propensities and views on social conflict. ² However, Ferguson was devoted to the Roman Stoics. Their works were favoured reading among literate Scots of the eighteenth century. Seneca and Cicero both advocated the political vigour and martial valour that Ferguson espoused.³ Stoicism was revived in Rome during the civil wars.⁴ It became a coping mechanism due to the relaxation of citizenship, the syncretism of religions, and the influx of conflicting morals and customs as a result of colonialism. Therefore, this late Stoic philosophy held that virtue entailed conformity to God, the universe, nature or the logos, accepting all humankind as citizens of the world who were divided merely by artificial convention.⁵ This cosmopolitan urbanity was liberating, but people were faced with almost unlimited choice of behaviour. The insult or loss of face which resulted in rage in shame-honour culture was replaced by anxiety or impotence in the cosmopolitan centre.⁶ Stoicism flourished as an antidote to loss of identity, isolation and uncertainty.⁷ A collateral effect of the influx of people into Rome from different ethnic backgrounds was that as Carlin Barton insists, ‘The Romans lost a clear and intuitive sense of “we”’.⁸ For Ferguson, as for earlier the Romans, identity was defined in oppositions. He indicated that, ‘The titles of fellow-citizen and countryman, unopposed to those of alien and foreigner, to which they refer, would fall into

¹ Joseph M. Bryant, Moral Codes and Social Structure in Ancient Greece: Greek Ethics from Homer to the Epicureans and Stoics (New York: State University of New York Press, 1996), 454.
⁴ Carlin Barton believes face-to-face culture began unravelling in Rome around the second century B.C.E. This also occurred during the Hellenistic Age in Greece. Carlin Barton, Roman Honor: Fire in the Bones (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 275; Bryant, Moral Codes and Social Structure in Ancient Greece, 428.
⁷ Bryant, Moral Codes and Social Structure in Ancient Greece, 428–432.
⁸ Barton, Roman Honor, 275.
disuse, and lose their meaning." Ferguson appreciated that identity blurred only when opposition and enmity were removed. This indistinctness was precisely what happened in the late Roman Empire. The notions of citizenship, nation, family and identity became more complex and less well defined.

Ferguson is often thought to be less innovative and more reliant on a debt to civic humanism than either Hume or Smith. However, Ferguson knew the value of conflict. Stability and equilibrium are not conducive to change or progress. Barton’s study bears out how a hankering after stability caused stagnation in Imperial Rome. Stability was one of the chief aims and desires for the Empire in its transition from a shame to a guilt culture. Barton implicated this need for peace and stability in Rome’s inevitable downfall. Unlike guilt cultures, the equilibrium in shame-honour cultures is constantly being changed by conflict and rebalanced by either forgiveness and reconciliation or, alternatively, exclusion. Ferguson differed from Hume and Smith because he did not see conflict and dissent as a harbinger of political instability. Machiavelli similarly observed that conflict between the patricians and plebeians secured both liberty and social stability. By Hume’s reasoning, refinement was conducive to peace and stability because the destructiveness of vice was minimised. By contrast, for Ferguson, conflict preserved freedom: ‘Liberty is maintained by the continued differences and oppositions of numbers, not by their concurring zeal on behalf of equitable

10 As regions became swallowed up by the Roman Empire the ius civile ran parallel to provincial systems of common law or vulgar law. The idea of citizenship, as it was defined in Republican Rome and outlined by Claude Nicolet, was more precise and far less complex than citizenship of the post-Caracalla era or even late Imperial Rome. See Claude Nicolet, The World of the Citizen in Republican Rome, trans. Paul S. Falla (London: Batsford Academic and Educational, 1980). See also Ralph W. Mathisen, "Peregrini, Barbari, and Cives Romani: Concepts of Citizenship and the Legal Identity of Barbarians in the Later Roman Empire", American Historical Review 111, no. 4 (2006), 1011–1041.
11 Barton, Roman Honor, 278.
government. To Machiavelli’s Republican Roman, the absence of the fear of oppression, the lack of humility and servility amounted to liberty. Ferguson believed that the amelioration of the warrior spirit was unnecessary, since art and invention continued throughout periods of instability. Conflict in no way retarded progress in the arts or sciences as he indicates in the following passage:

Greece, divided into many little states, and agitated, beyond any spot on the globe, by domestic contentions and foreign wars, set the example in every species of literature. *The fire was communicated to Rome*; not when the state ceased to be warlike, and had discontinued her political agitations, but when she mixed the love of refinement and of pleasure with her national pursuits, and indulged an inclination to study in the midst of ferments, occasioned by the wars and pretensions of opposite factions.

Ferguson understood the role of conflict in society as it progressed from its rude to its polished state. He understood that rivalry and enmity helped to forge a sense of identity, and to induce cohesion. Ferguson believed that cohesion lay not only in opposition but also in:

The sense of a common danger, and the assaults of an enemy, have been frequently useful to nations, by uniting their members more firmly together, and by preventing the secessions and actual separations in which their civil discord might otherwise terminate.

Ferguson’s arrival at these conclusions can only be taken into account when the operation of the shame-honour culture is understood. Furthermore, Ferguson’s reliance on the civic humanist tradition, as historians perceive it today, can be better understood when it is realised that Highland culture had much in common with the ancient classical cultures he so admired.

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17 Ferguson, *Essay*, 170. The emphasis is mine.
18 Ibid., 26.
APPENDIX K
CHAPTER 4
Background to the inception of the Scottish Militia, 1793–97

The militia that Ferguson hoped would come to fruition in the 1750s or 60s was not instituted until 1793. When it came, it received a hostile public reception, especially in Ferguson’s Highland Perthshire. Even so, it was just as unwelcome in many Lowland counties. The opposition in Perthshire came mainly from the Gaelic-speaking regions. The fear of dying of tropical fever in the West Indies, which had precipitated the Black Watch mutiny in 1743, still persisted and remained a source of mistrust in Atholl.¹ Many of the anti-militia campaigners were sons and grandsons of the Black Watch mutineers.²

Ferguson thought the 1793 militia’s conventions too stringent. He would have preferred a voluntary rather than compulsory intake of men.³ Men aged eighteen to twenty-three years were compelled to participate, being exempted only if they were fathers with two or more children. Those of the right age could choose to serve, pay a fine, or hire an unmarried substitute. Only the rich resorted to the latter, as paying a substitute was out of the reach of most middle-class families.⁴ Scotland’s target was to raise six thousand men. Schoolmasters had the authority in each parish to organise those who were eligible. However, five schoolmasters had their records destroyed. Similar resistance occurred in neighbouring Argyll.⁵

Many parishes were forced to raise subsidies so that they could hire recruits. By March of 1797, all resistance to the militia had been put down, but it had caused the greatest public outcry of the century. Twelve people lost their lives when dragoons

² Ibid.
⁴ For more background on the militia of 1797 see J. R. Western, "The Formation of the Scottish Militia in 1797", Scottish Historical Review, 30 no. 117 (1955), 1–18.
broke up a militia riot at Tranent, near Edinburgh.  Ferguson’s second son, James, was included in the ballot for the militia. He sought an exemption but was unable to find a substitute, though his father scoured Edinburgh on his behalf.  Ferguson hoped that the Militia Act would be amended for young men to go onto the roll at eighteen and come off it at twenty-four.

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APPENDIX L

CHAPTER 4
The service careers of Ferguson’s offspring

All Ferguson’s sons, and his only grandson, were instilled with his spirit of self-sacrifice, duty and manly service. James found the military to his liking and eventually served in the East India Company as a Colonel. Ferguson’s eldest son, Adam, served as a captain in the 101st Regiment under Wellington.¹ His third son, Joseph, entered service with the East India Company in April 1800, but became ill and died in India.² His youngest son, John Macpherson Ferguson, opted for a naval career and retired as a Rear Admiral in 1846.³ John’s son, Adam, Ferguson’s only grandchild, served like his

¹ Ferguson’s son, Adam, originally became a lawyer but did not find it to his liking. After training as an officer with the Edinburgh Volunteer Corps, he returned to the 101st in 1808 as a captain. See Vincenzo Merolle and Kenneth Wellesley eds, The Correspondence of Adam Ferguson, 2 vols, vol. 2 (London: William Pickering, 1995), 453. Letter from Ferguson to John Macpherson, dated Hallyards 20 March 1799. See also "A School-Friend of Sir Walter Scott", Chambers's Journal of Popular Literature, Science and Arts III, no. 60 (1855), 115. Adam served in the Peninsular campaign under Wellington, but was captured in the retreat from Burgos in 1812. Womack suggests that Ferguson’s action of reading Scott’s Lady of the Lake to his troops at the siege of Torres Vedras was not as eccentric as it might seem. It was a useful distraction for men lying prone under siege. It also exemplifies the changing nature of warfare by the juxtaposing of rapid action in Scott’s poem with the drudgery, ennui and alienation of soldiers endeavouring to hold the bridgehead under siege. Warfare was no longer a matter of a series of individuated expressions with sword or pike. There was no need for distraction in the medieval version of warfare and every need for concentration. Womack understood that it restored the ideological forms of the Peninsular Campaign to the history of Highland militarism. Peter Womack, Improvement and Romance: Constructing the Myth of the Highlands (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hants: Macmillan, 1989), 58–59. During Scott’s pageantry for George IV’s visit to Edinburgh in 1822, the younger Adam Ferguson became Keeper of the Scottish Regalia and was subsequently knighted. Ferguson’s experiences in the Peninsular campaign contributed to Walter Scott’s novel, The Fair Maid of Perth. Adam was a great raconteur, entertaining ‘the Abbotsford community’ (and the third division) with his songs and stories, especially his rendition of a Highland stag hunt. Sir Adam and Sir Walter between them reworked the Gaelic honour system for the mainstream as a guide masculine behaviour. This possibly inspired Digby’s Broad Stone of Honour, or Rules for the Gentlemen of England (1822). T. F. Henderson, "Sir Adam Ferguson" in Dictionary of National Biography, ed., Sir Leslie Stephen and Sir Sydney Lee (London: Oxford University Press, 1949–1950), 1204. See also Chambers’s Journal, 115. Digby was an Irish Protestant who later converted to Catholicism. He wrote an influential book on chivalry which had a bearing on the behaviour of the English gentleman. This in turn influenced such movements as ‘muscular Christianity’, Christian socialism, the English public school, as well as the Boys’ Brigade and Boy Scout movements. Digby later reworked the first edition of Broadstone of Honour in 1822 as an apologetic for Catholicism. See Mark Girouard, The Return to Camelot: Chivalry and the English Gentleman (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 142–144, 149, 165, 168–170, 198, 222. This relationship between Scott and Ferguson and its implications for British manners is an area where further research might be directed.

² Jane Bush Fagg, "Adam Ferguson: Scottish Cato" (Ph D, University of North Carolina, 1968), 310.

³ He served on two ships, Superb and Redwing, in the Gibraltar Straits before he was promoted to Captain on July 13, 1808. Fagg, "Adam Ferguson: Scottish Cato", 314.
grandfather in the Black Watch, but died unmarried, and the family line was extinguished.⁴

If Walter Scott did not have his love of the military aroused in the Ferguson home, he certainly had it satiated there. Scott and Robert Burns met once briefly in the Ferguson household at Sciennes. The catalyst for their exchange was a Bunbury print of Langhorne’s poem about the Battle of Minden.⁵ The print depicted a widow and child weeping over the corpse of a slain soldier. The war in Europe so preoccupied Ferguson in his dotage that he refused to surrender life until there was some closure to the affair. He lived to hear of Waterloo, and Adam’s safety and freedom from a prisoner-of-war camp. Scott claimed that after news of Waterloo, Ferguson lost interest and became careless about his daily regimen. Scott claimed it acted upon him like a nunc dimittis.⁶

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⁴ Ibid., 314–317.
⁵ Chambers’s Journal, 114–115. See also Womack, Improvement and Romance, 31.
APPENDIX M
CHAPTER 5
Ferguson’s epitaph and memorial

HERE REST THE MORTAL REMAINS OF ADAM FERGUSON, LL.D., PROFESSOR OF MORAL PHILOSOPHY IN THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH. HE WAS BORN AT LOGIERAIT, IN THE COUNTY OF PERTH, ON THE 20TH OF JUNE 1723, AND DIED IN THIS CITY OF ST ANDREWS ON THE 22ND DAY OF FEBRUARY 1816.

UNSEDUCED BY THE TEMPTATIONS OF PLEASURE, POWER OR AMBITION HE EMPLOYED THE INTERVAL BETWIXT HIS CRADLE AND HIS GRAVE WITH UNOSTENTATIOUS AND STEADY PERSERVERANCE IN ACQUIRING AND DIFFUSING KNOWLEDGE, AND IN THE PRACTICE OF PUBLIC AND OF DOMESTIC VIRTUE. TO HIS VENERATED MEMORY THIS MONUMENT IS ERECTED BY HIS CHILDREN THAT THEY MAY RECORD HIS PIETY TO GOD AND BENEVOLENCE TO MAN, AND COMMEMORATE THE ELOQUENCE AND ENERGY WITH WHICH HE INculcated the precepts of morality and prepared the youthful mind for virtuous actions, but a more imperishable memorial of his genius exists in his philosophical and historical works, where classic elegance, strength of reasoning, and clearness of detail secured the applause of the age in which he lived, and will continue to deserve the gratitude and command the admiration of posterity.
Figure M–2. Ferguson’s memorial in the ruined walls of St Andrews Cathedral, Fife.

Figure M–3. The house where Ferguson died in South Street, St Andrews. It is not far from his final resting place in the Cathedral. There is a sundial above the door casting a dark shadow to the right of the tree shadow.

1 All photographs previous page and above were taken by the author.
APPENDIX N
CHAPTER 7
An example of rhythm and repetition in *puirt-a-beul*

A *puirt-a-beul* displaying the classic repetition and rhythm and vowel play common in Gaelic songs. These are of prime importance for recollection and performance. This example was taken down from the singing of Mrs Annie Arnott of Benbecula.

*Seallaibh Curaigh Eoghainn*

Seallaibh curaigh Eoghainn
Is còig ràmh fichead oirre
Seallaibh curaigh Eoghainn
‘S i seachad air an Rudha Bhàn
Seallaibh curaigh Eoghainn
Is còig ràmh fichead oirre
Seallaibh curaigh Eoghainn
‘S i seachad air an Rudha Bhàn

Look at Ewan’s boat
With twenty five oars on her/it
Look at Ewan’s boat
She/it has passed the White Point
Repeat.

Seist: Bi Eoghainn, bi Eoghainn,
Bi Eoghainn na sgiobair oirr’
Bi Eoghainn, bi Eoghainn,
‘S i seachad air an Rudha Bhàn
Bi Eoghainn, bi Eoghainn,
Bi Eoghainn na sgiobair oirr’
Bi Eoghainn, bi Eoghainn,
‘S i seachad air an Rudha Bhàn

Chorus: Ewan will be, Ewan will be,
Ewan will be her skipper
Ewan will be, Ewan will be
Going past the White Point.
Repeat.

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APPENDIX O
CHAPTERS 2 & 7
The Family of Adam Ferguson

Patrick Gordon, 9th of Hallhead (d 1683)
m. Margaret Burnett (daughter of Alexander Burnett of Leys by Jean Arbuthnot)
   (a) John Gordon 10th of Hallhead
      m. Mary Ross daughter of Ross of Auchloosar
         ((1)) Patrick Gordon 11th of Hallhead (d 1724)
         (2) William Gordon (Planter in Jamaica)
            (A) Sir William Gordon (b. 1727 d. 1798)
            m. (07, 1776) Mary (d. 1796, Widow of Samuel Phillips of Garendon Park)
         ((3)) Barbara Gordon
         m. (1720) Harry Farquharson (d. Culloden 16.04.1746)
   (b) Charles Gordon 12th of Hallhead
      (c) Robert Gordon 13th of Hallhead and 1st of Esslemont (d. 07.04.1737)
      m. Isabella Byres (daughter of James Byres of Aberdeen, Brother of Sir John, 1st of Coates)
         ((1)) Robert Gordon 14th of Hallhead and 2nd of Esslemont (d. 1758)
          m. (23.01.1728/9) Anne Bowlder (they had issue, who also had issue - these have been omitted for brevity.) This is the Mrs Gordon whose home was looted by Government Troops following Culloden in 1746. This Robert Gordon of Hallhead was Ferguson's cousin
         ((2)) Alexander Gordon (d. 31.10.1778) has issue
         m. (1735) Jane Grierson (sister of Sir William Grierson of Lagg)
      ((3)) Margaret Gordon
      m. John Black of Belfast (friend of Montesquieu)
         (A) Isabella Black (b 1718)
         m. James Burnett (son of Bonny John Burnett and Katherine Gordon b. 1718)
            (a) Katherine Burnett (b.1718 d. 1795)
            m. Professor Adam Ferguson SEE BELOW ((8))
         m. (28.06.1752) Thomas Legerwood in Cairnhill
      (4) Janet Gordon
      m. (28.06.1752) Thomas Legerwood in Cairnhill
      (5) Isobel Gordon
      m. Professor James Russell in Edinburgh
   (d) Mary Gordon
      m Reverend Adam Ferguson minister of Logierait.
         ((1)) Mary (b. 2.11.1706)
         m. Duncan Stewart of Blackhill
            (A) James Stewart (translator of Bible into Gaelic)
            ((2)) Charles (b. 08.1708 d. Port Royal Jamaica 09.1743)
            ((3)) Anna (b. 31.05.1710 d. 02.09.1710)
            ((4)) Alexander (b.21.08.1713 d. 22.07.1724)
         ((5) Janet (28.09.1715)
         m. Thomas Wilkie of Foulden
         ((6) Patrick (b. 27.10.1717 d. Port Royal Jamaica 18.03.1747)
         ((7) Robert (b. 11.1719 d. 02.1797)
   (8) Adam Ferguson, Professor of Moral Philosophy at Edinburgh University (20.06.1723 - 22.02.1816)
      m. Katherine Burnett (02.10.1766)
         (A) Isabella d. 1831
         (B) Infant (died soon after birth)
         (C) Sir Adam Ferguson, (b 21.12.1770).
         (D) Mary (b.1773)
         (E) Joseph (b. by 1775)
         (F) Margaret (b. before 09.08. 1777)
         (G) James (b. 15.03.1778)
         (H) John Macpherson (15.08.1784)