Scottish enlightened culture originated in an awareness of various educational prejudices, including religious, patriotic, and linguistic ones. Overcoming them placed Scottish writers ahead of European philosophy in the central decades of the eighteenth century. Through their involvement in the contemporary debate on sensibility, the Scots set about recovering the fragments left of the Scottish past. However, this interest eventually involved a dissociation of the national past from the idea of progress, which in the nineteenth century led to a separation of the country’s history and literature from notions of scientific and academic success. Therefore, Scotland’s historical culture, which formerly had been an essential ingredient of the Enlightenment, was regarded as legendary, gendered as “feminine,” and relegated to the sphere of fancy. Religion regained control of Scottish universities and Scotland became a land of romance, rather than a model of cultural progress as in the age of Voltaire and Hume.

Key words: Scottish culture, the Enlightenment, eighteenth-century studies, education and literature, literary history, history of universities, historiography.

1. Introduction

No lo dudéis: el dominio de las ciencias se ejerce sólo sobre la razón . . . Aún parece que el corazón, como celoso de su independencia, se rebela alguna vez contra la fuerza del raciocinio, y no quiere ser rendido ni sojuzgado sino por el sentimiento. Ved, pues, aquí el más alto oficio de la literatura, a quien fue dado el arte poderoso de atraer y mover los corazones, de encenderlos, de encantarlos y sujetarlos a su imperio. (Jovellanos 1961: 22)

The aim of the present article is to show how the achievements of the Scottish Enlightenment depended on an idea of education which was fundamentally unprejudiced, interdisciplinary and related to sentimental popular culture, and how the idea was dismissed. It was in the enlightened universities that many academic subjects, such as history or natural philosophy, came into being as we know them, in their watertight compartments, albeit under different denominations. As Jovellanos wrote with the same distinction poetry, criticism and a treatise on agricultural reform, so for Adam Smith economics was an offshoot of his actual speciality, moral philosophy, which at the time was not distinctly separated from the philosophy of education; David Hume, who is now known as a philosopher, may have preferred to be honoured as a historian, and Lord Kames was also led into the field of general history through his legal research as a jurist. General studies of the Scottish Enlightenment (Daiches 1964; Smout 1969; Ferguson 1987), including recent
ones (Wood 2000; Buchan 2003; Broadie 2003; Herman 2003), have tended to consider its different branches without due emphasis on the interrelation of its various aspects, and on the correlative attitudes to education. What we now call interdisciplinary studies was a common practice in the eighteenth-century university, particularly in Scotland, where higher education enjoyed a vigour scarcely matched elsewhere, which certainly languished in the following century. The final discrimination between what pertains to reason and to the heart contributed to the cultural decline.

2. Nation and education

In order to pursue our leading argument, which is the interrelation among the various aspects of enlightened culture in Scotland and how they came into contradiction, it is necessary to rehearse briefly some well-known facts about the importance of education there. There will be no attempt here to explain what caused the Scottish Enlightenment, or to survey all its aspects. Scots have often prided themselves on the first national system of education in Europe, for which the reformer John Knox would take the credit (Grant and Humes 1993: 359). The results of Scottish education in the eighteenth century remain impressive, even if its supposed superiority to other countries has needed qualification (Houston 1982; Anderson 1995: 1–3). For the Moderate party which would lead the Kirk since the mid-eighteenth century, and whose dominance was crucial in assuaging religious and political partisanships, “Education was a modernizing, civilizing process which reinforced the social order, taught political loyalty, and created a workforce open to economic change” (Anderson 1995: 26). The Scottish Enlightenment was remarkably oriented to teaching, which perhaps contributed to the dissemination of its achievements. T. C. Smout (1969: 452–53) explained that Scottish philosophers were “avidly interested in other disciplines than their own,” which followed, to some extent, from their belief that “if philosophy was about morals, and morals affected the whole of society, then all the social sciences could legitimately become the philosopher’s field”; this, in turn, “led to brilliant teaching, for the philosophers felt it their duty to educate the future leaders of other disciplines in a rational approach to moral and social problems,” and the scientists “shone with scarcely less luminescence” than the philosophers. Herman (2003: 61–62) argues further that “The Scottish Enlightenment . . . sought to transform every branch of learning . . . into a series of organised disciplines that could be taught and passed on to posterity.” Its breakthroughs were thus scientific and educational in similar proportions.

The 1707 Union of Parliaments had improved the material means for Scots to export their intellectual achievements. The classic example is James Watt, a Glaswegian engineer whose steam engine was financed by the Birmingham ironmaster Matthew Boulton. Plenty other examples do not show the English connection so explicitly, such as those of the Scottish professors who are claimed to be the “fathers” of various sciences, including James Hutton in geology, William Cullen in chemistry, Adam Ferguson in sociology, John Millar in social history, and John Hunter in surgery. A strong case has also been made for the very creation of English literature as an academic discipline in Scotland, which was then exported, by Scots, to educational institutions in North America and India, the Dublin Trinity College, Australia and New Zealand, and finally to England itself (Crawford 1998). To a great extent, modern historiography was likewise born in Scotland, in the work of
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William Robertson and others, followed by modern biography as devised by James Boswell, and Walter Scott’s historical novel.

Such developments should make us wonder at the way they seem to have faded away by about 1830, the *terminus ad quem* of Smout’s landmark *History of the Scottish People*, whose concluding chapters are aptly called “Education” and “The Golden Age of Scottish Culture.” The various reasons Smout (1969: 450, 469) gives for the end of that golden age range from the massive migration from the parochial school system into the ill-provided suburbs of industrialised towns, to the turning of imaginative literature and history back on a nostalgically remote past: a myth which did not see history the way Robertson had done, namely, “as connected with explaining the development of society up to the point of contemporary existence,” that is, according to the enlightened approach whose last distinguished practitioner was Scott. Literature suffered a parallel decline leading up to the provincial sentimentalism of the “kailyard” novel (Campbell 1981). Scottish educational theorists like Thomas Dick then pleaded for the eradication of literature as one of those “hallucinations of the human intellect” which were not fit for workers. But as J. V. Smith (1983: 44) noted, Dick’s educational programme also represented “a full-scale assault on popular culture.” A sentimental popular culture which was, like its epitome Robert Burns, a result of the enlightened century, and could not be dissociated from its science and philosophy.

3. Economics and language

The English steel we could disdain,
Secure in Valour’s station;
But English gold has been our bane—
Such a parcel of rogues in a nation!

Our next task in this research is to note how Scottish authors found a contradiction between their Scots tongue and material prosperity, which would affect their educational ideas. The last line above gave its title to the song that Burns created, according to Thomas Crawford,

about the historical challenge which was the ultimate cause of the national revival—the situation caused by the Act of Union, which stimulated the men of subsequent generations to try to beat the English in the only sphere now open to them, the arts of peace, even if that meant that they anglicised themselves in the process. (Crawford 1978: 239)

The high degree of Anglicization is exemplified by the cited words of the poem, all of them English (though in some editions “steel” is spelt *stell*). The Scottish failure to establish a colonial outpost on Darien, and the financial disaster that ensued at the close of the seventeenth century, convinced the political and business classes of the possible benefits in the association with the “auld enemy.” Most of the clauses in the Treaty of Union dealt with economic matters. The crucial consent of the Kirk to the Union was gained by William Carstares, the Principal of the University of Edinburgh and current Moderator of the General Assembly. Practical reason prevailed over patriotism, and experience over prejudice, even if there was also a factor of fear involved (Scott 2003).
Hume (1964, 1: 415–16) was aware that “custom and education produce belief by such a repetition, as is not derived from experience”: as an empiricist, he would base his philosophy on experience and try to overcome “the prejudices of education” (Hume 1964, 2: 92). In Smollett’s Humphry Clinker (1985: 308) Matthew Bramble also noted about superstition that “The longer I live, I see more reason to believe that prejudices of education are never wholly eradicated, even when they are discovered to be erroneous and absurd.” They are also mentioned in Scott’s Waverley (1897: 254) at the moment of explaining what drew the novel’s hero to the outmoded Jacobite cause: “he was irresistibly attracted to the cause which the prejudices of education and the political principles of his family had already recommended as the most just.” Hume, Smollett and Scott, though talking at different historical moments, shared the Scottish experience of a Calvinist educational background. After the Union, the Scots were able to make the most of their educational system in the improved economic situation, without being constrained by the religious or patriotic prejudice it involved.

Another “prejudice” was linguistic. Knox himself had taken the first definite steps in the adoption of English. After the Union many more Scots, most famously Hume, were intent on purging their tongue of Scotticisms. The importance given to the English accent in education is well attested by Hume in a letter of 1767 to John Home of Ninewells concerning the education of the latter’s son:

> There are several Advantages of a Scots Education; but the Question is whether that of the Language does not counterbalance them, and determine the Preference to the English. He is now of an Age to learn it perfectly; but if a few Years elapse, he may acquire such an Accent, as he will never be able to cure of. (Greig 1969, 2: 154)

For Hume, Scots is like a disease that might prevent a young man from succeeding in life. It is Smith that makes the key connection between language and modern commercial society: both, like Smith’s own philosophical system, are founded on the principle of exchange. Languages, like manners, are polished through the commercial relations with other peoples. Ian Duncan (1998: 42–45) places Smith’s dialogic view of language in sharp contrast with that of Samuel Johnson, for whom “Commerce, however necessary, however lucrative, as it depraves the manners, corrupts the language.” The contrast applies no less tellingly to their respective views of literature: “a technology of representation by which readers constitute themselves as modern subjects in a commercial society” for Smith, whereas Johnson has his “role at the origins of an English critical tradition bearing an ideology—a barely secularized theology—of Romantic anti-modernity.” Smith’s idea of literature explains the interest of eighteenth-century Scottish writers, from Hume and James Thomson to Smollett, Mackenzie and Boswell, in the proper use of standard English. The Scottish notion of literature was thus less influenced by theology than that of Johnson’s England. Johnson’s idea of literature would also affect Scotland very soon, as it could be noticed in Hugh Blair’s critical writings. Scott, however, would remain a true disciple of Smith’s view of literature and society rather than a “Romantic.”

Smith also realised the educational advantage that “poorer universities” might have over “the richest and best endowed universities,” suggesting a comparison between Scotland and England’s universities, so that the latter were “sanctuaries in which exploded systems of obsolete prejudices found shelter and protection,” whereas “the most averse
improvements were more easily introduced into some of the poorer universities, in which the teachers, depending upon their reputation for the greater part of their subsistence, were obliged to pay more attention to the current opinions of the world” (1952: 337). Scottish universities made a greater effort to keep pace with economic and ideological progress, while the well-endowed Oxbridge world remained complacent. It was probably a Scottish professor, Francis Hutcheson, who began to lecture in English instead of Latin, an initiative also adopted in the course of the century by the Writing or Commercial Schools founded by Scottish burghs and the private academies to teach mainly scientific subjects and in English (Ferguson 1987: 203). Indeed,

[those who needed to make the most effort to educate themselves in “correct” English usage through the study of texts in which such usage was displayed were the people on the fringe of the geography of power—whether margins of class, province or nationality. (Crawford 1998: 8)]

Ultimately, Scotland’s junior partnership in the Union would also account for “the Scottish invention of English Literature.”

Boswell’s admiration for Johnson began, significantly, when the Scot met Thomas Sheridan, an Irishman who was at Edinburgh delivering “lectures upon the English Language and Publick Speaking to large a respectable audiences,” and whom he frequently heard expatiating “upon Johnson’s extraordinary knowledge, talents, and virtues” (Boswell 1979: 93). “Dictionary Johnson” was also very much the founder of English literary criticism in his Lives of the English Poets, yet his own life was most vividly immortalised by Boswell, a Scot keen on reaching the centre of the empire of learning. In Scotland, learning English language and literature was closely associated with economic progress and social improvement. Hence it was Scotland that first saw the transition from rhetoric, which tended to focus only on the rules of discourse, to criticism, which was concerned with the practical use of discourse as exemplified in the works of authors (Rhodes 1998: 29).

In the course of time, such practical criticism would become belletrism, or a merely sentimental form of literary appreciation, and also lead to the formation of a narrow, exclusive literary canon, due to institutional complacency. This seems to have started happening in Blair’s teaching and criticism. Blair first held the chair of Rhetoric in the University of Edinburgh in 1762, whose creation was prompted by the Town Council following the success of the lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres that Smith had originally delivered. While Smith had been able to embrace the theories of social science and moral sentiment, of literature and economics, under the same intellectual scope, eventually the progress of sentiment opened a gap between heart and mind that affected the entire approach to education.

4. Science and sensibility

But as to the higher part of education, Mr. Harley, the culture of the mind—let the feeling be awakened, let the heart be brought forth to its object, placed in the light in which nature would have it stand, and its decisions will ever be just. The world “[w]ill smile, and smile, and be a villain”; and the youth, who does not suspect its deceit, will be content to smile with it.” (Mackenzie 2001: 87; quotation from Shakespeare, Hamlet 1.5.109)
By the early nineteenth century, one could hear a radical like William Cobbett calling upon heaven to protect him from the “Scotch feelosophers” (Smout 1969: 475; see also Calder 1992: 38). The expression may allude both to the Scots accent they were hardly able to disguise and to the sentimental turn that eventually prevailed in Scottish thinking. The moral and educational issue became central to the European Enlightenment as reflected in Voltaire’s philosophical tale Candide (1759) and Rousseau’s Émile ou de l’Éducation (1762), but in Scotland it had been treated as early as 1739 in Hume’s Treatise of Human Nature. There he explains that it is our natural “sympathy” (our capacity to share other people’s feelings) that enables us to understand the “language” of morality, and in particular the “social virtues” such as beneficence or charity, and “the notions of honour and shame” that allow mankind to live in society (Hume 1964: 338). Hume’s stress on benevolence and sympathy as both natural sentiments and social virtues looks back on Hutcheson’s philosophy. But Smith would probe deeper into moral sentiment and modern society, and begin to find that they were at odds with each other. Then Mackenzie went even further in The Man of Feeling (1771) to suggest that moral sentiment was totally impractical in the modern world, which will “smile” at it sneeringly (see the epigraph above). It was to Mackenzie that the two greatest authors to come out of the Scottish Enlightenment would pay significant tribute. Burns told his old teacher Murdoch that The Man of Feeling was “a book I prize next to the Bible” (qtd. in MacKay 1992: 92), and Scott dedicated his first historical novel, Waverley, to Mackenzie, whom he calls “Our Scottish Addison”—a phrase denoting a patriotic feeling mixed with a sense of inferiority (Mullan 1987: 280; Beveridge and Turnbull 1989).

Sentimentalism had been gaining ground in Britain since the 1770s, especially among “provincial poets” (Brewer 1997: 581). In English culture it was often a matter of comedy. When Addison’s The Spectator touched sentiment, it did so with a “saving lightness of irony” that one would not find in neither Hume nor Mackenzie (Mullan 1987: 281). A comparable irony came to prevail in the English novel. For example, Lawrence Sterne’s Tristram Shandy is (among other things) a comic celebration of sentiment. On the other hand, the sentimental novel in English can be attributed to Samuel Richardson’s Pamela, a direct influence on Mackenzie, yet his man of feeling is devoid of the coyness of Richardson’s heroine. England’s identity was living through a “Machiavellian moment” of the citizen as a political agent, a civic theory which “was scarcely applicable to the inhabitants of what, since 1707, had been a province rather than a politically independent nation” (Mullan 1987: 285). As a result, in Scotland the sentimental education became, rather than just a fashionable moral theme, a philosophical problem (Buchan 2003: 141–71 and 300–33).

1. The popularity of Richardson’s novels made their sentimentalism an object of satire: Henry Fielding’s Shamel, Joseph Andrews and Tom Jones were all open satirical versions of them. Humphry Clinker, it should be admitted, tends to find a sense of the ludicrous or a source of embarrassment in sentimentalism, or even comically conflates it with Bramble’s physical hypochondriac ultrasensitivity to smells; but Smollett had spent most of his life living in London, and, though without losing much of his Scottish character and opinions, he seems to have been writing chiefly for an English readership. Finally, the period’s best English comedies, R. B. Sheridan’s The School for Scandal and Oliver Goldsmith’s She Stoops to Conquer, ridicule the figure and, above all, the language of the “Man of Sentiment.”
The philosophical theory of sentiment was imported to Scotland by Hutcheson, who expressed his view of mankind in *An Inquiry into the Original of Our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue* (1725). The book shows a complete reversal of the idea of man that had prevailed in the seventeenth century before John Locke: Thomas Hobbes' philosophy, largely a result of the English Revolution period, which considered man in perpetual struggle with one another, and in need of a tyrannical state to rule his passions—a pessimistic view akin to the Calvinist belief in mankind’s natural depravity (Stewart 2003). Hutcheson was the son and grandson of the radical Scottish Presbyterians who settled in Ulster, where the moderate “new light” first had some influence. He also belonged to the first generation of students who, at the University of Glasgow, enjoyed an atmosphere of relative academic freedom. Then he decided to complete his training as a minister at Dublin, where he came into contact with recent currents of thought, particularly Lord Shaftesbury’s ideas of “refinement” and “politeness”: “We polish one another, and rub off our Corners and Rough Sides by a sort of amicable Collision” (qtd. in Herman 2003: 72). In Scotland “polished” culture included the use of “correct” English (Crawford 1998: 14–15). Hutcheson, lecturing in English, would take that philosophy of benevolent “fellow-feeling” to the point of explaining man’s innate sense of good and evil, and his “delight in the Good of others.” As a thinker and as a founder of the Kirk’s moderate party, he became a direct model to Robertson, Blair and Smith. From Hutcheson Smith learned that the underlying principles of all human behaviour were themselves part of a moral system ruled by the law of nature, and which included “oeconomicks,” that is, the laws and rights of the various members of a family, as well as the “private rights” of natural freedom (Haakonssen 2003). Hence the men of the Scottish Enlightenment would oppose slavery. This philosophical system, however, failed to explain why so many societies denied their members those natural rights to freedom and happiness. The answer was sought in the history of law.

The other key influence on enlightened figures was a man of law. Henry Home, widely known as Lord Kames, the descendant of “lairs” from that locality in Berwickshire, opted for a career in law, like many sons of Scottish gentlemen farmers. Apprenticing with a writer of the Signet, Kames studied the feudal basis of Scottish land-holding at a moment of legal transition towards modern ownership. That his interests were by no means confined to legal matters is attested by the range of books he acquired as curator of the Edinburgh Advocates Library in 1737, including philosophy, history, geography and foreign travel. It eventually gave rise to the National Library of Scotland. Another inspiring location for the local enlightenment which Kames presided over was his own house, where among his regular young guests were Millar, Boswell, and Hume. The convivial evenings combined “food and drink, including prodigious quantities of claret, with discussion of philosophical and legal issues” (Herman 2003: 85–89). They also shared an interest in history. In his *Historical Law Tracts* (1758), Kames proposed a division of historical progress in four stages that laid the foundations of every other historical analysis: hunter-gatherers, pastoral-nomads, agricultural communities, and the commercial society. In the last of them, “Commerce . . . softens and polishes the manners of men” (qtd. in Herman 2003: 95). The historical experience of progress offered itself to Scottish eyes comparing the growing prosperity of Glasgow to the backwardness of the Highlands.

A Scottish form of sentimentality, however, would eventually creep into the more rational, scientific approach to history. Kames’s followers, above all Robertson in his successful *History of the Reign of Emperor Charles V* (1759), continued to explain the
process of social evolution or “civilisation” in similar terms. Hume, who used the Advocates Library (he was its keeper after Kames) to research his History of England (1754–62), had applied his scepticism to historiography in the Treatise on Human Nature, suggesting that the writing of history is always founded not on reason but on the imagination, however circumscribed by common sense (Craig 1996: 67). Not surprisingly, a novelist like Smollett also tried his hand at a History of England (1757). In the same years around 1760 James Macpherson produced his Ossian. Macpherson presented his supposed translations from the Gaelic in fragments as if to indicate “the imperfection inherent in all forms of human tradition . . . [A] point virtually identical with that of [the contemporary Scottish philosopher Thomas] Reid in his analysis of the imperfections of human sense perception”: Mackenzie, who was of direct Highland descent like Macpherson and therefore suffered in his own family the aftermath of the Jacobite rebellion of 1745, also chose to present The Man of Feeling as “a collection of apparently disjointed fragments, the form of which corresponds to the limitations of human memory and perception” (MacQueen 1989: 14). Like Macpherson’s Ossian, Mackenzie’s Harley is romantically attached to a vanishing order that is no longer profitable in the heartless modern world. Behind this form of sentimentalism, therefore, lies a feeling that the grand metanarrative of progress and scientific rationalism, the so-called “Enlightenment project” (Berkhofer 1995: 224), was not telling the whole story: it was missing out key pieces of the human heart. In Scotland that realisation motivated an impulse to recover the bits and pieces of pre-1707 traditions, as Macpherson, Burns and Scott did in their different ways.

A progressive education could involve renouncing one’s country and history. For Blair, the purpose of university education was initially to have access to the wider, cosmopolitan world, “in other words, a way to move past parochial standards towards universal principles of truth and beauty,” though his educational discourse tended then to shift “towards more local concerns over personal ‘reputation’ and professional distinction” (Dosanjh 1998: 63). Blair referred to the advocate’s education in particular, and it included rhetoric and literature to acquire eloquence at the Bar and for social advancement. A legal training was regarded in Scotland as the proper general education for a gentleman (Mackenzie, Scott, and R. L. Stevenson had it), and a guarantee of a liberal mind. Men of law “regarded themselves, with varying degrees of conscious awareness, as guardians of a peculiarly Scottish tradition,” therefore the legal profession was regarded as leading also to a political career (Daiches 1964: 57). Paradoxically, the more they advanced in Scottish politics, the more they had to approach the central government in London, and so the more they had to leave Scotland behind. As a result, “Those who did not develop cultural schizophrenia were liable to develop a political squint” (Daiches 1964: 66). The path of progress parted from Scotland men who owed to their nation their practical education and early political successes. Boswell and Smollett followed Johnson’s dictum: “the noblest prospect which a Scotchman ever sees, is the high road that leads him to England!” (Boswell 1979: 106). Burns seriously considered migrating to the West Indies and, had he followed the advice of his friends the Edinburgh literati and written in standard English, “it would have finished him off as an original poet once and for all” (Daiches 1964: 75). Others, like Hume, after living in France for a while, stayed in Edinburgh consolidating the intellectual circles. It took a degree of sentimentalism to renounce the logic of progress and stay at home.

Despite his reputation as a cynical person, Hume believed in moral sentiment as active in social ties whereas Mackenzie, who regarded sentiment as impractical in modern society,
curiously went down in history as a man of feeling himself, though nothing supports this view in what Mullan calls "a writing career symptomatic of the aspirations of the educated ruling class of Enlightenment Scotland (not least in that he continued a successful and remunerative legal career all the time he was a writer)"; Smith, on his part, took up the language of sentiment that Hume had defined, but he announced the limitations of the principle of "sympathy" in the modern commercial world, conceiving of the "social animal" as "a self-possessed citizen practising sympathy carefully, reservedly" (Mullan 1987: 280 and 286). Failing to see much consistency in Hume, Mackenzie argued that "He had, it might be said . . . two minds; one which indulged in the metaphysical scepticism which his genius could invent; another, simple, natural, playful, which made his conversation delightful to his friends" (qtd. in Mullan 1987: 277). Thus, unlike Hume, both Smith and Mackenzie divided sentiment from (modern) society in a way that came to characterise the Scottish Enlightenment. Hume, who in many ways had initiated the philosophical movement, became the "indigestible core to the phenomenon" (Calder 1992: 50).

The dissociation of sympathetic feeling from the modern society ruled by scientific rationalism, though most likely deriving from the market economy of capitalism and also evident in other countries (Austen’s England, Goethe’s Germany, Balzac’s France), it did not have the same devastating effects elsewhere as upon Scottish culture. It can be regarded as a version of the Scottish educational paradox. From it would stem the belief that a progressive education for the modern world should include neither Scottish literature nor most other merely humanistic subjects. English literature would be studied only to learn the correct use of cosmopolitan English, not to derive any emotion from its perusal. The various versions of the paradox would end up turning the split personality into a national identity sign. In the eighteenth century its visible symbol was the contrast between the Old Town of Edinburgh (the heart of the choking “Auld Reekie”) and the splendid neoclassical New Town. Daiches refers to the architectural project on which the New Town was based in a concluding chapter to his study (1964: 70–84), regarding it in relation to the cultural project of the Edinburgh literati, and remarking the difficulty of fitting into such (“Ordered, elegant, rational, optimistic”) projects the intellectual achievements of key figures of the Enlightenment, like Hume and Burns. The New Town, however, did not replace the Old Town, nor did English entirely supersede “the Doric,” as the citizens of “the Athens of the North” liked to call the Scots language. It is misleading to study the philosophical and scientific enlightenment as separate from the vernacular revival: both responded to a similar impulse of Scottish cultural identities to survive after the Union.

Burns’ song “A Red, Red Rose” encapsulates the combination of science and sentiment that was eventually deemed impossible. The first two stanzas lean on the sentimental commonplace of contemporary popular songs and chapbooks, but the last line of the second stanza introduces a striking image that turns pastiche into original (Crawford 1978: 278–81). It is repeated in the first line of the third stanza, and extended in the second and fourth, weaving an imagery of geological time:

Till a’ the seas gang dry, my Dear,
And the rocks melt wi’ the sun:
I will love thee still, my Dear,
While the sands o’ life shall run.
Edwin Morgan has set this stanza in relation to contemporary science in a sonnet entitled “Theory of the Earth,” like the book James Hutton published in 1795, the year after “A Red, Red Rose” first appeared in print:

James Hutton that true son of fire who said
  to Burns “Aye, man, the rocks melt wi the sun”
was sure the age of reason’s time was done:
what but imagination could have read
granite boulders back to their molten roots? (Morgan 1984: 24)

Burns could not have applied such imagery to a sentimental song without some awareness of the scientific revolution that Hutton’s analysis of rock deposits involved (Buchan 2003: 272-298). Morgan’s poem points to the interrelation between modern science and poetic imagination. Later in the sonnet, Morgan reminds us that “They died almost/together, poet and geologist,” suggesting how the Scottish Enlightenment facilitated this close kinship of science and poetic sentiment. A kinship Dugald Stewart overlooked when he “invented” the Scottish Enlightenment for later generations of students (see Wood 2000).

5. Past and present

[T]his Caledonian [Captain Lismahago] . . . has had the benefit of a school-education, seems to have read a good number of books, his memory is tenacious, and he pretends to speak several different languages; but he is so addicted to wrangling, that he will cavil at the clearest truths, and, in the pride of argumentation, attempt to reconcile contradictions. (Smollett 1985: 225)

Today, Scotland is mostly regarded as a country of romantic legends, rather than of educational and scientific achievements, despite its continued scientific contribution to the development of European industry and capitalism since the mid-seventeenth century (see Moreno 1995: 84; more recent scientific achievements include pioneering breakthroughs like the production of the world’s first cloned sheep, “Dolly,” by a Scottish biotechnology company in 1997). When the so-called dualities of Scottish culture like reason and passion, legend and technology, progress and primitivism, Highland and Lowland, or Gaelic/Scots and English have been considered together, they have been understood in Captain Lismahago’s terms, as contradictions to reconcile. This was G. Gregory Smith’s “Caledonian antisyzygy” (1919: 4). The “overmentioned bipolar identity of the Scots” has indeed been “a recurring motto for those who try to justify the political immobilisation of an internally-colonised people” (Rodríguez González 2004: 103). It was so when Edwin Muir adopted T. S. Eliot’s idea of the dissociation of sensibility (Hearn 1983), to argue the impossibility of feeling in one language (Scots) and writing in another (English), so that “the connection between the present and the past has been broken, and the past turns therefore into legend” (Muir 1982: 100). The uncanny fact remains, however, that the cultural crisis for Scotland started, not after 1707, but over a century later, around the date
of Scott’s death: not after the Union of Parliaments, but after the Enlightenment, though it could begin to be noticed around 1746.²

The romantic mythology that stands for Scotland today was an inadvertent result of its enlightenment and it was due, above all, to its last illustrious pupil. Waverley (1814), which set Scott on the trail of success as a historical novelist, shared with its dedicatee’s famous novel a concern with the crucial influence of education on a young man facing the modern world: Harley, the hero of Mackenzie’s *Man of Feeling* loses both his parents and is put under a variety of guardians, “His education therefore had been but indifferently attended to” (Mackenzie 2001: 10). Similarly, Edward Waverley’s education is “of a nature somewhat desultory” because his parents fail to supervise it properly (Scott 1897: 13–17). In both novels the result is that the young man is too inexperienced to deal with the social reality of the day. The problem of a prejudicial education and its religious and political effects is a recurrent topic running through key works of the Scottish Enlightenment. Smith (1952: 343) recommended that governments should invest in the education of common people to gain political stability:

The state, however, derives no inconsiderable advantage from their instruction. The more they are instructed the less liable they are to the delusions of enthusiasm and superstition, which, among ignorant nations, frequently occasion the most dreadful disorders.

In Scott’s novel, “the prejudices of education” are, indeed, determinant in the hero’s inconvenient choice of the rebellious Jacobite cause (Scott 1897: 254). It is his untutored romantic taste that turns Waverley away from the London of his businesslike father, and towards his Scottish adventure through the northern branch of his family.

In his fiction, Scott actually inverts the common course of events in a young Scotsman’s education, the “lad o’ pairts” who would be sent to England if his family really had social ambitions, by the end of the eighteenth century.³ By then a journey from England to Scotland, and not just the Highland tour, had begun to be regarded as travelling from the present to the past, and vice versa. English romantics, like Wordsworth, would travel to Scotland in quest of dreamy themes, while Scots like Lord Byron would make the opposite journey, for it was in England that he met literary success. Byron had an English education

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² There was, for instance, a significant expansion of iron works in the Firth of Forth coinciding with the failure of the last Jacobite rising. What Scotland has that England does not have is a contrast between still vital tribalism and ultra-modern technology (Carron iron works produced the most sophisticated small cannon in the world). The sharpness of the dividing line is evident in Scott and it might well be this that gives the edge to Kames, Ferguson, and Smith.

³ Hume’s letter to Home quoted earlier in the present article continues in the following terms: “It is not yet determin’d what Profession he shall be of; but it must always be of great Advantage to speak [an English accent] properly; especially, if it shou’d prove, as we have reason to hope, that his good Parts will open him the Road of Ambition. The only Inconvenience is, that few Scotsmen, that have had an English Education, have ever settled cordially in their own Country, and they have been commonly lost ever after to their Friends. However, as this Consequence is not necessary, the superior Recommendations of an English Education ought not to be neglected” (Greig 1969, 2: 154–55). Therefore “By the end of the eighteenth century … more and more upper-class Scots boys attended the English public schools and many of them went on to one or other of the English universities” (Ferguson 1987: 204).
at Harrow and the University of Cambridge. Though his poems are never explicitly Scottish and he tended to disavow this quality, many scholars since T. S. Eliot have claimed Byron’s Scottishness (see Speir 1977 and Calder 1984). The other classic romantic poets—Coleridge, Shelley, Keats—were English, not Scottish. Arguably, there was no Romanticism as such in Scotland (or so the discourse of English studies has made us believe. See Gifford, Dunnigan, and MacGillivray, eds. 2002: 118). But there was a deeply influential pre-Romanticism rooted on the Enlightenment—that of “Ossian,” Burns, and, as we shall contend, the ballad-singer Anna Gordon—which inspired the whole international romantic scene.

There is a further, gendered dimension to young Waverley’s political choice. He is attracted to the Jacobite cause, above all, because he is an eager romance-reader, and as such he appears somewhat feminised, since romance-reading was regarded primarily as a feminine activity (see Brewer 1997: 193–94). When he joins the Jacobites, he is feeling most romantically attracted to Flora Mac-Ivor, the Highland chieftain’s sister and an articulate spokeswoman of the Stuart cause who, in a notably Ossianic setting, had introduced Waverley to “the poetical language of my country, the seat of the Celtic Muse . . . in the mist of the secret and solitary hill, and her voice in the murmur of the mountain stream.” But Flora is no rustic lass. As she says, “though I can live like a Highlander when needs must, I remember my Paris education, and understand perfectly faire la meilleure chère.” Bonnie Prince Charlie himself cannot fail to notice “two of the handsomest women present” at the Holyrood ball, Rose Bradwardine, whom at the end of novel Waverley will consider as a more sensible choice for a domestic wife, and Flora Mac-Ivor: “The Prince took much notice of both, particularly of Flora, with whom he danced, a preference which she probably owed to her foreign education and command of the French and Italian languages.” (Scott 1897: 139, 263, 272). Neil Rhodes (1997: 31–32) recalls how English Literature would finally arrive at the nineteenth-century English universities, especially Oxford, as “a ‘women’s subject’ . . . because it was thought to lack the masculine discipline and social precision required to study the classics” (which might remind one of the gender distinction still existing today between “humanities” and “science” degrees); more to the point, after mentioning that women were of course not admitted to eighteenth-century Scottish universities, where literature served the purposes of male gentrification, Rhodes also refers to “an underlying principle of feminization at work here. With the arrival of Belles Lettres [long before the admission of women to university degrees] . . . persuasive eloquence in the arena of public life [that is, Rhetoric] is replaced by the more feminine activities of reading and conversation, which are associated in turn with the rise of the novel.” There was a fear that refinement, romance-reading and French influence were weakening English culture (Brewer 1997: 82–84). Flora is intelligent, well-read, and politically active (on feminine agency in Scott, see Irvine 2000). But Scott’s novel relegates her to a literary, romantic dream, like Jacobitism itself. Worse still, she is also a thing of the past.

The next question is whether women like Flora Mac-Ivor actually existed in mid-eighteenth-century Scotland, or she was a figment of Scott’s historical imagination. As a matter of fact, the role of women in the 1745 rebellion is as obscure (save that of Flora MacDonald, who harboured the Prince in 1746 during his “flight in the heather”) as in the Scottish Enlightenment itself. While England can boast enlightened women like Lady Wortley Montagu or Frances Burney, Scotland has hardly done the same: for example,
Alison Cockburn “is enshrined in literary history for her version of ‘The Flowers o’ the Forest’, and this mood piece . . . stands in place of her more clearly social and intellectual writing” (McMillan 1997: 78). There was a concern with women’s education in the European Enlightenment as a whole (Hyland et al., eds. 2003: 233-258). The Scottish authors, however, seem to have little to say about the subject, and there is no Scottish Olympe de Gouges or Mary Wollstonecraft to argue their case. Women were said to need primarily a moral education that would make them suitable wives and mothers, which resulted in a large gender gap in literacy (Anderson 1995: 17). Hume (1964: 332) mentions the need “to impose a due restraint on the female sex” to ensure that men would feel confident about their fatherhood and willing to share responsibility for the education of children. Smollett provides a very complete picture of what was expected in Britain of a respectable girl’s education (see also Irvine 2000):

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\ldots\text{ the girl’s parts are not despicable, and her education has not been neglected; that is to say, she can write and spell, and speak French and play upon the harpsichord; then she dances finely, has a good figure, and is very well inclined; but she’s deficient in spirit, and so susceptible—and so tender forsooth!—truly, she has got a languishing eye, and reads romances (Smollett 1985: 40).}\]

On his part, Boswell (1979: 129–30) reports Johnson’s nervous insistence that though his friend the brewer Henry Thrale had married his social superior “Miss Hesther Lynch Salusbury, of good Welch extraction, a lady of lively talents, improved by education,” Mr. Thrale was nonetheless “master of his wife and family” and “he has ten times her learning.” Only Mackenzie sounds a note of criticism in his Misanthropist’s discourse denouncing the “preposterous” education of “your youth,” including the notion “that a young woman is a creature to be married; and when they are grown somewhat older, they are instructed that it is the purpose of marriage to have the enjoyment of pin-money, and the expectation of a jointure” (Mackenzie 2001: 31). Not surprisingly, Anna Gordon, who provided Scott and later ballad collectors with their most valued pieces, would be universally known by her married name, Mrs. Brown of Falkland.

Anna Gordon can indeed be regarded as having a paradigmatic gender status in late eighteenth-century Scottish culture, along with Burns’ sister Isobel (Crawford 1997). As women, both were confined to the vernacular, oral, non-academic, sentimental and primitivist facet of the Enlightenment. Lacking a celebrated brother, Anna would have remained in anonymity if her father, Thomas Gordon, had not been a professor of philosophy at Aberdeen. After Scott approached her directly to hear recitations of her ballads and copy them down for publication, “she was ‘vexed’ with Scott when he used her name in print,” as she was concerned for her “propriety, gentility and station” as the lady of the manse (Harker 1985: 59). All of this goes to reflect how difficult it was even for a well-connected Scottish woman to have any intellectual recognition and influence. After all, Mrs. Brown would only appear as an informant of the author, Scott, the editor and collector of “traditional” (therefore supposedly anonymous or collective) songs. The task of studying folksong from a gender perspective, which is a previous step to understanding women’s contribution to the vernacular Enlightenment, and well beyond the scope of the present article, has only recently begun to be undertaken (Brown 1997). It will suffice for the present purpose to underline that analogy also embodied in Flora Mac-Ivor between
women’s song culture and Scotland’s romantic past. Having been gradually discovered in the eighteenth century, both became sources of inspiration for the Romantic Age. Both would be dismissed from academia as sentimental and useless popular entertainment.

Scotland’s savage past lurked behind the civilised façade maintained by Hume and the literati, at least since the Jacobite revolt of 1715. Even Voltaire said that it was to Scotland that his contemporaries looked for their idea of civilisation, so “it came as a shock when so much of Scotland lashed out violently against these [social and cultural] changes in 1745” (Herman 2003: 116); but the position of university scholars was on the side of progress and of the Whigs, so young men and students in Edinburgh reacted forming a voluntary militia of resistance, which was fortunately dissolved before Prince Charles’s Highland army took the city (Herman 2003: 135–37). By the end of the century, when the Jacobites inspired more longing than fear, they were glorified in sentimental nationalistic songs (Donaldson 1988). Jacobitism eventually became the chief symbol of Scottish identity (Pittock 1991). As it is implied by the Ossianic setting where Waverley meets Flora, the Jacobite mythology became related to Macpherson’s Ossian (but see Kersey 2004). An enlightened professor like Blair and a magistrate like Lord Kames defended the genuineness of what Macpherson brazenly claimed to be “extremely literal” translations (Macpherson 1996: 6). Their defence was based on what Daiches (1964: 80–82) described as “circular arguments”: “No modern writer could have imagined primitive society to be as Ossian depicts it; therefore it must have really been like that”; yet such analysis was based on enlightened anthropological and psychological criteria which, blended with current rhetorical criticism, underlined the feeling that the text produced on the reader (Daiches 1964: 81–82). Thus, a current scientific approach enabled them to impose their sentimental, “Scotch” criterion on enlightened rationalism. The will to believe in Ossian was no doubt related to the kind of ambivalent patriotism that produced the Scottish Enlightenment: the impulse to “beat the English at their own game,” which indeed offers “as neat an example of reverse cultural imperialism as one can find” (Herman 2003: 115–16). With Ossian the Scots were providing the Highlands and Great Britain with a Homer, and giving northern Europe an archetype of classical poet which the emerging romantic nationalism desired. Yet in so doing they allowed their sentimental side to triumph and separate them from the Enlightenment.

The Athens of the North, a model of modern philosophers, was within a few years, and particularly through Scott’s merits, giving way to picturesque and legendary Scotland. The Europeans no longer turned to Scotland to find a model of scientific progress and civilisation, as Voltaire and even Rousseau had done. They began to visit it as tourists searching for ghosts. Travelling to romantic Scotland became a form of emotional education, an alternative to the enlightened Grand Tour around Europe. Indigenous Scottish culture, seen from abroad, tended to coincide with the kind of writing that belonged most characteristically to the feminine sphere (the folk-song, the personal memoir, travel writing), as opposed to more markedly “virile” philosophy. Romantic tourism in Scotland dated back to the post-Union context and Defoe’s Tour Thro’ the Whole Island of Great Britain (1727) (Glendening, 1997: 25). But it was a century later that it became the dominant mode in approaching Scottish culture. Indeed, “The consequences of that circumstance remain a problematical part of Scotland’s situation today” (Hook 1987: 321).
4. It is well known that his history novels were written in haste to fulfil his social aspirations as the laird of Abbotsford and then to try and solve his financial problems. Significantly, “the only time that Scott used his pen to intervene in a current political controversy,” in the Malachi Letters, was motivated by an economic problem, the right of the Scottish banks to issue their own notes, and he developed “an argument which leads logically to the case for Home Rule” (Scott 1981: 78–79). Scott’s view of history was complex and well-informed enough to inspire subsequent historians and, though he also motivated much of the picturesque view of Scotland, “[i]t was not indeed Scott’s fault that his later followers were much less competent historians than he” (Smout 1969: 469).
Hume’s phrase (Broadie 2001; Pittock 2003), had ceased to be a model of education, while Scottish educators and scientists spread across the English-speaking world (Herman 2003: 329–92). Scottish culture soon began to be explained by contradictions without reconciliation (see, for example, Hart 1978: 1).

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