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Stadialism and Improvement in Eighteenth-Century Scottish Literature: a Newtonian reading of Adam Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments* and its influence on Henry Mackenzie's *The Man of Feeling* and James Macpherson's *Fragments of Ancient Poetry*

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We grasp the world by ear, by heart, by head,

And keep it in a soft continuingness

That we first learned to get by soul, or something.

John Hollander, 'By Heart'

Contents

Abbreviations

FFL	Adam Smith, *Considerations Concerning the First Formation of Languages, and the Different Genius of Original and Compounded Languages* (1761), in *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* (1762/3), ed. J.C. Bryce (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), pp. 201–26
ELH	*English Literary History*, The Johns Hopkins University Press
HA	Adam Smith, 'The Principles which Lead and Direct Philosophical Enquiries; Illustrated by the History of Astronomy' (1795), in *Essays on Philosophical Subjects with Dugald Stewart's Account of Adam Smith* (1795), ed. I.S. Ross (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), pp. 31–105
Journey	Samuel Johnson, *A Journey to the Western Isles of Scotland* (1775), in Samuel Johnson and James Boswell, *Journey to the Hebrides*, ed. Ian McGowan (Edinburgh: Canongate Classics, 1996)
Letters	Henry Mackenzie, *Letters to Elizabeth Rose of Kilravock: On Literature, Events and People*, ed. H.W. Drescher (Munster: Verlag Aschendorf, 1967)
Letters 1766–1827	Henry Mackenzie, *Literature and Literati: The Literary Correspondence and Notebooks of Henry Mackenzie*, vol. I: *Letters 1766–1827*, ed. H.W. Dresher (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag Peter Lang, 1989)
LRBL	Adam Smith, *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* (1762/3), ed. J.C. Bryce (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983).
MF	Henry Mackenzie, *The Man of Feeling* (1771), ed. Brian Vickers (London: Oxford University Press, 1967)
TMS	Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759, 6th edn 1790), ed. D.D. Raphael and A.L. Macfie (Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Fund, 1984). References are given by part, section, chapter and paragraph nos

Introduction

The aim of this thesis is to show that eighteenth-century Scottish sentimental literature is founded in contemporary Scottish philosophical theory; that is, that during the eighteenth century, Scottish sentimental literature assimilated in various ways the empiricism central to Scottish Enlightenment thought. Sentimental literature was intended to improve the reader, morally, and the key to the connection between Scottish literature and philosophy of the period lies in the way the concept of moral and societal 'improvement' was understood during the latter half of the century. Three texts have been used to explore the influences on Scottish sentimental fiction: Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759), which puts forward a theory of the development of moral concepts; Henry Mackenzie, *The Man of Feeling* (1771), an extremely successful novel, now considered paradigmatic of sentimental fiction of the period; and James Macpherson, *Fragments of Ancient Poetry* (1760), allegedly authentic third-century bardic poetry, collected, transcribed and translated into English by Macpherson, which became extremely popular as sentimental literature, while also raising a storm of academic controversy over its authenticity as the product of a primitive and hence unimproved society.[1] The claim is that the concept of moral and social improvement which is at play in Mackenzie's novel and which is also central to the debate over the authenticity of the *Fragments,* is that which is developed in Smith's *Moral Sentiments.*

The idea that Mackenzie's *The Man of Feeling* draws on Smith's moral theory is not new. For example, Gerard Barker finds in Mackenzie's work generally, evidence of 'a comprehensive theory of individual psychology' which he ascribes to Smith, while E.A. Baker claims more strongly that '*The*

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1 Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759, 6th edn 1790), ed. D. Raphael and A.L. Macfie (Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Fund, 1984); hereafter *TMS*; references are given by part, section, chapter and paragraph nos; Henry Mackenzie, *The Man of Feeling* (1771), ed. Brian Vickers (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), hereafter *MF*; James Macpherson, *Fragments of Ancient Poetry*, repr. in *The Poems of Ossian and Related Works* (1760–73), ed. H. Gaskill (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1996).

Man of Feeling is *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* in action.'[2] However, the account of the connection between the two texts which is developed here is distinctive in that it depends on a strongly revisionist interpretation of the structure and content of Smith's *Moral Sentiments*. Frequently, present-day commentators are eluded by Smith's intention in the *Moral Sentiments*, and regard it as a normative ethics driven by obscure moralising. By contrast, the claim here is that the *Moral Sentiments* is a rigorously empiricist, strongly Newtonian, hypothetico-deductive theory of the origin and development of morality and virtue. That is, the claim is that Smith was not prescribing morally correct behaviour – not describing how men ought to behave – but attempting to analyse the moral elements in man's actual behaviour, that is, he was attempting to identify and characterise the fundamental elements of behaviour which was already generally recognised to be moral. This revisionist reading of Smith's *Moral Sentiments* yields a model of man's conceptual development which subsequently can be seen at work in Smith's writing generally. Smith's various inquiries into law, language, rhetoric and belles-lettres, economics and religion, amongst others, each furnish the same kind of explanatory model of development, and consequently, each area of study can be regarded as contributing to an attempt at a comprehensive scientific account of the nature of man and of society.[3]

The model is context-sensitive, but none the less its parameters draw Smith's work together. The model also dissolves '*Das* Adam Smith

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[2] Gerard A. Barker, *Henry Mackenzie* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1975), pp. 28–9; E.A. Baker, *The History of the English Novel*, X vols (London: H.F. and G. Witherby, 1929–39), vol. V, p. 35, quoted in James Buchan, *Crowded with Genius: The Scottish Enlightenment: Edinburgh's Moment of the Mind* (New York: HarperCollins, 2003), p. 303.

[3] As noted by Dugald Stewart, who during the course of a discussion of Smith's dissertation on the origin of language, describes his work generally as showing evidence of an interest in 'a particular sort of inquiry ... entirely of modern origin, and which seems, in a peculiar degree, to have interested Mr Smith's curiosity'. Stewart continues: '[A similar line of inquiry] may be traced in all [Smith's] different works, moral, political, or literary; and on all these subjects he has exemplified it with the happiest success' (Dugald Stewart, 'Account of the Life and Writings of Adam Smith, LL.D.' (1793), repr. in Adam Smith, *Essays on Philosophical Subjects with Dugald Stewart's Account of Adam Smith* (1795), ed. I.S. Ross (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), pp. 269–351, II.44).

problem', an alleged contradiction in Smith's theory of man, which has exercised scholars since the publication of the *Wealth of Nations* was first published in 1776.[4] What has been understood as contradiction between Smith's ascription to man of a natural capacity for sympathy and sociability, which is central to the *Moral Sentiments*, and the innate self-seeking drive instrumental in Smith's analysis of economic forces in the *Wealth of Nations* is shown to be the result of failing to appreciate the context-sensitivity of Smith's model-theoretic explanation of the nature of social interaction.[5] That is, the seeming incompatibility between Smith's accounts of man's nature vanishes under the revisionist reading.

The revisionism is a consequence of taking seriously the importance that Smith and his contemporaries gave to constructing a thoroughgoing empirical and hence verifiable account of the nature of man. It is axiomatic to any empiricist theory that knowledge of conceptual content is founded in experience. We acquire a concept of blue, for example, by experiencing instances of the colour blue. Similarly we acquire the concept colour through experiencing what is coloured. When a theory treats conceptual content as necessarily derived from experience, it introduces an intuitive ordering on the acquisition of concepts. For example, according to empiricist epistemology, we learn to understand the general concept colour by abstraction from the conceptual content associated with individual colour terms. Our understanding of the concept colour is epistemically dependent on our prior understanding of individual colour terms, and, intuitively, this dependency orders concepts from less to more abstract, and from simple to complex.

The idea that concepts are intrinsically ordered is presupposed in most Enlightenment thought. It is particularly important to Scottish eighteenth-

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[4] The phrase '*Das* Adam Smith problem' was used by German economist Joseph Schumpeter (1883–1950) to refer to what he deemed an incompatibility within Smith's writings, and the phrase has subsequently been adopted as the name for this particular incompatibility issue. One of the first to attempt to compare Smith's economic man on the *Wealth of Nations* with the naturally virtuous man in the *Moral Sentiments* was Dugald Stewart, professor of moral philosophy at Edinburgh University from 1785 to 1820, and Smith's first biographer; see Stewart, 'Account', pp. 314, IV, 11–12.

[5] A mistake made by Janet Todd (*Sensibility: An Introduction* (London and New York: Methuen, 1986), pp. 27–8).

century accounts of the nature and moral development of man and society. In these accounts, it underpins the notion of improvement: what is taken to be evidence of use by an individual or by a society of increasingly complex or abstract concepts is regarded as indicative of progress or improvement. In an individual, such progress is towards increased moral and social refinement, or sensibility; and in a society it indicates development from the primitive to the civilised.

Smith's *Moral Sentiments*, in giving an account of the origin and development of morality and virtue, concerns man's capacity for moral improvement – i.e. it concentrates on how and why man can improve – and as such it is a project which entails no moral imperatives. Sentimental fiction, on the other hand, was written with the intention of actually improving the reader, morally. Today, 'sentimental' describes an indulgence in emotion purely for the sake of the resultant pleasurable sensations. During the eighteenth century, the term had a richer connotation, and until late in the century, carried none of the pejorative overtones often implied in current usage.[6] Sentimentalism was a philosophical movement which held that man is instinctively good, and that if he is able to act in accordance with his nature, he will be happy. Love of humanity was deemed the highest of virtues, and human nature was believed perfectible in this regard as well as others, by appeal to feelings rather than reason.

By the second half of the eighteenth century, sentimental literature had achieved cult status. Sentimentally instructive fictional writing aimed to evince from the reader an emotional if not physical response to a display of virtuous distress. The distressed are usually blameless victims, and their miserable predicaments were described with the intention of prompting the reader to admiration, or pity, or sympathetic tears. Scenes depicting virtue beleaguered by fate or by the forces of evil were considered pathetically

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[6] Mitzi Myers discusses Mary Wollstonecraft's reviews of sentimental literature written in the 1790s, showing her to have become bored with 'infallible creatures' who according Wollstonecraft 'love and weep by rule' (Mitzi Myers, 'Sensibility and the "Walk of Reason"', in Syndy McMillen Conger (ed.), *Sensibility in Transformation: Creative Resistance to Sentiment from the Augustans to the Romantics* (London and Toronto: Associated Universities Presses, 1990), pp. 120–44, p. 127).

beautiful and morally powerful, whether virtue emerged triumphant or suffered defeat.

The Man of Feeling has become paradigmatic of late eighteenth-century sentimental literature. Published in April 1771, it was Mackenzie's first novel. Although it was given a tepid reception at the hands of the critics, the first impression sold out within three months.[7] It quickly became a gauge against which a reader might measure her emotional responsiveness, and its capacity for provoking tears was one of the few positive remarks made by an otherwise less than enthusiastic contemporary reviewer: 'the Reader, who weeps not over some of the scenes it describes, has no sensibility of mind'.[8]

The Man of Feeling is a curious novel. A slender volume, it has no obvious plot, little action, and no continuity. The main character, Harley is invariably and, at times, vexatiously unsuccessful, and the reader is denied even a happy ending. According to Mackenzie's fictitious editor, the book is

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[7] '[T]he libraries of Tunbridge Wells, Bath, and Cheltenham were besieged by ladies demanding to be the first to read it' (Henry Grey Graham, *Scottish Men of Letters in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Adam & Charles, 1901), quoted in Barker, *Henry Mackenzie*, p. 50). Mackenzie commented on the unfavourable attitude of reviewers towards *The Man of Feeling* in a letter to his cousin, Elizabeth Rose: 'I am told, for I have not yet seen that Number, that they have treated it very roughly' (17 June 1771, Henry Mackenzie, *Letters to Elizabeth Rose of Kilravock: On Literature, Events and People*, ed. H.W. Drescher (Munster: Verlag Aschendorf, 1967), p. 89). In the same letter Mackenzie remarked on a very different reaction from the general readership: 'The reception which the public Indulgence has given it has exceeded all my expectations: the copies allotted for Edin[r] were all sold out in about a Week's Time, and when a fresh Demand was made on London it was found that the whole Impression had been already exhausted', and on 1 June 1771, James Elphinstone, had written from London that *The Man of Feeling* was receiving a 'unanimous reception' from the public, and that the first edition had almost sold out. However, Elphinstone noted later (15 June 1771) that 'the *Monthly Reviewers*' had treated Harley 'as they do every one of a different cast from their own' (Henry Mackenzie, *Literature and Literati: The Literary Correspondence and notebooks of Henry Mackenzie*, vol. I: *The Letters 1766–1827*, ed. H.W Drescher (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag Peter Lang, 1989), p. 55). Mackenzie read the review on 22 June, referring to it as 'the sentence of the *Monthly Reviewers*' in his reply to Elphinstone, and commenting: 'A judgment, so generally delivered, is not easily controverted; nor should it be my business to contradict it, tho I could' (24 June 1771, *Letters 1766–1827*, p. 55).

[8] Anon., *Monthly Review*, XLIV (1771), quoted in Barker, *Henry Mackenzie* p. 50.

'a bundle of little episodes, put together without art, and of no importance, with something of nature, and little else in them' (*MF*, p. 5) and a first reading is liable to leave one in complete agreement.

However, one conclusion of this thesis is that the editor's description of the book is false. It is argued here that, far from being a medley of episodes, *The Man of Feeling* is a highly structured collection of moral essays; that the essays are ordered according to the complexity of the moral puzzle posed by each essay for Harley, and so also for the reader; and that the concept of ethical complexity which supplies the architecture for the book is that which is developed by Smith in his *Moral Sentiments*.

The Man of Feeling has the form of an edited version of a patchily incomplete manuscript. The most obvious pattern for Mackenzie's use of this form is James Macpherson's *Fragments of Ancient Poetry*, which really is a bundle of little episodes.[9] There are enough tributes to Ossianic poetry in *The Man of Feeling* to leave the informed reader with little doubt that Mackenzie drew on Macpherson's Ossian poems. The Ossian poems appeared originally in three volumes: *Fragments of Ancient Poetry* (1760), *Fingal, an Ancient Epic Poem in Six Books* (1760–1) and *Temora, an Epic Poem in Eight Books* (1763). The poems are presented as English translations of authentic Gaelic poetry dating from the third century AD, gathered in the Highlands by Macpherson. However, Macpherson professed to have done more than just translate the poems; he claimed to have pieced together various sources and restored the poems to their original voice, reversing the corruption by bardic, and so oral, transmission through the generations. The end result was embraced as a national epic and the enthusiasm shown by the intellectual elite in Edinburgh quickly spread first to England, then to Europe and even to North and South America.[10] The

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[9] Contra e.g. Brian Vickers who suggests that Mackenzie's choice of structure was influenced by the disjointed narrative found in Lawrence Sterne, *A Sentimental Journey through France and Italy* (1768) (Vickers, 'Introduction' to Henry Mackenzie, *The Man of Feeling* (1771), ed. Brian Vickers (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), pp. vii–xxiv, pp. xii –xiv).
[10] Fiona Stafford, *The Sublime Savage: James Macpherson and the Poems of Ossian* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1988), p. 83; Uwe Böker, 'The Marketing of Macpherson', in Howard Gaskill (ed.), *Ossian Revisited* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1991), pp. 73–93, p. 74.

poems became very well known during the 1760s and in a letter written to his cousin, Elizabeth Rose, in 1770, Mackenzie shows his familiarity with the Ossianic corpus.[11]

Like *The Man of Feeling*, the Ossian poems became a 'standard of feeling'. For example, in his *London Journal* (1762–3), Boswell records Thomas Sheridan's comment that he and his wife 'had fixed [the poems of Ossian] as the standard of feeling, made it like a thermometer by which they could judge of the warmth of everybody's heart'.[12] The sagas *Fingal* and *Temora* honour Fingal, Ossian's father and the tribe leader. The former saga describes how Fingal and his warriors aided the Irish prince, Cuchullin, in defending his land from the Danes. *Temora* relates the end of Fingal's leadership and the tribe's involvement in what was effectively civil war in Ireland.

As with Mackenzie's *The Man of Feeling*, what captured the attention of contemporary readers was the poems' sentimental content, which is most obvious in the *Fragments*. The *Fragments* is a collection of short, emotionally intense accounts of romantic love thwarted by death. Readers were fascinated by the natural refinement of Ossianic heroes and by the 'joy of grief' that came from contemplating an irretrievably lost past. The strange imagery and the poetic prose reminiscent, stylistically, of the Bible, led eighteenth-century readers to believe they had been made privy to the thoughts and emotions of a preliterate, primitive society. Sheridan's reaction is representative: 'These poems give us great light into the history of mankind. We could not imagine that such sentiments of delicacy as well as generosity could have existed in the breasts of rude, uncultivated people.'[13]

The Ossian poems moved readers to tears with the plight of pure, unselfish, romantic love worsted by fate. However, the appeal of the poems lay in more than their ability to induce the pleasures of vicarious sorrow. As

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[11] In this letter Mackenzie mentions seeing the manuscript of a verse transcription of Macpherson's *Fingal* (1762) by John Wodrow (published 1771). Mackenzie dismisses Wodrow's version as he considers 'Rime' to disfigure 'the wild Sublimity of Ossian' conveyed so successfully by Macpherson (12 May 1770, Mackenzie, *Letters*, pp. 45–6).

[12] James Boswell, *Boswell's London Journal 1762–1763*, ed. Frederick A. Pottle (London: Reprint Society, 1951), 8 February 1763, p. 182.

[13] Ibid.

Sheridan's remark indicates, eighteenth-century readers were intrigued by the unexpected tenor of feelings demonstrated by Ossian both through his choice of events to chronicle and by the consideration with which he treated his subjects. Members of primitive societies were not thought capable of harbouring, much less celebrating, the kind of selfless, generous sentiments lauded by Ossian.

Although the pedigree claimed by Macpherson for the poems became the focus of heated controversy, their sentimental nature was taken by the general reading public as evidence of Ossian's genius. Ossian was deemed a remarkable exception to the rule which predicted that primitive cultures would not exhibit generosity of spirit. Literary arguments for the authenticity of the Ossian poems aimed to demonstrate that they conformed to the norm in most other importantly relevant ways; for example, in linguistic style and through the concreteness of descriptive detail, both of which were characteristics associated with barbaric societies. The surprise, it was claimed, came solely in the portrayal of social interaction between tribe members, which revealed a level of concern for others at odds with the volume of evidence for the primitivity of the tribe.

One of the more puzzling aspects of eighteenth-century responses to Macpherson's Ossianic corpus is the reasoning behind Ossian's status as a meritorious cultural anomaly. This is rarely addressed in current secondary literature, where the reception of the Ossian poems tends to be explained by general reference to the popularity of sentimentality. However, the reasons why Ossian was accorded an anomalous status merit investigation, not least because they show the degree to which Enlightenment theory had permeated popular thought.

The selfless and generous content of the poems both startled and charmed Macpherson's readership because the development of the related emotions was considered dependent on a more civilised social environment than that depicted in the Ossianic corpus. The basis for this idea lies in eighteenth-century empiricism, and Smith's *Moral Sentiments* explains why. It transpires that one consequence of Scottish Enlightenment thought was that individual moral refinement and societal improvement could not be considered intrinsically independent of each other. Their connection was

important to the eighteenth-century Scottish moralists – as was the converse: that individual and societal degeneration were similarly inextricably linked. These connections motivated much debate and social commentary by the Scottish literati.

One of the more overt indications of Macpherson's influence on Mackenzie's *The Man of Feeling* is the inclusion by Mackenzie of an encounter between a primitive warrior and a contemporary soldier. The warrior is Ossianic. The encounter occurs in a section decrying British colonial practice – a section particularly replete with pitiful scenes. Current commentaries on the text tend to fail to give an adequate explanation of the purpose of this section of the novel, suggesting either that Mackenzie was pandering to the demand for sentimentality, or that he was overindulging his love of pathos. By contrast, the claim here is that the context in which the incident occurs suggests that Mackenzie was not merely alluding to Smith's *Moral Sentiments* but applying Smith's account of the connection between individual and societal moral values to Scottish eighteenth-century economic policy at both domestic and imperial levels, to spell out the disastrous consequences for Scottish society of policies which he and others regarded as motivated by nothing more than greed and similar base objectives.

It has become evident that the proposed revisionist reading of Smith's *Moral Sentiments* imparts a unity of purpose to Smith's writings as a whole, one which is consonant with the preoccupations of Scottish Enlightenment thought generally. This sheds light on why 'the mob of the literati' became 'very loud in its praises' for the *Theory of Moral Sentiments* soon after its publication; and why Smith was regarded by his peers as 'the First of our Writers'.[14] Reconsidering the work of Macpherson and Mackenzie from within the framework of Smith's theory suggests new approaches for research into the work of these three significant Scottish writers of the mid- to late eighteenth century.

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[14] David Hume, Letter to Adam Smith, 12 April 1759, repr. in Dugald Stewart *Account,* pp. 296–9, p. 298; Henry Mackenzie, Letter to William Carmichael [1784], in *Letters 1766–1827,* p. 124.

1 Stadial history and moral improvement

Reference has been made to Smith's use of a model of concept-development in the *Moral Sentiments* which is also found generally in his writings. The model evolves out of his empiricism, which, as indicated above, imposes an intuitive ordering relation on concepts, arraying them from simple to complex and from concrete to abstract. The idea pervades Scottish Enlightenment thought but is most accessible through Enlightenment writing on history. In this context, the model is referred to as stadial or conjectural history. Stadialism is at the core of Hugh Blair's influential argument for the authenticity of the Ossian poems, and it is pertinent to the discussion of the structure of both the *Moral Sentiments* and *The Man of Feeling*. Since it is frequently misrepresented in secondary literature it requires articulation.[15]

Enlightenment historians placed great investment in the stadial account of society, according to which, there are four discrete stages in the development of a society: hunter-gatherer, pastoral, agricultural and commercial. The move from one stage to another is progressive: the pastoral stage is an improvement on the hunter-gatherer stage; the agricultural, an improvement on the pastoral, and so on. The four-stage theory of societal progress was described first by Adam Smith in the course of a set of lectures on jurisprudence.[16] Smith was concerned to give an account of property law, the one area that did not appear to yield to a natural-rights theory:

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[15] A good example of confusion about the nature of stadial history is found in Katie Trumpener's discussion of Johnson's use of stadial history in his *A Journey to the Western Isles of Scotland* (1775) (in Samuel Johnson and James Boswell, *Journey to the Hebrides*, ed. Ian McGowan (Edinburgh: Canongate Classics, 1996)). Trumpener understands stadialism to be determinist, and mistakes the context in which Adam Smith introduced the stadial model of social development – his use of it to explicate the evolution of property law – as an explanation of workings of the model itself, and consequently incorrectly glosses all contexts in which the literati subsequently used the model as based in considerations of property and wealth; see *Bardic Nationalism: The Romantic Novel and the British Empire* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), pp. 72–82.

[16] The lectures were delivered in 1762/3, but the doctrine possibly occurred in lectures he gave in Edinburgh as early as 1750 (Christopher Berry, *The Social Theory of the Scottish Enlightenment* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997), p. 93).

The only case where the origin of naturall rights is not altogether plain, is in that of property. It does not at first appear evident that, e.g. any thing which may suit another as well or even better than it does me, should belong to me exclusively of all others barely because I have got it in my power; as for instance, that an apple, which no doubt may be as agreeable and as usefull to an other as it is to me, should be altogether appropriated to me and all others excluded from it merely because I have pulled it of the tree.[17]

Smith's theory is that a society's economic basis determines the kinds of property laws that that society will develop; and that as society progresses, the concept of property becomes increasingly abstract, because its members' *experience* of property alters, and the concomitant relation of possession becomes more abstract. Hunter-gatherers have very few possessions; they can be said to own the creatures they kill and the fruit and plants they gather, but since food is eaten immediately, members of hunter-gatherer societies will not accumulate property. Property and possession are inseparable. What may loosely be referred to as 'property laws', laws prohibiting theft, so protecting the right of a person to his possessions, in hunter-gatherer societies, according to Smith, concern only murder.

The second stage, the pastoral, introduces tangible possessions in the form of herds and flocks. The notion of property at this stage will therefore be markedly different from that of the hunter-gatherer stage. Property includes objects which a person may accrue – it acquires temporal sustainability. 'Property' can also become extended to include symbolic marks of possession – flocks marked in a specific manner will be regarded as the property of their master simply by virtue of being recognisably distinguished as his. Since property and here-and-now possession are no longer equivalent

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[17] Adam Smith, *Lectures on Jurisprudence*, in Alexander Broadie (ed.), *The Scottish Enlightenment: An Anthology* (Edinburgh: Canongate Classics, 1997), p. 478. Smith is here disputing John Locke's theory of property, according to which a man owns what he has laboured for, because he has laboured for it. Locke's theory of property starts from the premise that a man's own body is his own property, which, he argues, entails that 'the labour of his body and the work of his hands we may say are properly his. Whatsoever then he removes out the state that nature hath provided and left it in, he hath mixed his own labour with and joined to it something that is his own, and thereby makes it his property' (Locke, *Two Treatises on Civil Government*, Second Treatise, sect. 27).

– a shepherd's flock remains identifiable his property even when the sheep are allowed to roam freely – property becomes a more abstract concept.

The third and fourth stages introduce more changes in the notion of property. The second stage is considered nomadic. The third stage is not. At the third, agricultural stage, property laws become more complex by virtue of the different kinds of objects which can become property – in particular, land and houses. Property and possession also become clearly distinguishable. One may own a house or land without occupying either, for example, and laws protecting property, in accommodating this kind of non-physical relation with one's property, will be accordingly more complex – and more abstract – than the property laws of societies in the previous stage. The fourth stage, the commercial stage, sees the introduction of movable property. There is commerce in land for example; bartering gives way to fiscal exchange and eventually credit.[18] The conclusions Smith reaches in his *Lectures on Jurisprudence* are given in précis form in the *Moral Sentiments*:

> The most sacred laws of justice ... those whose violation seems to call loudest for vengeance and punishment, are the laws which guard the life and person of our neighbour; the next are those which guard his property and possessions; and last of all come those which guard what are called his personal rights, or what is due to him from the promises of others. (II.ii.2.3)

The important features of Smith's stadialism are that the four-stage theory of societal progress is an heuristic; and that a change in a society's property laws is dependent on a change in its members' concept of property. A society is said to progress in this regard as its concept of property becomes increasingly abstract. Justice in a society is ensured by a set of laws which prohibit those actions which the society regards as punishable. Given Smith's empiricism, it follows that a society's property laws can only become increasingly more abstract when its members recognise that a person's property rights range over correspondingly increasingly more abstract possessions. In other words, Smith's four-stage theory encapsulates the empiricist credo that concept-formation is dependent on experience. If a hunter-gatherer has no experience of possession, then he will have no

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[18] Smith, *Lectures on Jurisprudence*, p. 479.

concept of possession, and consequently no recognition of his right to possession being violated.

Smith, like other Enlightenment thinkers, believed there to be universal truths about human nature; truths to which people's behaviour conformed. The stadial theory was thought to be based on such universal truths, but Smith was clear that stadialism was descriptive only – that fundamental truths about human nature generated the stadial model which he was then able to use as part of his explanation of the development of property law. In other words, fundamental to Smith's approach to social explanation is the belief that social phenomena should be treated as evidence of the behavioural trends of a society's members, and not as determinants of that behaviour. Any set of people under the circumstances of one or other stage of societal development will naturally develop the same law-like patterns of behaviour resulting in, for example, the same kinds of property laws, as any other set of people at the same stage of societal development.

Enlightenment thinkers believed that observation of different kinds of societies and the study of contemporary descriptions of past civilisations would reveal law-like patterns in human behaviour which would be descriptive (and not prescriptive) of human nature in general. To make these inductions, they had to assume that all men are equal: that under the same environmental, social and psychological conditions, any person would behave in the same way as any other. But given the scope of the variable parameters in these explanations – the variety of kinds, and of combinations of kinds, of environmental and social conditions in which man might find himself – it made sense to observe as many different kinds of social groupings as possible.[19] Only in this way could they be sure of identifying

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[19] Boswell explains that these kinds of considerations fuelled his and Johnson's tour of the Highlands and Islands: 'Dr. Johnson had for many years given me hopes that we should go together, and visit the Hebrides. Martin's Account of those islands had impressed us with a notion that we might there contemplate a system of life almost totally different from what we had been accustomed to see' (James Boswell, *The Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides* (1785), in Samuel Johnson and James Boswell, *Journey to the Hebrides*, ed. Ian McGowan (Edinburgh: Canongate Classics, 1996), p. 163). As Boswell explains, the lure of the Hebrides – of their promised stark unfamiliarity –

the true regularities in man's behaviour, that is, of being able to differentiate between actual law-like patterns of behaviour and coincidental or contingent or accidental convergence of kinds of behaviour. For the eighteenth-century theorist, the truly idiosyncratic had no place in the overarching explanatory endeavour.[20]

Nothing in this account says anything about the movement from one stage of society to another, and there are several reasons why the literati will have shunned any kind of determinism in their accounts of the progress of society – of its historiography.[21]

First, they believed that all men are created equal – in the sense that there is no inherent difference between members of different societies. This thought is expressed by Hume:

Mankind are so much the same, in all times and places, that history informs us of nothing new or strange in this particular. Its chief use is only to

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was their primitive state: their 'simplicity and wildness', their 'circumstances of remote time or place' (ibid.).

In addition, Johnson records his disappointment at finding the Island communities recognisably altered by, and homogenous with, English mores (disappointed, in fact, that the governmental measures to bring the Highlands into line with the rest of the country had taken effect, in the Islands at least): 'We came thither too late to see what we had expected, a people of peculiar appearance, and a system of antiquated life. ... Such is the effect of the late regulations, that a longer journey than to the Highlands must be taken by him whose curiosity pants for the savage virtues and barbarous grandeur' (*Journey*, p. 50).

Arguably, Johnson's organisation of material in the *Journey* is influenced by a stadialist perception of societal development.

[20] Katie Trumpener gives a different account of the difference between cultural historians and Enlightenment historians: the former 'place their emphasis very differently, insisting on a notion of cultural tradition left out of the natural and national histories of the mainstream Enlightenment' (*Bardic Nationalism*, p. 29).

[21] This is frequently misunderstood. For example, although Katie Trumpener correctly characterises the Enlightenment model of history as 'evolutionary, emphasizing the inevitability with which each developmental stage, each historical culture is replaced by the next, more advanced one' (*Bardic Nationalism*, p. 29), she understands Enlightenment accounts to depend on an impersonal and endlessly recurring historical process to explain societal change. But the impersonal changes in Enlightenment accounts are just those which they *cannot* accommodate by natural laws, because these are unpredictable, and so certainly would not represent them as 'endlessly recurring'.

discover the constant and universal principles of human nature, by showing them in all varieties of circumstances and situations, and furnishing us with materials from which we may form our observations and become acquainted with the regular springs of human action and behaviour;[22]

by Adam Ferguson:

Nature, therefore, we shall presume, having given to every animal its mode of existence, its dispositions and manner of life, has dealt equally with those of the human race; and the natural historian who would collect the properties of this species, may fill up every article now, as well as he could have done in any former age. Yet one property by which man is distinguished, has been sometimes overlooked in the account of his nature. Or has only served to mislead our attention. ... [I]n the human kind, the species has a progress as well as the individual; they build in every subsequent age on foundations formerly laid; and, in a succession of years, tend to a perfection in the application of their faculties, to which the aid of long experience is required, and to which many generations must have combined their endeavours;[23]

and by William Robertson:

Our human mind, whenever it is placed in the same situation will, in ages the most distant, and in countries the most remote, assume the same form, and be distinguished by the same manners.[24]

It also underpins Millar's justification for history and anthropology:

To investigate the causes of different usages [of law] has been likewise esteemed an useful as well as entertaining speculation. When we contemplate the amazing diversity to be found in the laws of different countries, and even of the same country at different periods, our curiosity is naturally excited to enquire in what manner mankind have been led to embrace such different rules of conduct; and at the same time it is evident, that, unless we are acquainted with the circumstances which have recommended any set of regulations, we cannot form a just notion of their utility, or even determine, in any case, how far they are practicable.[25]

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[22] Hume, *Enquiry Concerning Human Nature* (1748), quoted in Alexander Broadie, The *Scottish Enlightenment: The Historical Age of the Historical Nation* (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2001), p. 63.

[23] Adam Ferguson, *An Essay on the History of Civil Society* (1767), part I sect. 1, quoted in Broadie, *Anthology*, p. 502. Ferguson here states only that generation of experience serves to perfect the use of faculties; it does not endow them. Man's capacity for certain behaviour is brought out by certain societal conditions, not created by them.

[24] William Robertson, quoted in Broadie, *The Historical Age of the Historical Nation*, p. 69.

[25] John Millar, *The Origin of the Distinction of Ranks* (1771/1779), in Broadie, *Anthology*, p. 490.

Second, the literati were well aware that the collapse of the Roman Empire, which precipitated the cultural impoverishment of western Europe, demonstrated that movement from one stage to another is not always forwards, so not always lineal. Furthermore, a community may move from one stage to another through all manner of accidental and so unpredictable causes – as is acknowledged by both John Millar and Dugald Stewart:

> Various accidental causes, indeed, have contributed to accelerate or to retard this advancement [in human society] in different countries. It has even happened that nations, being placed at a particular period, have been so habituated to the peculiar manners of that age as to retain a strong tincture of those peculiarities, through every subsequent revolution.

> ... when different theoretical histories are proposed by different writers, of the progress of the human mind in any one line of exertion, these theories are not always to be understood as standing in opposition to each other. If the progress delineated in all of them be plausible, it is possible at least, that they may all have been realized; for human affairs never exhibit, in any two instances, a perfect uniformity. But whether they have been realized or no, is often a question of little consequence. In most cases, it is of more importance to ascertain the progress that is the most simple, than the progress that is the most agreeable to fact; for, paradoxical as the proposition may appear, it is certainly true, that the real progress is not always the most natural. It may have been determined by particular accidents, which are not likely again to occur, and which cannot be considered as forming any part of that general provision which nature has made for the improvement of the race, to again occur.[26]

And Hume aside, the literati had to accommodate God, or Providence in their accounts, Adam Smith's 'invisible hand' perhaps being the most well known of such accommodations.

Finally, and most significantly, according to Enlightenment thought, man's behaviour could not at bottom be regarded as fully explicable, because he is essentially a moral agent, which implies he has free will, and hence has both the capacity for decision-making, and the capacity for irrationality, which is by definition, behaviour which is unpredictable. According to Adam Smith, the non-rational components of man's make-up – the senses, passions and appetites – were superintended by the moral faculties:

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[26] Millar, ibid. p. 492; Dugald Stewart, 'Account of the Life and Writings of Adam Smith LLD' (1793), in Broadie, *Anthology*, pp. 673–4.

Upon whatever we suppose that our moral faculties are founded, whether upon a certain modification of reason, upon an original instinct, called a moral sense, or upon some other principle of our nature, it cannot be doubted that they were given us for the direction of our conduct in this life. ... they were set up within us to be the supreme arbiters of all our actions, to superintend our senses, passions, and appetites, and to judge how far each of them was either to be indulged or restrained. ... what is agreeable to our moral faculties, is fit, right, and proper to be done; the contrary, wrong, unfit, and improper.

and although man acts rationally only when he acts in accordance with the dictates of the moral faculties, this far from implies that he has no option but to do so:

> ... The happiness of mankind, as of all other rational creatures, seems to have been the original purpose intended by the Author of nature ... by acting according to the dictates of our moral faculties, we necessarily pursue the most effectual means for promoting the happiness of mankind ... By acting otherways, on the contrary, we seem to obstruct, in some measure the scheme which the Author of our nature has established for the happiness and perfection of the world ... (*TMS*, III, 5.5–5.7)

However, man's nature was not considered in principle fully explicable. From a philosophical and methodological perspective (one which limited human inquiry even for a non-believer such a Hume) this followed from the belief that man's nature inherently comprised irrational elements – elements that by definition could not yield up law-like descriptions of behaviour. From a theological perspective, this was in keeping with the idea that the discerned patterns were part of God's universal architecture, and therefore man's understanding would necessarily be incomplete.

In 1729, Father Thomas Innes (1662–1744) published his *Critical Essay* in which he undermined the evidentiary foundations of the Fergusian argument by exposing the forged regnal line on which Boece had based his early account of Scottish kings. Innes then argued that the monarchy was founded in a Pictish hereditary crown. Innes undermined the evidentiary foundations of the traditional Dalriadic argument, which, until he cast doubt on the veracity of the Fergussian regnal line, was cited in evidence of the ancient pedigree of the Scottish constitution and, as such, used against claims

to English suzerainty.[27] Enlightenment historians took Innes's *Critical Essay* (1729) as some kind of watershed.

After Innes, a historical account of Scotland no longer had to work round the Dalriadic myth. Instead of iterating a list of kings, historians were able to work from the patterns they saw emerging in the histories of other societies and civilisations. More liberating still, they were no longer constrained by theological considerations: by Mosaic history, and Calvinist predestination. History after Innes, could be built up using environmental and psychological considerations rather than the mythological and supernatural, and so became explicable to a much greater degree than was possible before. [28]

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[27] See Colin Kidd, *British Identities before Nationalism: Ethnicity and Nationhood in the Atlantic World 1600–1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 123ff.

[28] There is evidence of this in Johnson's *Journey* for example. Davis notes that Johnson conceived of the idea of writing a book about his journey when he became first aware of the fundamental unfamiliarity of the country he was travelling in (Leith Davis, *Acts of Union: Scotland and the Literary Negotiation of the British Nation, 1707–1830* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998), pp. 95–6). At the time in question, Johnson and Boswell had been travelling on horseback through the Great Glen with the aid of Gaelic-speaking guides, for almost three days. On the first day out from Inverness, despite seeing a Highland hut, Johnson could compare the road they travelled as comparable with (but significantly less muddy than) an English lane. After three days he is battling with his reactions to the vast, forbidding and awesome mountains of the Great Glen (reactions familiar to anyone who has been hillwalking in the area, so travelling only slightly more slowly than Boswell and Johnson would have done). It is at this juncture that he decides to write a book about his tour: 'I sat down on a bank, such as a writer of Romance might have delighted to feign. I had indeed no trees to whisper over my head, but a clear rivulet streamed at my feet. The day was calm, the air soft, and all was rudeness, silence, and solitude. Before me and on either side, were high hills, which by hindering the eye from ranging, forced the mind to find entertainment for itself. Whether I spent the hour well I know not; for here I first conceived the thought of this narration' (*Journey*, p. 34). He was hemmed in by mountains that had stirred mixed reactions by their unremitting yet barren presence: 'An eye accustomed to flowery pastures and waving harvests is astonished and repelled by this wide extent of hopeless sterility. The appearance is ... that of matter ... left in its elemental state, or quickened only with one sullen power of useless vegetation' (*Journey*, p. 33). With characteristic pomposity, Johnson lets the reader know he has never experienced anything like it, and couldn't have hoped to have formulated an idea remotely resembling that experience from description or by analogy. He concludes: 'Regions mountainous and wild, thinly inhabited, and little cultivated, make a great part of the earth, and he

Enlightenment historians saw their role as providing explanations, and furthermore, could justify these explanations in regard to their morally practical use in the pursuit of virtue, as Adam Smith explains:

The design of historicall writing is not merely to entertain; (this perhaps is the intention of an epic poem) besides that it has in view the instruction of the reader. It sets before us the more interesting and more important events of human life, points out the causes by which those events were brought about and by this means points out to us by what manner and method we may produce similar good effects or avoid Similar bad ones.[29]

Most Enlightenment thinkers (an exception in this case being Hume as a non-believer) perceived a third consequence of Innes' work. Innes established that the Dalriadic myth was false. The fact that Enlightenment historians had found a form of enquiry which promised to yield truth, had import. Hume attempted to explain the difference that truth might make to a tale, without much success – truth doesn't add anything to the tale itself, but in some way serves to fix our attention:

If the importance of truth be requisite to compleat the pleasure [of study], 'tis not on account of any considerable addition, which of itself brings to our enjoyment, but only because 'tis, in some measure, requisite to fix our attention.[30]

Others were in a better position to explain the difference the pursuit of truth made to their inquiries. The revelation of patterns in man's behaviour was a source of pleasure, because these patterns revealed something of God's

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that has never seen them, must live unacquainted with much of the face of nature, and with one of the great scenes of such human existence' (*Journey*, p. 34).

Johnson continues recounting his reactions. They comprise trying to imagine what life in that kind of environment must be like – and in so doing, is made very aware of how fragile existence under these conditions will be (*Journey*, pp. 34–5). For the archetypal city boy, this experience must have been shattering. For the enlightened historian, it would have been exciting: it was as close to the experience of a hunter-gatherer as could be imagined without adopting that lifestyle, although one feels that Johnson just couldn't keep the desolation at a comfortable distance.

[29] Adam Smith, *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* (1762/3), ed. J.C. Bryce (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983) (hereafter *LRBL*), ii.16–17.

[30] David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1739/40), ed. Ernest Mossner (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969) II, x.

cosmic architecture, that is, they endorsed the Argument from Design.[31] The internal logic of Enlightenment history is motivated by these historians' belief that the patterns they discerned in man's behaviour contributed to an overarching pursuit of truth and virtue.

In addition to there being philosophically and theologically based methodological reasons blocking the option of determinism for Enlightenment historians, there was another set of considerations which both provided an explanation for an inherent incompleteness in their accounts of the nature of man, and motivated the pursuit of such accounts. If man's make-up contains an inherent propensity for non-rational action, then there will always be elements of man's behaviour which will not allow of generalisation. (Theologically, once Calvinist predestination dropped out of the picture, this could be taken to account for the source of free will.) Yet it seemed possible to discern general law-like patterns of human behaviour. So, there had to be an aspect of man that overrode, or kept in check these non-rational propensities. The literati linked this aspect with virtue, and regarded this supererogatory facility to be a moral faculty or ability, or set of moral faculties. Observing, collating and analysing behavioural patterns of communities, societies and civilisations, then, revealed truths about man's capacity for virtue; about the conditions under which virtue flourished and those under which it failed to thrive. And it was this possibility for an account of social conditions for the promotion of virtue, which drove, or at least contributed a motivating element to, the pursuit of historical explanation; of truths of history.[32]

The Scottish Enlightenment thinkers regarded man's moral behaviour to exhibit lawlike regularities in the same way as did other aspects of his

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[31] Frances Hutcheson, for example, argues this in the context of an account of the sense of beauty: *An Enquiry into the Original of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue* (1738), in Broadie, *Anthology*, p. 223

[32] An idea of the eighteenth-century Enlightened view of human nature is given by the headings for each of the three books in Hume's *A Treatise of Human Nature*. Evidently Hume regarded human nature to be described as fully as possible in terms of just three sets of faculties: Understanding, Passions and Morals.

behaviour, and since moral concept-formation was founded in experience, changes in these regularities would be concomitant both with changes in other forms of behaviour and with changes at a societal level. These regular connections are contingent – the outcome of concatenations; and as such they are highly likely but not inevitable, and not primarily prescriptive.

Improvement in eighteenth-century Scotland

Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments* articulates the mechanics of moral development at both individual and societal levels; that is, Smith attempted an explanation of how moral concepts are formed, and the reason why certain kinds of experiences can effect that development. His explanation was stadial but dependent on experience. This meant that improvement, understood as conceptual movement from simple to complex, could be considered to exhibit lawlike regularities. It also meant that if factors affecting or impeding conceptual development at either individual or societal level could be identified and controlled, then moral development could be enhanced or at least preserved.

The interest of the Scottish philosophers and moralists in the nature of moral goodness was much more than academic. As was the case with Enlightenment thought generally, it was a response to a perceived, potentially serious, set of societal problems. The Scots literati believed the moral fabric of Scots society to be under threat from the corrosive effect of increased wealth and luxury. Henry Mackenzie referred to the intellectual and pragmatic elements of Scottish Enlightenment endeavour in this field in an essay in the *Lounger*:

> To the historian and the antiquary it is a matter of curious investigation, to trace the progress of expense and luxury through the different stages of increasing wealth and advancing refinement in a country, and to observe the war which for some time is carried on between the restraining powers of grave and virtuous legislators, and the dissipated inclinations of a rich and luxurious people. ... The first sumptuary law that is passed is the signal of that growing opulence which is soon to overturn it; and the weak barriers of successive restraints and regulations are in vain opposed to a force which the progress of time and of manners daily renders more irresistible.[33]

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[33] *Lounger*, no. 54, 11 February 1786.

Recent developments in London, as well as historical evidence from ancient Rome and early eighteenth-century Paris had shown that luxury lured people into large cities – circles of 'extravagance, of vanity, and of vice' – and induced them to 'waste their means, and to corrupt their principles'. The literati believed that contemporary social and economic developments were making Scotland vulnerable to the same corrosive influences:

In Scotland, at a very early period, attempts were made to control this abuse [luxury and dissipation], as it was thought, by law ... In these days of liberty and enlarged ideas, the restraints of law, or the recommendations of royalty, are not employed to check abuses of that sort which do not violate the great bonds of society or openly disturb the good order and government of the state.[34]

According to Mackenzie it is left to preachers and moralists to police 'private vices and private follies'. The cause of the problem was seen as the comparatively abrupt change in Scotland's economic status and concomitant enormous change in the distribution of wealth. The period 1750–80 was one of great economic change in Scotland. Scotland's economic growth during this 30-year span equalled that of England during the previous two centuries. The reorganisation of the farming system, the development of the fine linen industry in Glasgow, and of ironworks at Carron were all evidence of a change in the economic basis of the country.[35]

Communications within Scotland had improved dramatically: the gentry set up turnpike trusts in the countryside in order to better the roads. These changes within Scotland coincided with a period during which the turnpike network in England grew considerably. In 1741 the furthest north one could travel from London on (almost) continuous turnpike roads was Manchester, and the network was then very thin and sporadic throughout England. But by 1770, the network centring on London had become significantly denser, and had spread throughout England and into Wales, with turnpike roads linking

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[34] Ibid.

[35] Rosalind Mitchison, *A History of Scotland* (London: Methuen, 1970), pp. 344–7.

London with both Berwick and Carlyle.[36] People and ideas could move more swiftly and easily within Scotland and between Scotland and England – more pertinently, between Edinburgh and London.

When the seat of Scottish parliament moved from Edinburgh to London after the Treaty of Union, Scottish MPs had to spend the parliamentary session in London, and increasingly they began to move their bases from Scotland to London, leaving their estates in the hands of stewards. This trend was deplored by the literati not merely because they saw it as detrimental to the landowners' dependants within the agricultural community, but also because they believed it encouraged the spread of London values into Scotland. The nobility and landed gentry of Scotland set standards of conduct within Scotland, and so by adopting those of London, they introduced immoral city values north of the Border.

The period during which communication with London became more efficient coincided with that in which certain sectors of the Scottish population began to gain access to the means to increase personal wealth.[37] Economically, the benefits to trade on which, arguably, Scottish support for the Treaty of Union hinged, persistently failed to materialise for the first decades of the century.[38] There are several reasons for this, not least of which being heavy taxes on imports levied by the government to meet

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[36] Paul Langford, 'The Eighteenth Century (1688–1789)', in Kenneth O. Morgan (ed.), *The Oxford Illustrated History of Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), pp. 352–418, pp. 378–9.

[37] David Daiches, *The Paradox of Scottish Culture: The Eighteenth Century Experience* (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), pp. 6–8.

[38] A remark by the Earl of Roxburgh appears to justify emphasising the importance placed on access to the English market in Union debates: 'The motives [for Union] will be, Trade with most, Hanover with some, ease and security with others, together with a general aversion at civill discords, intollerable poverty, and the general oppression of a bad ministry, from generation to generation, without the least regard to the good of the country' (from a letter from the Earl of Roxburgh, 28th November 1705; quoted in Paul Henderson Scott, *'The Boasted Advantages': The Consequences of the Union of 1707* (Edinburgh: Saltire Society, 1999), pp. 22–3). Article 4 of the Union settlement lifted restrictions on access to English home and imperial markets, and the treaty also ensured protection for certain aspects of the Scottish economy, for example by providing subsidies for the woollen trade. In 1707 the English domestic market was of more importance to the Scots than the imperial.

interest repayments on the national debt incurred to fund war.[39] By 1750, however, Scottish trade had increased enough to outweigh taxation, and continued to do so, despite two subsequent lengthy and expensive wars increasing taxation levels further.[40] Connection with the English led to an influx of wealth and skills, particularly to lowland Scotland. It also opened up free trade areas to Scotland. British colonisation of the West Indies provided a market for coarser linens for clothing for the slave population, and trade with America provided the material for the re-export trade in tobacco and cotton.[41] Trade with both the West Indies and the East Indies democratised wealth − wealth and so power became the provenance of all levels of society, unlike formerly when wealth was tied up in land and so restricted to the landed minority.

In addition to new sources of wealth opening up through trade, there was, in Scotland, the opportunity to improve pre-existing sources of wealth. The population in Scotland increased significantly from 1740, and this had a marked effect on food prices in the 1760s, corn prices rising 160 per cent during the 60-year period from 1740. It gave an incentive to Scottish landowners to improve farming techniques, while improved communication

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[39] This, because war expenditure was financed by public loans, each loan requiring a new tax to enable the government to repay the interest.

[40] By 1745, Glasgow imported 13 million pounds of tobacco per annum, which volume increased to 46 million pounds (21,000 tons) by 1775, constituting between a third and two-fifths of the value of Scotland's imports. Since most imports of tobacco were for re-export, based on a regulatory provision in the Acts of Navigation which prohibited direct trade between Chesapeake and foreign countries, the tobacco trade became victim to the American War of Independence and withered after about 1783 (Bruce P. Lenman, *Integration, Enlightenment, and Industrialisation: Scotland 1746–1832* (London: Edward Arnold, 1981), pp. 23–4, 42–4; Lenman, 'From the Union of 1707 to the Franchise of 1832', in R.A. Houston, and W.W.J. Knox (eds), *The New Penguin History of Scotland: From the Earliest Times to the Present Day* (London: Penguin, 2001), pp. 289–90). It took two generations for Scotland to have a fair share of the East India Company, as the company was exclusive to London. Tobacco became affordable before tea, but by mid-century, tea was found in Edinburgh's charity workhouse (Mitchison, *A History of Scotland*, pp. 325–6; Lenman, 'From the Union of 1707 to the Franchise of 1832', p. 327; see also Murray G.H. Pittock, *Inventing and Resisting Britain: Cultural Identities in Britain and Ireland, 1685–1789* (London: Macmillan, 1997), p. 72).

[41] Mitchison, *A History of Scotland*, p. 343.

with England gave them access to information about advanced farming practices, together with experienced advisors. The landowners' changes in policy to increase the yield of their land required more intensive farming practices from their tenants. Farms were restructured to form larger and more coherent separate units; the old runrig system of fields was dropped; and tenants were under pressure to stop overcropping and overstocking: increased farm size meant that land could be left fallow, a practice which increased the yield of land three to six times.[42] This practice also required more intensive farming from tenants to increase the grain yield of the land.

The literati, and so Mackenzie, were not so backward looking as to condemn the increase in Scotland's national wealth out of hand, but sought a way both to encourage the improvements to city and country which it brought in its wake, and to retain the traditional moral value system. They wished to find a way of reintroducing the values of moral man into a society which was rapidly being taken over by the materialistic ambitions which grew up with an increase in, and democratisation of, personal wealth in the nation.[43] The solution seemed to be to find a way to encourage the nobility and landed gentry to remain in Scotland – to reduce the influence of fashionable court-based London, and increasingly also of Edinburgh – by reinstating the values of a land-based aristocracy.

The Church of Scotland, and the legal system were the two hegemonic domains in which Scotland remained independent after the Union, but the Church itself was in a state of flux, so it was in no position to provide the

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[42] Ibid.

[43] Daiches argues that the issue contributed to concern on the part of the literati that the union with England threatened Scotland's national identity. The retention of cultural characteristics became of paramount importance to the preservation of this identity (Daiches, *The Paradox of Scottish Culture*, passim, but esp. ch. 1). However, to generalise over even just the thirty-year period from 1750 is misleading; for example, Dwyer and Murdoch, argue convincingly that the Scottish literati in general, and, Dundas in particular and most surprisingly, became decidedly less oriented towards England, after the Bute smear campaign; see John Dwyer and Alexander Murdoch, 'Paradigms and Politics: Manners, Morals and the Rise of Henry Dundas, 1770–84', in John Dwyer, Roger A. Mason and Alexander Murdoch (eds), *New Perspectives on the Politics and Culture of Early Modern Scotland* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1982), pp. 210–48.

kind of practical strategies for improving the morality of a nation in the wake of huge economic change. Although within the Church of Scotland, the rational religion of the Moderates jostled with, and eventually superseded, the fundamentalist Calvinism characteristic of the previous century, this failed to have a schismatic effect on the Kirk. However, by 1740, theological debate within the established church had given way to ecclesiastical dispute over the question of patronage, which had been abolished in 1690 on the grounds that it opposed the principles of 'the call', but which Westminster had restored in 1712, not without controversy, to bring the Church of Scotland in line with the practices of the Church of England.[44] In 1733, Ebenezer Erskine was suspended for refusing to withdraw an objection to patronage made to the Synod of Perth and Stirling, as were three ministers who supported him. These men rebuffed attempts by the General Assembly to appease them in 1734 and 1736, by calling themselves a presbytery. They were joined by four more ministers in 1737, and so instigated secession as a permanent feature within the Kirk. By 1760, the original secession had spawned 99 congregations in Scotland and more in Ireland. In effect, the Kirk by Law Established was divided as a result of tension between the medieval concept of the nation as a homogenous community, and a social and political leadership which contained a significant 'non-resident' element not quite adhering to Presbyterian establishment.[45] Schisms within the Church undermined any possibility of it having the kind of universal authority required to instigate the moral readjustment which the literati saw as necessary.

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[44] Patronage was the right belonging mainly to large landowners, town councils, universities and others in positions of wealth and influence to present (select) a parish minister. As such, it flew in the face of the call – a basic tenet of Presbyterianism according to which a congregation as a whole selected and signed an invitation to a minister. The Crown was patron of about a fifth of the parishes: of 944 benefices, 344 were Crown patrons, 309 were nobility, and 233 landed gentry (Callum Brown, 'Religion and Social Change', in T.M. Devine and Rosalind Mitchison (eds), *People and Society in Scotland*, vol. I, *1760–1830* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1988), pp. 143–62; the actual distribution of benefices is given in Lenman, 'From the Union of 1707 to the Franchise of 1832', p. 309).

[45] Lenman, 'From the Union of 1707 to the Franchise of 1832', pp. 306–13; Lenman, *Integration, Enlightenment, and Industrialisation*, pp. 11–12.

Hutcheson, Hume and Smith had argued that man's nature is intrinsically moral. Since the literati were not, in the main, philosophers, they did not explore this idea to ascertain its coherence, but they adopted its equation of the intrinsic moral nature of man with sensibility. The development of sensibility then became the development of a moral capacity, and the intrinsic sociability of sensibility enabled the literati to argue for a practical morality which would achieve the intended end: the reintroduction of traditional morals within a society which would necessarily change as a result of increased wealth.

Appeal to sensibility could ground the claim that it is part of man's nature to act benevolently. A morally refined person has no option but to respond benevolently to genuine distress. But the natural capacity for sympathetic recognition of another's distress has to be developed, and the education of this sense requires a controlled environment. Furthermore, a man's capacity for benevolence is naturally bounded – an attempt to alleviate the distresses of a large community is liable to encourage only 'public acts of virtue', that is benevolence motivated by duty, which lent itself to abuse. The message to the landed society of Scotland became 'execute your natural sensibility in as efficacious a way as possible: restrict your domain enough to ensure that you always act out of genuine compassion' i.e. remain on your estate and tend to the needs of your dependants, the tenantry; pay heed to the moral education of your children by setting a good example, and engendering the requisite environment to ensure the full development of their natural sensibility; and cultivate only those friends who endorse your priorities. And the motivation for this: acting from the dictates of sensibility is pleasurable.

Philosophy had provided both the means for containing the morally destructive effects of increased wealth and the motivation for an individual to pursue the moral life.

2 A peculiarly Scottish sentimentalism

As mentioned above, sentimentalism was an eighteenth-century philosophical movement based on the assumption that man is intrinsically good; that his capacity for virtue is perfectible; and that moral improvement depends on appeal to feelings rather than reason. The influence of

sentimentalism is evident in all literary genres of the period – poetry, novels, drama and essays – but for 30 years from 1740, its evolution is most clearly illustrated in fiction.

A new reading public had grown up during the first half of the century in France, England and Germany. Non-aristocratic, puritan and practical, this readership warmed to literature celebrating virtue in domestic and commercial settings.[46] By 1760, preoccupation with the notions of sentiment and sociability had spread to literary circles in Italy, North America and Scotland, and sentiment had come to stand for all that was laudable in polite society. Earlier in the century, periodicals such as *The Tatler* (1709–11) and Addison's *Spectator* (1711–12, 1714) had carried Richard Steele's sentimentalist essays, and in Scotland, these were reprinted in the *Scots Magazine* together with essays and reviews from the *Gentleman's Magazine*, the *Monthly Review* and other English periodicals.[47] The *Scots Magazine* also carried translations of Jean François Marmontel's *Contes moraux*, sentimental prose tales charmingly depicting French society under Louis XV, which appeared initially in *Mercure* from 1761 to 1786.[48]

During the 1740s and 1750s, sentimental fiction showed people how to behave. Samuel Richardson continually emphasised the morally instructive nature of his novels. He states that *Pamela* (1740–1) had been written in order 'to cultivate the Principles of Virtue and Religion in the Minds of the Youths of Both Sexes', and described *Clarissa* (1747–8) as an '*Example* and *Warning*' about the 'distresses' resulting from a marriage contracted for morally reprehensible reasons, whether or not with the blessings of a parental figure.[49]

Sentimental fiction is rich with cautionary tales demonstrating the perilous existence of unchampioned feminine virtue in scurrilous and

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[46] Buchan , *Crowded with Genius*, pp. 302–3.

[47] H.W. Thompson, *A Scottish Man of Feeling: Some Account of Henry Mackenzie, Esq. of Edinburgh and of the Golden Age of Burns and Scott* (London: Oxford University Press, 1931), p. 102.

[48] J.H. Brumfitt. *Scotland and the French Enlightenment* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1967), p. 322; John Dwyer, *Virtuous Discourse: Sensibility and Community in Late Eighteenth-Century Scotland* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1987), ch. 1.

[49] Emphasis in the original. Quoted in Todd, *Sensibility*, pp. 70–1.

avaricious mixed society, and authors were at pains to ensure the reader benefited from their salutary effects. The earlier sentimental narrative is interrupted by philosophical disquisitions on the nature and practice of benevolence, and major characters illustrate exemplary traits by word, deed and reputation. For example, Henry Fielding prefaced each of the 18 books of *Tom Jones* (1749), with an essay on a theme connected with the chapters that follow. and in *Sir Charles Grandison* (1753–4), Richardson introduces Sir Charles' moral rectitude before the character himself puts in an appearance: Sir Charles' opinion on matters of virtue is delivered with a sententiousness that demands a reader's attention; and onlookers express approval of, and praise for his displays of virtue.[50]

As the genre became established, moralising and authorial direction became subtler. The writing encouraged readers to identify less with the characters than with the feelings engendered by the situations they encountered, and it leaned more and more towards evincing tears. While earlier novels laud benevolence, and the concomitant notion of charitable action, the fiction of the 1760s emphasises feelings and sympathetic reaction. Mackenzie's *The Man of Feeling* was published at the end of a decade of literature celebrating sentimental sympathy including Jean Jacques Rousseau, *La Nouvelle Héloïse* (1761), Henry Brookes, *The Fool of Quality* (1766–70), Oliver Goldsmith, *The Vicar of Wakefield* (1766) and Laurence Sterne, *A Sentimental Journey through France and Italy* (1768).

The 1760s also saw Macpherson's rise to fame. *Fragments of Ancient Poetry* was published in 1760, the epics *Fingal* and *Temora* appeared in 1762 and 1763 respectively, and the controversy over Macpherson's claim that these were translations from Gaelic of authentic bardic literature from the third century AD, ensured the Ossian poems remained in the ascendant for more than a decade. The poems celebrated and conveyed the 'joy of grief' and were valued for what Hugh Blair described as their capacity to make readers 'glow, and tremble, and weep', responses which left them 'warmed with the sentiments of humanity, virtue and honour'.[51] Failure to be moved

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[50] Ibid., pp. 72–3.
[51] Hugh Blair, *A Critical Dissertation on the Poems of Ossian* (1763; revised edn 1765), repr. in James Macpherson, *The Poems of Ossian and Related*

by the poems was taken by devotees as evidence of a deficiency in the reader, as shown by James Boswell's record of the response to the poems by Irish actor and elocution teacher, Thomas Sheridan: 'Mrs Sheridan and he had fixed it [the poems of Ossian] as the standard of feeling, made it like a thermometer by which they could judge the warmth of everybody's heart.'[52] Mackenzie retained a fondness for the Ossianic cult of melancholy. Shortly before his death, he wrote of the pleasures in old age of the 'milder melancholy' of entertaining memories of youth, in the course of which he referred specifically to Ossian's skilful evocation of this kind of gentle sadness: 'I said of a *milder* melancholy, because no man would wish not to feel it. *Ossian* expresses the feeling simply tho' boldly in two Gaelic words, *the joy of grief*, which McPherson has softened down to the construction of a sentiment: "the memory of joys that are past, pleasant and mournful to the soul".'[53]

Literature which prompted tears in its readers was considered morally uplifting. This led to the expectation that readers would weep in response to sentimental fiction, and concomitantly, created an association between a dry-eyed response to sentimental literature and moral shortcoming. The role that tears acquired as a benchmark of moral refinement explains the Sheridans' use of the Ossian poems as a measure of the warm-heartedness of their friends. It also explains why the more emotive scenes in *The Man of Feeling* received critical acclaim, and why readers felt anxiety about their ability to respond – for example, why, when Lady Louisa Stuart first read *The Man of Feeling*, aged 14, she was 'secretly afraid lest she "should not cry enough to gain the credit of proper sensibility"'.[54]

Works (1760–73), ed. H. Gaskill (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1996), pp. 345–99; pp. 396, 397.

[52] Thomas Sheridan, quoted in *Boswell's London Journal 1762–1763*, 8 February 1763, p. 182.

[53] Henry Mackenzie, 'Reminiscence', in *The Anecdotes and Egotisms of Henry Mackenzie, 1745–1831*, ed. H.W. Thompson (London: Oxford University Press, 1927), p. 246; emphasis in the original.

[54] From a letter to Sir Walter Scott, written by Lady Louisa Stuart in 1826, quoted in Vickers, 'Introduction', p. viii.

The Man of Feeling has been described as a fine example of sentimental writing, but with little literary value.[55] Critics holding this opinion regard Mackenzie's characters as indulging in effusions of feeling to no purpose beyond that of satisfying readers avid for pathos, and consider Mackenzie to have confused moral and emotional attitudes with the moral and psychological situations in which they arise.[56]

There are good reasons to challenge this reading of *The Man of Feeling*. As will be argued below, textual evidence strongly suggests that Mackenzie wrote with a didactic purpose, using the account of the development of virtue put forward by Smith in his *Theory of Moral Sentiments*. However, Smith's theory is evident throughout Mackenzie's writing.

Crucial to Smith's *Moral Sentiments* is the idea that virtue is essentially sociable. His empiricist analysis of moral concept-formation leads him to conclude that an individual cannot develop a concept of virtue in isolation – that we are able to make moral judgements about our own behaviour only because we have learnt to do so about the behaviour of others. This constitutes Smith's most important contribution to the eighteenth-century debate over the nature of moral goodness.

Mackenzie wrote two further sentimental novels: *The Man of the World* (1773) and *Julia de Roubigné* (1777), and together with *The Man of Feeling*, these novels articulate Smith's claim that the development of virtue is a social process. *The Man of the World* has a standard narrative format in two volumes. It is a story of the havoc and distress that result even for those educated in virtue when disorientated by exposure to socially influential, but unprincipled 'men of the world'. Harriet and Billy Annesly are brought up in a relatively secluded social milieu by their father Richard. Richard Annesly, a man of feeling with a high regard for virtue, accordingly gives his children a sound moral education. Despite this, both children are defenceless against the evils of the world at large, represented by the socially influential and

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55 See for example, Daiches' treatment of *The Man of Feeling* and of Mackenzie's writing generally in Daiches, *The Paradox of Scottish Culture*, pp. 75–7.
56 Daiches, ibid., p. 77; see also Vickers, 'Introduction', pp. vii–xxvi, esp. pp. xvi–xix.

utterly unprincipled Sir Thomas Sindall, who succeeds in his aim systematically to corrupt them both.

Julia de Roubigné is an epistolary novel set in France. The letters are written primarily by the protagonists: Julia; Montaubon, a French nobleman; and Savillon, a man of feeling and an intimate of Julia. The letters reveal the complex emotional dynamics between the three characters, which are made tenser and more complicated by a great deal of second guessing and mistaken deduction by each concerning the intentions and actions of the others. Julia marries Montaubon, in part because this arrangement will ensure her father happiness and security in his old age, but also because she believes the man she loves, Savillon, to have married while abroad. She learns too late that the rumour of Savillon's marriage is false and with this information her mental state begins unravel. None the less, despite an unexpected appearance by the still ardent Savillon, Julia remains true to her husband. However, Montaubon learns of a connection between Savillon and Julia, becomes intensely jealous, deludes himself that his wish for revenge is a respectable response to an attack on his honour, and poisons Julia.

Despite the emotional pyrotechnics of each novel, Mackenzie is careful to show that the sentimental heroes and heroines remain essentially virtuous throughout their respective ordeals. Julia de Roubigné's behaviour never deviates from that of dutiful daughter and wife. Billy Annesly is corruptible only when he leaves home to study in Oxford, a milieu which is at too great a distance actually and socially for his father's sedulous virtue to remain actively influential. Harriet Annesly falls victim to Sindall less through moral weakness than through gullibility. Sindall's initial attempts to seduce her fail to overcome her sense of virtue, and his eventual success is wholly dependent on an elaborate deception: he arranges for Harriet's coach to be 'waylaid' by 'outlaws', then appears to rescue her, taking her to recuperate from her ordeal in an isolated, empty house, where he sedates her heavily and rapes her.

The two later novels complement *The Man of Feeling*. In *The Man of Feeling*, Harley develops morally as a result of a short if abrasive exposure to the depravities of London life, after which he returns to the bosom of his family. Harley's experiences differ enough from those in his domestic

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environment to throw into relief the advantages of the virtuous life, without inhibiting or corrupting his moral development. By contrast, Billy and Harriet Annesly are overwhelmed by the depravity of worldliness to such an extent that their connection with their virtuous background is broken, albeit in each case temporarily. In *Julia de Roubigné* the protagonists are similarly cut off from the influences of their virtuous mentors, not as a result of intervention by the world but by social isolation. Although each communicates by letter with a friend who is close enough to be concerned about his or her welfare to take a balanced, dispassionate perspective on the situation, this kind of social contact proves too weak to promote the discipline over their emotions that each needs in order to regain a sense of proportion.

Mackenzie's novels reinforce the idea that the development of virtue is essentially a social process. Each novel begins in rural innocence. *The Man of Feeling* and *The Man of the World* pursue the theme of urban corruption, while *Julia de Roubigné* shows the difficulty of retaining a healthy objectivity towards one's emotional circumstances, when alone for long periods. In each case the moral of the story is that the development of virtue depends on an environment which enables an individual first, to learn how to make moral judgements through the guidance and example of morally mature mentors, and then to continue to refine this facility through interaction with suitable peers.

Mackenzie continued to work with Smith's model of moral development. He was active in contemporary moral discourse, and, in addition to being a leading member of the Edinburgh literati, he became the editor of the literary journals the *Mirror* (1779–80) and the *Lounger* (1785–6), for which he was also one of the primary contributors. The journals resulted from the meetings of a group of literary lawyers in the George Square area of Edinburgh, who became known as the Mirror Club.[57] The club, and the events that led to the publication of the *Mirror* were described by Mackenzie in an article for the final issue of the journal:

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[57] Buchan, *Crowded with Genius*, p. 107.

The idea of publishing a periodical paper in Edinburgh took its rise in a company of gentlemen, whom particular circumstances of connection brought frequently together. Their discourse often turned upon subjects of manners, of taste, and of literature. By one of those accidental resolutions, of which the origin cannot be traced, it was determined to put their thoughts into writing, and to read them for the entertainment of each other. Their essays assumed the form, and soon after, someone gave the name of a periodical publication.[58]

The journals act as an index to what has been described as 'the polite culture and practical moral discourse of the late eighteenth-century republic of letters'[59] and they show that Mackenzie retained an interest in issues he had addressed in his novels. For example, the moral questions raised by the story of the seduction of an essentially virtuous but gullible young woman by a man too morally weak to withstand the influence of corrupt society which Mackenzie used in Miss Atkins' tale in *The Man of Feeling* is explored again in 'The Story of Louisa Venoni' (1780);[60] while 'The Story of Father Nicholas' which appeared in the *Lounger* in 1786 with the title 'The Power of Corrupt Society and False Shame over the Natural Feelings of Virtue', is highly reminiscent of Billy Annesly's story in *The Man of the World*: the hero, Henry St Hubert, travels to Paris where he gradually falls under the influence of sophisticated but corrupt Parisian society. Like Annesly, although he is aware of the depravity of those with whom he keeps company, he is not morally strong enough to divorce himself from it.[61]

The idea that an individual cannot develop a concept of virtue in isolation, which recurs in Mackenzie's novels and underpins the majority of the contributions in the *Mirror* and *Lounger*,[62] sets Scottish sentimental fiction apart from the sentimentalist writing of the 1750s and 1760s, as well as differentiating it from early romantic literature. The lonely sorrow of Goldsmith's *Deserted Village* (1770) is more akin to that of Grey's *Elegy* which was published almost twenty years earlier in 1751, than it is to *The*

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[58] *Mirror*, no. 110, 27 May 1780.

[59] Dwyer, *Virtuous Discourse*, pp. 24–6.

[60] *Mirror*, nos 8–9, May 1780.

[61] *Lounger*, 82–84, August–September 1786; see also Barker, *Henry Mackenzie*, pp. 92–7.

[62] This is pointed out by Dwyer, although he argues against its coherence and so also its importance (Dwyer, *Virtuous Discourse*, pp. 62ff).

Man of Feeling published only a year later in 1771; while considering Goethe's *Werther* (1774) from within Scottish sentimental discourse, renders the young man's suicide less romantically heroic than regrettably wrong-headed.

The differences between Mackenzie's protagonists and those of his predecessors are subtle. This is unsurprising. Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments* is a response to the same issues as those addressed in the sentimentalist philosophy influencing Mackenzie's predecessors, and builds on these earlier responses. In other words, Smith refines rather than revolutionises the philosophy informing earlier sentimental fiction, and consequently the expectation will be that fiction based on Smith's theory will reflect this refinement, in its difference from earlier literature, without departing radically from the conventions of the genre.

The problem that bedevilled eighteenth-century empiricists was that of giving an account of moral goodness which did not rely on reason alone as a source of moral knowledge – that is, which did not explicitly or tacitly import the rationalist tenet that, in principle, moral properties or relations can be discovered in the absence of experiential knowledge. Smith's views on the possibility of a rationalist account of moral goodness were categorical: 'it is altogether absurd and unintelligible to suppose that the first perception of right and wrong can be derived from reason'.[63] The empiricist agenda became that of explaining what in human experience leads to the concepts of good and evil. The account had to cohere with moral reality, that is, with the way people actually behaved, and so had to accommodate the fact that human behaviour embraces both self-interest and altruism.

Egoistic accounts of morality, for example, Hobbes' *Leviathan* (1651) and Mandeville's *The Fable of the Bees* (1721/1732) define good and evil by reference to self-interest and argue that what appears altruistic is actually modulated self-interest. According to Hobbes, for example, good is whatever an individual desires, and evil is what he hates. In an unregulated society – a

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[63] *TMS*, VII, iii 2.7; quoted in Berry, *Social Theory*, p. 157. Since Smith denies only the possibility of 'first perceptions' originating with reason, he is not denying that reason plays a role in the acquisition of moral knowledge. This is discussed more fully below, pp. 146–61.

state of nature – every man has a natural right to what he judges he needs for self-preservation, including a right to his possessions. Since this yields a society in which every man acts in his own interests, so life is 'nasty, brutish and short', Hobbes argues that it is in every man's interest to inaugurate an authorised sovereign to establish appropriate sanctions, and consequently morality becomes no more than forced compliance to the sovereign's edicts.

Eighteenth-century sentimentalists rejected Hobbes' egocentric account on the ground that it failed to yield an accurate description of human behaviour: humans are not irreducibly self-interested. For example, Shaftesbury argued that humans possess a natural moral sense – a natural facility for discerning good and evil.[64] Frances Hutcheson, the first Scottish Enlightenment moralist to enter the arena, developed Shaftesbury's idea of a moral sense. He defended it against Mandeville's objection that it was unfounded in day-to-day day experience by arguing that benevolence is irreducible to self-interest. This was a point on which the Scots moralists agreed. However, they disagreed over whether an explanation of moral behaviour required a distinct moral sense.

Hutcheson defined moral goodness independently of self-interest by reference to some quality of actions which prompts approval and love for the agent from those who receive no advantage from the situation.[65] He argued that moral approval and disapproval are involuntary responses of a moral sense, which operates independently of self-interest, although can be obstructed by it. While Hume agreed with Hutcheson's characterisation of moral reactions as unmediated, he referred to the unmediated moral response as 'sympathy'. However, Hume disputed Hutcheson's equation of the virtuous with the agreeable, arguing that justice, for example, although a virtue, is not always agreeable, and so cannot be accounted for by reference to a concept of moral goodness defined in terms of pleasurable responses to the actions of others. Hume also argued that there are also virtues which are grounded in utilitarian considerations, and so in reasoned response, rather

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[64] See Berry, *Social Theory*, p. 157.
[65] Frances Hutcheson, *An Inquiry concerning Moral Good and Evil* (1725); see Berry, *Social Theory*, pp. 158–60.

than derived from an unmediated natural moral response. Such virtues, which include justice, Hume termed 'artificial'.

Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments* responds to the theories both of Hutcheson and of Hume. Like Hume, Smith agreed with Hutcheson's characterisation of moral response as an unmediated reaction by a dispassionate observer, but rejected the notion of these being the responses a distinct moral sense. However he disputed the legitimacy of Hume's notion of reason-based artifical virtue, and the *Moral Sentiments* is intended as a thoroughgoing empiricist explanation of moral concepts which will accommodate those complex moral concepts such as justice for which Hume required the concept of artificial virtue.

As they stand, nothing in accounts of moral goodness based solely in an unmediated response to another's situation appears to preclude an individual from forming moral judgements on the basis of his or her experience in isolation, whether the response is considered to be that of a distinct moral faculty such as that proposed by Hutcheson or Shaftesbury, or the kind of emotional reaction found in Hume's theory. It follows that the heroes and heroines of sentimental fiction influenced by these kinds of accounts of the nature of moral goodness could be judged capable of reaching unequivocally virtuous conclusions alone; and hence that literature centring on the emotional reactions of a solitary protagonist would improve readers by appropriately eliciting approval or sympathy. By contrast, Smith's theory of moral goodness argues that an individual can only improve morally through interaction with others, and it follows that improving sentimental fiction based on Smith's theory will reflect this. Sentimental literature influenced by Smith's theory will elicit moral responses from a reader by way of the same kinds of emotional reactions of its heroes and heroines as those found in earlier fiction, but these reactions will be regarded as reliable stimuli to moral development only if the protagonists are socially integrated.

It follows from these considerations that what critics have construed as confusion on Mackenzie's part between moral and emotional attitudes and moral and psychological situations, could instead be explained as due to Mackenzie giving due weight to those elements of Smith's theory which differentiate it crucially from its predecessors, namely, the situational. This

idea is reinforced by the fact that in his essays and novels, he modified scenarios familiar from earlier sentimental fiction in ways which emphasised the sociability of virtue.

The similarities between Mackenzie's *Julia de Roubigné* and Rousseau's *Julie, ou la nouvelle Héloise* (1761) are noted by several commentators.[66] In each novel, the heroine is in love with a young man whose wealth and social situation precludes their marrying. Each suitor goes abroad, after which the heroine is persuaded by her father to marry a man she does not love. The main differences between the two plots is that Mackenzie's heroine remains chaste, while Rousseau's heroine has an affair with St Preux, the man she loves, and becomes pregnant; and Montaubon becomes jealous and attempts to kill Savillon, while Julie's impassive and benevolent husband invites St Preux to join the household. These plot differences reflect differences in the import of each tale. In Rousseau's tale, St Preux's love for Julie is enough to ensure his moral development – and it is the love story that the reader is intended to respond to. By contrast, Mackenzie's readers are encouraged to respond to the heroine's situation, and to her resolutely dutiful behaviour as wife and daughter, which takes precedence over her love for Savillon. Romantic love in this tale causes sorrow and ultimately death, because it affects people in addition to the lovers.

A similar kind of reworking can be seen in 'The Story of Louisa Venoni' – Mackenzie's treatment of the plot in Marmontel's 'Lauretta'.[67] In Mackenzie's tale, Sir Edward is injured while travelling through Piedmont and nursed back to health by Venoni, a peasant, and his daughter, Louisa. Sir Edward falls in love with Louisa, and his emotions are strengthened when he learns that she is to marry, reluctantly, a rich but vulgar neighbour. Since the difference in their stations precludes Sir Edward from marrying Louisa, he attempts to persuade her to accompany him when he leaves to return to London, effectively requesting that she becomes his mistress. Initially

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[66] For example, Susan Manning, 'Introduction' to Henry Mackenzie, *Julia de Roubigné*, ed. Susan Manning (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 1999), pp. vii–xxviii, p. xi; Barker, *Henry* Mackenzie, p. 70; Thompson, *Scottish Man of Feeling*, pp. 145–9.

[67] Marmontel, 'Lauretta', *Contes Moreaux* (1781); see Barker, *Henry Mackenzie*, pp. 89–92.

Louisa refuses, but when Sir Edward is leaving, quite abruptly changes her mind. Once in London, Louisa becomes deeply remorseful about her situation, although blames only herself for her situation. By chance, she is reunited with her father, now living as an itinerant musician, having left Piedmont to search for her. Louisa's father's grief at the situation causes Sir Edward to feel such remorse that he offers to marry Louisa.

Once the self-absorption of romantic love has been given free reign, the narrative in this story is fuelled by grief and remorse – emotions which are dependent on the characters feelings towards each other. Edward and Louisa actively recognise and regret the consequences of their actions for Louisa's father. This contrasts with Marmonetal's original version, 'Lauretta'. Although Mackenzie's plot is very similar to that of Marmontel, in 'Lauretta' the heroine embraces the wealth, riches and sensual pleasures that Count de Luzy offers; and when Lauretta's father eventually finds her, because Marmontel fails to convey any sense of the protagonists being aware that and how their actions affect others, Lauretta's remorse and Luzy's proposal which are intended to convey a similar lesson to that of 'Louisa Venoni', are developments driven less by the characters than by convention.

Although in each case, Rousseau and Marmontel had written a love story, when Mackenzie reworked the tale, he moved the readers' attention away from the self-absorbed headiness of romantic love to the inner conflict suffered by each protagonist. In each case, the characters' emotional discomfort is the result of their recognition of the impact of actual or imagined or intended behaviour on others. In other words, the morally uplifting emotional content depends on interaction between at least two people, and the moral discourse occurs in a real or imagined social context.[68] Given the crucial role of sympathy in Smith's theory of moral development, it is plausible to suggest that Mackenzie's use of the 'joy of grief' was for more specific ends than has been recognised formerly, that is, that Mackenzie used the pathetic in his writing to stimulate readers' moral improvement,

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[68] Real or imagined because of, for example, Montaubon, in *Julia de Roubigné*.

using the concept of virtue put forward by Smith in his *Theory of Moral Sentiments.*

3 The structure of the discussion

In conclusion, there are good reasons to contextualise eighteenth-century Scottish sentimental literature by the themes and methodology of Scottish philosophy of the period; and so to regard Mackenzie as doing significantly more in his fiction than indulging a cult of tears. Scottish Enlightenment thought was in part a response to social and political changes and developments that had been taking place on a national scale within Scotland since the turn of the century – changes which were seen to threaten what might be termed the moral meritocracy. History was understood as the discovery of predictable social trends using records from the past in what would now be referred to as 'longitudinal studies' of the evolution of societies, and history had revealed that the kind of economic growth experienced by Scotland during the eighteenth century spawned conditions which encouraged economic, political and moral deterioration in well established, polished society. Ancient Rome provided one example, and the more recent events in France under first the Sun King, then the Regency, provided another. After the Union, the political situation in Scotland was more or less a given, and the upturn in the economy was understood to be highly advantageous, in many ways, so the literati directed emphasis and energy towards preserving the nation's moral health.

Since the beginning of the eighteenth century, philosophers had been concerned to give a non-egoistic account of the nature of moral goodness. Rousseau aside, the approach was empiricist. Adam Smith's account of moral goodness in the *Theory of Moral Sentiments* both refined the concepts foundational to the theories of his Scottish predecessors, Hutcheson and Hume, and broadened their scope to yield a more thoroughly empiricist account from first principles of the more complex moral concepts such as justice, guilt and remorse.

Smith's explanation of the formation of moral concepts applied to concept-formation generally. On an empiricist account, all conceptual content is founded initially in experience, and non-experiential, complex

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concepts are derived by abstraction from simple, experiential concepts. This dependency relation between simple and complex ideas, and between concrete and abstract conceptual content imposes an ordering on concept-development, from simple to complex. Smith uses this to create the stadial heuristic widely found in eighteenth-century Scottish histories: the simple/complex conceptual continuum concatenates with the primitive/civilised societal continuum.

Central to Smith's account is the idea that virtue is essentially sociable. This idea demarcates both the content and the methodology of Smith's theory from those of earlier sentimental philosophers. It also has the potential to demarcate between didactic uses of moral theory based on Smith's *Moral Sentiments* and didactic uses made of earlier theories, since the former will need to accommodate Smith's requirement for the development of virtue to be sociable.

Eighteenth-century sentimental fiction was written with a view to improving the reader, and there is strong evidence of this didactic element in Scottish sentimental writing, particularly in the essays in the Edinburgh journals the *Mirror* and the *Lounger*, published during the 1780s under Mackenzie's editorship. Mackenzie has often been represented as taking advantage of the sentimental cult to indulge his preference for pathos, with *The Man of Feeling* being regarded as the last and one of the finest of a long list of sentimental novels published during the decade from 1760. However a closer examination of Mackenzie's sentimental writings shows him to have responded not so much to the popularity of the sentimental genre, as to the publication of Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments* in 1759. Unlike earlier sentimental fiction, including Macpherson's Ossian corpus, plotting in Mackenzie's novels seems to be regulated more by the kind of social interaction that occurs between protagonists than by stories of romantic love now considered to be the defining characteristic of sentimental literature. This suggests that Mackenzie intended to reflect Smith's arguments for the influence of social context on an individual's moral development: for Smith, it is as damaging, morally, for individuals to be emotionally insular as is it is for them to keep corrupt society.

The suggested reading of Mackenzie's novels is non-standard, and the proposed interpretation of Smith's *Moral Sentiments* is revisionist. As a result the bulk of this thesis is devoted to establishing the credentials of the claims: first that Mackenzie's *The Man of Feeling* is far from being the 'bundle of little episodes, put together without art' it is billed as in the preface to the novel; and second, that Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments* is a hypothetico-deductive account of moral development, and not the collection of moral prescriptions it is often taken to be.

Working with Smith's theory will have placed severe constraints on the structure of Mackenzie's book. According to Smith, an ability to make moral judgements is a learned skill, dependent on practised reasoning about the right kind of experience. Furthermore, this skill develops in identifiable, if not precisely defined stages, and is cumulative: each level of moral competence is necessary for the next. In chapter I, I show that *The Man of Feeling* is structured in a way which will provide a reader with the kinds of vicarious experiences and 'graded' practice in moral reasoning which will encourage the development of capacity for refined, sensitive moral judgements. I shall argue that the lack of narrative continuity in the book has didactic import, because it enabled Mackenzie both to write episodes suitable for identifiable stages of moral development and to move from stage to stage without using or implying any specific connection between stages, so upholding the basic non-determinism that underpins stadialism. The moral content of episodes in the book also reflects the stadial model of development in progressing from simple to complex. Each episode describes Harley's experiences, the progression ensures that Harley improves morally, and because the reader is assumed is to share Harley's experiences, albeit vicariously, the reader will also develop morally.

The structure of Smith's *Moral Sentiments* is complex and detailed – particularly in the opening sections. This is inevitable. Smith was concerned to construct an empiricist theory of morals from first principles, which means that the atomic elements of the theory must be irreducible by reason, but accessible through experience. In other words, Smith could not explain the fundamental elements of his theory, only describe them. Since the theory is sentimentalist the atomic elements are feelings, and Smith had to aim to

evoke the relevant feelings in his readers through his description. Critics often fail to appreciate this aspect of the text and in consequence, fail to grasp the intended import of the book. In addition the aetiology of the theory is complex. Smith builds on Hume's work in the moral sciences, refining and redefining certain of his key concepts. Somewhat unexpectedly, Newton's gravitational theory is equally important to the *Moral Sentiments*: Smith constructs his theory using Newton's methodology for scientific explanation. Although Locke's influence on eighteenth-century philosophy in general and on Smith's work in particular is widely acknowledged in the secondary literature, precisely which elements of Lockean empiricism are in play at any given time is rarely made plain, and in regard to Smith's writing, this adversely effects the interpretation of the text. As a result, the justification for the revisionist reading of Smith's *Moral Sentiments* proposed here requires both a detailed account of the philosophical background to Smith's work, and a close examination of the text itself.

The bulk of chapter II is devoted to a description of the key concepts in the *Moral Sentiments* in order to demonstrate the way in which Smith constructs complex moral concepts from the unmediated irreducible emotions he identifies as primitive moral reactions. I explain the relation between Smith's work and that of Hume, and explain the difference between their respective concepts of sympathy. Sympathy in each case refers to an analytically primitive, unmediated moral response, and I show how Smith's notion of sympathy, but not that of Hume, entails that virtue is essentially sociable.

Smith's theory of concept development, and concomitantly his notion of impartial spectatorship, are crucial to his account of conscience and moral self-government. Both are dependent on the presupposition that human behaviour exhibits lawlike regularities. I argue that this idea functions in the same way in Smith's account of rules of conduct and in his understanding of stadial history, and consequently that Smith's moral theory is stadialist. This conclusion is crucial to the claim made above that the notion of moral improvement which informs Mackenzie's novels differs from that in earlier sentimental fiction.

For his theory to be complete, Smith needed to explain the possibility of moral change. Given the emphasis he places on the sociability of virtue and the regularities in man's moral behaviour, this threatens to unseat his theory. I show how Smith accommodates this difficulty in a way which explains moral improvement at a societal level as well as for an individual and argue that he uses his account to explain moral deterioration. Finally I show how Mackenzie applies Smith's theory to the idea of educating for virtue which is used in his sentimental fiction.

The final part of the thesis pursues and strengthens the claim that Smith's moral theory shaped the literati's idea of a virtuous education. Hugh Blair's enthusiasm for the Macpherson's Ossian poems, evident from his *Critical Dissertation*, is partly because the poems appear to give the reader privileged access to the thoughts and emotions of a member of an ancient and primitive society. Blair's discussion of the poems and of ancient poetry generally depends on a specific theory of social development, namely Smith's stadial theory. Blair's argument for the antiquity of the poems presupposes that the study of languages and literature also yields to a stadial approach. This discovery about the scope of stadialism explains the anomalous status accorded by eighteenth-century readers to Ossian's character: the stadial nature of concept-development will be evident in changes in the language of an individual or in the conceptual complexity of the language of a society. Moral improvement, then, will become evident linguistically.

In chapter III, I first describe the Ossianic corpus and explain Blair's stadial approach to the comparative study of ancient poetry found in his *Critical Dissertation*. Blair uses a grammatical analysis of the Ossian poems to support his claim for their antiquity. I explain the assumptions about language development on which Blair's analysis rests and, drawing on Smith's remarks on love, the reasons why Blair draws conclusions about Ossian's moral character from the grammar of the poems. Finally, I argue that Mackenzie acknowledges the influence of both Smith and Macpherson in *The Man of Feeling* by using a meeting between an Ossianic hero and a British soldier, to comprise the culmination of Harley's moral education, as well as that of the reader.

The centrality of the notion of improvement to Scottish Enlightenment thought is now well established.[69] Often, modernisation and improvement in eighteenth-century Scotland are discussed in connection with the legal, political and economic effects of the Union – the impact of the Union on trade and agriculture in Scotland, for example. 'Improvement' as a social and moral endeavour tends to be discussed under the general rubric of 'polite society'. However, the conclusion drawn from this discussion of the role of improvement in literary and philosophical contexts not only underlines how pervasive the concept was in Enlightenment discourse, but also shows why it was given so much weight. 'Improvement' in Scotland during the later eighteenth century referred specifically to a model of conceptual development first put forward by Smith. According to this model, there are lawlike regularities in the ways in which societies or individuals improve – or deteriorate. Since Smith's *Moral Sentiments* explained the general motives and mechanics of social change, as well as indicating signs of moral improvement and symptoms of deterioration, the theory introduced a degree of structure and precision to the concept and as such seemed to open up the possibility of exercising some control over the rate and direction of societal change.

Read in the light of this interpretation of Smith's theory, the structure and content of *The Man of Feeling* shows Mackenzie to have modified the improving nature of sentimental fiction to accommodate Smith's findings. For Mackenzie and for the eighteenth-century Scottish moralists generally, virtue is sociable, and a virtuous education proceeds in identifiable, if indefinable, stages.

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[69] N.T. Phillipson, and Rosalind Mitchison, 'Introduction to the 1996 edition', in N.T. Phillipson and Rosalind Mitchison (eds), *Scotland in the Age of Improvement* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1996), pp. ix–xi.

I *The Man of Feeling*

Today, it seems surprising to question whether *The Man of Feeling* is accurately characterised as a novel. The frame, structure and narrative have all the hallmarks of the kind of sustained fictional tale paradigmatic for this classification. Furthermore, it is now regarded as representative of late eighteenth-century sentimental fiction; that is, as representative of a genre, the object of which was to illustrate the alliance of acute sensibility with virtue. Although 'sensibility' is variously defined, it is essentially an immediacy of sensation outrunning thought.[1] However, there are indications that Henry Mackenzie regarded himself as having written something other than a novel. In a letter written to his friend, James Elphinstone, almost a year before the book was published in 1771,[2] he claimed that *The Man of Feeling* is 'perfectly different than a novel', and in *Anecdotes and Egotisms* he describes the book as a 'a novel, different from most others, containing little plot or incident'.[3] In this chapter, I argue that Mackenzie's claim to have written something other than a novel is valid – that going beyond the relatively uneventful narrative, the book may be read as a catalyst for the development of sensibility, an aim which was in the ascendant in the late eighteenth century; and, following John Dwyer's thesis in *Virtuous*

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[1] J.M.S. Tompkins, *The Popular Novel in England, 1770–1800* (1932) (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1961), p. 95. Mary Wollstonecraft writing in the late 1780s, described sensibility as 'the result of acute senses, finely fashioned nerves, which vibrate at the slightest touch, and convey such clear intelligence to the brain, that it does not require to be arranged by the judgement' (quoted by Tompkins, ibid., from Wollstonecraft's unfinished oriental tale 'Cave of Fancy').

[2] 23 July 1770, Henry Mackenzie, *Literature and Literati: The Literary Correspondence and Notebooks of Henry Mackenzie*, vol. I: *Letters 1766–1827*, ed. H.W. Drescher (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag Peter Lang, 1989), p. 48.

[3] Henry Mackenzie, *The Anecdotes and Egotisms of Henry Mackenzie, 1745–1831*, ed. H.W. Thompson (London: Oxford University Press, 1927), p. 186.

Discourse,[4] that it expounds a practical morality which had particular relevance for the nobility and gentry of Scotland.

I have structured my discussion as follows. In section 1, I give a synopsis of the plot and of what might loosely be called the 'action' of *The Man of Feeling*. In section 2, I consider the structure of the book and the themes underpinning Harley's experiences in London, with a view to indicating the kinds of pointers given by Mackenzie concerning the way in which he intended the book to be approached. This leads to a closer examination, in section 3, of the relation between the themes of the chapters and the structure of the book. In section 4, I suggest that the chapter sequences up to Harley's departure from London chart the development of his sensibility, and that Mackenzie's concept of the ways in which this can be developed ensures that a reader may be regarded as similarly experiencing such a development. In section 5, I suggest that in addition to writing a manual for the development of sensibility, Mackenzie propounds a practical morality which gives purpose to refining sensibility; further I suggest that Edwards' tale is crucial to the practical morality aspect of the book. I rely heavily on Dwyer's thesis that eighteenth-century sentimentalist philosophy informed a practical morality of a peculiarly and identifiably Scots bent among the Edinburgh literati, of which Mackenzie was a leading member. In section 6, I outline the kinds of national issues which will have preoccupied the literati, and suggest that these create the context for Mackenzie's practical morality. The conclusion is that the real action of the book concerns the course of moral development in Harley, the hero, and that, by implication, Mackenzie aspired to induce the same increased moral sensitivity in his readership – that *The Man of Feeling* is less a novel than a primer of practical morality.

1 Synopsis of *The Man of Feeling*

The plot of *The Man of Feeling* is straightforward and simple, as was Mackenzie's intention.[5] Further, with the exception of momentary high

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[4] John Dwyer, *Virtuous Discourse: Sensibility and Community in Late Eighteenth-Century Scotland* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1987).

drama generated by a case of mistaken identity, it is very quiet. It is also very damp: great moments invariably involve tears, as is characteristic of sentimental fictional writing. It is the story of an ingenuous, naive and highly sensitive young man's sojourn in London to apply for the lease of Crown lands abutting his small country estate, with a view to improving his comparatively lowly financial position; the adventures which there befell him; and events subsequent to his return home empty-handed.

Having been persuaded to travel to London in pursuit of the lease, Harley, the principle character, takes leave of the maiden aunt with whom he lives, and the daughter of a neighbour for whom he harbours unprofessed love, and begins his journey. Before he reaches London he has been relieved of a shilling by a beggar's dog.

Once in London he is bowled by friends and by chance, from one incident to another, meeting with increasingly insistent evidence of the corrupt nature of life in the metropolis, at that time Mecca for the rich and fashionable and regarded by the morally upright as a den of iniquity.[6] He is misled by an excise man's dress and conversation, into believing him to be a gentlemen; and is, by turn, horrified, bemused and distressed by inmates of Bedlam where he mistakes an inmate for a guide. He has dinner with an intractable misanthropist. He has a hectic 24 hours which begins by his being taken up by a company of card sharps who relieve him of most of his money. Extricating himself from their company, he sets out to honour a prior engagement, but is accosted by a prostitute on the Strand, and prevailed upon to buy her a drink in a brothel, at which juncture the prostitute faints with

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[5] In a letter to his cousin, Elizabeth Rose, Mackenzie said of the narrative: 'you wou'd find the Hero's Story, even if it were finish'd & I were to send it you entire, simple to Excess', 31 July 1769 (*Letters to Elizabeth Rose of Kilravock: On Literature, Events and People*, ed. H.W. Drescher (Munster: Verlag Aschendorf, 1967), p. 18). In *Anecdotes and Egotisms*, Mackenzie described the book as 'merely a sketch of some particulars of the life and sentiments of a man of more than usual sensibility' (*Anecdotes and Egotisms*, p. 186).

[6] Harley's aunt, for example, considered London to be 'so replete with temptations, that it needed the whole armour of her friendly cautions to repel their attacks' (*MF*, p. 18); and his manservant, Peter, 'choaked' at the mere thought of London, which he described as 'a sad place' (*MF*, p. 19).

hunger. Once she has revived, Harley arranges a chair to convey her home, and elects to visit the woman the following morning. Giving her the little money left to him after his card-playing, he leaves himself without the means to settle the bill for their wine, and consequently has to pawn his watch in lieu of payment. Only then does he manage to keep his original engagement.

The following morning Harley's visit to the prostitute is interrupted by unexpected arrival of her father, who, mistaking Harley for the man who caused her downfall, threatens to run him through with his sword. Once this confusion is dispelled, Harley arranges for both father and daughter to lodge at his house.

On learning that his application for the Crown lease has been unsuccessful, Harley promptly arranges to return home. Taking a stage coach for much of the journey, he strikes up an acquaintance with a fellow passenger, Ben Silton, an elderly man after his own heart; and after alighting to walk the remainder of the way, his path coincides with that of Edwards, a veteran returning from India, and someone of whom Harley had been fond as a child.

The connection with Edwards is sustained for the rest of the story. Edwards and his family move into a small farm on Harley's estate. Edwards is also the unwitting cause of Harley's early death, for, while helping nurse him through a fever, Harley contracts the same. During his illness, he plucks up courage enough to declare his love for Miss Walton, learns that it is reciprocated, and dies.[7]

The story lacks the passion and intrigue of a romance, and the hurly burly of the picaresque. Villains are sanitised, as are potentially upsetting or distasteful scenes.[8] A woman, but not a maiden, is rescued, and then from

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[7] Tompkins (*Popular Novel*, p. 54), and Vickers in his introduction to *The Man of Feeling* suggests Harley's death is from an excess of joy (Brian Vickers, 'Introduction' to Henry Mackenzie, *The Man of Feeling* (1771), ed. Brian Vickers, (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), pp. vii–xxvi, p. xvi); see Smith's account of the deleterious effects of joy, given below, p. 122, n. 78.

[8] For example, Mackenzie does not exploit the potential for wallowing in Gothic description of the incurably mad (*MF*, p. 30); and treats with delicacy the seduction of Miss Atkins, the prostitute, her subsequent pregnancy and miscarriage (*MF*, pp. 58–9, 64–5).

destitution and not a dragon. And we are denied a happy ending. Man of Feeling he might be, but Man of Action, Harley is not.

2 The structure of *The Man of Feeling*

The synopsis of the action of *The Man of Feeling* given in section 1, follows the book almost chapter by chapter, and so shows that the narrative both has a unity, and, as far as charting Harley's experiences, occurs within a single time-scale.[9] However, Mackenzie chose to present the text as if it is only part of a complete history of Harley. This required considerable thought in the organisation of the material in order to ensure enough of the tale is given for a reader to follow the narrative while giving plausibility to the alleged incompleteness of the text. Although superficially, the organisation of the text invites the description given by the fictive editor as 'a bundle of little episodes, put together without art'[10] closer study of the text reveals this is far from the case. A rationale for Mackenzie's decision to present the tale in this form can be derived from considering the book to have didactic purpose.

The heart of *The Man of Feeling* is presented as the published version of an edited but incomplete manuscript, the author of which, though known to Harley, is unknown to the editor and remains unknown to the reader, appearing in person only in the first and closing chapters of the alleged manuscript.[11] The chapter numbering is to be understood as that of the original manuscript, but of the implied original 56 chapters plus conclusion, we are given only 20 complete sections and 3 fragments. The fictional editor explains the reason for the incompleteness of the original manuscript in his

[9] I have qualified the statement because the book is read at two removes from the narrative, as a result of Mackenzie introducing both a fictive author of the manuscript writing retrospectively and a fictive editor at a later period again.

[10] *MF*, p. 5; Mackenzie also refers to it as a 'very odd Medley' (8 July 1769, *Letters*, p. 16), and as 'a sketch of some particulars of the life and sentiments of a man of more than usual sensibility' (*Anecdotes and Egotisms*, p. 186).

[11] Harley's biographer appears in the body of the book in discussion with Ben Silton in the opening chapter of the alleged manuscript (ch. XI), and again in the closing chapters of the book where he reveals that Harley was one of a small number of friends remaining after he was struck by 'the malevolence of fortune' (*MF*, p. 127). However the voice of the author appears on occasion throughout.

introduction: the missing pages had been used as wadding by the curate into whose hands the manuscript fell between author and editor.[12] Towards the end of the book we learn that the editor himself had omitted some of the extant text, because the inroads of the curate had rendered it too disjointed (*MF*, p. 125). Somewhat curiously, in addition to writing the book with implied lacunae, Mackenzie chose to include a section which is presented as having been *added* to the original by an unknown hand (*MF*, pp. 40–2).

Mackenzie wrote the book in fits and starts.[13] Furthermore, in a letter to his cousin, he explains that he did not write the episodes in the order in which they appear finally: 'I think I informed you before that the Chapters of the Performance were wrote occasionally at different Periods; frequently not in the order in which they appear.'[14] The book is therefore far from a collection or bundle of episodes put together 'without art'. Mackenzie will have organised the text to ensure that the reader is given enough information about the principle character for the narrative to make sense while also sustaining the fiction that the book is taken from an incomplete manuscript.

On the face of it, Harley's adventures in London seem to be ordered randomly: it hardly matters whether Harley meets the prostitute before or after he is fleeced by the card sharps, and whether he has dinner with the misanthropist before or after he visits Bedlam, since no narrative action hangs on the outcome of any of the episodes occurring in London – there is no causal chain of events through this part of the text. However, Mackenzie's remark to his cousin about ordering the text is made in connection with the prostitute's tale, part of the London sequence of chapters,

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[12] *MF*, p. 5; the reader is reminded of the curate's intervention in a note to the opening chapter of the tale proper (*MF*, p. 7).

[13] In a letter written to Elizabeth Rose, and accompanying a copy of the introduction to *The Man of Feeling*, Mackenzie wrote 'I began with this Introduction & write now and then a Chapter as I have Leisure or Inclination' (8 July 1769, *Letters*, p. 16).

[14] 29 November 1769, *Letters*, p. 29. In an earlier letter, Mackenzie referred to 'some detach'd Essays' he'd written when in London, on 'Men & Manners' (8 July 1769, *Letters,* p. 29), some of which are found in his Passe-Temps, a notebook of largely unpublished prose and poetry written between 1763 and 1766; see Gerard A. Barker, *Henry Mackenzie* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1975), p. 42.

so Mackenzie has to be considered to have ordered this material according to some alternative train of thought – an alternative internal logic.

The logic driving Mackenzie's ordering of events begins to surface if we consider the book's most obvious, if limited, formal structure – the chapter numbering, which, with the exception of one chapter towards the end of the book, occurs in short runs or sequences. Giving weight to the runs in the chapter numbering within each sequence, the tale in each chapter can be seen to be related to those of other chapters in the same sequence. Furthermore, Mackenzie's introduction of chapter fragments can be argued to have didactic purpose in addition to their role in sustaining the fictive explanation for the incompleteness of the text; and that the divisions of the text resulting from the alleged lacunae in manuscript correspond to movement from level to level as Mackenzie guides his reader through the stages of moral maturation (see section 4).

The first four chapters take us up to the point where Harley, having left home for London, pauses for the first time in his journey. Alighting from the chaise which took him from his house, and deciding against his original intention to breakfast at the inn at which they have drawn up, Harley opts instead to stretch his legs:

He walked out on the road, and gaining a little height, stood gazing on that quarter he had left. He looked for his wonted prospect, his fields, his woods, and his hills: they were lost in the distant clouds! He pencilled them on the clouds, and bid them farewel with a sigh![15]

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[15] *MF*, p. 19. Here we are given the impression that Harley is well and truly beyond the boundaries of his familiar domain. It is quite possible that he hasn't travelled at all. We learn later that he was at school at South-hill (*MF*, p. 87) which is 'distant but a short day's journey' from his estate (*MF*, p. 99). And given the lack of consideration to his education, and presumably his financial position he won't have been on the customary Grand Tour. The extent of his ignorance of the world at large becomes more evident when within minutes of taking farewell of his 'distant' home, he meets a beggar who knows him by name (*MF*, p. 20). That Harley's London sojourn is his equivalent of a Grand Tour of Europe is suggested on *MF*, p. 100, when he returns home without the lease but accompanied by Edwards, his two grandchildren, a borrowed horse and a borrowed servant. His return with this retinue is described as giving him as much enjoyment 'as if he had arrived

And at this juncture, when he feels very definitely 'away from home', he falls foul of a gentle form of the kind of trickery which becomes synonymous with the name 'London': he loses a shilling to a beggar's dog.

The next sequence of chapters opens with Harley ensconced in London long enough to be about to make his second visit to the baronet to whom he has been advised to appeal for help in obtaining the lease of the Crown lands – the sole reason for his being in London.[16] In these three chapters, Harley is deceived first by the conversation and appearance of a young man with ambitions above his station – an ex-footman and pimp who eventually obtains the lease which Harley is hoping for;[17] then by an inmate of Bedlam. In the third chapter of this sequence, Harley is himself judged on appearances: he is taken by a misanthropist, to be one of the corrupt, fashionably wealthy, and so a target for the misanthropist's extended criticism of contemporary polite society.

Each of these chapters focuses on the inadequacy of judging a person by his appearance – and the point is driven home in the third, when it is Harley whose nature is incorrectly deduced from his apparel.

The third sequence of chapters is the most sustained and concerns the hectic 24 hours described in section 1, in which Harley meets both the card sharps, and Miss Atkins the prostitute, and her father.

Mackenzie introduces the first fragment at this point, which explains that Harley's application for the lease has been unsuccessful, and gives the

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from the tour of Europe, with a Swiss valet for his companion, and half a dozen snuff boxes, with invisible hinges, in his pocket'.

[16] The first visit to the baronet, we learn from the text, has been detailed in an earlier 'missing' chapter. Chapter XIX opens with a specific reference to the non-existent description of Harley's earlier visit: 'We have related in a former chapter, the little success of his visit to the great man' (*MF*, p. 23). We also learn indirectly that Harley has been in London rather longer than this mention of his second visit would imply, Harley not having been as sedulous in seeking a second interview as those of a more single-minded bent might have been: his friends in the country wrote to Harley soon after his unsuccessful first visit to the baronet, '[expressing] their surprise at his not having been more urgent in his application', and recommending 'the blushless assiduity of successful merit' (*MF*, p. 23).

[17] And so, presumably becomes Harley's neighbour – or perhaps the absent landlord of the land neighbouring Harley's estate.

reasons for his lack of success. It allows Mackenzie to jump, without further explanation, from Harley's intervention on behalf of the prostitute, to a sequence of three chapters detailing his journey home.

The account of Harley's journey from London, shows him re-entering an increasingly more benign environment. On the coach he becomes acquainted with Ben Silton, to whom readers have been introduced at the outset, as a man who is both warm-hearted and wise.[18] While making the last leg of his journey on foot, he meets Edwards, another man of feeling, and the sequence ends in rural tranquillity with Edwards and the remnants of his family, accommodated through the goodwill of Harley, in a small farm on Harley's estate.

A chapter detailing Harley's lack of progress in love is flanked by two fragments, the second of which includes a précis of events by the editor, which ties up loose ends enough for Mackenzie to follow it with the final two chapters describing Harley's last hours.

3 The themes of the chapter sequences

The narrative is shaped by the chapter sequences together with judicious use of chapter fragments. If we consider the themes of the opening sequence and the two London sequences, more closely, we can see more of the reasoning behind Mackenzie's choice of this architecture for the narrative, and of the purpose of Harley's story.

The opening sequence

The first four chapters of the manuscript describe the cast of the central character and indicate what the book is about. Although by implication, the complete text of *The Man of Feeling* would have been the full biography of Harley, the opening chapter of the spurious extant manuscript explicitly concerns the refining effect of travel on a person's character. More

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[18] A cameo portrait of Silton is given at the beginning of the first chapter; there he is described as being 'an honest old man' (*MF*, p. 7) with a heart 'uncorrupted by [the world's] ways' and 'ever warm in the cause of virtue and his friends' (*MF*, p. 8); the antithesis of the misanthropist in short. Although unable to substantiate this, I suspect that Ben Silton is a caricature of Adam Smith.

specifically, travel is said to have an improving, if, abrasive effect on a person's character: the author states 'There is some rust about every man at the beginning' and Ben Silton's opinion on the matter is given very soon after: 'Let them rub it off by travel.' It transpires that while this 'rust' will accrue in a man's nature through of some kind of disuse,[19] in some it may have a protective role: 'an encrustation, which nature has given for the purposes of the greatest wisdom' (*MF*, p. 9).

From Silton's subsequent remarks, we learn that bashfulness can be considered to have this protective role. Silton distinguishes between the bashfulness of a booby, or country fellow – the awkwardness of ignorance which is quickly shed; and that which accompanies sensitivity and which is more tenacious (*MF*, p. 9). Harley, we are told, is afflicted with the second kind of bashfulness. In this indirect manner, then, Mackenzie describes the theme of the book. It is not an incomplete biography, but an account of the effects of travel on the central character, Harley, a man hampered by both naïveté and great sensitivity.

The rest of this first sequence of chapters is devoted largely to fleshing out the central character – revealing the extent of his sensitivity and lack of experience – and in explaining why, despite being constitutionally ill-fitted for such a place, he is bound for London. Orphaned when a boy, Harley was brought up under the jurisdiction of a group of guardians chosen by his father less with a view to their suitability for the role than from fear of giving offence (*MF*, p. 11). Since his guardians seldom met, and when they did meet, failed to reach agreement over the guidance of their ward, Harley's education was patchy and makeshift. He reached manhood unmotivated and intellectually too undisciplined to follow a profession, and disinterested

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[19] *MF*, p. 7. It seems odd to a present-day reader to find rust ascribed to something 'new'. It is possible that the exchange between the author and Silton is word-play. The *Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue* (1811) gives as one definition of 'rusty', restiveness in a horse, which meaning was extended also to humans. Elsewhere, however, Mackenzie uses 'rust' in the more familiar sense connoting disuse, but with specific reference to 'disuse of sociability': 'There is a certain learned Rust which Men as well as Medals acquire. – It is, simply speaking, a Fault in both. The social Feelings grow languid from disuse; & there wants a Pliancy of little Affections to sweeten the Cup of Life as we drink it' (12 May 1770, *Letters*, p. 44).

enough in his income to be unperturbed by his relatively lowly status according to the by-then norms of power, wealth or grandeur (*MF*, pp. 10–11). We learn, too, that Harley cannot dissemble. He fails to follow the instructions of his advisors to insinuate himself with a distant wealthy relative with a view to benefiting from her will (*MF*, pp. 12–13). Harley's decision to attempt to increase his estate is reached only with reluctance and in response to considerable pressure from his (presumably more worldly wise) friends (*MF*, pp. 13–14).

We have, then, many of the ingredients of a sentimental hero – Harley, at the start of the book, is an embryonic man of feeling: he is unable to motivate himself to act for reasons which, when considered by those of a more realistic (and materialistic) bent are not merely prudent, but compelling, and has little patience with those who exhort him to 'see sense' and adopt a more sophisticated attitude towards fiscal matters (*MF*, p. 11). The description of his conduct when allegedly attempting to win a wealthy relative's approval shows him to be entirely at the mercy of his natural responses. It also shows what is missing from Harley's make-up. While it is laudable that Harley refuses to enter the proposed deceit and win the relative's affection solely for the purpose of ensuring an inheritance, his actual reactions to her company are on occasion simply ill-mannered (*MF*, p. 13).

At this stage Harley seems as likely to develop into a dolt as an ideal. His potential for the latter hangs on the well-respected opinion of Ben Silton, himself a man of virtue.[20] However, the revelation that Harley is in love with his neighbour's daughter, Miss Walton, goes some way to justify the expectation that he will indeed mature into a sentimental ideal.

Miss Walton is the perfect sentimental heroine: essentially retiring in all respects. Physically she is has an 'interestingly' pale complexion and a natural elegance; she is mild-mannered; and conversationally she is good-humoured, soft-voiced and always accommodating. She is muted in all respects except her goodness; and her sensibility is perfectly developed – she acted according to the dictates of her heart rather than reason: 'her humanity

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[20] The curate responsible for the spoiling of the manuscript, a man of a strenuous rationalist bent (*MF*, p. 5), mentions that generally Harley was considered 'a whimsical man' (*MF*, p. 4).

was a feeling, not a principle'.[21] Miss Walton shows no capacity for passion, or for intellectual acuity, but part of her appeal to Harley is just this lack of verve in all respects.

By contrast, Harley's reaction to Miss Walton definitely is not of the calibre of the refined sensibility which she exemplifies: he verges on the passionate, albeit only when not in her company (*MF*, p. 17); and is so far from urbane in her presence as to be tongue-tied (*MF*, p. 16). Nevertheless the fact that he responds to the tiny vibrations of Miss Walton's nature is sufficient to mark him out as having the potential to become her suitor.

Harley's love for Miss Walton encourages the reader to anticipate a specific outcome to the story. In addition to Harley returning from London in possession of a lease and burnished by the experience of London life, the reader is now led to expect him to marry Miss Walton. That Mackenzie was fully aware of this is evident from a remark he made in a letter to his cousin, Elizabeth Rose, about 'the winding up of a Story', which he describes as 'one of the dullest Things in the World'. He continues: 'You remember a Miss Walton; you have nothing to do but to imagine [Harley] somehow or other wedded to her & made happy; – so must all stories conclude you know; the Hero is as surely married as he was born.'[22] In fact the reader's expectations are frustrated by Harley's unforeseeable early death, although this too is consonant with the book having an improving purpose.

As stated above, in the last chapter in the opening sequence Harley leaves for London, and encounters the beggar with the dog. In effect the nature and content of this encounter foreshadows most of those he has in London. The beggar offers to tell Harley's fortune, a suggestion which Harley dismisses with brusque scepticism (*MF*, p. 20). The beggar responds to this with a speech which is tantamount to the bare bones of a credo for men of the world:

'Master, ... I like your frankness; God knows I had the humour of plain-dealing in me from a child; but there is no doing with it in this world; we must live as we can, and lying is, as you call it, my profession: but I was in

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[21] *MF*, pp. 14–16, quotation from *MF*, p. 16. The nature of the sentimental heroine tends to make one think in terms of the conversational equivalent of invalid food.

[22] 19 April 1770, *Letters*, p. 41.

some sort forced into the trade, for I dealt once in telling the truth.' (*MF*, p. 20)

This short speech contains two ideas which underpin the melancholy tales which Harley is to hear in London: that children are naturally good (or virtuous); and that the world can impose on a person enough to deflect him or her from their natural tendency to virtue.[23]

The beggar's subsequent explanation – which he evidently considers a justification – of his life of deceit contains a third tacit theme of the book. The beggar was reduced to penury by a series of natural disasters: his health was ruined by a bout of jail-fever when prison-visiting, and while in the throes of this illness, his house burnt down.[24] His broken health prevented him from resuming work as a labourer, and he freely admits that he had no savings to fall back on. However, the beggar isn't entirely worthy of pity. He visited prisons for less than laudable reasons: he sought out the company of convicts for their mirth and thoughtlessness. Further, we are told not that he *had* no living relatives to whom he could appeal for help, but that he *knew of* no living relatives, that is, that he had lost contact with his family. He had lived voluntarily as an itinerant, so had no ties of friendship; and he had lived so much for the moment that he had no savings to bolster him against loss of work. In short, he had lived entirely for himself, and so was in part to blame for his destitute condition.

During his meeting with the beggar, we see Harley acting appropriately for the first time. Even before being accosted by the beggar, Harley has decided to give the man sixpence:

The beggar had by this time come upon him and pulling off a piece of hat, asked charity of Harley; the dog began to beg too: – it was impossible to resist both; and in truth, the want of shoes and stockings had made both unnecessary, for Harley had destined sixpence for him before. (*MF*, p. 20)

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[23] This danger is touched on in the opening chapter when, discussing the abrasive nature of travel or experience of the worldly life, the author says: 'the friction is so violent, that not only the rust, but the metal too is lost in the process' (*MF*, p. 8).

[24] This is a comparatively restrained litany of disaster. The idea that the ill-fortunes of fate spare no man, regardless of their virtuousness, is demonstrated in the case of Edwards, in which injury is heaped upon injury (*MF*, pp. 87–95, 97–9).

More interestingly, during this episode, Harley begins to show a glimmer of discrimination. As the beggar takes his leave, Harley hesitates over giving the beggar a further shilling. His initial impulse, described as springing from an unidentifiable source 'not as severe as virtue, nor so serious as pity', is tempered by reason – Harley questions whether the beggar merits further charity. However, the reader is left in no doubt that Harley still has a long way to go to before he sheds his natural gaucheness. He apparently becomes so absorbed in considering this issue that he drops the coin, which is snapped up by the dog, which has been trained for such exigencies, and given to his master (*MF*, p. 22). Harley's hesitation shows that the abrasion by the world has begun it seems – and this, despite Harley being still close enough to home for the beggar to know him by name (*MF*, p. 20).

The opening sequence of chapters therefore indicates the subject matter of the book. Harley's journey is to be a rite of passage and the expectation is that, encountering residents in a city 'replete with temptations' (*MF*, p. 18), Harley will lose some of his naïveté – his adolescent rust. Mackenzie makes a glancing reference to this in a letter: '[the book] consists of some episodical adventures of a Man of Feeling; where his sentiments are occasionally expressed and the features of his mind developed, as the incidents draw them forth.'[25]

The first London sequence

As mentioned above, in this sequence of chapters, Harley repeatedly comes up against the deceptive nature of appearances. He has already learnt that the apparel of poverty guarantees nothing about the nature of its wearer. He meets and falls in with an excise man on the steps of the baronet's house (ch. XIX), and despite the man's manners belying the rank of the gentleman he

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[25] To James Elphinstone, 23 July 1770, *Letters 1766–1827*, p. 48. That Harley learnt from his encounter with the beggar is made plain in connection with his later recorded encounter with a beggar in London. Harley states: 'Yet I agree in some measure, ... with those who think, that charity to our common beggars is often misplaced; there are objects less obtrusive, whose title is a better one' (*MF*, p. 45). Unfortunately, this statement is made during an encounter in which Harley loses significantly more than shilling as a result of once again failing to judge on more than appearances.

seeks to convey in his dress and conversational subject matter, Harley has to be relieved of his misconception by someone who knows the excise man's history.[26] This mistake on Harley's part is juxtaposed against the still inefficient workings of Harley's reason. He allows himself to be conducted away by the 'young gentleman' just as he reaches the conclusion that he should remain indifferent to his fellow men regardless of their financial status. Harley draws this conclusion at the end of a 'rumination' about the power of wealth against breeding, and the ability of the wealthy to reduce their less wealthy social equals to a state of servility, from which we gather that Harley was fortifying himself against being humiliated a second time by the baronet.[27]

In London it seems, no one is as they appear. The excise man's suggestion that Harley dine with him leads to Harley meeting with two men who appear to be well below the station of both himself and the excise man. One, Mundy, a grazier, is dressed very shabbily; the other, Sam Wrightson, is only marginally better attired. Neither says a great deal during the meal, largely because the conversation is dominated by the excise man's endless store of anecdotes about high society, although they attempt to begin a political discussion which is quickly quashed by the excise man (*MF*, p. 27). Once the excise man and Mundy have departed, Harley learns that his new

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[26] *MF*, p. 28. That Harley is better versed in the manners of a gentleman than the excise man is evident from the very beginning of the encounter. The excise man bows to Harley as they pass on the steps of the house. This startles Harley, although he returns the bow, as 'he could not remember ever having seen him before' (*MF*, p. 24), that is, they hadn't been introduced and the bow was therefore inappropriate. The ease with which the excise man can insinuate himself into the socially élite company he boasts of keeping (*MF*, p. 25) becomes evident. The disparity between the excise man's actual and professed social position becomes increasingly more overt over the dinner he and Harley take together: his claim to being unused to eating 'at the horrid mechanical hour' of artisans is undermined by his healthy appetite and enthusiasm for the food (*MF*, pp. 26–7); his introduction of talk of a fight as 'something of the fine arts' (*MF*, p. 27), being two of his grosser mistakes. There is added irony in Harley's mistake about the rank of the excise man: earlier in the book he is said to have been tutored in arithmetic and book-keeping by an excise man (*MF*, p. 12).

[27] *MF*, p. 23. That he found his first meeting unnerving is alluded to slightly earlier in the text: 'To people of equal sensibility, the influence of those trifles we mentioned on his deportment will not appear surprising.'

acquaintance, far from being a young gentleman is an ex-footman and pimp. He is also not at all wealthy. Mundy, by contrast is worth a considerable sum – 'nine thousand if he's worth a farthing' (*MF*, pp. 28–9). The full extent of Harley's misinterpretation of the nature of the company at this meal is only revealed much later in the book. Shortly before he leaves London, he learns that both Wrightson and the excise man had applied for the lease of the same Crown lands as he (*MF*, pp. 74–5).

Harley's education in the shiftless world of profligate London continues with a visit to Moorfields, a lunatic asylum. In this connection Harley is persuaded once again to overrule his principles: 'Harley objected to [the visit] because ... "I think it an inhuman practice to expose the greatest misery with which our nature is afflicted."' That Harley is not in harmony with received opinion on this matter is made plain by the opening statement of this chapter: 'Of those things called Sights, which every stranger is supposed desirous to see, Bedlam is one.' The majority of visitors to London lack sensibility – Harley gives a further reason for not wishing to visit Moorfields: 'it is a distress which the humane must see with the painful reflection, that it is not in their power to alleviate it' (*MF*, pp. 29–30). Far from being an entertainment, then, for those of a sensitive disposition, the experience is painful.[28] The majority, it seems, do not react in this way.

After the unnerving experience of witnessing the bestial state of the incurably mad, Harley is shown three inmates whose wits have been turned by single-minded dedication to respectively mechanistic science; the stock market; and the (deliciously absurd) academic question of the pronunciation of Greek vowels.[29] Harley's guide at this point, a 'decent looking man', turns

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[28] That it is viewed as entertainment – as a show – by the acquaintance who proposes the visit is implied by the statement: 'To that place, therefore, an acquaintance of Harley's, after having accompanied him to several other shows, proposed a visit' (*MF*, p. 29).

[29] *MF*, pp. 30–3. Mackenzie's choice of causes of insanity are topical: the follower of Newtonian physics became unhinged when his calculations about the path of a comet failed to be confirmed by the comet itself – Mackenzie refers to 'Comet-gazing' in a letter to Elizabeth Rose dated 15 September 1769 at which time Messier's comet, first discovered in August of that year, was easily visible to the naked eye; see *Letters*, p. 2, no. 11. The stock-

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out himself to be an inmate: victim to delusions of grandeur, he believes himself to be the Chan of Tartary (*MF*, pp. 30–2).

Despite his expectation that his visit to the asylum will be a painful experience, Harley is unmoved by these four inmates. However, the history of the next inmate he meets reduces him to tears. The man she loved died in his attempt to accrue enough wealth in the West Indies to persuade her father to agree to their marriage. Her distress at his death was not merely discounted by her father, but compounded by his insistence that she marry a rich miser. The madwoman's insanity is the outcome of her having being victim to two sources of intense distress, simultaneously. On hearing her history from her keeper, Harley gives the keeper a large sum of money as incentive for him to treat the madwoman with consideration, bursts into tears and leaves (*MF*, pp. 32–5).

The final chapter of this sequence is a splendid muddle of scrambled thinking – albeit by one who is introduced as 'one of the wise'.[30] Harley is exposed to the thoughts of a man who was so deeply disappointed in love and in friendship in his youth, that he has withdrawn as completely as possible from all forms of social interaction: a misanthropist who lectures on the value of friendship; a man who extols the value of truth and excoriates the contemporary tendency to place emphasis on appearance while incorrectly deducing from Harley's dress that he is one of the fashionable court-oriented set of London and so dedicated to 'avowed insincerity' (*MF*, p. 39); who disparages politeness as no more than ceremonious jargon, i.e. empty communication, while also brooking no conversation of any kind with another. This man (correctly) tracks the extent to which overemphasis on

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jobber will be representative of the frequent spates of bankruptcies at that time.

[30] *MF*, p. 35. The dubious nature of Harley's acquaintances in London is gently, if insistently, implied throughout the London sequences, by the kinds of expeditions proposed for Harley's entertainment. The acquaintance's assessment of the misanthropist's merit, questionable at the outset, becomes more dubious still when he pronounces the misanthropist's thought to be valuable: 'disagreeable in its operation, but hard metals may be the brighter for it' (*MF*, p. 43). While the misanthropist's lecture missed its mark entirely with respect to Harley, it seems it might have struck a chord with his acquaintance.

wealth and the trappings of wealth corrupt the social fabric, but he refuses to countenance the possibility that anyone now eschews these values – he is convinced that all benevolence is tainted by vanity, i.e. it is motivated by self-interest.[31] In short, his life belies his beliefs, and his understanding of Harley's nature is turned upside down and inside out in the process. Truth, which he regards as 'the most amiable, as well as the most natural of virtues' (*MF*, p. 39) can't possibly find a way into his thinking.[32] This is particularly ironic in the light of his complaint against philosophers who 'adopt modes of truth to follow them through the paths of error, and defend paradoxes merely to be singular in defending them' (*MF*, p. 39).

The second London sequence

The third, and longest, sequence of chapters is still set in London. This raises a question of whether there is any obvious reason for Mackenzie to introduce a putative break in the narrative at this point. Harley continues to meet people whose lives have been detrimentally affected by the social mores of London. However, there are two differences between the episodes in the first London sequences, and the second. In the first sequence, Harley is essentially a spectator, a passive observer: his sole independent act is that of giving money to the keeper at Moorfields, while in the second London sequence, he becomes agent. Again, in the first London sequence Harley is chaperoned, but in the second London sequence he is no longer accompanied.[33]

The second London sequence concerns two separate encounters: with the card sharps; and with Miss Atkins, the prostitute. The first of these is disastrous. Harley seems doomed to be ever the victim of deceit in London, and in this case his failure to discern the unmeritworthy is made even more

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[31] That there is some truth in the misanthropist's views is evident from the echoes of these found in Harley's later conversation with Silton (*MF*, pp. 80–3). The misanthropist has drawn the wrong pragmatic conclusions.

[32] In a letter to Elizabeth Rose, Mackenzie wrote: 'recluse People ... like dead Liquors, you may force them into Fermentation for a while, will, like them, be afterwards all the deader for it' (12 February 1770, *Letters*, p. 36).

[33] This point is made in Barker, *Henry Mackenzie,* p. 27.

tragic by the fact that he seems to be trying to find some kind of method by which he can overcome continually being taken in by people's appearances. He opts to rely on 'the science of physiognomy', being confident in his skill in this approach.

In the episode with the card sharps we become increasingly aware of Harley's main downfall: he naturally believes that people are good; kind, truthful, benevolent; and persists in this belief about an individual despite all evidence to the contrary. In the case of the con man, Harley's persistence reaches ludicrous levels. Bolstered by his confidence that using physiognomic criteria, he has fallen in with a genuinely benevolent gentleman, he explains away everything which conflicts with this idea: he gives a beggar a shilling in appreciation of the con man's 'good intentions' which he ascribes on the basis of a conversation between the beggar and con man in which the con man expresses compassion but professes himself unable to help in any pragmatic way, because he has no change. Later, when the con man produces ten shilling coins to act as counters in a game of cards, Harley explains to himself the con man's earlier claim to have no change by ascribing to the con man a sentimental attachment to the coins – disarmingly comparing this imputed attachment with his own for a pair of brass sleeve buttons (*MF*, pp. 46–7). His conviction that the con man is genuinely benevolent (and hence that his own skill in physiognomy is confirmed) deepens during discussion with him on the nature and value of public acts of charity. The outcome of this encounter is, as mentioned above, that Harley is lured into a card game and loses a considerable sum of money. And even then he tries to turn the experience to some virtuous end, by consoling himself with the thought that the accomplice who won the money must have been miserably poor, because he had had to borrow money from the con man for the game (*MF*, p. 52). He is only relieved of this illusion later that evening when recounting his escapade to friends, he learns that the pair of card sharps were known as such.[34]

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[34] And then only persuaded with difficulty (*MF*, p. 52). Harley's naïveté is the cause of much mirth, despite one of the company recently having been fleeced for a much larger sum.

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He lurches from the encounter with the card sharps to his meeting with the prostitute, which eventually results in Harley's one successfully beneficent action in London, as mentioned in section 1. This is a surprising development in the narrative because everything has been put in place for Harley once again to be gulled. He has no more than the prostitute's word that her situation is as bad as it is, yet he parts with his last half guinea, more than ten times the amount he gave to the beggar he encountered earlier, wishing it were still more (*MF*, p. 50). The plight of the prostitute and her eventual rescue is one of the more tearful episodes in the book. And indeed it is tears to which Harley responds initially; 'There is virtue in these tears; let the fruit of them be virtue' (*MF*, p. 50).

Two aspects of this episode differentiate it from others in this and the first London sequence. The woman is depicted as essentially virtuous; and Harley's involvement requires a degree of commitment not found in his earlier acts of charity – his involvement with each of the two beggars and with the madwoman ends with his donation of money. In the case of Miss Atkins, he follows up his first encounter with a further meeting the following day, and, subsequently takes on the responsibility of finding lodgings for her and her father, in the house in which he is staying – the implication being that contact with the Atkinses does not end with the end of the associated narrative.

Harley's sensibility matures – and so the story becomes more tearful – as he approaches home. In addition, his benevolence demands more commitment in that he takes on the patronage of Edwards and the remnants of Edwards' family (*MF*, pp. 100–1), but it also becomes driven less by melodrama than by pathos. Harley's journey to London although unsuccessful materially, has achieved what Ben Silton would have anticipated: the maturation and tempering of Harley's highly emotional nature by prudence.

4 *The Man of Feeling* as a manual for the development of sensibility
The development of sensibility

If we take *The Man of Feeling* to chart the maturation of Harley's nature then we should be able to identify what this growth consists of. It is this: common to Harley's successful acts of benevolence is an unmediated response on Harley's part to the plight of another. Harley's initial reaction to the beggar with the dog at the start of his journey to London is prompted by the 'want of shoes and stockings', and his response is occasioned by the fact that moments before he had had to remove a pebble from his shoe (*MF*, p. 19): 'Our delicacies ... are fantastic; they are not in nature! that beggar walks over the sharpest of stones barefoot, while I have lost the most delightful dream in the world, from the smallest of them happening to get into my shoe' (*MF*, pp. 19–20). Harley had to some extent 'entered the experience' of the beggar; and it was this which prompted him to give him alms.

The same 'mechanism' is at work during Harley's visit to Bedlam. He is horror-struck by the incurably mad; left indifferent to the madness caused by scientific, economic and academic pursuit; but is completely overwhelmed by the history of the madwoman, whose insanity has been caused by the death of the man she loves. If we consider this incident a little more closely we can perhaps see why.

The woman's father withheld permission for Billy to marry his daughter because Billy was not wealthy enough. Billy travelled to the West Indies with the intention of making his fortune and re-requesting the woman's hand in marriage, but fell ill and died shortly after reaching his destination. The woman's madness, as mentioned above, was the outcome of her distress and despair – two powerful emotions in response to two separate states of affairs: the death of the man she loved and the unavoidability of concurring with an impending and distasteful marriage of convenience. From the text we know that the madwoman is the wreck of a woman of sensibility: in addition to her nature being sensitive enough for extremes of emotion to tilt her irrevocably into insanity, her appearance echoes faintly that of Miss Walton: she is said to have a superior dignity; her face is pale and wasted but 'less squalid' than those of other inmates; and she has an expression of restrained dejection –

one which moves people to pity unmixed with horror. She is quite mad, but with refinement.[35]

There is enough resonance between Harley's hopeless love for Miss Walton and the madwoman's hopeless love for Billy, for Harley to feel an affinity with both Billy and the madwoman. Miss Walton is superior socially to Harley – her father is well connected enough to be able to give Harley a letter of introduction to the baronet providing entry into a realm of 'the great' to which Harley would otherwise have been denied access (*MF*, p. 13). Much later we learn that there is an enormous discrepancy between Harley's financial status and that of Miss Walton: Harley has an annual income of only £250, while Miss Walton is heiress to £4,000 p.a. (*MF*, p. 126). Using London values, this disparity of wealth is too great to be bridged by love.[36] In effect, Harley is in the same position as Billy was. He can also resonate with the madwoman, in the hopelessness of her love for Billy. The similarities are compounded when the madwoman remarks on a resemblance between Harley and 'her Billy', albeit in expression – presumably sorrow. Harley is reduced to tears by the keeper's description of the events which led to the woman's insanity. He is transfixed by astonishment and pity after interacting with the woman. He then gives the keeper two guineas to ensure that she is well looked after, bursts into tears, and leaves.[37]

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[35] Mackenzie comments on the difficulty of writing with restraint in a letter to Elizabeth Rose, albeit in connection with the chapter describing the anguish of Mr Atkins: 'These are Scenes I delight to describe; but it is delicate to describe them with Propriety: Feelings must appear but not obtrusive; just so much as to call forth the Hearts of our Readers' (8 November 1769, *Letters*, p. 29).

[36] Harley is of this opinion too. In the editor's précis of the 'missing narrative' following a section detailing Harley's despair when misinformed about Miss Walton's impending marriage to another, the editor comments: 'for according to the conception of the world, the love for a man of Harley's fortune for the heiress of 4000 l. a-year, is indeed desperate' (*MF*, p. 126).

[37] *MF*, pp. 34–5. Simpson points out that it is significant that Harley bursts into tears after he has donated alms as this highlights a self-conscious aspect to his benevolence. Simpson suggests that this be considered in the light of the misanthropist's cynicism about the motivation of those who claim to act motivated by sensibility, by 'natural impulse of the heart', which he believes to actually be motivated by vanity: 'this secret satisfaction is truly excellent – when we have some friend to whom we may discover its excellence' (*MF*, p.

Harley again in some way shares the experience of a victim in regard to Miss Atkins, the prostitute. His distaste for her soliciting and the moral depravity it implies, are overridden when, having fainted from hunger, Miss Atkins explains that she hasn't eaten for two days. Harley responds by entering the experience – imagining her hunger: "'Two days!" – said he –; "and I have fared sumptuously every day"' (*MF*, p. 50). Harley's identification with her state turns her from a miserable creature (*MF*, p. 49), to a woman he treated 'with as much respect as if she had been a dutchess' (*MF*, p. 50). Harley's reaction to her at this stage is a far cry from the self-conscious 'ideas of pity suitable to the scene around him' which he entertains as he walks 'amidst a croud of those wretches who wait the uncertain wages of prostitution' just before he is approached by Miss Atkins (*MF*, p. 48).

During Harley's meeting with Miss Atkins the following morning, and having heard her history; he is encouraged to resonate with her experience first by direct appeal, and later by indirect appeal. Miss Atkins says:

'Amidst all the horrors of such a state, surrounded with wretches totally callous, lost alike to humanity and to shame, *think, Mr Harley, think what I endured*: nor wonder that I at last yielded to the solicitations of that miscreant I had seen at her house, and sunk to the prostitution which he tempted ...

'Oh! did the daughters of virtue know our sufferings! did they see our hearts torn with anguish amidst the affectation of gaiety which our faces are obliged to assume; our bodies tortured by disease, our minds with that consciousness which they cannot lose! *Did they know, did they think this, Mr Harley!* – their censures are just; but their pity perhaps might spare the wretches whom their justice should condemn.'[38]

Miss Atkins' speech reduces Harley to tears (*MF*, p. 66). The use of indirect invitation to enter into the feelings of a sufferer by Miss Atkins' father similarly induces a tearful response from Harley: 'Could such tales as mine, Mr Harley, be sometimes suggested to the daughters of levity, did they but know with what anxiety the heart of a parent flutters round the child he loves,

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42) (Kenneth Simpson, *The Protean Scot: The Crisis of Identity in Eighteenth Century Scottish Literature* (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1988), p. 148).

[38] *MF*, p. 65; emphasis added. It is unlikely that Harley had entertained anything remotely resembling feelings to which Miss Atkins so eloquently appeals while he was walking through the crowd of prostitutes on the Strand the previous evening.

they would be less apt to construe into harshness that delicate concern for their conduct' (*MF*, p. 73). In each case the emotional ferment described is one of which Harley would not have had any direct experience, yet he is able to respond unselfconsciously with sincerity to the speaker's anguish.

Harley's ability to connect non-rationally and sympathetically comes into its own while he hears Edwards' history. Edwards' account of his eviction from the farm he and previous generations had occupied, compounded by the death of his dog as the family were leaving, causes Harley to weep so hard his face is bathed in tears (*MF*, p. 89); and he becomes immersed in Edwards' subsequent ill fortune to the extent that, while Edwards recounts the intrusion on Christmas Eve by a press gang, Harley is so swept up by the narrative that he loses all sense of time and place, and seizes Edwards' sword, to defend the family from the press gang: 'At these words Harley started with a convulsive sort of motion, and grasping Edwards' sword, drew it half out of the scabbard, with a look of the most frantic wildness' (*MF*, p. 91).

Sensibility isn't just the provenance of the benefactor. While recognition of another's distress can produce tears, the victim's recognition of another's sincere response to their plight also produces tears.[39] For example, Miss Atkins weeps tears of gratitude at Harley's generosity after her dénouement in the brothel (*MF*, p. 49); she weeps again when her father unbends enough agree to listen to her explanation of her downfall (*MF*, p. 68); and Edwards is reduced to 'blubbering' like a child at Harley's recognition of the hardship he suffered when dishonourably discharged from the army in the wake of an act of compassion on his part.[40] Edwards gushes again when Harley offers him and his grandchildren a home on his estate.[41]

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[39] Curiously, today, responding with tears to sympathy is taken to be a symptom of depression.

[40] Harley's reaction to Edwards' story at this point is melodramatic: 'when he had given vent to the fulness of his heart by a shower of tears', he pressed him in his arms and said 'Edwards, ... let me hold thee to my bosom; let me imprint the virtue of thy sufferings on my soul' (*MF*, pp. 94–5).

[41] *MF*, p. 101. It is symptomatic of the madwoman's imbalanced state of mind that she is unable to cry; she responds to Harley's tears with 'I would weep too, but my brain is dry' (*MF*, p. 34).

Responding to melancholic tales with tears was considered as 'giving convincing testimony of one's sensibility'.[42] An ability to elicit tears was also proof of a developed sensibility, and the height of refined sensibility was to be able to do both – which explains Edwards' glance at Harley after recounting the death of his dog, which memory produced in Edwards 'one tear and no more' (*MF*, p. 89)

We may conclude that it is this ability to respond immediately and unthinkingly to others' distress which marks Harley's maturation as a man of feeling – to his achieving a 'proper sensibility' – in the vocabulary of the period, to his having developed sufficient 'pliancy of mind' or 'complacency'.[43]

Harley's London experience doesn't merely demonstrate that a refined sensibility gives an unmediated means by which people can determine how to act virtuously – how to respond appropriately and with sincerity to those they meet, as benefactor or friend. The story actually guides the reader through the stages of refinement. Natural sympathy prompts Harley's decision to donate sixpence to the beggar with the dog. A less straightforward, more complexly based sympathetic reaction prompts his response to the madwoman – a resonance with her emotional distress rather than physical discomfort; and then a resonance with an imagined physical and then mental distress prompts his response to Miss Atkins. At each stage, Harley is required to dissociate from the circumstances of the victim to focus on the victim him- or herself, until with regard to Miss Atkins, he has to disregard a plethora of reasons why she might be dismissed as irredeemably morally depraved. A reader able to respond with tears appropriately – that is, as and when Harley weeps – is assumed to have developed her sensibility in

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[42] Harriet Lee from *The Errors of Innocence* (1786) quoted in Tompkins, *The Popular Novel*, p. 96. Lee goes on to define sensibility as 'a certain tender sympathy of disposition, which, tho' originally deriv'd from the passions, is meliorated into something gentler and more pleasing than those'.

[43] Mackenzie refers to the development of sensibility as the development of nerves of the soul, which improve with use: 'the Soul as well as the body has nerves, which are only affected in a certain indescribable Manner, & gain by frequent Exertion a very Superior degree of Feeling' (8 July 1769, *Letters*, p. 14).

the same way as Harley. In this way, the book tutors the sensibility of the reader.

The nature of sensibility

If we take Harley's maturation to consist in his growing ability to enter others' situation in some manner, regardless of whether their experience is one remotely related to any personal experience on Harley's part, then, by implication, the reader should be able to learn to do the same. That is, by reading about and becoming absorbed by Harley's adventures in London, the reader may be considered to be exposed to the same kinds of stimuli as Harley, and so be in a position to develop the same kind of responses.

In this sense, then, sentimental literature which 'works' – which produces tears in the reader – is potentially a powerful tool for educating the readership. There is nothing in *The Man of Feeling* to suggest that Harley's reactions are primarily the result of his actual encounters with those who merit his attention. Harley's tears, an indication that sensibility is at work, are prompted not by witnessing the events which befall the victim, but by the *story* of their downfall. Harley weeps at the story of the madwoman: 'Though this story was told in very plain language, it had particularly attracted Harley's notice: he had given it the tribute of some tears.'[44] He weeps at the end of Miss Atkins' long and detailed account of her downfall (*MF*, p. 66); he weeps at the end of Mr Atkins' account of the distress he felt at his daughter's disappearance; and he weeps at the end of Edwards' extraordinary litany of woes leading to his returning an old soldier (*MF*, p. 94). However, he does not weep when the prostitute faints – he panics:

Harley started from his seat, and, catching her in his arms, supported her from falling to the ground, looking wildly at the door, as if he wanted to run for assistance, but durst not leave the miserable creature. It was not till some minutes after, that it occurred to him to ring the bell, which at last however he thought of, and rung with repeated violence even after the waiter appeared. Luckily the waiter had his senses somewhat more about him. (*MF*, p. 49)

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[44] *MF*, p. 34. The reference to 'plain language' here indicates that Harley wasn't responding to rhetoric.

But tellingly he weeps the following morning at the *recollection* of the episode: 'he recalled the languid form of the fainting wretch to his mind; he wept at the recollection of her tears' (*MF*, p. 53). Keeping one's head during an emergency is definitely not a characteristic of developed sensibility, it appears.

If we look at the gradual change in the nature of Harley's responses to situations through the book it becomes apparent that these evolve to the extent that, eventually, he feels some kind of resonance with the victim's distress which is independent of whether he has experienced anything remotely resembling its cause.[45] It is almost as if sensibility is a sixth sense. This is consonant with the then prevalent idea that sensibility was a natural propensity which people could develop with practice, until it 'responded' in an unmediated way. It isn't an appreciation of someone's experience – it isn't an intellectual response: it is more like the response of windchimes to a breeze.

Sensibility was considered to be capable of development to such an extent that people were able to respond to the slightest of stimuli.[46] This highly complex, ultimately ineffable, natural capacity involved some kind of interaction, either actual, or remembered or imagined or by association. It appears that a sensibility-informed response on the part of one can stimulate a similar response in the other. In a sense then, sensibility responds not to the anguish of an individual but to evidence of their humanity, which in part explains why benevolence evinces tears of gratitude. It isn't the benevolent act per se which counts, but the sensibility which informs it, and it is this to which the recipient responds. And the ability of a reader to respond to the

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[45] Contemporary literature also referred to this as harmonising or synchronising with the victim's reactions; see Dwyer, *Virtuous Discourse*, p. 126.

[46] The madwoman's former refined sensibility is demonstrated by the cause of her insanity: extreme emotion has overstimulated her sensibility and tipped her into insanity.

humanity in the victims of *The Man of Feeling* is taken as evidence of a developed sensibility.[47]

Reacting to minute stimuli was regarded as a sign of refined sensibility, but this leaves people with a highly developed sensibility vulnerable to the more full-blooded experiences; hence Harley's overreaction when Miss Atkins fainted, and the madwoman's reaction to the strong stimuli of deep emotion. Further, because evidence of humanity on the part of one evinces a response in the other, to react to a sad tale with an outburst of weeping is likely to overstimulate those victims of a highly developed sensibility. The aim, then, is to produce a restrained response: a single tear – and to respond to minute stimuli, as the book's fictitious author does in dropping a single tear in memory of Silton at the sight of his empty chair, and again even when merely recalling the sight of his empty chair: 'I gave thee a tear then: accept of one cordial tear that falls to thy memory now' (*MF*, p. 8).

The conclusion is that one can learn to fine-tune one's natural sensitivity, and to do so without actually experiencing face-to-face encounters with victims of disaster. One can lose one's adolescent rust merely by reading about such disasters.

Didactic purpose and the text

However, if *The Man of Feeling* is to provide a practical guide to the development of sensibility, then the reader has to be exposed to the melancholic tales in as near a fashion as Harley is depicted as doing. Harley has to act as conduit but not a mediator to ensure a direct connection between reader and victim's tale. Hence Harley cannot have any characteristics of the more familiar romantic hero. The reader mustn't be swayed in her reactions by passion. Harley has to remain 'out of the way' – must be insubstantial

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[47] Hence Lady Louisa Stuart's concern, mentioned above (p. 30). Writing to Walter Scott in 1826, she described herself reading *The Man of Feeling* when 14 and worrying that she 'should not cry enough to gain the credit of proper sensibility' (quoted in Vickers, 'Introduction', p. viii).

enough to vanish completely from the reader's mind as and when a lesson is on the way.[48]

The potential didactic function of the text, then, determines the nature of the hero. He has to be bland. Arguably it also informs Mackenzie's choice of structure. If the hero has to get out of the way in order for a reader to be able to respond to a victim's history, to ensure that no irrelevancies disturb the reader's response; then Harley's story has to be similarly pared down – which is precisely what is achieved by the structure Mackenzie chose for the book.[49] The gaps in the story, the missing chapters of the fictional manuscript, allow Mackenzie to restrict the amount of detail he gives in the tale; and to forego any requirement for some kind of causal link between events; which in turn allows him to leave out those elements of a narrative which set up a reader's expectations.[50] Everything is subordinated to the incidents on which Mackenzie wants his readers to focus. We know little of the details of Harley's education, for example, bar that it was formally inadequate. We are not told what happened to Miss Atkins and her father subsequent to their being installed in Harley's London lodgings.

Arguably the book isn't merely a vehicle for the development of sensibility. It is also a selection of cautionary tales suitable for adolescents, issuing in such rules of thumb as 'Do not judge a person by his appearance' (because the overtly poor are not always worthy (the beggar's tale); the

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[48] The fact that novels could manipulate readers in this way is perhaps why Mackenzie worked so hard to establish that both the author and the editor were of suitable temperament to work on a biography of such a man has Harley. The editor remarks that he would have wept had he known that the author was reliable (*MF*, p. 5). This is neatly juxtaposed against his comment that his dog is good despite his having lost its pedigree. The dog can be regarded to function well enough without its antecedents being provable, but a book may not (*MF*, p. 5).

[49] Mackenzie states one of his intentions in writing *The Man of Feeling* as being to 'have it as different from the Entanglement of a Novel as can be' (31 July 1769, *Letters*, p. 18).

[50] The curate complains about this as a feature of the complete manuscript – even before he had made inroads into the fictive text, he couldn't find the author 'in one strain for two chapters' (*MF*, p. 5). The exception to the lack of movement internal to the narrative between incidents is provided by Harley's love for Miss Walton, which is mentioned in the opening sequence.

overtly mad are not always frightening (the madwoman's tale); the overtly fallen are not always irretrievably depraved (Miss Atkins' tale); the overtly wealthy are not always honourable (remember the baronet's susceptibility to bribery), or well bred (remember Harley's encounter with the excise man)); judge a man by his 'deeds not his words' (recollect Harley's meetings with the card sharp and with the misanthropist); and 'Choose your friends wisely' (think about the misanthropist's tale; and about Harley's meeting with his friends after the episodes with the card sharps and Miss Atkins; and Sedley's discovery about his 'friend Respino's treacherous behaviour' ('The Pupil' fragment)). In fact, reading *The Man of Feeling* is not unlike reading a series of Mackenzie's contributions to the Mirror Club's moralistic periodicals *The Mirror* and *The Lounger*. And again the structure of the book encourages the reader to consider each chapter individually. With little reliance on causal movement within the text to link the separate episodes, and neither suspense nor horror, there is no great temptation for the reader hurry through the book 'to find out what happens next'.[51] Hence, the reader is encouraged by the nature of the text itself, to read each chapter as an insular morality essay.

Throughout the book, Harley meets individuals whose lives have been devastated in the wake of a set of values skewed by the corruptive influence of increased wealth. In some cases, the link between wealth and catastrophe is straightforward: for example, the madwoman's incarceration is the outcome of the course of true and virtuous love being perverted by her father's overriding ambition to attain greater wealth. In other cases the link is more complex. In fact, the extent of the destructive effect of placing wealth and its trappings above all else is shown in Miss Atkins' tale.

Superficially Miss Atkins' fall from grace is the result of her seduction by the free-thinking Winbrooke. Superficially then, Winbrooke is the villain of the story, but the seduction itself is the outcome of a plethora of wrong turns, not only by Miss Atkins and Winbrooke, but also by their respective fathers. Miss Atkins and Winbrooke reach adulthood lacking a firm moral grounding

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[51] That the outcome was deliberate on Mackenzie's part is evident from a letter in which he wrote of '... the want of connection in the Parts' making it 'bear being read at Intervals [better] than some other books should' (8 November 1769, *Letters*, p. 27).

to act with propriety as a consequence of insufficient parental guidance. Winbrooke has just returned from a Grand Tour well versed in the art of flattery and seduction; and Miss Atkins has been left to glean knowledge of the world from novels.[52] The upshot of Miss Atkins' lack of supervision is that, for her, the world is full of romantic heroes, and she automatically casts Winbrooke as one such. In Miss Atkins' vicarious novel-based experience, romantic love leads to marriage; in Winbrooke's experience, since Miss Atkins is unlikely to bring a large dowry,[53] so marriage to her would be impossible, flattery leads to seduction and the acquisition of a mistress. Each has enough natural virtue to hesitate over committing themselves to the inevitable satisfaction of their respective expectations, but neither is sufficiently grounded, morally, to act on their naturally virtuous inclinations. However, neither Miss Atkins nor Winbrooke can be considered solely to blame for their respective shortcomings. Winbrooke has been brought up to adhere to 'maxims of vulgar doctrine' (MF, p. 56), that is, the pursuit and enjoyment of increased wealth, and Sir Winbrooke has little influence over his son, questions of inheritance aside. The gaps in Miss Atkins' moral education have a more complex aetiology. Her father brought her up to revere honour above virtue – to give importance to being seen to have acted with propriety. Her father is not entirely to blame for this: his adherence to the tenets of honour is a consequence of his having been exposed to the dogmatism of a religious code which defines virtue only in relation to one's destination in the next life, rather than one's passage through this (MF, p. 55). Mr Atkins rejected the religious code, and reinterpreted virtue as honour. The destructive effects of aspirations to wealth in this case then are not the direct cause of Miss Atkins' downfall nor of Winbrooke's knavery – rather

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[52] This is the theme of Charlotte Lennox, *The Female Quixote*, in which Arabella, the heroine, is eventually persuaded that her Romances are not histories, by reference to their heavy reliance on coincidence, and consequent lack of casual connection between elements of the tales (Charlotte Lennox, *The Female Quixote, or the Adventures of Arabella* (1783), ed. Margaret Dalziel (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), Bk IX, ch. XI).

[53] Winbrooke obviously considered the possibility of disinheritance well-founded reason enough to give for breaking his alliance with Miss Atkins, although the text intimates that Miss Atkins believes he had other – perhaps less honourable – reasons for his precipitate disappearance (*MF*, p. 59).

each is vulnerable to these effects because they haven't been brought up to be sufficiently well armed against them: each has gaps in their moral armour.

The conclusions to be learnt from Miss Atkins' experience do not follow straightforwardly from the tale. The possibility of a reader failing to grasp the full import of her tale is increased by the style in which it is written, as here, Mackenzie adopts the melodrama and high register of contemporary 'bad' novels – of precisely that kind of novel which has been instrumental in forming Miss Atkins' dangerously unrealistic expectations of an encounter with a romantic (and honourable) hero.[54]

The story is punctuated by detailed descriptions of the gestures and postures of the protagonists. An example is provided by the description of Miss Atkins' faint:

Harley filled the lady's glass; which she had no sooner tasted, than dropping it on the floor, and eagerly catching his arm, her eye grew fixed, her lip assumed a clayey whiteness, and she fell back lifeless in the chair. (*MF*, p. 49)

A little later she is described as 'the dying figure'. Mr Atkins' entrance is similarly a moment of high drama:

the door burst open, and a man entered in the garb of an officer. When he discovered his daughter and Harley, he started back a few paces; his look assumed a furious wildness! he laid his hand on his sword. ... 'Villain,' he cried, 'thou seest a father who had once a daughter's honour to preserve; blasted as it now is, behold him ready to avenge its loss!' (*MF*, p. 66)

with the climax provided by the description of a closing scene – which can only be described as theatrical:

His daughter was now prostrate at his feet. 'Strike,' said she, 'strike here a wretch, whose misery cannot end but with that death she deserves.' Her hair had fallen on her shoulders! her look had the horrid calmness of out-breathed despair! Her father would have spoken; his lip quivered, his cheek grew pale! his eyes lost the lightening of their fury! there was a reproach in them, but with a mingling of pity! He returned them up to heaven – then on his

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[54] Tompkins gives a description of the common features of the romantic novels of the period (*The Popular Novel*, ch. 2).

daughter. – he laid his left hand on his heart – the sword dropped from his right – he burst into tears.[55]

The story seems to proceed in a series of stills – but at a pace, nevertheless. Tompkins identifies this as a characteristic feature of romantic novels, which she sums up beautifully as: 'Fortune's wheel is wrenched round at a giddy rate, and the entire cast are jerked from posture to posture, with barely enough time to gasp out the appropriate comments.'[56] The dialogue is conducted in absurdly high language, again characteristic of the romantic novel of the period – for example, the father is sufficiently compos mentis to express his shock at finding Harley in Miss Atkins' company in extraordinarily eloquent and complex language.[57] Another feature of the romantic novel on which Mackenzie relies in this episode is the use of coincidence: Miss Atkins happens to alight at the inn at which Winbrooke is staying when she pursues him to London (*MF*, p. 60); and her father happens to relocate his daughter after a considerable time, just on the morning that Harley visits after his accidental encounter the previous night, leading to the histrionics when Mr Atkins mistakenly assumes that he is Winbrooke. So, despite the elements of the tale having considerable importance to the didactic function of the book, they are buried in an uncharacteristic

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[55] *MF*, pp. 66–7. It's actually quite difficult to work out which way up the daughter has prostrated herself, given the account of her look: face down or face up? Tompkins suggests that use of 'prostration' (frequently found in romantic novels) is always to be understood as hyperbole; that it might mean kneeling (*The Popular Novel*, p. 107). Tompkins discusses the use of theatrical gesture in sentimental novels of the period on pp. 107–9.

[56] Tompkins, *The Popular Novel*, p. 60. Harley seems to catch the pace of the bad novel too. Mackenzie gives a delightful description of Harley's frenzy as he tries to leave to meet his appointment with Miss Atkins. He had to return to his rooms twice, first for Miss Atkins' address, and then for his purse, and having retrieved his purse he couldn't make himself stop to lock his bureau, although only 'two vibrations of a pendulum would have served him to lock his bureau; – but they could not be spared' (*MF*, p. 54).

[57] Tompkins discusses the use of register in dialogue in sentimental fiction, and gives several of the florid excesses as examples (*The Popular Novel*, pp. 108, 352–65). Harley seems to be afflicted with the same inability to use mundane language when he meets Edwards – see, for example, the quoted text in n. 40.

maelstrom of exactly the kind of detail Mackenzie has taken pains to avoid elsewhere.

However, Harley has developed sufficiently to be able to disentangle what is, and what is not, irretrievable. He recognises that Miss Atkins is essentially virtuous even before hearing her history (*MF*, p. 50), and is sufficiently convinced of her intrinsic virtue – despite her having been seduced, and imprisoned, and worked as a concubine and a prostitute – for him to be able to convince her father that even given the dishonour, she merits his forgiveness (*MF*, p. 68). This conclusion generalises: the moral rot can be stopped if people adjust their perspectives and are guided by their sensibility. Mackenzie uses this conclusion as the basis of a practical morality propounded in the sections of the book located away from London.

Mackenzie takes pains here as elsewhere to ensure that a reader won't fail to draw the right conclusions from the cautionary tales forming the bulk of the London sequences of chapters. Nor does he leave it to the reader to identify the true villain in these tales. During a sustained speech in which he defends a more romantic, less prosaic attitude, Harley cites 'the immense riches acquired by individuals' as the cause of the general deterioration in the moral community (*MF*, pp. 82–3). Increased wealth has 'erected a standard of ambition', which ambition undermines the twin pillars of a stable moral community: private morals and public virtue.[58] Young people have adopted the ambitions concomitant to increased personal wealth, and recast all in their light: 'their desire for pleasure is warped to the desire of wealth'. Even love has yielded to wealth in this way: marriages are contracted with one eye on the dowry; and since wealth defines a person's status and merit, other discourse becomes unnecessary: appearing wealthy is sufficient to guarantee a person's good reputation. Harley ends this speech with a powerful statement about the cumulative effect of this misplacement of values: virtue is forgotten and vice is no longer recognised as such:

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[58] *MF*, p. 82. 'Private' here is used to refer to the domain of the estate rather than in the sense of 'domestic' – and is opposed to a man's public or civic life. This is discussed in Dwyer, *Virtuous Discourse*, pp. 95f.

This I hold to be an alarming crisis in the corruption of the state: when not only is virtue declined, and vice prevailing, but when the practices of virtue are forgotten, and the infamy of vice unfelt. (*MF*, p. 83)

The sojourn to London has worked: Harley leaves the city in no doubt about the lure of luxury and its invasive nature. But he has also learnt that the situation isn't irretrievable, providing one places emphasis in the right quarters: on virtue; and providing one trusts to one's sensibility rather than in appearances or rational judgement to guide one's behaviour. By fiat the reader will have learnt the same lessons, from experiencing the exercise of sensibility and by absorbing the content of Harley's speech.

One strong theme of *The Man of Feeling* is that, once you go beyond the bounds of familiar territory, the world becomes one of 'trickery, sham and broken dreams'. The solution to this is not to attempt to shun the world entirely, not to follow the misanthropist's strategy.[59] Harley retreats from London, but only as far as his estate, to live 'sequestered from the noise of the multitude' (*MF*, p. 104) – unlike the misanthropist who sold up his land and so gave up his responsibilities to, and ties with, his tenants. However, it is unrealistic to consider that one will never come into contact with those who live by the corrupted tenets of the city, not least because the influence of the city is seeping into the country too, as is shown by the reference to the newly wealthy being in possession of much of the land in Harley's parish (*MF*, pp. 9–10), and by his aunt's scathing comments about the mushroom gentry 'who wear their coats of arms in their purses' (*MF*, p. 109), whom she met at the Waltons.[60] London cupidity, in the book, is shown to have penetrated all levels of society even in the country: the grocer's wife on the coach from London speaks approvingly of the crossing-sweeper's rise in stature (*MF*, p. 78); the beggar with the dog has absorbed something of it; the parish minister, too, acknowledges wealth before breeding: 'a bow at church from [the newly wealthy] to such a man as Harley, – would have made the

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[59] The inability to retain a healthy objectivity towards one's emotional circumstances, when alone for long periods, is the theme in Mackenzie's *Julia de Roubigné* (1777) (ed. Susan Manning (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 1999)).

[60] The Mushroom family make several appearances, later, in Mackenzie's contributions to the *Mirror* (1779–80).

parson look back into his sermon for some precept of Christian humility' (*MF*, p. 10). Nevertheless, the moral is, providing one acts according to the dictates of sensibility, then one will be able to negotiate the hazards of the materialistic world successfully.[61]

5 A practical morality

From the discussion so far, *The Man of Feeling* can be understood as a series of cautionary tales, and a guide to self-preservation, as well as a manual of sensibility. However, the book is more than a guide to self-preservation. Mackenzie describes both the nature and cause of the corruption which informs people's deceitful and self-interested behaviour; and the way in which its growth can be halted if not reversed. In effect, then, *The Man of Feeling* is also a book of practical morality.[62] Edwards' tale is essential to this aspect of the book's didactic function.

If Mackenzie's intention was only to write a book which guided the young through the development of sensibility, and to warn of the pitfalls into which they will fall through relying on standards other than those of virtue in judging their fellow men, then Harley's story would be complete at the point at which he demonstrates that he has learnt these lessons. Without incongruence, Harley could leave London, and return home to marry Miss Walton to live happily ever after in rural tranquillity. Instead, Mackenzie chose to add Edwards' lengthy tale of misfortune, followed by a long speech by Harley in which he acknowledges the advantages of increased wealth for a nation, but condemns the contemporary colonisation practices (*MF*, pp. 102–3). This is followed by a twist in the plot familiar in romantic novels, frustrating the smooth passage of love between Harley and Miss Walton, during which Harley falsely believes Miss Walton to be about to marry another, someone consonant with Miss Walton's social standing. In the sentimental climax of the novel, Harley's misconstrual of the situation is

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[61] Which can be understood to guide in friendship as well as indicate sincere distress.

[62] It is a *practical* morality in that its foundations, premises concerning the essential nature of man, are simply assumed, not established.

revealed, he and Miss Walton declare their love for each other, and Harley dies.[63]

If the didactic intention behind the book is taken seriously, then Edwards' tale raises the question of whether Mackenzie considered it to contribute to the instructive content of the novel, or whether it is a literary equivalent of a Baroque coda, allowing Mackenzie to indulge his love of pathos and the dexterity with which he can manipulate readers' reactions. Some take this latter line, regarding Edwards' tale as adding nothing to the overall architecture of the book.[64] However, there is sufficient evidence in Edwards' litany of woes to consider Mackenzie here to have been writing as a practical moralist and further as a Scots practical moralist, with a message specifically for the nobility and landed gentry of his country. Reading Edwards' tale in this way, the perils of London described in the earlier sequences, take on a different role too. They no longer appear to be just a collection of cautionary tales about the hazards facing the naïve in slippery polite London society; they also become a series of warnings about the effects of exchanging a traditional provincial value system for one that is driven by greed. The London sequences show how corrosion by wealth can spread within the city; Edwards' tale shows that it has serious ramifications in the country too; and given colonisation, potentially also on a global scale. But Edwards' tale is more than a series of prohibitions: for 'old money' it describes a morally motivated way of life which can stem the corrosive force of increased personal wealth – a reminder for old money of traditional mores: that land means more than merely revenue; and for 'new money' it can act as a 'pattern book', a guide to the kinds of responsibilities and priorities they should adopt as land owners. However, while the values which Mackenzie wishes to preserve are rooted in tradition, the moral code he develops to

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[63] Joy followed by sorrow is the mark of sentimental literature (Tompkins discusses the cult of distress in this regard, *The Popular Novel*, p. 108). Mackenzie refers to a well developed mind being able to 'meet Joy with Composure, & Afflictions with Tranquillity' (31 October 1770, *Letters*, p. 60). A sad ending of this nature to the book should be as pleasurable as a happy one to those who have learnt the lessons on sensibility well.

[64] For example, Barker, *Henry Mackenzie*, ch. 2; and Simpson, *The Protean Scot*, ch. 6.

promote them is not trenchantly reactionary. By emphasising the essentially interactive, sociable nature of sensibility, Mackenzie can propose a moral code which can both accommodate the inevitable changes to society wrought by an influx of wealth, and give new reasons for preserving the traditional web of interaction within communities.

Edwards' tale

Edwards' tale can be seen as giving reasons for a need to work towards preserving the fabric of provincial communities. Edwards' litany of woes is the outcome of a land owner adopting the self-interested priorities which he is taken to have learnt in the city and applying them in his private – that is, estate-based – life.

Edwards' problems began when his landlord followed the advice of his London-trained steward, and restructured his land to increase the size of farms with a view to increasing their productivity. Edwards was faced with the choice between leaving the farm he and several generations of his family had worked, and leasing more land. He opted for the latter, for sentimental reasons. This increased additional commitment brought in its wake both a need for more farm-hands, and a degree of financial risk. Two poor seasons and the loss of money as a result of bankruptcy on the part of his corn factor left Edwards financially distressed and unable to pay his rent on the due date. The steward acted according to the letter of the lease, and evicted Edwards within days of his failure to pay the rent. He and his son and family leased a smaller farm from a neighbouring land owner and eventually regained financial equilibrium.

The same land owner provoked a second, more pernicious run of disaster for Edwards and his family. Edwards' son, Jack, made an enemy of the land owner's gamekeeper after the gamekeeper shot Jack's pointer for straying on to the land. Jack assaulted the gamekeeper, and was subsequently arrested without bail, tried and fined. Later, at the suggestion of the justice who tried him, a press gang arrived at the farm to conscript him. Edwards persuaded the sergeant, with the help of a bribe, to let him take his son's place.

Edwards was sent to the East Indies, where he swiftly gained promotion to sergeant. However, having witnessed an elderly Indian prisoner

repeatedly tortured at the instigation of officers, in the expectation that he would reveal the whereabouts of a store of some form of treasure, Edwards allowed the prisoner to escape. He was subsequently court martialled, lashed and dishonourably discharged without the wherewithal to return to Britain. He was helped by the Indian prisoner, who supplied money enough for his passage home. Harley meets Edwards as Edwards is approaching his former home.

Edwards' trials don't stop here. On reaching South-hill, the area in which he originally farmed, he learns that his son and daughter-in-law have died of despair after crop failure left them in debt. Their two children remained in the area, having been taken in by a local woman. Edwards is reunited with his grandchildren, and rescued from the inevitability of life on parish charity by Harley, who accommodates them all in a farm on his land.

It is true that the story is larded with pathos. Edwards' old dog, Trusty, dies exactly when the family are leaving under eviction, for example, and the description of the dog's last moments is replete with sentimental detail (*MF*, pp. 88–9). The press gang intrudes on Christmas Eve, which is also the grandson's birthday, disturbing the family in a game of Blind Man's Buff. Again, Mackenzie doesn't stint in his description of the reactions of the family to this infraction (*MF*, p. 91). The verbatim report of the Indian's side of his conversation with Edwards, when he meets Edwards after his court martial, is remarkably eloquent.[65] However, the disasters which overtake Edwards are far from irrelevant to Mackenzie's overall purpose, which is to show that unless landed gentry remain at home and fulfil their responsibilities to tenants, rural communities will fragment, causing innocent people undue and deep distress. Further the pathos in the tale is part of Mackenzie's strategy to re-educate the aristocracy on this issue.

Edwards is unlike the victims of ill fortune whom Harley has met in London in that he didn't in any way precipitate the chain of disasters which overtook him. He is a model tenant: attached to his original farm by family ties (*MF*, p. 87); careful to pay his rent and remain out of debt. He is also a

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[65] Simpson focuses on the sentimental aspect of Edwards' tale to the exclusion of any didactic purpose (*The Protean Scot*, p. 159).

man of feeling – his sensibility is apparent in his compassion for the Indian (*MF*, p. 93), and for the 'cordial tear' dropped when describing the death of his dog (*MF*, p. 89).

The villain in this tale is Edwards' landlord, and the general moral of the story for land owners is that success as a land owner is judged by more than just healthy finances. Further, that failure to respect this will have repercussions not only for their tenants, but for the agricultural community as a whole.[66]

Mackenzie makes specific reference to the landlord's steward being from London, the implication being that he has allowed himself to be advised by one with no first-hand experience of farming and no working knowledge of the kind of relationship that grows up between land owner and long-standing tenant. The decision to increase the size of his farms was reached on purely economic grounds, without consideration of the repercussions, financial or otherwise, that this would have for his tenants. A good landlord would be expected to exercise a degree of flexibility with regard to Edwards' failure to pay his rent – to recognise the nature of the antecedents to this unprecedented occurrence and to give credence to Edwards' long history of reliability and trustworthiness in this matter by allowing him time to recoup his losses from the series of financial disasters. The London steward's decision to activate the tenancy agreement to the letter shows he lacked both personal knowledge of the tenants and comprehension of the vagaries of farming life. The land owner is equally culpable albeit by omission – for leaving such decisions in the hands of someone without requisite experience, and so, for failing to fulfil his expected paternalistic role with regard to his tenants' distress.

Land owners are again targeted in connection with the accident with regard to Jack's dog. The gamekeeper had, presumably been ordered to adopt a 'shoot on sight' policy with regard to dogs straying on to the land to protect the game. However since Jack's dog is a gun dog, a pointer, the dog would have been unlikely to damage the game. Had there been more

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[66] That the land owners' revenue depends on industrious and dedicated tenant farmers isn't mentioned.

connection between land owner and tenants, or indeed gamekeeper and tenants, the dog might have been recognised, and left unharmed.

Edwards' son and daughter-in-law later die of heartbreak having run into debt as a result of poor harvests. It is within the remit of a good land owner to encourage enthusiastic tenants to remain on their land and to help out those who are victims of natural disaster to recover their equilibrium. It is also to the land owner's advantage.

The role of Edwards' tale

The most insistent message of *The Man of Feeling* is that London life is corrupt, and that that corruption is the outcome of people's ambitions to increase personal wealth. Edwards' tale introduces a further and more endemic consequence of the cult of wealth: that it is impossible to confine its effects to the city. Its effects are evident in the behaviour of land owners who are adopting agricultural policies driven by economic considerations alone; distancing themselves from their tenants and their responsibilities to tenants by employing mediators with little or no first-hand experience of agriculture; and becoming dissociated generally from the day-to-day life of the tenants on which the revenue from the estate depends.

Taking Edwards' tale together with those of the London sequences reveals Mackenzie's view about how the corruption of society has come about and, more importantly, what Mackenzie believes can, and should be done to prevent deeper incursions into the provinces and perhaps even to reverse the trend. In short, Edwards' tale contains the features which make *The Man of Feeling* a handbook of practical morality.

We know from the opening chapters that Harley is a member of the minor landed gentry, is 'old money'.[67] We are told that the antiquity of his family commands the respect of long-standing local residents but that the parish in which his estate is located is gradually becoming the domain of the

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[67] Dwyer places Harley in the rank of minor gentry on the basis of his income being £250 p.a. – which isn't an insignificant amount but not enough to enable him to take up the benevolent role of landed gentry (*Virtuous Discourse*, p. 165, n. 36).

newly wealthy.[68] The fact that concern with increasing wealth informs the opinions of Harley's friends is quietly indicated right at the start of the book (*MF*, p. 10). In Edwards' tale, and the following fragment, Mackenzie places responsibility for the spread of 'London ambition' from city to country, firmly at the feet of old money – the aristocracy and landed gentry: Edwards' landlord's family has long been connected with the land; Edwards explains that the farm he lost 'had been possessed by my father, grandfather, and great-grandfather, which last was a younger brother of that very man's ancestor who is now lord of the manor'.[69] Edwards' tale also shows that the ramifications of the landlord's new policies for running his estate affect not only Edwards' family but the agricultural community as a whole – which, like Edwards' family, threatens to be dislocated and displaced.

The agricultural community is depicted as tightly knit. A neighbouring farmer's daughter had joined Edwards' family on Christmas Eve, for example. The family's maidservant had been with them since Edwards was a

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[68] The attitudes of the newly wealthy are beginning to be adopted by others in the locale: Harley is encouraged by his friends to increase his wealth by acquiring land (*MF*, p. 10); Mr Walton provides a letter of introduction to a baronet who has influence with the first lord of the Treasury (*MF*, p. 13); Mrs Walton suffers the aspiring incomers (*MF*, p. 108–9). Presumably, since the excise man acquired the lease which Harley hoped to apply for, he too will become one of the newly landed in the area.

[69] *MF*, p. 87; this is a reference to a typical clan relation. There is an explanation of traditional clanship, and especially the non-commercial nature of the relationship between clan chief and tacksman in Johnson's *Journey*. Early in the book, Johnson comments on the civility and politeness of Highlanders, characteristics that he believed to result from the paternalistic influence of their clan chief (*Journey*, p. 24). He explains the role of the tacksmen as overseer of the land and people in the chief's absence; takes pains to make clear that the tacksman stands in for the chief in every way, and not merely as a land manager or steward (ibid., pp. 75–6); and contrasts the breadth of a tacksman's responsibility for his tenants' general welfare, with the money-based contractual relationship of a factor (ibid., p. 78). Johnson emphasises that the relationship between chief and tacksman is familial rather than contractual, by referring to the fact that tacksmen were often 'collateral relations' (ibid., p. 75); and by describing fosterage (ibid., p. 119). He draws attention, too, to the fact that clans were not invariably at war with each other; and that allegiances between clans on occasion had a very long history: 'One of the old Highland alliances has continued for two hundred years, and is still subsisting between *Macleod* of *Raasay* and *Macdonald* of *Sky*' (ibid., p. 52).

child (*MF*, p. 91); a neighbouring land owner offers Edwards a farm on his land.[70] The land owner's action led indirectly to the departure of Edwards for the East Indies, and to the death of his son and daughter-in-law, so it also had repercussions for the children and presumably also for the maidservant. In short, the heart of community life is disturbed by such policies on the part of the land owner. Edwards' grandchildren can remain in the area only because taken in by someone who knew their parents. The children's school has such importance that the land owner's decision to raze it to the ground caused the schoolmaster to die of sorrow, but the education of the children is considered important enough for someone to step in and continue their education while they wait for a new teacher. The kind of charitable activities practised by the members of the community are dependent on long-standing ties within the community. The woman substituting for the schoolmaster expresses what may be understood as the fundamental tenet of the community in her reproach of those who fail to honour family ties: 'it is a shame for some folks to forget their relations, at a time when they have most need to remember them' (*MF*, p. 97).

The ramifications of the squire's actions spread through, and threaten to dislocate and disperse, the society on which he is dependent for the revenue from his land. The fabric of the whole community is threatened by a wrong move on the land owner's part.

The general implication of Edwards' tale is that without a change of heart on the part of those at the apex of society, the fabric of society as a whole will shred. Taking Edwards' tale together with the London sequences, the outcome is that, if allowed to continue unchecked, the situation can only worsen. Without a suitable precedent set by those in the upper echelons of the social structure the cult of wealth will continue to seep down via their children, who are already seen to be acting in accordance with the misguided ambitions of a wealth-oriented society – this is the import of the misanthropist's diatribe against contemporary education (*MF*, p. 40), and Harley's speech to Silton (*MF*, p. 82): young men are allowed to embark on a

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[70] One assumes this offer must have been made as a result of Edwards' long-standing good reputation, as eviction for non-payment of rent is not liable to make one seem a promising tenant.

Grand Tour to complete their education ill-equipped for such an experience and return with their wealth-oriented values only deepened further – as shown in the case of Winbrooke. Young women are left without suitable mentors. Marriage has become yet another domain in which money plays a major role.

The destructive effects of wealth spread not only from the city to the provinces, but beyond. Edwards describes the attitude of the officers towards the indigenous population in the East Indies (*MF*, p. 93); and Harley extrapolates: the wealth the British have taken from the 'treasuries of Nabobs' will be replaced through the oppression of the indigenous subjects – that is, the wealth of Indian princes depends on their subjects and it is these people who will feel the weight of British greed.

There is additional reason for the nobility to adjust their values – their behaviour is already mimicked by the newly affluent, by dint of the authority this echelon of society has always had. In the country their attitude has more far-reaching consequences – it threatens to cause the fragmentation of the agricultural community; and will be emulated at all levels of society: trade and commerce have opened opportunities formerly denied to all bar the aristocracy and landed gentry. Wealth has been democratised so tradesmen – for example, the grocer's wife in the coach – and the poor – for example, the beggar Harley meets on his journey to London – harbour ambitions for wealth which are now, for the first time, realisable in principle.

The solution is for the land owner to stay at home and honour his responsibilities as a land owner. However, Mackenzie also has to show that it is ultimately in the land owner's interest to take this option and do so without relying on increased revenue as incentive.

Edwards' tale pinpoints the source of the contagion of increased personal wealth to be London. However, the responsibility for containing the phenomenon lies within the peripatetic nobility and landed gentry. Edwards' tale demonstrates their pivotal role in this. The agricultural community is dependent on the land owner honouring his responsibilities and although the community is tightly knit, and in certain respects autonomous, the existence of the ties within the community is dependent on the landlord generating conditions under which they may be maintained. This is because such ties

can only evolve within a stable society, and the landlord is crucial to the creation or destruction of the stability of the community.

By identifying the cause of fragmentation within the agricultural communities to be the landlord's agronomic policy, Mackenzie also provides the means by which this fragmentation can be halted and possibly reversed. By making Edwards' land owner the cause of the fragmentation, a change of heart on his part will be sufficient to prevent the community dislocating further; and by ensuring that the children of those in this pivotal position are inculcated with similarly benevolent views, not only will the agricultural communities be preserved from generation to generation, but a suitable example will be set for those coming into land ownership for the first time. This influence will percolate down through society generally – the ambitions and priorities of the upper echelons of society will therefore become those of society as a whole.

Further, to ensure that the right principles are passed down through the generations, the education of children needs close attention, so that they are well enough equipped to withstand the lure of less morally based environs, and to maintain correct attitudes through to adulthood, when they become members of the most influential sector of society.

Effectively Mackenzie motivates this change in two ways. First, the whole moral programme depends for its efficacy on a tacit assumption of the inherent authority of the aristocracy and landed gentry. Land ownership is a source of revenue, but within society, land ownership also commands respect, and with that respect come certain responsibilities to which only the traditional land owners will be sensitive. Implicitly, and perhaps unwittingly, Mackenzie is flattering those whom he wishes to influence. Wealth alone is not sufficient to generate the authority and respect given to the upper classes. What is necessary is a command of the mores of land ownership which are part and parcel of 'breeding'.

Mackenzie goes further than this. Estate management will not be successful without the kind of day-to-day involvement on the part of the land owner which engenders a network of communication and ties between people, rather than between elements of an economic unit – the kind of day-to-day working knowledge of tenants which would inform, for example,

discretion in the implementation of the conditions of a lease, and so preclude the injustice of the eviction of a model tenant such as Edwards.

This strain of thinking isn't independent of that which informs the London sequences in the book. The ability to relate to people in the kind of way which acknowledges their humanity depends on the development of sensibility, as is exemplified by Harley's encounters in London. In sum, then, *The Man of Feeling* is not only a manual for the development of a refined sensibility, but has a specific end in mind, which end is revealed by Edwards' tale. The aristocracy and landed gentry need to develop a refined sensibility to inform the benevolence they extend to their tenants, and this paternalism is deemed a concomitant of land ownership.

The didactic function of *The Man of Feeling* has broad scope. Edwards' tale reveals that the education, or re-education of society depends on the development of sensibility, and the London sequences show – in fact guide the reader through – the process. In each case, the lessons in the book are learnt in the same way: the reader's natural sensibility is stimulated by some melancholic tale, which is followed by a section which explains what it is that has been highlighted by the unmediated response on the part of the reader. Tears come unprompted by an intellectual appreciation of a situation for those with a refined sensibility as they are a reaction to the distress of humanity, and not to the specific situation; and comprehension of that situation and of what may be done to alleviate it follows after.[71]

Following this interpretation of the didactic 'mechanism' used in *The Man of Feeling* the seemingly excessive pathos in Edwards' tale can be understood to have a didactic function too. To make his point, Mackenzie has to show that the tenantry deserve consideration for their humanity, that there are aspects of their lives which respond to, and provoke response from, sensibility. To demonstrate this point, Mackenzie emphasises features of their everyday life and uses them to stimulate a melancholic response from the reader. Furthermore, Mackenzie has to show that the agricultural

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[71] The use of fragments or incomplete text, as in Harley's speech about colonisation, and the misanthropist's speech allows Mackenzie to put across those aspects of a general situation which he regards as pertinent without having to give an argument for his points.

community is an essentially moral community – where morality is defined by reference to sensibility.

As mentioned above, the agricultural community is depicted as tightly knit. Without these community ties, and the fortuitous meeting with Harley, Edwards' prospects of regaining contact with his grandchildren, and of living other than as a destitute would have been thin. Since the ties are based on interactions which are prompted by sensibility – the ties are sociable – the community becomes a moral community.

The upshot of Edwards' tale, then, is not only that of giving an account of the way the upper classes should live in order to maintain the moral fabric of the nation, but of giving a moral purpose to the development of sensibility. If one lives quietly and acts according to the dictates of sensibility towards one's fellow men, then one will be able to negotiate the swiftly changing patina of society caused by the influx of wealth without forfeiting the traditional mores on which the existence of a moral community depends. A proper sensibility becomes necessary to the preservation and reinstatement of morality.

The conclusion is that *The Man of Feeling* can be interpreted as a manual of practical morality. The justification for this rests in part on demonstrating that Mackenzie was indeed concerned to re-educate the influential sectors of society, and in part on showing that the book was written with a view to educating not the higher echelons of society in Britain as a whole, but specifically those of Scotland – the aristocracy and landed gentry.

6 A Scottish practical morality

The claim that Edwards' tale shifts the purpose behind *The Man of Feeling* from being a primer in sensibility for the young to a book of practical advice for determining the morals of a nation is somewhat audacious. Its plausibility depends on showing that the concerns within Edwards' tale in particular and the book as a whole are part of a general trend in Mackenzie's thought during the period in which he was writing. If we consider the cultural environment in which Mackenzie was significantly active and the period in Scots history during which he lived, then there are enough parallels between the issues attracting attention generally from Mackenzie and his peers and

those which function within *The Man of Feeling* to give it an overarching and morally motivated structure, to at least make the claim that the book provides a set of moral precepts which had particular relevance to the upper echelons of Scots society at that time.

We don't have to look far for the source of ideas for the London sequences in the book. Mackenzie explains in letters to his cousin Elizabeth Rose, and in *Anecdotes and Egotisms* that the book grew out of ideas and experiences he had noted during the two years he was in London, learning the workings of the English Exchequer.[72] He began writing the book in 1767, after he had returned to Scotland to work in a legal practice in Edinburgh.

As mentioned above, Mackenzie was an active member of the Edinburgh literati and the Mirror Club. The concerns of the Mirror Club were generally to cultivate the virtue of the Scottish citizen, and to condemn the vices which were becoming increasingly more insistent.[73] The literati saw themselves as responding to the threat to the moral fabric of Scottish society, posed by the increase in national wealth and by changes in the distribution of wealth. These changes were pandemic to Britain during this period, and it is particularly interesting that Mackenzie responded to a national problem with a specifically Scottish solution.

Scottish identity

There is a glaring lacuna in this interpretation. Amongst other presuppositions, it relies on the idea that Mackenzie, and those for whom he was writing, regarded themselves to be identifiably Scots, and that, in turn, is dependent on being able, now, to pinpoint what can have been taken, then, to have constituted identification as Scots. In other words, this interpretation necessarily depends for its plausibility on being able to reconstruct to what Mackenzie and his readers, as Scots, felt allegiance.

For some commentators, teasing out the concept of Scottishness which can be considered as foremost during the period which supplies the context

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[72] *Anecdotes and Egotisms*, p. 185.
[73] Dwyer, *Virtuous Discourse*, pp. 24–5.

for Mackenzie's novels,[74] implies that Mackenzie may not be considered to hold an allegiance to Scotland at all; for, such commentators argue, as a member of the Edinburgh literati and so advocate and practitioner of Enlightenment principles, his primary allegiance must be considered to have been, at best, to a newly created Britain, and, more probably, to England. This conclusion is a corollary to a model of eighteenth-century social and cultural history in which Britain is understood as effectively the result of England having conquered Scotland by the 1707 Treaty of Union – a model according to which a country's nationalism is defined culturally in terms of its difference from, or defiance towards, other countries. Such models presuppose that there is a set of identifiable cultural criteria for a nationalist allegiance, which are both necessary and sufficient for that allegiance, and which, in the case of eighteenth-century Scotland, are incompatible with, and, more emphatically, often contradictory to, the *modus operandi* of the literati. A prime example of this kind of account of Scottishness is given in Katie Trumpener's *Bardic Nationalism*.[75]

Trumpener explains the cultural attitudes of the British peripheries (Wales, Ireland and Scotland) using the assumption that each of these cultures was bifurcated by England's imperialism, during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. She uses a Marxist interpretation of this perceived bifurcation to generate a nationalist explanation of the two cultures, by which I mean she draws a Marxian categorical distinction between the well-to-do and the people based on a perceived opposition, or tension, between the polite and the popular cultures of the period; and then argues that the polite is essentially foreign – English – and imposed; and that the popular culture, being indigenous (and accordingly, by her, exalted), has to be taken as that in which a nation's identity resides.

By contrast, Linda Colley argues that evidence from popular culture demonstrates that it was this sector of eighteenth-century society in both

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[74] It is arguable that all three of Mackenzie's novels address the same issue of the morality of the nation, although each takes a different approach to the issue. For example, *Julia de Roubigné* (1777) charts the disastrous effects of failing to recognise the necessity of sociability to moral thinking.

[75] Katie Trumpener, *Bardic Nationalism: The Romantic Novel and the British Empire* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997).

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England and Scotland which was instrumental in generating a full-blooded concept of Britain.[76] Colley explains the evolution of Britain as the consequence of a series of events during the eighteenth century, the effect of which she interprets using evidence of popular interest in initially, Protestantism, then, from mid-century, imperialism. Like Trumpener, she works from the assumption that national identity is forged in terms of difference, but unlike Trumpener, she argues that imperialism, far from being divisive, smoothed over differences between the constituents of Britain. The catalytic difference, according to Colley's thesis, was that resulting from the need to maintain the British Empire against erosion by the rest of the world.

By 1750, it would appear that the Scots had no option but to consider themselves North Britons politically, and little cause not to, economically. The failure of the '45 Rising and the harsh governmental recriminations that followed rendered the Hanoverian succession and Protestant settlement unchallengeable. Politically then, Scotland was apparently committed to the Union.

As discussed above (pp. 23–4, by 1750 Scottish trade had increased enough to outweigh taxation, and continued to do so. If we assume, then, that during the period from 1750 until the French Revolution, the British nation, considered as a political and economic entity, became only increasingly robust, it follows that we have to look to other spheres in which to establish a concept of Scottish identity.[77] However, none of the cultural aspects of eighteenth-century Scottish life, which were left untouched by the incorporative union per se, can be said to contribute to, or to constitute the core of Scottishness without qualification. On the face of it, Scottish culture was deeply divided, with high culture on one side of the crevasse, and an informal, indigenous, vernacular culture on the other; and the differentiating factor in each case appears to be Anglicisation.

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[76] Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707–1837* (London: Vintage, 1996).

[77] This general interpretation of British politics and economics seems to underpin much discussion of Scottish cultural identity, and for the given period comprises the main thread of Colley's argument for a pan-British identity in *Britons*. Colley's overall interpretation for this period is plausible, but requires qualification.

Although, within the Church of Scotland, the rational religion of the Moderates jostled with, and eventually superseded, the fundamentalist Calvinism characteristic of the previous century, as described above (pp. 25–6), this failed to have a schismatic effect on the Kirk. So, it might appear that the Kirk could be taken to provide a focal point for Scottish identity during the eighteenth century. However, the subsequent series of secessions over patronage meant there was no focal point on which Scotland could focus.

The education system in Scotland differed from that in England, but formal institutions, such as universities, and philosophical and scientific societies were definitive centres of empirical methodology, and Enlightenment principles in general. In addition, by the middle of the eighteenth century, polite culture, which flourished among the professional classes – lawyers, clergymen, physicians and professors – had become the norm in universities.[78] Furthermore, the universities benefited from reforms that established a 'modern' system of lectures by specialised professors, in place of regenting. These reforms began in Edinburgh in 1709, and had spread to include all universities except King's College, Aberdeen by 1753. Many of the specialist positions had sympathetic patrons with strong links with Westminster, for example, the Duke of Argyll and the 3rd Earl of Bute.[79] Again, a Scottish institution which survived the Union intact, could be considered subsequently to have sold out to the English.

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[78] G.E. Davie describes the Scottish education system and the principles behind it, in *The Democratic Intellect: Scotland and her Universities in the Nineteenth Century* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1961); esp. pp. 1–6, 20–1, 26–56, 201, concerning the 'peculiar institution' and contemporary opinion of the benefits of compulsory philosophy (p. 5). However, Davie argues that the Scottish educational system is a paradigm case of the distinctive features of Scottish ethos, *because* it combines 'the democracy of the Kirk elders with the intellectualism of the advocates' (p. xii).

[79] Regenting was the generalist supervision of a student cohort by a single professor, which was replaced by subject-specialist teaching by an expert professor (David Allan, *Scotland in the Eighteenth Century: Union and Enlightenment* (London: London, 2002), p. 122; see also Alexander Murdoch and Richard B. Sher, 'Literary and Learned Culture', in T.M. Devine and Rosalind Mitchison (eds), *People and Society in Scotland*, vol. I, *1760–1830* (Edinburgh: Donald, 1988), pp. 127–42).

In the area of letters and literature, the high culture of polished English prose and poetry contrasted with the informal, indigenous oral and vernacular culture of 'the people', of whom ballads and the poems of Robert Fergusson and Robert Burns in Scots, and those of Alasdair MacMhaighstir Alasdair, Rob Donn Mackay and Dugald Buchanan in Gaelic, are taken to be representative. But it is in this realm that the division between high and popular culture, required for a two-culture theory of Scottish identity, becomes overtly problematic.

When considering the potential of formal institutions representative of post-Union Scottishness, it seems they fail in this regard either as a result of a general tendency towards Enlightenment principles and English polite culture, or as a result of an apparent ambivalence towards one culture or the other; but in each case the disregard for, or ambivalence towards what two-culture theorists regard as the indigenous culture, can be ascribed to movements or factions within the institutions. In these cases, then, a two-culture theory at least is viable.

However, with regard to letters and literature, ground for the division becomes blurred by evidence that the individuals representing each culture, themselves display ambivalence. Fergusson and Burns both had substantial links with English and Scots literary culture.[80] Enlightened and high-born Scots 'shared' popular culture by speaking Scots and singing or composing Scots poems and ballads. The association of nationalism with 'the people' is upset by the fact that the gentry, clergy and men of letters adopted indisputably national causes, such as the mid-century campaigns for a Scots militia.

Justification for a two-culture thesis often relies on demonstrating what is considered to be the literati's dismissive attitude towards the Scots language, by way of highlighting the lengths to which they went to ensure they used only ultra-correct spoken and written English. Examples in support of this thesis are provided by the Easy Club set up in 1712, by Alan Ramsay and friends, for the purpose of 'mutual improvement in conversation', with a

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[80] With regard to Burns, see Carol McGuirk, *Robert Burns and the Sentimental Era* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1985), esp. ch. 7.

view to becoming 'more adapted with the politer part of mankind';[81] the Select Society, which included Hume and Adam Smith, which changed its name to the Society for Promoting the Reading and Speaking of the English Language, and, in 1761, to this end hired an elocution teacher;[82] Hume's (1752) collection of Scottish usages to be avoided together with their 'correct' English counterparts;[83] and James Beattie's *Scoticisms, Arranged in Alphabetical Order, Designed to Correct Improprieties of Speech and Writing* (1787).

But then the two-culture theorist has to explain such anomalies as Hume's splenetic outburst against Parliament and the English in a letter written in 1770:

Our Government has become a Chimera; and is too perfect in point of Liberty, for so vile a beast as an Englishman, who is a Man, a bad Animal too, corrupted by above a Century of Licentiousness.[84]

The theorist needs, too, to accommodate significantly subtler retractions from rampant anglophilia such as Beattie's 'The Minstrel' (1768), a lyrical poem in which Beattie praises the Scotland familiar from bardic description – the Scoticisms:

A nation famed for song, and beauty's charms;
Zealous, yet modest; innocent, though free;
Patient of toil; serene amidst alarms;
Inflexible in faith; invincible in arms.
(Bk I, ll. 96–9)

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[81] Quoted in Lenman, 'From the Union of 1707 to the Franchise of 1832', p. 328.

[82] Thomas Sheridan, an Irish actor and friend of Boswell; see above p. 30. Lenman points out that this wasn't as self-defeating as it sounds, owing to a connection between Ireland and that part of England in which English evolved from an eleventh-century Anglo-Saxon-based patois of Latin and Norman French (Lenman, 'From the Union of 1707 to the Franchise of 1832', p. 330). Johnson remarks on the lack of Scots accent in Highlanders' English (*Journey*, p. 30).

[83] Hume's collection was reprinted in the *Scots Magazine* in 1760. His *Scotticisms*, became fodder for Wilkes' xenophobic attack on the Scots during the Bute ministry. See below, pp. 104ff.

[84] Letter to Gilbert Elliot, quoted in J.G.P. Pocock, 'Hume and the American Revolution: the Dying Thoughts of a North Britain', in his *Virtue, Commerce and History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 125–41; p. 127.

'The Minstrel' not only seems at odds with the intentions behind Beattie's *Scoticisms*; it is at odds with itself. Beattie lauds Scotland's heritage – its rural beauty and primitivism – and describes the poem as tracing 'the progress of poetical genius', which genius, Beattie implies, is essentially Scottish, yet the poem is English in form. Beattie wrote in the Preface: 'I have endeavoured to imitate Spencer in the measure of his verse, and in the harmony, simplicity, and variety of his composition.'[85] The hero has an Anglo-Saxon name: Edwin; and despite the poem being about 'a character, which, according to the notions of our forefathers, was not only respectable but sacred' (ibid.), Beattie forgoes use of either of the Scots terms 'bard' and 'senachie' in favour of the English 'minstrel'. It has been argued that English bardic poetry centres on a minstrel, rather than a bard of senachie; that the minstrel is associated with fourteenth-century mercantilism, as opposed to the agrarian association of the Celtic bard; and is portrayed as an isolated and peripatetic character, essentially dislocated from society, unlike the bard 'proper' who is the mouthpiece of society.[86] According to these criteria, James Beattie's 'The Minstrel' indisputably falls within the realms of the anglo-centric linguistic imperialism side of the divide. But on closer inspection, *Scoticisms* isn't quite straightforwardly anglophilic. Beattie seems to be writing for a British, rather than just Scottish readership: in the introduction, he refers to a wish to preserve the standards of British, rather than English, literature; and, a little later, he takes pains to reassure English readers (this anticipated readership itself a surprise), that his book was written for young Scots, and that it wouldn't be necessary for most 'people of education' north of the Border to refer to such a text.

[I have lately observed] a strange propensity, in too many of our people, to debase the purity of the language, by a mixture of foreign and provincial idioms, and cant phrases; a circumstance which has in other countries generally produced, and partly occasioned, the decline of learning, and which of course must be a matter of regret to those who wish well to British literature ...

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[85] In Thomas Crawford, David Hewitt and Alexander Law (eds), *Longer Scottish Poems*, vol. II, *1650–1830* (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1987), p. 120.

[86] Trumpener, *Bardic Nationalism*, p. 6.

These idioms are thus huddled together by way of exercise to young Scotch people, who may have been reading this pamphlet. But the English readers will not suppose that the people of education in North Britain speak so uncouth a dialect. Many of them use a correct phraseology.[87]

There have been several attempts to maintain a two-culture thesis in the face of these kinds of anomalies. In the 1960s, David Daiches and David Craig each proposed a version of a thesis that defines polite and popular culture as two distinct entities.[88] Daiches takes evidence of two cultures to indicate a dissociation of sensibility – 'cultural schizophrenia', in his terms. Scottish identity isn't bifurcated: instead the expression of cultural identity is hampered by the thought and feeling associated with that identity naturally occurring in Scots, yet being written in another language – English.[89] Simpson argues that there is no single symptom of cultural bifurcation, that it runs through the gamut of eighteenth-century literature revealing itself in such diverse writers as Boswell and Macpherson.[90]

The relationship between Scots and English is complex.[91] It seems that in prose and speech it was treated as a dialect of English, but in poetry a language in its own right. However, taking Daiches' view that the Union imposed a need for bilingualism on the Scots is not sufficient to explain the problem. There were traditional academic connections between Scotland and

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[87] Beattie, *Scoticisms*, p. 5; quoted in Leith Davis, *Acts of Union and the Literary Negotiation of the British Nation 1707–1830* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998), p. 9.

[88] David Craig, *Scottish Literature and the Scottish People 1680–1830* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1961); David Daiches, *The Paradox of Scottish Culture: The Eighteenth-Century Experience* (London: Oxford University Press, 1964).

[89] Daiches uses this interpretation to explain why the literati failed to produce good English poetry, and also why they failed to appreciate Scots Gaelic. Lenman's condemnation of the literati's literary efforts is expressed in no uncertain terms: 'Their own efforts, in prose and verse, in the same field were in fact laughably inferior' ('From the Union of 1707 to the Franchise of 1832', p. 342); he dismisses Mackenzie's *Man of Feeling* as '[a] third-rate tear-jerking novel of sensibility' (ibid., p. 345).

[90] Simpson, *The Protean Scot*.

[91] Janet Adam Smith, 'Eighteenth Century Ideas of Scotland', in N.T. Phillipson and Rosalind Mitchison (eds), *Scotland in the Age of Improvement* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1996), pp. 107–24. Smith discusses uses of English and the vernacular language by Hume, Burns and Boswell, and concludes that each illustrates a different notion of Scottishness in his choice of language, which choice is context-sensitive.

Holland, the Calvinistic Dutch universities having attracted a steady stream of Presbyterians. Until 1720, communication was unhampered linguistically as the common language for lecturing and academic discourse throughout Europe was Latin.[92] Thinking in one language and writing in another does not therefore seem to be adequate to produce cultural schizophrenia: the dissociation has to be considered to be in some way a concomitant of writing in English.[93]

Daiches' failure to explain, as opposed to describe, the 'schizophrenic' cases is common to all theories which approach the issue of Scottish identity as being that of reconciling two distinct cultures, or distinct manifestations of culture. But in their favour, such theorists do attempt an explanation. Smout, on the other hand, accounts for anomalies by reference to what he terms 'concentric loyalties'.

There are attempts to avoid the two-culture thesis, such as those of Smout and Kidd. Smout models an individual's allegiances as ordered concentrically, thus allowing for an individual to hold two conflicting loyalties at once, and to retreat to that which is strongest (and hence modelled as closest) should a situation bring the opposition to the fore. This kind of idea is articulated most clearly by Colin Kidd. Kidd concludes that during the relevant period, while the Scots can be described as anglo-centric, this implies neither anglophilia nor anglophobia.[94]

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[92] Allan, *Scotland in the Eighteenth Century*, p. 122; Scoto-Latin was traditionally associated with conservative Jacobitism, and the north-east Lowlands being a stronghold this tradition, Latin was retained longer here than elsewhere in Scotland, dying out eventually in the 1750s. (Fergusson was conversant with Scoto-Latin in consequence.) The demise of Latin in academia, and hence of its role as an intellectual lingua franca, occurred throughout Europe during the early part of the eighteenth century, when it was supplanted by the vernacular (Allan, ibid.; Murdoch and Sher, 'Literary and Learned Culture', p. 130).

[93] If Daiches' analysis is taken to refer only to the dearth of poetry written in English by the literati, then this objection of course relies on demonstrating that literary composition in Latin was far inferior to any in Gaelic and Scots. However, this restriction on the scope of Daiches' thesis doesn't apply in the current context.

[94] T.C. Smout, 'Perspectives on the Scottish Identity', *Scottish Affairs* (1994), no. 6, pp. 101–13; 'Problems of Nationalism, Identity and Improvement in later Eighteenth-Century Scotland', in T.M. Devine (ed.), *Improvement and Enlightenment* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1989), pp. 1–21. Colin Kidd's

According to Smout, an individual is to be considered as upholding sets of allegiances, to family, kin, class, locality, nation, and so on. Each allegiance is understood as more or less strong, according to how close to their heart it is. A conflict of loyalties will result in a show of allegiance to that which is held more strongly, that which is closer to the heart. Identification with Scotland, on this model, will be stronger than identification with Britain; identification with one's county within Scotland, stronger than that with Scotland.[95] On Smout's thesis, then, there is nothing anomalous about Beattie's 'The Minstrel' – it simply arises from allegiances both to Britain and to Scotland; just as there's nothing anomalous in Burns castigating the behaviour of Scots land owners as being not 'for Britain's guid' but 'for her destruction! / Wi dissipation, feud an faction.'[96]

Smout's approach accommodates seeming contradictions, by the idea not that the Scots were influenced by the English, but that they identified with both Scotland and Britain. However this merely describes a set of attitudes, without providing either their explanation or their motivation. In consequence, it leaves two important questions unanswered: why did the literati opt for polished English prose and poetry, refined manners, and polite culture generally? And what understanding did Scots have of Britain? Was it more than a political and economic expedient?

Smout follows Colley's analysis of the way a concept of British nationality was generated during the course of the eighteenth century: Britain was identified with Protestantism initially, and imperial power after mid-century, with British allegiance being forged as a result of threats from elsewhere to both: from France until the end of Seven Years War; and from

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discussion of mid-eighteenth century Britishness in his 'North Britishness and the Nature of Eighteenth Century Patriotisms (*The Historical Journal*, 39 (1996), pp. 361–82), is placed within a larger historical context in his *British Identities before Nationalism: Ethnicity and Nationhood in the Atlantic World 1600–1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

[95] Smout, 'Perspectives'; Smout, 'Problems of Nationalism'. The circles of loyalties are shown in a figure in 'Perspectives', p. 103. Presumably there is no need to explain the gradations of allegiance, as these are to be taken as grounded emotively – non-rationally.

[96] Robert Burns, 'The Twa Dogs' (1786), in *The Poems and Songs of Robert Burns*, ed. James Kinsley, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), no. 71, pp. 137–45, ll. 169–70.

the colonies during the American War of Independence.[97] According to Smout, antagonism towards England – interpreted by some as nationalism – occurred in consequence of the Scots being treated unfairly, or contemptuously: in ways that were seen to contravene the terms of the Union.[98]

Although Smout's model appears to rely on an intuitive understanding of which allegiances are likely to be strong for an individual, it does allow that allegiances can wax and wane. Since Anglo-Scots relations vacillated between tolerance and hostility throughout the 30 years from 1750, a plausible account of Scottish identity during the eighteenth century needs to be sensitive to these fluctuations. It is particularly relevant in connection with attempts to interpret the loyalties of the literati. The social and political context changed dramatically between the 1750s and early 1760s, for example, and it is a misrepresentation to draw conclusions about the aims and intentions of the literati during the latter period on the basis of evidence drawn from the 1750s.

Mackenzie's *Man of Feeling* was written during the long-term aftermath of the Bute smear campaign. Antagonism broke out between the two countries in the early 1760s, as a result of the rise in power and influence of John Stuart, 3rd Earl of Bute. Lord Bute was a close friend of the King, a fact that was viewed with suspicion by his detractors. In 1761 he was made Secretary of State and in 1762, became Prime Minister. English longstanding suspicion of the Scots, which had initially been due to their belief in supposed unilateral Scottish support for Jacobitism refocussed on the King's pronounced attachment to Bute.

Bute's ministry negotiated the Peace of Paris, in February 1763. Despite increasing Britain's empire substantially, the treaty was widely unpopular. In addition, Scots virtually monopolised governorship in the newly

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[97] Smout, 'Perspectives', p. 105. As in most other references to Colley's thesis, Smout's fails to mention that Colley argues from evidence of popular responses to British policy – the exception to this general omission being Alexander Murdoch, 'Scotland and the Idea of Britain in the Eighteenth Century', in T.M. Devine and J.R. Young (eds), *Eighteenth Century Scotland: New Perspectives* (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 1999), pp. 106–21.
[98] Smout, 'Problems of Nationalism', pp. 6–7, 19.

conquered territories. Bute's detractors rekindled English antagonism further by arguing that Bute favoured his compatriots at home, suggesting this could be seen as a kind of Jacobite invasion. (The absurdity of allegations of Scots Jacobite leanings to those deemed too intimate with the Hanoverian Crown appears to have been overlooked.)

Bute became a frequent target of the *North Briton*, a journal launched by Wilkes in June 1762. The remit of Wilkes' journal was in direct opposition to that of the *Briton*, which had been established by Smollet in February of that year, and which was intended promote harmony between Scotland and England together.[99] Wilkes appealed to the English fear of everything Scots. For example, after Bute directed £4,000 for the construction of a bridge over the Tweed, Wilkes played on English fear, not of simply Scottish culture, but of Scottish economic power:

I Cannot conceal the joy I feel as a *North Britain*, and I heartily congratulate my dear countrymen on our having at length accomplished the great, long fought, and universally national object of all our wishes, the planting of a *Scotsman* at the head of the *English* treasury.[100]

The English fear of the Scots extended even to their use of the English language. Another anti-Scots attack in the *North Briton* by Wilkes read:

Though I am a NORTH BRITAIN, I will endeavour to write *plain English*, and to avoid the numerous *Scotticisms* the BRITON abounds with; and then, as the world is apt to mistake, he may be taken for an *Englishman*.[101]

Xenophobic attacks on Bute eventually led to his resignation in April 1763. The intensity of popular hostility suffered by Scots generally in London is described in Boswell's *London Journal* and Smollett's *Humphrey Clinker*.[102]

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[99] Smollett was commissioned by Bute to undertake the publication of the *Briton*, a party periodical in defence of his government.
[100] Quoted in Davis, *Acts of Union*, p. 76
[101] Quoted in ibid.
[102] *Boswell's London Journal 1762–1763*, ed. Frederick A. Pottle (London: Reprint Society, 1951), p. 79; Tobias Smollett, *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker* (1771), ed. Lewis Knapp, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), for example, a letter from Jery Melford describes the scene at St James during in which he describes the raillery of the crowd towards 'the Caledonian luminary' (p. 97); in another letter, Jery relates conversation overheard at the Duke of N[ewcastle]'s levee, which features rank anti-Catholicism, and the duke is represented as dismissing politicians as 'a pack

Prior to this, Scottish MPs had become disaffected as a result of changes in the structure of English politics, which had led to increasing emphasis on party organisation and financial manipulation, and the loss of more traditional modes of representation and patronage. The dissatisfaction expressed by David Dalrymple, the future Lord Hailes, was not untypical:

One would imagine, indeed, that those whose birth and rank in life entitles them to aspire to posts of honour and pre-eminence in the state, should be above all sordid consideration of gain. Their sentiments ought to be as elevated as their station; and to a mind so enlarged, the pleasure of serving his country, and contributing to the happiness of millions, is surely a sufficient reward.[103]

Many Scottish peers stopped attending Parliament between 1763 and 1775, and during the 1760s, a significant number of those who had been resident in London returned to Scotland.[104]

The return of absentee peers to Scotland was not an unalloyed benefit to the country, as many embarked on improving their estates, often to the detriment of the tenants who suffer the kinds of consequences illustrated in Edwards' tale.[105] However their change of focus from London to Scotland,

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of rascals ... Tories, Jacobites, rebels' (p. 113). The Duke of Newcastle resigned from Bute's ministry in 1762 in protest at the treaty arrangements for the Peace of Paris the following year.

[103] *Caledonian Mercury*, 14 September 1763; quoted in John Dwyer and Alexander Murdoch, 'Paradigms and Politics: Manners, Morals and the Rise of Henry Dundas, 1770–84', in John Dwyer, Roger A. Mason and Alexander Murdoch (eds), *New Perspectives on the Politics and Culture of Early Modern Scotland* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1982), pp. 210–48, p. 217.

[104] Dwyer and Murdoch, 'Paradigms and Politics', p. 217.

[105] Johnson was preoccupied by the relation between emigration, rent increase and the breakdown of clanship throughout the *Journey*.

Johnson considers two different sets of motives for emigration (ibid., p. 85). He concludes that those for whom emigration is for positive reasons – as a result of wishing for 'the pleasure of happier climes' could not be dissuaded from their decision to leave. However, he believed that those whom he describes as being 'driven from their native country by positive evils', by which we are to understand rent increases, and imprudent improvement, should have been encouraged to stay by the removal of whatever conditions were driving them away. And with regard to rent increases, Johnson states simply that landlords should reduce their rent, and be compensated for whatever losses result (ibid., p. 86).

It is plausible to explain Johnson's acute interest in, and anxiety over, the effects of rent increase, emigration and clan break-up, in terms other than

explains the upsurge in large-scale civic developments during the 1760s such as the construction of the Forth–Clyde canal, and the development of the New Town.

Although peers returned to Scotland, they were not resident on their estates, but retained their position as absentee landlords, spending a large part of the year in Edinburgh. At the same time, the increased interest in land and the increase in land prices led to an influx in the counties of the newly wealthy – Glasgow tobacco merchants, government contractors and rich nabobs returning from the Indies – who took their cue from the established landowning class, both in terms of estate management and with regard to the ways in which they adapted their London lifestyle and values for the Scottish context.

It is now becoming evident that the prevailing social and political climate in Scotland at the time Mackenzie wrote *The Man of Feeling*, although sharing some of the characteristics of that of Britain as a whole, included conditions peculiar to Scotland, and it is plausible to consider the literati as attempting to negotiate a 'new social order' which would both accommodate the economic changes of benefit to the country while curbing a value system based predominantly on increased personal wealth.[106] They laid emphasis on reintroducing the values of moral man into society by encouraging the nobility and landed gentry to reside on their estates and reintroduce the values of a land-based aristocracy.

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antiquarian concern for the preservation of tradition. For example, taking his stadialist stance to be paramount suggests that the source of Johnson's concern might have been that the loss of clan property would put clan society back a stage in the stadial schema. In other words, Johnson might have regarded the mass emigration of tacksmen and associated tenants to be in danger of taking the clan from the agricultural stage back to an earlier, nomadic, pastoral stage. Alternatively one might interpret Johnson's concern to be primarily driven by moral considerations: in losing the paternalistic influence of a clan chief (which Johnson regarded as a detrimental consequence of the abolition of heritable jurisdictions), clan members also lose their source of moral guidance.

[106] Although to generalise over even just the thirty-year period from 1750 is misleading; for example, Dwyer and Murdoch argue convincingly that the Scottish literati in general, and Dundas in particular and most surprisingly, became decidedly less oriented towards England, after the Bute smear campaign; see Dwyer and Murdoch, 'Manners, Morals and the Rise of Henry Dundas, 1770–84'.

That this line of thought had been at least entertained by Mackenzie is evident from Edwards' tale, which includes many of the features which caused concern for the moral state of the Scottish nation among the literati: Edwards falls foul of his landlord's decision to restructure land use on his estate: he is forced to take on the lease for a larger farm and is seen to be under pressure to meet an annual rent of £300.[107] Edwards is genuinely the victim of unforeseeable circumstances, so one deserving the benevolence dictated by a developed sensibility – as demonstrated by Harley's reaction. There is a pay-off for the benefactor since doing one's doing one's duty is a pleasure. The author ends the episode leading to Edwards being accommodated on Harley's estate with a statement of just this point:

Father of mercies! I also would like to thank thee! that not only has thou assigned eternal rewards to virtue, but that, even in this bad world, the lines of our duty, and our happiness, are so frequently woven together. (*MF*, p. 102)

Conclusion

The Man of Feeling is arguably far from being just the story of a sentimental hero – not the adventures of a quixotic youth. Mackenzie uses Harley's tale, both to guide readers through the stages in the refinement of sensibility; and as a set of cautionary tales about the destructive effects to both the individual and the community, of placing most emphasis on the acquisition and enjoyment of increased personal wealth. But it is more than this too: it is a handbook of practical morality for those in positions of authority within a community – and specifically for the aristocracy and nobility of Scotland.

The book is also far from being a loose collection of episodes. It is a carefully structured collection of moral essays, which taken together guide a reader through the various stages of developing a refined sensibility from the natural sympathy Mackenzie believed intrinsic to man, and the seat of man's

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[107] Land worth £200–£300 featured in the debate about the destruction of entails, this being the value of the smallest economically viable farm unit, see Dwyer, *Virtuous Discourse*, p. 42. It is also relevant here to note that the kind of family tie Edwards claimed to have with his landlord, namely, their both having the same great great grandfather, is very much a clan-based notion rather than the English notion of family tree.

moral nature. Further, it uses the notion of sensibility and the connected concept of benevolence to propound a practical morality which is constructed to give new life to the traditional Scottish values of land and land ownership. In short, it is, as Mackenzie described it, 'as much as sermon as a history', and in being so is quite different from a novel.

The notion of sensibility is vague, however. This can be remedied by considering exactly how Smith's philosophy influenced the literati's approach to questions concerning social values. In so doing, the extent to which Smith's moral philosophy underpins *The Man of Feeling* is revealed to be surprisingly deep.

II *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*

The outcome of the analysis of the structure and content of Mackenzie's *The Man of Feeling* given in chapter I is that it was intended as an aid to the development of sensibility. This raises the question of why such a book might have been thought to have value in this regard; or of what theory of morality and of moral development underpinned the notion that reading morality tales would enable an individual to develop his or her capacity to react appropriately to another's situation. The argument in chapter I led to the conclusion that in *The Man of Feeling*, Harley, and so the reader, is confronted by a series of situations of increasing moral complexity, the response to each requiring concomitantly more sophisticated moral reasoning. Clearly the intention is not to prepare the reader specifically for the kinds of encounters that Harley has, so the descriptions of Harley's experience of card sharps, prostitutes and the insane must serve a different pedagogic purpose. Reading *The Man of Feeling* as instructing and guiding a reader by stages through a process of moral maturation prompts the question of what Mackenzie understood to constitute moral maturity.

Smith first published his Theory of Moral Sentiments in 1759.[1] The book was so well received that it merited the publication of 6 editions between 1759 and 1790. We know that Mackenzie greatly admired Smith's work,[2] and the aim of this chapter is to demonstrate that Mackenzie's understanding of moral development was derived from Adam Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments*. However, this requires first, a demonstration that Smith's *Moral Sentiments* does indeed comprise a theory, since, to the unprepared contemporary reader, it seems a bewildering muddle of neonate psychology, prescriptive rules for mannered society, and philosophical dispute over abstruse issues in eighteenth-century moral philosophy. Smith added an explanatory subtitle for the 4th edition (1774), which states that the

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[1] Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759, 6th edn 1790), ed. D.D. Raphael and A.L. Macfie (Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Fund, 1984); hereafter references given by part, section, chapter and paragraph nos.
[2] In a letter to William Carmichael, written early in 1784, Mackenzie referred to Smith as 'the first of our writers, both in point of Genius & Information' (*Letters 1766–1827*, p. 124).

book concerns 'the Principles by which Men naturally judge concerning the Conduct and Character, first of their Neighbours, and afterwards of themselves', but while this indicates the scope of Smith's use of the phrase 'moral sentiments', it still fails to elucidate what kind of book the *Moral Sentiments* is. Smith makes no concessions to the reader in his opening paragraphs. From the first part, section and chapter titles, we learn that a discussion of sympathy is to provide Smith's route into the notion of propriety, but Smith gives no obvious explanation for choosing this route, nor a description of how his discussion is to proceed. He simply opens with an assertion about man's natural capacity for uncalculated interest in the welfare of others.[3] On first reading there seem to be good grounds for describing the book as 'wandering like a river amidst luxuriant banks'.[4]

However, if the book is read as a contribution to what Berry has argued was a central concern of Scottish Enlightenment thought – namely, to provide an empiricist account of the nature and development of society – and if weight is given to Campbell's analysis of the Newtonian influence on Smith's moral theory, then Smith's discussion, far from meandering, reveals itself as a tight, controlled argument for a specific model of social interaction, while the seemingly lush landscape of its discursive setting, is seen as providing descriptive evidence for the plausibility of each stage in Smith's carefully constructed theory.[5]

There is intrinsic interest in reading the *Moral Sentiments* as a scientific discourse, blending, as it does, Hume's empiricism, Locke's epistemology and Newton's methodology. Furthermore, as a result of Smith's unstinting use of detailed examples and illustrations of contemporary attitudes to social and political events and circumstances throughout, the book also merits a

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[3] 'Howsoever selfish man may be supposed, there are evidently some principles in his nature, which interest him in the fortunes of others, and render their happiness necessary to him, though he derives nothing from it except the pleasure of seeing it' (I.i.1.1).

[4] John McCosh, *The Scottish Philosophy* (London: Macmillan, 1875), p. 168; quoted in T.D. Campbell, *Adam Smith's Science of Morals* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1971), p. 21.

[5] Christopher Berry, *Social Theory of the Scottish Enlightenment* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997); Campbell, *Adam Smith's Science of Morals*.

subtextual study. Here, however, the remit is to show that in the *Moral Sentiments*, Smith presented a theory of social interaction which conformed to the principles of hypothetico-deductive discourse which he articulates elsewhere; and that Smith was not merely influenced by Hume's theory of understanding, but adopted it and extended it to encompass the moral domain. Furthermore, in constructing this theory, Smith identified certain specific experiential parameters which have direct reference to an individual's ability to make moral judgements; so while Smith may have intended to write no more than a scientifically objective account based on observation alone, of the stages in the development of man's ability to make moral judgements, his theory was taken to indicate a means by which an individual's sensibility can be developed fully as a result of controlling certain experiential parameters. The plausibility of this suggestion rests, in part, on showing what Smith's theory of moral sentiments is – which is a controversial issue.

There is little agreement about how the *Moral Sentiments* is to be read. In consequence, the bulk of this discussion focusses on establishing a particular interpretation; an interpretation which takes seriously Smith's decision to describe his text as a theory.

The eighteenth-century Scots were concerned to answer the question 'How do I know what is morally the right action?' Since they were empiricists, an adequate answer had to be founded in experience, without appeal to innate concepts of right and wrong, good and evil, just and unjust, and so on. Moral knowledge was regarded as being on all fours with any other empirical knowledge, and so gained through our experience of the world via the senses. As described in the introduction, this led Hutcheson and others to postulate a moral sense. By contrast, Hume and Smith rejected the suggestion of a sixth, moral sense, and instead considered experience of the moral to promote a feeling, that is, the rationale being that initially, moral knowledge of the world comprises an unmediated response to some aspect of the actions of others. We can think of this as analogous to the acquisition of the concept of heat, for example. We learn that heat is a property of a flame from an unmediated feeling of warmth induced by our

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proximity to the flame; similarly, moral action will produce an unmediated identifiable feeling in a witness to the act. In order to be adequate, that is, in order for it to accommodate all the kinds of behaviour intuitively considered moral, the theory had to account for abstract moral concepts such as justice; and also provide an explanation of judgements of conscience – moral judgements which appear to be made without a witness's approval, and so seemingly independent of experience. Smith's treatment of judgements of conscience was intended to show that these judgements, like all other moral judgements, are based in experience of others' moral behaviour.

The eighteenth-century Scottish moralists believed that science generally would yield to Newtonian methodology. Since morality was considered an empirical subject, the expectation was that Newtonian principles of theory construction would apply equally fruitfully to this domain. Newton had also subscribed to this view. As noted by Berry, Newton stated in the preface to his *Optics* (1704), that 'the method of natural philosophy or science when perfected would enlarge the bounds of moral philosophy'.[6] The claim here is that Smith's *Moral Sentiments* is a theory of morality which is constructed according to the principles of Newtonian methodology. In fact, the claim is stronger than this: it is that Smith not only adopted Newtonian principles of theory construction but also adapted Newton's laws of motion. As mentioned in the introduction, this reading of the *Moral Sentiments* is highly revisionist.

Smith's work on morality builds on that of Hume. Hume had rejected Hutcheson's notion of a distinct sense to explain the source of the kinds of experience that form the constituents of moral knowledge, arguing instead that moral knowledge is founded in an unmediated sensation or feeling which he termed 'sympathy'. Smith used this idea, but modified it. For Hume, sympathy is an individual's reaction to another's moral behaviour, but for Smith it is a relation between moral agent and spectator: an unmediated mutual response between agent and witness.

The fact that both Smith and Hume used the term 'sympathy', has misled some commentators to assume that the two uses are equivalent. Since the

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[6] Berry, *Social Theory*, p. 4.

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revisionist reading proposed here requires the distinction between the two uses to be made clear, and this is articulated below.

To make some progress towards validating the claim that Smith's *Moral Sentiments* is a Newtonian account of the nature of moral knowledge, it is necessary to show that his theory exhibits the characteristics of Newtonian methodology. Newton's theory of gravitation is constructed from three laws of motion and a handful of atomic concepts. In the following analysis, Smith's theory is shown to be constructed from a small number of principles based on lawlike regularities in the sympathetic response, together with a small number of irreducible concepts.

Acknowledging that and why Smith had to work with irreducible moral concepts provides the motivation for a revisionist reading of the opening sections of the *Moral Sentiments*. However, it is not difficult appreciate why this aspect of Smith's text frequently has been misinterpreted. In these first sections of the book, Smith introduces the basic building blocks of the theory: irreducible concepts founded in unmediated responses to others' behaviour. By definition these atomic concepts cannot be analysed or explicated – to do so would imply that our notion of morality is actually artificial, being a complex construction from other, non-moral concepts.[7] Smith had to attempt something akin to an ostensive definition of moral concepts, to equate the element of an immediate response with the feeling that he identified as necessary for a reaction to another's behaviour to comprise a moral response. His only means of achieving this was to describe situations which he considered would elicit the feeling in the reader that he had argued is definitive of a moral response. However, unless this context is understood fully and the examples are taken as having this illustrative role, they can appear to have a prescriptive function: that is, instead of being read as describing scenarios intended to induce an intuitively recognisable reaction on the part of the reader, Smith is seen as stipulating the appropriate moral response to the situations he described. In order to motivate the proposed revisionist reading it needs to be clearly

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[7] This is the essence of Hume's account of justice;' see above, pp. 36–7.

established that, and why Smith's examples have a merely illustrative role in his argument for the moral primitivity of sympathy.

Smith's main contribution to eighteenth-century moral theory was a consistently empiricist account of conscience, which he achieved by reference to his concept of impartial spectatorship. This aspect of his theory still attracts great philosophical interest. It follows that Smith's account of judgements of conscience must be shown to remain central and intact under the revised reading.

Smith intended to construct an account of the development of our moral knowledge, and his discussion of sympathy shows that an individual's moral education begins with the identification of his unmediated reaction to another's situation. But Smith goes on to show that moral judgements are tempered according to the context in which that situation arises. *The Man of Feeling* supplies examples of the kind of contextual information that Smith describes. For example, Harley modifies his initially benevolent response to the beggar's plight on learning that the man's destitution was due to a series of misfortunes exacerbated by his persistent self-centredness; while he modifies his initial disapproval of Miss Atkins, on learning that the series of misfortunes that led to her plight were largely not her fault. However, Smith argues, it is often impracticable to anticipate full knowledge of the background to a given situation. In these cases we can only reach a judgement by applying general rules of conduct to the situation, that is, by subsuming the situation under one, or a set of inductive generalisations about what is and what is not appropriate conduct under certain broadly specifiable conditions.

Rules of conduct play a substantial part in Smith's thought. With regard to an individual member of a society, they enable him to make judgements about situations which lack adequate specific information, and in this role they provide a gauge against which to judge the conduct of others. They can also provide a means of charting an individual's moral development since increasing competence can be defined as increasing familiarity with the rules of conduct.

The idea of rules of conduct also has a wider role. Smith believed they

derive from inductive generalisations over a society and as such they describe general behavioural trends within that society. It follows that a statement of a society's general rules of conduct effectively describes that society's social mores. This idea that it is possible to identify general behavioural trends in one's own or another society forms the basis of stadialism. As noted in the Introduction, stadial history depends on the possibility of comparing the social mores of different societies, and identifying those which are common to, and so interpreted as indicative of, a specific developmental stage. General rules of conduct were regarded as providing the data for this kind of comparative study, in particular those rules which are comprise the legal system for that society.

Since, in Smith's view, an individual's ability to make moral judgements depends on his familiarity with the rules of conduct for the society to which he belongs, it follows that any morally competent agent will have tacit or explicit knowledge of the general trends in his own society. This line of thinking provided the literati with a means of implementing their ideas for halting and reversing what they saw as the moral deterioration of their society. While general rules of conduct can provide a description of a society's moral code, for an individual they have a prescriptive role. Since Smith's theory explained how an individual acquires knowledge of these rules, it follows that if the rules of conduct can be identified, they can be taught to an individual.

Furthermore, according to stadialist theory, a society's mores can change. Change can be a sign of improvement, or of deterioration. For completeness, Smith had to accommodate this capacity in his account of the means by which knowledge of general rules of conduct is disseminated. His analysis also had to be compatible with his account of how individuals learn to regulate and improve their moral conduct, since, as mentioned above, rules of conduct are inductive generalisations over the behaviour of a society's members. This is explicated by Smith in the course of his discussion of custom and fashion.

Smith's theory of social improvement can supply a structure and rationale for a system of moral education. He gave an empirical analysis of the

elements of moral judgement and an account of the conditions under which they can be acquired. He also explained the derivation of abstract moral concepts and showed how these are formed by abstraction from less complex concepts. This dependency introduces an intrinsic ordering or hierarchy of concepts from less to more complex, and for this reason, in theory, it can be used to structure the moral education of an individual. There is good evidence that this underpinned the literati's strategy for improving society morally, a point taken up again in chapter 3, and, as argued below, that Mackenzie used Smith's theory of the generation of general rules and their role for an individual, to structure *The Man of Feeling* and so educate the reader in what he deemed the moral code considered appropriate for Scottish society.

In conclusion, Smith's *Moral Sentiments* should be understood to be putting forward a theory, in which first the atomic building blocks of the theory are identified and described, and then are used in the construction of more complex concepts. Few commentators have taken this theoretical structure into account. Intuitive and, frequently, inaccurate interpretations have been given of the concepts Smith uses, with little or no recognition of the possibility of there being an overall purpose to Smith's argumentation. A good example of the confusion that can arise from this kind of piecemeal approach is given by Dwyer's discussions of Smith's *Moral Sentiments*. I have considered Dwyer's account in detail, partly because his mistakes throw into the relief the explanatory advantages of the revisionist reading, and partly because, since his account of the concerns of the eighteenth-century Scottish moralists is one of the few that is sympathetic to the suggestion that the literati's concern was to improve the moral fabric of Scotland by preserving traditional mores, his overview of the intended import of the literati's sentimental writing is useful. However, as is shown below, his analysis fails to recognise the coherence of their approach, and its dependence on Smith's theorising.

The structure of the discussion of the *Moral Sentiments* and its influence on Mackenzie's *The Man of Feeling* is as follows. In section 1, I explain what it is about Smith's theory of moral sentiments that differentiates it from

that of Hume; and gesture towards the kind of evidence we might expect to find of the influence in Smith's work of his intellectual mentor, Newton. In section 2, I attempt to clarify the concepts basic to Smith's moral theory. These concepts are both fundamental to the theory and, as mentioned above are all too often misread as constituting a normative ethics. I reconstruct Smith's argument that propriety, that is, morally acceptable behaviour, is learned behaviour founded on sympathy; and that while sympathy is spontaneous, we have to learn when to modulation our responses to others' behaviour.

Since Smith's main contribution to eighteenth-century moral theory was a consistently empiricist explanation of conscience, I discuss his use of the notion of impartial spectatorship reconstruction in Smith's account of conscience in section 3, and show how this accounts remains consistently empiricist.

Many have read the *Moral Sentiments* as essentially prescriptivist. In section 4, I argue that this is inappropriate by demonstrating the extent to which Smith incorporated Newtonian thought into his theory – and hence ground the claim that Smith's theory is not prescriptive, but a scientific account of human conduct.

Smith relies on Lockean epistemology and its implied empiricist psychology for his account of an individual's concept development. In section 5, I describe how this feature of Locke's thought comprises the epistemic presuppositions for Smith's theory, and in section 6, I use this to articulate Smith's analysis of change in social mores.

Central to Scottish Enlightenment thought is the idea that societies improve or progress – become more civilised. This is a problem for an empiricist account of social mores and one which Smith does not really solve. However, it is possible to reconstruct his analysis of the dynamic of social change from his account of the corrosive effects of wealth on societal values. This forms the content of section 7. It leads to an explanation of Smith's emphasis on the middle rank as the custodians of acceptable social conduct, as explained in section 8. In this section I also demonstrate the advantages of the Newtonian reading of the *Moral Sentiments* by contrasting

it with that of Dwyer's reading of the text as a normative ethics. In section 9, I return to the question which initiated this discussion of Smith's theory; namely, that concerning the source of Mackenzie's idea of a virtuous education, by first explaining how Smith's theory of moral sentiments lends itself to use in this way; and then by showing that his theory does indeed inform *The Man of Feeling*.

1 *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*: an overview

As mentioned above, the 4th edition of the *Moral Sentiments* was given the subtitle: 'the Principles by which Men naturally judge concerning the Conduct and Character, first of their Neighbours, and afterwards of themselves'. Superficially, the subtitle appears to be no more than a clear, if somewhat pedantic statement about the ordering of material in the book. Parts I and II do indeed treat of judgements concerning the behaviour of others – the matter of making judgements about one's own conduct not being addressed until part III.[8]

To anyone familiar with the kinds of problems engendered by an empiricist account of the meaning of terms denoting what may be called 'private objects' – pains, emotions, attitudinal states such as approval or expectation – the specification of the order 'others; self' in connection with the concept 'character' carries other connotations. It signifies a sensitivity to the problems created by the privacy of experience.

Smith's theory of moral sentiments, essentially, is that men approve of another's conduct and character when, on imagining themselves to be in the same situation as that person, the imagined situation causes the same feeling to arise in them as that which they perceive to have motivated the behaviour under scrutiny. Another's behaviour prompts disapproval, when the imagined situation fails to cause such feelings to occur (I.i.2.6). The accordance of feelings between agent and observer – or, to use Smith's term, spectator – is referred to by Smith as the relation of sympathy.

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[8] 'In the two foregoing parts of this discourse, I have chiefly considered the origin and foundation of our judgments concerning the sentiments and conduct of others. I come now to consider more particularly the origin of those concerning our own' (III.1.1).

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The sympathy relation is sensitive to various contingencies affecting the spectator's ability to imagine the agent's situation – for example, inexperience (II.2.31, n., III.3.19); inattention (I.i.3.4); insufficient information about the agent's situation (III.2.4, III.2.33); partiality (III.2.26, III.4.1). However, certain kinds of conduct inherently affect the spectator's sympathetic response, namely those which entail interaction between the agent and another – what might be thought of as 'transitive acts' such as beneficence on the part of an agent with concomitant gratitude on the part of the recipient; or anger on the part of an agent and concomitant fear on the part of the provocateur. In these cases a spectator's response to an agent will be modulated by his response to the party to the agent's behaviour. For example, a benefactor will garner approval only if the spectator can sympathise with both parties – in such instances, according to Smith's theory, the spectator's sympathy with the gratitude of a beneficiary will enhance the spectator's approval of the benefactor (II.i.4.1–2). In the case of anger, the spectator can sympathise wholly with only one of the parties concerned, but which of the two parties will depend on the spectator's judgement as to whether the agent has reacted appropriately to the situation provoking his anger.[9]

Impartiality

Moral sentiments, then, are understood by Smith to be ultimately reducible to the reactions by a spectator towards an agent's conduct or character. This approach to an explanation of moral judgements does not originate with Smith. Hutcheson and later Hume both accounted for morality in terms of the response of spectators to events or states of affairs. Hutcheson's theory was innovative in being the first to insist on an account of morality which depends on the idea of disinterested moral judgements.[10] Hutcheson

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[9] In each case the spectator instinctively tends towards sympathy with the party to the agent's action, so moral judgement about the agent's conduct rests more overtly on the motivating circumstances (II.1, chs 4, 5).

[10] I.e. in addition to disinterested motives. Lord Shaftesbury and Bishop Butler had each argued against egoistic accounts of morality, basing alternative accounts on disinterested motives, but neither managed to eradicate completely considerations of self-interest. Both gave accounts of

developed the concept of a 'moral sense', which he describes as a disinterested feeling of approval which naturally occurs when witness to an act of benevolence arising from disinterested motives.[11] He compared disinterested moral reaction with aesthetic reactions (love or admiration) evoked by beauty. The point of the comparison was not to draw parallels between the objects of judgement for each kind of judgement – benevolence in the case of moral judgements; unity-in-variety in the case of aesthetic judgements – but to stress the impartiality Hutcheson regarded as necessary for moral judgements; an impartiality which he argued had to be regarded as that of a witness to acts of benevolence, rather than the reaction of any of those connected with the feelings of either agent or beneficiary.

Hume endorsed and built on Hutcheson's moral theory. He added an explanation of the moral sense, or sentiment of approval, describing it as a feeling of pleasure or displeasure of a particular kind which arises in an impartial spectator as a result of sympathy with the pain or pleasure of the person affected by the action under consideration.[12] He also widened the scope of virtue beyond benevolence, arguing that a more complex account of moral judgements was necessary. He developed the concept of artificial virtues using the concept of utility, the most notable of which virtues is justice. However, all such analyses were founded in sympathy and analysed from a spectator's point of view.[13]

The originality in Smith's use of the concept of an impartial spectator lies in his development of the concept in such a way as to enable an explanation of judgements of conscience made about one's own conduct.[14] According to Smith, moral judgements about one's own behaviour are the result of

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morality based on the psychology of the moral agent alone: the agent's judgements about his own behaviour being the result of reflection on his motives. Smith argues against Hutcheson's theory at III.4.5 and VII.iii.2.9–VII.iii.3.17.

[11] Disapproval is similarly a naturally occurring feeling, but evoked by action motivated by self-interest.

[12] David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1739–40), ed. E.C. Mossner (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969), II.ii.2, pp. 522–4.

[13] Ibid., I.ii.

[14] See D.D. Raphael, 'The Impartial Spectator', in Andrew S. Skinner and Thomas Wilson (eds), *Essays on Adam Smith* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1975), pp. 83–99, p. 87.

applying to oneself, decisions already made about similar behaviour in others.[15]

In effect, Smith equates a moral judgement with recognition of the existence or otherwise of a sympathetic relation between agent and spectator, while Hume grounds morality in the occurrence or otherwise of a sympathetic contagion of the spectator's feelings by the agent. In Hume's theory, sympathy is a communicated passion (*Treatise* III.iii.1); by contrast, for Smith it is a relation of accordance between passions caused by an actual situation on the part of the agent, and passions caused by an imagined situation on the part of the spectator (I.i.3.1). In other words, according to Hume, sympathy is a reaction by a spectator to an agent; while for Smith it is an interaction between agent and spectator.[16]

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[15] Smith wrote: 'To be amiable and to be meritorious, that is, to deserve love and to deserve reward, are the great characters of virtue ... but all these characters have an immediate reference to the sentiments of others' (III.i.6). Dugald Stewart glossed this as 'The fundamental principle of Mr Smith's theory is, that the primary objects of our moral perceptions are the actions of other men; and that our moral judgements with respect to our own conduct are only applications to ourselves of decisions which we have already passed on the conduct of our neighbour' (Stewart, 'Account of the Life and Writings of Adam Smith, LL.D.' (1793), repr. in Adam Smith, *Essays on Philosophical Subjects with Dugald Stewart's Account of Adam Smith* (1795), ed. I.S. Ross (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), pp. 269–351, p. 280).

[16] The connection between Hume's notion of sympathy and that of Smith is often recognised but misrepresented. Mullan, for example, inverts the relation between sociability and sympathy, so representing Smith and Hume as relying on sociability as compensation for the effects of competition and self-interest. This may be the pragmatic end result of Smith's and Hume's theories, but it is inadequate as an explanation of the role ascribed to sympathy in the theories of each (see for example, I.i.3.1; Hume, *Treatise*, III.iii.1.1, 'Of National Character' (1748), in *Essays, Moral, Political and Literary* (1741–77), ed. E.F. Miller (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1985), pp. 197–215, p. 202). Mullan's approach leads him to describe Hume as establishing the principle of social relations by describing 'our need for and behaviour in company', and sympathy becomes the principle which is taken to make social transactions possible. This is a misconstrual: sympathy is not a response to social interaction, but in effect the cause of it. Mullan's misunderstanding of the presuppositions behind Hume's and Smith's accounts of social interaction results in his describing Smith as forsaking 'the ambition to imagine a sociability which could be a common habit, a shared possession'. Mullan continues: 'In a sense, the ideally socialized individual has become, in [Smith's] moral theory, the abstracted spectator' (John Mullan, 'The Language of Sentiment: Hume, Smith and Henry Mackenzie',

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Smith's Newtonianism

The relational nature of Smith's concept of sympathy and its role in society lends itself to comparison with the nature and role of gravity in Newtonian astronomy. Smith's theory of interactions between any given person and the rest of society can be modelled by an orrery.[17] This is not as surprising as it might be, given Smith's enthusiasm for Newton's theory of gravitation, both as an explanation of planetary movement and as an example of scientific discourse. Clearly he not only regarded Newtonian methodology to have application in any scientific domain but recommended that it be followed. It is also evident from his other writings that Smith considered a theory of morals to come within the remit of 'scientific theory'.[18]

Taking Smith's intention behind his account of moral sentiments to be that of presenting a structured scientific account of morality which not only adheres to Newtonian principles of scientific explanation, but also transposes Newton's model of gravitational force from the planetary to the social arena, has several favourable consequences. An immediate outcome

in Andrew Hook (ed.), *The History of Scottish Literature*, vol. II: *1660–1800* (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1987), pp. 273–89; pp. 276, 286). This misinterpretation of Smith's concept of impartial spectatorship is not unusual, as discussed in section 8, pp. 196–8, below.

[17] This can be generalised to societies (III.3.42).

[18] See Smith, 'The Principles which Lead and Direct Philosophical Enquiries; Illustrated by the History of Astronomy' (1795), in *Essays on Philosophical Subjects with Dugald Stewart's Account of Adam Smith* (1795), ed. I.S. Ross (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), pp. 31–105 (hereafter HA), IV.75; and *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* (1762/3) (hereafter *LRBL*), ed. J.C. Bryce (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), ii.133. Campbell's study of the *Moral Sentiments* seeks to establish the Newtonian influence on Smith's moral philosophy: Campbell, *Adam Smith's Science of Morals*, pp. 43–4; 'Scientific Explanation and Ethical Justification in the *Moral Sentiments*', in Andrew S. Skinner and Thomas Wilson (eds), *Essays on Adam Smith* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1975), pp. 68–82, p. 69. As Raphael and Macfie remark, the Newtonian aspect of Smith's theory was noted as innovative by his contemporaries; Raphael and Macfie quote from a letter from James Wodrow (written about 1808) in which Wodrow refers to Smith's lectures on moral philosophy: 'His Theory of Moral sentiment founded on sympathy, a very ingenuous attempt to account for the principal phenomena in the moral world from this one general principle like that of gravity in the natural world' (quoted in D.D. Raphael and A.L. Macfie, 'Introduction' to Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, pp. 1–52; p. 3).

is that, as mentioned above, the *Moral Sentiments* loses its meandering quality and becomes, instead, a controlled, tightly constructed theory of morality. Moreover, the theory is arguably more rigorously empiricist even than that of Hume. Hume is content to allow that an individual's sensory experiences remain essentially private, and his account of morals relies on the idea that the kinds of experiences which form the objects of moral judgements are in some sense transmitted between agent and observer. Smith, however, both acknowledges the essential privacy of experience throughout both sensory and moral domains, and uses that privacy to drive his account of self-approbation; to explain the root of man's essential self-interest; and to explain conscience and duty in empiricist rather than (tacitly or overtly) rationalist concepts.[19]

A less immediate consequence of a strongly Newtonian reading of the *Moral Sentiments* is that, because Smith highlights and uses the role and scope of experience in the formation and manipulation of moral concepts, and furthermore, constructs complex and abstract moral concepts from simple concrete experiences, his theory can be used to form the basis for controlling and structuring moral development. According to Smith's theory, an individual can be educated morally, in much the same way as he can be educated intellectually, and for the same reasons. In each case, the ability to reason – to manipulate conceptual content – is independent of the objects of

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[19] Hume argues for the concept of artificial virtues on the grounds that since moral sentiment is an original quality and primary constituent, but the number of duties is, in a manner of speaking, infinite, it is impossible that original instincts should extend to each of these duties (*Treatise*, III.i.2, pp. 525–6). Hume regards some virtues (e.g. justice) as yielding pleasure and approbation as a result of 'artifice or contrivance', which artifice is a necessary response by mankind to social circumstances (ibid., III.ii.1, p. 529; III.ii.5, pp. 568–77). The pleasure such virtues generate results from intellectual appreciation of the reason-based response to circumstances, rather than from a non-rational, sympathetic response. I suspect that Mullan's confusion (see above, p. 121, n. 15) is a result of failing to appreciate Hume's distinction between natural and artificial virtue – despite this being the crux of Smith's objection to Hume's account of justice. It is true that Smith utilises a notion of contrived propriety, but this appears only in explanations of moral approval founded in delusions about the nature of virtue; and as justification for moral approval. See Smith on custom, below (pp. 188–9).

reason, and of the quality of experiences to which one is exposed. In an era in which economic and religious trends were changing rapidly, and in a country stripped of its political identity, the promise of a means of preserving and propagating societal values will have had no little import.

2 The basic concepts

The framework for Smith's theory of moral sentiments is given in the opening section of the book. By the end of that section, Smith has indicated both his understanding of the nature of the subject matter of his inquiry and the approach he intends to take in answering the two questions which he believes an adequate account of morality should answer, namely 'What is virtue?' and 'How do we recognise it?' (VII.i.1). We learn that man's capacity for moral evaluation is natural: developing the ability to make moral judgements is part and parcel of man's experience of social interaction, and man is intrinsically social; so the subject matter for a theory of moral sentiments is the nature of man. Moral facts then, are observable social facts; and because observable will yield to a consistently empiricist approach.

I have referred to Smith as 'indicating' the way in which he intends to carry out his inquiry because nowhere in the *Moral Sentiments* does he *explain* his approach. He opens the book with a statement of fact which he describes as 'too obvious to require any instances to prove it' (I.i.1.1). But this description in itself is indicative of the manner in which Smith proposes to conduct his inquiry. Where necessary, demonstration of the plausibility of his theory is to be furnished by 'instances' − by appeal to confirmation by readers' experience; otherwise he will rely on statements of fact too obvious to brook doubt.

The fact that Smith regards as being too obvious to require demonstration is 'that we often derive sorrow from the sorrow of others' (I.i.1.1). Man is naturally disposed to pity or sympathise. This is an 'original passion', and as such it is universal and irreducible.[20] While acknowledging that the term

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[20] Properties or characteristics of mankind which Smith describes as natural, or ascribes to Nature, are atomic, hence universal and irreducible. A contemporary reader would have been alerted to the kind of enquiry Smith

'sympathy' is generally regarded as a generic term for a compassionate response to another's emotional state (I.i.1.5), Smith uses it as a technical term. He treats pity and compassion as two of a family of responses towards the feelings or emotional states of another, a family which also includes joy, gratitude and resentment, and in fact any resonance with any emotional reaction in another: 'Whatever is the passion which arises from any object in the person principally concerned, an analogous emotion springs up, at the thought of his situation, in the breast of every attentive spectator' (I.i.1.4). He refers to these analogous responses generically as 'fellow feelings' (ibid.), and he then defines 'sympathy' as the relationship of concordance or harmony between the emotional responses of any two people to the same kind of cause: 'Sympathy ... may ... without much impropriety, be made use of to denote our fellow-feeling with any passion whatsoever' (I.i.1.5).

Empiricism and the problem of privileged access

It takes two to sympathise.[21] Since, for Smith, sympathetic reactions are the result of original passions, it follows that man is naturally disposed to interact socially. Taken within an empiricist theory, this implies that social facts are understood to be facts of nature, and hence irreducible. To put the point another way, for an empiricist, man's societal existence cannot be regarded as fully explicable by reference to purely rational concepts.[22] Social facts may be confirmed by observation, but cannot ultimately be proved by analytic reasoning.[23]

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had undertaken by the reference in the subtitle to principles by which men *naturally* judge.

[21] It is true that Smith describes situations which, he acknowledges, involve only the spectator – we sympathise with the dead, for example (I.i.1.13, II.i.2.5), but he argues subsequently that sympathy under these circumstances is dependent on an ability to sympathise with an actual agent.

[22] Hence one cannot assume that Scottish Enlightenment writers fall into the 'Age of Reason' categorisation applied to the European Enlightenment generally, a point noted by Dwyer (*The Age of Passions: An Interpretation of Adam Smith and the Scottish Enlightenment Culture* (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 1998), p. 1).

[23] Smith states: 'the reasonings of philosophy ... though they may confound and perplex the understanding, can never break down the necessary connection which Nature has established between causes and their effects' (VII.ii.1.47).

Smith indicates that he is working with an empiricist theory of knowledge at the outset of the *Moral Sentiments*, albeit with characteristic lack of fanfare. He writes:

As we have no immediate experience of what other men feel, we can form no idea of the manner in which they are affected, but by conceiving what we ourselves should feel in the like situation. ... Neither can that faculty help us in any way, than by representing to us what would be our own, if we were in [another's] case. (I.i.1.2)

Here, Smith is addressing the fact that emotions and feelings are essentially private experiences. We can know *that* A feels pain, for example, but not what it is for A to be in pain – what *A's* experience of pain is. The fact that Smith refers to the inaccessibility of another's experience does not provide sufficient grounds for ascribing to him an empiricist stance.[24] What does supply the grounds for this ascription however, is the way in which he accommodates the privacy problem, namely, by recourse to an appeal to the imagination: 'Though our brother is upon the rack, as long as we ourselves are at our ease, our senses will never inform us of what he suffers. They never did, and they never can, carry us beyond our own person, and it is by imagination only that we can form any conception of what are his sensations' (ibid.). Smith's approach to the privacy of experience provides insight into his conception of what might be referred to as the 'mechanics' of the sympathy relation, and since, as Hume noted, sympathy forms 'the Hinge of [Smith's] System',[25] it is important that the ideas underpinning Smith's reliance, in this passage, on imagining the content of another's experience of pain, are made explicit.

Smith seems to be stating that in order to understand what another is feeling, we have to do no more than imagine that we are in the same situation as that person. That is, it appears that, for Smith, an adequate account of the content of B's statement of an ascription of pain to A, is

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[24] This is the crux of debate in meaning theory, in the wake of Wittgenstein's anti-private-language argument in his *Philosophical Investigations* and elsewhere.

[25] 'Letter from David Hume, 28 July 1759', in J. Reeder (ed.), *On Moral Sentiments: Contemporary Responses to Adam Smith* (Bristol: Thoemmes Press, 1997), pp. 3–12, p. 10.

supplied by reference to the pain sensations B imagines he would have, were he in the same situation as A. However, throughout the first chapter, there are indications that Smith is working with a very specific idea of what it is to use one's imagination in such cases. For example, one's powers of imagination are affected by one's physical constitution: 'persons of delicate fibres and weak constitution' are unable to help reacting adversely and physically to the sight of 'sores and ulcers exposed by beggars in the street' (I.i.1.3); on occasions an emotional response to another's emotional state is so instantaneous as to seem the result of contagion (I.i.1.6);[26] and as Smith mentions at the outset, the capacity to respond compassionately in the face of another's misery, is universal (I.i.1.1).

There is another idiosyncracy in Smith's comments in I.i.1.2. The observer's compassion in Smith's example is the outcome not of vicarious pain, but of vicarious sorrow: 'For as to be in pain or distress of any kind excites the most excessive sorrow, so to conceive or to imagine that we are in it, excites some degree of the same emotion, in proportion to the vivacity or dullness of the conception.' In other words, fellow feeling is not fellow feeling with the sufferer's pain, but with his sorrow.

Smith's remarks in I.i.1.2 have the general tenor of a mere reminder to his readers of what it is we understand when we recognise pain, or, indeed, any sensation, in another individual. The clue to the way in which Smith is using 'imagination', lies in his reference to the imagination *copying impressions* of our senses, which reproduces Hume's terminology with regard to Hume's description of the imaginative faculty. On closer reading, it can be seen that Smith presupposed Hume's account of the passions.[27] In order to understand fully Smith's concept of sympathy, the *Moral Sentiments* has to be read as propounding a theory developed from Humean empiricism.

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[26] Presumably Smith believed this phenomenon to have misled Hume.

[27] Hume expounded his theory of understanding in *Treatise of Human Nature* (1739–40), and in *Philosophical Essays concerning Human Understanding* (1748). *Philosophical Essays* was later renamed and subsequently known as the *Enquiry concerning Human Understanding*.

According to Hume, all conceptual content is derived ultimately from the effect of stimulation of our senses, i.e. from what are now commonly referred to as 'sense data'. Our knowledge of an object existing independently in the external world is effectively treated as constructed from information we gather from our senses:[28] a round, pink, sugar-coated pill feels solid, looks pink and tastes sweet. We experience solidity, pinkness and sweetness. In Hume's terminology, we experience *sensations* of solidity, pinkness and sweetness. Sensations give rise to ideas, in the following manner: when we are subject to a sensation, the mind 'takes a copy' of that sensation, which we retain indefinitely, after the sensation has ceased. The copy is an idea. So for example, seeing a pink pill, we have a pink sensation; the mind copies the pinkness; and we acquire the idea 'pinkness' (*Treatise* I.I.ii, p. 55).

Hume includes pleasure and pain among sensations (ibid.). However, sensations are only a subcategory of the possible initial causes of ideas. Other such causes are passions and emotions (*Treatise* I.I.i, p. 49). Hume refers to passions, emotions and sensations generically as *impressions*. There is a crucial distinction between sensations, and passions and emotions. Although all impressions give rise to ideas, passions and emotions are themselves derived, by a mental process which Hume calls 'reflexion', from ideas that arise from sensations, namely the sensations of pain and pleasure:

Impressions may be divided into two kinds, those of SENSATION and those of REFLEXION. The first kind arises in the soul originally, from unknown causes. The second is derived in great measure from our ideas. ... [The] idea of pleasure or pain, when it returns upon the soul, produces new impressions of desire and aversion, hope and fear, which may properly be called impressions of reflexion, because derived from it. These again are copied by the memory and imagination, and become ideas. ... So the impressions of reflexion are only antecedent to their correspondent ideas; but posterior to those of sensation and deriv'd from them. (*Treatise* I.I.ii, p. 55)

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[28] Hume remains agnostic about the way in which our senses work: cf: 'As to those impressions which arise from the senses, their ultimate cause is in my opinion, perfectly inexplicable by human reason, and 'twill always be impossible to decide with certainty whether they arise immediately from the object or are produc'd by the creative power of the mind, or are derived from the author of our being' (*Treatise*, I.iii.v, p. 132).

Arguably, Hume has managed to account only for memories, but he intends his distinction between memory and imagination, for all its philosophical opacity, to carry explanatory weight.[29] Both memory and imagination act on the same kinds of impressions, but memory 'preserves the original form in which its objects were presented', while ideas resulting from the action of the imagination are not so constrained (*Treatise* I.I.iii, pp. 57, 56).

The difference between ideas copied by memory and those copied by imagination is crucial for Hume's account of understanding. Impressions furnish only simple ideas – the content of atomic concepts, such as pinkness; sweetness; solidity. However, our experience is of compound ideas: a pill, for example.[30] If his theory is to be both plausible and consistently empiricist, then Hume needs to be able to explain how we can entertain complex concepts without appeal to any notion of innate ideas – that is, by appeal only to ideas derived from sensation. More importantly, if his account is to be plausible, he has to be able to explain how we understand complex concepts for which we have had no corresponding experience. As Hume points out, we can understand descriptions of places we've never visited, for example;

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[29] Hume is aware that he has given no means for a hard and fast demarcation between ideas resulting from the imagination and those of memory. He mentions differentiation between the two kinds of ideas by way of differences in their relative liveliness and vivacity. Impressions generally are the most vivacious (*Treatise*, I.I.i, p. 49); ideas have lost vivacity, and memories are 'somewhat intermediate betwixt an impression and an idea' (*Treatise* I.I.iii, p. 56). None of these distinctions will serve to allow an individual to decide between an impression, a memory or idea, however, for the simple reason that the decision requires that one is able to make sense of the notion of comparing ideas. Later Hume appeals to the notion of there being a difference in feeling between memories and 'pure' ideas, although this feeling is again something to do with relative strength and liveliness: 'I believe every one will readily agree with me, that the ideas of the memory are more *strong* and *lively* than those of fancy' (*Treatise* I.III.v, p. 133; original emphasis).

[30] Both Smith and Hume make explicit reference to the fact that qualities are essentially abstractions; that they are only ever experienced as qualities of an object; see Hume, *Treatise*, I.i.7, pp. 64–5; Smith, *Considerations Concerning the First Formation of Languages, and the Different Genius of Original and Compounded Languages* (1761), hereafter *FFL* (in *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* (1762/3), ed. J.C. Bryce (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), pp. 201–26), 6).

we can also understand 'poems and romances' which refer to fabulous creatures – in which 'Nature ... is totally confounded, and nothing mentioned but winged horses, fiery dragons and monstrous giants' (*Treatise* I.I.iii, p. 57); and in the opening paragraph of the *Treatise* he mentions that we understand abstract ideas.[31] Hume's response to each of these issues relies on our atomic ideas being intrinsically independent of each other, and the bulk of Book I of the *Treatise* comprises Hume's solutions to problems created by combining the need for this independence with an explanation of the predictability, or law-governed quality, of our experiences without either confining mental activity to what has been actually experienced, or invoking innate ideas.[32]

Smith's concept of fellow feeling

The difficulty either of ensuring that a Humean ontology melds with our intuitive metaphysics, or of giving a plausible explanation of its failure to so meld is of such significance, philosophically, as to have merited the exertions of the some of the greatest thinkers from Kant onwards. However, in the *Moral Sentiments*, Smith's argument with Hume is over the place of utility in moral evaluation.[33] Smith's remarks about fellow feeling, the role of the imagination in generating fellow feeling, and the nature of the sympathetic

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[31] Hume refers to the ideas involved in reading the *Treatise* – 'the faint images ... in thinking and reasoning; such as, for instance, are all the perceptions excited by the present discourse excepting only, those which arise from the sight and touch [i.e. from the physical book], and excepting the immediate pleasure or uneasiness it may occasion' (*Treatise* I.i.1., p. 49).

[32] Hume states: 'As all simple ideas may be separated by the imagination, and may be united again in what form it pleases, nothing wou'd be more unaccountable than the operation of that faculty, were it not guided by some universal principles, which render it, in some measure, uniform with itself in all times and places' (I.i.4, p. 57). A great deal of subsequent philosophical activity has been devoted to saving Humean methodology from the sceptical paradoxes it engenders, while also saving the phenomena it endeavours to explain.

[33] See Smith's comments on accounts of virtue which are founded on utility at I.i.4.4; and IV.2.3–7; especially IV.2.3, which refers directly to Hume; and Hume's comment on Smith's objections in a review of the *Moral Sentiments*: 'Hume's *Abstract of Adam Smith's Theory of Moral Sentiments*' (May 1759), repr. in J. Reeder (ed.), *On Moral Sentiments: Contemporary Responses to Adam Smith* (Bristol: Thoemmes Press, 1997), pp. 33–50, esp. pp. 45–6.

relation become significantly less opaque when read in the light of Hume's description of the origin of ideas. One may regard him as using Hume's ontology as a starting point in his theory of moral sentiments, as a Humean reading of Smith's 'rack' example (I.i.1.2) illustrates.

Smith wrote: 'As we have no immediate experience of what other men feel, we can form no idea of the manner in which they are affected, but by conceiving what we ourselves would feel in the like situation. Though our brother is on the rack ... our senses will never inform us of what he suffers' (ibid.). Smith's point here is that the immediate experience of witnessing someone in pain, is restricted to what we experience through the five senses – the 'look and gestures' (I.i.1.6) of the person affected. An individual B can ascribe pain to another, A, on the basis of A's behaviour.[34]

This raises a question as to what it is that is being ascribed to A; what content the concept – or idea – of another's pain can have, given that we experience only what we see, hear and so on. According to Hume, an individual's idea of pain can only derive from pain felt by that individual; in other words, when B ascribes pain to A, the content of B's use of the term 'pain' can only have been supplied by B's past personal experiences of pain. Using Hume's terminology, B's idea of pain is the copy by the imagination of what B has felt in the past when in pain. Smith expresses the point generally: 'It is the impressions of our own senses only ... which our imaginations copy' (I.i.1.2).

As mentioned above, Hume's account of the origin of ideas of the passions, rests on the notion that physical pain gives rise to emotional reactions. Smith concludes the rack example with a statement which shows he accepts this notion: 'For as to be in pain or distress of any kind excites the

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[34] It may be argued that a person's behaviour is neither necessary nor sufficient for an ascription of pain, and that 'being-in-pain behaviour' is not a necessary condition for ascription of pain and other essentially private states, plays a large part in Smith's account of self-control (I.iii.1.9); and the possibility of feigned pain seems to undermine any claim that behaviour can give sufficient grounds for such an ascription (I.iii.1.2 mentions feigned sorrow). I understand Smith in this chapter to be focusing on 'the norm' – on 'average' symptoms of pain. Justification for this can be drawn from Smith's arguments against Stoic perfection (I.iii.2.9, n., pp. 58–60, III.3.14, III.3.27), and his repeated references to a use of plausible expectations of another's conduct in making moral judgements (e.g. I.i.3.4. III.3.26).

most excessive sorrow, so to conceive or to imagine that we are in it, excites some degree of the same emotion, in proportion to the vivacity or dullness of the conception' (ibid.). But notice that Smith's notion of fellow feeling depends on the generation of the emotional response itself to pain, and not on the idea of that emotion. Hume says that emotions arise from, for example, pain and are copied by the imagination to yield ideas; Smith's theory depends only on the first half of this process: that imagining that we are pain is sufficient to cause actual sorrow.

It seems to me that Smith is working with an understanding of the imagination of pain according to which understanding the meaning of the term 'pain' entails associating with it, past experiences of pain, and – perhaps even, therefore – using the term meaningfully entails replicating, in some sense, the being-in-pain content.[35] For Smith, we empathise with another's painful situation, and as a result feel our own sorrow. Neither response is intellectual, and the response to recognition of someone's physical situation is itself physical.[36] One upshot of this is that the more an observer B understands of A's pain-provoking position, the richer will be his response, and the closer his emotional reaction will be to A's both in kind and strength. Full sympathy in this case, depends on having the same kind of emotional reaction, as far as possible in the same degree, to another's situation; and that in turn requires as great a comprehension as possible of that situation.

Smith's choice of pain to highlight the role personal experience plays in furnishing the content of concepts is both useful and misleading. It is useful, because the idea of a separation between external, publicly observable cause and internal private effect is implicit in pain discourse, and hence familiar: for example, we are used to the notion that if we were to witness someone watching himself being injected in the thigh, his experience would have an

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[35] Jonathan Harrison construes the foundations of Hume's epistemology similarly; see *Hume's Moral Epistemology* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1976), esp. pp. 29–30.

[36] This interpretative route seems to be confirmed by Smith's description of a crowd's unconscious movements when watching a tightrope walker (I.i.1.3); and provides an explanation for Smith's comments about physical sensitivity increasing the intensity of a spectator's reaction to another's injuries (I.i.1.3).

aspect which is inaccessible to us, namely in addition to seeing all we can see (the needle denting, then entering his flesh, the syringe plunger being depressed and so on), the subject would also feel pain. Nevertheless, the idiosyncrasy of pain discourse is misleading because, given Hume's account of understanding, all conceptual content reduces ultimately to private experience. We acknowledge that the denotation of 'pain' is an internal private experience, in our use of the term. According to Hume, the conceptual content of every term is reducible to an essentially private denotation – for example, just as I can't know what another's pain feels like, so I can't know what another's perception of pinkness looks like. However, we *use* the term 'pink' to refer, not to the experience of pink, but to an external, independently existing source of that experience, and effectively, abnormal circumstances aside, the experiential side of colour concepts drops out of colour discourse. Taking Smith to rely on the use made by Hume of experiential component in an account of understanding has repercussions for Smith's notions of fellow feeling and sympathy – and, more importantly, for his use of both in his theory of moral judgements. Smith's account of both notions shows him to have been not just sensitive to this, but to have deployed it.

Sympathy

Fellow feeling is a natural reaction (I.i.4.7) – Smith describes the emotional responses of fellow feelings as 'original passions' (I.i.I.1). However, the ability to interact with another is dependent on experience. It is dependent on recognising the import of another's behaviour. Just as we are born with a linguistic capacity, but have to learn a language; so we are born with the capacity for fellow feeling but have to learn to use it.[37] Since the content of all concepts is founded ultimately in experience, and understanding concepts entails in some sense replicating the experiential content, it follows that a mutual understanding of *any* concept which generates a non-physical response has the potential for spawning fellow feeling. Because social interaction is dependent on communication between individuals, or on a

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[37] A new-born has no such concepts, according to Smith (I.i.1.12); we have to learn 'the looks and gestures' which indicate grief or joy (I.ii.1.6).

degree of mutual understanding, it follows that fellow feeling is a concomitant of social interaction. Sympathy is, at bottom, no more than recognition of this mutual understanding, so sympathy is also a concomitant of social interaction.[38]

There is nothing intrinsically moral in man's capacity for fellow feeling; it is more akin to an autonomic response. Nevertheless, Smith makes it clear that there is a certain category of response which is associated with a moral reaction. In order for sympathy to become the 'hinge' to his theory of moral sentiments, then, he has to provide criteria for the distinction between moral and amoral responses.

Smith has another, more immediate task: namely, to give a plausible explanation of why, when a sympathetic relation can involve simultaneous experiences of such painful emotional responses as grief and sorrow, people are inclined to enter such a relation – why they tend neither to avoid certain kinds of interaction, nor to ignore those liable to induce painful emotional responses. This is particularly important, as he regards the motivation for communicating one's grief and sorrow to another to be that of alleviating the pain and discomfort of these feelings (I.i.2.3); yet he also acknowledges that while people do enter sympathetic relations with those who are suffering emotionally, they do so only with reluctance (I.iii.1.9). If the motivation for communicating one's disagreeable passions is to subdue their painfulness, this implies that, according to Smith, man's actions are explicable, at least in part, by reference to a natural wish to reduce pain and increase pleasure. Given that pain is part and parcel of sympathy with the afflicted, what is it that prevents another from attempting to avoid encounters which will generate painful or disagreeable fellow feelings? Smith's answer is simple: we derive pleasure from sympathy: 'As the person

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[38] In fact, it transpires that one may strengthen this last statement: sympathy is a necessary and sufficient condition for socially effective interaction. Smith constructs the concept of justice from the idea of spectatorial sympathy with the resentment of one whose rights have been violated (II.ii.3.6–7 – here he presents the first of several objections to Hume's idea that justice is founded in an appreciation of utility); and he argues that society cannot subsist among those without a sense of formal justice – 'those who are at all times ready to hurt and injure one another' (II.ii.3.3); hence justice, and not benevolence, is necessary for a concept of society (II.ii.3.3).

who is principally interested in any event is pleased with our sympathy, and hurt by the want of it, so we, too, seem to be pleased when we are able to sympathize with him, and to be hurt when we are unable to do so.'[39] Since Smith is discussing a natural response or original passion, he does not attempt to reason his way to this conclusion, but instead appeals to his readers' observations of their feelings and of others' behaviour.[40]

In Smith's system, the pleasure and pain which derive from fellow feeling and the want of it, are sufficiently strong as to provide the motivation for social conformity. Approval of another's sentiments, generally, is based on 'correspondence with our own' (I.i.4.1), and Smith defines approval and disapproval of another's passions in terms of sympathy or lack of sympathy with the feelings which provoke that behaviour:

> To approve of the passions of another, therefore, as suitable to their objects, is the same thing as to observe that we entirely sympathize with them; and not to approve of them as such, is the same thing as to observe that we do not entirely sympathize with them. (I.i.3.1)

In other words, to express the judgement that someone is reacting with appropriate emotion in a specific situation – or behaving with 'propriety', to use Smith's preferred term (I.i.3.6) – is equivalent to stating that one entirely sympathises with that individual's behaviour; that one responds in a similar way as that individual when one imagines oneself in that situation. Given a Humean gloss on the workings of the imagination, this implies that one can use one's past experience of reactions to the kind of case in point, to comprehend the other's current experience of that situation.

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[39] I.i.2.6. This points forms the crux of Hume's objection to Smith's use of sympathy: 'It is always thought a difficult Problem to account for the Pleasure, receivd from the Tears and Grief and Sympathy of Tragedy; which woud not be the Case if all Sympathy was agreeable. An Hospital woud be a more entertaining Place than a Ball. I am afraid that ... this Proposition has escapd you, or is rather interwove with your Reasonings ... You say expressly, *it is painful to go along with Grief and we always enter into it with Reluctance*. It will probably be requisite for you to modify or explain this Sentiment, and reconcile it to your System' ('Letter from David Hume, 28 July 1759', pp. 3–12, p. 10–11); Smith added a footnote to the 2nd edition of the *Moral Sentiments* responding directly to Hume's objection (I.iii.1.9, fn.).
[40] For example, he appeals to readers' intuitions about their sympathetic responses to the mad or the dead (I.i.1.11, 13).

Whenever Smith introduces a concept defined in terms of 'original passions', he uses the properties of equivalence inherent to a definition, to demonstrate the plausibility of his definition. He cites examples which show that, when the definiens is inapplicable, so is the definendum; and vice versa; and so on.[41] Furthermore, he uses examples to show that apparent counterexamples to his definition are explicable in ways which show them to be consistent with his definition. Accordingly, having defined approval in terms of sympathy at I.i.3.1, he sketches situations which confirm his definition (I.i.1.3–13); and dissolves prima facie counterexamples by showing that they can be reduced to conditions which confirm the definitional equivalence together with independent conditions which override the sympathetic response. For example, while Smith claims that sharing another's sense of grief is equivalent to approving of it (I.i.3.1), he also acknowledges that there are circumstances in which one may approve of another's grief without reacting emotionally to the circumstance that has caused it. He explains this apparent counterexample to his definition of approval by reference to independent factors which temporarily override one's capacity for engagement with the victim's plight, together with past experience of one's own reactions in similar situations:[42]

A stranger passes by us in the street with all the marks of deepest affliction; and we are immediately told that he has just received the news of the death of his father. In it impossible that, in this case, we should not approve of his grief. Yet it may often happen, without any defect of humanity on our part, that, so far from entering into the violence of his sorrow, we should scarce conceive the first movements of concern upon his account. Both he and his

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[41] He relies on what are now known as 'thought-experiments'.

[42] This is an instance of what Smith refers to as 'conditional sympathy'; describing circumstances under which one can approve of another's grief over his father's death, without sympathising, Smith writes: 'We have learned ... from experience , that such a misfortune naturally excites a degree of sorrow, and we know that if we took time to consider his situation, fully and in all its parts, we should, without doubt, most sincerely sympathise with him. It is upon the consciousness of this conditional sympathy, that our approbation of his sorrow is founded, even in cases in which that sympathy does not actually take place' (I.i.3.4). Conditional sympathy plays an important role in Smith's account of rules of conduct, which in turn is crucial to his account of the origin of a sense of duty. See below, p. 146.

father, perhaps, are entirely unknown to us, or we happen to be employed about other things, and do not take time to picture out in our imagination the different circumstances of distress which must occur to him. (I.i.3.4)

Smith's choice of examples to illustrate the tenability of his definition of approval reveals several features of this definition, not the least important of which being the scope of approval – and, by fiat, the scope of what is understood by 'acting with propriety'. He appeals both to circumstances in which a correspondence of sentiments (cf. I.i.3.2) intuitively can be related to what we now consider the domain of moral approval (e.g. approval of another's resentment or grief (I.i.3.1)); and to those which do not (e.g. approval of another's laughter, or admiration of a poem, or picture (I.i.3.1), or opinions (I.i.3.2)).

Another feature of his definition, which Smith later addresses explicitly (I.i.5.5) is that an expression of approval is not equivalent to a commendation; that is, to earn another's approbation is not thereby to earn another's praise, but merely implies conformity with the norm.[43]

A third outcome of Smith's definition is that, since it leaves room for disapproval – and would obviously lack plausibility if it did not – conformity to the norm is not something hardwired into man;[44] it is possible to fail to meet the norm; and (unlike under the kind of mitigating circumstances mentioned in connection with conditional sympathy) to do so for reasons which merit blame. Furthermore, it is also possible to exceed the norm: to act in ways which are commendable, ways which deserve praise (I.i.3.5–7).

The sympathy relation and the moral domain

I stated above, that while Smith equates approval of another's passions, with a sympathetic response to those passions, he exemplifies his definition of approval using cases which extend beyond the moral domain. It transpires that, for Smith, propriety is dependent on the 'cause or object which excites it' alone (i.e. not on the effect of the response) (I.i.3.6–7), and that whether

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[43] This idea forms part of his criticism of the conduct of 'men of rank'. See below, p. 189–94.

[44] More importantly, most norms are not hardwired into man.

judgements of approbation/disapprobation are moral judgements is determined by the nature of the cause or object of another's conduct. The moral realm comprises all and only those causes which are fundamentally subjective; events and states of affairs which it does not make sense to regard as publicly accessible – in Smith's terms: '[objects which] are considered as *peculiarly affecting* one or other of us' (I.i.4.1; emphasis added), or 'objects which *affect in a peculiar manner* either ourselves or the person whose sentiments we judge of' (I.i.4.5; emphasis added). Furthermore, a judgement is defined as moral or not according to whether a correspondence of sentiments or reactions relies on a sympathetic relation – whether it demands 'that imaginary change of situations from which [sympathy] arises' (I.i.4.2).

There is an inherent asymmetry in the sympathy relation. No matter how assiduously an observer imagines the situation of the primary individual, his notion of that individual's situation draws on ideas furnished only by his imagination – copies of previous sensations – and consequently the emotions which these ideas cause cannot be as acute as those that arise from the actual experience of the situation (I.i.4.7). Full correspondence of sentiments is only possible where both parties can have the same perspective on a situation (I.i.4.2); and generally that can occur only when the object of both parties' attention is independent of each.[45] Smith writes:

My companion does not naturally look upon the misfortune that has befallen me, or the injury that has been done me, from the same point of view in which I consider them. They affect me much more nearly. We do not view them from the same station, as we do a picture, or a poem, or a system of philosophy, and are, therefore apt to be very differently affected by them. (I.i.4.5)

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[45] 'Generally' because Smith evidently regards the achievement of perfect harmony to be possible, albeit only in connection with the extraordinarily virtuous, either in reacting to another's situation (I.i.5.2), or in controlling his natural response to his own acutely distressing situation (I.iii.1.13). This coheres with Hume's definition of moral causes: 'By moral causes, I mean all circumstances which are fitted to work on the mind as motives or reasons, and which render a peculiar set of manners habitual to us' ('Of National Character', in *Essays, Moral, Political and Literary*, p. 198).

Sympathy is a pleasurable experience, one which benefits both parties to the relation. In consequence, there is a natural propensity on the part of an observer to attempt to achieve sympathetic harmony with another, and to do this he must 'strive to render as perfect as possible, that imaginary change of situation upon which his sympathy is founded' (I.i.4.6). However, since the imaginary quality of the observer's response is by nature less intense than that of an actual experience, and since both parties benefit from the sympathetic relation, it implies that if the primary individual concerned can lessen his response, 'flatten ... the sharpness of its natural tone' (I.i.4.7), it may become possible to attain concordance with an observer's reaction. In fact, this possibility plays an important part in Smith's theory:

In order to produce this [correspondence of sentiments], as nature teaches the spectators to assume the circumstance of the person principally concerned, so she teaches this last in some measure to assume those of the spectators. As they are continually placing themselves in his situation, and thence conceiving emotions similar to what he feels; so he is as constantly placing himself in theirs, and thence conceiving some degree of that coolness about his own fortune, with which he is sensible they will view it ... and as the reflected passion, which he thus conceives is much weaker than the original one, it necessarily abates the violence of what he felt before he came into their presence, before he began to recollect in what manner they would be affected by it, and to view his situation in this candid and impartial light.[46]

The onus on the spectator to strive to replicate the agent's reaction leads to Smith's definition of amiable virtue, which is excellence in the degree to which another can appreciate an agent's situation. The demand that sympathy makes on an agent to control an emotional response leads to the concept of self-command, excellence in which constitutes 'awful' virtue. Virtue comprises excelling in both regards:

And hence it is, that to feel much for others and little for ourselves, that to restrain our selfish, and to indulge our benevolent affections, constitutes the perfection of human nature. (I.i.5.5)

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[46] I.i.4.8. Smith refers to the *continual* adoption by each party of the other's situation, because the imaginary change of situation is not considered to be sustainable: 'That imaginary change of situation, upon which their sympathy is founded, is but momentary' (I.i.4.7).

Virtue can be seen to be a complex concept, on Smith's account. Fellow feeling creates sympathy; sympathy is equivalent to moral approval; and excellence in propriety constitutes virtue.

3 The impartial spectator

The imbalance within the sympathy relationship, together with Smith's general notion of propriety as being correspondence of sentiments, allows Smith to make use of the concept of 'impartial spectator' as an indication of societal norms. Within a set of people, one of whom is Smith's 'person principally concerned' by a situation, where each observing member of that set is engaged in a sympathetic relation with the principal, each may also regard any other observer's sympathetic reaction without sympathy (i.e. with full objectivity), and hence make judgements about the appropriateness or otherwise of that observer's reaction by direct comparison with their own. The norm, then, can be defined as how most people would react, most of the time, in any given situation – or, how man in general (III.2, n., p. 129), or an impartial, or indifferent spectator would react to a given situation. Smith refers to this idea throughout the *Moral Sentiments*; for example he writes:

But these [gratitude and resentment], as well as all the other passions of human nature, seem proper and are approved of when *the heart of every impartial spectator* entirely sympathizes with them, when *every indifferent by-stander* entirely enters into, and goes along with them. (I.i.2.2; emphasis added)
Some of [other people's] actions shock all our natural sentiments. We hear every body about us express the like detestation against them. ... *It satisfies us that we view them in the proper light, when we see other people view them in the same light.* (III.4.7, emphasis added)

It follows from this, that one's past experience of sympathetic reactions comprises in part, perception of concord between one's reactions as an observer and those of other observers.

The concept of the impartial spectator is an abstract. It represents the judgements of the average man when unswayed by personal interest, the

man of middling understanding, or a society's norms.[47] It has a crucial role in Smith's theory, as it represents the standpoint from which moral judgements are made. Ultimately, according to Smith, moral sentiments are the sentiments of a spectator: to understand spectatorial judgements is to understand the nature of morality. However, for Smith's theory of moral sentiments to have plausibility, it has to provide an explanation of how moral judgements acquire prescriptive value for an individual – how they gain the authority to influence an individual's perception of his own conduct. In other words, Smith's theory needs to provide an account of the relation between judgements made from a spectator's point of view, and self-approbation.

Smith understands self-approbation, or the ability to make judgements about the propriety of one's own conduct, to be a natural development from the ability to engage sympathetically with a spectator. As explained above (pp. 138–40), the causes of the emotional reactions of agent and spectator in a sympathetic relation differ in kind. The agent is understood to be reacting to an actual experience, and the spectator is reacting to an imagined experience. As such, the strength of the emotional response in each case differs according to the nature of the experience – the agent will respond more keenly than the spectator.

In order to achieve the kind of concordance of emotions necessary for the sympathetic relation to hold, the spectator has to work to heighten his comprehension of the agent's situation. However, the spectator's involvement with the situation is by definition psychologically less immediate than that of the agent, and in consequence his reaction will necessarily be less intense. For a sympathetic relation to become possible, then, the agent has to strive to control his response – to decrease the intensity of his reaction to a level approximating that of the spectator. The ability to control natural responses in this way is what Smith regards to be the essence of self-command (I.i.5.3, 6).

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[47] III.2.14; III.2.30, n. p. 130. 'Middling' does not carry the connotation 'second-rate', in Smith's usage, but is used in the sense of 'average' or 'the norm'; see below, p. 189.

Smith's account of the way in which a sympathetic relation is achieved is presented very simply. However, a great deal is presupposed in the idea of spectator and agent each striving to achieve concordance with the other's reaction. To be a spectator, one has to have had enough experience to appreciate the effect of the agent's situation in such a way as to be able to imagine the emotional response it would elicit; i.e. a range of experience broad and deep enough to give conceptual content to the agent's situation in such a way as to elicit an emotional response from the spectator were he subject to the same conditions. To be an agent, one has to have had enough experience *as a spectator* to be able to appreciate the level of emotional response plausibly expected from an independent observer. In other words, given Smith's account of the nature of propriety, in order to become agent in a sympathetic relation, one has to be already qualified as a spectator.

The scene is set for Smith to invoke one more shift in imagination. The ability to judge one's own conduct independent of the presence of an impartial spectator, is the ability to act *as if* there is a spectator with whom one is striving to achieve sympathy. Smith writes:

[W]e either approve or disapprove of our own conduct, according as we feel that, when we place ourselves in the situation of another man, and view it, *as it were*, with his eyes and from his station, we either can or cannot entirely enter into and sympathize with the sentiments and motives which influenced it. ... Whatever judgment we can form concerning [our own sentiments and motives], accordingly, must always bear some secret reference, either to what are, or to what, upon a certain occasion would be, *or to what, we imagine, ought to be* the judgment of others. We endeavour to examine our own conduct *as we imagine* any other fair and impartial spectator would examine it. (III.1.2; emphasis added)
When I endeavour to examine my own conduct, when I endeavour to pass sentence upon it, and either to approve or condemn it, it is evident that, in all such cases, I divide myself, *as it were*, into two persons; ... the spectator, whose sentiments with regard to my own conduct I endeavour to enter into, by placing myself in his situation, and by considering how it would appear to me, when seen from that particular point of view... the agent, the person I properly call myself, and of whose conduct, under the character of a spectator, I was endeavouring to form some opinion.[48]

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[48] III.1.6; emphasis added. See also reference to the 'supposed' impartial spectator at III.2.32, 33.

As Smith makes clear here, an ability to judge one's own conduct tacitly relies on a spectator's judgement.[49] If Smith's use of Hume's concept of imagination is taken seriously, then the reason for this dependence becomes clear. Smith's use of 'ought' in this context is causal, not moral, i.e. it is intended to embrace cases in which actual spectators either have incomplete knowledge of the agent's situation or no knowledge at all (III.2.7, 9).

One important aspect of Smith's account of the origin and development of conscience which, in the majority of commentaries, is either missed, or passed over without comment, is that it is no more than an application of the general theory of understanding implicit in the *Moral Sentiments*, to the specific domain of moral judgements. That is, that the general account of understanding implied by the *Moral Sentiments*, when used to underpin an explanation of concept-acquisition by an individual, will involve reference to the kind of concept which Smith terms 'impartial spectator'. This is part and parcel of Hume's empiricist epistemology, because, given the empiricism, some explanation is required of how an individual learns to differentiate and categorise his sensations and impressions in such a way as to accord with the differentiation and categorisation taken to be the norm by the society in which he is brought up. Humean empiricism precludes any appeal to innate ideas. Conceptual content is a consequence of experience alone. However, only an individual has access to their own experiential content. Accordingly, one is able to show that one has acquired a particular concept only by responding appropriately – linguistically or otherwise – under certain circumstances. Furthermore, one can only be considered to acquire a concept by being shown by others the appropriate response. For example, generally, a child's reaction to his mother will differ from his reaction to any other female, from an early age. He may be described as showing an ability to identify his mother, by this reaction, but would not plausibly be considered to have acquired the concept mother until he is able to demonstrate, linguistically and otherwise, that he understands the meaning of the term 'mother' both by his own use of the term, and through

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[49] This is the import of Smith's use of the phrase 'secret reference', in the preceding quotation from III.1.2.

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his response to others' use. He will learn the correct use of the term from those who already possess the concept – from those already linguistically competent. Similarly, while a child may consistently show a preference for soft toys which are pink over those which are in every way the same but blue, the child will not be said to possess the concepts pink, blue or colour until he is able to use the terms in the correct way – and again, he will learn their use from those who are already competent.

One problem for this kind of theory is that of explaining what it is to *become* competent; what it is that marks off the novice from the competent, and it is in this regard that Smith's notion of an impartial spectator comes into play. If we allow Smith the presupposition that when an individual possesses a concept, he associates certain sensations with the term denoting that concept; then according to Smith's theory, a child will acquire that concept as a result of guidance in the use of the term, by an independent party; and a child will be considered to have acquired understanding of the concept when he behaves in a manner which is considered correct (or appropriate) by an observer.

The change from learner to competent language user is that from being subject to other people's judgement about one's use of a term, to becoming qualified to judge others' use of the term – that is, becoming qualified to act as an impartial spectator. Another change is that of being able to judge, without recourse to, or even the possibility of recourse to endorsement by others (cf. III.2.1), that one's own use of the concept is correct; an ability which Smith would describe as acting as an impartial spectator towards one's own use.

It seems unnecessary to stress the impartiality of judgement involved in educating and testing another in the use of concepts concerning the external world – concepts which under most circumstances are not obviously open to interpretation. As mentioned earlier, in such cases, the experiential content of such concepts drops out of the picture. Royal Mail pillar boxes just are red; coal just is solid; and so on. It is assumed that those who educate a child in the meaning and use of concepts in this domain are impartial (in fact, it is difficult to find a sane motive for bias for these kinds of cases).

While the domain now of what is, and what is not certain, is not isomorphic to that of Smith's era (Smith, for example, was able to regard mathematics as yielding certainty (III.2.20)), there are areas of overlap between what we currently regard as open to interpretation, and the areas which Smith regarded as falling short of truth and certainty (III.2.18–23). One of these areas of overlap is that of interpretation of other people's behaviour, as is amply testified by the plethora of self-help books; agony aunt columns; and opportunities for counselling. It is in this area, now, as in Smith's time, that impartial adjudication is not assumed inevitable. It is considered valuable enough to be actively sought after. Furthermore its value is formally acknowledged in the legal system, by the reliance on the decision of an unprejudiced jury regarding the culpability of a defendant.

Reliance on impartiality, and the opinions of impartial observers or spectators, are not uncommon concepts in the domain of social mores. Smith's notion of the impartial spectator merely highlights the fact that social mores are ultimately dependent on the idea of what is acceptable behaviour to an independent third party; and his account of conscience uses this implicit presupposition to explain how an individual acquires knowledge of social mores – an acquisition which differs from the acquisition of any other knowledge only in its subject matter, and not in the method of acquisition. Smith expresses this idea as follows:

Every faculty in one man is the measure by which he judges of the like faculty in another. I judge of your sight by my sight, of your ear by my ear, of your reason by my reason, of your resentment by my resentment, of your love by my love. I neither have, nor can have, any other way of judging about them. (I.i.3.10)

Rules of conduct

Raphael has objected that Smith's account of conscience is 'too complicated when one works it out fully in terms of his general theory of approval'; that a theory in which an agent has to imagine what he would feel were he witnessing his conduct, and then compare that imagined spectatorial

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position with his actual feelings, while not impossible, is 'too complicated to be a common occurrence'.[50]

Raphael's objection applies equally to an account of an individual's knowledge of colour concepts, yet few would dispute either that that knowledge is originally acquired from experience of what may be termed 'criterial' occurrences of specific colours together with guidance by another in the correct use of the term; or that under normal circumstances, mature competence in colour recognition does not, or does not obviously, involve consciously the complicated mental processes involved in learning to recognise colour concepts.

However, Raphael's objection is valid if Smith's account is understood to be a description of what is involved each time one acts in accordance with a sense of duty – Smith's account would indeed lack plausibility if this was his intention. However, Smith is not concerned to explain what happens on a day-to-day mundane level, but to explain the *origin* of conscience. Smith may be considered as explaining what is involved in *consciously* deciding what constitutes one's duty – in conscious decision-making procedures per se; or as describing the learning process involved in acquiring a sense of duty. He gives examples of both. But he accommodates the fact that on most occasions, we are not aware of imagining a spectator's judgement on our conduct when we act according to the dictates of duty (III.5.1) in two ways: he acknowledges and explains the idea of certain kinds of behaviour becoming second nature; and he explains the origin and nature of rules of conduct – and the origin of their apparent prescriptive nature. His explanations are perhaps not sound, philosophically considered, but this is irrelevant to the question of the *intended* scope of Smith's account of conscience. What is pertinent is that Smith was sensitive to a difference between an explanation of the origin of a concept, and a description of the psychological deployment of that concept.

Smith slips in the notion of rules of conduct very early in the *Moral Sentiments*. As noted above, in considering a potential counter-example to his definition of approval of another's conduct as sympathetic harmony with

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[50] Raphael, 'The Impartial Spectator', p. 99.

the feelings which motivated the behaviour, Smith concedes that 'there are, indeed, some cases in which we seem to approve without any sympathy or corresponding sentiments', that is, there are cases in which 'the sentiment of approbation would seem to be different from the perception of this coincidence'.[51] Smith's example here is the instance of conditional sympathy cited above (pp. 86–7) in which a stranger's display of grief gains approval by an observer, when that observer learns that is it occasioned by the death of the stranger's father. In other words, the stranger's conduct is sanctioned as a consequence of the spectator's knowledge of its cause, and not as a result of fellow feeling with his grief. Smith's analysis of this apparent counter-example leads him to conclude that the sanction is a consequence of the stranger's behaviour according with 'general rules derived from our preceding experience of what our sentiments would commonly correspond with'. In other words, conditional sympathy occurs when an agent behaves in a manner which accords with that derived inductively by spectatorial experience of similar situations. According to Smith such rules can 'correct upon many occasions, the impropriety of our present emotion' (I.i.3.4). In this context Smith is referring to the correction of a spectator's emotions; but such rules can also be relied on by an agent to correct, or check a tendency towards inappropriate emotions. In fact, such rules not only can be so used; Smith's opinion is that 'the bulk of mankind' are incapable of 'directing their actions' (i.e. acting as moral agents) by any other means.[52]

Smith is aware of the difficulty of adopting an impartial stance towards one's own conduct: man is naturally self-interested (III.6.6–7); the ability to judge oneself impartially has to be learnt (III.3.3); and even when mastered

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[51] I.i.3.2; rules of duty are also anticipated in Smith's account of remorse in part II (II.ii.2.3), as noted by Stewart ('Account of the Life and Writings of Adam Smith, LL.D.', p. 285).

[52] III.5.1. This is because the bulk of mankind are unable to attain the degree of impartiality and self-control required to work from 'first principles': 'None but those of the happiest mould are capable of suiting, with exact justness, their sentiments and behaviour to the smallest difference of situation, and of acting upon all occasions with the most delicate and accurate propriety' (ibid.). That Smith regards such a person as exhibiting moral excellence is evident from his account of the amiable virtues (I.i.5.2; I.i.5.6).

is liable to be overridden by the strength of emotions motivating certain behaviour (III.4.3), and blurred after the event by a tendency to justify one's reactions (III.4.4). In fine, Smith writes: 'so partial are the views of mankind with regard to the propriety of their own conduct both at the time of action and after it; and so difficult it is for them to view it in the light in which any indifferent spectator would consider it' (III.4.5). This weakness is corrected by falling back on general rules drawn from our experience as spectators concerning the fitness or otherwise of certain kinds of conduct:

> Nature, however, has not left this weakness [partiality] which is of so much importance, altogether without a remedy ... Our continual observations upon the conduct of others, insensibly lead us to form to ourselves certain general rules concerning what is fit and proper either to be done or to be avoided. (III.4.7)

Smith repeatedly refers to the empirical nature of general rules of morality. For example, he wrote: '[the general rules of morality] are ultimately founded upon experience of what, in particular instances, our moral faculties, our natural sense of merit and propriety, approve or disapprove of' (III.4.8); that they are 'formed, by finding from experience, that all actions of a certain kind, or circumstances in a certain manner are approved or disapproved of' (ibid.). General rules of morality are fundamentally no different from any other laws of nature – a point to which Smith alludes at III.5.6:

> All general rules are commonly denominated laws: thus the general rules which bodies observe in the communication of motion, are called laws of motion. But those general rules which our moral faculties observe in approving or condemning whatever sentiment or action is subjected to their examination, may much more justly be denominated such.

As with laws of nature, general moral rules can function either descriptively or predictively.[53] However, since moral rules are inductive generalisations about the free actions of men, and as such can influence such actions, they have prescriptive value (III.5.6), although the prescriptive

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[53] Smith switches between these two uses continually – see for example his account of savages' codes of conduct at III.6.7. Campbell discusses the fact that Smith does not pass from causal explanation to moral judgement but combines the two enterprises: 'Explanation and Ethical Justification', pp. 68ff.

content is founded ultimately in man's natural (and hence irreducible and God-given) propensity for sympathy.

Two aspects of Smith's notion of general rules of morality are of particular importance. First, Smith regards it to be a natural human tendency to formulate such generalisations. It is not something learnt, nor does it appear to be executed consciously: Smith refers to 'our continual observation upon the conduct of others, *insensibly* lead[ing] us to form ... certain general rules' (III.4.7; emphasis added). It is apparent from Smith's other writings that he regarded generalising, categorising and abstracting from experience to be part and parcel of the human condition. In fact, it would appear from Smith's comments in the 'History of Astronomy' that mankind is constitutionally bound to manipulate and order the data of experience – to rein in experience to the domain of the familiar. To be unable to do so results in wonder or surprise, both of which states appear to be exceedingly uncomfortable:

When something quite new and singular is presented ... [t]he memory cannot from all its stores, cast upon any image that nearly resembles this strange appearance ... it stands alone and by itself in the imagination, and refuses to be grouped or confounded with any set of objects whatever. The imagination and the memory exert themselves to no purpose, and in vain look around all their classes of ideas in order to find one under which it might be arranged. They fluctuate to no purpose from thought to thought, and we remain still uncertain and undetermined where to place it, or what to think of it. It is this fluctuation and vain recollection, together with the emotion or movement of the spirits that they excite, which constitute the sentiment properly called *Wonder*, and which occasion that staring, and sometimes that rolling of the eyes, that suspense of breath, and that swelling of the heart ... which are the natural symptoms of uncertain and undetermined thought. (HA III.3; emphasis in the original)

Wonder and sometimes surprise also result from confrontation with a lawless succession of objects (ibid., II.5). Surprise may be violent enough to cause death or lunacy, and 'almost always occasions a momentary loss of reason, or of that attention to other things which our situation or our duty requires'.[54]

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[54] HA I.2. Surprise is rendered more graphically in *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles-Lettres*; there it is described as causing a person 'to start back, his hands stretched out and his eyes staring'(*LRBL*, Lecture 13, para. 164).

Secondly, since the general rules of morality are derived from spectatorial experience, they encapsulate the norms of whatever society or social grouping the spectator belongs to – alternatively they can be regarded as describing the codes of conduct of the majority of the people most of the time. The lack of precision in the rules themselves is important for several reasons. It provides enough leeway for an explanation of the differences in behaviour between groups within a society – such groups as are determined by rank or profession or age (V.2.4); and it also allows for differences between civilisations and nationalities (V.2.7). Perhaps more importantly for the Scottish literati, the flexibility concomitant with inductive generalisations across behaviour is compatible with the idea of social progress, or improvement. If one can identify and isolate the catalysts for change in societal norms, then one can in theory calibrate 'progress' across societies; and, theoretically at least, one has the means for influencing the norm in any given society.

4 A Newtonian theory of social interaction

Interpreting the role of the impartial spectator to be that of representing the social mores of a society is not uncontroversial. As Raphael and Campbell have each shown, alternative interpretations have been proposed according to which the impartial spectator is, in some sense, an idealisation of moral norms.[55] This family of interpretations leaves Smith's theory wide open either to inconsistency or to incoherence. However, as both Raphael and Campbell have argued, the source of error in these accounts of the nature and role of Smith's impartial spectator is a misconstrual of Smith's intention in constructing the concept. Smith's primary intention is bipartite: to give an account of the origin and development of an individual's ability to make moral judgements, and to provide an explanation of the origin and workings of conscience.[56] The impartial spectator underwrites Smith's account of conscience.

[55] Raphael, 'The Impartial Spectator'; Campbell, *Adam Smith's Science of Morals* and 'Explanation and Ethical Justification'.
[56] Campbell, 'Explanation and Ethical Justification', pp. 68, 73–4; Raphael, 'The Impartial Spectator', pp. 91–4.

The problem for Smith is that an account of judgements of conscience in terms of internalisation of a society's rules of conduct lacks plausibility, as it appears to fail to accommodate instances in which an individual's judgement of conscience goes against the judgements of society in general. As Smith acknowledges, there are two general sets of circumstances under which this situation can (and does) occur. An individual can differ in judgements from the majority either in judging that his conduct is morally correct when received opinion believes otherwise; or in judging that his conduct is incorrect (i.e. when the agent feels remorse), when received opinion believes otherwise (II.ii.2.3–4). Smith not only has to be able to explain such divergences generally, but also to allow for the possibility that in each case the individual's judgement is correct. Smith's explanation of the divergence in each case is in terms of one or other party lacking impartiality. The problem then becomes that of explaining how an individual's opinion can override that of the majority; that is, how an individual can make a judgement about his own conduct which can coherently be deemed more impartial than that of society generally. What commentators have failed to appreciate is that if Smith is unable to give a plausible account of how an individual may differ in judgement about his own (or another's) conduct from the majority, whilst nevertheless being correct, then he is also unable to give an account of how society's mores as a whole may change.[57] The possibility of a causal explanation of the conditions under which the moral code of a society may change, is important both for Smith's project in the *Moral Sentiments* and for his overall perspective on societies' development: he requires an account of social change which will take in both the stadial nature of societal development and the possibility of social corruption.[58]

Smith's impartial spectator has been interpreted variously as a vehicle for Smith's preferred normative ethics; as an ideal observer; and as a device of

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[57] More accurately, Smith will be unable to give a *causal* account of change in the moral code of a society.

[58] Stadial history is discussed above, pp. 9–21.

utilitarian theory.[59] The alternative is to show that Smith's concept is compatible with reading the *Moral Sentiments* as an empiricist theory of morality, and that within this context Smith has left himself enough conceptual room for a coherent notion of divergence between the moral judgements of an individual and of society at large, where the individual's judgement can be seen to be the more correct, even according to the lights of the society in question. This is the tack independently taken by Raphael and by Campbell, although each has argued to the conclusion from very different kinds of evidence.

Raphael bases his argument on textual evidence of Smith's intention to construct an empiricist account of morality, which differed from, and improved on, those of Hume and Hutcheson because, unlike that of Hutcheson, it does not depend on postulating an additional, and specifically moral, sense; and unlike that of Hume, it is able to account for the development of conscience, using the concept of the impartial spectator. Raphael's tactic is to trace the additions and alterations which Smith made in the second and subsequent editions of the *Moral Sentiments*, in response to critics' comments on just these aspects of his theory.[60]

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[59] For example, a normative interpretation is foundational to Dwyer's reading of the *Moral Sentiments* in his *Age of Passions* (see esp. chs 1–2); the ideal observer theory has been propounded by Roderick Firth in 'Ethical Absolutism and the Ideal Observer', *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 12 (1952), pp. 317–45, and its failings as an exposition of Smith's concept clearly demonstrated by Campbell, in *Adam Smith's Science of Morals*, pp. 128–34. The use of the concept of an impartial spectator in a utilitarian ethics is found in Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, although, despite Rawls' description of his account as 'reminiscent' of both Hume and Smith, given Smith's severe criticisms of utilitarian ethics (part IV), it cannot be regarded as particularly illuminating with regard to Smith's position – a point also made by Raphael ('The Impartial Spectator', pp. 94–6).

[60] Raphael, 'The Impartial Spectator', pp. 87–94. The objection most pertinent to the current context appears to have been that of Gilbert Elliot. Although Elliot's letter to Smith is not extant, it is possible to reconstruct his objection to Smith's theory from Smith's reply to Elliot (10 October 1759), in which he asks for Elliot's opinion on emendations to the text in response to Elliot's remarks about the 1st edition: 'You will observe that [the emendation (III.2.6–7)] is intended both to confirm my Doctrine that our judgements concerning our own conduct have always a reference to the sentiments of some other being, and then shew that, notwithstanding this, real magnanimity and conscious virtue can support itself under the

Campbell argues that Smith's remarks about the nature and role of the impartial spectator are context-sensitive; effectively, his argument is that the use/mention distinction has to be honoured with respect to Smith's comments on the concept of the impartial spectator, and that apparent inconsistencies within Smith's theory arising from the properties accorded by Smith to the concept impartial spectator are the outcome of failure to differentiate between contexts in which Smith is constructing the concept and those in which he is using it.[61]

Campbell's overall position is adopted here: the *Moral Sentiments* is a scientific study of morality in which Smith applied Newtonian methods of theory construction and presentation which, he argued in the 'History of Astronomy', are optimal.[62] Campbell's reasons for regarding the impartial spectator as a construct within a scientific account of moral knowledge acquisition are strengthened if one considers the structure of the *Moral Sentiments* in the light of Smith's remarks on scientific discourse in *LRBL* – a text on which Campbell relies only very slightly as support for his interpretation of the *Moral Sentiments*. However, Campbell's understanding of those aspects of Newton's theory which Smith adapts for a study of a

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disapprobation of all mankind' ('Letter from Adam Smith to Gilbert Elliot, 10 October 1759', repr. in J. Reeder (ed.), *On Moral Sentiments: Contemporary Responses to Adam Smith* (Bristol: Thoemmes Press, 1997), pp. 18–29, p. 19).

[61] Nevertheless, Campbell seems to regard Smith as using the concept to promote a specific normative ethics despite taking the *Moral Sentiments* to be primarily a scientific endeavour; see, in particular, his comments on impartial spectatorship in 'Explanation and Ethical Justification', pp. 79–82.

[62] Campbell, ibid. p. 68. Campbell here describes the *Moral Sentiments* as a 'pioneering venture' in the scientific study of morality, apparently ignoring the fact that Hume intended the same, as attested by the subtitle to his *Treatise*: *Being An Attempt to introduce the experimental Method of Reason into MORAL SUBJECTS*. Interestingly, Hume compares the contemporary moral philosophy with pre-Copernican astronomy: 'moral philosophy is in the same condition as natural, with regard to astronomy before the time of Copernicus' (*Treatise*, II.i.3, p. 334) – the comparison being on the grounds that moral philosophies displayed the same kind of complexity found in ancient astronomy, and so were implausible because they failed to reflect the economy of Nature.

Smith advocates what is now referred to as the hypothetico-deductive method of theory construction (see below, pp. 166–77; Campbell, ibid., pp. 31–2).

morality, is incomplete. Campbell claims that Smith adopted only Newton's principles of theory construction and presentation. However, as argued below (pp. 158–66), there is textual evidence that Smith assigned to sympathy the same role and the same kinds of properties in his theory of morality as that which gravitational force has in Newton's theory of planetary motion; and that he also worked with ideas akin to those of Newton's laws of motion, in his account of the modulation of passions required for fellow feeling.

Although Campbell addresses the problem created for Smith by the need to explain how an individual can override the moral judgements of the majority, he seems to take the problem to issue from a tacit requirement that Smith's theory has plausibility only with regard to the moral judgements of an individual within a given society. He does not consider the fact that Smith needs to be able to accommodate this possibility in order to be able to explain the society-wide changes in moral code intrinsic to his stadialist perspective on history.[63] A further element of Smith's theory which Campbell – and most other commentators – fail to discuss, is his equation of happiness with tranquillity. Taking a strong Newtonian line on Smith's

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[63] Stadial history views societal progress in terms of four stages: hunter-gatherer; pastoral, agricultural and commercial, as discussed above (pp. 9–21). That Campbell underestimates the importance to Smith of evidence of societal trends across ages is indicated by his remark that 'Smith, no doubt, relied too much on second-hand accounts and tales from classical literature' (ibid., p. 54). Smith, like all Scottish Enlightenment historians regarded classical literature and travellers' tales as providing either observations which needed to be accommodated by a stadial and causal theory of man's societal development, or confirmation of such a theory. In the *Moral Sentiments*, Smith's description of the differences between polished and barbarian society (V.2.8–9), and his reference to the prompts to increased sophistication in judicial concepts (II.ii.2.2) presuppose a stadial approach to history; as does his reliance, throughout the text, on examples drawn from Ancient Greek and Roman sources (see for example his comment on sources of confirmation at III.3.31). He refers specifically to stages of societal development in HA, III. Stadialism underpins his discussion of the evolution of astronomy in HA, and his use of examples drawn from 'ancient Physics' to illustrate his argument about the origin and development of philosophical/scientific inquiry in 'History of Ancient Physics' and 'History of Ancient Logics and Metaphysics' (both in *Essays on Philosophical Subjects with Dugald Stewart's Account of Adam Smith* (1795), ed. I.S. Ross (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980)).

theory yields an explanation of this definition (see pp. 161–6). This is important, as Smith's concept of happiness is pertinent to his account of luxury induced social corruption and instrumental in his proposal for its prevention (pp. 196–7).

Smith's transposition of Newton's theory of gravitation

The excitement and admiration which Newton's gravitational theory caused is evident even in Smith's measured prose. In the 'History of Astronomy', Smith's reference to the way in which Newtonian mechanics enables the computation of the mass and density of the planets conveys something of the astonishing quality of this achievement:

> But of all the attempts of Newtonian Philosophy, that which would appear to be the most above the reach of human reason and experience, is the attempt to compute the weight and density of the Sun and of the Several Planets.[64]

Smith's enchantment with the nuts and bolts of Newton's theory is similarly evident, and similarly understandable. Smith pinpointed the most unexpected aspect of Newton's theory, namely, that the mass and velocity of the planets are calculable in exactly the same way as the same properties of mundane objects of human experience.

Using the concept of gravity, together with a handful of simple laws, Newton constructed a theory which analyses such everyday phenomena as falling apples, collisions between people on a crowded street, and carts increasing in speed when moving downhill; yet which also explains the movement of the planets. According to Smith, Newton's theory is 'the greatest discovery ever made by man' (HA IV.76), revealing 'an immense chain of the most important and sublime truths, all closely connected

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[64] HA IV.75. Even now the idea of calculating the weight of the Sun seems audacious, so it is small wonder that Newton's achievements captured the attention of so many. It is one of the relatively few achievements of European world mentioned in Montesquieu's *Persian Letters* which not only do not come under attack, but merit praise (*Persian Letters* (1721; revised edn 1758), trans. John Davidson (London: Routledge, 1891), Letter 98). John MacQueen discusses the Scottish Newtonian poets, citing work by Ramsay, Fergusson and Thomson (*The Enlightenment and Scottish Literature*, vol. I *Progress and Poetry* (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1982) pp. 55–60).

together by one central fact, of the reality of which we have daily experience' (ibid.). Newton's theory was the acme of scientific explanation: it satisfied the aesthetic criteria of a good scientific account – simplicity, comprehensiveness and familiarity (HA II.12); and it was open to confirmation by experience.[65]

Campbell's interpretation of Smith's Newtonianism

Campbell believes that most commentators on the *Moral Sentiments* have failed to appreciate the extent to which Smith saw himself as applying Newtonian theory to morals.[66] He argues convincingly that Smith's intention was to achieve in moral science, or philosophy, the same breadth and depth of explanation as that of Newton's theory, and in the same manner. That is, according to Campbell, Smith followed Newton's methodology in using a familiar concept and a few simple laws, to construct a theory in which a multitude of law-governed, predictable effects could be derived from a single cause. Smith's moral causal counterpart to Newton's single cause – gravity – is sympathy.[67]

Campbell understands the foundational concept in Smith's theory to be spectatorial imagination; and Smith's intention to be to reduce operations of the imagination to empirical laws with human application. He isolates several such laws in the *Moral Sentiments*; that is, he finds textual evidence of generalisations which relate the efficiency of spectatorial imagination to the kind of circumstances imagined. For example, that men can imagine some states more easily than others; pleasure more easily than pain; common rather than uncommon circumstances; and mental states rather than physical ones.[68] Campbell refers to these generalisation as 'laws of sympathy', and shows that Smith uses these laws in explanation of such moral facts as that men approve of expressions of love more readily than those of less pleasant emotions such as anger; that the expression of physical

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[65] HA IV.72. Smith highlights the simplicity of his theory in the *Moral Sentiments*, commenting that it accords with Newton's demonstration that Nature 'acts with the strictest oeconomy' (VII.iii.3.3).
[66] Campbell, 'Explanation and Ethical Justification', p. 69.
[67] Campbell, *Adam Smith's Science of Morals*, pp. 43–4.
[68] This reduction is effectively a précis of I.ii.

pain causes more disapproval than the expression of mental anguish, as does that of the idiosyncratic by contrast with that of the more usual.[69]

According to Campbell, the laws of imagination, together with the assumption of the universality of mankind's make-up, allow Smith to account for basic similarities between societies and for detailed differences in moral codes. Campbell further argues that the role of the impartial spectator in determining moral norms, is explicable by reference to two postulates: (i) what is desired for harmony (i.e. agreement of sentiments) is irreducible and universal; and (ii) that only by adopting the perspective of an impartial spectator can man hope to achieve the coincidence of sentiments which he desires.[70]

While Campbell's explication of Smith's remarks on the relationship between approval and spectatorial imagination is accurate, he misinterprets its role in Smith's theory. He has extracted not laws of *sympathy*, but (some of the) laws of *imagination*. He justifies his decision to refer to the laws as those of sympathy, on the grounds that a spectator's sympathy with an agent is dependent on his ability to imagine himself in the agent's situation.[71]

It is true that, according to Smith, sympathy is only possible if a spectator can imagine the agent's situation, but Campbell's laws do not describe generalisations about the sympathy relation per se. In short, laws of imagination are not same as laws of sympathy – at least, not if Smith is understood to be using 'imagination' in Hume's sense of 'concepts drawn from sense experience', for then the scope of imagination becomes far wider than that of spectatorial imagination. For Campbell to have equated 'conditions affecting man's imaginative faculty' with 'conditions affecting man's spectatorial ability' means he has either underplayed, or failed to note the possibility that Smith was not using 'imagination' in the sense of 'fabrication'.

While the details of Campbell's interpretation of Smith's theory are disputable, his general position seems sound – the *Moral Sentiments* should be read as a theoretic discourse. Campbell justifies this interpretation by

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[69] Campbell, *Adam Smith's Science of Morals*, pp. 98–102.
[70] Campbell, 'Explanation and Ethical Justification', p. 71.
[71] Ibid., p. 98.

appeal to Smith's analysis of the development of scientific method in the 'History of Astronomy', and to his explanation of those features of Newton's theory which constitute the acme of scientific explanation (e.g. HA IV.67). Somewhat ironically, the inaccuracies in Campbell's discussion stem from exactly that failing which he criticises in 'normative' interpretations; it fails to acknowledge the extent to which Smith saw himself as applying Newtonian principles of scientific explanation to moral theory.

Campbell blurred the distinction between imagination and spectatorial imagination by failing to recognise that spectatorial imagination is a kind of imagination, and identifiable as such by its subject matter. Furthermore, it is independent of, and prior to, sympathy, as is evident from the fact that a spectator's ability to imagine himself in another's situation does not always lead to sympathy. In fact it cannot always lead to sympathy, since, if it did, Smith would be unable to account for disapproval, which he explains as the failure of a sympathy relation between a spectator and an agent, due to a spectator, on imagining the agent's situation, failing to respond emotionally in the same way as the agent (e.g. I.i.1.6).

Campbell seems to have overlooked the import of sympathy being a relation between individuals' reactions to each other's situation, and not between an individual and a set of circumstances. The moral crux of the matter is not whether a spectator can imagine what it will be like in another's circumstances, but whether what he imagines evokes the same kind of emotional response as that displayed by the agent. Sympathy is a function of two individuals – a relation; while on Campbell's account it appears to be a function of one individual and a set of circumstances – a predicate.

Newtonian Laws of Sympathy
It is a pity that Campbell fudged the distinction between sympathy and imagination, as his suggestion that Smith worked with laws of sympathy is confirmed within the *Moral Sentiments*. When these laws are teased out of the text, they strengthen Campbell's claim that Smith intended the *Moral*

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Sentiments to be an application of Newtonian theory to morals, because, not only do the properties of sympathy bear a striking resemblance to those of gravity; but Smith's remarks on the interactions of emotions or passions suggest that he believed they operated according to laws resembling Newton's laws of motion.

Newton's law of gravitation states that every particle of matter attracts every other with a force proportional to the product of the particles' mass and inversely proportional to the square of the distance between them. Smith comments:

The law [of gravitational force] ... by which gravity is supposed to diminish as it recedes from its centre is the same which takes place in all other qualities which are propagated as rays from a centre, in light, and in everything else of the same kind. (HA IV.76)

The imagery and metaphors associated with Smith's description of the sympathy relation, suggest that he thought of sympathy as a kind of force which is 'propagated as rays from a centre'. In fact, his description of social interaction suggests that sympathy relations can be modelled as an orrery, with the agent, or object of moral judgement at the centre; and that this model applies whether the object is an individual, a group within a society, or a nation.[72] Mankind becomes bound together by sympathy, just as the solar system is bound together by gravitational force.

A feature of Smith's account of propriety which tends to go largely unmentioned, is that the degree of an agent's self-control which is requisite for a spectator's approval, is dependent on the kind of spectator in question. Evidently, the standard of approval for any given set of circumstances varies with the social milieu. The requisite level of self-command for propriety turns out to vary according to the social distance between agent and spectator:

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[72] 'Model' here is used in the formal sense of 'interpretation of a formal system, or set of axioms'. Each individual becomes the sun in his own solar system; although, from any other individual's perspective, he is just another planet. That nations are subject to sympathetic interrelations is indicated, for example, by Smith's statement at III.3.42: 'Of the conduct of one independent nation towards another, neutral nations are the only indifferent and impartial spectators.'

We expect less sympathy from a common acquaintance than from a friend ... we assume, therefore, more tranquillity before him, and endeavour to fix our thoughts upon those general outlines of our situation which he is willing to consider. We expect still less sympathy from an assembly of strangers. (I.i.4.9)

The need to modulate one's emotional response to a situation, according to one's company, is iterated throughout the *Moral Sentiments*. For example, Smith states that 'modern good manners' permit only near relations and intimate friends to visit a family undergoing great distress, because the grief-stricken 'have reason to expect more indulgent sympathy' from those to whom they are closer socially (III.3.24); he refers to being able to expect a more 'indulgent sympathy' from a friend than from strangers (V.2.10); and states that those 'whom we can neither serve, nor hurt' should expect no sympathy from us at all (III.3.9).

In a nutshell, sympathetic indulgence, like gravitational force, decreases over distance. The explanation for this turns on the notion of common experience. At III.2.24, Smith gives a partial explanation: 'the sufferers can more easily accommodate themselves to the feelings of those, from whom they have reason to expect a more indulgent sympathy'. By contrast, no sympathy will be forthcoming from strangers who 'know nothing, or care nothing' about their misfortune (III.3.39).

Sympathy is more easily achieved when the agent and spectator are familiar to each other. Under these circumstances, it seems plausible to regard both agent and spectator as knowing how to expect the other to react. Furthermore, it is also plausible to regard the spectator as having more detailed knowledge of the agent's situation than would be expected of an acquaintance. Given the way in which Smith regards the imagination to function, it follows that a consequence of familiarity is that the spectator can be expected to imagine the agent's situation with more accuracy, and so achieve fellow feeling with more ease. In other words, the explanation for 'sympathetic indulgence' lies in the fact that a common emotional response is dependent on common experience.[73]

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[73] See V.2.5; I.ii.2.5. In HA, Smith describes the imagination as 'gliding easily' along events to which it has become accustomed (II.8). Presumably the sympathy relation is more easily attained the less difficulty each

It appears that sympathy varies with the depth and breadth of experience common to agent and spectator: the richer the common ground, the more easily the participants will achieve sympathy. Considered in this form, sympathy once again appears to have properties markedly resembling Newton's gravitational law, which states that the gravitational force between two objects is proportional to the product of their masses.

Newtonian emotions

It may seem fanciful to regard Smith to have applied Newtonian science to moral theory to the extent of appropriating and modifying the nature and properties of gravitational force. After all, Smith is surely doing no more than making statements of mundane fact about the way people just do feel more comfortable and less inhibited with those with whom they are familiar. But objections along these lines miss the point of Smith's project, which is to provide an *explanation* for everyday features of social interaction. Furthermore, since he refers frequently to agents *expecting* (e.g. I.i.4.9, quoted above), or *having reason* (III.3.24) to expect to forge a sympathetic relation easily with those whom they know well, it would appear that he regarded the explanation to be accessible to any who are familiar with the experience of sympathy.

The conclusion from this is that it is possible to make empirical generalisations about the sympathy relation, which resemble those about gravitational force. Campbell has shown that imagination similarly can be encapsulated in empirical laws. The case for the extent of Newtonian influence on Smith's moral theory becomes stronger still in the light of Smith's comments on the interaction between emotions, as it transpires that emotional flux is both predictable and strongly Newtonian.

Newton's three laws of motion are:

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participant has in imaging the response of the other, which in turn is dependent on the imagination 'covering trammelled ground' on each side. Smith's use of 'indulgent' in this context, is consistent with his notion that impartial spectatorship is difficult to achieve between family members or close friends – that such individuals will naturally favour the agent's response (III.3.41). He writes: 'my imagination is more ductile [than the body] and more readily assumes, if I may say so, the shape and configuration of the imagination of those with whom I am familiar' (I.ii.1.6).

1. Every body continues in a state of rest or uniform motion in a straight line unless it is acted upon by an external force.
2. The rate of change of momentum of a body is proportional to the applied force and in the same direction.
3. For every applied force, or action, there is an equal and opposite reaction.

Together these laws are sufficient to explain why, in Newtonian space, the planets orbit the Sun as they do, and more importantly, why *ceteris paribus* the solar system is stable and will remain so.

Prima facie the suggestion that Smith considered man's emotions to conform to laws akin to, or perhaps adapted from, Newton's laws of motion seems just too neat, or too far fetched. None the less there is evidence that this is indeed what he did, and furthermore, the suggestion casts light on Smith's extraordinary statement about man's natural state and happiness – that is, on his reason for believing the majority of mankind man to be happy (I.iii.1.5; see also III.3.30) – and the role this idea plays in his account of virtue.

One of the more marked features of Smith's comments on emotion is the frequency with which the relation between emotional response and propriety is described as proportional. For example:

If we consider the different passions of human nature, we shall find that they are regarded as decent, or indecent, just in proportion as mankind are more or less disposed to sympathize with them. (I.iii.intro.1)

Elsewhere he states that the extent to which we attain approval is 'exactly proportional' to the 'vivacity and force' with which we can replicate the feelings of a spectator (III.3.34); that this proportional relationship holds even in the case of self-approbation (III.3.26); and that our reliance on others' judgement about our behaviour is 'in exact proportion' to our uncertainty about our own ability to judge (III.2.10). Although not an exactitude, there is a precision in the relation between the rewards of sympathy and the combined efforts of spectator and agent in achieving fellow feeling, a relation to which Smith explicitly refers in the case of an agent at III.3.26:

The reward which Nature bestows upon good behaviour under misfortune, is ... exactly proportional to the degree of that good behaviour ... In proportion to the degree of self-command which is necessary in order to conquer our natural sensibilities, the pleasure and pride of the conquest are so much the greater.[74]

In other words, the harder one works to overcome one's emotions, the greater the ensuing pleasure. The pain of effort is rewarded by the pleasure of sympathy: the idea evokes Newton's third law.

The strongest evidence that Smith worked with ideas resembling those formulated by Newton's first and second laws is given in the opening sections of the 'History of Astronomy', in which he describes the effect of novelty and surprise on the emotional constitution, which he regards as a partial explanation of man's inherent tendency towards scientific inquiry. Although the 'History of Astronomy' is often read as a discourse on scientific method, by way of a critical account of the development of astronomy, Smith described his agenda quite differently:[75]

It is the design of this Essay to consider particularly the nature and causes of each of [the] sentiments [of wonder, surprise and admiration], whose influence is of far wider extent than we should be apt upon a careless view to imagine. (HA Intro.7)

In the 'History of Astronomy' Smith details his idea that man's natural state is one of tranquillity – more specifically, man's natural state is one in which the *imagination* is tranquil and composed (HA II.12); Smith describes this state as 'both agreeable in itself and most suited to [the mind's] nature' (HA II.12). Once certain basics of life are guaranteed – namely, those necessary for the preservation and continuance of the species (HA III.1), man can turn his attention to maintaining mental composure (HA III.3). Mental composure is disrupted by the unexpected – by encounters for which

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[74] Although this is a reference to the rewards of self-command on the part of the agent, since the spectator has to work towards attaining fellow feeling, and the sympathy relation is rewarding to both parties, presumably the spectator's efforts will be similarly proportionately rewarded.

[75] This point is made in Raphael and Skinner's 'General Introduction', to Adam Smith, *Essays on Philosophical Subjects with Dugald Stewart's Account of Adam Smith* (1795), ed. I.S. Ross (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), pp. *1–2*, p. *4*; and in J. Ralph Lindgren 'Adam Smith's Theory of Inquiry', *Journal of Political Economy*, 77 (1969), pp. 897–915.

the mind is unprepared.[76] Man instinctively endeavours to pre-empt such encounters by anticipating the future, by observing and identifying trends and regularities in his experience, and so introducing order into '[the] chaos of jarring and discordant appearances' (HA II.12). Such predictions 'allay the imagination', and restore it to its natural 'tone' of composure (HA II.12). The task of science – or philosophy, in Smith's parlance – is to identify regularities.[77]

When the mind is prepared, it can accommodate change: the emotions or passions which the change excites 'glide gradually and easily into the heart, without violence, pain or difficulty' (HA I.1; cf. Hume, *Treatise* I.i.4, p. 58). By contrast, the mind has to work hard to accommodate unexpected change. Regardless of whether the change is ultimately welcome, experience of the

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[76] The mental effects of the unexpected are acute: it can cause lunacy and distraction (HA II.10).

[77] Cf. Hume's distinction between cause and chance: 'the distinguishing between chance and causes must depend on every particular man's sagacity, in considering every particular incident. But if I were to assign any general rule to helping applying this distinction, it would be the following. *What depends on a few persons is, in a great measure, to be ascribed to chance, or secret, or unknown causes: What arises from a great number, may often be accounted for by determinate and known* causes' (David Hume, 'Of the Rise and Progress of the Arts and Sciences' (1742), in *Essays Moral, Political, and Literary*, pp. 110–37, p. 112; emphasis in the original). It is worth noting that Smith's account of the origin of curiosity presupposes uniformity in man's make-up. 'Barbarians and savages' are precluded from this kind of intellectual endeavour only because their society has yet to evolve to a stage at which provision for survival can be assumed. Life in an undeveloped society entails constantly reacting to the environment – an idea which Smith also uses to explain the form taken by 'primitive' religions. See for example, HA III.2; Christopher J. Berry, 'Rude Religion: The Psychology of Polytheism in the Scottish Enlightenment', in Paul Wood (ed.), *The Scottish Enlightenment: Essays in Reinterpretation* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2000), pp. 315–34; and Jerry Evensky, 'Adam Smith's Moral Philosophy: The Role of Religion and its Relationship to Philosophy and Ethics in the Evolution of Society', *History of Political Economy*, 30 (1998), pp. 17–42. It is also worth noting that Smith regarded man's need for predictability to be strong enough not only to engender reliance on connections created by the imagination, but also induce him to regard these as holding objectively (HA IV.76; see also HA II.12). Part of the splendour of Newton's theory is that its explanatory scope is so wide that it appears to be more objectively based than theories founded in connections by the imagination: Smith describes Newton as having gone beyond the laws of conjecture to unravelling 'the real chains of Nature' (HA IV.76).

unexpected is, at best uncomfortable, and often unpleasant. Smith takes 'surprise' to denote the emotional effect of an unexpected cause. The greatest surprise results from a cause which induces a change from an emotional state to that which is its opposite: from grief to joy, for example.[78]

According to Smith's analysis, surprise varies according to both the degree of change produced, and the rate at which it causes one emotional state to give way to another.[79] Emotions are subject to a law not dissimilar to Newton's second law of motion, which states that the rate of change of momentum is proportionate to the applied force and in the same direction.

In the 'History of Astronomy', Smith claims that man's natural state is one of tranquillity, and throughout the *Moral Sentiments* he cites examples which cohere with and endorse this idea. For example, he states that distress is a temporary state (III.3.28) and that once it has passed, the mind returns to 'ordinary tranquillity' (III.3.29); furthermore, man unfailingly accommodates a permanent change in his situation (III.3.30).

The 'ordinary' state of tranquillity is the median state, which Smith equates with happiness:

Happiness consists in tranquillity and enjoyment. Without tranquillity there can be no enjoyment, and where there is perfect tranquillity there is scarce anything which is not capable of amusing. But in every permanent situation,

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[78] HA I.6. Unanticipated joy is veritably dangerous, according to Smith, who describes the effect of which in graphic detail. Grief dampens and oppresses the heart. Because joy is a welcome passion, which the mind is keen to embrace, unlike grief, which 'comes on slowly and gradually' (ibid.), joy 'comes rushing upon us all at once like a torrent' and expands and elates the heart. Its effect is intense and violent, and never more so than when a 'tide of gladness' unexpectedly relieves grief. Then according to Smith, the heart 'extends' and 'heaves up' violently, and irresistibly, causing 'pangs of all others most exquisite', which 'almost always occasion faintings, deliriums, and sometimes instant death' (ibid.). 'Most men', Smith comments, soberly, 'who can take the trouble to recollect, will find that they have heard of more people who have died or become distracted with sudden joy, than with sudden grief' (ibid.). Apparently, Harley's fate is not as extraordinary as it seems.

[79] A fact Smith takes to be attested to by the fact that one prepares a friend for news of an 'extraordinary calamity' (HA I.6).

where there is no expectation of change, the mind of every man, in a longer or shorter time, returns to its natural and usual state of tranquillity.[80]

In other words, there is a median state to which the mind or imagination generally returns after a disturbance. The intended import of this statement is not normative, but factual. It is also not implausible: one cannot live constantly in a state of shock or surprise.[81] Smith's analysis of surprise can be seen to rest on an assumption about emotional change and what might be termed man's 'resting emotional state' which is reminiscent of the concept conveyed by Newton's first law of motion, namely homoeostasis. In the absence of an external force, the emotions maintain a state of equilibrium.

Smith's analysis of hypothetico-deduction

As it stands, the justification for interpreting the *Moral Sentiments* as a scientific account of the origin and nature of morality and, more specifically, for taking the impartial spectator to be a theoretical construct within such an account, is vulnerable to just the objections levelled by Campbell and Raphael at normative readings. The claim made above that Smith's analysis of moral concepts is strongly Newtonian in both form and content is justified by appeal to remarks drawn from throughout the *Moral Sentiments* without reference to their context. If it is acceded that these do supply evidence, at least, of a scientific slant to Smith's account, then the *Moral Sentiments* stands in danger of seeming even more of a confusion than that perceived on the normative reading. Without additional evidence of the Newtonian influence of Smith's thought, the *Moral Sentiments* threatens to appear no more than a ragbag of prescription gilded with Newtonian mechanics.[82] What is needed to avoid this unpalatable outcome is evidence

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[80] III.3.30. Cf. Locke's comments on the relationship between unease and the motive for change, John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1689), ed. A.D. Woozley (London & Glasgow: Collins, 1964), II.xxi–xxii.

[81] Smith believes that it would not be possible to live in the state of heightened awareness he terms surprise, because repetition of an experience deadens the associated emotional reaction (HA I.9).

[82] This perspective might be the cause of Dwyer's cavalier attitude towards the suggestion that the *Moral Sentiments* is a scientific discourse. See *Age of Passions*, p. 1, and below, pp. 199–202.

of linearity in the argument of the *Moral Sentiments*; that is, that Smith constructs moral concepts of increasing complexity and abstraction.

Campbell argues that the Newtonian influence is evident in both the content and the form of the *Moral Sentiments*; that is he argues that there is evidence of those features of Newton's method of theory construction which Smith highlights in the 'History of Astronomy' as paradigmatic of excellence in scientific discourse. He points out that in addition to appreciating the simplicity and economy of the content of Newton's theory, Smith is enthusiastic about the way in which Newton presents his theory.[83]

Smith's remarks in the 'History of Astronomy' show him to have been intellectually impressed and aesthetically pleased by what is now known as hypothetico-deduction, that is, creating a scientific theory by making a hypothesis or set of hypotheses from which results already obtained could have been deduced and which also entails new experimental predictions which can be verified or refuted.[84] Part of Campbell's intention in *Adam Smith's Science of Morals* is to show that this method is replicated in the *Moral Sentiments* – an intention which is not quite fulfilled, in part because he blurred the distinction between sympathy and imagination; and in part because, charitably interpreted, his reading of the *Moral Sentiments* can be seen as underplaying the importance to this method, of demonstrating that it will 'save the phenomena' , i.e. account for phenomena which are intuitively

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[83] Campbell, *Adam Smith's Science of Morals*, p. 31.

[84] Smith comments that 'the observations of Astronomers at Lapland and Peru have fully confirmed Sir Isaac's system and have not only demonstrated, that the figure of the Earth is, in general, as he supposed it; but that the proportion of its axis to the diameter is almost precisely such as he had computed it. And of all the proofs that have ever been adduced of the diurnal revolution of the Earth, this perhaps is the most solid and satisfactory' (HA, IV.72). The hypothetico-deductive method is clearly explained in Ferguson's *Institutes of Moral Philosophy*: 'Method in science is of two kinds; analytic and synthetic. Analytic method is that by which we proceed from observations of fact, to establish general rules. Synthetic method, is that by which we proceed from general rules to the particular application. The first is the method of investigation. The second of communication, or of the enlargement of science' (Adam Ferguson, *Institutes of Moral Philosophy* (1769) (London, Bristol: Routledge/Thoemmes Press, 1994), pp. 3–4).

associated with concepts undergoing analysis, in a principled way.[85] Campbell focuses on the elements of Smith's theory construction almost to the exclusion of considering the way Smith structures his argument. It is not possible here to carry out the kind of textual analysis required to show that Smith put as much effort into demonstrating that his theory was confirmed by intuitively recognised facts about the approval of conduct as he did into constructing complex concepts from atomic moral facts. This would entail showing that for each moral concept he constructs, he provides an illustration of its application which functions as a thought-experiment for the reader. Limitations of space also preclude a demonstration that Smith tackled the predictive aspect of Newtonian theory construction – it is possible only to gesture in the direction which such a demonstration might take by suggesting that this might have been his intention in arguing that wealth can result in moral deterioration.[86]

What it is possible to establish, with requisite brevity, is that there is a degree of support for the suggestion that Smith used the full barrage of Newtonian methodology; that is, that he not only endorsed the principles of the hypothetico-deductive method, but applied them. In consequence, a detailed textual study from this perspective would reveal the intended import of the *Moral Sentiments*.

Evidence for this line of thought comes from a source rarely utilised fully in connection with the *Moral Sentiments*, namely Smith's *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*. This book merits study in its own right. Together with Blair's text of the same title (1783), it introduces a new categorisation of prose. Smith's *Lectures* articulates principles of composition for scientific, didactic, historical and oratorical discourse.[87]

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[85] Smith's objection to Hume's reliance on utility to explain justice and duty is effectively that he fails to save the phenomenon of conscience (part IV).

[86] Arguably it is more accurate to suggest that this might have been Smith's original intention for discussing the luxury issue; that his addition of material in the 6th edition of the *Moral Sentiments* was a response to trends beginning to confirm his predictions. See below, pp. 197–204.

[87] Jill Marie Bradbury agues that Smith gives a unique, philosophically motivated analysis of prose forms which maps out the fields of relations between eighteenth-century discursive forms. She also points out that Smith

As argued below there is evidence of Smith's influence on Mackenzie and other late eighteenth-century prose writers considered meritworthy by their contemporaries. Mackenzie's depiction of characters' emotions follow Smith's guidelines, for example, and it is arguable that Smith's comments on the purpose of history influenced Mackenzie's choice of structure for *The Man of Feeling*.[88]

Smith explains the criteria for 'good prose' for each category according to the efficiency with which it attains its intended end, whether that is to educate, analyse, persuade or stimulate emotionally.[89] The innovation of Smith's approach merits attention, but more interesting are the tacit assumptions which underpin it, as these indicate that Smith's perspective on stylistics is consonant with his general theory of the development of man's mental and emotional faculties.[90] 'Good prose' is not a literary attribute but a psychological one.[91]

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was the first to treat prose and poetry as different media: 'New Science and the New Species of Writing', *Eighteenth-Century Life*, 27 (2003), pp. 28–51.

[88] Evidence of Smith's influence on Mackenzie is discussed on pp. 222–34; that of his influence on Macpherson, on pp. 280–7. Charlotte Lennox's satirical *The Female Quixote* constitutes further argument for Smith's analysis of style, content and authorial intention appropriate to history (*The Female Quixote, or the Adventures of Arabella* (1783), ed. Margaret Dalziel (London: Oxford University Press) esp. Bk IX, ch. XI).

[89] See *LRBL* ii.12; and Lecture 17 in which Smith describes different kinds of discourse.

[90] See ibid., Lecture 19 in which Smith gives a history of historians and makes the association between poetic content, and superstition and credulity (ii.46–7).

[91] This is overlooked by almost all who have discussed the literary predilections the Scottish literati – see for example, Simpson on Hume's criteria of literary quality (Kenneth Simpson, *The Protean Scot: The Crisis of Identity in Eighteenth Century Scottish Literature* (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1988), ch. 3); Trumpener on the literati's response to the *Poems of Ossian* (*Bardic Nationalism: The Romantic Novel and the British Empire* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), ch. 2); and probably every single discussion which mentions Mackenzie's advice to Burns to write in English. This is not to suggest that the literati are immune to criticism on this question; but that the objections made to their criteria for quality writing fail to take into account that the literati were working with a teleological notion of 'quality'. Campbell nods in this direction – he mentions that Smith's *Essays on Philosophical Subjects* shows the extent to which Smith regarded empirical science as a distinct species of didactic discourse (*Adam Smith's Science of Morals*, p. 31). An example of the kind

Smith's enthusiasm for Newton's achievement is as obvious in *LRBL* as in the 'History of Astronomy'.

The Newtonian method is undoubtedly the most Philosophical, and in every scien<c>e w<he>ther of Morall or Nat<urall> phil<osophy> etc., is vastly more ingenious and for that reason more engaging than the other [i.e. the scientific method Smith attributes to Aristotle].[92]

We are left in no doubt about the importance Smith placed on the presentation of a theory. According to Smith the intellectual appeal of the deductive method is so strong that, on first encountering it in Descartes' theory of astronomy, 'all the Learned in Europe' were beguiled into accepting as fact what was later shown to be 'one of the most entertaining Romances that has ever been wrote' (*LRBL* ii.134).

Smith regarded 'Newtonian method' to be the most suitable prose style for theory construction, which he refers to as 'didactical writing containing an account of some system' (ibid.). It is axiomatic – a discursive form of the kind of theory construction which would have been familiar from Euclidean geometry:

[In using the Newtonian method] we lay down certain principles known or proved in the beginning, from when we account for the severall phenomena, connecting all together by the same Chain. (Ibid.)

Here Smith uses terms which had, or which swiftly acquired, specific use in this kind of scientific context. 'Principle' for example, is defined by Ferguson as 'a general rule, when applied to explain or regulate particulars',

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of psychological criteria Smith invokes is given by his comment that in didactic discourse, 'It is proper to begin with laying down the proposition, as the argument advanced will by that means make a greater impact on the mind'; and with regard to the number of propositions presented at any one time, he writes: 'The Rule is in this matter the same as in architecture; the mind can not there comprehend a number at sight and without counting above 9 or 10' (*LRBL*, ii.126, 127).

Stylistics for Smith seems to have been a literary equivalent of method acting; and from his comments in the *Moral Sentiments* it is plain that he regarded his principles to be no more than guidelines (III.6.9–11) – if the parallel he draws between style and morals is solid, then one may also assume that the rules may be countermanded by those who excel (as Bach's genius is revealed by his decision to break the rules of Baroque composition).

[92] *LRBL* ii.133; angled brackets indicate editorial additions.

and 'phenomena' as the particulars to be explained.[93] Smith's use of 'chain' refers to 'a chain of metaphysicall arguments one deduced from another' (*LRBL* ii.131). So, if Smith adopted the Newtonian method in the *Moral Sentiments* we can expect the text to be arranged to form a single chain of argument, or alternatively, chains of argumentation which all stem from the same set of premises. Whichever form the text takes, there will be evidence of a direction in conceptual content from less to more complex – in other words, evidence that Smith has used the conclusions from one stage as assumptions for the next, so moral concepts considered in the later parts of the book will be both theoretically more complex than, and explanatorily dependent on, those found in the earlier. Furthermore given Smith's reference to 'metaphysical arguments', the analysis will be causal – in Humean terms this means Smith's theory will be constructed according to general rules drawn from experience of constant conjunctions between phenomena. Finally, we can expect Smith to work to establish propositions already accepted.

Smith's discussion of didactic discourse also indicates what we should not expect to find – namely the second of the two possible forms of presentation he identifies as suitable for the presentation of scientific theory. In his explanation of the methodology for this discarded method, Smith relies heavily on its use in Virgil's *Georgics* (*LRBL* ii.132–3). Smith's description makes it plain that the method is iterative. One analyses a concept by listing instances, grouped intuitively, and then generalising over kinds of instance.[94] No attempt is made to order the kinds, i.e. to put them in a relation with one another. So, in Smith's example, the concept of 'husbandry' is explicated by listing different kinds of husbandry – from bees to trees – and generalising only over instances within each category, not across categories. Smith describes it as 'go[ing] over the Different branches [of a subject] in the order which they happen to cast up to us, giving a

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[93] Ferguson, *Institutes*, p. 3. Ferguson goes on to point out that a theory (or system) 'must rest on ultimate facts' – that is on facts which cannot be analysed or reduced (ibid., pp. 8–9).

[94] These are now known as 'natural kinds' in contemporary philosophy. We can identify instances of colour, for example, without knowing the physics of light.

principle, commonly a new one, for every phenomena' (*LRBL* ii.133). As Smith points out, an attempt to present systematically the results of this kind of iterative account of a concept, alters the presentation from iterative to the Newtonian (ibid.).

Smith details the architecture of the Newtonian method, pointing out that his comments refer equally to both the proof of either a proposition or a set of propositions; and to the presentation of theory, 'where the Design is to Deliver a System of any Scien<c> e.g. Naturall Philosophy' (*LRBL* ii.130). The overriding consideration is to make it as easy as possible to keep track of the connection between premises and conclusion – of the steps in argumentation. For example, Smith states that each deductive argument should begin with the statement of the proposition to be proved; and when a conclusion is dependent on the proof of several subcomponents this too should be stated at the outset. Both are obvious points but perhaps their obviousness indicates only that the nuts and bolts of discursive deduction are now familiar.[95] Smith also details a specific internal structure for scientific composition, again on the grounds that the mind responds better to some arrangements of textual material than to others. Here, though, he relies on a blend of ideas drawn from both his analysis of the Newtonian method and from time-honoured mnemonics.[96] Smith's blend of ancient and modern in this way would not have been novel. Yates discusses evidence of reliance on classical memory systems in the developing sciences of the seventeenth century.[97] From Smith's discussion, it is evident that he thought of the way in which material is clustered for optimum clarity, by breaking dense argumentation into its subcomponents, as being determined by considerations regarding both memory and reason. For example, he states that each propositional cluster should comprise no more than three or five propositions – and justifies his choice by appeal to both the ease with

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[95] *LRBL* ii.125–6. It is impossible to determine the extent to which Smith's emphasis is due to the fact that *LRBL* comprises teaching material, rather than R&D.

[96] Smith relies on a relatively simple mnemonics relying on architectural metaphor. See Frances A. Yates, *The Art of Memory* (1966) (London: Ark, 1984).

[97] Yates, ibid., ch. 17.

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which a small number of steps can be remembered, and, by using an odd rather than even number, the ease with which reason, or the mind, can recollect the deductive connections between propositions because odd numbers provide a central pivot from which one may work to construct the more complex or synthetic proposition, or deconstruct via analysis to its conceptually simpler components.[98]

Even a fairly superficial reading of the *Moral Sentiments* reveals that Smith followed the principles of clarity he laid down for didactic discourse in the *Lectures on Rhetoric*. Each part of the *Moral Sentiments* deals with a different moral concept. The connection between parts is not strictly linear, however. The content of part II, 'Of merit and demerit' depends on the arguments in part I for Smith's notion of propriety and subsequently virtue. Merit and demerit – or reward and punishment – are (re)constructed on the basis of these concepts, but Smith also constructs the concept of justice equating it with the notion of avoidance of punishment – a more complex concept than punishment *simpliciter*. Part III, in which Smith constructs 'conscience' and from this, the concept of duty, is dependent on arguments in part II. Conscience is derived from praiseworthiness and blameworthiness, which are in turn are derived from praise and blame – concepts discussed in part II, but justice per se is not a component of conscience. It is therefore possible to order deductively the moral concepts which feature centrally in parts I to III, but part II contains a 'conceptual outcrop' which is related to the matter within that part but not foundational to subsequent parts.

Parts IV and V are similarly dependent on Smith's conclusions in foregoing chapters, but the derivational elements are not quite as straightforward as in parts I to III. Hume argues that justice and related concepts which he associates with the notion of 'government' are founded in considerations of utility.[99] In part IV Smith objects to this on the grounds

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[98] *LRBL* ii.126–30. The associated imagery is highly reminiscent of that of Ferguson's description of the hypothetico-deduction, quoted above n. 84.

[99] *Treatise* II.i; in his abstract of the *Moral Sentiments*, Hume wrote: 'Our author subjoins many irrefragable arguments, by which he refutes the sentiments of Mr. Hume, who founded a great part of his moral system on the consideration of public utility' ('Hume's *Abstract*' p. 45).

that Hume's arguments constitute post hoc justification for social practices which his theory explains more adequately by reference to fellow feeling and the sympathy relation. And in part V Smith tackles the difficult issue of diverging practices across societies – using the idea of 'created propriety' (see below, p. 188). In each of these parts, Smith's aim is to show that the moral concepts are based on a tacit assumption of propriety – that they are logically complex. Part VII cannot be considered a contribution to Smith's theory. It is more akin to the form of discourse Smith refers to as 'deliberative' (*LRBL* ii.135–6). His intention in part VII is to show that ' the most celebrated and remarkable' of moral theories given to explain the nature and origin of moral sentiments are only partially correct, and that in each case, the partial nature of the account is due to the theory relying on some but not all of the concepts foundational in Smith's theory; in other words that an analysis or deconstruction of other theories will reveal them to be based on concepts which are identical with only some of those foundational in Smith's theory. The net result, he concludes, is that either the theory tacitly imports concepts which need explanation – i.e. is only a partial explanation; or, like Hume's and Hutcheson's have limited scope, i.e. are only a partial explanation of the concept of morality per se.[100]

The concepts foundational in each part become increasingly complex as the book progresses. Part I depends on the concept of fellow feeling – the concordance of irreducible passions and emotions. Fellow feeling is then used in Smith's reconstruction of the sympathy relation, by which he defines propriety. Propriety in part I is discussed only with regard to spectatorial judgement on one other person's conduct – which Smith remarks upon:

> The effects of grief and joy terminate in the person who feels those emotions, of which the expressions do not, like those of resentment, suggest to us the idea of any other person or whom we are concerned, and whose interests are opposite to his. (I.i.1.8)

In part II, Smith uses propriety and sympathy in an analysis of moral judgements of greater complexity because it involves the interaction of two

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[100] Smith's objections to Hutcheson's theory are given at VII.3.7–16; and he argues against Hume in part IV.

(or more) individuals – which I have referred to above as transitive acts.[101] In such cases, a moral judgement on the interaction is dependent on the spectator's reaction to each of those involved. One cannot condone a man's fury if one condones the victim's resentment of this anger, for example; and one cannot condone the generosity of a benefactor unless one also condones the gratitude of the recipient (II.i.5.2; II.i.5.5). Smith then uses the compound nature of such judgements in an analysis of praise and blame, which he in turn uses in an explication of reward and punishment. From punishment he derives the morally highly complex concept of justice.

The content of part III is dependent on the conclusion of part I concerning the role of the spectator's perspective in moral judgements; and on the notion of remorse which is derived from blame in part II. Smith builds on these conclusions, to construct the concepts of self-approbation and of conscience, which are the most complex moral concepts in the theory.

So, the theory construction in the *Moral Sentiments* arguably follows that which Smith outlines in *LRBL*; five parts centring on part III. Arguably part VI also fits into the schema, as it can be read as a summation of the conclusions drawn in parts I to V. This can only be left as conjecture here.

This is more than merely an exercise in pattern-recognition. If Smith followed his principles for the presentation of scientific theory, in this regard, it is not unreasonable to look for evidence that he followed them generally, in which case, we should find that he begins each part, and each logical subcomponent of a part with a statement the proposition he intends to prove, followed by argument for that proposition. We should also find he differentiates between descriptions of events and states of affairs which illustrate the points made; and descriptions intended to generate in the reader emotional responses of the kind he regards as foundational.[102] This would

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[101] Smith refers to such cases in part I, but does not analyse them.

[102] The difference between these two uses of examples being that Smith would be intent in the first cases, on describing a situation to demonstrate that certain concepts apply; and in the second on showing that certain responses occur spontaneously. Both cases rely ultimately on spontaneous emotional reactions, but concept-formation entails the use of reason to compare and contrast reactions and so form generalisations, which are then used to formulate predictions – hypothetical conditionals of the form 'if x then y'. Logically the ordering relation is 'more complex than'. 'To do x is

constitute a very strong case against a normative interpretation of the *Moral Sentiments*, not to mention gloss Smith's choice of subtitle for the book.

This brief outline of the content and structure of the *Moral Sentiments* indicates that there is justification for reading the *Moral Sentiments* as a scientific theory of morality, which is presented in hypothetico-deductive form, and in which elements of Newton's theory have been transposed from the gravitational to the social.

This is an important conclusion. It provides good reason for confining the question of the normative content of the *Moral Sentiments* to the subtextual; and it provides a general philosophical context for Smith's comments on individual and societal development. Furthermore, regarding the *Moral Sentiments* to be the result of Smith's application of an empirical epistemology to the moral domain, gives Smith's corpus an overall coherence. His thoughts on language, economics, history and jurisprudence all yield to the same kind of epistemic interpretation and show Smith's work to be stunning in scope and intellectually appealing in its rigour and consistency.

For present purposes, however, the fact that the *Moral Sentiments* can be interpreted within a specific empiricist account of understanding provides a foundation for the suggestion that the later eighteenth-century moralists worked with the idea that morality is both learnable and 'scrutable';[103] and because moral development is observable and founded in experience, an individual's moral development can be guided and refined by controlling the kinds of experiences to which he is exposed.

The fact that an individual's moral development is 'accessible' to, and dependent on, spectators also provides a means by which the mores of a society generally may be changed.

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wrong' is construed as 'when I have done x in the past, I have gained disapproval; so doing x causes disapproval; therefore, if I do x now, I shall gain disapproval'. This together with an analysis of disapproval in terms of lack of sympathy as necessary and sufficient for avoiding doing x, yields the requisite moral generalisation.

[103] To borrow Donald Davidson's happy phrase.

5 The psychology of morality: moral change and Smith's moral stadialism

For Smith, a sense of duty comprises a regard for the general rules of morality (III.5.1). These rules are inductive generalisations drawn from sympathetic spectatorial experiences, and once identified, may then be used to predict and prescribe, both for others and for oneself, the conduct appropriate for certain familiar circumstances (III.4.8).

The capacity for fellow feeling, which lies at the root of Smith's understanding of the sympathetic relation, is inherent. It follows from Smith's definition of propriety, that the capacity for moral approbation and disapprobation is also inherent.[104] Given this, what is learned from experience are the appropriate responses to certain circumstances; more accurately, given that Smith holds that a certain basic moral rectitude is inherent and uniform (V.2.1), experience teaches the approved manner of responding, or the approved modulation of response, to certain circumstances. This varies not only across societies and nations (V.2.7, 8), but also within a society in accordance with the kind of interaction between the members of a group.[105]

In effect, Smith regards the general rules of morality to be the set of social habits for any given group. The notion of habitual mental processes played a central role in eighteenth-century epistemology. Hume's explanation of the source of certainty in causal explanation is that it consists in a 'habit of the mind' resulting from the constant conjunction of cause and

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[104] V.2.1, see also III.3.3.

[105] V.2.4, cf. Hume: 'A soldier and a priest are different characters in all nations, and all ages; and this difference is founded on circumstances whose operation is eternal and unalterable' ('Of National Characters', p. 198; not that Hume liked priests see fn. 3). Smith makes the same point: 'We cannot expect the same sensibility to the gay pleasures and amusements of life in a clergyman, which we lay our account with in an officer. The man whose peculiar occupation it is to keep the world in mind of that awful futurity which awaits them, who is to announce what may be the fatal consequences of every deviation from the rules of duty, and who is himself to set the example of the most exact conformity, seems to be the messenger of tidings, which cannot, in propriety be delivered either with levity or indifference. His mind is supposed to be continually occupied with what is too grand and solemn, to leave any room for the impressions of those frivolous objects, which fill up the attention of the dissipated and the gay' (V.2.5).

effect; the mind is 'determined by custom to pass from any cause to its effect ... upon the appearance of the one, 'tis almost impossible for it not to form an idea of the other' (*Treatise*, I.ii.10, p, 179). Smith adopts the same kind of explanation: 'when two objects have frequently been seen together, the imagination acquires a habit of passing easily from one to the other'.[106]

In addition to forging mental links between phenomena, Smith regards repetition of experience to alter one's disposition: 'custom and the frequent repetition of any object comes at last to form and bend the mind or organ to that habitual mood and disposition which fits them, to receive its impression, without undergoing any violent change' (HA I.10, p. 37). Bearing in mind that Smith believed that the moral sentiments cannot be erased from a person's make-up (V.2.1), it follows from this, that although repeated exposure to certain social states of affairs cannot eradicate the possibility of a sympathetic response, it will modulate that response. Smith also states that experience which 'concides with the natural principles of right and wrong', will reinforce that sympathetic response, and lead to the development of heightened sensibility (V.2.2).

The idea that the general rules of morality describe what are effectively a set of social habits, gives morality the kind of flexibility that Smith needs for his account to be plausible. For his empiricism to work, he has to assume a uniformity of nature across mankind – the differences between societal norms becoming completely determinable by reference to differences between asocial factors affecting members of each society. 'Society' is to be understood in the broadest sense – in order to cover a discussion of the codes of conduct of nations and historical periods; as well as discussion of the codes of conduct for such groups within any given society as are created by professions or trades, and familial and more informal social sets.

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[106] V.1.2. Smith uses 'object' to refer both to external objects and to mental events and states: 'internal [objects] ... pass within the mind itself and are the object of none of our senses. The causes of these internall facts, or objects are ... either internall or externall. The internall ones are such dispositions of the minds as fit one for that certain passion or affection of the mind and the externall are such objects as produce these effects on a mind so disposed' (*LRBL*, i.162).

Smith's theory might appear to engender a form of moral relativism; that is, it might seem to be a theory according to which there are no hard social facts: societal norms are no more than the codes of conduct approved of and upheld by the majority of people in any given social grouping. However, a thoroughgoing moral relativism bars any comparison between societies. If what is moral is simply what is approved of within any society, then differences between societies may be described, and perhaps explained, but neither condoned nor condemned – judgements of approval or disapproval of the moral conduct of a social group may only be made relative to the norms and practices of the society which the group comprises or to which it belongs.[107]

Although Smith rarely condemns the practices of other societies,[108] he works with an implicit notion of 'moral progress'. Civilised, polished societies are an improvement on the societies of the barbaric and savage (V.2.10); they are morally more developed than the savage and barbaric (V.2.11). Given the ways in which Smith considers moral developments to

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[107] The question whether Smith's theory engenders moral relativism is addressed by Dwyer – and dismissed by a comment which reveals his failure to grasp the import of the assumption, found throughout Scottish Enlightenment writing, that the nature of mankind is uniform across nations and through ages. Dwyer comments: 'Adam Smith's treatment of the ways in which the social group defined propriety without recourse to some eternal standard might seem to make him a moral relativist. But although he did believe that the circumstances of social groups differed and could be affected by historical circumstances and customs, he thought that the basic features of sympathy and morality are remarkably uniform' (*Age of Passions*, p. 38). This is inaccurate: Smith assumed the propensity for sympathy to be uniform, and, certain moral values to hold uniformly. Given the equation of propriety with the existence of a sympathy relation between agent and spectator, the uniformity of fundamental moral judgements becomes inevitable.

[108] In concluding his explanation of the influence of custom (part V), Smith writes: 'In general, the style of manners which takes place in any nation, may commonly upon the whole be said to be that which is most suitable to its situation. Hardiness is the character most suitable to the circumstances of a savage; sensibility to those of one who lives in a very civilized society. Even here, therefore, we cannot complain that the moral sentiments of men are very grossly perverted' (V.2.13). Reading Dwyer, however, one is left with the impression that Smith is highly critical of alternative societies (*Age of Passions*, pp. 38–9). However Dwyer appears to have mistaken Smith's comments on religious fanaticism as general criticism of alternative codes of conduct.

occur – the kinds of catalysts which provoke improvement in the codes of conduct for any given society – it follows that members of the less developed societies have to be regarded as literally being unable to conceive of ways in which to better conduct until the conditions which spawn such improvements prevail, because concept-formation is dependent on experience. Smith's comments entail the belief that he is well placed to comment on the moral development of societies; and hence entail the belief that Smith's perspective (and that of his readers) is that from the most developed societal norms.

For Smith, the epitome of moral development is exemplified by an individual who excels in both the amiable and the awful virtues (III.3.35); that is, someone 'whose sympathetic heart seems to re-echo all the sentiments of those with whom he converses, who grieves for their calamities, who resents their injuries, and who rejoices at their good fortune' (I.i.5.2), while exercising over his own passions 'that degree of self-command which astonishes by its amazing superiority over the most ungovernable passions of human nature' (I.i.5.6). Both kinds of virtue demand practice (III.3.36, III.3.42). However, according to Smith, there are certain societal conditions which inhibit the development of one or the other aspect of man's moral character. For example, the lifestyle of the 'savage' as a matter of course exposes him to 'continual danger' and to 'the greatest extremities of hunger'. In short, savages are habitually inured to 'every sort of distress' (V.2 9). Since it is not possible to generate fellow feeling for others unless we are ourselves at ease, members of savage communities cannot expect sympathy from their fellows; consequently they underrate the amiable virtues; consider it to be a sign of weakness to display distress; and therefore extol self-command (V.2.8–10). The demands of day-to-day life are physically less demanding in more civilised societies and their members are more inclined to sympathy as a result. But, on Smith's analysis, these less aggressive conditions are not such as to engender self-command: 'the man of the most exquisite humanity is naturally the most capable of acquiring the highest degree of self-command. He may not, however, always have acquired it; and it very frequently happens that he has not'

(III.3.36), because 'In the mild sunshine of undisturbed tranquillity, in the calm retirement of undissipated and philosophical leisure ... the greatest and noblest exertions of self-command have little exercise' (III.3.37).

The fact that savage society fails to allow the development of humanity, while civilised society fails to encourage the development of self-command threatens to undermine Smith's tacit assumption that the latter is the more morally developed. But it appears, there is an intrinsic difference between the lack of kinds of virtues in each kind of society. In the savage society, conditions are such that it is not possible to develop the amiable virtues; while in the civilised society, while the conditions do not encourage the development of self-command, they do not render its development impossible, for several reasons. First, exposure to the dangerous conditions savage deals with as a matter of course is not eradicated entirely from civilised society. The onus merely devolves onto a specific segment of society – namely the armed forces, whom Smith describes as being expected to display the same kind of fortitude in the face of danger as the savage.[109] Second, Smith regards the development of a degree of self-command to be part and parcel of the human condition: a child begins the practice at a very early stage in his development, namely, as soon as he is old enough to mix with his peers (III.3.22). Third, the concept of self-command is not only possible in all societies but fundamental to societal existence; by contrast the concept of humanity can only evolve once a society has achieved a level of stability (V.2.9). Virtuous conduct is what exceeds the societal norm. If, as in the savage society, there is no such norm for humanity, the concept of amiable virtues is empty.

The demands of a group's lifestyle, therefore, can provide barriers to the development of certain societal norms. This accords with Smith's stadialism, and enables him to draw broad conclusions about the kinds of social norms to be expected at certain stages of social development. But this

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[109] III.3.37. The devolution of a citizen's responsibility for self-preservation to a standing army is one of the marks of civilisation. Cf. Hume: 'The force which now prevails, and which is founded on fleets and armies, is plainly political and derived from authority, the effect of an established government' ('Of the Original Contract' (1742), in *Essays, Moral, Political and Literary*, pp. 465–87, p. 468).

kind of analysis will not explain the moral differences between societies (or nations) at the same level of development, or indeed those between groups, ranks, or factions within a given society.[110]

6 Custom and Corruption

According to Scottish Enlightenment thought, it is in the nature of social mores to change. The engine for this kind of societal change is an inherent aspect of man's make up – what is referred to as 'self-interest', 'selfishness' or 'self love'. During the eighteenth century, these terms did not carry the pejorative connotation of current use. The terms were used instead to denote a species-driven propensity in man to preserve himself and his offspring, a propensity referred to explicitly by Smith in this regard:

> Every man is, no doubt, by nature, first and principally recommended to his own care, and as he is fitter to take care of himself than of any other person, it is right and fit that it should be so. (II.ii.2.1)
> Nature, for the wisest purposes, has rendered, in most men, perhaps in all men, parental tenderness a much stronger affection than filial piety. The continuance and propagation of the species depend altogether upon the former, and not upon the latter. (III.3.13)

According to Smith, 'bettering our condition' is 'the great purpose of human life' (I.ii.2.1).[111]

Eighteenth-century Scottish thinkers regarded self-love as requiring moderation or control, but not eradication. Indeed, the sole function of

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[110] It is here that Smith reveals his hopes and fears for eighteenth-century Scottish society – it would be interesting to compare his remarks in the 5th edition with those of the additions for the 6th edition.

[111] It is possible that population increase was taken as a criterion of social progress. Hume's essay 'Of the Populousness of Ancient Nations' (1754) directly addresses and refutes Montesquieu's claim in *The Persian Letters* that 'there are on the earth hardly one-fiftieth part of the people there were in ancient times' (Letter 112; this appears as Letter 113 in revised editions after 1758, and revisions include a partial retraction of Montesquieu's claim – 'one-fiftieth' is reduced to 'one-tenth') (Hume, 'Of the Populousness of Ancient Nations' in *Essays, Moral, Political and Literary*, pp. 377–464; pp. 380ff.; Montesquieu, *The Persian Letters*, p. 252. Montesquieu's argument spans Letters 113–33)). It is also possible that Hume regarded a decrease in population to be a indication of a corrupt society – for example, veneral disease is referred to as the 'new plague' and Hume believes it had as devastating effect on the population as 'the three great scourges of mankind, war, pestilence, and famine' (Hume, ibid., pp. 380–1).

Smith's impartial spectator is to govern or rein in self-interest (II.ii.2.2). However, a degree of self-interest is healthy and, on occasion, laudable (II.ii.2.1); and there are circumstances in which failing to act in one's own interest is contemptible; Smith's examples include failure to demonstrate a degree of self-respect in the face of insult (I.ii.3; II.ii.2.2); a private gentleman's failure to pursue an estate or office (*vide* Harley); an MP's indifference towards his election; and a merchant's indifference towards his business (III.6.7). In short, 'self-interest' did not have the aggressive grasping connotation it has now. Bryson, in the course of an astute characterisation of the general Scottish Enlightenment approach to the study of man, deftly explicates the eighteenth-century concept as 'the belief that it was natural for man to make an order of life different from that in which the race was nurtured earlier, that it was in the nature of his equipment that it should react intelligently and creatively to the situations in which he found himself, however new and different and difficult they might be'.[112]

However, in the *Moral Sentiments*, the relation between self-interest, impartial spectatorship and societal change threatens to create an impasse. If social mores change as a result of man acting in his own self-interest, but self-interested conduct is under the jurisdiction of the guardian of social

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[112] Gladys Bryson, *Man and Society: The Scottish Inquiry of the Eighteenth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1945), pp. 173–4). Bryson's characterisation of eighteenth-century thinkers' understanding of the nature of man précises that of Hume: '[Man is] a creature, whose thoughts are not limited by any narrow bounds, either of place or time; who carries researches into the most distant regions of this globe, and beyond this globe, to the planets and heavenly bodies; looks backward to consider the first origin, at least, the history of the human race; casts his eye forwards to see the influence of his actions upon posterity, and the judgments which will be formed of his character a thousand years hence; a creature who traces causes and effects to a great length and intricacy; extracts general principles from particular appearances; improves upon his discoveries; corrects his mistakes; and makes his very errors profitable' ('Of the Dignity or Meanness of Human Nature', in *Essays Moral, Political, and Literary*, pp. 80–6; p. 82). Simpson relies more overtly on Hume for a statement of the 'definitive formulation of the thinking characteristic of the Scottish Enlightenment', quoting from Hume's *Essays Literary, Moral and Political*: '*industry*, *knowledge*, and *humanity*, are linked together by an indissoluble chain, and are found from experience as well as reason, to be peculiar to the more polished, and, what are commonly denominated, the more luxurious ages' (quoted in his *The Protean Scot*, p. 72).

mores, then, prima facie, it appears, there is no opportunity for any kind of innovation – or at least no opportunity for any kind of predictable, hence causally explicable, innovation. In other words, considering man as regulating his behaviour in a manner satisfactory to an impartial spectator, appears to annul the possibility of all but accidental social change. Smith avoids this deadlock by relying on what is effectively a stipulation of the end or purpose of human life: being aware of 'being beloved' (III.5.1), where 'to be beloved' is, '[t]o be observed, to be attended to, to be taken notice of with sympathy, complacency and approbation' (I.ii.2.1).[113] This definition leaves room for the idea that social mores might and do change, when a deviation from the norm is recognised, generally, as promoting this end more efficiently for each member of society. Smith relies on the assumption that man is naturally endowed with the capacity to recognise and adopt changes in conduct which will enhance the quality of life: 'the love and admiration which we naturally conceive for those whose character and conduct we approve of necessarily disposes us to desire to become ourselves the object of the like agreeable sentiments' (III.2.2). Since such changes (necessarily) appeal to all, they (necessarily) receive the blessings of the impartial spectator.

This position will not yet accommodate the kinds of change in moral conventions and social values for which there is evidence from observation and from historical accounts.[114] Reliance on a natural ability to judge whether novel conduct is meritorious allows only for society to become increasingly more virtuous, while, to be plausible, Smith needs an account which will accommodate change which is morally neither more nor less an improvement on the status quo; or, more pertinently, morally a change for the worse, given the downfall of the Roman Empire, for example. Smith therefore has to be able to answer the question 'How can a society become corrupt?'

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[113] Dwyer points out that even in an economic context, Smith's use of 'bettering one's condition' is essentially non-aggressive (*The Age of Passions*, p. 36).

[114] For example, Smith refers to the 'Luzury [sic] of the Romans and their depraved morals', and to Greek sedition' as described by Thucydides (*LRBL*, ii.59).

Smith refers to two kinds of corrosive influence: faction and fanaticism; and custom and fashion:

Faction and fanaticism have always been the greatest corruptors of moral sentiments. (III.3.43)
[Custom and fashion] are the chief causes of the many irregular and discordant opinions which prevail in different ages and nations concerning what is blameable or praiseworthy. (V.1.1)

Smith describes the distorting effect of faction and fanaticism on a society's moral code in the same way. In each case, the affected group loses impartiality; attitudes towards any from the opposing camp are essentially partisan.[115] However, neither of these kinds of cases can function in an explanation of the kind of predictable deterioration Smith needs for his account of societal development. For this, he needs to consider phenomena which yield to a causal analysis. That is, Smith needs to be able to explain the causal aetiology of moral deterioration on a society-wide scale. This explanation is provided by his analysis of custom and fashion.

This interpretation of the intention behind Smith's discussion of custom and fashion is diametrically opposed to the interpretation given by Dwyer who takes Smith's remarks on religion to have more weight than is given here, to the extent of dismissing Smith's discussion of custom and fashion.[116] In keeping with his reading of the *Moral Sentiments* as an economist's critique of contemporary Scotland, Dwyer understands Smith's comments on the corrosive effects of religious fanaticism to relate to his views on the contemporary battle for precedence within the Church of

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[115] In a discussion of the distorting effects of religion, Smith refers to the damage being the outcome of religion claiming the authority to dictate the rules of duty (III.6.12), which if taken together with Smith's comments in part III, ch. 3, indicate the relation between the concept of impartial spectator and the rules of duty. Presumably Smith regards religious fanaticism to be the greater of the two evils because, although war induces an inability to judge members of the opposing faction with any degree of sympathy – to refuse to acknowledge a shared humanity – its effects are not all lacking in virtue: it promotes the development of self-command in those who are fighting for example (III.3.37). By contrast, religious fanaticism appears to Smith to have nothing whatsoever to recommend it. Arguably, Scott explores the differences between fanaticism/faction and patriotism, sentimentally construed, in *Old Mortality*.
[116] Dwyer, *The Age of Passions*, pp. 47f.

Scotland between the Moderates and the High Flyers.[117] This reading places Smith firmly on the side of the Moderates, and the *Moral Sentiments* then becomes Moderate proselytising – which flies in the face of the claim that Smith was attempting to produce an objective account of the nature of man and society.

According to Dwyer, the *Moral Sentiments* propounds a social ethics 'well tailored to a society organized in terms of independent proprietors and capitalist production'. In partial justification of this remark Dwyer states: '[Smith] paid relatively little attention ... to the role of custom and fashion in the creation of social values'.[118] This is an odd conclusion to draw, given that Smith devoted an entire part of The *Moral Sentiments* (part V), to the discussion of the influence of custom and fashion on social mores. One's confidence in Dwyer's reading dwindles in the light of the quotation from the *Moral Sentiments* with which he chose to justify his preferred reading. Dwyer would have us believe that Smith wrote, of custom and fashion: 'All these effects of custom and fashion upon the moral sentiments of mankind are inconsiderable' but what Smith actually wrote was:

All these effects of custom and fashion, however, upon the moral sentiments of mankind, are inconsiderable, in comparison of those which they give occasion to in some other cases; and it is not concerning the general style of character and behaviour, that those principles produce the greatest perversion of judgment, but concerning the propriety or impropriety of particular usages. (V.2.12)

So, contrary to the conclusion invited by Dwyer's doctored quotation, Smith is not here dismissing the idea that custom and fashion affect social mores; he is stating that custom and fashion give rise in some instances to gross perversions of judgement – his example being the Athenians' practice of infanticide (V.2.15). His point is that while custom and fashion can affect (and corrupt) a society's moral code, they cannot *in general* go so far as to alter man's fundamental understanding of right and wrong; although in particular instances they are capable of shocking 'the plainest principles of right and wrong' (V.2.14) – Smith gives as example the Athenians practice

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[117] Ibid., pp. 38–9.
[118] Ibid. p. 47.

of infanticide long after their circumstances provided anything verging on a justification for this kind of practice, simply because it had become customary.[119] Infanticide breaches what Smith has earlier described as the foundational sacred law, namely that protecting 'life and person' (II.ii.2.2). Such a practice cannot become condoned generally – cannot be considered a part of potentially universalisable trend – because it is antithetical to the concept of society (V.2.16; cf II.ii.3.3). Somewhat ironically, Dwyer has chosen to quote from a context in which Smith both acknowledges that custom and fashion affect social mores, and relies on the properties of inductive generalisation to dismiss (only) those customs which cannot be considered relevant to his theory because by definition they are too fundamentally idiosyncratic to count as evidence contributing to a general account of mankind.[120]

Smith's discussion of custom and, especially, fashion, works the impartial spectator very hard indeed. In fact, it threatens to spell disaster for Smith's attempt to construct a philosophically consistent moral empiricism. Since his compatriots seemed not to object to his theory on this score, the question whether the internal consistency of the *Moral Sentiments* can be salvaged, may be left unexplored, here. However, the threat posed by the fashion issue, has interesting, highly relevant repercussions.

From Smith's discussion of custom and fashion (part V), there appears to be no bars as to what may become customary or fashionable, because custom, by linking together two objects or ideas, *creates* propriety. Customary connections are powerful – even to the extent of rendering

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[119] V.2.15. This was apparently treated as a test case for a moral theory. Athenian practice of infanticide is also discussed by Hume, for example. Its problematic nature stems from the fact that the practice continued long after Athenian society became civilised. The issue became that of explaining how such a barbaric custom could be sustained within a morally civilised people, given that it contravened a basic moral principle.

[120] Dwyer's *Age of Passions* is rife with evidence of shoddy scholarship: inaccurate citations; typographic errors; and in the opening pages, a glaring mistake in the form of a reference to the final paragraph of the *Moral Sentiments* followed by a quotation from the first paragraph. However, Dwyer is most culpable in regard to his misuse of textual quotation: repeatedly he fails to honour the context-sensitivity of Smith's comments, and the worst case is this partial quotation from a discussion which gives the lie to the claim for which Dwyer intended the quote as justification.

acceptable, or at least diminishing disapproval of, 'improper' conjunctions (V.1.2). Smith's thought seems to be that what is customary creates propriety (i.e. approval founded in a familiar conjunction which is not found universally) because it appears to display the same kind of sustained conjunction between two objects or ideas, as those constant conjunctions which do occur naturally, or as that which is 'naturally' causal.[121] What is customary apes natural conjunctions to such an extent that it can appear to sanction 'a violation of humanity', although, as discussed above, Smith regards such harmful customs as aberrations on the grounds that a general acceptance of inhumanity within any given society would destroy that society (V.2.16).

'Custom' refers to a society's practices which have become habitual through some idiosyncrasy of its members. 'Fashion' has a more restricted application. Smith describes it as 'a particular species of custom' (V.1.3), although his account of how and why the fashionable has influence, suggests that while fashion resembles custom in creating propriety, the relation between custom and fashion is more akin to that of host and parasite than that between genus and species. Fashions can be significantly more ephemeral than customs, which, because *habitual* associations, are by definition of long duration. Fashions are also more prone to being wrongheaded than custom, and so more likely to be morally corrosive.

Although Smith nowhere explicitly describes the origin of fashion and the source of its influence, his thinking on both can be gleaned from his comments on ambition and wealth. Admittedly these comments appear to fuel arguments for a prescriptive interpretation of Smith's intended import of the book.[122] Certainly Smith's remarks on avarice and wealth indicate an anxiety about the effect on morality of contemporary economic developments, but taking this anxiety seriously does not entail the

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[121] HA II.11; see above, pp. 163–5. Although it seems that the propriety is most evident by its absence.

[122] For example Dwyer, *Age of Passions*, esp. ch. 2, of which Dwyer writes: 'Its underlying assumption is that Smith's work cannot be fully understood in terms of its supposed scientific or abstract philosophical character but needs to be related to a specific environment and a particular social constituency' (p. 35).

conclusion that Smith intended the *Moral Sentiments* to be read as a handbook of morality; nor does it undermine the claim that his intention was to give an objective and scientific empiricist account of morality. The fact that his thoughts on ambition and wealth have to be constructed from comments scattered throughout the book, suggest that they were used either as illustration for his discussion or to demonstrate the adequacy – the explanatory scope – of his theory. Furthermore, the idea that his comments on wealth, if illustrative, are incidental to the main purpose of the book, invites the suggestion that rather than drawing attention to those aspects of contemporary society which he believed should be eradicated – a suggestion which is concomitant with the normative reading of the *Moral Sentiments* – Smith's intention was to choose issues which at the time were generally held to be cause for concern in order to display the plausibility of his theory.

Regardless of whether Smith is understood to have been putting forward his own ideas on corruption within eighteenth-century Scottish society, or drawing on received opinion on this matter, his remarks on ambition and avarice do indicate where he laid the blame for societal corruption, and, as a corollary, in whom he placed the responsibility for a society's moral health: moral corrosion begins in the uppermost rank of society, the rank which ought to set the standard of conduct for society; and the saviours of a society's moral standards, in lieu of the men of rank, come from the 'inferior rank'; in eighteenth-century Scotland, the men of rank were the aristocracy and landowners; while the 'inferior rank' included those like Dundas and Mackenzie who could aspire to the upper echelons of government administration.[123]

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[123] I.ii.2.5. It would appear that Smith considered mid-eighteenth-century Scottish society to comprise three strata: men of rank (aristocracy and landowners); inferior ranks (including those who received university education); and 'the mob'. Smith's discussion of wealth, in the *Moral Sentiments*, leads one to conclude that, mid-century, the social placement of (successful) merchants was highly problematic – that Smith regarded them as essentially (and so, morally) belonging to the mob but economically part of the upper echelons of society. I have referred explicitly to the mid-eighteenth century, as the structure of Scottish society changed during the 30 years after the publication of the 2nd (revised) edition of the *Moral Sentiments*, and this, together with factors affecting the internal political relations between Scotland and England, altered the tenor of issues

7 Smith's analysis of social corrosion

Smith's explanation of the way fashion 'works' – the way the preferences of the minority comprising the highest rank in a society influence the cultural and moral values of society as a whole, is misleadingly simple. Trends set by 'men of rank and distinction' are 'connected in our imaginations with the idea of something that is genteel and magnificent' (V.1.3). By dint of this connection, the substance of the trends is regarded as itself possessing gentility and magnificence (ibid.). However, these admirable qualities pertain to a trend only as long as it is upheld by members of the highest rank (ibid.). When that association breaks, the qualitative association also breaks. Smith merely indicates the extent of this rank's influence in the course of describing the change in the perception (and reception) of any given trend once it no longer informs the codes of the highest rank. As soon as a preference is dropped by men of rank, Smith states that it not only loses its connotation of grace and gentility – which loss would render it once again culturally neutral; but it acquires the 'meanness and awkwardness' associated by our imaginations with 'the mob' (V.1.3; I.iii.2.1). That is, trends set by the few men of rank influence, and are adopted by society as a whole.

In some spheres – matters of taste, for example – the influence over a society by those with the highest social profile seems unlimited (V.2.1). By contrast, their effect on the moral codes of a society is constrained by man's natural sense of right and wrong. Trends which accord with these moral principles enhance a society's sense of propriety – increasing sensibility; but those which run counter to such principles will warp a society's notions of vice and virtue – deadening a society's response generally to vice, and so lowering its moral standards (ibid.). Nevertheless it appears that fashion can turn the notion of morally approved conduct on its head, albeit only temporarily; the prevailing codes of conduct during the reign of Charles II

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preoccupying the literati (see above, pp. 104–8) – a fact which is reflected in the substantial revisions made for the 6th edition (1790) and, particularly, the additional part (VI). Tellingly, the text for the 5th edition (1781) differs only minimally from that of the 2nd edition (1761).

provide Smith with a case in point. At that time, 'a degree of licentiousness ... was connected ... with generosity, sincerity, magnanimity [i.e. self command], loyalty, and proved the person who acted in this manner was a gentleman'; meanwhile any behaviour or practice associated with Puritanism – for example, severity of manner and regularity of conduct – left the perpetrator open to accusations of 'cant, cunning, hypocrisy and low manners'.[124]

Fashion, then, trades on a temporally prior association between rank and gentility and other similarly laudable qualities. This prior connection must itself be a product of custom, given the connection does not hold necessarily. According to Smith's account, the association between rank and all that is good and worth striving after is strong: 'Even when the order of society seems to require that we should oppose [the inclinations of our superiors], we can hardly bring ourselves to do it ... even when the people have been brought to [punish or depose their superiors], they ... easily relapse into their habitual state of deference to those whom they have been accustomed to look upon as their natural superiors' (I.iii.2.3). In fine, deference to one's superiors is so ingrained a habit as to seem natural – it is literally 'second nature'.[125]

Smith traces the origin of deference to one's social superiors to man's natural proclivity to better his condition, which he understands as a proclivity on the part of each man, to increase his happiness. The explanation of this is somewhat convoluted. According to Smith, the man of rank in any given society, appears to his social inferiors to have attained

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[124] V.2.3. Attitudes towards Puritanism were still disdainful during the eighteenth century. In Smollett's, *Humphry Clinker* (1771), Matthew Bramble is described as 'ashamed of his name Matthew, because it is puritanical' (*The Expedition of Humphry Clinker*, ed. Lewis M. Knapp (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 191).

[125] Smith's views on the extent to which deference becomes ingrained are similar to those of Hume: 'Obedience or subjection becomes so familiar, that most men never make any enquiry about its origins or cause' (Hume, 'Of the Original Contract' (1742), p. 470). Later in the *Moral Sentiments* Smith concludes: 'Few men ... are willing to allow, that custom or fashion have much influence upon their judgments concerning what is beautiful or otherwise, in [the arts]; but imagine, that all the rules, which they think ought to be observed in each of them, are founded upon reason and nature, not upon habit and prejudice' (V.1.4).

perfect happiness (I.iii.2.2). By dint of his position alone, he commands not only the attention of those beneath him, but their sympathy (I.iii.2.1). This is because he appears to have pursued with success what Smith describes as 'the impossible and absurd project of gaining the good will and approbation of every body', a project to which all men are naturally drawn as a result of their inherent desire to please: 'the chief part of happiness' according to Smith's account of sympathy 'arises from the consciousness of being beloved' (I.ii.5.1), and as mentioned earlier (p. 184), one is beloved when in sympathy with – or pleasing – one's fellow men.

The man of rank, of course, has not attained perfect happiness for reasons delineated in Smith's appraisal of his situation (I.iii.2.1). Smith argues that society at large is deluded into the belief that he has, because they fail to go beyond appearances. The sympathetic response to a man of rank is the result of failing to comprehend what it would be like to experience that situation, and of responding instead to the trappings of rank and wealth (I.iii.2.2).[126]

In effect, the approval and admiration of the majority of society for their superiors is based on an inaccurate notion of what it would be to experience superior status. Hence they fail to judge that rank impartially. As already mentioned above, Smith regarded the judgement of a partial and indulgent spectator to result in the corruption of moral sentiments (pp. 148, 158–61). Smith evidently believes that impartiality on the part of a spectator is possible when there is temporal distance between the spectator and the society under judgement: his examples of corruption engendered by indulgent spectatorship on the part of the hoi polloi are all drawn from history: the prevailing mores during the reign of Charles II (V.2.3) or Louis XIV (III.2.5); and Plutarch's account of the sympathetic reception by the crowd of the Macedonian king after his defeat by Rome (I.iii.2.6).

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[126] Actually, although the members of the higher ranks in society are the focus of attention for the majority of the remainder, for whom they are objects of sympathy, the actual relation between the strata is something other than a sympathy relation, as according to Smith, the upper ranks interact socially (and so presumably sympathetically) only within their own stratum (I.iii.2.5).

It is possible to reconstruct Smith's train of thought concerning how the rich and powerful have carte blanche to set moral trends for a society. Such men command a high profile, socially, as a result of vaunting their wealth. The rest of society are attracted by displays of wealth and consequently direct their sympathy towards the wealthy. Since what is socially acceptable is by definition what gains the approval of the average spectator, wealth becomes emblematic of propriety. However, since virtue consists in exceeding the approved norm (I.i.5.9), and members of the highest order of a society are by definition also in the wealthiest bracket, wealth becomes emblematic not merely of propriety but of virtue; those who are wealthy are thereby deemed also virtuous; and thereby provide the standards for moral excellence – standards which people strive to emulate. In short, wealth appears to bestow the moral high ground on those who possess it; so the conduct of this economic bracket of society is allowed to define the moral norm for society as a whole. This it seems, is what prompted Smith to such comments as:

[A palace] may serve to promote luxury and set the example of the dissolution of manners. (I.ii.3.4)
It is from our disposition to admire and consequently to imitate, the rich and the great, that they are enabled to set. or to lead, what is called the fashion ... even their views and follies are fashionable, and the greater part of men are proud to imitate and resemble them in the very qualities which dishonour and degrade them. (I.iii.3.7)

The hoi polloi are misled by their imagination into equating wealthiness with happiness, and rank with virtue.[127] The delusion is self-perpetuating and – worse – in a commercial society it is self-propagating: initially wealth

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[127] The men of rank are also deluded albeit in a different way. They believe they are being admired for themselves, but in fact are being admired for what they own. This analysis reappears in Marx's writings, albeit for a different end: 'Everything that the political economist takes from you in life and in humanity, he replaces for you in *money* and in *wealth*; and all the things that you cannot do, your money can do. It can eat and drink, go to the dance hall and the theatre; it can travel, it can appropriate art, learning, the treasures of the past, political power – all this it *can* appropriate for you – it can buy all this for you: it is the true *endowment*. Yet being all this, it is *inclined* to do nothing but create itself ... All passions and all activity must therefore be submerged in *greed*' (quoted in Robert Tucker, *Philosophy and Myth in Karl Marx* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), p. 139).

is equated with rank and rank with virtue. This equation transmutes into one of wealth with rank and hence, of wealth with virtue (I.ii.1). Those with wealth then set the moral standard for society a whole, and the acquisition of wealth becomes a virtue – a state all would wish to attain. In a commercial society, wealth is no longer restricted to men of rank; merchants also become wealthy. In fine, the moral standards for society are open to influence by those who value wealth over virtue, and the scene is set for the general deterioration of moral sentiments.

A society in the most advanced stage of developed is in a precarious position on Smith's analysis. Although moral corruption is not inevitable, it is highly probable. For Smith and his contemporaries, this conclusion tallied with evidence from history.[128] Unlike social changes brought about by faction, wealth-induced corruption is predictable, because brought about by changes in society which are themselves predictable. Most important for Smith's theory, the cause of the corrosive influence wealth reduces to, or is explicable in terms of universal natural characteristics of man's make up, namely self-interest; the capacity for fellow-feeling; and the pursuit of happiness.

However, although Smith did not seem aware of it, the 'fashion issue' threatens his empiricism because his analysis of the way in which corrupt fashions or trends of any kind permeate society, and of how and why the preferences of a few can influence society as a whole, depend on the idea that at any given time, a morally incorrect view can be held by the majority

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[128] Smollett expresses this concern through Lismahago, the Scot and Devil's Advocate in *Humphry Clinker*: "'Woe be to that nation, where the multitude is at liberty to follow their own inclinations! Commerce is undoubtedly a blessing, while restrained within its proper channels; but a glut of wealth brings along with it a glut of evils: it brings false taste, false appetite, false wants, profusion, venality, contempt of order, engendering a spirit of licentiousness, insolence, and faction, that keeps communities in continual ferment, and in time destroys all the distinctions of civil society; so that universal anarchy and uproar, must ensue. Will any sensible man affirm, that the national advantages of opulence are to be sought on these terms?" "No, sure; but I am one of those who think, that, by proper regulations, commerce may produce every national benefit, without the allay of such concomitant evils'" (p. 280; quoted in M.A. Goldberg, *Smollett and the Scottish School: Studies in Eighteenth-Century Thought* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1959), p. 168).

of society; that is, that the majority of society and so, it would appear, by Smith's definition, the impartial spectator, can be morally deluded. If Smith's theory is to avoid importing idealism, then the judgements ascribed to an impartial spectator of any level of abstraction, have to be either generalisations drawn from experience, or, at least, supervenient on such generalisations. The concept of impartial spectator has its origin in the concept of 'a moral judgement of the majority', and proceeds via the more generalised concept of 'the judgement of "the average man"' to that of a highly abstract 'man within', who can, at times, countermand the moral conclusions of those of a fairly immediate social circle.[129] If Smith's theory is to remain empiricist, then the judgements of 'the man within' can never float entirely free of those of the society on which the abstraction depends or supervenes, as Smith acknowledges.[130] However, if Smith's account of fashion is to allow for the possibility of society-wide moral corruption, recognisable as such either by a member of the society under scrutiny, or by a member of a different society, the recognition of moral corruption has to be regarded as the result of a judgement made according to standards of right and wrong which are immune to, or supersede those maintained by the majority of that society. It appears that Smith could assume that such a judgement with moral content can be made only by a member of a different society, only on pain of contradicting the foundational assumption that the nature of mankind is universal. However, given the examples he uses in the *Moral Sentiments*, it is apparent that he presupposes such judgements can be made by his readers about contemporary developments within Scotland, which presupposition threatens his empiricism.

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[129] This is broached by Campbell ('Explanation and Ethical Justification', pp. 73–4).

[130] '[When all our brethren appear loudly to condemn us] The supposed impartial spectator of our conduct seems to give his opinion in our favour with fear and hesitation; when that of all the real spectators, when that of all those with whose eyes and from whose station he endeavours to consider it, is unanimously and violently against us. In such cases, this demigod within the breast appears, like the demigods of the poets, though partly of immortal, yet partly too of mortal extraction ... when he suffers himself to be astonished and confounded by the judgments of ignorant and weak man, he discovers his connexion with mortality, and appears to act suitably, rather to the human, than to the divine part of his origin' (III.2.32).

8 The social role of the middle rank

Smith does not want to eradicate wealth; nor can he consistently advocate the eradication of ambition, given that that is a natural concomitant of man's tendency for betterment. His argument is against neither wealth nor ambition, but against the equation of wealth with virtue, and the perception of wealth as a worthy goal. Given Smith's demonstration that this equation is the result of a causally explicable mistake about the existence of a relation between wealth and virtue, it follows that Smith may argue that if a society can avoid making the erroneous connection or, having made it, realign its focus on a genuine source of happiness, then economic improvement will not engender moral deterioration.[131]

The social group Smith regards as the most suitable custodians of a society's mores is the middle rank. In this he follows Hume, and for the same kinds of reasons. Hume argues that 'all Discourses of Morality ought to be principally addressed [to the middle station]' because 'they form the most numerous Rank of Men that can be suppos'd susceptible by Philosophy'.[132] According to Hume, the middle rank is best placed to appreciate moral reasoning because their social position affords the most balanced view of society, being midway between the extremes of poverty and wealth, and equally importantly, its members have 'the leisure' to observe social interaction, unlike the wealthy who are too absorbed in pleasure, and the poor who are 'too much occupy'd in providing the Necessities of Life'.[133]

Smith identified two social groups which are immune to the lure of social distinction: those whose behaviour greatly exceeds the 'ordinary standard of

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[131] This is an important connection for Smith to have made, given the general concern among the literati about the potential detrimental effect of Scotland's improved economy. It informs Mackenzie's view on wealth and corruption, described above, pp. 90–1.

[132] David Hume, 'Of the Middle Station of Life' (1742), in *Essays, Moral, Political and Literary*, pp. 545–51; p. 547.

[133] Ibid., pp. 546–8. It is interesting to note that the poor are precluded from philosophical pursuits for the same kinds of reasons as barbarians: they are able only to react to situations, the demands of day-to-day life being too great to allow contemplation (V.2.8–9); see above pp. 180–1.

human behaviour', i.e. the virtuous; and those who have lost the wish to better themselves, and succumbing to 'slothful and sottish indifference' sunk too far below 'the ordinary standard' for redemption (I.iii.2.7). The immunity of the former group is a result of their being less concerned about the attitudes of their fellow man, than about acting according to the dictates of conscience.[134] This characterisation excludes men of rank, for whom 'glory' consists in no more than 'the propriety of ordinary behaviour' (I.iii.2.5). Men of rank regard themselves as unconstrained by the rules of decorum, not because they discount the views of their inferiors, but because they fail to acknowledge the existence of other ranks (ibid.). Since Smith also describes this group as 'inaccessible to reason and dispute' by all but their peers, given their failure to acknowledge society at large, 'reason and dispute' are unlikely to produce the kind of impartial moral judgements which are constitutive of the virtuous character.[135]

The poor do not feature large in the *Moral Sentiments*, unless they are afflicted by the desire for wealth.[136] Smith laments the status of nonentity which poverty confers, and argues that this is wrongheaded on two counts: poverty is castigated as a vice in consequence of a delusion about the virtuous nature of wealth (I.iii.2.1); and poverty does not of itself result in,

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[134] Smith associates this attitude with a 'well-formed mind' (III.2.7). Virtue is equated with behaviour beyond 'the ordinary' at I.i.5.6.

[135] I.iii.2.3. Given that the implication of Smith's argument against the pursuit of wealth is that the rich, being pleased with 'groundless applause', have demonstrated 'the most superficial levity and weakness' (III.2.5) not to mention his dismissal of their acquisition as 'mere trinkets of frivolous folly' (IV.1.7), we can assume Smith regarded his readership to be only the convertible.

[136] E.g. Smith refers to the poor man's son who admires the condition of the rich as one whom 'heaven in its anger has visited with ambition' (IV.1.7) because, Smith claims, a lifetime devoted to the pursuit of wealth will reveal that riches are just 'mere trinkets of frivolous utility' (ibid.). One is left with the distinct impression that Smith enjoyed writing this chapter. It is full of deft caricatures of the more idiosyncratic 'collectors': men with pockets bulging with what would now be referred to as 'designer tweezers' for example. Cf. Harley's predilection for a pair of brass sleeve buttons (*MF*, p. 47; mentioned on p. 64 above); and his return from London as if from a Grand Tour, replete with half a dozen snuffboxes with invisible hinges (*MF*, p. 100, quoted above, p. 52–3, n. 15).

or cause, unhappiness.[137] Apart from this the poor tend to be subsumed under the general rubric 'the mob', of whom Smith seems to have little expectation of displaying refined reasoning and who generally represent the lowest common denominator socially.[138]

Dwyer's normative reading of The Theory of Moral Sentiments

Smith's conclusion that the middle station is most likely to spawn men of virtue has been taken by many, not as the outcome of an analysis of the causes of social corruption by increased wealth, but as the starting point for

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[137] IV.1.11. Smith also argues that disdain causes distress for the poor because it has a concomitant lack of sympathy and causes the poor to feel intrinsically unworthy of sympathy, 'for though to be overlooked, and to be disapproved of, are things entirely different, ... to feel that we are taken no notice of, necessarily dampens the most agreeable hope, and disappoints the most ardent desire of human nature' (I.iii.2.1).

[138] E.g. II.ii.3.8. Smith's reasoning here may well have been justified pragmatically at the time. It is hard to imagine how the majority of society would have gained access to the material he regarded as essential for the development of the kind of refined reasoning skills needed to follow his arguments, despite the breadth of catchment of education in Scotland (see George Elder Davie, *The Democratic Intellect: Scotland and her Universities in the Nineteenth Century* (Edinburgh: The University Press, 1961); Henry Grey Graham, *The Social Life of Scotland in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Adam and Charles and Black, 1906), chs 10–12). Then – as now – few would have had the time or motivation to study texts at the cutting edge of philosophy, science and history. Most people were reliant on the pulpit for the dissemination of new ideas. Smith was aware of the limitations of oratory: 'The arguments that are to be used before a people cannot be very intricate; the Proposition generally requires no proof at all and when it does the arguments are of themselves so evident as not to require any elaborate explanation. There must be in this case no nicety nor refinement, no metaphysicall arguments, these would be altogether superfluous in the circumstances an orator is generally in and can very selldom be in any shape applicable' (*LRBL* ii.138). This is not to slight the intelligence of an audience or congregation; it just is difficult to follow complex reasoning aurally – as any attending philosophy conferences will fully appreciate. Smith's argument against the pursuit of wealth is indeed complex: it rests ultimately on his definition of propriety, and of virtue as excellence in this domain. It is also dependent on his analysis of custom, and as Smith points out, few will acknowledge the transience of custom (V.1.4). The concept of the impartial spectator is also in play.

a normative ethics.[139] One such reading is found in the several discussions of the *Moral Sentiments* by Dwyer.[140] Dwyer states that Smith's intention in the *Moral Sentiments* was 'to provide the "middling ranks" of an emerging capitalist society with a framework for social behaviour'.[141] While he acknowledges that there are grounds for treating the *Moral Sentiments* as a scientific discourse, he believes that such an approach obscures 'a major insight' in Enlightenment thought, namely that emotions played a primary role in individual motivation and social organisation.[142] It appears that the possibility that this insight might form the starting point for a principled empiricist analysis of the role that human emotions play in human motivation and social organisation for Smith (or Hume) has passed Dwyer by. It is valuable to consider Dwyer's discussions of the *Moral Sentiments* in detail because it highlights the confusion resulting from a piecemeal approach to the text, which appears viable on a normative reading of the *Moral Sentiments*. According to Dwyer, Smith's *Moral Sentiments* is riddled with inconsistencies. The Newtonian reading, by contrast, shows Smith to have been rigorously consistent both in his empiricism and with regard to his views on the importance of a structured argument from first principles found elsewhere in his writings. Dwyer's reading does have a redeeming feature however. His discussion emphasises the value of a subtextual study of part VI of the *Moral Sentiments*. This was a later addition to the text, written for the 6th edition. This edition was published 1790, at the end of a decade which had seen the end of the American War of Independence (1775–83) and the French Revolution (1789–90). The issues

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[139] This kind of approach not only is tantamount to dismissing the bulk of the *Moral Sentiments*, but also ignores the fact that Smith's concern to give a causal explanation of social corruption reflects a general concern of the Scottish literati. Smith also believed that the delusion of the mob by the aristocracy was advantageous for society – this being the origin of ranks (I.iii.2.3).

[140] John Dwyer, *Virtuous Discourse: Sensibility and Community in Late Eighteenth-Century Scotland* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1987), ch. 7; 'Enlightened Spectators and Classical Moralists: Sympathetic Relations in Eighteenth-Century Scotland', in John Dwyer and Richard Sher (eds), *Sociability and Society in Enlightenment Scotland, Eighteenth-Century Life*, 15 (1991), nos 1–2, pp. 96–118; and *Age of Passions*.

[141] *Age of Passions*, p. 35.

[142] Ibid., p. 1.

which Smith chooses to discuss in this part cast light on the concerns of the late eighteenth century – namely the potentially damaging effects of an improved economy.

Juxtaposing Dwyer's justification of his normative interpretation of the *Moral Sentiments* with approaches which take seriously Smith's attempt to apply the hypothetico-deductive method, for the use of which he lauded Newton frequently, is an exercise in chiaroscuro. What, on the 'structured theory' reading, feature as illustrative examples, are taken by Dwyer to be the backbone of the book – and as such to be read prescriptively; Smith's construction from first principles of complex abstract moral concepts is ignored or glossed over; and since no attempt is made to elucidate Smith's use of such terms as 'sympathy', 'imagination' or 'propriety', Dwyer understands Smith's usage intuitively, which at times yields only obfuscation – a prime example of which being Dwyer's statement that 'sentiment' (the use of which he nowhere explains) 'had the sole purpose of transforming the patriotic citizen into a creature of peace, friendship and love'.[143] The kinds of differences between the 'theory' reading, and the normative reading championed by Dwyer, are exemplified by such comments on Dwyer's part as that propriety 'often' dictated 'a certain mediocrity of feeling and behaviour', as opposed to the interpretation given above which takes seriously Smith's definition of propriety as 'actions the greater part of men commonly arrive at' (I.i.5.9), which, since it is a

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[143] Ibid., p. 154. This is a curious statement, to say the least; Smith barely address the notion of patriotism in the *Moral Sentiments*, and when he does consider the concept, it is in the context of discussing the single-minded, and therefore reprehensible, bias towards one's own country engendered by war (III.3.42). Furthermore, Smith does not consider there to be a single sentiment. The whole problem for him is the reconciliation of motives resulting from the several sentiments natural to man, to explain the fact of social harmony.

Dwyer uses a similarly opaque connection between passion and patriotism in ibid., ch. 6 – concerning the Ossian poems – which he describes as a discussion of 'the contribution which the new analysis of the passions made to a burgeoning European nationalism' (ibid., p. 11). Dwyer's views on Ossian are discussed below (pp. 281–5); I'll mention here only that they failed to cast light on what he understands to be the eighteenth-century concept of 'European nationalism'.

definition, means propriety cannot but dictate 'a certain mediocrity'.[144] Sympathy, propriety, and impartiality, concepts and relations which are foundational to Smith's reasoning according to the 'theory' reading, for Dwyer warrant mention only in a footnote, where they are billed as 'other features of Smith's approach'.[145] The relationship between virtue and conscience, generally regarded even on most normative readings as worthy of attention, and which on the 'theory' reading is seen to be the end for which Smith worked hardest, for Dwyer, merits only a glancing reference as 'complex' in the course of comments in support of his (dubious) claim, *contra* not only Smith but Hume, Elliott and Stewart,[146] that the central concept in the *Moral Sentiments* is self-control.[147] And he understands 'secondary passions' to mean weaker, less important passions, missing entirely the philosophical import of Smith's use of the term 'secondary', to refer to passions deriving from passions as opposed to passions arising from (physical) sensation. This misreading on Dwyer's part leads him to a deeper misinterpretation regarding Smith's views of love and marriage (see below pp. 282–4) – a mistake which effectively undermines the main thesis of *Age of Passions* which is based on the premise that Smith did not believe that love played, or should ever play, a dominant role in human motivation; and that in consequence, he was less influential on later writers such as Mackenzie than Millar and Macpherson.[148] Given that 'the chief part of happiness' according to Smith's account of sympathy 'arises from the

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[144] Ibid. p. 38.

[145] Ibid., n. 17, p. 51.

[146] Hume, 'Letter from David Hume, 28 July 1759'; Elliot's objection can be reconstructed from Smith, 'Letter from Adam Smith to Gilbert Elliot, 10 October 1759', and from the footnote added in the 2nd edn of the *Moral Sentiments*, I.ii.1.9, n.; Stewart, 'Account of the Life and Writings of Adam Smith, LL.D.', p. 281.

[147] Ibid., p. 19.

[148] Ibid., p. 84; p. 11. An interpretation of Smith's views on love which is diametrically opposed to that of Dwyer, is given in Douglas J. Den Uyl and Charles Griswold, 'Adam Smith on Friendship and Love', *Review of Metaphysics*, 49 (1996), pp. 609–37. Far from considering Smith to have marginalised love, Den Uyl and Griswold regard it as pivotal in Smith's thought.

consciousness of being beloved' (I.ii.5.1), Dwyer's interpretation requires no little justification. None is forthcoming, however.

There are additional sources of irritation with Dwyer's approach which countermand its viability. Dwyer rarely argues for his position. For example, he makes unsupported generic claims such as 'Smith believed that the achievement of a state of sympathetic harmony with one's fellows could never be based in reason' – which is correct, but wrongly suggests that Smith himself supplied no reasons; and he makes claims which he supports by misquotations: for example, Dwyer states 'Smith refers to [those who were responsive to public opinion and capable of virtue] as "by far the greater part of mankind"' and equates 'the greater part of mankind' with the middle station, which if nothing else is an oxymoron.[149] The text Dwyer quotes actually states that 'the greater part of mankind' respects the law; and depends for success on the 'favour and good opinion' of their neighbours and peers (I.iii.3.5), a situation which, had Dwyer taken into consideration Smith's analysis of the nature and role of sympathy in all societies and groups within society, would have been seen to apply to all but those in the 'superior' stations of life. Smith's point, here, as he makes explicit in the immediately following text (I.iii.3.6), is not that imputed to him by Dwyer, i.e. that the middle station is likely to preserve a society's morality through sheer force of numbers; but that the conditions conducive to the promotion of virtue do not prevail in the highest rank of society.

Dwyer's is the more recent of a long line of woolly-minded commentary on the influence of Smith's *Moral Sentiments* on eighteenth-century Scottish literature. Goldberg, for example, argues for the general thesis that Smollett's heroes are grappling with the issues of the Scottish Enlightenment – that *Roderick Random* for example, centres on a tussle to reconcile the opposition between passion and reason; and that the relevant issues are reflected in the overarching internal structure of each book. Somewhat surprisingly however, Goldberg manages to discuss Enlightenment thought without a single reference to Hume. In opposition to the view of *Peregrine Pickle* as pure and unmitigated farce, Goldberg argues

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[149] Ibid., p 63.

that it is less ludicrous than satiric and relies on wit rather than farce, on the ground that eighteenth-century wit has to be understood in the context of the relation then assumed between wit and imagination.[150] Goldberg's conclusions are interesting, but his reasoning is badly adrift, ascribing to Smith the view that the imagination is a source of judgement, when Smith, following Hume, takes imagination to supply the subject matter for judgements which, because comparative, are the provenance of the separate mental faculty of reason, or the mind.[151] His discussion becomes less convincing still when he glides seamlessly from the moral theory of Adam Smith to that of David Fordyce in the course of arguing that there is an internal progressive structure to *Roderick Random*. The dynamic of this progression, he argues, is provided not by a plot, but by the hero's development of a moral sense.[152] Goldberg, here, appears to equate Smith's understanding of moral development with that of Fordyce, despite the latter following Hutcheson in holding that the moral sense is a separate faculty (albeit differing from Hutcheson in regarding it to be 'midway' between passion and reason, as if arbitrating between the two); and more importantly, despite Smith arguing quite specifically against Hutcheson's postulation of a separate moral sense.[153] Goldberg argues that *Sir Launcelot Greaves* is a study in self- and social love.[154] In the course of describing the importance

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[150] Goldberg, *Smollett and the Scottish School*, p. 54.

[151] Ibid. See also pp. 28–9. Cf. Hume's argument that reason is 'perfectly inert' never producing of itself a motive for action, or the content of a concept or judgement (*Treatise*, II.iii.3, pp. 460–5).

[152] The kind of movement to which Goldberg is referring to is akin to that which structures *The Man of Feeling*. There are several parallels between *Roderick Random* and *The Man of Feeling*.

[153] VII.ii.3.4–19; VII.ii.2.9–VII.iii.3.16; Goldberg, *Smollett and the Scottish School*, pp. 46–7. A further difference between Fordyce and Smith, which Goldberg fails to mention, is that Fordyce holds that passions act without regard for others, that they essentially concern only oneself, while Smith regards resentment and gratitude as passions, each of which is rooted in sympathetic responses to others. In fact the innovation of Hutcheson, Hume and Smith lies in recognition of the need for impartiality in moral judgements; see above pp. 119–21. His understanding of resentment is central to his analysis of justice as grounded in sympathy, and hence, *contra* Hume (*Treatise*, III.ii.1, III.iii.6), a natural virtue. Goldberg's muddled attempt to describe Smith's theory appears on pp. 28–9.

[154] Ibid., ch. 5.

ascribed to this antipathy in Scottish Enlightenment moral theory, Goldberg describes Hutcheson as advocating a practical and utilitarian view to mediate self- and social love – a view less applicable to Hutcheson than to Hume; and slips from Hutcheson's moral theory to that of Ferguson without taking into account that like Smith but unlike Hutcheson, Ferguson did not regard man's selfishness to need eradication.[155] In fact, Goldberg regards Ferguson as representative of Scots moral thought, which view is liable to encourage a normative reading of Smith's the *Moral Sentiments*, if for no other reason than that Ferguson states categorically that moral philosophy is essentially prescriptive – 'is knowledge of what ought to be, or the application of rules that ought to determine the choice of voluntary agents'.[156] By contrast, both Hume and Smith regard moral philosophy to be a prescriptively neutral, causal analysis of social facts.

Even Simpson, who argues that evidence of conflict within the work of individual Scottish writers of eighteenth-century literature points to a crisis of identity in the century following the Union, and whose claims are generally well substantiated, goes astray with regard to Smith.[157] In the course of an attempt to establish that the Scottish literati worked to replace the essentially Scottish features of their culture with those which accorded with English standards of taste, he cites in evidence from both Smith's writings on language – *Lectures on Rhetoric* and *First Formation of Languages* – and the *Moral Sentiments*.[158] Simpson quotes from Smith's

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[155] Ibid., pp. 112–13.

[156] Ibid., p. 184; Ferguson, *Institutes,* p. 9.

[157] Simpson, *The Protean Scot.* Simpson's conclusions on Smollett are diametrically opposed to those of Goldberg. Where Goldberg finds evidence of preoccupation with philosophical issues characteristic of Enlightenment endeavours in the architecture of Smollett's novels, Simpson sees only 'rage and pace and concomitant lack of depth', a firmly external point of view, and little beyond a physical response by characters to their situations (p. 14).

[158] Simpson, ibid., pp. 71–81; Simpson draws on the *Moral Sentiments* for evidence of the divided nature of the Scottish personality, citing, somewhat crassly, Smith's use of the idea of a division of the self to explain the way in which conscience works (p. 12), which indicates a clumsy reading of the *Moral Sentiments*. His interpretation of Hume to the same end is similarly heavy-handed; for example failing to follow Hume's reasoning about why customary constant conjunction in matters of taste takes on the authority of

argument against the notion of objective standards of excellence, founded independently of experience, in moral conduct (I.i.5.6), during the course of which Smith likens the foundations of judgements of moral excellence to those of taste. Smith uses the simile, because unlike morality, the standards for which then, had until recently had been presented as having the authority from some extra-societal source (via revealed religion, for example), matters of taste are more overtly rooted in the opinions of a society. Simpson, however, fails to appreciate the purpose of Smith's comparison, taking the fact that Smith 'mentions taste and sensibility in the same breath' as evidence that, according to Simpson, Smith, like the literati generally, overrated the importance of taste, and (somewhat surprisingly given Simpson supplies no grounds for this move), in particular the importance of cultivating English taste. [159] In fact, Smith goes to some length to demonstrate that the difference between moral standards and standards of taste is that while a disagreement over the latter will have no bearing on one's attitude towards the person holding the differing opinion, evidence of a difference in moral judgement will affect one's attitude towards the other person (I.i.4.5), which implies that, according to Smith, English opinions on matters of taste have no intrinsic social weight.

Despite a plethora of drawbacks to Dwyer's exegesis, it has the edge over these and many other attempts at normative readings of Smith's thought in addressing the *Moral Sentiments* directly rather than assimilating it in a congenial amble through the full gamut of Scottish Enlightenment critical writing. However, given the vapid quality of Dwyer's engagement with the text, this not enough to redeem it as a reliable commentary on Smith's thought per se.

In *Virtuous Discourse* Dwyer considers the substantial changes that Smith made to the *Moral Sentiments* for the sixth edition (1790). His thesis is that the additional text – namely chapter 3 of the third section in part I; and part VI – indicates that Smith had become increasingly concerned that economic improvement together with changes in social priorities in the

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natural conjunctions. Simpson reads Hume's remarks as indicative of conservatism (ibid., p. 81).

[159] Simpson, *The Protean Scot*, pp. 78–9.

higher ranks of society resultant from increased contact with London society, were threatening to change the nature of Scottish social mores. He cites as evidence for this interpretation the fact that the additional chapter in part I deals with the corrosion of a society's morals which can be wrought by society-wide increase in wealth; and he argues that in part VI, 'Of the Character of Virtue', Smith changes the nature of the impartial spectator from that of embodying generalisations about a society's moral code to that of an autonomous morality relying more heavily on the notion of self-command than in former editions, again as a result of Smith's observations on the effects of wealth-oriented ambition.[160]

Dwyer's preoccupation with Smith's arguments for the value of self-command becomes more evident in his later paper 'Enlightened Spectators and Classical Moralists'. This is a condensed version of the material in *Age of Passions*, the rehydration of which takes the form of a long and somewhat unwieldy attempt on Dwyer's part, to trace the self-interested capitalist he finds in *Wealth of Nations* to the more stoic version of the virtuous man he claims comes into the existence in the sixth edition of the *Moral Sentiments*.

Dwyer's remarks in his later discussion of the *Moral Sentiments*, like that in *Virtuous Discourse*, centre on the content of part VI. Unlike the discussion in *Virtuous Discourse*, however, Dwyer does not state this to be the case. If the 'theory' interpretation of the *Moral Sentiments* is given any credence, Dwyer's interpretation is just a red herring. The aetiology of his reading is evident. Assuming I.iii.3 and part VI add to, rather than clarify, Smith's position in the *Moral Sentiments*, Dwyer takes Smith both to have dropped the relationship between impartial spectatorship and general notions of propriety, replacing it by an autonomous abstract concept of correct conduct; and to have introduced a concern about the deleterious effects of increased wealth on a society's moral code.[161] The change in impartial spectatorship, Dwyer claims, is the result of Smith coming to regard self-command as of more importance than humanity, in the light of

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[160] Dwyer, *Virtuous Discourse*, pp. 169–76. Mullan also understands Smith ultimately to divorce judgements of the impartial spectator from those of actual spectators (Mullan, 'The Language of Sentiment', pp. 286–7).
[161] See, e.g., Dwyer, *Virtuous Discourse,* p. 14.

contemporary developments in Scotland's economy.[162] Dwyer then argues from this, in both his later publications, to the conclusion that Smith's moral theory is Stoic, and so, classical in essence.[163] The discussion of *Wealth of Nations* in *Age of Passions*, is based on what Dwyer sees as a connection between the newly introduced emphasis on Stoicism in the *Moral Sentiments*, and '[the] controlled and "dispassionate desire" for self-advancement, particularly on the part of small-scale agricultural capitalists' which is extolled in *Wealth of Nations*.[164]

It is easy to pick holes in Dwyer's interpretation. For every quotation Dwyer chooses from part VI to confirm his reading of it as indicating a new direction in Smith's notion of impartial spectatorship, there are several equivalent statements to be found in the text of the earlier editions, which suggests that part VI does not introduce new material but forms a concise summation of the conclusion drawn in parts I to V. It is true that Smith emphasises the need for self-command in the pursuit of virtue, or moral excellence, but it is equally true that self-command is essential to an ability to act in accordance with the dictates of one's conscience as opposed to acting only to meet the approval of actual impartial spectators – the argument of part III (second and subsequent editions). Since the kind of reasoning required to make sense of the notion of autonomous conscience derived from generalisations of actual experience, proved difficult for Smith's critics (then, and it would seem, also now), it is not unreasonable to regard Smith as attempting to clarify this, which arguably is the point of part VI.[165]

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[162] Dwyer, *Age of Passions*, pp. 19, 38; this is another point at which Dwyer cites text which fails to provide the requisite confirmation. He states 'In the final edition of *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, ... Smith used the concept of the "impartial spectator" to refer more exclusively and abstractly to conscience or the "man inside the breast"', and citing VI.iii.concl. in evidence (ibid. and n. 16, p. 50). The reference is to text in which Smith states only that it is impossible to tread the virtuous path without being able to do so with a clear conscience.
[163] Dwyer, 'Enlightened Spectators and Classical Moralists', pp. 102–4; *Age of Passions*, pp. 8, 20–2.
[164] *Age of Passions*, p. 14.
[165] Criterial justification which is what Smith relies on in his argument to the notion of autonomy of conscience – of the 'abstract' impartial spectator – is

Dwyer's claim that Smith 'consistently lauded the stoic emphasis on self-control' is an exaggeration. The need for self-control is a concomitant of Smith's empiricist presupposition that man is a social animal. Smith condones the emphasis on self-control found in Stoicism as being along the right lines for the construction of a system of morals, but criticises it for being essentially unworkable because premised on moral perfection, rather than moral excellence. Since moral perfection is an unattainable ideal, Stoic concepts of morality are not founded in experience, and therefore cannot provide an explanation of the origin and source of concepts of virtue (I.iii.2.9, n., pp. 58–60). Stoicism is lauded only as much as any other system of moral philosophy aside from his own – as being partially correct:

From some one or other of those principles which I have been endeavouring to unfold, every system of morality that ever had any reputation in the world has, perhaps ultimately, been derived. As they are all of them in this respect, founded upon natural principles, they are all of them in some measure in the right. But as many of them are derived from a partial and imperfect view of nature, there are many of them too in some respects wrong. (VII I.i.1; see also VII.ii.1.26–7)

Dwyer's attempt to solve what has become known as 'Das Adam Smith problem', i.e. the alleged incompatibility between Smith's account of the nature of man in the Moral Sentiments and that in Wealth of Nations, fails, but none the less has a salvageable element.[166] Dwyer's proposed solution

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used by Wittgenstein to explain language meaning (e.g, Philosophical Investigations). That this is a difficult form of reasoning to grasp is evident from the havoc it has wrought for meaning theory in philosophy (e.g. Hilary Putnam has produced no less than five different accounts of meaning, each of which he bills as Wittgensteinian); and the nonsense its misinterpretation has spawned in other disciplines, not least of which being post-modernist literary theory.

[166] I confess I have not entirely understood the issue, as it seems unnervingly evident that there is no incompatibility between the interaction of merchants depicted in Wealth of Nations and the dynamics of social interaction in the Moral Sentiments – a perspective endorsed by J. Cropsey, 'Adam Smith and Political Philosophy' in Andrew S. Skinner and Thomas Wilson (eds), Essays on Adam Smith (Oxford: Clarendon, 1975), pp. 132–53). At II.ii.3.3 Smith refers to the social dynamic between merchants as being upheld by the 'mercenary exchange of good offices according to an agreed valuation' as opposed to that of a less formal nature which is comprised of 'mutual love or affection' and 'obligation and gratitude'. Later Smith refers to strangers 'who know nothing or care nothing' about one's private life (III.3.39). The

seems to be that the *Moral Sentiments* is a normative ethics for 'the middle station', an identifiable social sector, typically comprising not merchants, manufacturers or tradesmen, but 'the gentry, the upper yeomanry, civil servants and the members of the learned professions'.[167] In other words, Dwyer takes Smith to be addressing a different social group in the *Moral Sentiments* from that in the *Wealth of Nations*, and writing ad hominem. There is nothing inherent to this solution precluding its viability, but for it to hold water, Dwyer needs to establish that Smith's primary intention was to address a specific group in the *Moral Sentiments* rather than address a specific conceptual issue, which has as a conclusion a moral role for that group, and this he fails to do.

The redeeming feature of Dwyer's discussion is that it draws attention to the chapter written for the sixth edition of the *Moral Sentiments*, in which Smith describes the potentially detrimental effects, morally, of an improved economy (I.iii.3). In this chapter, Smith argues that the promise of meteoric elevation, socially, which appears to be an adjunct of increased personal wealth, is ephemeral (I.iii.3.4); and that the social distinction which wealth appears to confer can be achieved reliably, and more importantly, without moral compromise, by consistent application within 'the real and solid' professions (I.iii.3.5). There are good grounds for the claim that in this

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difference between interaction based on commerce and that based less formally is that the former is not dependent on sympathy — does not depend on emotional harmony. There seems nothing intrinsically contradictory in Smith's presupposition that decorum is relative to context; and it is consonant with his analysis of an individual's social experience being made up of different kinds of interactions (see above, pp. 159–61). His concern in the *Moral Sentiments* is to show that moral codes of conduct yield virtue — not that business takes place in accordance with such rules. That Smith regarded the realms of business and of social intercourse to operate according to different dynamics is confirmed by his discussion elsewhere of the different conceptual domains of poetry and of prose. He states, 'Prose is naturally the Language of Business; as Poetry is of pleasure and amusement', and observes laconically, 'No one ever made a Bargain in verse' (*LRBL*, ii.115–16).

[167] Dwyer, *Age of Passions*, p 35. Dwyer's reference to 'yeomanry' is strictly inaccurate; during the eighteenth century, England, but not Scotland, had a yeomanry. Dwyer also fails consistently to acknowledge an additional and socially important infrastructural difference between England and Scotland during the eighteenth century, namely that between the respective educational systems in the two countries.

chapter, Smith is writing prescriptively for an identifiably specific contemporary readership. However, the interest of this chapter stems not so much from its normative content per se, but from the questions it raises about the reasons for Smith's decision to deviate from the general tenor of the *Moral Sentiments*, not least because in this chapter, Smith presents, prescriptively, conclusions he argues for elsewhere in the *Moral Sentiments*, and so conclusions to be found in earlier editions of the *Moral Sentiments* – as argued above (pp. 173–6) in the chapter preceding this late addition to the text (i.e. I.iii.2). There are good grounds for arguing that events and developments during the interim between the initial publication of the *Moral Sentiments* and the sixth edition altered the nature of the luxury debate, the repercussions of which would have been worrying enough to prompt Smith to respond directly. Despite this, it is obviously unreasonable to suggest that the addition of a single chapter can change the character of the *Moral Sentiments*, and since Dwyer fails to establish other reasons for reading the *Moral Sentiments* normatively, his interpretation lacks conviction.

However, Dwyer's approach suggests an endeavour which would have great value, namely a subtextual study of the *Moral Sentiments*. His interpretation of the *Moral Sentiments* is confused because he relies too heavily on Smith's examples, which at times almost merit the status of case studies. However, had Dwyer made clear the difference between what he takes to be the structure of Smith's ethics – or presuppositions – and its content, and subjected the details of the latter to scrutiny, he would have produced a convincing case for what the *Moral Sentiments* reveals about the concerns of the period – particularly those which came on the back of the change in Scotland's political and economic status during the eighteenth century.[168]

9 *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* and *The Man of Feeling*

The claim was made in Chapter I, that Mackenzie's *The Man of Feeling* is a manual of morality, constructed in accordance with principles of moral

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[168] It is almost a hallmark of Dwyer's studies that their value lies in the lines of inquiry suggested by the objections they provoke – an instance of what Smith would regard as the work of an invisible hand.

development derived from Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments*. Given the perspective on the nature of Smith's *Moral Sentiments* developed in this chapter, this claim can now be substantiated. First I shall outline how Smith's theory gives rise to an account of the actual course of child's moral development; and then present evidence that Smith's theory informs *The Man of Feeling*.

The virtuous education

Smith's man of virtue has achieved excellence in regard both to self-command and to humanity. That is, he is one for whom 'the view of the impartial spectator' is 'so perfectly habitual' that he adopts an impartial view on his own conduct as a matter of course (III.3.29); and he is also able to 'adopt the whole case of his companion, with all its minutest incidents; and strive to render as perfect as possible, that imaginary change of situation upon which sympathy is founded' (I.i.4.6):

The man of the most perfect virtue, the man whom we naturally love and revere the most, is he who joins, to the most perfect command of his own original and selfish feelings, the most exquisite sensibility both to the original and sympathetic feelings of others. (III.3.35)

The virtuous man is the ideal spectator – both of others' conduct and of his own. However, since Smith takes seriously the notion that 'ought implies can', 'ideal', here, does not refer to unattainable perfection, but achievable excellence.[169] Our understanding of virtue derives, in the first instance, from comparison; in consequence, the notion of moral perfection can only be extrapolation from ideas drawn from experience, and hence the work of reason acting on experience, and not the outcome of an innate idea.[170]

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[169] I.i.5.9. Smith objects to Stoicism on the grounds that it implies perfection, and since no one can achieve perfection, and hence no one will gain such an idea from experience, 'moral perfection' is an abstract concept generated by reason (I.3.2.9, n., pp. 58–60, esp. p. 60).

[170] Smith follows Hume: 'That there is a natural difference between merit and demerit, virtue and vice, wisdom and folly, no reasonable man will deny. Yet it is evident, that in affixing the terms, which denote either our approbation or blame, we are commonly more influenced by comparison than by any fixed unalterable standard in the nature of things ... the

Since man is inherently social, and predisposed to morality, it follows that, for Smith, amorality is a state not just contingently, but logically prior to any social experience. A newborn, strictly, is amoral, because able only to react to its immediate sensations – it cannot draw on past experience in order to conceive of possible consequences of its sensations:

> 'The [sick] infant ... feels only the uneasiness of the present instant, which can never be great. With regard to the future, it is perfectly secure, and in its thoughtlessness and want of foresight, possesses an antidote against fear and anxiety, the great tormentors of the human breast, from which reason and philosophy will, in vain, attempt to defend it, when it grows up to be a man. (I.i.1.12)

Otherwise, amorality is only a *theoretical* possibility:

> Were it possible that a human creature could grow up to manhood in some solitary place, without any communication with his own species, he could no more think of his own character, or the propriety or demerit of his own sentiments and conduct, or the beauty or deformity of his own mind, than of the beauty or deformity of his own face ... To a man who from birth was a stranger to society, the objects of his passions, the external bodies which either pleased or hurt him, would occupy his whole attention. The passions themselves, the desires or aversions, the joys or sorrows, which those objects excited, though of all things the most immediately present to him, could scarce ever be the objects of his thoughts.[171]

The newborn is amoral because literally without thoughts or ideas; the solitary man would be amoral because, since he would obviously live without the kind of interaction that prompts sympathy, his experience could

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honourable appellations of wise and virtuous are not annexed to any particular degree of these qualities of *wisdom* and *virtue*; but arise altogether from the comparison we make between one man and another' (Hume, 'Of the Dignity or Meanness of Human Nature' (1741), pp. 81–3; emphasis in the original). The comparative nature of Smith's concept of virtue is an outcome of his empiricism, and is fundamental to his notion of societal improvement. Because the notion of virtue is derived comparatively, it follows that only a minority of any given society can be deemed virtuous by that society. A society cannot therefore be regarded as virtuous per se; but it may be regarded as more or less virtuous than another society. Smith states explicitly that virtue is defined contextually: 'Every age and country look upon that degree of each quality, which is commonly to be met with in those who are esteemed among themselves, as the golden mean of that particular talent or virtue' (V.2.7).

[171] III.1.3; cf. Smith's description of the savage as one 'whose notions are guided altogether by wild nature and passion, waits for no other proof that a thing is the proper object of any sentiment than that it excites it' (HA III.2).

not supply any motive to please, and he could not have a concept of another's approval – whatever seemed right to him would be right.

One upshot of this is that propriety is learnt behaviour. The feelings in which it is founded are spontaneous; so what is learned is the modulation of expressions of feeling.[172] The drive to learn to express one's emotions in an acceptable manner is inherent: 'Nature, when she formed man for society, endowed him with an original desire to please.'[173] A second outcome is that all men are have the potential for virtue. The determining factors as to the kind of character an individual develops are the social milieu to which he is exposed as a child, and that which he chooses as an adult. Of paramount importance to an individual's moral education are initial experiences of social interaction he had as a child. Reconstructing Smith's reasoning in this regard, we can see that Smith relied heavily on empiricist psychology to justify the application of his theory of moral sentiments in this manner.

Smith wrote of the virtuously educated:

Those who have been educated in what is really good company, not in what is commonly called such, who have been accustomed to see nothing in the persons whom they esteemed and lived with, but justice, modesty, humanity, and good order; are more shocked with whatever seems to be inconsistent with the rules which those virtues prescribe. (V.2.2)

By contrast:

Those, ... who have had the misfortune to be brought up amidst violence, licentiousness, falsehood, and injustice; lose, though not all sense of the impropriety of such conduct, yet all sense of its dreadful enormity, or of the vengeance and punishment due to it. They have been familiarized with it from their infancy, custom has rendered it habitual to them, and they are very apt to regard it as what is called, the way of the world. (Ibid.)

So the attitudes of those by whom a child is brought up affect his capacity for virtue as a mature individual. The kind of experience to which a child is exposed will heighten or deaden natural reactions to vice and virtue (ibid.); and since the virtuous man acts in accordance with the dictates of his

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[172] This is an important distinction within Smith's thought, especially with regard to his concept of social improvement.
[173] III.2.6. According to Smith, Nature also endowed man with an inherent desire 'of being what ought to be approved of' (III.2.7), an idea crucial to his account of the development of conscience.

conscience; and Smith explains the development of conscience as the result of applying to oneself the judgements one makes on others' conduct, which judgements are, in turn, learnt from witnessing others acting as impartial spectators; it follows that both the kind of behavioural responses which a child's behaviour evokes, and those which he observes are evoked by others' behaviour, will colour his capacity for virtuous conduct in later life.

Smith's comments on the learning process and on rule-formation indicate that he regards the formative effect of a child's initial experiences to have paramount importance because he believes they will have greater impact, psychologically, than most of those of later life. For example, he refers explicitly to 'the lively impressions that interesting objects are apt to make upon the tender and unpractised senses' of the young (V.2.4); and since it is evident that Smith believed even the jaded senses of the more mature react acutely to the novel or unexpected (I.ii.1.9), and that, for the newborn, all sense experience will be novel, it follows that a child's impressions (i.e. mental responses and resultant ideas) will be particularly well defined. Similarly, mental habits formed when young will be more ingrained than those developed in later years; and prove more difficult to overturn.[174] This applies not only to responses to encounters with events or (internal or external) objects,[175] but to successions of objects, or events, from which, as noted above the mind naturally or inherently derives predictive trends.[176] It follows from this that the social and moral attitudes a child encounters at

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[174] *LRBL* I.1–2; see also the discussion of rules of conduct above, pp. 146–50; For example, on the effect of attempts to create new mental habits later in life, Smith wrote: '... too severe an application to study sometimes brings on lunacy and frenzy, in those especially who are somewhat advanced in life, but whose imaginations, from being too late in applying, have not got into those habits which disposes them to follow easily the reasonings in the abstract sciences' because the imagination 'feels a real difficulty in passing along two events which follow one another in uncommon order' (*LRBL* ii.10).
[175] Smith refers to internal and external facts or objects in *LRBL*: 'the cause of ... internall facts, or objects are ... either internall or externall. The internall are such dispositions of the mind as fit one for that certain passion or affection of the mind; and the externall are such objects as produce these effects on the mind so disposed' (*LRBL* i.162).
[176] HA II.11 and pp. 149. Although Smith does not refer explicitly to John Locke, the epistemic model strongly resembles that in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, esp. I.ii.5.

home will form a backdrop to subsequent experience, and, as such, have paramount importance.

Principles of the virtuous education

Smith's psychology of learning together with his theory of moral sentiments provide the means for educating someone for virtue. Smith's account of virtue is constructed from concepts derived from experience. So, if a child is educated socially in an environment which replicates the kinds of experiences which Smith regards as constitutive of virtue, then that child will be equipped with habits and concepts necessary for right conduct, and all that is necessary to develop a standard of conduct which exceeds the norm – that of a man of virtue – which is the end to which such an education is intended to lead. Smith expresses some thoughts on the basics of a virtuous upbringing:

> There is scarce any man ... who by discipline, education, and example, may not be so impressed with a regard to general rules as to act upon almost every occasion, with tolerable decency, and through the whole of his life avoid any considerable degree of blame. (III.5.1)

A virtuous education can even compensate for a naturally cool temperament:

> The man who has received great benefits from another person may, by the natural coldness of his temper, feel a very small degree of sentiment of gratitude. If he has been virtuously educated ... [t]hough his heart is not warmed with any grateful affections, he will strive to act as if it was. (Ibid.)

Another way of looking at the notion of virtuous education is to regard it as an education in ideal spectatorship. As Campbell has noted, the ideal spectator exhibits all the characteristics of a good scientist.[177] His judgements are impartial, well informed and accurate (I.iii.2.5); his humanity is generous and comprehensive, but based in a realistic assessment of the situation (III.4); and he is guided by enlightened reason – that is, he makes judgements which accord with inductive generalisations which reflection reveals yield to causal analysis (II.ii.3.5). There is an additional aspect of spectatorship which Campbell, and most other commentators, at best radically underplay and in the main fail to mention at all; namely, that

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[177] Campbell, 'Explanation and Ethical Justification' p. 81.

spectatorship requires self-control. Many have picked up on the effort involved in achieving a sympathy relation as a result of the inherent disparity between the intensity of the agent's responses to experiencing his situation, and the relatively tepid nature of a spectator's response to experience of an imagined situation. However, Smith also takes pains to explain that, and why, once achieved, the relation is difficult for a spectator to maintain. Smith comments: 'the imaginary change of situation upon which sympathy is founded, is but momentary'. The intermittent nature of spectators' engagement is due to a natural tendency on their part, to turn their attention to their own situation – 'to thought of their own safety, the thought that they themselves are not really the sufferers' (I.i.4.7). In other words, self-absorption on the part of either agent or spectator causes the sympathy relation to fail, so self-discipline is required on the part of both parties. Smith is explicit about this:

Our sensibility to the feelings of others, so far from being inconsistent with the manhood of self-command is the very principle on which that manhood is founded. ... The man who feels the most for the joys and sorrows of others is best fitted for acquiring the most complete control of his own joys and sorrows. The man of the most exquisite humanity, is naturally the most capable of acquiring the highest degree of self-command.[178]

In each case, self-discipline is required to quell a natural, instinctive tendency for concern for oneself. It is true that the outcome of this self-discipline differs in each case – the agent is working to decrease the emotion which the spectator is working to heighten. For this reason, although self-discipline is necessary to achieve impartiality on the part of the agent and the spectator, mastery of either role does not entail mastery in the other (III.3.26).

So the intention behind a virtuous education can be understood as providing conditions under which an individual develops the concepts of right and wrong, and the habits of an impartial spectator, with regard to both

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[178] III.3.34, 36. Given that self-command is required for both the awful and the amiable virtues, it is small wonder that references to it appear throughout the *Moral Sentiments*.

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his own and others' conduct. Experience is essential to each.[179] To see why, requires consideration of the constraints which Smith's adoption of Hume's empiricism places on his account of knowledge acquisition.

A new-born possesses no concepts. It is motivated by an instinct for self-preservation and for pleasing others (III.2.31, n., p. 129). Self-preservation initially depends on an ability to express one's needs pre-verbally, and this is achieved by emotional reactions to sensory experiences. It includes an ability to anticipate events, which ability requires reasoning skills. A child is equipped with the capacity for reasoning, but reasoning is understood by Smith to be the manipulation of concepts, so until a child acquires ideas with conceptual content, the reasoning skills remain dormant; also dormant is an inherent desire for self-approval.[180]

Initially the child learns how to behave in a way that pleases those to whom we would now refer as his primary carers. However the restrictions family members place on the child's conduct are minimal: enough to preserve a child's safety, and the parents' ease, and focussing mostly on controlling the child's anger.[181] While the family environment might be relied on to ensure that a child's natural aversion to vice is not deadened, it cannot provide the kind of environment for the development of self-command, because the parents are not able to view their children's

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[179] It may seem that Smith's comments on the possibility of living a blame-free life by following rules of conduct without engaging in a sympathy relation (III.5.1) allow for the possibility of moral conduct as a result only of learning to follow rules. However, knowledge of when specific rules apply can only be gained from observation; of the virtuously educated, but emotionally lacking, individual Smith says he will respond appropriately to generosity as a result of having been 'made to observe how odious those actions appear which denote a want of the sentiment of gratitude' (ibid.). Given Smith's empiricism, one may assume that Smith's use of 'observe' here is not being used in the sense of 'intellectually taking note'.

[180] III.2.5. The upshot of Smith's comments is effectively that the child is completely dependent on his parents for all knowledge and experience, initially. Smith expresses this as follows: 'Nature seems to have judged it necessary for their [i.e. children's] preservation that they should, for some time at least, put implicit confidence in those to whom the care of their childhood, and of the earliest and most necessary parts of their education, is intrusted' (VII.4.23).

[181] III.2.31, n., p. 129. It is interesting that Smith refers to use of noise and fright to discipline the child – which seem a far cry from the more aggressive practices in Victorian childrearing.

behaviour impartially. According to Smith's theory, this will not be a moral defect per se on the part of parents, but an inevitable outcome of biology and psychology. Parental indulgence – or lack of impartiality – is an instinctive reaction: 'Nature has rendered in most men ... parental tenderness a much stronger affection than filial pity. The continuation and propagation of the species depend on it' (III.3.13). Smith obviously does not regard this to be an easy option: 'We blame the excessive fondness and anxiety of a parent as something which may in the end prove hurtful for the child, and which in the meantime is excessively inconvenient to the parent' (III.3.14). Certainly a mother's concern for a very young child is almost as irrational as concern for the wellbeing of the dead – and as impossible to eradicate (I.i.1.12–13).

The psychological bar to impartiality has been explained above in connection with Smith's ideas that social proximity increases the ease with which the sympathy relation can be established, because it is easier for each party to imagine the situation of the other as a result of their common experience (see above, pp. 160–1). The difficulty in achieving impartiality with close friends and family members is consequently second only to that with which we achieve impartiality towards ourselves:

> Those private misfortunes, for which our feelings are apt to go beyond the bounds of propriety, are of two different kinds, they are either such as affect us only indirectly, by affecting in the first place, some other persons who are particularly dear to us; such as our parents, our children, our brothers and sisters, our intimate friends; or they are such as affect ourselves immediately and directly. (III.3.12)

Without a counter to the indulgence occurring naturally in the family setting, a child will fail to develop the strength of character required to achieve the sympathy relation as an agent when adult; in consequence, under duress he is likely to behave 'like a child that has not yet gone to school' and attempt to gain sympathy by 'importunately' calling on the compassion of others (III.3.23). Smith also points out that in the restricted environment of the family, a child will gain the impression that he is able to please everyone (III.2.31, n., p. 129), so in addition to a skewed notion of acceptable behaviour, he will also develop a skewed set of expectations about how others will respond to him. Furthermore, without his expectations being

challenged in anyway, there will be no cause for him to exercise his reasoning skills, which lack will hinder his ability to make judgements on others and subsequently his own behaviour (cf. III.3.20). Given this ability is intrinsic to Smith's concept of virtue, Smith is bound to advocate that a child spend at least some of his time in a non-familial environment (III.2.31, n., p. 129; III.3.22).

Initially a child is educated morally with a view to imbuing him with a concept of sociability. Effectively it comprises refining a child's innate emotional responses, with the most urgent task being to teach a child to control anger and revenge (III.4.42). However the point of virtuous education, ultimately, is to enable an individual to pass judgement on his and others' behaviour independently of others' opinions even to the extent of overturning others' decisions. Since virtue is a comparative notion, it follows from Smith's epistemological stance, that the richer and more diverse appropriate behaviour an individual experiences, the more numerous and richer the ideas he'll develop. Not only will he then be able to imagine another's situation with more accuracy and in more detail, and so be more adept at sympathy for another; but he will also be able to make more accurate generalisations – and so develop a more refined concept of duty. By comparing and contrasting ideas and groups of ideas, an individual should be able to reconstruct those rules of conduct he has been taught, and generate more from his own experience. [182] As with any inductive generalisation, the greater the breadth of domain over which the induction is made and the greater the number of instances in the domain, the more likely the induction is to be correct. A concomitant advantage of a broad-based experience is that it reduces the chance of surprise, and novelty, which, as discussed above (pp. 163–6), renders the possibility of a measured and impartial reaction almost impossible.

Another way of expressing the same idea is to think of the child as needing to amass concrete ideas about his own emotional reactions – in order to be able to then learn to associate the behaviour of others with

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[182] Rules of conduct being inherently vague, it appears that everyone has to refine them to some degree in order to apply them to any given situation (III.6.8).

feelings he himself has experienced. The child then has to learn to recognise modifications of these descriptions – that is, has to learn how to identify behaviour in others not just as expressive of anger but of appropriate anger or inappropriate anger. At this stage the child is not deemed by Smith to control his behaviour in accordance with a moral imperative, but in order to gain approval. Once amongst his peers the child begins to learn why some behaviour is approved – the foundation of others' encouragement and prohibitions on his behaviour: he starts to experience the emotional effect on himself of others' behaviour; and begins to experience the sympathy relation with others, as a spectator. It is only once a child has acquired a degree of experience of what he recognises as appropriate and inappropriate behaviour and the relation between this differentiation and his reaction to other's behaviour that he can be regarded as equipped to draw general conclusions about the nature of propriety in certain circumstances, and hence have acquired moral concepts. Formally, Smith regards the child's experience to yield first, concrete ideas about his feelings and behaviour; then concrete ideas about the distinction between appropriate and inappropriate behaviour – that is he learns that it is appropriate to exhibit grief under certain specific conditions; the loss of a parent, for example. Only at this stage will there be the kind of ideas on which reason can work inductively to yield abstract notions such as propriety, right, correct, and so forth.

There's a problem with this experiential account of moral development however; namely how to educate a child to recognise and disapprove of vice without putting the child at risk. Given Smith's psychology of learning, this proves a very delicate issue indeed, given that, according to this account, repeated exposure to any kind of experience deadens any emotional response. On the other hand, an understanding of punishable behaviour is required for an understanding of remorse, an acquaintance with which is fundamental in the development of conscience. According to Smith, being able to foresee that certain actions will bring remorse in their wake, and knowing that remorse is not an emotion anyone would willingly embrace, is fundamental to the development of the restraining element of conscience:

The man who has broke through all those measures of conduct, which can alone render him agreeable to mankind, though he should have the most perfect assurance that what he had done was for ever to be concealed from every human eye, it is all to no purpose. When he looks back upon it, and views it in the light in which the impartial spectator would view it, he finds that he can enter into none of the motives which influenced it. He is abashed and confounded at the thoughts of it, and necessarily feels a very high degree of that shame which he would be exposed to, if his actions should ever come to be generally known. (III.2.8)

The experience of remorse without forgiveness or punishment is considered by Smith to be unbearable enough to force those who experience it to seek out witnesses to their confession:

In such cases [when a crime is unlikely to be discovered] the horror of blame-worthiness seems, even in persons who cannot be suspected of any extraordinary delicacy or sensibility of character, completely to conquer the dread of blame. In order to allay that horror, in order to pacify, in some degree, the remorse of their own consciences, they voluntarily submitted themselves both to the reproach and to the punishment which they knew were due to their crimes, but which, at the same time, they might easily have avoided. (III.2.10).

The notion of blame and of blame-worthiness is of paramount importance in Smith's theory. It is foundational both to the concept of justice, and to his account of conscience. However, it is not only important for an individual to learn to recognise which of his actions are blameable; it is equally important to recognise accurately when someone is blameworthy because inaccurately apportioning blame will adversely affect even those who, in other respects, are virtuous enough to eschew the opinions of the majority in other respects (II.iii.3.5). That an empiricist account of the development of the notion of justice is flawed because of the difficulty of making judgements about a person's motives from his conduct and appearance alone, is testified by the fact that Smith devotes an entire section to just this issue (part II, section iii).

The only means of correctly assessing the blameworthiness of an action is to judge whether, under the circumstances, a person has acted inappropriately as a result of morally reprehensible motives; and the only means of doing this is to make an assessment of the causal history of the situation. So, in order to be able to asses whether an individual should be

punished or blamed, the aetiology – the history – of the situation needs to be assessed.

Mackenzie and the virtuous education

The Man of Feeling provides experience, albeit vicarious experience of situations to which a reader is not witness first hand. They are open to causal explanation, and the reader, if guided by Harley's (eventual) judgements, will be guided towards the response appropriate to an impartial spectator. This approach to moral education would have had Smith's seal of approval, as he too regarded reading as a suitable means of being prompted to sympathy: 'We can sympathise with the distress which excessive hunger occasions when we read the description of it in the journal of a siege, or of a sea voyage.'[183]

Throughout *The Man of Feeling*, Harley is confronted by situations in which an individual's presenting situation belies their circumstances. Prior to the episode with Miss Atkins, poor Harley's inability to go beyond appearances and discriminate between those who are worthy of sympathy, and those who are not, makes life very difficult for him. Until Harley's encounter with Miss Atkins, Harley's moral learning curve is vertical. Mackenzie flags Harley's sudden moral growth when, on receiving Miss Atkins' sincere gratitude for his concern, and expressing remorse at her situation, Harley responds with 'there is virtue in these tears; let the fruit of

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[183] I.ii.1.1; see also III.4.9. Smith may not have approved of the reading matter being fiction however; 'A well contrived Story may be as interesting and entertaining as any real one: the causes which brought about the several incidents that are narrated may all be very ingeniously contrived and well adapted to their severall ends, but still as the facts are not such as have realy [sic] existed, the end proposed by the history will not be answered. The facts must be real, otherwise they will not assist us in our future conduct by pointing out the means to avoid or produce any event' (*LRBL*, ii.17). This perhaps is the reason for Mackenzie stating his book is not a history. Smith's remark about journals, and the prevailing view of the moral value of reading true accounts, may also be what prompted Burns' wry comment in the preface of his Common-place Book: 'it may be of some entertainment to a curious observer of human-nature to see how a plough-boy thinks, and feels, under the pressure of Love, Ambition, Anxiety, Grief, with the like cares and passions, which, however, diversified by the Modes and Manners of Life, operate pretty much alike, I believe, in all the Species' (quoted by Simpson, *The Protean Scot*, p. 1).

them be virtue' (*MF*, p. 50). Harley has recognised remorse, and for once judged the situation correctly, as he, and the reader subsequently learn, on hearing the history – that is, the causes – of Miss Atkins' destitution.

The parallel between Smith's and Mackenzie's emphasis on the importance of causes and motives in making moral judgements, together with evidence of Harley's growing ability to deal with moral situations of increasing complexity while relying less on his own experiences in reaching such judgements, are good reasons for taking seriously the suggestion that Mackenzie has written an aid to the kind of virtuous education promoted by Smith's theory. Further, less theoretical, reasons to assume a connection between Mackenzie's *The Man of Feeling* and Smith's *Moral Sentiments* is provided by considering the characters in *The Man of Feeling*, many of whom express views of which Smith overtly disapproves. For example, the philosophy of the beggar Harley meets en route for London (outlined above, p. 58), epitomises attitudes that Smith associates with those who 'have had the misfortune to be brought up amidst violence, licentiousness, falsehood, and injustice', and who, in consequence, 'lose, though not all sense of the impropriety of such conduct, yet all sense of its dreadful enormity, or of the vengeance and punishment due to it' (V.2.2). Furthermore, Mackenzie's beggar very obviously fails to regard his lot as being in any way a consequence of his attitude: the disasters that befell him 'forced' him to beg; and he was surprised to find that telling his story honestly failed to induce people to give him alms. He illustrates what Smith describes as the belief that 'the way of the world' is 'something which either may, or must be practised, to hinder us from being dupes of our own integrity' (ibid.). Mackenzie's misanthropist (see above, pp. 62–3) exemplifies the conclusions Smith reaches as a result of considering the sociable nature of sympathy about the result of solitary brooding on one's disappointments: 'In solitude, we are apt to feel too strongly whatever relates to ourselves: we are apt to over-rate the good offices we may have done, and the injuries we may have suffered: we are apt to be too much elated by our own good, and too much dejected by our own bad fortune' (III.3.28).

Mackenzie's excise man (p. 60 above) could substitute for Smith's

'coxcomb' or liar:

> The foolish liar, who endeavours to excite the admiration of the company by the relation of adventures which never had any existence; the important coxcomb, who gives himself airs of rank and distinction which he well knows he has no just pretensions to; are both of them, no doubt, pleased with the applause which they fancy they meet with. But their vanity arises from so gross an illusion of the imagination that it is difficult to conceive how any rational creature should be imposed upon it.[184]

There are few references to women in the *Moral Sentiments* but none the less, Miss Walton (see above, pp. 56–7) matches Smith's description of a virtuous woman: '[the company of women] should inspire us with more gaiety, more pleasantry, and more attention; and an intire insensibility to the fair sex, renders a man contemptible in some measure even to men.'[185] Where Smith wrote:

> Humanity is the virtue of a woman, generosity of a man. Humanity consists merely in the exquisite fellow-feeling which the spectator entertains with the sentiments of the persons principally concerned, so as to grieve for their sufferings, to reset their injuries, and to rejoice at their good fortune. The most humane actions require no self-denial, no self-command, no great exertion of the sense of propriety. They consist in doing what this exquisite sympathy would of its own accord prompt up to do. But it is otherwise with generosity. (IV.2.10)

Mackenzie states of Miss Walton: 'Her beneficence was unbounded; indeed the natural tenderness of her heart might have been argued by the frigidity of a casuist, as detracting from her virtue in this respect, for her humanity was a feeling, not a principle' (*MF*, p. 16).

Most importantly, Harley and Edwards are also two of Smith's characters. Smith may as well have been describing Harley when he wrote:

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[184] III.2.4, although given Smith's analysis, Harley doesn't come out of this well, since he was thoroughly credulous throughout the exciseman's extraordinary performance during lunch.

[185] This remark is made in the context of the impropriety of expressions of lust – Smith's point is not that the calibre of conversation should be lowered in the presence of women, but that while they should not be treated as 'sex objects', women nevertheless demand respect on account of their gender. Dwyer, however, has suggested that this comment supplies evidence of Smith's demeaning attitude to women; as, given his contrast between Fordyce's and Smith's attitudes towards women, he also apparently interprets Smith's comment on women and humanity (Dwyer, *Age of Passions*, pp. 81–3; 126–8).

There is a helplessness in the character of extreme humanity which more than anything interests our pity ... We only regret that it is unfit for the world, because the world is unworthy of it, and because it must expose the person who is endowed with it as a prey to the perfidy and ingratitude of insinuating falsehood, and to a thousand pains and uneasinesse, which of all men, he the least deserves to feel, and which generally too he is, of all men, the least capable of supporting. (I.ii.4.3)

Edwards as the benevolent, family-oriented warrior fits perfectly Smith's idea of the man of virtue (see above, p. 138–9). For example, his self-command is such that while his description of events leading to his conscription make Harley weep so much his face was bathed in tears, he himself 'dropped one tear and no more' (*MF*, p. 89), yet despite his great self-command, he was able to grieve for others – for his dead son and his fatherless grandchildren, for example (*MF*, p. 100). He matches Smith's description of the man of virture as capable of both great self-command and sincere benevolence:

When we meet, in common life, with any example of such heroic magnanimity, we are always extremely affected ... the sympathetic grief of the spectator appears to go beyond the original passion of the person principally concerned. (I.iii.1.4)

In addition to peopling *The Man of Feeling* with Smith's stereotypes, Mackenzie replicates some of the situations Smith uses as illustrative examples in the *Moral Sentiments*. For example, Smith regarded madness, to be the worst conceivable affliction: 'Of all the calamities to which the condition of mortality exposes mankind, the loss of reason appears, to those who have the last spark of humanity, by far the most dreadful, and they behold that last stage of human wretchedness with deeper commiseration than any other' (I.i.1.11). This sentiment is echoed in *The Man of Feeling*: 'Harley objected to [a visit to Bedlam] , "because," said he, "I think it an inhuman practice to expose the greatest misery with which our nature is afflicted"' (*MF*, p. 29). And just as Smith argued that in the case of madness, it is possible to feel sympathy because one cannot help imagining oneself in the circumstances of the afflicted, regardless of whether they are themselves aware of their condition, so Harley reacts acutely to the bereaved lover's situation, although she herself is unable to do so (*MF*, pp. 33–5).

Smith argued that it is impossible to feel sympathy with a lover's feelings for his beloved, because it is impossible to imagine yourself in their position – that is, it is impossible to imagine falling in love with someone with whom you are not romantically involved:

The passion appears to every body, but the man who feels it, entirely disproportionate to the value of the object; and love, though it is pardoned in a certain age because we know it is natural, is always laughed at, because we cannot enter into it. All serious and strong expressions of it appear ridiculous to a third person, and although a lover may be good company to his mistress, ... he endeavours to treat his own passions with raillery and ridicule. (I.ii.2.1)

Harley's inadequacy as a swain prior to his visit to London is highly illustrative of Smith's remarks about the impossibility of spectatorial sympathy with a lover's feelings. Miss Walton obviously has hidden allure, for example:

The effect [that Miss Walton's voice] had on Harley, himself used to paint ridiculously enough; and ascribed to it powers, which few believed, and nobody cared for. ... there were certain seasons when his ideas were flushed to a degree much above their common complexion. In times not credulous of inspiration, we should account for this from some common cause; but we do not mean to account for it at all; it were sufficient to describe its effects; but they were sometimes so ludicrous as might derogate from the dignity of the sensations which produced them. (*MF*, pp. 16–17)

Harley didn't even escape as well as Smith's besotted man, as it is evident that, at this stage, he wasn't even good company for his mistress, being rendered tongue-tied in her presence.

Smith's influence on *The Man of Feeling* is pronounced with regard to Mackenzie's treatment of wealth and social corrosion. The London sequences are almost entirely related to the ill-effect of avarice and ambition. On the reading of Smith's analysis of the cause of the wealth-induced social deterioration, given here, the relation between Mackenzie's *The Man of Feeling* and Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments* seems indisputable. Smith argues that valuing wealth above virtue is the result of misperceiving the condition of the wealthy – taking the trappings of wealth to indicate something of the worth of the person (pp. 190–4 above). Throughout Harley's sojourn in London, he is repeatedly confronted by the discrepancy

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between appearance and reality, and in almost all cases, the illusion concerns wealth or poverty. The excise man appears to be of a certain rank because of the way he dresses; yet the topsy-turvy effect of the appearance of wealth is emphasised by the fact that Wrightson and Mundy look shabby in inverse proportion to their financial situation (*MF*, pp. 26, 28). Throughout, the message is that of Smith: that wealth not only blurs the distinctions between social ranks but more importantly, it blurs that between the virtuous and the non-virtuous. Given the importance, according to Smith's theory, of the need to develop ideas engendering virtue through experience of appropriate sympathy relations, *The Man of Feeling* can be seen as a series of exercises in sensibility focusing on the difficult business of becoming discerning enough to see beyond the trappings of status.

Throughout *The Man of Feeling*, Harley encounters evidence of a society in which wealth takes precedence over virtue. The beggar, the excise man, the mad woman, Miss Atkins and Edwards, in different ways, are all products of a corroded set of social values. The beggar sought out the company of felons, because he appreciated their feckless, self-centred lifestyle, and, as a result of habitual contact with such people, adopted their values. The woman in the asylum was victim to her father's overriding desire for a wealthy son-in-law. Winbrooke's refusal to countenance marriage to Miss Atkins was largely due to his anxiety that such a move would threaten his inheritance; while Edwards' woes began when his landlord implemented changes on his estate to increase its revenue. In each case, virtue has been superceded by baser, money-oriented values. In conversation with Ben Silton, when travelling home from London, Harley explains the reasons why an improved economy will court society-wide moral deterioration. The populace have been dazzled by the trappings of increased personal wealth, into believing there is more reward in achieving riches than in virtue: 'The immense riches acquired by individuals have erected a standard of ambition, destructive of private morals, and of public virtue' (*MF*, p. 82). Harley then refers specifically to an issue of great concern to the literati: 'The Frivolous and the Interested ... are characteristical features of our age; they are visible even in the essays of our philosophers' (ibid.). The Frivolous and the

Interested reject the value system of their predecessors, replacing it with one which values appearances. Harley concludes: 'This I hold to be an alarming crisis in the corruption of the state; when not only is value declined and vice prevailing, but when the praises of virtue are forgotten, and the infamy of vice unfelt' (*MF*, pp. 82–3). Again Mackenzie is following Smith. Since Smith argued that virtue is learned, it follows that, in a society in which vice and virtue go unrecognised can only deteriorate further.

Perhaps the most important evidence of the centrality of Smith's *Moral Sentiments* to *The Man of Feeling* lies in the way sympathy 'works' in *The Man of Feeling*. As mentioned above, whether a person's conduct merits approval is signalled by Harley's response to their history – the account of the circumstances which caused the situation in which Harley finds them. Tears from Harley signal that moral approval is appropriate, because he regards the person's attitude and conduct to be those he would adopt under the same circumstances. It follows that if a reader responds to the characters' histories in the same way as Harley, she can be assumed to have understood their moral import, and, equally importantly, when Harley withholds approval, to have understood why he has done so.

An example of the case in point is given by the variation in Harley's reactions during his encounter with Miss Atkins. He did not weep at Miss Atkins' initial display of remorse (*MF*, p. 50), although he wept when, the following day, she recounted the events that led to her becoming a prostitute (*MF*, p. 66). Indeed, at this juncture, his tears threatened to cause her to weep:

[Harley] beckoned her with his hand: he would have stopped the mention of his favours; but he could not speak, had it been to beg a diadem.
    She saw his tears; her fortitude began to fail at the sight, when the voice of some stranger on the stairs awakened her attention. (*MF*, p. 66)

Since the reader is expected to weep when Harley weeps, and withhold her tears when Harley does, here she needs to understand the difference between the two situations. During the initial exchange between Harley and Miss Atkins, Miss Atkins demonstrates the potential for a reversal of her slide into depravity in her response to Harley's offer of a financial help: 'She burst into

tears! "Your generosity, Sir, is abused; to bestow it on me is to take it from the virtuous: I have no title but misery to plead; misery of my own procuring'" (*MF*, p. 50). Harley acknowledges this, but he has no information about why she is in her current situation so is unable to draw any conclusions about how genuine her remorse is. Having heard her story, however, he is able to judge her morally, and his tears indicate that her attitude towards her history and her situation, and the fact that, unlike the beggar, she acknowledges her part in her downfall, have his approval. The reader is expected to respond similarly: to weep only when there is sufficient cause for sympathy.

Miss Atkins' tale introduces an additional element of complexity for the reader. Understanding the difference described above between Harley's responses during his first and second encounters with Miss Atkins requires appreciating the conditions under which it is possible to reach a conclusion about another person's moral conduct. However, Mackenzie also describes Harley's response the following morning, to his memory of his first meeting with Miss Atkins. He remembers that she wept in gratitude for his assistance: 'he wept at the recollection of her tears. "Though I am the vilest of beings, I have not forgotten every virtue; gratitude, I hope, I shall still have left'" (*MF*, p. 53). It is difficult to explain what a reader is to understand by Harley's tears at this juncture, unless Smith's notion of impartial spectatorship is brought into play. According to Smith's theory, gratitude implies a benefactor, so moral approval of Miss Atkins' gratitude implies moral approval of the conduct of the benefactor. Curiously, Harley has to be regarded, here, as expressing moral approval of his own actions. Smith's theory provides the reason for this unexpected development: it moves the reader to a different, more complex, and so more sophisticated set of moral judgements – ones for which the reader needs to consider a moral dyad. The reader can only appreciate Harley's tears, if she has approved both Miss Atkins' response to Harley's intervention and Harley's intervention itself. This incident marks the start of a series of situations in which Harley reactions guide the reader towards specific reactions, rather than demonstrate what her reactions ought to be. The education process

ends with Harley's death scene, which effectively leaves the reader without instruction:

He sighed, and fell back on his seat. – Miss Walton screamed at the sight – His aunt and the servants rushed into the room – They found them lying motionless together. – His physician happened to call at that instant – Every art was tried to recover them – With Miss Walton they succeeded – But Harley was gone for ever! (*MF*, pp. 130-1)

There is no mention of tears in this scene, yet undoubtedly the reader is expected to weep. An analysis of an impartial spectator's sympathetic response in this situation shows it to be another moral dyad, complicated by the fact that Miss Walton's anticipated sorrow is understood to be the result of the complex business of imagining what she would feel were she in Harley's situation. Smith describes the cause of our sympathy with the dead as the effect of concern with 'those circumstances which strike our senses, but can have no influence upon their happiness':

It is miserable, we think, to be deprived of the light of the sun; to be shut out from life and conversation; to be laid in a cold grave, a prey to corruption and the reptiles of the earth; to be no more thought of in this world, but to be obliterated, in a little time from the affections, and almost from the memory, of their dearest friends and relations' (I.i.1.13).

When the reader can respond appropriately to Harley's death, she has accommodated all this together with the knowledge that Harley has the happiness of knowing his love for Miss Walton was reciprocated. For the reader to feel sorrow she will need to have both a sympathetic reaction to an imagined situation – Harley's grief at his death – and an appreciation that Miss Walton's sense of grief and loss relies on what she imagines Harley to feel. Taking Smith's theory as central to *The Man of Feeling*, this becomes the most testing of scenarios, a fitting end to a course of education in virtue.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Smith's *Moral Sentiments* is intended to be read first and foremost as a scientific theory of morality. Following Newton, Smith uses the hypothetico-deductive methodology of theory construction. He decomposes moral judgements into atomic constituents manipulated

according to inductive generalisations about acceptable conduct; demonstrates the plausibility of his theory by showing how intuitively understood, simple moral concepts such as propriety and gratitude can be reconstructed from the moral primitives in combination with the inductive generalisations or general laws, and then shows the completeness of his theory by using these simple concepts to constructing complex abstract moral concepts such as justice to recreate the full domain of moral discourse.

Smith identifies sympathy as the moral primitive. Sympathy is a relation between moral agent or agents and impartial spectator. A sympathetic relation arises between two people when they recognise that agent's emotional response to a situation accords with or is very similar to that which the spectator imagines such a situation would cause him to feel. A moral judgement involves the spectator recognising that nature of the relation – the degree of convergence – between his imagined reaction, and that of the agent, and condoning or condemning the agent's behaviour according to whether or not there is enough convergence for the relation to be sympathetic. The ability to sympathise is unlearned; however, agents have to first learn to recognise their feelings as sympathetic, and then to modulate their response to accord with the general rules of conduct. The theory is consistently empiricist. Moral conduct is learnt through experience initially through the guidance of mentors.

It has also been argued that Smith used more than just Newtonian methodology. Sympathy is the convergence of two or more people's emotional reactions. Smith suggests that an individual's emotions wax and wane in a predictable manner. Smith's general statements about fluctuations in emotions, which he regarded as derivable by inductive generalisation from experience, bear a marked resemblance to Newton's three laws of motion. Full sympathy is an ideal only. Since one element of the sympathy relation is the spectator's imagined response to the circumstances in which he understands the agent to be situated, and since, according to both Hume and Smith, a reaction to imagined circumstances will always be less intense than a response to actual circumstances, the spectator's response cannot match that of an agent. However agent and spectator attempt to achieve full

sympathy by modulating their responses to match each other's. Smith argues that this involves knowledge by each of the other's circumstances in order to gauge what their emotional reaction might be. The greater the knowledge of the other's circumstances, the nearer they can get to achieving full sympathy. It follows that the closer agent and spectator are socially, the more common ground they will have, and the easier it will be for them to approach full sympathy. This can be expressed generally as a Newtonian-type law: sympathy is inversely proportionate to social distance − analgous to Newton's law that gravity is inversely proportional to distance. According to Smith's theory, since sympathy relations describe the ways in which mankind interact, sympathy can be regarded as binding a society in a manner analogous to that in which gravity binds the elements of the universe.

Smith and Hume both adopted Locke's theory of concept-formation. Smith built on Hume's account of the way information received through the senses is subsumed under identifiable concepts, to explain how experience affects moral concept-formation. Because on Smith's theory, all conceptual knowledge is ultimately derivable from experience, it follows that the wider and more comprehensive one's experience of virtuous behaviour, the richer one's corresponding concept of virtue. This account also motivates Smith's explanation of the derivation of general rules of conduct − these are derived by induction from experience. Smith is then able to explain development of conscience in terms of internalising these rules, and developing sufficient self-discipline to act in accordance with them regardless of whether subject to the moral judgements of others.

The inductive nature of general rules of conduct makes Smith's theory comprehensive enough to accommodate predictable social change. This is required for the theory to be plausible: since it is intended to encompass the moral codes of any societies, it has to accommodate and explain the evolution and change of a society's value system − whether progressive or regressive, as in the case of the Roman Empire, for example. The theory's comprehensiveness enables Smith to give a causal analysis of wealth-induced social deterioration, drawing on evidence in history. Because his analysis indicates the kinds of factors which precipitate social change, it also provides

the framework for a means of preventing or reversing social deterioration, arguably without eschewing commerce and an improved national economics.

Although Smith's concept of general rules is such that they can be used prescriptively in the moral education of an individual, they can function descriptively in the characterisation of a society's moral code. As such, they are intrinsic to the stadial view of social development, foundational to the eighteenth-century concept of improvement or societal progress.

Reading Smith's intention in the *Moral Sentiments* to be that of providing an objective, scientific account of moral concept-formation has been shown to give a unity and consistency to the text which is missing from a normative reading. In addition the *Moral Sentiments* becomes recognisably related to Smith's work in other disciplines, and as such imparts a unity to Smith's corpus as a whole.

If *The Man of Feeling* is read in conjunction with the revisionist interpretation of the *Moral Sentiments,* the didactic aspects of the novel come to the fore. There are enough parallels with the *Moral Sentiments,* for *The Man of Feeling* to be described as an illustration of Smith's theory. Throughout the *Moral Sentiments* Smith exemplifies points of his argument with detailed descriptions of specific kinds of social interaction. These examples, together with the character sketches Smith gave to illustrate the relation between a person's behaviour and his level of moral knowledge appear throughout *The Man of Feeling.*

In addition, Mackenzie guides the reader through a series moral puzzles, in which Harley acts first as role model, and then as mentor. Using Smith's analysis of moral concepts, the puzzles can be seen to increase in moral complexity, where moral complexity is determined by the complexity of the sympathetic relation between the reader and characters which needs to arise for a reader to be able to make a correct moral judgement about the characters' conduct. The reader can only respond correctly if she is first able to imagine the feelings of the characters involved in interaction, and then judge from the given causal history for each character whether their reaction to their circumstances is appropriate. In conclusion, it can now be seen that the account of *The Man of Feeling* given in chapter I is incomplete:

Mackenzie's novel is not merely a manual of morality, but an aid to a reader's education in the theory of moral sentiments as propounded by Smith.

III The *Fragments*

I have argued that Smith used the hypothetico-deductive method to construct a theory of moral sentiments; that his theory provided a structure and rationale for a principled approach to moral education; and that there is strong evidence of Smith's influence in this regard in Mackenzie's *The Man of Feeling*.

There is another source of evidence for the claim that the literati developed an education for virtue from Smith's theory; namely Hugh Blair's writings – his *Sermons* (1777–1801) and *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* (1783). To establish this satisfactorily requires a detailed discussion of Blair's *Sermons* and *Lectures*, an inquiry which is not possible here.

However, much of the content of Blair's *Lectures* appears in a condensed form in his *Critical Dissertation the Poems of Ossian*.[1] Blair's response to the Ossian poems reveals enough of his debt to Smith to bolster the claim that Smith's theory was foundational in the literati's approach to the promotion of virtue. Considering Blair's discussion of the Ossian poems has the added advantage of dovetailing with the discussion of the nature of Mackenzie's *The Man of Feeling*, which several have pointed out exhibits markedly Ossianic qualities.[2] The link between Ossian and *The Man of Feeling* is not controversial; the link between Blair's response to Ossian, *The Man of Feeling* and Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, is. For example, it has been argued that the response to Ossian shows a distinct break with Smith's position on the role of the family in the promulgation of virtue – a

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[1] *A Critical Dissertation on the Poems of Ossian* (1763; revised edn 1765), repr. in James Macpherson, *The Poems of Ossian and Related Works* (1760–73), ed. H. Gaskill (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1996), pp. 345–99. The relation between Blair's *Lectures* and his *Critical Dissertation* is described in Fiona Stafford, 'Hugh Blair's Ossian, Romanticism and the Teaching of Literature', in Robert Crawford (ed.), *The Scottish Invention of English Literature*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 68–88; pp. 77–9.

[2] See, for example, Susan Manning, 'Henry Mackenzie and *Ossian* or, the emotional value of asterisks', in Fiona Stafford and Howard Gaskill (eds), *From Gaelic to Romantic: Ossianic Translations* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1998, pp. 136–52). However Manning considers Mackenzie to have applied Reid's philosophy rather than Smith's, see. pp. 137–9.

break regarded as evident also in Mackenzie's novels; and that this break is concomitant with a general shift away from the Stoicism seen as underpinning Smith's moral theory.[3] However, few, in discussing Blair's *Dissertation*, mention that Blair attended Smith's lectures on rhetoric and belles-lettres, delivered in Edinburgh from 1749; that Blair later borrowed part of Smith's manuscript for his own use; or that Mackenzie, familiar with Smith's work, commented on the lack of originality in Blair's published *Lectures*.[4] In addition to these points, there are more interesting reasons for countering claims against Smith's influence on the literati's approach to issues of morality – reasons which come to light by considering Blair's critical approach to the Ossian poems and to 'ancient poetry' generally.

The Ossian poems have been discussed from many quite different angles. More accurately, the reception of the poems has been approached in different

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[3] John Dwyer, *The Age of Passions: An Interpretation of Adam Smith and the Scottish Enlightenment Culture* (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 1998), pp. 4–5; and 'The Melancholy Savage: Text and Context in the *Poems of Ossian*', in Howard Gaskill (ed.), *Ossian Revisited* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1991), pp. 164–206; pp. 166–7.

[4] The connection between Smith and Blair is acknowledged by Stafford in 'Hugh Blair's Ossian', p. 71. Smith's Edinburgh lectures on rhetoric and belles-lettres are mentioned in Dugald Stewart, 'Account of the Life and Writings of Adam Smith, LL.D.' (1793), repr. in Adam Smith, *Essays on Philosophical Subjects with Dugald Stewart's Account of Adam Smith* (1795), ed. I.S. Ross (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), pp. 269–351, p. 272; Berry refers to a note in Blair's *Lectures* acknowledging his debt to Smith (Christopher Berry, 'Adam Smith's *Considerations* on Language', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 35 (1974), pp. 130–8; p. 131). In a letter written in 1784 to William Carmichael, his former class mate and then American Chargé d'Affaires in Spain, Mackenzie commented '*Dr Blair* has at least published his *Lectures on Rhetoric & Belles Lettres*, which I think very good, both in point of Criticism & Taste, tho' perhaps not so original or deep as the metaphysical enquiring turn of this age, might have required.' In the same letter he refers to Smith as 'the first of our Writers, both in point of Genius & Information' and of Smith's projected publication of his *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*, they will 'nowise derogate from his former Reputation as an Author' (*Letters 1766–1827*, p. 124; emphasis original). An example of a discussion of Blair's *Dissertation* which appears to work from the assumption that Blair's critique of *Ossian* is entirely original is that of John Valdimir Price, 'Ossian and the Canon in the Scottish Enlightenment', in Howard Gaskill (ed.), *Ossian Revisited* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1991), pp. 109–28; see especially pp. 110–11, where Price comments that Kames' comments on *Ossian* in his *Sketches of the History of Man* (1774), can be traced back to Blair.

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ways. The authenticity of the poems has been a perennial preoccupation of commentators; however, in the first half of the last century, the Ossian poems formed the basis of discussion of eighteenth-century Scottish primitivism.[5] More recently the poems and the debate over their authenticity have been requisitioned by the various camps in the 'Scottish identity' debate. The poems' reception has been taken as evidence of the literati's renewed interest in Scottish culture in the wake of the '45.[6] The success of the poems has been read as connected with the militia issues of the 1750s;[7] and with the Bute smear campaign of the early 1760s.[8] Then again it has been argued as evidence of an essentially Anglo-Scottish move on the part of the literati;[9] and also an anti-Anglo-Scottish move on their part.[10]

Here, however, the Ossian poems raise a more local concern. Hugh Blair responded enthusiastically to the very first of Macpherson's translations of Gaelic poetry; and on the strength of this worked hard to coax Macpherson out of his reluctance to provide further translations.[11] Blair's efforts led to the

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[5] See for example, Roy Pearce, 'The Eighteenth-Century Primitivists: Some Reconsiderations', *ELH*, 12 (1945), pp. 203–20.

[6] Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707–1837* (London: Vintage, 1992), p. 92.

[7] See for example, Dwyer, *Age of Passions*, pp. 8–9.

[8] Leith Davis, *Acts of Union: Scotland and the Literary Negotiation of the British Nation, 1707–1830* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998), pp. 75–6.

[9] See Kenneth Simpson, *The Protean Scot: The Crisis of Identity in Eighteenth Century Scottish Literature* (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1988), pp. 43–4.

[10] Katie Trumpener, *Bardic Nationalism: The Romantic Novel and the British Empire* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), ch. 2.

[11] Blair refers to Macpherson's initial reluctance to translate the poems in the 'Appendix' to his *Critical Dissertation* citing Macpherson's reason as that he was 'afraid of not doing justice to the poems' ('Appendix' to *A Critical Dissertation on the Poems of Ossian* (2nd edn, 1765), repr. in James Macpherson, *The Poems of Ossian and Related Works* (1760–73), ed. H. Gaskill (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1996), pp. 401–12; p. 401). In a letter written to Henry Mackenzie in 1797, Blair wrote that having seen Macpherson's initial translation – the poem of the death of Oscur (Fragment VII), 'I urged, him to translate the other pieces which he had ... he was extremely reluctant and averse to comply with my request, saying, that no translation of his could do justice to the spirit and force of the original ... It was not till after much and repeated importunity on my part, and representing the injustice he would do to his native country by keeping concealed those hidden treasures, which, I assured him, if brought forth, would serve to

publication of *The Fragments* (1760), for which he wrote a preface, anonymously.[12] Although the preface mentions 'a greater work' of which the *Fragments* are remains, and which 'might be recovered and translated', it is reasonable to assume that Blair was responding to more than just the promise of an extant epic – that he responded to the poems themselves, to what he refers to in the preface as the 'spirit and strain' of the poems which he regarded as demonstrating their authenticity.[13] This suggests that there are elements of the *Fragments* which Blair associated with 'remote antiquity'. Since the poems were unique and novel, Blair's response could not have been one of straightforward recognition, so his reaction will have been, in part, to the ways in which the poems confirmed a preconceived notion of the nature of poetry composed during 'an æra of the most remote antiquity'.[14] The question then, is 'What provoked Blair's interest in the Ossian poems?'; and the answer to this is given in the *Critical Dissertation*. More pertinently,

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enrich the whole learned world, that I at length prevailed on him to translate, and bring to me the several poetical pieces which he had in his possession' (*Letters 1766–1827*, ed. H.W. Drescher (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag Peter Lang, 1989), p. 197). Fiona Stafford quotes an account given by John Home for the Highland Society's inquiry into the authenticity of the Ossian poems, concerning his initial exchange with Macpherson about the possibility of Macpherson providing a translation of some of the Gaelic poetry, to enable Home, not a Gaelic speaker, to understand the reasons for Macpherson's enthusiasm. Here too, reference is made to Macpherson's reluctance resulting from concern that he would be unable to do the poems justice: 'Mr Macpherson declined the task [of translating a piece of Gaelic poetry], saying, that his translation would give a very imperfect idea of the original' ('A Note from John Home', in Henry Mackenzie, *Report of the Committee of the Highland Society of Scotland, appointed to Inquire into the Nature and Authenticity of the Poems of Ossian* (Edinburgh 1805), quoted in Fiona Stafford, *The Sublime Savage: James Macpherson and the Poems of Ossian* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1988), pp. 77–8).

[12] 'Preface' (1760) to James Macpherson, *Fragments of Ancient Poetry*, repr. in *The Poems of Ossian and Related Works* (1760–73), ed. H. Gaskill (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1996), pp. 5–6. Blair explained that he contributed the preface, in a letter to Henry Mackenzie (*Letters 1766–1827*, p. 197).

[13] Blair, 'Preface', p. 5. This is not to discount the lure of a Scots epic – a lure which would have been in evidence from the first, as Macpherson's initial translation was the fragment describing the death of Oscur, in which it is evident that Ossian is the narrator. The fragment opens with a reference by the narrator to Oscur as his son; and a little later, Oscur is addressed as 'son of Oscian'.

[14] Ibid.

this answer also shows the extent to which Blair's thought was dependent on that of Smith.

I describe the Ossianic corpus in section 1, and describe Blair's stadial approach to a comparative study of ancient poetry in section 2. The import of stadial history for language and literature studies in the eighteenth century has been underestimated, and when acknowledged is frequently misrepresented. Misconceptions about the principles of stadialism, with regard to history and language have been shown in the introduction (pp. 10–20), however, stadialism informs Blair's grammatical analysis of the Ossian poems, as is shown in section 4, and this leads to an analysis in section 5, of the origin of the anomaly posed for Blair by the character of Ossian. Blair's reliance on Smith's stadial theory of language development is discussed in section 6, and in section 7 Blair's Ossian problem is revisited by way of a discussion of Smith's account of love in the *Theory of Moral Sentiments*. Finally, in section 8, I show that Mackenzie reveals a link between *The Man of Feeling*, *The Fragments*, and *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* in the course of Edwards' tale.

1 The Ossian corpus

The Ossian poems originally appeared in three volumes: *Fragments of Ancient Poetry* (1760), *Fingal, an Ancient Epic Poem in Six Books* (1760–1) and *Temora, an Epic Poem in Eight Books* (1763). They were presented as English translations of authentic Gaelic poetry, gathered in the Scots Highlands by James Macpherson, a Gaelic-speaking Highlander. The *Fragments* comprises 15 segments of poetry (16 in the second edition (1760)), which introduced the English-speaking world to a formerly lost Caledonia of the third century AD. *Fingal* and *Temora* are epics. *Fingal* describes the defence of Ireland by the Gaels from an assault by the Scandinavian king, Swaran. The saga centres on Fingal the leader of the Scots Gaels; Ossian, his son, warrior and poet; Ossian's son Oscur; the Irish prince Cuchullin; the Dane, Swaran and through stories his father Starno; and is augmented by a number of incidental sorrowful episodes involving bards, warriors and maidens. The *Fingal* publication includes a poem which was later republished as the first book of *Temora*. *Temora* relates the end of

Fingal's reign, and the involvement of the Scots Gaels in what was effectively civil war in Ireland.[15]

Even today the Ossian poems make strange reading. For an eighteenth-century readership, used to the rule-governed elegance of neo-classicism, they would have appeared like a bolt from the blue – which Macpherson anticipated would preclude a suitably appreciative reception of the poems.[16] That Blair shared Macpherson's concern is indicated by the fact that in his preface for the *Fragments* he concentrates on the antiquity of the poems – on their value as artefacts – almost to the exclusion of mention of them as literature; and overtly leaves judgement of their literary merit to the public.[17] By contrast, 95 per cent of the *Critical Dissertation* is devoted to comments on the literary nature of ancient poetry generally and to a critical study of the Ossian poems as poetry.[18] The shift in emphasis reflects the extent to which anxiety that the poems would be received coolly or, worse, with disbelief,

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[15] Blair gives a fuller synopsis in his *Critical Dissertation* of each of *Fingal* (p. 361), and *Temora* (p. 370).

[16] According to Blair, Macpherson's initial reluctance to translate further poems in addition to that on the death of Oscur, which he had translated originally for John Home, was in part through fear of 'injuring them by translation' and in part because 'he apprehended they would be very ill relished by the public as so very different from the strain of modern ideas, and of modern, connected, and polished poetry' (Hugh Blair to Henry Mackenzie, 20 December 1797, in Mackenzie, *Letters 1766–1827*, p. 197).

[17] 'Of the poetical merit of these fragments nothing shall here be said. Let the public judge and pronounce' (Blair, 'Preface', p. 6).

[18] Rizza gives exact figures for the discussions in the *Critical Dissertation*, of antiquity and of more literary issues: 'Of some one hundred and thirty pages of octavo text in the *Dissertation* proper only seven are devoted directly to the matter of the poetry's authenticity' (Steve Rizza, 'A Bulky and Foolish Treatise? Hugh Blair's *Critical Dissertation* Reconsidered', in Howard Gaskill (ed.), *Ossian Revisited* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1991), pp. 129–46; p. 130). It is true that Blair added an appendix giving testimonies of the authenticity of the poems to the second edition of the *Critical Dissertation*, but this appears to have been prompted by Hume, who regarded Blair's arguments for their authenticity based on the poems themselves, to require augmentation by credible external evidence. Hume persuaded Blair to postpone publication of the second edition until such evidence could be could be included (Blair, 'Appendix'); Hume's intervention is discussed in Rizza, 'A Bulky and Foolish Treatise?', p. 131; and more fully in David Raynor, 'Ossian and Hume', in Howard Gaskill (ed.), *Ossian Revisited* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1991), pp. 147–63. Raynor quotes the letter to Blair, in which Hume exhorts him to authenticate the poems (ibid., pp. 148–50).

proved unfounded. The *Fragments* was published in Edinburgh in June 1760, and was successful enough to warrant the publication of a second edition just 4 months later.[19]

Little of the *Fragments* would have been familiar to the majority of readers. It is written in prose, the structure of which is very simple – short phrases often comprising monosyllables, and, proper names apart, rarely exceeding the disyllabic:

My love is a son of the hill. He pursues the flying deer. His gray dogs are panting around him; his bow string sounds in the wind. (Fragment I)

Son of the noble Fingal, Oscian, Prince of men! what tears run down the cheeks of age? what shades thy mighty soul? (Fragment VI)

The cadence and rhythm of the prose is redolent of Old Testament text.[20] The fragments, either singly or in pairs, tell a complete story in just a few short paragraphs, the motifs of which are repeated with little variation, not only in this collection, but throughout the Ossianic corpus.

The first two of the fragments contain most of the elements making up 'the Ossianic'; what is missing from the *Fragments* is the overarching presence of the bard, Ossian. He overtly narrates only three of the fragments (VI, VII, VIII), although this is sufficient to establish the relationship between Fingal, Ossian and Oscur, and hence Ossian's bardic-historian pedigree.   In the majority of the fragments, however, the narrator is unidentifiable.   The fragmentation is replicated in the epics by the introduction of incidental tales of the kind making up the *Fragments* which

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[19] Stafford, *The Sublime Savage*, p. 96.

[20] This point is made in Blair, *Critical Dissertation*, p. 391, although with respect to the use of simile rather in respect of pace and cadence. The text is often described as reminiscent of the Song of Solomon; or of the Psalms (Dafydd Moore, 'Heroic Incoherence in James Macpherson's *The Poems of Ossian*', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 34 (2000), pp. 43–59; p. 46; Simpson, *The Protean Scot*, pp. 58–9; Stafford, *The Sublime Savage*, p. 102); the cadence and rhythm is also very similar to the Latin form of Catholic invocatory prayers.

have the effect of stilling the overall pace of the longer poems by introducing what is, in effect, a meditation in sorrow.[21]

Fragments I and II are largely exchanges between Shilric, one of Fingal's warriors, and his love, Vinvela, although peculiarly in neither fragment are both parties physically present in the exchange. In the first, Vinvela describes Shilric, and anticipates secretly watching him, only to discover, from Shilric himself, that he is already far from familiar territory, en route to fight for Fingal. In the second it is Shilric who anticipates watching Vinvela unseen, and whose expectations are thwarted; for, when Vinvela eventually appears, she explains that, having heard he had been killed in battle, she has died from grief.

Romantic love thwarted by death is recurrent throughout the poems. As Stafford notes, Ossianic lovers only sleep together in the grave.[22] In fact Ossianic heroes, for all their valour in the field, tend to have disastrous personal lives. Crimora, unwilling to be parted from her love, Connal, follows him to war 'bright in the armour of man', and in an attempt to prevent his death in hand-to-hand fighting with the mighty enemy, Dargo, draws her bow against Dargo, misses, mortally wounds Connal instead, and is herself killed by grief (Fragments IV, V).

Ossian's son, Oscur, also dies at the hand of his love, the enemy Dargo's daughter, albeit this time the death is willed, Oscur having killed friend and twin soul, Dermid, for somewhat complicated reasons. After a victorious battle in which they killed Dargo, Dermid, in love with Dargo's daughter, yet aware that she is in love with Oscur, and that that love is reciprocated, concedes any claim to her, to Oscur. However, Dermid is unable to countenance life without her, and asks Oscur to kill him to ensure that he can at least have the satisfaction of an honourable death. Oscur refuses to kill him outright, agrees reluctantly to fight him instead, and wins. However, Oscur is too grief-stricken by Dermid's death, to countenance life without him, and tricks Dargo's daughter into killing him. The sorry tale does not

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[21] This is noted by Blair: 'In most of our author's poems, the horrors of war are softened by the intermixed scenes of love and friendship. In *Fingal* ... these are introduced as episodes' (*Critical Dissertation*, p. 371).
[22] Stafford, *The Sublime Savage*, p. 105.

end there however; Dargo's daughter, although markedly unaffected by her father's death, is too distraught at the loss of Oscur to countenance life without him, and commits suicide (Fragment VII).

Death is also the recourse of another Ossianic maiden Rivine. In Fragment IX, Rivine buries herself with her brother, Connan, and his friend and her love, Ronnan. Ronnan has killed Connan as a result of their being duped into fighting each other by the enemy Durstan, who wished to possess Rivine. On discovering whom he had slain, Ronnan sought out Durstan; they fought so long and hard that both expired from exhaustion. Connan does not come out of this at all well, given he had promised Ronnan to protect his sister from Durstan's advances while Ronnan was in Norway for a year or so. Duping by an enemy intent on absconding with a maiden who is already spoken for, also brings about the deaths of brother, sister and sister's beloved in Fragment XI; while in Fragment VI, three more Ossianic warriors overreach themselves in matters chivalric – warriors whom one feels ought to have fared better given their progeniture: they are Fingal's sons Carryl, Fillan and Fergus, who, in their attempt to uphold their promise to Prince Cremor's daughter of protecting her from Ullin, a Danish invader, hellbent on ravishing her, put up such an inadequate fight that they are described as yielding at Ullin's hands as easily as a crop falls at the hands of a reaper.

Ullin continues to wreak havoc among Gaelic lovers. The final fragment tells of the discovery by Lamderg that Ullin captured his love, Gealchossa, while Lamderg was away at the wars. Ullin magnanimously had given Lamderg three days in which to fight to reclaim the maiden before taking possession of her. It is not evident whether Lamderg returns in time to meet Ullin's ultimatum; none the less, as soon as he has been apprised of the situation, he sets out to challenge Ullin. Although the fragment ends just as Ullin learns of Lamderg's pursuit, given the preceding litany of disasters, the reader has no good reason to conjecture a successful and happy outcome for Lamderg.

The first two fragments have other motifs common to the poems generally. Shilric and Vinvela appear to communicate telepathically in Fragment I, and in the second fragment, Shilric has a conversation with Vinvela's ghost. Robust hill-walking maidens, like Vinvela, or warrior maidens like Crimona,

generally tend to wilt dramatically, terminally and with remarkable rapidity, in grief. Furthermore, as in Fragment I, the (subsequent) ghosts in the Ossian poems are highly ephemeral but with a definite presence, although, one is never quite sure whether the characters have actually communed with spirits or have believed or wanted to believe they have to the extent of misconstruing the sound of wind, or water, or of being beguiled by a trick of the light. For example, when on his way to war, Shilric describes hearing Vinvela's voice which is like 'the summer-wind'; and when Vinvela's ghost appears to him she is like a beam of light – albeit as remarkable a beam as that of the harvest moon, or sunlight during a summer storm (Fragment II). Again when she disappears she is described as sailing away 'as grey mist before the wind!' It's hardly quiet on the hilltop: Shilric is sitting 'by a mossy fountain', at the top of a hill, which is so gusty as to have become known as 'the hill of winds', under a tree rustling in a wind stiff enough to cause 'dark waves' to 'roll over the heath' and to disturb the surface of a lake below him enough for him to notice. Though he might well have the acute senses of a hunter, it is not unreasonable to conjecture that he might have mistaken wind or water or rustling leaves for the voice of his beloved. The same kind of explanation is equally plausible for the ghost in Fragment III: Carryl is waiting, with increasing hopelessness, for the return by boat, of Malcolm. Carryl's suspicion that Malcolm has come to grief at sea is confirmed when he hears a voice and sees Malcolm's ghost which is green, insubstantial and riding on a 'meteor of fire'. But again, Carryl's conditions are far from optimal. He's old; it's dusk; it's freezing cold, blowing a gale and either sleeting or snowing; and within earshot a river is flowing fast and full enough to howl. Furthermore, Carryl is sitting in a wood, under ferns which are described as 'dry' and which will veritably rattle in these weather conditions. Matters won't have been helped by the fact that he's also sitting by a hollow rock which is liable to boom or rumble with the wind:

Evening is grey on the hills. The north wind resounds through the woods. White clouds rise on the wind: the thin-wavering snow descends. The river howls afar, along its winding course. Sad, by a hollow rock, the grey-hair'd Carryl sat. Dry fern waves over his head; his seat is an aged birch. (Fragment III)

Who can tell what Carryl really heard and saw 'through the trees'?

This pattern of ghosts being sighted under extreme meteorological conditions is repeated throughout: ghosts in Fragment X are seen at night, at a distance, from the 'hill of storms' in teeming rain and high wind; and in Fragment XI they are seen from the seashore, as the moon is setting, during a storm which raises booming surf and so, presumably, also spume and heavy sea spray.[23]

Considered in this way, the poems appear ludicrous, but they are so well crafted that it requires effort to step back enough to hear the creak of their parts. Repeated use of the same kind of plot renders the failed chivalry of warriors unremarkable; and the frequency of the appearance of ghosts makes their presence begin to seem quite natural. Repetition also creates limitations – a boundedness – for the Ossianic world, in terms of both time and space. The past is dependent on, and so limited by, human memory; and individuals' expressed expectations of the future are in the main similarly overtly dependent on remaining alive in others' memory. Warriors exact promises from loved ones to remember them should, or rather when, they die in battle – Shilric asks this of Vinvela (Fragment I), and Connal of Crimora (Fragment IV). Fear-comhraic's grave is to be marked by a cairn (XIII); and one is promised for Shilric, and for Connal, while Duchommar seems to regard the promise of a monument to his victim and rival in love for Morna, Cadmor, enough to induce Morna to turn her affection for her lover, whom he has just murdered for the purpose, towards himself (Fragment XV):

[Duchommar, son of Mugruch, to Morna, daughter of Cormac-Carbre]: His [Cadmor's] blood is on my sword. I met him by the mossy stone, by the oak of the noisy stream. He fought; but I slew him; his blood is on my sword. High on the hill will I raise his tomb, daughter of Cormac-Carbre. But love thou the son of Mugruch; his arm is strong as a storm. (Fragment XV)

The fact that commemoration of the dead is ensured by memory alone is emphasised in Fragment IX, which is framed as an answer to a question

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[23] Macpherson himself gives a naturalistic explanation of the Ossianic ghosts – specifically that Ossian's voice of the dead, which he explains might have been 'no more than a shriller whistle of the winds in an old tree, or in the chinks of a neighbouring rock' (quoted in Rizza, 'A Bulky and Foolish Treatise?', p. 141).

about to whom certain tombs belong: 'Thou askest, fair daughter of the isles! Whose memory is preserved in these tombs?' It also underpins Shilric's prediction that his grave located far away at the scene of the wars, will be recognised only as that of a warrior (Fragment I); while Malcolm (Fragment III), Shalgar and his beloved's brother (Fragment X), Daura, Arindel her brother, and Armor her beloved (Fragment XI) for whom there are no graves, are wholly reliant for posterity on others' laments. An appreciation of the fact that the urgency of promises to preserve another's memory is undermined by the subsequent alleged or actual transcription of these orally transmitted tales, requires a little thought.

Repetition also places constraints on the imagined location of the Ossian poems. In this case, the boundary is created by repetition of form rather than of content, and has the curiously contradictory effect of at once creating an intimacy between the reader and the narrator, but ensuring that the setting of the tales is impossible to locate.

One of the most striking aspects of the *Fragments* is the description of location. For example, Fragment I opens with the line 'My love is a son of the hill.' The phrase is 'a son of the hill' seems an archaic and metaphorical description, summoning up connotations of someone's familiarity with the mountains, or the region, or perhaps self-sufficiency in the wilderness. However it quickly becomes apparent that 'the hill', while it might have this kind of metaphoric sense, also has denotational import. Shilric's response to Vinvela's expectations of his whereabouts also uses 'the hill' in this hybrid manner: 'Afar, Vinvela, afar I go to the wars of Fingal. My dogs attend me no more. No more I tread the hill', but in Vinvela's reception of this news from Shilric the use of the phrase shifts towards the denotational: 'I am alone on the hill. The deer are seen on the brow', and in the last of Vinvela's speech, the denotational sense is highlighted by Vinvela's contrastive general reference to the area: 'Through these hills I will go at noon.' The implication that those who hear and, now, read the poem will know which hill and which heath are being referred to, generates a false intimacy through the tacit assumption that those who act as audience to the exchanges between the lovers will be familiar with the location. In Fragment V, the phrase occurs in a description of the location of Connal's grave: 'A tree stands alone on the

hill, and marks the grave of Connal.' A specific and identifiable tree indicates the grave, but this landmark is useless, because, obviously, it can only denote the relevant tree, if one knows on which hill to start looking.

The references to 'the hill of winds' (Fragment II), and 'the hill of storms' (Fragment X), have the same inclusive effect on the reader as 'the hill'; so do references to such locations as 'on the hill, beneath the aged trees' (Fragment VIII); 'by the brook of the hill' (Fragment VII); 'by the wall; by the tree of the rustling leaf' (XIV): while by contrast, although a rock near the seashore, with a tree laden with red fruit, visibly growing out the side, is a more distinctive feature than a brook or hill, the description in Fragment XI makes it less so, because the indefinite article suggests the location is unfamiliar both to Daura, who is to look for it, and to an 'audience': 'a rock not distant in the sea, bears a tree on its side; red shines the fruit afar'. Repeated use of the same form for reference to landmarks leaves the reader with an impression of knowledge of the area in which the poems are set.[24]

A similarly false intimacy or familiarity is created in a similar fashion by the descriptions of the characters in the poems. None of the descriptions of protagonists' physical characteristics enables one to differentiate between maidens or between warriors. With few exceptions, the women are fair, with snowy breasts; several have blue eyes, and two – Rivine (Fragment IX) and Annir (Fragment XI) – are the fairest of maids. The warriors tend to be described in terms of physical prowess rather than appearance, although most are tall: Connal is tall, like 'a rock on the plain' (Fragment V), Moran is 'tall as a rock of ice' (Fragment XIV), and Gaul is singled out as 'the tallest of men' (Fragment VIII). Warriors generally are noted for the loudness of their voices and for the strength in their arms.[25] Much as the lovers lost in the

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[24] The intimacy created by the poems lends credibility to those commentators who explain the meteoric success of the Ossian poems in terms of their ability to induce a vicarious Romantic Highland experience in the eighteenth-century reader. See, e.g. Davis, *Acts of Union*, ch. 3; H.W. Thompson, *A Scottish Man of Feeling: Some Account of Henry Mackenzie, Esq. of Edinburgh and of the Golden Age of Burns and Scott* (London: Oxford University Press, 1931), pp. 285, 295ff.

[25] Blair comments on the import of praise for a warrior's loud voice: 'They had no expedient for giving military alarms but striking a shield, or raising a

wood in Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream*, the individuals matter less than the ins and outs of each amorous entanglement, and yet the reader is beguiled into a feeling of acquaintance with those involved, by virtue of the presupposition that naming the fathers of the characters is enough to identify the individuals. The Caledonia described in the *Fragments* is small enough with a population limited enough for a person's immediate family connections to be an adequate means of identification.

The well-craftedness of the poems is evident also when they are considered singly. In Fragment I, for example, the haunting quality of the exchange between Shilric and Vinvela is in part created by the use of vowel harmony – more specifically, long-vowel harmony. Vinvela's opening speech includes a sentence containing long i and a diphthong: *thee, me, unperceived, see, thee* followed by the diphthong in appr*oa*ch, *oa*k and Brann*o* and these are echoed in Shilric's response:

V: When the rushes are nodding with the wind, and the mist is flying over thee, let me approach my love unperceived, and see him from the rock. Lovely I saw thee first by the aged oak of Branno.

S: No more from on high I see thee, fair-moving by the stream of the plain; bright as the bow of heaven.

The plaintive nature of the exchange is enhanced by the repetition of phrases such as *afar* and *no more*, the vowel sounds themselves adding to the feeling of increasing distance between them:

S: No more I tread the hill. No more from on high I see thee...

V: No more they dread the wind, no more the rustle of the tree ...

In this way the orality of the poems seems to have been preserved in some way.

The repetition of tokens creates a focus. For example, in Fragment I, repetition *afar* and *no more* draws attention to the intractable separation of the lovers, while in Fragment IV the repetition of *shield* focuses attention on combat:

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loud cry. And hence the loud and terrible voice of Fingal is often mentioned, as a necessary qualification for a great general' (*Critical Dissertation*, p. 354).

Connal: Bring me thy father's shield; the iron shield of Rinval; that shield like the full moon when it is darkened in the sky.

Crimora: That shield I bring, O Connal ...

Macpherson also used onomatopoeic alliteration. The relentless and ominous approach of Ullin, for example, in Fragment VI, appears in sound as well as by description, with the more muted thumping *m* giving way to *d* as Ullin draws nearer – the effect is of the sound of an approaching thunderstorm:

The mountains trembled as he moved. The hills shook at his steps. Dire rattled his armour around him. Death and destruction were in his eyes.

Macpherson combined syllabicity, alliteration and repetition to superb effect to reproduce the sounds of an increasingly more heated hand-to-hand battle between Fear-comhraic and Muirnin, in Fragment XIII:

Swords sound on helmets, sound on shields; brass clashes, clatters, rings. Sparkles buzz; shivers fly; death bounds from mail to mail. As leaps a stone from rock to rock, so blow succeeds to blow. Their eyes dart fire; their nostrils blow: they leap, they thrust, they wound.

Whatever the truth behind these poems, whether they were composed or translated by Macpherson, they are the work of a master of language use.

2 Blair's critique of the Ossian poems

It is evident from the outset that Blair's discussion of ancient poetry in general and the Ossian poems in particular, is conducted on the assumption of a specific theory of social development. According to Blair, 'ancient poems' 'yield knowledge of the history of the human imagination and passions'; they allow an acquaintance with 'notions and feelings'; the values and pleasures of those who lived in a materially simple and socially uncultivated milieu, prior to those refinements of society 'which enlarge, ... and diversify the transactions, but disguise the manners of mankind'.[26] Ancient poetry provides useful information for those 'philosophical observers' of human nature' (ibid.). But while proving a source of information about attitudes and reactions of ancient peoples, such poetry also has a strong aesthetic appeal, promising 'some of the highest beauties of

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[26] Blair, *Critical Dissertation*, p. 345.

poetical writing' (ibid.). Underpinning Blair's approach to the Ossian poems are two presuppositions which have great importance within Scottish Enlightenment thought generally, both of which are already familiar from the discussion of Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments*: that societies progress — become more sophisticated, in a discernible and predictable fashion; and that concomitant with this is a change in 'manners' although the fundamental nature of man remains unchanged throughout. Man's essential nature is unaltered, but becomes more disciplined or modulated by the prevailing conditions of the society in which he is brought up, or educated. The former presupposition informs Blair's seemingly bland statement that ancient poetry acquaints us with the emotions and values of those before 'the refinements' of society have occurred; and the latter is implicit in his choice of reference to manners of mankind being *disguised* by societal refinements. It is also a requisite assumption in an explanation of the way 'ancient poetry' has contemporary aesthetic value – of why contemporary readers appreciate the poems as examples of 'the highest beauties of poetical writing'. The poems do not so much introduce readers to primitive emotional reactions as remind them of such reactions.[27]

While it is not surprising that archaic poetry was understood to provide evidence of the kinds of preoccupations of the society from which they spawned, Blair's statement that such poetry can achieve poetic excellence is unexpected – particularly given the contemporary preference for mannered Augustan poetry. It transpires that the poetic comprises 'compositions in which the imagination has the chief hand',[28] and that Blair regards the prevailing conditions in barbaric societies to encourage the 'high exertions of fancy and passion'.[29] While metre and tonal modulation tend to be used in the composition of poetry, what is essential is the kind of content: the poetic

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[27] Hume wrote: 'Stature and force of the body, length of life, even courage and extent of genius, seem hitherto to have been naturally, in all ages, pretty much the same' (Of the Populousnes of Ancient Nations' (1754), in *Essays Moral, Political and Literary*, pp. 377–464, p. 378).

[28] Blair, *Critical Dissertation*, p. 346.

[29] Ibid., p. 346; cf. Smith's reference to savages as those 'whose notions are guided altogether by wild nature and passion' (HA III.2), and above p. 212, n. 170.

conveys feelings and impressions.[30] Blair was not alone in regarding the definitive characteristic of poetry to be given by its content. Smith goes so far as to categorise prose writers as poets, if their subject matter concerns the fantastic, regardless of the intended import of the text. In his 'History of Historians' he wrote:

The next Species of Historians were Poets in every respect except the form of the Language. Their language was prose, but their Subject altogether Poeticall – Furies, Harpys, Animalls half men and half Bird, Snake, centaurs, and others half fish and half men that were bread in Tartarus and Swam about in the Sea; ... The intercourse of Gods and Women, and Goddesses with men, and the Heroes that Sprung from them ... the Creatures of an imagination engendered by terror and Superstitious fear which is always found in the ruder state of Mankind. (*LRBL* II 46–7)

Ancient poetry displays an excellence unlikely to be found in the more mannered compositions of refined society, because it trades in the norms of ruder societies. Poetic genius cannot occur in a social vacuum.[31] Blair regarded poets to promote social progress. as is evident from his discussion of the improving influence of Ossian.[32] So, a society which promotes, or at least fails to modulate, emotional reactions, is more likely to produce compositions of poetic value than those societies which value more refined, more modulated manners.

Blair also makes plain that the conditions which promote poetic compositions are concomitant with a less developed society. They are conditions which he overtly equates which the 'infancy of societies', in which life is riddled with insecurities, and lawlessness, so man is constantly presented with the novel and the strange, and consequently, constantly in a

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[30] Ibid.

[31] A thought which Hume also expresses: 'it is impossible but a share of the same spirit and genius must be antecedently diffused throughout the people among whom [the few who cause progress in arts and sciences] arise, in order to produce, form, and cultivate, from their earliest infancy, the taste and judgment of those eminent writers' ('On the Rise and Progress of the Arts and Sciences' (1742), in *Essays Moral, Political, and Literary*, pp. 110–37; p. 114).

[32] *Critical Dissertation*, p. 351. Blair's explanation of the manner in which bards might be considered to have had an improving effect on their society is an application of Smith's general explanation of the mechanisms of change in social mores; see above p. 184.

state of wonder and surprise.[33] Stafford has understood Blair to be expressing the belief that members of ruder societies live in a state of childlike innocence and delight.[34] However, the list of subjects likely to be found in ancient poetry suggests otherwise: praises of their gods, or of their ancestors, commemorations of their own warlike exploits, or lamentations over their misfortunes. Such topics 'naturally' assume the tone of poetry, that is they naturally induce the reactions of the order of the sublime. As such they suggest less the innocent delight of children, than the discomfort Smith associates with wonder and surprise (see above, pp. 149–50). Smith is equally unenthusiastic about novelty: novelty does not of itself engender pleasure. 'New objects are never agreeable in description merely from being new. There must be something else in them than mere novelty before they can please us much' (LRBL, ii 156–7).

According to Blair, the life of the barbarian is primarily reactive: conditions preclude the possibility of reflecting on experience, and so disallow anticipation and prediction of events and developments. Members of barbaric societies are continually assailed by the new and strange, and so are continually in emotional extremis of one kind of another.[35] This line of thought is familiar from the Moral Sentiments (see, for example, above pp. 180–2).

Blair's discussion of the Ossian poems rests on further assumptions about the nature of societal development. Concomitant with an ability to subject experience to causal analysis is the tendency of man 'to correct and refine one another', pruning human nature 'according to method and rule'. Both causality and the modulation of behaviour are linked with the gradual precedence of understanding over imagination, again a model familiar from Smith's Moral Sentiments.[36] Blair relies heavily on a further theoretical construct initially developed by Smith – the idea that societal development is

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[33] Cf. Hume: 'from law arises security, from security curiosity, and from curiosity knowledge' (Hume, History of England, quoted in Simpson, The Protean Scot, p. 71). Cf. also Smith on savages' experience, and novelty mentioned above (p. 181).

[34] Stafford, The Sublime Savage, p. 172.

[35] Blair, Critical Dissertation, p. 345.

[36] Ibid., p. 346

stadial. This is what prompts him to claim that it is probable that an extensive search would 'discover certain degrees of resemblance among most ancient poetical productions, from whatever country they have proceeded';[37] that 'in a similar state of manners, similar objects and passions operating upon the imaginations of men, will stamp their productions with the same general character' (ibid.). It is this assumption which is worked hardest by Blair in the course of establishing the antiquity of the Ossian poems from internal evidence alone. Poetry, and especially ancient poetry, is characteristic first and foremost of an age, and not a country of origin (ibid.). Diversity between ancient poetry is taken to be the result of climate and genius. This assumption legitimates comparison between Ossian and Homer:

As Homer is of all the great poets, the one whose manner, and whose times come nearest to Ossian's, we are naturally led to run a parallel in some instances between the Greek and the Celtic bard. For though Homer lived more than a thousand years before Ossian, it is not from the age of the world, but from the state of society, that we are to judge of resembling times. (Ibid., p. 353)

However, Blair's position on this is stronger than implied by his reference to 'some parallels' being drawn between societies at similar stages of development. Blair adopts a stadial theory of societal development (ibid.):

There are four great stages through which men successively pass in the progress of any society. The first and earliest is the life of hunters; pasturage succeeds this, as the ideas of property begin to take root; next agriculture, and lastly commerce.

The Ossianic poems are firmly placed by Blair in the first, hunter-gatherer, stage of society, and the bulk of the *Critical Dissertation* analyses the poems by reference to the kinds of considerations which this categorisation generates, and which Blair uses to establish both the antiquity of the poems and their remarkable qualities (see below, pp. 265–72).

3 Blair's stadialist account of language development

Stadialism pervades much of Scottish Enlightenment thought about men and society. It has been shown to have been a concomitant of the theory of moral concept-development put forward by Smith in *Moral Sentiments* and to have

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[37] Ibid., p. 347.

influenced the structure and content of *The Man of Feeling*. It also takes the brunt of the weight of Blair's discussion of the Ossian poems.

As explained in the Introduction (pp. 10–11), Smith used the stadial account of society to explain the development of property law.[38] In the first stage of society, people have little or no property, for they consume, rather than accumulate what they acquire; in the second stage, because less mobile than the first, there is an opportunity for the accumulation of wealth as shepherds may increase the sizes of their flocks or herds. Accumulation of wealth and inequality of wealth have noticeable social impact at the third stage, when farmers live in permanent housing, and there are more opportunities to acquire property. And at the fourth stage, acquisition of wealth and the laws governing property become increasingly more complex.

As mentioned above, Smith's formulation of the four-stage theory of societal development was developed in the course of lectures on jurisprudence (p. 10, above). The lectures were delivered in 1762/3, but the doctrine possibly occurred in lectures he gave in Edinburgh as early as 1750.[39] Smith refers to the four-stage theory of societal progress in the course of discussing the property rights of occupation. A possession is something perceivable; property is a relation between a person and an object; and since occupancy is the most immediate relation between a person and a thing, Smith starts his discussion of property rights with this relationship.[40]

It is important to bear in mind that Smith's four-stage model of societal progress is merely an investigative tool. The Enlightenment perception of the role and explanatory dynamic of history combines several important, distinctively eighteenth-century ideas of the nature of the historian's inquiry.[41] Scottish historians believed that by observation of different kinds

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[38] Adam Smith, *Lectures on Jurisprudence*, ed. R.L. Meek, D.D. Raphael and P.G. Stein (Oxford: 1978), pp. 13–23; repr. in Alexander Broadie (ed.), *The Scottish Enlightenment: An Anthology* (Edinburgh: Canongate Classics, 1997), pp. 478–87; p. 479.
[39] Christopher Berry, *The Social Theory of the Scottish Enlightenment* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997), p. 93.
[40] Smith, *Lectures on Jurisprudence*, in Broadie, *Anthology*, p. 479.
[41] David Allan has argued differently. According to his thesis, there is a continuum of stadialist approaches to historical inquiry which ranges from those like Hume whom he takes to be motivated by Calvinist considerations,

of societies and through contemporary descriptions of past civilisations they could discern law-like patterns in human behaviour which they interpreted as descriptive (and not prescriptive) of human nature in general. In order to be able to make these inductions, they had to assume that all men are equal: that under the same environmental, social and psychological conditions, any person would behave in the same way as any other. But given the scope of the variable parameters in these explanations – the variety of kinds, and of combinations of kinds, of environmental and social conditions in which man might find himself – it made sense to observe as many different kinds of social groupings as possible. Only in this way could they be sure of identifying the true regularities in man's behaviour, that is, of being able to differentiate between actual law-like patterns of behaviour and the coincidental or contingent or accidental convergence of kinds of behaviour.

A society's property laws are dependent on what its members understand to constitute property. As this changes, the concept of property will become increasingly abstract. Justice in a society is ensured by a set of laws which prohibit those actions which the society regards as punishable. Since the protection of an individual's property rights will come under the jurisdiction of a legal system, the property laws of a society will become more abstract as a result of the society's concept of property becoming more complex. Given Smith's empiricist account of concept-formation, it follows that a society's property laws can only become increasingly more abstract when its members experience property rights as ranging over correspondingly increasingly more abstract possessions. Smith's four stages provide a way of categorising this kind of evidence of societal change. If a hunter-gatherer has no experience of possession then he will have no concept of possession, and consequently no recognition of his right to possession being violated, so there will be no call for laws reflecting concern with possessions. Stadial theory encapsulates the empiricist credo that concept-formation is dependent on experience.

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through scholarly antiquarianism to cultural collectors. See David Allan, *Virtue, Learning and the Scottish Enlightenment: Ideas of Scholarship in Early Modern History* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1993), ch. 3.

In the preface to the *Fragments* Blair alludes to a larger work of Scottish poetry: 'It is believed, that, by careful enquiry, many more remains of ancient genius, no less valuable that those now given to the world, might be found in the same country where these have been collected. In particular there is reason to hope that one work of considerable length, and which deserves to be styled an heroic poem might be recovered and translated, if encouragement were given to such an undertaking.'[42] Macpherson was encouraged to pursue the 'remains of ancient genius' which Blair intimated in the preface gave hope of a 'work of considerable length, and which deserves to be styled an heroic poem might be recovered and translated'. He was encouraged most notably by Hugh Blair, who responded enthusiastically on being shown examples of Macpherson's translations of Gaelic verse.[43]

Blair took up the newly created chair of Rhetoric and Belles Lettres at Edinburgh University in 1760 and in 1783 published *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*. Fiona Stafford has argued that study of the *Lectures* and Blair's sermons reveals the reasons why, from its inauguration as an academic subject, Blair was confident of the need for the development of literary criticism.[44] Blair considered the study of literature to be an integral part of a much larger Enlightenment programme. It was encompassed by the stadialist account of societal development, and so related to the development of sensibility. As such, the study of literature was justified by a moral imperative.

Briefly, the moral imperative that underpins Blair's justification for the study of rhetoric and literature, arises from the essential need for sociability – communication with others – in the development of sensibility. Because, following Smith, Blair believed that sensibility can only mature as a result of interaction with others – the idea underpinning Mackenzie's history of Harley's moral development – and because we are morally bound to develop sensibility, it follows that we are also morally obliged to develop our ability

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[42] 'Preface', p. 5.
[43] Quoted in Davis, *Acts of Union*, p. 80.
[44] Fiona Stafford, 'Hugh Blair's Ossian'.

to interact with others, and hence to develop both oral and writing skills. According to Blair, studying literature promotes both.[45]

As discussed above, Enlightenment historians believed that the study of societal progress, understood in stadialist terms, revealed truths about man's capacity for virtue and the conditions under which this capacity flourished or floundered (pp. 20–1). Since interaction and communication are necessary for the development of virtue – and sensibility; and since too, according to a stadialist account, a society is more or less developed according to the development of its members; it follows that a society's level of sophistication depends on the level of sophistication of its members' means of communication. This means that languages can also be categorised in stadialist terms (see below, pp. 273–80).

Progress in the development of sensibility was considered to be evident in terms of degree of emotional control and interaction. And this idea too applies in language: the more developed a society, the more refined – the more rational – its language. This means that the less developed a society, the more emotional its language. As Stafford points out, the progress of language in Blair's account was not conducive to the composition of poetry, which he associated with the expression of feelings rather than reason:

Language is become, in modern times, more correct, indeed, and accurate; but, however, less striking and animated: In its ancient state, more favourable to poetry and oratory; in its present, to reason and philosophy.[46]

Macpherson in *The Introduction to the History of Great Britain and Ireland* (1771) expresses similar ideas about the development of language. Language is integral to a nation's identity:

Nations are not so tenacious of their customs and manners as they are of their aboriginal tongues. The first gradually vanish in the growing improvements of civil life; the latter can only be buried in the grave with the people themselves ...

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[45] Stafford, 'Hugh Blair's Ossian', pp. 69–71.
[46] Hugh Blair, *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*, 2 vols (London and Edinburgh, 983), vol. I, pp. 124–5; quoted in Stafford, 'Hugh Blair's Ossian', p. 74.

But, he continues, language also loses its integrity, as result of conquest, or corruption by commerce – where commerce is possible only in the most developed society according to a stadialist theory. Macpherson depicts a language as changing until its ur-form remains only in place names:

Conquest may confine the bounds of a language; commerce may corrupt it; change in the mode of thinking may alter idiom: but ... [language] retires from invasion into rocks and desarts; it subsists with the remains of the people; even mountains and rivers in part retain it when the people are no more.[47]

Macpherson obviously subscribed to Blair's idea that stadial development of language occurs in tandem with the development of a society. It is hardly surprising then that Blair was enthusiastic about Macpherson's first translations; nor that he encouraged Macpherson to pursue the 'heroic poem' of substantial length which he hinted at in the preface to the *Fragments*. Macpherson's finds promised to substantiate Blair's theory of language development. Taking a cynical view of the patronage and funding, it also seems hardly surprising that Macpherson found the poem he was looking for. Nor that he went on to find another.

The authenticity of the poems was called into question almost immediately on their publication in the early 1760s, and the debate continued throughout the remainder of the century. Eventually, in 1805, 9 years after Macpherson's death, the Highland Society was appointed to inquire formally into the 'nature and authenticity' of the poems. However, the concerns of the sceptics were far outweighed by the popular reception of the Ossianic corpus.

The poems very obviously had appeal for a diversity of interests. Highlanders were enthusiastic about the poems – Donald M'Nicol's vituperative response to Johnson's overtly sceptical remarks in his *Journey* being a case in point.[48] The following is only a mere sample:

[the book systematically discredits] the Poems of Ossian – the whole Gallic language, – our seminaries of learning, – the Reformation – and the veracity of all Scotch, and particularly Highland narration. The utter extinction of the

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[47] Quoted in Davis, *Acts of Union*, p. 86. Beattie's remarks (quoted above, pp. 99–100) about the corruption of language are in a similar vein.
[48] Johnson, *Journey*, pp. 101–5.

two former seems to have been the principle motive of [Johnson's] journey to the North.[49]

The poems also appealed to Lowlanders, and to the English; and were endorsed by the Edinburgh literati to such an extent that, as Katie Trumpener points out, Macpherson was almost commissioned to produce the second and third volumes of poetry.[50]

It is not surprising that Highlanders embraced the poems. Ossian's poems describe three generations of Highland bards and warriors, and since Macpherson felt the Highlanders were like the Greeks, the poems present the Highlanders as Homeric, militaristic and, because Celtic, mysterious.[51]

The appeal to the English might be explained to some extent by Thompson's description of the Ossianic heroes: 'If you took Macpherson's own word for it, the Ossianic poems ... were genuine translations of old Celtic fragments and epics, proving that in the fourth century Scotland had been inhabited by Men of Feeling as full of pity and tenderness as Mackenzie's Harley.'[52] So while they were heroic, the Highlanders were also tame. This would have been influential. The poems were published during the Seven Years War at which time the Scots were outraged by English reluctance to extend the militia system to Scotland. The British Army was able to recruit from the Highlands which was supposed by the Scots to present the country in a more favourable light to the English, the reputation of Scotland still suffering the consequences of the '45 Jacobite Uprising. However, as mentioned earlier (pp. 104–5) renewed antagonism broke out between the two countries in the early 1760s, as a result of the rise in power and influence of John Stuart, 3rd Earl of Bute.

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[49] Quoted with approval by Trumpener (*Bardic Nationalism*, p. 68).

[50] Trumpener, *Bardic Nationalism*, p. 75. The poems were also translated into 26 languages. The literati funded Macpherson's subsequent tours through the Highlands in pursuit of further material; see Stafford, *The Sublime Savage*, ch. 7.

[51] Trumpener, *Bardic* Nationalism, p. 74; Bruce P. Lenman, 'From the Union of 1707 to the Franchise Reform of 1832', in R.A. Houston and W.W.J. Knox (eds), *The New Penguin History of Scotland: From the Earliest Times to the Present Day* (London: Penguin, 2001), pp. 276–354, p. 334; Murray G.H. Pittock, *Inventing and Resisting Britain: Cultural Identities in Britain and Ireland, 1685–1789* (London: Macmillan, 1997), p. 154.

[52] Thompson, *Henry Mackenzie*, p. 285.

Macpherson's sentimental, heroic and, above all, temporally distant Highlanders acted as a balm for the English in the midst of this fear-induced outbreak of acute xenophobia.[53] This English reaction also explains part of the appeal of the poems to the Lowlanders. From attempting to distance themselves from any connection with the Highlands and its associated Jacobite disloyalty, it now became prudent for Lowlanders to encourage English confusion about the demography of Scotland and acquiesce to Highland and hence Ossianic ancestry.

The question now arises as to what it was about the poems themselves that captured people's attention. It has been argued that it was their bardic quality; and that in effect Macpherson became the bardic voice for Scotland.[54] However, it is difficult to understand how Macpherson can be regarded as the Scottish bardic voice, for the simple reason that the Ossianic poems are written, are allegedly in translation, and are translated in such a way as to massage the images and characteristics of what Macpherson presented as a Homeric and hence primitive society into something comfortingly pastoral.

We might assume that in constructing the Ossian poems, Macpherson was responding solely to his feelings and reactions towards the Highlands and whatever of its oral-based history he knew. In which case, it could be argued from the fact that the poems had widespread appeal in Scotland to features of a bardic culture by considering the nature of the poems' content; then, by emphasising the backwards-looking, primitive, elements of the poem, argue that these expressed people's disaffection with the increasingly more commercial, more fiscal ambitions towards which Scottish society was seen to be tending. However this tack lacks plausibility, for at the time the Ossianic poems were launched and ancient Highland ancestry embraced across the whole of Scotland, concerted efforts were being made not only to keep in force the governmental tactics to quell what was understood (erroneously) to be the rebellious Jacobite Gaeltachd, but to anglicise the

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[53] Macpherson dedicated *The Works of Ossian* (1765) to Bute. Bute's patronage of Macpherson, provided yet more ammunition against Bute for Wilkes after the publication of *Fingal* (Davis, *Acts of Union*, p. 81).
[54] Trumpener, *Bardic Nationalism*, pp. 74–82.

area in the interests of presbyterianism; while clan chiefs were improving the returns on their land by introducing agricultural measures which hastened the break-up of their clans, the heart of Highland society.

Davis has argued that Macpherson's intention was to promote Scottish influence in Britain and to boost the morale of the Scots nation, and to achieve both without inciting English fears of Scottish dominance. Davis then demonstrates that he achieved these ends by depicting an imagined community, situated far enough in the past to pose no contemporary threat, in such as way as would appeal to both Scots and English classically educated readers. Davis sums up Macpherson's intention as being to emphasise cultural homogeneity.[55]

But equally plausibly, we might assume that Macpherson took advantage of the primitivist movement, and 'worked the system' – very well. That he was in fact motivated less by any kind of patriotism, than by self-interest.

Johnson doubted the authenticity of the Ossian poems. He devotes four pages of the *Journey* to just this point (pp. 101–5). In fact, he holds a stronger opinion than this. He doesn't merely doubt the truth of the claim that the Ossian poems are translations from an authentic third-century Gaelic epic; he believes that this claim is completely false:

I believe [the poems of Ossian] never existed in any other form than that which we have seen. (*Journey*, p. 104)

The Ossian poems had by this time been in print for ten years, the *Fragments* having been published in 1760, and *Fingal, an Ancient Epic Poem in Six Books* and *Temora* in 1762 and 1763 respectively.

Johnson's objections to Macpherson's claims to the poems' authenticity are pertinent. Although he finds it 'insolent' and 'audacious' that Macpherson should claim to have original manuscripts yet refuse to produce them, [56] Johnson's incredulity focuses on the sheer length of the poems, and Macpherson's claims for their oral nature. 'Few have the opportunities of hearing a long composition often enough to learn it, or have inclination to

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[55] Davis, *Acts of Union*, p. 70.

[56] *Journey*, p. 104. This refusal does indeed seem to be unexpected behaviour on the part of an antiquarian or scholar.

repeat it so often as necessary to retain it; and what is once forgotten is lost for ever' (*Journey*, p. 103). Johnson's objection is not to the orality of the poems, per se. He valued oral history. For example, commenting on being told the story behind a melody he was listening to on bagpipes, he wrote:

Narrations like this, however uncertain, deserve the notice of the traveller, because they are the only records of a nation that has no historians, and afford the most genuine representation of the life and character of the ancient Highlanders. (*Journey*, p. 43)

Johnson's objection is to Macpherson's claim that such a large body of narrative has survived oral transmission from generation to generation intact, because he finds it implausible to assume conditions under which such a feat of memory should occur in any one generation, and because once any part of an oral history is forgotten it can never be retrieved (or as he more eloquently expresses it earlier in the book: 'Tradition is but a meteor, which, if once it falls, cannot be rekindled' (*Journey*, p. 98)).

Johnson's dismissal of the whole of the Ossian corpus as fabrication may well be a case of throwing the baby out with the bathwater, but, on the other hand, from the point of view of historical inquiry the text as a whole is worthless: knowledge that parts of the text are genuine is only useful in this kind of situation if one knows which parts, or has some independent means or criteria for winnowing out the original text.[57] And as Johnson pointed out in no uncertain terms, neither Macpherson nor anyone else would, or more probably could, supply this kind of knowledge (*Journey*, pp. 104–5).

The veracity of the poems' content, and so of the sincerity of intent, or otherwise, of the poems' author/translator/editor is important. The value of the Ossian poems depended *and still depends* – perhaps only partially, but nevertheless crucially – on adopting a specific and sympathetic stance over the nebulous issue of Macpherson's intentions. Regardless of how difficult it

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[57] It's interesting to note that Johnson also isn't objecting to antiquarian pursuits: he describes the difficulty of having to rely utterly on the candour of indigenous informants – and admittedly comments on this in a way which seems very uncomplimentary about the indigenous Highlanders' regard for truth (*Journey*, p. 103). In mentioning this it seems Johnson would have been prepared to 'excuse' the Ossian poems as a product of Macpherson's gullibility, had there not been mention by Macpherson of manuscripts.

is to explain or describe the difference between reading something as fiction and reading the same thing as fact, Hume was right: truth adds a certain dimension to a text.[58] It is not that truth is necessary for a text to gain status as historical evidence: for example, Burns's 'Address of Beelzebub', and the uncharacteristically whimsical ghost story which appears at the end of Pennant's *Tour* can each now contribute to a historical account of the effects of rackrents and the breakdown in clanship.[59] The problem with the Ossianic corpus is that Macpherson presented the poems as translations from an original archaic source, and for all the reasons Johnson gives, because the source is an allegedly oral culture which died away, as such the poems lack evidential veracity.

Johnson's less than amenable interpretation of Macpherson's intentions seems to merit serious consideration for other reasons. These concern Macpherson's connection with Hugh Blair and the Edinburgh literati. The outcome of this consideration is that Trumpener's reference to the Ossian poems being 'almost commissioned' by the literati contains more truth than Trumpener realised.

The finding of the Highland Society's investigation into the authenticity of the poems was that Macpherson wove either small fragments from an original Gaelic source into his own composition or into a composite of his own poetry with fragments he collected from various sources (and eras); or that he wove merely bridging sequences into a collage of stories and poems from the oral Gaelic corpus of the time.

The Committee can with confidence state that its opinion that such [ancient] poetry [known by the denomination of Ossianic] did exist, that it was common, general, and in great abundance; ...

The Committee is possessed of no documents, to shew how much of his collection Mr. Macpherson obtained in the form in which he has given it to the world ...

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[58] See above p. 19.
[59] Burns, 'Address of Beelzebub', in *The Poems and Songs of Robert Burns*, ed. James Kinsley, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), vol. I. no. 108, pp. 254–5; Thomas Pennant, *A Tour in Scotland and Voyage to the Hebrides 1772* (1774, 1776), ed. Andrew Simmons (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 1998), pp. 365–9. Pennant's tale is overtly inspired by the Ossian poems, p. 364.

[The] Committee has not been able to obtain any one poem the same in title and tenor with the poems published by [Macpherson] ... .[60]

However, the Committee also reported:

[Macpherson] was in use to supply chasms and to give connection, by inserting passages which he did not find, and to add what he conceived to be dignity and delicacy to the original composition, by striking out passages by softening incidents, by refining the language, in short by changing what he considered as too simple or too rude for a modern ear and elevating what in his opinion was below the standard of good poetry.[61]

Taking seriously Blair's linguistic moral imperative casts an interesting light on the Highland Society's findings in their investigation, after Macpherson's death, into the authenticity of the poems. The inquiry resulted in a seemingly non-committal verdict, however, given Blair's stadial view of language, Macpherson will have been regarded by the literati to have acted fraudulently with regard to the poems regardless of the issue of the authenticity of their source. By 'changing what he considered as too simple or too rude', and 'elevating what was *in his opinion* below the standard of good poetry', he will have been seen as altering a fundamental feature of the language of the society in which these poems were supposed to have had their origin. And by elevating it from the 'too simple' and 'too rude', he also by fiat elevated the society itself from one stage to the next. In short, Macpherson's evidence of an instantiation of Blair's linguistic stadialism was a forgery whether Macpherson constructed the poems by translation or by composition.

4 Blair's stadial critique of the Ossian poems

In his *Critical Dissertation*, Blair follows his discussion of the parallels between Ossian and other poets deemed to be from comparable societies,

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[60] Highland and Agricultural Society of Scotland, *Report of the Committee of the H.S. of S. 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 convener or chairman, Edinburgh 1805*; quoted in Davis, *Acts of Union*, p. 89; and Thompson, *A Scottish Man of Feeling*, pp. 298–9. These are, I think, interesting for the cagey nature of the Committee's report reasons. Macpherson's change of linguistic register has moral implications.

[61] Highland Society of Scotland, *Report*; quoted in Davis, *Acts of Union*, p. 89.

stadially considered, with an analysis of the differences between Ossian and other comparable poetry. It is at this stage that his comment that poetry allows a history of the imagination takes on a full-blooded sense. It is also here that the extent of Blair's debt to Smith becomes most apparent.

Blair's discussion of the literary credentials of the Ossian poems is comprehensive. Having explained the stadialist rational for cross-cultural comparison of the poetic output of different countries, he compares and contrasts the Ossian poems, first with Gothic (Old Norse) poetry, and then with Homer; and briefly and contrastively with Virgil.

The Old Norse poem he chose for his comparison is a funeral song by Regnor Lodbrog. Lodbrog was an eighth-century Danish king, and the poem is a translation of his funeral song. Lodbrog's song is taken as paradigmatic of barbaric poetry – according to Blair, it is 'as we might expect from a barbarous nation'; it is ferocious and bloodthirsty, animated and strong, hard and irregular, and has the stylistic marks of antiquity, being rich in metaphor, with many grammatical inversions.[62] Ossian's poems exhibit some of these features: they too are highly figurative, with the same marked grammar, and strong animation found in Lodbrog's song. However, where Lodbrog's song is brimming with graphically and aggressively described military encounters, in Ossian's poems, the overall mood is gentler; the composition is also more regular.

Ossian's poems, particularly the *Fragments*, certainly appear decorous by comparison with Lodbrog's song. In the extract quoted by Blair, Lodbrog dwells repeatedly on the copious amounts of blood they caused to pour out of the enemy: 'we made torrents of blood flow ... the whole ocean was one wound – the crow waded in the blood of the slain ... the warm streams of wounds ran into the ocean'.[63] Blood spilt in the *Fragments*, when it runs at all, runs with significantly less verve: when Crimora wounds Connal we learn that 'he bleeds' (Fragment V); when Cremor's daughter died at the hand of Ullin 'her soul came forth in blood' (Fragment VI); and when Oscur felled Ullin, although having plunged his sword into her heart, there was no blood at all. More often than not, warrior exploits are adverted to by

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[62] Blair, *Critical Dissertation*, p. 349.
[63] Ibid., p. 348.

reference to blood stains on their swords; and hand-to-hand struggles tend to be described aurally rather than visually.[64]

Lodbrog's song ends with an expression of contempt for death which includes the declaration: 'He only regrets this life who has never known distress.'[65] By contrast, while warriors in the *Fragments* not only anticipate death in combat, but regard it as an honour, they tend to more lugubrious expressions of this expectation, largely because they are usually talking about death in action when taking leave of their loved ones (for example, Shilric in Fragment I, and Connal in Fragment IV). Ossian's warriors seem less to welcome the chance of honour than to regret having to leave at all, an impression created by, for example, Shilric's list of all he has left behind: his dogs, his homeland and his woman. Furthermore, as mentioned above, most of the warriors in the *Fragments*, when seen in action, are fighting for love rather than for more patriotic reasons.

The warrior mentality is in evidence in the *Fragments*, albeit more subtly than in Lodbrog's song. Ossianic warriors and some warrior maidens tend to be men and women of action rather than reflection – although perhaps 'very impulsive' would be a more accurate description. Duchomar, lusting after Cadmor's beloved, Morna, does not attempt to woo her away from Cadmor; instead he gets rid of the opposition by murdering him. Shilric leaves for the wars so abruptly he is unable to let Vinvela know he is going; Euran's plan to trick Connan and Ronnan into fighting each other, leaving Rivine vulnerable to exploitation by Durstan was guaranteed to work because Connan and Ronnan could be counted on to hurry away to fight at the slightest chilvaric provocation (Fragment IX). In short, Ossianic warriors demonstrate the truth of 'Act in haste, repent at leisure'. The fact that the same scenarios are repeated time after time in the *Fragments* shows that Ossian's characters fail to learn from experience, their own or that of others – which is a splendid attitude when away at war, but apparently, not quite as successful when applied to the domestic front.

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[64] For example, the fight between Gaul and Fingal (Fragment VIII); and that between Fear-comhraic and Muirnan quoted above (p. 249).
[65] Blair, *Critical Dissertation*, p. 348.

Blair nowhere explains the theory behind his critique of the Ossian and other poems; he merely describes the stadial framework without giving any theoretical account of it. Ossian is presented as proof of conjectural history;[66] and throughout there are indications that Blair's critique is couched in a theoretical frame concerning man's development: 'The progress of the world resembles ... the progress of age in man' with regard to the gradual increase in the influence of understanding over that of the imagination with a concomitant refinement in manners and language.[67] However, Blair shows evidence of having adopted specifically Smith's theoretical framework.

5 Blair's Ossianic puzzle

One of the marks of antiquity in poetic writing on which Blair dwells for some time, and to which he draws specific attention, is the 'figurative cast' of the language; that is, the high incidence of concrete metaphors and similes which, together with the dearth of general terms, abstract nouns and specifically the lack of anthropomorphisation of abstracts, he regards as demanding 'particular notice', because 'one of the most genuine and decisive characters of antiquity'.[68] Blair also remarks on Ossian's tendency to use definite descriptions as opposed to proper nouns, to specify location: 'Even a mountain, a sea, or a lake, which he has occasion to mention, though only in a simile, are for the most part particularized.'[69] On this point, Blair makes a curious comment:

The ideas of men, at first were all particular. They had not the words to express general conceptions. These were the consequence of more profound reflection, and longer acquaintance with the arts of thought and of speech.[70]

Two points are relevant here both to Blair's critique of the Ossian poems, and to his reference earlier in the text to the stadial model of societal progress inaugurated by Smith. First, identification of orders, or grammatical classes,

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[66] Ibid., p. 347.
[67] Ibid., p. 346.
[68] Blair, *Critical Dissertation*, p. 354; Blair discusses similes and metaphors found in the Ossian poems on pp. 384–92.
[69] Ibid., pp. 354–5; see above, pp. 246–7.
[70] Ibid., p. 354.

of nouns used in a text is regarded, at least by Blair, as an analytic tool for dating the text, not chronologically, but by reference to the progressive stage of the society to which the composer belongs; that is, language development is assumed to progress in tandem with the stadial development of a society. Second, the analysis reveals not merely the stage of linguistic development of the society but the stage of *conceptual* development that society has reached – Blair's explanation of the use of definite description and of concrete as opposed to abstract nouns is that Ossian's *ideas* were particular. Together these points reveal something of the theoretical underpinnings of Blair's critique.

The puzzle prompting this diversion into the Ossian poems is that of identifying what it was about the first of Macpherson's translations that caught Blair's attention. Although much of the *Critical Dissertation* draws on, and is a discussion of, primarily *Fingal* but to some extent *Temora*, Blair's remarks about the reliance on metaphor, the lack of abstract concepts, and the use of definite descriptions and of inversions applies equally to the poems first published. The proliferation of definite descriptions used to identify location is discussed above (pp. 246–7). Inversions abound from the very beginning of the *Fragments*:

Fragment I:

Whether by the fount of the rock, or by the stream thou liest; ... Lovely I saw thee first by the aged oak of Branno.

Remember me, Vinvela, when low on earth I lie!

Fragment III:

Sad on the sea-beat shore thy spouse looketh for thy return.

Fragment IV:

... sad is his darkened brow. Live the mighty race of Fingal? Or what disturbs my Connal?

Fragment VIII:

Fair with her locks of gold, her smooth neck, and her breasts of snow, fair as the spirits of the hill when at silent noon they glide along the heath, fair as the rain-bow of heaven; came Minvane the maid.

Similarly, reliance on metaphor and simile is very evident in the *Fragments*:

Fragment I:

My love is a son of the hill

... thou were returning tall from the chace

... the hunter is far removed, he is in the field of graves.

... sons of the waves!

Fragment II:

... she sails away

... the wings of the gale ...

And the poem recounting the death of Oscur (Fragment VII), the first of Macpherson's translations, is particularly rich in similes, tropes and synecdoche:

He fell as the moon in a storm, as the sun from the midst of his course ...

I, like an ancient oak on Morven, moulder alone in my place. The blast has lopped my branches away; and I tremble at the wings of the north.

Her eyes like two stars in a shower; her breath the gale of spring; her breasts as the new-fallen snow floating on the moving heath. The warriors saw her, and loved; their souls were fixed on the maid. She forgot the blood of her father and loved the hand that slew him.

Often on their green earthen tombs the branchy sons of the mountain feed, when mid-day is all in flames, and silence is over all the hills.

Given Blair's faith in the reliability of noun-type for dating text, the reason for his enthusiasm for the first of Macpherson's translations becomes a little clearer.

There are at least two other facets of Blair's critique which depend for their sense on a stadialist theory of societal development, namely his characterisation of the tenderness of the Ossian poems as anomalous, or at least unexpected; and his discussion of the supernatural elements in the poems. These two aspects become interrelated as a result of Blair's extraordinarily contorted description, and strained justification, for what he regards as Ossian's remarkable refinement when considered by reference to

comparably archaic northern poetry – specifically Lodbrog's funeral song, mentioned above.[71]

Blair highlights the similarities and differences between Lodbrog's funeral song and Ossian's poems. Both texts depend heavily on inversions, metaphors and similes; both are emotionally energetic; but where Lodbrog's poem is 'wild, harsh and irregular', Ossian's are artful and regular, expressing tender and delicate sentiment.[72] In short, by comparison with Lodbrog, Ossian is veritably cultivated. Blair responds to this with: 'How is this to be accounted for? Or by what means to be reconciled with the remote antiquity attributed to these poems? This is a curious point; and requires to be illustrated.'[73] And illustrate it he does, with a description of Ossian's refinement by reference to a complex bardic and Druidic heritage in which religion flares and dies, and according to which the Celts, unlike members of societies at a similar stage of economic development, have progressed beyond the kind of rude heroism expressed in Lodbrog's song by such sentiments as: 'What is more certain to the brave man than death, though amidst the storm of swords, he stand always ready to oppose it? He only regrets life who hath never known distress'; and have also progressed beyond Lodbrog's idea of the afterlife as companionable male drunkenness in Valhalla.[74] Again, those aspects of Ossian's poems which Blair highlights in the *Dissertation* as being remarkably uncharacteristic of hunter-gatherer society, would have been evident to him on reading the *Fragments* alone. There, warriors follow their leader to war, but not joyfully: they take their leave with sorrow; and although like Lodbrog, they do not shy away from the idea of dying for the cause, they do not embrace the idea with his vim and vigour. Lodbrog states:

But this [his imminent death] makes me always rejoice that in the halls of our father Balder [or Odin] I know there are seats prepared, where, in a short time we shall be drinking ale out of the hollow skulls of our enemies. In the

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[71] Blair, *Critical Dissertation*, pp. 349–52.
[72] Blair, ibid., p. 349.
[73] Ibid.
[74] Ibid.

house of the mighty Odin, no brave man laments death. I come not with the voice of despair to Odin's hall.[75]

By contrast, warriors in the *Fragments* worry about their reputation after death, worry about those they leave behind when they go to war, then tend to meet their death on home ground after all; and whether death is honourable or not, so many haunt the area in which they lived or died, that those still alive anticipate the spectral appearance of the dead; while some Ossianic spirits, such as Vinvela, go so far as to worry about the living. The warriors cannot be described as mannered however – they are motivated too often by high-running passion to merit this epithet.[76] Although we do not know what the women in Lodbrog's life felt about his warrior status, so cannot make a strict comparison, we do know that the women in Ossian's tales – Crimora, for example – would have been less than enthusiastic to hear their men declaim like Lodbrog that 'He who aspires to the love of virgins, ought always to be the foremost in the roar of arms.' Blair sums up the character of an Ossianic hero as one which exhibits magnanimity, generosity and true heroism. And for Blair this is problematic.[77]

Equally problematic are the ghosts themselves – it is not merely the sensitivity and sociability of their nature that needs explanation but their presence at all, for the simple reason that they come without the trappings of any kind of religion. The fact that the Ossianic poems are devoid of reference to any religion is problematic, prima facie because, in order to explain Ossian's poetic refinement, Blair has taken recourse to the bardic connections with Druidism, explaining that the bardic tradition was sustained through 'the changes of [the Celts] government and manners, even long after the order of the Druids was extinct and the national religion altered' because the Celts' love of poetry was so strong.[78] Blair does not explicitly state that the Ossianic ghosts are anomalous, but his explanation of the supernatural in the poems lacks conviction.[79] Ossian's descriptions of ghosts are regarded as being vivid enough for Blair to praise them as being drawn 'with all the

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[75] Ibid., p. 349.
[76] Ibid., p. 354.
[77] For reasons outlined on pp. 181–2, above.
[78] Ibid., p. 350.
[79] Ibid., pp. 365–70.

particularity of one who had seen and conversed with them, and whose imagination was full of the impression they had left upon it'.[80] They have the advantage of being independent of a 'local and temporary' set of superstitions.[81] On the other hand, Blair also surmises that Ossian 'found the tales of his country full of ghosts and spirits', that it is likely that he believed them; yet Blair concludes somewhat weakly that 'Ossian's mythology is, to speak so, the mythology of human nature; for it is founded on what has been the popular belief, in all ages and countries under all forms of religion, concerning the appearances of departed spirits.'[82] On one hand, this remark is at odds with the degree of sophistication introduced into the culture by the Druids as it attributes to Ossian a set of beliefs so primitive as to accord with Blair's earlier comments on the lack of evidence of general concepts in Ossianic thought. On the other hand, it can be understood as implying that Ossian's thoughts have progressed intellectually beyond those of Druidism. The latter interpretation makes Blair's wish that Ossian had demonstrated belief in a 'supream Being' less out of place, but it then undermines his belief in the efficacy of linguistic analysis in dating compositions of ancient peoples. Ossian's human mythology becomes conceptually closer in generality to a belief in a 'supream Being'; and a belief in the latter is presumably to be thought of as developing by abstraction from beliefs about identifiable spirits of the dead.

6 Smith's theory of language origin and development

In section 5, I concentrated on showing that, given Blair's faith in the conclusions about the stage of development that Ossian's society can have reached, yielded by an analysis of the grammatical constructions used in the

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[80] Ibid., p. 366. Blair's discussion of Ossianic ghosts is so fulsome in its praise that one is left with the distinct impression that he had to add the much remarked-upon qualification 'Notwithstanding the poetical advantages which I have ascribed to Ossian's machinery, I acknowledge it would have been much more beautiful and perfect, had the author discovered some knowledge of a supream Being' (p. 370), largely to remain respectable, given his position as a Moderate minister of some importance.
[81] Ibid., p. 368; they also have the advantage over Homer's gods of being well behaved enough to refrain from 'indecent squabbles'.
[82] Ibid., pp. 365, 368.

poems, there would have been enough in the *Fragments* to merit his enthusiasm for the text as a relic of ancient poetry. I also showed that Blair's grammatical analysis is dependent on a stadial theory of conceptual development within a society. Blair's conclusions posed a problem, however: namely that of reconciling the kinds of concepts he found in the poem which he associates with a primitive hunter-gatherer society[83] with the artful, regular stylistics of the compositions, and with the tenderness of the sentiments the poems express.

Blair's explanation of Ossian's stylistic refinement by reference to a long and convoluted bardic pedigree is unconvincing, but he fares even worse with regard to the sentimental content of the poems: 'the bravery and generosity of heroes, the tenderness of lovers, the attachment of friends, parents and children'.[84] Of Ossian's capacity to convey such sentiments in ways that 'capture and melt the heart', Blair comments: 'This is indeed a surprising circumstance, that in point of humanity, magnanimity, virtuous feelings of every kind, our rude Celtic bard should be distinguished to such a degree, that not only the heroes of Homer, but even those of polite and refined Virgil, are left behind by those of Ossian.'[85] Blair concluded that Ossian was naturally endowed with an exquisite sensibility; and that he would have been exposed to the songs and poems of professional bards from childhood, which will have 'had influence in propagating among [Celtic warriors] real manners nearly approaching the poetical'.[86] In short, Blair's explanation of the sentimental nature of Ossian's poetry is that the society with which they were associated was not as backward in matters of sentiment as might have been expected for a society in the first stage of development; and that they were written by an exceptionally and naturally poetically gifted individual who moreover had privileged access to the Celtic bardic traditions.[87]

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[83] Ibid., p. 353.
[84] Ibid., p. 357.
[85] Ibid., p. 358; that Ossian should outstrip even Homer in this regard is surprising to Blair, given that 'Homer lived in a country where society was much farther advanced' than Ossian's (p. 357).
[86] Ibid., p. 351.
[87] Ibid., p. 352.

The kernel of Blair's conclusions is that Ossian is an anomaly. He does not fit neatly into the framework which Blair uses to establish the antiquity of the poems. We are told that this framework is stadialist, and glean both that Blair assumed that stadialist predictions apply to the language of experience and associated concept-formation, and that in these respects Ossian's poems are as expected from a warrior poet belonging to a hunter-gatherer society: consistently founded in sense impressions. Ossian's anomalousness stems from his failure to conform with Blair's expectations concerning moral sentiments. It seems that he regarded these as characterised by, or perhaps characterising a society; and that, like language and economics, they progress. Blair's difficulty seems to be that the content of the Ossian poems does not cohere with predictions given by a stadial theory, about a society's moral sentiments.

Blair had a precedent for making a stadialist connection between a society's language, religion, literature and codes of conduct in the various writings on each subject by Smith.

Smith's account of the origin and development of language, *Considerations concerning the First Formation of Languages*, was initially published 1761 in English in the translation of a selection of essays from French Academy of Belles-Lettres, and later appeared as an appendix to the third edition of the *Moral Sentiments* (1767).[88] As noted above (p. 235–6), Smith's lectures on language influenced Blair. Unsurprisingly, there is consonance between Smith's description of the origin of nouns and Blair's conclusion about the level of development of a society, the language of which lacks abstract nouns.

Eighteenth-century theories of language were constructed before the discovery of Sanskrit, and so without a conception of language families. Grammar was understood to be a set of prescriptive rather than descriptive

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[88] Berry takes Smith's essay to have first been published as the *Moral Sentiments* appendix in 1767 (Berry, 'Adam Smith's *Considerations* on Language', p. 130), but it was published in May 1761 in *The Philological Miscellany*, the only volume of a projected twice-yearly journal (J.C. Bryce, 'Introduction' to Adam Smith, *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* (1762/3), ed. J.C. Bryce (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), pp. *1–37*; p. *27*). Smith's stadial account of language is also found in *LRBL*, Lecture 3.

rules, and Latin grammar the paradigm for all language.[89] The syntactic categories of language were explained predicatively, in accordance with Aristotle's *Categories*. In the *Categories*, Aristotle distinguished eight different predicate types:

Kind (e.g. ___ a man)

Quality (e.g. ___ pale)

Quantity (e.g. ___ ten feet)

Relation (e.g. ___smaller than ___)

Location (e.g. ___ in Arcadia)

Time and date (e.g., fourth century AD)

Action (e.g. ___ laughs)

Undergoing (e.g. ___ being poisoned).

Most predicate types have corresponding abstract nouns: ___ *laughs/laughter*; ___ *pale/pallor*. Kind terms, however, do not have corresponding abstract nouns.[90] For example, in the grammatically acceptable string *The moon is a heavenly body*, *body* is the kind term; however, creating an attribute from the predicate results in the string **The moon's heavenly bodyhood* which is at best marked, so in the main unacceptable. This is because *bodyhood* is not recognised as an abstract noun. Aristotle's kind terms can be thought of as modified by the other 7 types.[91]

Two questions preoccupied eighteenth-century linguisticians: which came first – language or society? And (the question which interested Smith): how can the different parts of speech be accounted for? The first issue derives from empiricist epistemology; while the second circumscribes a problem for an empiricist explanation of linguistic evolution, because of the need to

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[89] *LRBL*, Lecture 6.

[90] These are also referred to as count nouns; although the epithet is rendered inadequate by mass terms (e.g. coffee) and plurals (army); terms which cause untold problems for formal representations of natural languages.

[91] Aristotle – and presumably also Smith *et al.* – obviously had never come across an ergative language e.g. Basque, in which, semantically, verb phrases are modified by noun phrases.

eschew any explanatory dependence on abstraction in order to avoid vicious circularity. The general theme of Smith's essay is that of accounting for the evolution of parts of speech without needing abstraction.

Smith's solution is to make the same kind of analytic moves as he makes in his construction of the definition of the sympathy relation (see above, pp. 133–6), a solution to which the Aristotelian approach lends itself. He takes abstract nouns to be definable in terms of iteration; *pallor* is understood as that which is common to all of which … *is pale* can accurately be predicated. One is regarded by Smith to learn the meaning of *pallor* by recognising and abstracting what is common to all of which it can correctly be said *He/she/it is pale*.

For Smith, the first step in the evolution of a language, then, has to be the development of names denoting objects, which he regards will initially function as proper nouns, which (temporally and psychologically) later are used as general terms. Sociability is coeval with, and in fact necessary to, this first stage in the development of language:

Two savages, who had never been taught to speak, but had been bred up remote from the societies of men, would naturally begin to find that language by which they would endeavour to make their mutual wants intelligible to each other, by uttering certain sounds whenever they meant to denote certain objects. Those objects only which were most familiar to them, and which they had most frequent occasion to mention, would have particular names, assigned to them. The particular cave whose covering sheltered them from the weather, the particular tree whose fruit relieved their hunger, the particular fountain whose water allayed their thirst, would first be denominated by the words *cave, tree, fountain*, or by whatever appellations they might think proper. Afterwards, when the more enlarged experience of the savages had led them to observe, and their necessary occasions obliged them to make mention of other caves, and other trees and other fountains, they would naturally bestow upon each of those new objects, the same name they were first acquainted with. … And thus, those words which were originally the proper names of individuals, would each of them insensibly become the common name of a multitude.[92]

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[92] Adam Smith, *Considerations Concerning the First Formation of Languages, and the Different Genius of Original and Compounded Languages* (1761), in *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* (1762/3) (hereafter *FFL*), ed. J.C. Bryce (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), pp. 201–26, pp. 203–4.

Language begins with naming particular objects within a narrow sphere of shared social experience; the proper names so devised become common nouns as a result of the scope of shared experience becoming wide enough to embrace more of the same kinds of objects initially denoted. The progression is natural – Smith refers to a child's natural tendency to denote 'every person who comes to the house its papa or mama' (*FFL*, p. 204). According to this model of linguistic development, logically, adjectives are dependent on the prior categorisation of objects under nouns, because they modify kinds. Psychologically, adjectives arise in response to the necessity of distinguishing between objects with a common denotation. They do not require abstraction so much as the discernment of 'peculiar qualities [of a specific object]; or ... the peculiar relation which it stood in to some other things' (*FFL*, p. 205). In effect, adjectival modification is taken by Smith to function initially in the same way as proper nouns. He writes: 'the words *green tree*, for example, might serve to distinguish a particular tree from others that were withered or blasted' (ibid.). In other words, initially, *green tree* functions as a definite description. The abstract noun *greenness* is a second-order term, considered psychologically to be the result of generalising across noun categories (leaf, grass, (for Ossian) ghost, etc.), which requires not only being able to recognise what might be loosely if strictly inaccurately, referred to as leafhood, grasshood, ghosthood, in order to sort objects nominally, but also being able to discern a cross-category similarity between green leaves and red leaves; green grass and brown grass, green ghosts and grey ghosts, and abstracting from this the idea of the quality that all green things share: greenness. In short, the idea of greenness is not derived directly from experience because it is only ever experienced as a quality of an object.[93]

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[93] *FFL*, pp. 206–7. Smith follows Locke in this regard; cf. Locke, *Essay concerning Human Understanding*, II.8. See Smith's remarks on Virgil's use of concrete iterative definition, mentioned above, p. 171. This kind of explanation of meaning has been used in a useful study of the mechanism of metaphor: Lakoff and Johnson argue that at a certain denotational level, language comprises largely dead metaphors: George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981).

The evolution of relation terms is more problematic because relations are deemed more abstract than qualities, although Smith's explanation of their origin is of the same kind as that for qualities. Prepositions are developed in order to distinguish between objects denoted by the same common noun, resulting in definite descriptions: *the brook on the plain*; *the cave under the tree*. Genitive *of* appears to be taken as associated originally not with possession, but with definite descriptions: *the hill of winds*, and so once again can be regarded as explicable by reference to its use in the modification of references to concrete, and hence, perceivable objects (*FFL*, pp. 210–11).

Smith's argument for this model of language evolution depends heavily on the grammar of Latin. Aside from a rather thin explanation of the evolution of verbs according to which inflection for number etc. is logically – because psychologically – a qualification of originally impersonal verbs,[94] the bulk of his essay is an argument for the model by reference to the Latin case system, although he also explains the relationship between the antiquity and purity of a language, and between syntactic simplicity and linguistic impurity (*FFL*, pp. 222–6). However, what is of relevance here, is the connection Smith assumes between the kinds of nouns and noun phrases used by a people, and their level of intellectual development. The more abstract the nouns and noun phrases, the more developed the language, and so thought, of the speakers, where intellectual development is understood in terms of the direction of dependence of the ideas denoted by the noun phrases. Proper nouns denote particular objects of experience; common nouns denote experienceable categories; adjectives denote experienceable qualities; but abstract nouns denote the result of comparing, contrasting and abstracting from ideas gained from experience; they are initially second-order – ideas derived from ideas. It is now clear why Blair regarded Ossian's use of definite descriptions and concrete tropes and similes as indicating categorically that the poems were the product of a poet belonging to a community in the first stage of societal development; and it is also clear the

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[94] *FFL*, pp. 215–16; according to Smith's theory those languages which exhibit PRO-drop, such as Italian, will be regarded as retaining the most archaic of verb forms.

extent to which Blair relied on Smith's theory and empiricist psychology in his assessment of the authenticity Ossian poems.

Smith uses the idea of ordering the complexity of concepts on a concrete/abstract axis throughout his writing. It underpins his theory of the development of religion – and explains why he, in common with all Enlightenment thinkers, regarded polytheism to be the first form of religion.[95] It also explains why he, and subsequently Blair, regarded poetry to be the most ancient kind of composition; and casts light on Smith's extraordinary comment that while poets were the first historians, 'the next species of Historians were Poets in every respect except the form of the Language. Their language was prose but their Subject altogether Poeticall' (*LRBL* ii.46). The poetical is the child of the imagination;[96] it is effectively descriptive, not explanatory, because the ideas tend to be concrete and not abstract, and because descriptive, it is void of causal explanation and hence cannot educate, only entertain. Poetry engages the reader by seeming to provide experiential immediacy, and hence engages the reader's imagination rather than his reason.[97] The axis of ideas also underpins Smith's articulation of stadial history, and his theory of moral sentiments.[98] Since Ossian's anomalousness is in respect of his failure to fit neatly into the former theory because he exhibits sentiments of too great a refinement, it is worth exploring the connection a little more deeply.

7 Blair's Ossian puzzle revisited

Blair's problem is that he is unable to contain Ossian within the rude, and barbaric hunter-gatherer stage of society, of which Lodbrog is a prime candidate for membership. One question raised by Blair's struggle to place Ossian raises is that of why he is unable to settle for the idea of Ossian's

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[95] See Smith, HA III.1–2; Smith's theory is articulated and discussed in Christopher J. Berry, 'Rude Religion: The Psychology of Polytheism in the Scottish Enlightenment', in Paul Wood (ed.), *The Scottish Enlightenment: Essays in Reinterpretation* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2000), pp. 315–34.

[96] Blair, *Critical Dissertation*, p. 346.

[97] *LRBL* ii 44–7; 73–80.

[98] Berry discusses the stadial theory in terms of conceptual development in *Social Theory*, pp. 93–4.

society being that of hunter-gatherers who are more refined socially than those in Lodbrog's society. The problem with that suggestion seems to be that it fails to cohere with the language of the Ossian poems. This implies that Smith's stadial history accords the concrete language found in Ossian's poems to hunter-gatherer societies generally. And this is indeed the case. So, just as the limited experience of day-to-day life of a hunter-gatherer fails to give rise to a need for more than common nouns and definite description; so his experience will fail to give rise to complex property laws.[99]

It is important to pinpoint exactly what Blair's problem with Ossian comprises. It is not so much the sorrowful scenes in the poems that are problematic, as that Ossian chose to dwell on these, to accord them the honour of bardic celebration; and, according to Blair, that he depicts them in such a way as to leave no doubt how these scenes affected him.[100] Considering this more closely reveals that, *contra* Dwyer, Blair's response to the poems, far from indicating a break with Smith's theory of moral sentiments, relies on it, because an explanation of his perception of Ossian as remarkable presupposes Smith's stadial theory of the development of moral concepts.

Smith on the tender sentiments

The theme throughout the *Fragments* almost consistently centres on romantic love. Smith does not say a great deal about romantic love in the *Moral Sentiments* and what he does say can appear unnecessarily scathing; for example:

The passion appears to everybody, but the man who feels it, entirely disproportionate to the value of the object; and love, though it is pardoned in

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[99] See above, pp. 10–12; see also Smith's argument that conceptual development of moral concepts is circumscribed by social experience, discussed above, pp. 181–2.

[100] Ossian's attitude towards the impetuous lovers is exactly that which Smith ascribes to those who are bought up to live in civilised societies. Of these Smith wrote: 'if they allow themselves to be overcome by love, or discomposed by anger, they are easily pardoned' (V.2.10). 'Overcome by love' and/or 'discomposed by anger' describes almost all the protagonists of the *Fragments*.

a certain age because we know it is natural, is always laughed at, because we cannot enter into it. (I.ii.2.1)

This, and similar remarks by Smith (for example, I.ii.2.5), have been understood by Dwyer as indicating that Smith 'probably did not know a great deal about the opposite sex', and that while he accepted a strong instinct to love was perfectly natural and more easily pardonable at a certain age, Smith suggested that 'overly "serious and strong expressions of [love]" would not meet with much sympathy'. This interpretation invites the conclusion that Smith considered the 'abject lover' as 'typically a figure of ridicule; if the lover wanted the approval of others, he had to learn to laugh at himself'.[101] This is grossly at odds with an interpretation which takes seriously Smith's definition of propriety. Smith discusses romantic love and the propriety of talking about the beloved in the context of a general discussion 'of the degrees of the different passion which are consistent with propriety' (I.ii section title). Propriety being defined in terms of mutual fellow feeling, Smith's point is that the degree to which it is acceptable to express or withhold one's natural reactions to an 'object', is determined by the extent to which an independent observer can be expected to sympathise with – that is replicate – those reactions. Passions which 'take their origin from the body' are hard for a spectator to sympathise with (I.ii.I1.1) – we can sympathise with the distress of 'excessive hunger' but not with the hunger itself, for example (ibid.). It is in this context that Smith remarks on the impropriety of what he refers to as 'the passion by which Nature unites the two sexes' (I.ii.1.2). Dwyer in discussing Smith's account of romantic love, comments on this remark as follows:

As far as Smith was concerned, the love bond itself was not analytically significant; if anything it was vulgar, distracting and ethically suspect. 'The passion by which Nature unites the two sexes', is the 'most furious'; and all 'strong expressions' of it were 'indecent'. Despite its fury, however, Smith did not believe that love played, or should ever play, anything like the dominant role in human motivation.[102]

What this remark fails to acknowledge is that Smith differentiates between lust, romantic love (being-in-love), and what, for want of a better term, can

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[101] Dwyer, *Age of Passions*, p. 83.
[102] Ibid., p. 84.

be referred to as mature love.[103] The passion which is 'the most furious of all passions' is a bodily passion of which Smith remarks that 'all strong expressions of it are upon every occasion indecent', even between those 'whom its most complete indulgence is acknowledged by all laws' (I.ii.1.2). Regardless of whether one agrees or not with Smith's notion of inappropriate pillow talk, it is true – even in the current climate – that the notion of 'appropriate' applied to public expressions of lust differs from that of public expressions of romantic love. Smith's explanation of this is that lust, being a physical passion, is extremely difficult for an impartial spectator (and here 'impartial' has to be given full force) to sympathise with – replicate – just as it is difficult for a spectator to replicate another's hunger.

Does Dwyer's dismissal of Smith's views on romantic love fare any better when it is actually applied to Smith's views on romantic love? The answer is no. Dwyer wrote:

Despite its fury, however, Smith did not believe that love played, or should ever play, anything like the dominant role in human motivation.

Smith wrote, in a section entitled 'Of those Passions which take their origin from a particular turn or habit of the Imagination':

There is in love a strong mixture of humanity, generosity, kindness, esteem; passions with which, of all others, for reasons which shall be explained immediately, we have the greatest propensity to sympathize, even notwithstanding we are sensible that they are, in some measure, excessive. (I.ii.2.5)

His objection to romantic love is that it is 'extravagantly disproportioned' to the 'value' of its object. He also believes that 'in the one sex it necessarily leads to the last ruin and infamy; and though in the other, where it is apprehended to be least fatal, it is almost always attended with an incapacity for labour, a neglect of duty, a contempt of fame, and even of common reputation' (ibid.). Taken out of context, Smith's remarks do indeed suggest that he considered romantic love to have little to recommend it. However, Smith's intention, here, is to show that differences in codes of conduct are founded in differences between the potential for spectatorial sympathy under

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[103] Cf. Smith's objections to Mandeville (VII.ii.1.40).

certain conditions, one being that of sympathy with an agent's romantic love for another, because: 'Our imagination not having run in the same channel with that of the lover, we cannot enter into the eagerness of his emotions' (I.ii.2.1). With regard to romantic love his point is that, since generally, romantic love is exclusive, for an impartial spectator, an overwhelming but impartial enthusiasm for another's beloved tends to be difficult, if not impossible to replicate and so sympathise with (I.ii.2.2). Smith is not relegating romantic love to the level of office politics in stating that the same kind of considerations apply in this case as render appropriate 'a certain reserve' when 'we talk of our own friends, our own studies, our own professions' (I.ii.2.6); he is explaining that one cannot expect the same degree of enthusiasm from others as one feels towards objects which are of specifically personal interest. Had he been writing now, his reasoning could be used to explain the exasperation and boredom of an evening devoted to looking at a stranger's photos of his wife and children. It is difficult to see how from Dwyer's discussion he is able to conclude that Smith regarded love to have no part to play in human motivation, given Smith's comments about the concomitant feelings of generosity and kindness. In fact, a few paragraphs later, Smith writes approvingly of love:

The sentiment of love is, of itself, agreeable to the person who feels it. It soothes and composes the breast, seems to favour the vital motions, and to promote the healthful state of the human condition; and it is rendered still more delightful by the consciousness of the gratitude and satisfaction which it must excite in him who is the object of it. (I.ii.4.2)

Love between friends is of such value that Smith refers to 'sowing dissent among friends' as an atrocity; and he becomes positively lyrical in describing love between family members:

With what pleasure do we look upon a family through the whole of which reign mutual love and esteem, where the parents and children are companions for one another, without any difference than what is made by respectful attention on one side, and kind indulgence on the other; where freedom, and fondness, mutual raillery and mutual kindness, show that no opposition of interest divides the brothers, nor any rivalship of favour sets the sisters at variance, and where every thing presents us with the idea of peace, cheerfulness, harmony, and contentment. (Ibid.)

Dwyer's discussion of Smith's account of love is important because it is one of the few that gives weight to the role the passions played in Enlightenment thought about the nature of man. However, his thesis is diametrically opposed to that put forward here. He argues that there is a break in eighteenth-century thought about the nature of the moral sentiments; that Smith valued Stoicism and self-command over the more sociable virtues; and that the enthusiastic reception of the Ossian poems indicates that the emphasis was less on civic virtues than on family values, and followed not Smith, but Millar.[104] His discussion gives the impression that the Ossian poems are antidote to Smith's *Moral Sentiments*.[105] However, the argument here is for the claim that, like *The Man of Feeling*, *The Poems of Ossian* trades on Smith's ideas.

Smith states that while a spectator cannot sympathise with another's love for a particular person, per se, if he has experienced a similar passion, then he can sympathise with the emotions resulting from that passion: 'Though we do not properly enter into the attachment of the lover, we readily go along with those expectations of romantic happiness which he derives from it' (I.ii.2.2). It follows that while expressing one's romantic attachment to another lacks propriety, expressing the emotional reactions one has as a consequence of falling in love, is acceptable. Smith explains that another's crush on someone is of interest to an impartial spectator, not because of the lovers' feelings towards each other, but because the situation has the potential to generate disappointment and melancholy for the lovers: 'The happy passion ... interests us much less than the fearful and the melancholy. We tremble for whatever can disappoint such natural and agreeable hopes

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[104] See Dwyer, *Age of Passions*, ch. 4. Dwyer remarks: 'The cultivation of "honourable love" became the explicit mission of many members of the Scottish literati. ... Henry Mackenzie described it in novels like *Julia de Roubigné* and essays like *The Story of La Roche*' (ibid., pp. 6–7). Dwyer's reference to 'novels like *Julia de Roubigné*' is puzzling, given Mackenzie wrote only three novels, none of which is overtly similar to any other in form or content, and the overriding impression one is left with after reading *Julia de Roubigné* (1777) is not that it is about honourable love, but about the dangers of isolation – that, when passions run high, one's conscience needs the help of a physically present impartial spectator

[105] See for example his outline of the differences between Smith and Macpherson, *Age of Passions*, pp. 8–11.

[i.e. those caused by hopeful live]: and thus enter into all the anxiety, and concern and distress of the lover' (ibid.).

The *Fragments* can be considered as a collection of textbook illustrations of Smith's theory. Consider Fragments I and II: from the first sentence we learn that the poem is something to do with a pair of lovers. Vinvela opens with: 'My love is a son of the hill.' We learn that Vinvela expects to come across Shilric: 'let me approach my love unperceived and see him from a rock'. But then she, and we, learn that (a) Shilric is not on the hill; and not only (b) has he gone away to war; but (c) neither he nor Vinvela foresee much chance of his survival. Here indeed is a case in which we can tremble in sympathy for the lovers, as it appears that all hope for happiness is undermined by the prospect of Shilric's death in action. But, Fragment II proves this set of expectations wrong. Shilric has survived, and although naturally very depressed after what appears to have been a particularly harrowing experience, involving not merely combat, but finding himself the sole survivor of his race, and then burying every one of his fellow warriors, including all his friends, he is very much looking forward to seeing Vinvela again. And he, and we, expect Vinvela to welcome him back, dispel his solitude, and grieve with him over the loss of their friends. The immediate prospects for the couple are not happy, but they are not as bleak as they were at the end of Fragment I. However, Shilric is denied even these morsels of comfort. Vinvela is dead. This is particularly shocking because the last time he, and we, had any communication with her, she was fit and well, and rambling the hills. Although there is some consolation for Shilric in having proof in her death, of the depth of her love for him, this is more than countered by her having died as a result of misinformation. The fact that Vinvela's ghost is fully apprised of her mistake only compounds the misery.

The reader is not expected to engage with the passion of either of the lovers for the other. It would actually be difficult to do so; of Shilric we learn only that he is a hunter, has dogs, and is tall and handsome; while Shilric's description of Vinvela is even less useful: she moves beautifully, has long hair, and, in ways left largely unspecified, resembles a rainbow. It is Shirlric's situation to which the reader responds; a situation no one would

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wish on their worst enemy;[106] and a situation in which he is behaving awfully well, under the circumstances, so one with which we as impartial spectators can sympathise fully.

The fact that we can sympathise with the situations of characters described by Ossian is what made Ossian seem anomalous to Blair. In order to be able to describe the situation in a way that prompts a sympathetic response from the reader, Ossian has to be considered to have been able to report as an impartial spectator and so to have been able to have experienced situations as an impartial spectator. In most of the Fragments, Ossian as narrator is invisible. In Fragments I and II he has picked out those circumstances which enable us to see what has caused Shilric's sadness, but according to stadial history, this is an intellectual move he is not supposed to be able to make. To be an impartial spectator, one has to be able to generate the emotions one would have if one were in the agent's situation, and then judge whether the agent's reaction is consonant with one's own, and hence appropriate. This is a capacity which an individual acquires by experience and induction, which he learns by experience of others' reactions to the way in which he expresses his feelings, yet Ossian describes the situation in a way which is consonant with the approval of, among others, of Blair, an eighteenth-century enlightened Scots minister. Ossian's poems elicit emotions, and describe situations that are sad with a relentlessness, but he is not merely expressing emotion, which is what hunter-gatherers are supposed to do; he is describing situations in a way which *causes* an emotional reaction and so has picked out those elements of the circumstances which have caused *him* to feel sympathetic sorrow; and hunter-gatherers aren't supposed to do that, because that requires reflection and abstraction. It is in this way that Ossian creates an anomaly for Blair. It is also this aspect of the efficacy of the Ossian poems which links Macpherson with Mackenzie and Smith.

8 'For indeed it is no more a history than it is a sermon'

I have argued that the theory of conceptual development which underpins Blair's critique of the Ossian poems is that which underpins Smith's theory

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[106] Well, no one except Lodbrog.

of moral sentiments, and further that the considerations which are tacitly presupposed in Blair's characterisation of Ossian as remarkable, are familiar from Smith's *Moral Sentiments*. I have argued in chapter II that it is this theory which structures Mackenzie's *The Man of Feeling*. There are other links between the Mackenzie's novel and Macpherson's Ossian poems; several of which are immediately obvious; one of which is not. This last, however, explains Mackenzie's choice description of *The Man of Feeling* as 'no more a history than it is a sermon' (*MF*, p. 4). More interestingly, it serves to provide another link between Macpherson and Smith.

I argued above (pp. 74–5) that Mackenzie's decision to present *The Man of Feeling* as an incomplete manuscript had the didactic purpose of focussing the reader's attention on each of Harley's adventures, enabling them to function individually either as exercises in sympathy, or as complete morality tales. Doubtless this format was suggested by that of the Ossian poems generally, and, given Mackenzie's specific use of chapter fragments, almost certainly in particular by Macpherson's *Fragments*. Blair commented that the '[Ossian] poems require to be taken up at intervals, and to be frequently reviewed; and then it is impossible but his beauties must open to every reader who is capable of sensibility. Those who have the highest degree of it, will relish them the most.'[107] In the same way Mackenzie's choice of structure for *The Man of Feeling* encourages the reader to return to the incidents in the book, because they are isolable.

In addition to replicating the fragmentation of the Ossian poems, *The Man of Feeling* contains other tributes to the poems. The book as a whole is framed as an Ossianic fragment. The story of Harley is prompted by the sight of a 'venerable pile' swathed in melancholy which turns out to have been Harley's house (*MF*, pp. 3–4). This is reminiscent of Ossianic tombs and graves, and like its equivalent in the poems, it prompts a sorrowful story. The monument comes replete with a maiden, whom we eventually learn is Miss Walton, and who passes between trees in the manner of grief-stricken Ossianic maidens, or ghosts of maidens, whose cause of sorrow is one with which Ossianic maidens would be familiar; in fact the description of the fate

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[107] Blair, *Critical Dissertation*, p. 357.

of the lovers in *The Man of Feeling* suggests that like so many of the Ossianic couples, Harley and Miss Walton embrace only in the grave: when Harley died, 'Miss Walton screamed at the sight – His aunt and the servants rushed into the room – They found them lying motionless together' (*MF*, p.130). The book ends in a typically Ossianic setting, described in typically Ossianic terms: the vicinity of Harley's grave, which is shaded by a lone tree (cf. the description of Connal's grave in Fragment V), and it is evident that the graveyard is a location that Harley visited often enough for the narrator to be able to conjure up his friend when alive, as with many of the Ossianic locations. Further, and, like Ossian, the narrator's seat when visiting a memorial to a lost friend, is the hollow of a tree (*MF*, pp. 132–3). There is also a gesture towards it being the haunt of Harley as an Ossianic ghost, in the reference to Harley waving like the tree swaying in the wind, on the last occasion he and his biographer visited the cemetery together. The book ends on a note of despondency which is Ossian's trademark: regret about the passing of an individual hearkening from a world infinitely more virtuous than the present (*MF*, p. 133).

While one couldn't even at a stretch describe Harley as in anyway reminiscent of a warrior, his story has several of the motifs which recur throughout the *Fragments*. The story begins when Harley leaves his family and his beloved for what his family considers to be a dangerous mission in London, in the manner of Shilric's departure for the wars of Fingal, for example. He survives the treachery of the metropolis only to die from causes entirely independent of his crusade shortly after he returns, with time between return and demise for the kind of amorous jealousy which prompts Ossianic warriors to the lengths which all too often prove their downfall. Although nursing Edwards through a fever does not have quite the panache of championing a maiden, none the less, it causes Harley's death which, in ways familiar from the *Fragments*, thwarts love.

One aspect of the *Moral Sentiments* which fails to receive mention in most, if not all commentaries, is that Smith uses two different methods of description in his examples. On some occasions he details minutely a person's mental or emotional state; on other occasions he describes a

person's behaviour. For example, Smith goes to great lengths to describe the ideas which provoke sympathy with the dead:

It is miserable, we think, to be deprived of the sun; to be shut out from life and conversation; to be laid out in the cold grave, a prey to corruption and the reptiles of the earth; to be no more thought of in this world, but to be obliterated, in a little time, from the affections, and almost from the memory, of their dearest friends and relations.[108]

Throughout Smith is describing actual sensations. By contrast, when he describes the experience of entering a house in which 'jarring contention' prevails, he does not describe the discomfort felt by a visitor, but the causes of that discomfort:

Amidst affected smoothness and complaisance, suspicious looks, and sudden starts of passion betray the mutual jealousies which burn within them and which are every moment ready to burst out through all restraints which the presence of the company imposes[.] (I.ii.4.3)

In the first example Smith is concerned to establish *what* we feel in grieving for the dead; and in the second *why* we feel uncomfortable. Although on the face of it, Ossian's poems are the outpourings of a primitive soul shooting 'wild and free',[109] they are not; if they were, their content would be more like that of the first of the examples from the *Moral Sentiments*. The structure of the fragments is not so much an outpouring of feelings as a list of reasons for Ossian's gloom. In effect, Macpherson gives structurally what Smith would refer to as a 'history' of the protagonists for whom Ossian is mourning.

The design of historicall writing is not merely to entertain; ... besides that it has in view the instruction of the reader. It sets before us the more interesting and important events of human life, points out the causes by which these events were brought about and by this means points out to us by what manner and method we may produce similar good effects or avoid Similar bad ones. (*LRBL* ii.17)

The Historian ... can only excite our affection by the narration of the fact and setting them in as interesting a view as he possibly can. ... [he] may excite grief or compassion but only by narrating facts which excite those feelings. (*LRBL* ii.40)

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[108] I.i.1.13. Smith's list of the effects of thoughts of another's death could have been written by Ossian.

[109] This is Blair's description of the content of ancient poetry: *Critical Dissertation*, p. 345.

Prima facie, it seems implausible to suggest that the fragments each recount a history in Smith's sense, but if one allows that, for Ossian at least, the most important event in a someone's life is how they died (so to speak), then the fragments follow Smith's format and follow Smith's advice concerning the best way to portray heightened grief: 'The best method in in such cases is not to attempt any indirect description of the grief and concern [i.e. a description of the person's conduct] but barely relate the circumstances the persons were in, the state of their mind before the misfortune and the causes of their passion' (*LRBL*, ii.7).

Why is Kirmor grieving (Fragment XI)? Because he ended up losing both children and his daughter's beloved, all on the same night.

How did this happen? Earch was bent on revenge for his brother's death at the hands of Armor.

Cause: He persuaded Armor's beloved, Daura, to sail to a particular rock, by telling her she'd find her love Armor there. Arindel set out to rescue her and was killed by accident by Armor, who drowned in his attempt to rescue Daura. Daura, unrescued, died from grief.

Kirmor gives only a list of events, i.e. the series of causes leading up to the disaster. There is no explanation about why this list of disasters provokes grief, that connection has to be made by the reader.

In *The Man of Feeling*, each catastrophe or state of affairs is 'explained' by reference to the events leading up to it, as in the fortune-telling beggar's explanation of his current plight (see above, p. 58). This analysis of the efficacy of the Ossian poems in promoting sympathy yields the same explanation of how *The Man of Feeling* can act as an aid to the development of morality (see pp. 72–3 above). There is a difference between the two texts in this regard, however, in that Ossian, as narrator announces the reaction to be provoked at the outset, while in *The Man of Feeling*, Harley initially demonstrates the appropriate response, and later guides the reader towards it – albeit sometimes only eventually; also, unlike *The Man of Feeling*, the appropriate reactions to the Ossian poems are uniformly sorrowful.[110]

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[110] The fact that, unlike the *Fragments*, episodes in *The Man of Feeling* are intended to produce a range of responses (and some episodes are intended to

Another similarity between the two texts lies in the overarching import of both the poems and *The Man of Feeling*; and again follows an analysis given by Smith. In each case we learn about the characters of Ossian and Harley, less from their actions than from their reactions to others, although Mackenzie initially follows Smith's rules for describing a character – by narrating 'the different circumstances of [his] past Life, [his] Education, and the advances or declining State of [his] fortunes'.[111] So, while the events recounted within each of the texts can be considered histories in Smith's sense, the overarching nature of each is a description of a character.

This explains Mackenzie's description of *The Man of Feeling* as neither history nor sermon. According to Smith, we cannot be regarded as reading Harley's history, because we are not, strictly, given the causes of his character. It is described; we are told how he reacts, and what he is responding to. In the main, there is little argument in *The Man of Feeling*, Harley's conversation with Ben Silton in the homeward-bound coach, aside. This precludes it from being classified as a sermon, as a sermon 'consists of two parts, the proposition which we lay down and the proof that it is brought to confirm this' (*LRBL*, 1.14). The alternative to didactic and oratorical writing, both of which according to Smith are characterised by their intended import (to prove some proposition (*LRBL*, ii.12)), is historical narrative: 'in the narrative Stile there is only one Part, that is, the narration of facts' (*LRBL*, ii.14).

However, Smith adds another condition for a text to qualify as a history: 'we should never leave any chasm of Gap in the thread of the narration even though there are no remarkable events to fill up that space' (*LRBL*, ii.36). According to Smith's criteria, Mackenzie has indeed produced no more a history than a sermon.

Conclusion

Mackenzie makes a subtle reference to the problem created by Smith's stadial history for Blair's interpretation of the moral character of Ossian, in

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provoke disapproval) might explain the curate's complaint that he could 'never find the author in one strain for two chapters together' (*MF*, p. 5).
[111] *LRBL*, i.199; Cf. *MF*, ch. XII, pp. 10–14.

the course of Edward's tale. While in the army in the East Indies, Edwards had let a prisoner – an old Indian – escape, and in consequence, had been court-martialled for negligence while on duty and sentenced to a flogging and dishonourable discharge. Edwards had allowed the Indian to escape because the dictates of his conscience overrode those of his military superiors, despite the inevitable ignominy of military dishonour – a sign that he is one of Smith's men of virtue.

The Indian prisoner had provoked Edwards' compassion. He was being flogged daily solely because Edwards' officers believed him to be withholding information about the location of hidden hoard of treasure, despite his denial that he had any. The Indian bore his torture silently, showing great self-command, as would be expected from one of Smith's savages (see above, pp. 181–2), but could not hold back tears of shame, which show him to be a man of feeling. After his escape and Edwards' discharge, he seeks out Edwards, and gives him gold in gratitude for Edwards' intervention, so enabling Edwards to make his way back to Britain; declares him to have the spirit of an Indian and departs leaving Edwards to continue his long journey home.

Simpson has described the Indian as the earliest of Mackenzie's noble savages.[112] McQueen has described the Indian as intrinsically if crudely good.[113] It also seems possible to describe him as fulfilling Blair's criteria for an Ossianic warrior: he exhibits magnanimity, gratitude and (given he seeks out Edwards within only a mile of the soldiers' billet), heroism (p. 271, above). The problem is that Edwards also fulfils the criteria for an Ossianic warrior – that they are similar in matters of virtue, despite coming from societies of markedly different stages of civilisation.

The conundrum is compounded by the fact that although the Indian does not behave like one of Smith's barbarians, he is treated as one by Edwards' officers. As explained above, Smith argues that the savages' lifestyle precludes the development of the amiable virtues – generosity, gratitude, an

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[112] Simpson, *The Protean Scot*, p. 145.
[113] John McQueen, *The Enlightenment and Scottish Literature*, vol. II: *The Rise of the Historical Novel* (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1989), p. 23.

ability to sympathise with another's distress and so on (pp. 181–2). Savages excel in self-command, to the extent of being able to withstand being roasted over a fire without revealing signs of pain or distress, and during a temporary respite from such torture, despite being 'scorched and burnt, and lacerated in all the most tender and sensible parts', are likely to mingle with their torturers catching up on news of their country; their savage captors, meanwhile are unaffected by the distinctly horrible appearance of their victim, and unmoved by the torture process itself, looking at the victim only when lending a hand with the torture, and otherwise smoking or occupying themselves in similarly mundane ways (V.2.9). According to Smith the emphasis on self-command and the concomitant need to conceal all passions, means that savages easily develop the habit of deceit:

Barbarians, ... being obliged to smother and conceal the appearance of every passion, necessarily acquire the habits of falsehood and dissimulation. It is observed by all those who have been conversant with savage nations, whether in Asia, Africa, or America, that they are all equally impenetrable, and that, when they have a mind to conceal the truth, no examination is capable of drawing it from them ... The torture is incapable of making them confess any thing which they have no mind to tell. (V.2.11)

It is evident from the officers' refusal to believe that the Indian is not withholding information – by the fact that they assume that if they persist in flogging him daily, he will eventually give in – that they assume his silence is just the inevitable savage reticence.

An analysis of the encounter between Edwards and the Indian demonstrates that Mackenzie was aware of the difficulty Ossian caused for Blair's stadialism – that is, that he understood that Blair's perception of Ossian as remarkably refined given his primitive background is both dependent on, and undermines, Blair's use of stadially motivated, linguistic analysis of the texts.

The overriding evidence that Mackenzie was able to meld the influence of Smith and Macpherson, and so that Macpherson did not break away from Smith's theory of moral sentiments but used it, is given by Mackenzie's choice of demise for Harley. Harley's death is paradigmatic of both an Ossianic interpretation of spectatorial joy of grief – the course of true love thwarted by death – and Smith's Newtonian theory of spectatorial sympathy.

We can be invited to feel sympathy with Miss Walton for having her love snatched away when love is declared, with Smith's approval; and we can feel sympathy for Harley again with Smith's blessing; and we can explain the cause of Harley's untimely end by reference to the psycho-physiological ill-effects of surprise – just that emotional reaction which man seeks to avoid by finding causal explanations which yield the predictions that keep novelty at bay, and which enable a society to progress.

In conclusion, then, it is impossible to regard Mackenzie as being influenced by either Smith or Macpherson, but not by both, because as Blair's critique unwittingly reveals, and Mackenzie recognised, the sympathetic efficacy of the Ossian poems is dependent on just those elements of Smith's theory of moral sentiments which give *The Man of Feeling* the content and internal logic required for its didactic purpose.

IV Conclusion

Scott wrote of Henry Mackenzie: 'No man is less known from his writing, We would suppose a retired, modest, somewhat affected man with a white handkerchief and a sigh ready for every sentiment. No such thing. H. M. is as alert as a contracting tailor's needle.'[1] Certainly, if one thinks of Mackenzie as resembling the protagonists that people not just *The Man of Feeling*, but his fiction generally, then the disparity between the creator and his characters will be startling. On first reading, it is very tempting to dismiss *The Man of Feeling* as a collection of saccharine tales, written by a man with a marked penchant for pathos, in response to a rather strange eighteenth-century cult favouring melancholic sentimentality. However, the argument in chapter I is to the conclusion that *The Man of Feeling* was written in response to contemporary concern over the effect of widespread opportunities for increasing personal wealth and of the dissemination of London values, on the moral fabric of Scotland. I argued further that Mackenzie relied heavily on theory of moral concept-formation put forward by Smith in his *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, and that Mackenzie used the theory both to structure the novel and to supply its content.

On first reading, the fragmented nature of *The Man of Feeling* makes it appear to be a collection of moral tales, not dissimilar to those Mackenzie later wrote for the *Mirror* and the *Lounger*, periodicals published in Edinburgh during the 1780s. In chapter I, I argue that if, instead of focussing on the events in the book, we consider the reactions of the protagonist, Harley, to those events, then Harley's moral development will be seen as giving the text a linear, progressive internal dynamic. Although, until Harley meets Miss Atkins, the prostitute, there appears to be no causal ordering to Harley's encounters in London, they form a series of experiences for Harley which require increasingly complex moral judgement

The main thesis of chapter II is that the notion of moral complexity which orders events in *The Man of Feeling* is that which Smith puts forward in his *Moral Sentiments*. This connection between Smith's and Mackenzie's texts

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[1] Walter Scott, *The Journal of Sir Walter Scott* (1825–32), ed. W.E.K. Anderson (Edinburgh: Canongate, 1998), p. 33.

depends on a revisionist reading of the *Moral Sentiments*, according to which the text is a strictly empiricist, hypothetico-deductive theory of moral concept-formation, the content and structure of which is heavily influenced by Newton's gravitational theory.

A hypothetico-deductive approach to scientific explanation of a given set of phenomena is a two-step form of explanation, involving first, an analysis of those concepts which are intuitively recognised to be associated with the phenomena, into irreducible constituents and a demonstration to show that by manipulating the irreducible primitive concepts in formally stated, predictable ways, the theory can adequately reconstruct the familiar concepts. This step demonstrates the plausibility of the theory, by showing that the theory will generate all and only those concepts identified as familiarly associated with the phenomena under investigation. The second step is to use the theory – the primitives and axioms, or rules governing the manipulation of concepts, to generate abstract, highly complex concepts which are associated with the field under investigation and which require explanation.

In chapter II, I argue that Smith follows this approach in the *Moral Sentiments*. He first demonstrates the plausibility of his theory by showing how simple moral concepts such as gratitude and remorse, are derived from the morally atomic relation of sympathy together with a handful of inductively derived generalisations about human behaviour; then he goes on to establish the completeness of his theory by showing that it will generate all and only the abstract, complex concepts making up our notion of morality – such concepts as justice, virtue and judgements of conscience.

Smith's theory of moral sentiments can be stated quite simply: men approve morally of another's behaviour in a given situation if, on imagining themselves in the same situation, it gives rise to the same emotions in them as those they see it has caused in the person in question. For moral concepts drawn from personal experience, such as gratitude and remorse, complexity is determined by the nature of the associated sympathy relation. One will feel sympathy for another's pain, if when imagining oneself in the situation which is causing his pain, one feels the same sorrow at the pain as that which prompts the agent's behaviour. This is a one-to-one sympathy relation

between spectator and agent. By contrast, on Smith's theory, gratitude, for example, requires that the spectator feels sympathy with both the benefactor causing the gratitude as well as the grateful recipient. The nature of sympathy in this instance is more complicated, as it is a one–many relation. Sympathy with another's bereavement is more complicated still, since, according to Smith, we sympathise with the dead, imagining the emotions we imagine would feel had we died under the same circumstances. Sympathy for the bereaved involves both imagining their loss and imagining both the feelings of the person who has died and the feelings the bereaved imagines the person who has died is experiencing. The sympathy relation here is one–many, with components which are themselves one–many sympathy relations.

Smith's theory applied at an experiential level yields a notion of moral complexity which is determined by the number and kinds of factors that have to be taken into consideration by a spectator in order to achieve a sympathy relation with the moral agent. Using this idea to analyse the situations in which Mackenzie places Harley in *The Man of Feeling*, shows there is a progression in the events in the novel – the sympathy relations necessary for moral judgement to be possible become increasingly more complex. This interpretation also shows Harley's role in the book to be that of moral mentor. Initially he demonstrates the appropriate moral response (usually tears); and later he guides the reader towards the moral judgement which will spawn the appropriate response. The discussion of the epistemic theory underpinning Smith's theory in chapter II, leads to the conclusion that the nature of this pedagogic element in the book conforms with Smith's empiricist account of the acquisition of knowledge.

The analysis of Smith's *Moral Sentiments* in chapter II provides justification for Mackenzie's assumption that *The Man of Feeling* could contribute to the moral education of the reader – an assumption common to all eighteenth-century writers of improving sentimental literature. The *Moral Sentiments* is shown to be a thoroughgoing empiricist account of moral concept-formation. Since empiricism entails that moral concepts are crucially formed through experience, it follows that the ability to make moral judgements is learned behaviour – according to Smith it is dependent on the exercise of reason to determine whether the causal history of an agent's

situation warrants his reaction to it. Reason helps to modulate the sympathetic response. This modulation is necessary because there is an imbalance between a spectator's responses to a situation and an agent's responses: the spectator can only imagine the feelings that would arise were he in the same situation as the agent, and, according to both Hume and Smith, ideas which are rooted in imagination are less vivid than those which have their source in the world. Both agent and spectator aim to achieve full sympathy – that is complete parity of their emotion responses. To achieve this, the spectator must heighten his reactions as far as possible while the agent must subdue his.

The empiricist account of moral concept-formation is potentially problematic in that moral judgement-making requires practice; specifically, since a comprehensive moral education will require practice both in the assessment of an agent's response, and in suitably modulating one's response, it will also have to incorporate opportunities to assess and respond to an array of causal histories. Throughout *The Man of Feeling*, the reader is confronted with scenarios which will test her ability to judge appropriately, particularly with regard to kinds of non-standard situations with which the reader would not be expected to encounter – such as meeting a virtuous prostitute.

The Man of Feeling can be seen to augment an education in virtue. Moral progress is understood in terms of the acquisition of increasingly complex moral concepts, where moral complexity is defined by reference to Smith's account in the *Moral Sentiments* of the relationship holding between moral concepts and their associated judgements.

In chapter I, I suggested that in *The Man of Feeling* Mackenzie is responding to the general concern in the eighteenth century about the detrimental effects of an improved economy which led to more personal wealth for a larger proportion of the population than ever before. I also suggested that the causes for Mackenzie's concern were peculiar to Scotland, and he put proposed a specifically Scots solution: namely that of encouraging absentee landowners to return to their estates, and live there. It transpires that an analysis of the problem together with the general solution adopted by Mackenzie is given by Smith in the course of his discussion of conditions which catalyse change in a society's mores. According to Smith, trends set

by 'men of rank and distinction' are associated in the imagination of the populace with the ideas of gentility and magnificence. This connection is the result of prior associations between rank and gentility – associations so strong that, according to Smith, even when conditions demand rebellion against the mores of men of rank, people will find it impossible not to defer to them. A society is vulnerable to corruption when virtue is connected with the wrongs kinds of social trends, a situation which is engendered in an improving economy, because society is attracted by displays of wealth and almost as a matter of course, gives its approval to the rich and wealthy who command a high profile. The problem is that what is socially acceptable gains the approval of the impartial spectator, or the majority of a society, and since the populace is by nature attracted to the wealthy, it follows that this element of society will gain the approval of the majority, and hence whatever the wealthy do will become morally virtuous. If the most conspicuous elements of society adopt a scurrilous or superficial value system, this will almost inevitably become the value system for the society in general. Mackenzie's solution is to exhort the men of rank – the conspicuous stratum – to return to their estates, and reinstate, and so promulgate by example, the lifestyle of their predecessors; and to educate their children in these mores in order to promote them through the generations.

According to the analysis in chapter II, Smith understood social mores to be the identifiable general behavioural trends in a society, derivable by inductive inference. They can be used either in a descriptive role – to describe what is considered socially acceptable behaviour in the society; or in a prescriptive role to ensure an individual's conduct accords with what is socially approved of. In chapter II, I argued that this notion of inductively derivable rules of conduct underpins Smith's stadial of history and moreover that it is his stadialism which gives content to the literati's concept of improvement. In chapter II, I showed how Smith's stadial concept of social development is a concomitant of his theory of concept-formation generally and moral concept-formation in particular; and in chapter III I argued that the anomalousness of Ossian and of his poetry, lauded by Blair in his discussion of the Ossianic corpus in his *Critical Dissertation* of Macpherson's poems is the result of applying the notion of improvement which derives from stadial

thinking to the question of the linguistic development of a society. I also show how this approach enabled Smith to rank written texts as showing more or less evidence of improvement according to their function; and finally show how Smith's stadial theory links Macpherson's work with Mackenzie's novel – a link which to date has been established only by reference either to the fragmented nature of *The Man of Feeling* echoing the form of the *Fragments*; or through exploring the extent to which Mackenzie is indebted to Macpherson for the cult of melancholy which pervades his novel.

The temptation is to dismiss Smith's *Moral Sentiments* and so, by implication, *The Man of Feeling*, as propounding a context-specific reactionary normative ethics, constructed in response to the fear, frequently articulated in print by the literati, that Britain, and more pertinently Scotland, will submit completely to the lure of increased wealth and luxury, and so suffer the fate of Rome. While the key to *The Man of Feeling* is to discount Mackenzie's characterisation of his work, the key to Smith's *Moral Sentiments* is to take his description of his work seriously, and look for the reasons why he chose to refer to his discussion of moral sentiments as a *theory* of such sentiments. This is the purpose of chapter II. The outcome is the discovery that Smith's *Moral Sentiments*, far from being an exposition of reactionary ethics, is a rigorous, tightly argued, empiricist theory of man's moral conduct, founded in scientific observation, building on and improving Hume's theory of understanding, heavily influenced by Newton's theory of gravitation and his use of hypothetico-deductive methodology, and tackling head on the difficulty of reconciling the empiricist requirement that explanations are founded in the observable with the essentially private nature of experience. Given this intellectual heritage for *The Man of Feeling*, it no longer seems surprising that its author proved to be as sharp as a contracting tailor's needle. Nor is it surprising to learn that, when asked by Mackenzie if he would be willing to contribute to the *Mirror*, the essays for which are similar to the episodes comprising Harley's adventures in London, Smith

declined on the grounds that his 'manner of writing [would] not do for a work of that sort; it runs too much into deduction and inference'.[2]

The purpose of *The Man of Feeling* would have been served had Mackenzie chosen to write it as a series of essays in the manner of those he wrote, at a later date, for the *Mirror* and the *Lounger*. His decision instead to emulate the Ossian poems and present the book as if the edited version of an incomplete manuscript might be explained in part by the popularity of the poems, but it is equally possible that he was influenced by Blair's comment in his *Critical Dissertation* that '[Ossian's] poems require to be taken up at intervals and to be frequently reviewed: and then it is impossible but his beauties must open to every reader who is capable of sensibility.'[3] The actual or created fragmentation of the poems encourages this kind of approach by a reader. As argued in chapter III, Mackenzie framed *The Man of Feeling* after the manner of the frame for the Ossian poems; and, as concluded in chapter III, Mackenzie was familiar with both the content of, and the rationale behind, Blair's critique of the poems.

One of the most persistent features of eighteenth-century thought is the idea that society develops stadially. Often stadialism is taken to be a characteristic only of eighteenth-century causally interpreted history. However, by juxtaposing a reconstruction of Smith's theory of moral sentiments with evidence of its use in *The Man of Feeling* and with Blair's grammatical analysis of the Ossian poems in his *Critical Discussion*, as is attempted in chapter III, it becomes evident that the stadial model pervades all fields of inquiry connected with the study of man's nature; that it cannot be equated with, or considered to be founded in, a particular subject matter; and that rather than denoting a form of analysis, per se, it is an heuristic for the causal analysis of social phenomena generally. Smith's use of the model in his account of the origin and development of language, and Blair's reliance on Smith's theory of language and his theory of moral sentiments in

[2] Quoted by Drescher in his introduction to Mackenzie, *Letters 1766–1827*, pp. 27–8.
[3] Hugh Blair, *A Critical Dissertation on the Poems of Ossian* (1763; revised edn 1765), repr. in James Macpherson, *The Poems of Ossian and Related Works* (1760–73), ed. H. Gaskill (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1996), pp. 345–99; p. 357.

his analysis both of the Ossian poems and of the nature of Ossian himself, emphasise the fact that for the literati the overarching purpose of enquiry into the nature and causes of social phenomena – language, history, morals, law, religion – is the study of man's capacity for conceptual development. Observable social facts are treated as evidence of intrinsically private phenomena: ideas, emotions, reasoning processes.

Even today, the possibility that almost every aspect of man's behaviour is accessible to scientific enquiry gives pause for thought. When revealed religion fell from the ascendant, leaving all manner of subjects open to new interpretation, the idea will have seemed simply astonishing, and overwhelming. The appeal during the eighteenth century, of empirical enquiry, together with what appeared to be the infallibility of Newtonian methodology in these contexts, is now impossible to imagine, as we are too used to the idea that most fields seem to yield to scientific inquiry. A final conclusion that can be drawn from this exploration of the intellectual ancestry of *The Man of Feeling*, and another outcome of the discussion in chapter III is that, during the second half of the eighteenth century, the literati regarded scientific endeavour as essentially an applied science. This in itself is not unexpected. Fundamental to an empiricist analysis of social phenomena is the idea that man comes into the world equipped to reason, but devoid of conceptual information. It follows from this that man's nature is fleshed out and modified by experience, and this in turn invites the idea that social phenomena can be regulated to some extent by controlling experience. In *The Man of Feeling,* Mackenzie constructed a way of developing a reader's virtue which accords with Smith's theory of moral sentiments.

The Man of Feeling can now be seen to be very much a product of its time. Given that enthusiasm for sentimental fiction flared and died relatively quickly, it appears that its time was very short. Just how short is indicated by Lady Stuart's discovery that while she had wept over the book at 14, she 'perceived a sad change in it', when, as an adult, she read the book aloud to friends: 'the effect altogether failed. Nobody cried, and at some of the

passages, the touches I used to think so exquisite – oh dear! They laughed.'[4]
None the less, the slender, seemingly bland, uneventful novel encapsulates
many of the most important elements of eighteenth-century Scottish thought.
The swiftness of its fall from literary grace, and the richness of the context
within which it has to be taken to be appreciated fully, do not undermine its
value as an indication of the cultural preoccupations of the literati during the
second half of the eighteenth century; rather these aspects of the book testify
against the plausibility of broad generalisations about Scottish culture during
the century after the Union; and the same time indicate the fertility of that
culture during the eighteenth century.

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[4] From a letter from Lady Louisa Stuart to Sir Walter Scott, 1826; quoted in
Brian Vickers, 'Introduction' to Henry Mackenzie, *The Man of Feeling*
(1771), ed. Brian Vickers (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), pp. vii–
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