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Remembering and forgetting the Scottish Highlands: Sir James Mackintosh and the forging of a British imperial identity

“All over the Highlands of Scotland may be observed, here and there, the effects of a little stream of East or West Indian gold, running side by side with the mountain torrent, spreading cultivation, and fertility, and plenty along its narrow valley, and carrying away before it silently all those signs of rocky sterility, over which its elder companion has tumbled ‘brawling’ since ‘creations morn.’”¹

In the Memoirs of the Life of the Right Honourable Sir James Mackintosh (1835), Robert Mackintosh (1804-1864) the editor and son of Sir James Mackintosh, lamented the hasty sale of his father’s Highland Scottish estate. Unlike other Scotsmen, whose imperial endeavours enabled them to return ‘home’ with riches to improve their lands and develop their estates, Sir James Mackintosh (1765-1832) had sold his estate in 1801 in order to build on his life of metropolitan sociability.² In 1789, writing to his aunt from the genteel world of Bath, he justified his plan to sell his property rather than suffering a ‘remote and miserable exile’.³ Yet if Mackintosh’s sale of his Highland estate served to postpone his ‘exile’ to the colonies, his sense of ‘home’ lay far away from the Highland landscape and society into which he was born. Far from admiring the ‘romantic’ scenes of his native lands and claiming the distinct heritage of his Highland ancestors, James Mackintosh turned his back on the Highlands as soon as he was able. Instead, he forged for himself a British imperial identity, through which he asserted his belonging to a ‘civilised’ metropolitan society. Drawing on the extensive collection of Mackintosh’s letters and diaries, including an unpublished autobiography, this article explores the process of configuring and performing a British, imperial identity in the early nineteenth century. In doing so, it endeavours to balance the current historiographical trend for reading ‘Scottishness’ onto empire, by questioning the role of imperial power in forging the identities of some Highland Scots. In contrast to historians who have looked at the influence of Scottish culture, thought, politics and religion upon the British empire, this article explores the impact of the empire on the configuration and performance of social identities. Rather than looking at the content of ideas, beliefs and ways of being that Scots brought to imperial spaces, it looks at the erasure of people

¹ Memoirs of the Life of the right honourable Sir James Mackintosh, ed. Robert James Mackintosh (London, 1835), vol. I, 169.

² See Andrew Mackillop, ‘The Highlands and the returning nabob: Sir Hector Munro of Novar, 1760-1807’ in Emigrant Homecomings: the return movement of emigrants, 1600-2000 ed. Marjory Harper (Manchester, 2005), 233-261. Charles Grant (1746-1832), Director of the East India Company between 1794 and 1799 provides another example of a Highlander who returned from empire with considerable wealth. Unlike Munro and perhaps more like Mackintosh, Grant showed little enthusiasm for returning ‘home’ or for the Highland estate that he bought for the purposes of election. See Henry Morris, The Life of Charles Grant sometime member of Parliament for Inverness-shire and director of the East India Company (London, 1904).

³ James Mackintosh to Mrs MacGillivray, Bath, 15th June 1789, BL Add MS 78768, 2.

and culture that was integral to the performance of belonging to a metropolitan, ‘civilised’ British world.

The last two decades have seen an increasing scholarship and a growing literature both on the role played by Scotsmen (and, less frequently, Scotswomen) in the British empire and on the place of the Highlands in national and imperial imaginary.⁴ In 1997 David Armitage charted Scotland’s long and ambivalent relationship with England’s project of expansion and colonisation. As both colonised and co-colonisers, Armitage argued that, “Scots helped make the Atlantic empire British.”⁵ Research into the role of Scots in colonial India has shown how Scottish education, religion, politics and patronage networks pervaded every level of the imperial project.⁶ Avril Powell’s work on the Muir brothers and Martha McLaren’s research into what she sees as a distinctively Scottish school of East India Company administrators, show how important Scottish education was to the structuring of Indian administration and oriental scholarship on India.⁷ John MacKenzie has shown how Scottish imperialists configured their new environments, whether in South Africa, India or New Zealand, in relationship to the familiar landscapes they had left behind in Scotland. As he suggests, the process of forging a distinct Scottish national identity was a complex process of myth-making and invented traditions, which took place in relationship to landscape and memories of a different texture of life.⁸ Most recently, John MacKenzie and Tom Devine have published an edited volume Scotland and the British Empire, which brings together work on various aspects of Scottish relations with empire and imperialism between the seventeenth to the twentieth centuries.⁹

The publication of Scotland and the British Empire offers an opportunity take a step back from a rapidly expanding field and explore emerging historiographical trends. As Andrew MacKillop

⁴ N. Landsman, Nation and Province in the First British Empire: Scotland and the Americas (Cranbury, 2001); T.M. Devine, Scotland’s Empire 1600-1815 (London, 2003); Geoffrey Plank, Rebellion and Savagery: The Jacobite Rising of 1745 and the British Empire (Philadelphia, 2006). James Livesey, Civil Society and Empire: Ireland and Scotland in the Eighteenth-Century Atlantic World (New Haven and London: 2009); Peter Womack, Improvement and Romance: Constructing the Myth of the Highlands (Basingstoke, 1989); Evan Gottlieb, Feeling British: Sympathy and National Identity in Scottish and English Writing, 1707-1832 (Cranbury, 2007); Kenneth McNeil, Scotland, Britain, Empire: Writing the Highlands, 1760-1860 (Columbus, 2007).

⁵ David Armitage, “Making the Empire British: Scotland in the Atlantic World 1542-1707,” Past and Present 155, (1997): 63.

⁶ Andrew MacKillop, “Fashioning a ‘British’ Empire: Sir Archibald Campbell of Inverneil and Madras, 1785-9,” in Military Governors and Imperial Frontiers, c.1600-1800: A Study of Scotland and Empires, ed Andrew MacKillop and Steve Murdoch (Leiden, 2003), 205-231.

⁷ Avril Powell, Scottish Orientalists and India: The Muir Brothers, Religion, Education and Empire (Woodbridge, 2011); Martha McLaren, British India and British Scotland: Career Building, Empire Building and a Scottish School of Thought on Indian Governance (Akron, 2001).

⁸ John Mackenzie, “Scotland and Empire: Ethnicity, Environment and Identity,” Northern Scotland 1 (2010): 24.

⁹ John Mackenzie and T.M. Devine, Scotland and the British Empire (Oxford, 2011).

points out in his chapter, 'Locality, Nation and Empire: Scots and the Empire in Asia, c.1695-1813', despite a seeming confluence of interests, the literature on Scotland and Empire has rarely drawn on the conceptual themes raised by the 'new imperial' history.¹⁰ This includes consideration of the ways in which apparently spatially, socially and culturally distinct 'peoples' are constituted in relationship to each other.¹¹ It is perhaps because demarcating the boundaries of 'Scotland' vis-à-vis 'England' as 'colony' and 'metropole' is so complex, that the impact of wider imperial encounters on the configuration of Scottish identities threatens to further unravel an already tenuous 'whole'. Scotland, in this respect, occupies a similar position to almost all post-colonial nations, in which fraught questions of derivativeness and authenticity stand to reveal the 'janus-faced discourse of the nation'.¹²

De-centring the centres of imperial and national entities necessitates the fragmentation of the national narratives that serve as cultural delineators of those boundaries, and thereby also the fragmentation of any notion of 'a people's' homogeneity.¹³ Questions of race, gender, class - the relationships between power, status, subjectivity and embodiment - are integral to the formation of regional, national and imperial identities.¹⁴ In the case of Scotland, the myth-making and re-configuring of traditions that has profoundly influenced today's conceptualisation of Scottish national identity, has been well-documented, particularly in relationship to the Highlands.¹⁵ Yet the categories of analysis that underlie recent critiques of traditional histories of empire appear not to have been adopted by the majority of historians of Scotland and Empire. This is despite,

¹⁰ Andrew MacKillop, 'Locality, Nation and Empire' in Scotland and the British Empire, 72-73.

¹¹ Ann Laura Stoler and Frederick Cooper, "Between Metropole and Colony: Rethinking a Research Agenda," in Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World, eds. Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1997), 2-3; Ann Laura Stoler, Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule (Berkeley, London, 2002); Catherine Hall, "Introduction: thinking the postcolonial, thinking empire" and Antoinette Burton, "Who needs the nation? Interrogating 'British' history," in Cultures of Empire, ed. Catherine Hall (Manchester, 2000), 34 and 137-153; Catherine Hall, Civilising Subjects: Metropole and Colony in the English Imagination 1830-1867 (Oxford and Cambridge, 2002); Mrinalini Sinha, 'Britishness, Clubbability, and the Colonial Public Sphere: the Genealogy of an Imperial Institution in Colonial India', Journal of British Studies, 40. 4 (2001): 498-521; Mrinalini Sinha, 'Mapping the Imperial Social Formation: A Modest Proposal for Feminist History', Signs, 24, 7 (2000), 1077-1082; Kathleen Wilson, The Island Race: Englishness, Empire and Gender in the Eighteenth Century (London and New York, 2003).

¹² Homi K. Bhabha, "Introduction: Narrating the Nation," in Nation and Narration, ed. Homi Bhabha (London, 1990), 1-7. Partha Chatterjee, Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse? (London, 1986) Dipesh Chakrabarty, 'Postcoloniality and the Artifice of History: Who Speaks for 'Indian' Pasts?' Representations 37 (1992): 1-26. Sudipta Kaviraj, "The Imaginary Institution of India," in Subaltern Studies VII, eds. Chatterjee and Pandey (Delhi, 1992), 1-39.

¹³ Catherine Hall, "At Home with History: Macaulay and the History of England," At Home with the Empire: Metropolitan Culture and the Imperial World in eds. Catherine Hall and Sonya Rose (Cambridge, 2006), 32-52.

¹⁴ Kathleen Wilson, "Introduction: histories, empires, modernities," in A New Imperial History: Culture, Identity and Modernity in Britain and Empire, 1660-1840, ed. Kathleen Wilson, (Cambridge, 2004), 1-27.

¹⁵ Murray G.H. Pittcock, The Invention of Scotland: The Stuart myth and the Scottish identity 1638 to the present (London and New York, 1991); Hugh Trevor-Roper, The Invention of Scotland: Myth and History (New Haven and London, 2008).

for example, the hyper-masculinity of nineteenth-century configurations of the Scottish Highlander, the wars over gender that ran between the *Edinburgh Review*, *Blackwood's Edinburgh Review* and English periodicals and the importance of racialised differences that were integral to the development of stadial theory.¹⁶

This article asks how the reiteration of a narrative of Highland Scottish 'backwardness', in contrast to an Anglo-British 'modernity', informed the performance of identity for Highlanders who sought access to the centres of imperial power.¹⁷ In doing so, it draws on the conceptual approaches of 'new imperial' history (also referred to as 'critical colonial studies') to discuss the relationship between 'Scottish' identity and empire, particularly in relationship to the Highlands. Heavily influenced by early nineteenth-century romantics, the idea of Scotland and identification with 'Scottishness' was shaped through an ambivalent relationship to the Highlands.¹⁸ As Kenneth McNeil has argued, defining Scottish particularity required a simultaneous embrace and rejection of Highland culture, which provided romantic nationalists with both the inspiration for the invention of traditions and the embarrassment of 'backwardness.'¹⁹ It was the proximity of the "simplicity and wildness," where, according to James Boswell, one could witness "all the circumstances of remote time or place, so near to our native great island," that both enticed and troubled Scottish elites.²⁰ Sir James Mackintosh's extensive archive of letters, diaries and drafts offers a remarkably in-depth insight into the literary and epistolary presentation of self from childhood through to old age, from the Scottish Highlands to Edinburgh, London, Paris and Bombay. Looking at the relationship between socio-economic change and the discursive construction of identity, I examine the ways networks of power, kinship relations and cultural representations overlapped to inform Mackintosh's performance of identity.

¹⁶ Heather Streets, *Martial Races: The Military, Race and Masculinity in British Imperial Culture, 1857-1914* (Manchester, 2004); Jane Rendall, "Bluestockings and Reviewers: Gender, Power and Culture in Britain, c.1800-1830," *Nineteenth-Century Contexts*, 26,4(2004): 355-374; V.G. Kiernan, "Noble and Ignoble Savages," in *Exoticism in the Enlightenment*, eds. G.S. Rousseau and Roy Porter (Manchester, 1990), 86-116.

¹⁷ I draw on Judith Butler's notion of performativity, which sees the configuration of hegemonic identities as taking place through the reiteration of particular discourses. Her recent work has explored the ways in which these discourses render 'unliveable' the lives of those it marginalises. See Butler, *Gender Trouble*, ch.1 and Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender* (New York and London, 2004).

¹⁸ McNeil, *Scotland, Britain, Empire*; Leith Davis, Ian Duncan and Janet Sorensen, *Scotland and the Borders of Romanticism* (Cambridge, 2004); Katie Trumpener, *Bardic Nationalism: the Romantic Novel and the British Empire* (Princeton, 1997); *Scotland, Ireland and the Romantic Aesthetic*, eds. David Duff and Catherine Jones (Lewisburg, 2007); Murray Pittcock, *The Invention of Scotland*.

¹⁹ McNeil, *Scotland, Britain, Empire*, 3-4.

²⁰ *Boswell's Journal of A Tour of the Hebrides with Samuel Johnson, L.L.D.*, eds. Charles Bennett and Frederick Pottle (New York and London, 1936, 1st published 1785): 3.

By the time of his death in 1832, Sir James Mackintosh was well-known and well-respected as a Whig gentleman, a man of letters and a political and legal reformer. The first-born son of a petty-gentry, Highland family, with few connections and from an area of Britain's internal empire deemed 'uncivilised' and 'barbaric', Mackintosh's rise to political, intellectual and social prominence amongst Britain's imperial elite was quite remarkable. Mackintosh's thought, influenced by his education at King's College, Aberdeen and Edinburgh University, was fundamentally informed by the Scottish enlightenment.²¹ Drawing on this intellectual inheritance, he first gained a reputation as a radical Whig as the result of the publication of the *Vindiciae Gallicae* (1791), a response to Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France*.²² Whilst his ability to survive in the capital was initially reliant upon relatives and networks of professionals drawn from his days as a student at Aberdeen and Edinburgh, he was soon immersed in wider Whig circles.²³ Mackintosh's later public denunciation of the French Revolution and his assertion of patriotism through his Lectures on the Law of Nature and Nations in 1799, made him palatable to moderate Whigs and Tories alike.²⁴ A less radical character by the turn of the century, Mackintosh gained access to Holland House and the patronage of George Canning, who secured him a high-ranking position in Bombay. Between 1804 and 1811, Mackintosh and his family lived in Bombay, where he held the position of Recorder of the Court. There, he established the Literary Society, later to become the Asiatic Society of Bombay. Mackintosh's attempts to reform and regulate Bombay's colonial governance marked the first steps, in what he called "the most obscure and insignificant corner of India," towards redefining the nature of the relationship between the British state and the East India Company in Bombay.²⁵ He returned to

²¹ Jane Rendall, "The Political Ideas and Activities of Sir James Mackintosh (1765-1832): A Study in Whiggism between 1789 and 1832," Unpublished PhD Thesis, University College London, 1972, ii. "Mackintosh, Sir James" in ed. David Fisher, *The History of Parliament: The House of Commons 1820-1832, VI Members L-R* (Cambridge, 2009): 258-281. Patrick O'Leary, *Sir James Mackintosh: The Whig Cicero* (Aberdeen, 1989); Mackintosh, Sir James of Kyllachy (1765-1832), <http://www.oxforddnb.com/index/101017620/James-Mackintosh-of-Kyllachy> [17/04/2012].

²² James Mackintosh, "Vindiciae Gallicae: Defence of the French Revolution and Its English Admirers Against the Accusations of the Right Honorable William Edmund Burke; Including Some Strictures on the Late Production of Mons. De Calonne" (London, 1791) in *Vindiciae Gallicae and Other Writings on the French Revolution*, ed. Donald Winch (Indianapolis, 2006). Knud Haakonssen, *Natural Law and Moral Philosophy* (Cambridge, 1996); Marcel Isnard, "Vindiciae Gallicae Revisited," *The Yearbook of English Studies*, vol. 19, The French Revolution in English Literature and Art, special number (1989): 219-230; William Christian, "James Mackintosh, Edmund Burke and the Cause of Reform," *Eighteenth Century Studies*, vol.7, no.2 (Winter, 1973-4): 193-206; Lionel McKenzie, "The French Revolution and English Parliamentary Reform: James Mackintosh and the Vindiciae Gallicae," *Eighteenth Century Studies*, 14,3 (1981): 264-282.

²³ See Jane Rendall, "Scottish Citizens of London: Whigs, Radicals, and the French Revolution, 1788-1795," in ed. Stana Nenadic *Scots in London in the Eighteenth Century: Patronage, Culture and Identity* (Lewisburg, 2010), 272-299.

²⁴ James Mackintosh, 'Discourse on the Law of Nature and Nations' (1799) in *Vindiciae Gallicae and Other Writings on the French Revolution*, ed. Donald Winch, (Indianapolis, 2006), 203-258.

²⁵ Sir James Mackintosh to Robert Sharp, Bombay, 14th August 1804, BL Add MS 52451a , 9.

England in 1812, took up a position as professor of law at Haileybury College and served as a Member of Parliament, representing Nairnshire and later Knaresborough.²⁶

The vast majority of the letters and diaries upon which this article draws are housed in the Mackintosh collection, archived in the British Library, which predominantly comprises letters and diaries written by Mackintosh, his second wife, Catherine (née Allen, 1765-1830), and his expansive circle of friends and acquaintances. A small number of early letters relate to his education and family but the majority date from after 1798, when Mackintosh married Catherine after the death of his first wife, another Catherine (née Stuart, 1764-1797). Many of the most detailed and informative documents date from the seven years the Mackintosh family spent in Bombay between 1804 and 1811. The letters, diaries and journals of thoughts on politics and literature that he wrote whilst travelling or when separated from his wider network of friends and family supplied the vital means of maintaining a presence in absence, ‘a chain to link to the mother country.’²⁷ Often read aloud in homes, clubs and taverns, the diaries and journals were written with the intention of circulation, as were many of the couple’s letters.²⁸ Writing to Mackintosh from London in 1804, Richard Sharp (1759-1835) stated that having read his letters to all his many friends, ‘the poor thin paper has had a more troublesome journey in my pocket book about London, than it had in crossing deserts and seas.’²⁹ As Sarah Pearsall argues, letters between itinerant members of families and friendship circles provided a means of reconstituting relationships.³⁰ These letters and their circulation were the means through which to create and maintain family and social networks, to assert belonging, to forge a persona and perform a self.³¹ Mackintosh’s unfinished, unpublished, autobiography upon which this paper focuses, belongs materially in the midst of these letters, journals and diaries. Yet it also stands out as being somewhat different in both intention and genre. Autobiographical narrative, like narrative in general, allows events to be re-organised, chosen, re-interpreted or erased, in order to present a congruent identity across time.³² Reading Mackintosh’s autobiography alongside his letters and diaries, this article explores the relationship between networks of power, affective communities and the configuration of self in relation to imperial space.

²⁶ “Mackintosh, Sir James,” ed. David Fisher, The History of Parliament: The House of Commons 1820-1832, VI Members L-R (Cambridge, 2009): 258.

²⁷ Kate Teltscher, “The sentimental ambassador: the letters of George Bogle from Bengal, Bhutan and Tibet, 1770-1781” in Epistolary Selves: letters and letter-writers 1600-1945, ed. Rebecca Earle (Aldershot, 1999), 93. Zoe Laidlaw, Colonial Connections 1815-45: Patronage, the Information Revolution and Colonial Government (Manchester and New York, 2005), 17.

²⁸ Rebecca Earle, “Introduction: letters, writers and the historian” in Epistolary Selves, 7.

²⁹ Sharp to Mackintosh, London 18th January 1805, BL Add MS 78764, 23.

³⁰ Sarah Pearsall, Atlantic Families: lives and letters in the later eighteenth century (Oxford, 2008), 5.

³¹ Earle, Epistolary Selves, 2.

³² Martin Denis-Constant, “The Choices of Identity,” Social Identities 1, 1, 1995: 7-14.

James Mackintosh was born in 1765 into the Kyllachy branch of the Clan Mackintosh. The oldest cadet branch of the clan Mackintosh, the Kyllachy clan had possessed the lands around Aldourie, on the banks of the Loch Ness where James Mackintosh was born and raised, since the early seventeenth century.³³ The Clan Mackintosh, chiefs of the Highland confederacy Clan Chattan, could trace its origins back before the Norman Conquest and its ownership of lands and the castle at Inverness to Shaw, the son of Duncan, fifth earl of Fife in the mid-twelfth century.³⁴ Like many Highland clans, the Clan Mackintosh derived its size and status from the combination of land ownership and kinship ties that waxed and waned across the long stretch of a millennium.³⁵ At the end of the eighteenth century, however, a small part of that long heritage that linked ancestry to land looked set to collapse. Having inherited the Kyllachy estate on the death of his father in 1788, James Mackintosh, then resident in London, began looking for ways to convert his “shreds of property” into money.³⁶

In 1799, five years before the sale was finally completed, an old friend of Mackintosh’s from his days in the Speculative Society in Edinburgh, read of the intended sale of the Kyllachy estate in the newspapers. John Wilde wrote to Mackintosh expressing his horror of the prospect:

Think, James, of your ancestors. Think of the hills themselves! ...Will you reject and fling away the trust of your ancestors, by which they have entailed the superiority of wisdom with their lands! Or can you allow any other than a Mackintosh to advise a Mackintosh! James! James! James! Think! Think of the space of power you throw away.³⁷

Wilde had always been Edinburgh based, the son of a tobacco merchant rather than of the gentry class, yet he keenly felt the significance of Mackintosh’s sale.³⁸ In the passage that is quoted above, Wilde wove together history, power and landscape, connecting the “space of power” to ancestral inheritance in a tone reminiscent of Edmund Burke’s denunciation of

³³ Charles Fraser-Mackintosh of Drummond, Letters of Two Centuries Chiefly Connected with Inverness and the Highlands from 1616 to 1815 (Inverness, 1890), 317.

³⁴ Margaret Mackintosh, The Clan Mackintosh and the Clan Chattan (Edinburgh and London, 1948), 2.

³⁵ Robert Dodgshon, From Chiefs to Landlords: Social and Economic Change in the Western Highlands and Islands c.1493-1820 (Edinburgh, 1998), 33-37; Bruce Lenman, The Jacobite Clans of the Great Glen, 1650-1784 (Aberdeen, 1995), 6-7; T.M. Devine, Clanship to Crofters’ War: The Social Transformation of the Scottish Highlands (Manchester, 1994).

³⁶ Patrick O’Leary, Sir James Mackintosh; Mackintosh to Mrs MacGillivray, Bath, 15 June 1789, BL Add MS 78768, 2.

³⁷ John Wilde to Mackintosh, Edinburgh, April 3 1799, BL Add. MS 78765, 19.

³⁸ Denis Wood, Benjamin Constant: A Biography (Cambridge, 1987), 51-59.

French Revolutionary principles. “People will not look forward to posterity, who never look backward to their ancestors,” Burke had proclaimed in his Reflections on the Revolution in France.³⁹ Likewise, Wilde suggested that wisdom itself was imbibed through hereditary descent, that identity was bonded with the land and ancestry. To “throw away” the land that he had inherited, was to discard history, memory and identity. “Think of the possibility of your passing that road and saying these are now the lands of a stranger. The very thought is dreadful!” Wilde wrote with sentimentality and outrage.⁴⁰

James Mackintosh, who, less than ten years earlier had argued against rank, descent and pedigree as the necessary qualifications for the nation’s rulers, appears not to have shared his friend’s sentimental attachment.⁴¹ Indeed, the decision to sell the estate was one that Mackintosh himself seems to have taken with a sense of detachment. Writing to his aunt in the Highlands, Mackintosh claimed that he had been advised against holding onto “such property as that” in the hope that he could make money elsewhere.⁴² The option to leave London, for a position somewhere in the British empire or potentially Russia, or selling his Highland estate in order to pay for his life in the metropole, appears to have been straightforward.⁴³ From this flippant tone, Mackintosh appears to have had little regard for his Highland estate. A letter five years later confirms Mackintosh’s dis-interest, except as a source of possible revenue to fund a life in London that he referred to as a financially ‘hard struggle’.⁴⁴ With thinly veiled frustration, D.M. Campbell, wrote to Mackintosh in 1795, stating that ‘I am indeed much hurt to see your matters in this country in a state of ruin. It is true the subject is small but were you worth £10 000 a year I beg leave to say the small property you have in Inverness shire deserves some little attention.’⁴⁵

Yet Mackintosh had very little incentive to take an interest in his Highland estate. Contrary to John Wilde’s claims that he was throwing away a ‘space of power’, the Kyllachy estate failed to afford Mackintosh very much power at all. As Andrew MacKillop has argued, the dominance of the lairds of Grant in Invernesshire meant that political power did not accrue to lesser landed

³⁹ Edmund Burke, Reflections on the Revolution in France (New York, 2006, based on the “Seventh Edition,” 1790), 31.

⁴⁰ John Wilde to James Mackintosh, Edinburgh, April 3rd 1799, BL Add MS 78765, 19.

⁴¹ Mackintosh ‘Vindiciae Gallicae’, 150

⁴² James Mackintosh to Mrs MacGillivray, Bath, 15th June, 1789, BL Add MS 78768, 2.

⁴³ Letter of Recommendation by Dugald Stewart, London 4th June, 1788, BL Add MS 52451b, 10.

⁴⁴ James Mackintosh to Mrs Macgillivray, 14 Serle Street, Lincoln’s Inn, London, 16th November, 1796, BL MS Add 78768, 4.

⁴⁵ D M(?) Campbell to JM, Charlotte Street, Portland Place, 8th April 1795, BL MS Add 78765, 1.

elites in that county.⁴⁶ Ambitious from a young age, Mackintosh was obliged to look to other avenues of patronage if he was to gain access to the corridors of power. His entrance into Parliament in 1813 as member for Nairnshire was secured through the patronage of Lord Cawdor, who was more closely connected with his second wife's Pembrokeshire family than his own Highland one.⁴⁷ When Mackintosh finally sold the Kyllachy estate in 1804 to provost Phineas Mackintosh of Drummond for £9000, most of the money was eaten up in loans that had been previously drawn on the estate in anticipation of its sale.⁴⁸ Although the estate remained in Mackintosh hands, there is little evidence that this was James Mackintosh's intention or that the sale held much interest for him beyond pecuniary gain.⁴⁹ To Mackintosh himself, the securities on, and ultimate sale of, Kyllachy offered a means of affording the life to which he aspired, one that was marked by a sense of belonging to the centres of metropolitan power. With little to gain from his own networks of kin and clan, Mackintosh moved away from the Highlands, to other networks that would provide him with a greater chance of access to social and political power. The necessity of this move, however, informed Mackintosh's own identification with, and configuration of, his Highland Scottish history and heritage.

When "poor little Jamie McIntosh" left the Highlands for King's College, Aberdeen in 1782, he followed in the footsteps of previous generations of young men from Highland clans who attended Lowland universities.⁵⁰ For nearly two centuries clan elites had educated their sons in urban Lowland universities – Aberdeen, Glasgow, Edinburgh. It was a practice that had originally been decreed by the Crown through the Statutes of Iona in 1609, in an attempt to break up clanship and create a reformed and 'civilised' class of landowners.⁵¹ By the time James Mackintosh was studying at King's College, many of the practices and loyalties associated with clanship had been gradually eroded through a combination of state intervention and changing lifestyles, especially amongst the elite. The tradition of *cuid-oidhche* – the obligation of tenants to

⁴⁶ Andrew Mackillop, "The Political Culture of the Scottish Highlands from Culloden to Waterloo," The Historical Journal, 46, 3 (2003): 515; See also, Amanda Epperson, "It would be my earnest desire that you all would come": Networks, the Migration Process and Highland Emigration," The Scottish Historical Review, Volume LXXXVIII, 2: No. 226: October 2009: 313–331.

⁴⁷ Elisabeth Inglis-Jones, A Pembrokeshire County Family in the Eighteenth Century, Part I, National Library of Wales Journal, 1971, Winter. Volume XVII/2, <http://www.genuki.org.uk/big/wal/PEM/Jeffreyston/Allen.html> [17/04/2012].

⁴⁸ O'Leary, Sir James Mackintosh, 54.

⁴⁹ Fraser-Mackintosh, Letters of Two Centuries, 318.

⁵⁰ The expression is from a letter from Jean MacGillivray to Bailie John Mackintosh, Inverness, 1774, BL Add MS 78771a, 1.

⁵¹ Charles Withers, Gaelic Scotland: The Transformation of a Culture Region (London and New York, 1988), 7.

provide hospitality for their chiefs and his household – had been gradually replaced by a more standardised form of rent paid in money or kind.⁵² The physical, economic and lifestyle distances between landowner and tenant slowly widened as landowners (lairds) spent more time in urban centres and, much like James Mackintosh himself, looked to their lands to yield significant surplus in order to afford urban lifestyles. Yet if the sovereignty of clanship had been largely undermined, practices remained and were undertaken in fraught conjunction with forms of attachment and modes of being that were deemed more ‘modern’ and ‘civilised’.⁵³ In 1785, for example, Mackintosh of Mackintosh summoned the twenty year-old James Mackintosh to accompany him on an expedition to Lochaber against armed robbers.⁵⁴

The same Lochaber to which James Mackintosh was summoned by the chief of the Clan Mackintosh in 1785, was later referred to by Thomas Babington Macaulay in his *History of England*, published in 1848. Writing of ‘barbarians’ across the British empire, Macaulay narrated and celebrated the taming of the Highlands and the Highlander, conjuring up a picture of nature eventually controlled, “till there was as little danger of being slain or plundered in the wildest defile of Badenoch or Lochaber as in Cornhill.”⁵⁵ The historian to whom Mackintosh bequeathed his volumes of archival notes, spoke with a disdain for Highlanders that provoked a small public outcry and much admonition.⁵⁶ Yet Mackintosh, whose Whiggism pre-staged and informed much of Macaulay’s own political thought, would probably have concurred with the younger and more successful historian. Unlike a number of his contemporaries, who were looking to the Highlands to provide them with inspiration for the romantic re-invention of a uniquely ‘Scottish’ past, Mackintosh completely dismissed the Highlands and even Scotland more generally.⁵⁷ Reflecting on Walter Scott’s *Lady of the Lake*, Mackintosh predicted that the author’s fame would be short-lived, a “national, almost country poet.”⁵⁸ “He selects in a barbarous period of a very barbarous country the two most barbarous bodies of men,” Mackintosh wrote with disdain and detachment from the country of his birth.⁵⁹

⁵² Dodgshon, *From Chiefs to Landlords*, 57.

⁵³ Allan I MacInnes, *Clanship, Commerce and the House of Stuart, 1603-1788* (Phantassie, 1996), 195.

⁵⁴ Rendall, *The Political Ideas*, p.25

⁵⁵ Thomas Babington Macaulay, *The History of England from the Accession of James II*, vol. III, (Philadelphia, 1871, 1st published 1848), 239.

⁵⁶ Catherine Hall, *Macaulay and Son: architects of imperial Britain* (New Haven, 2012), 305-8.

⁵⁷ See Devine, *Scotland and Empire*, 347-60; Peter Womack, *Improvement and Romance: Constructing the Myth of the Highlands* (Basingstoke, 1989).

⁵⁸ Journal, Bombay 1811, BL Add MS 52438a, 29.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

Both Mackintosh and Macaulay drew on an idea of the Highlands that was prevalent in the official, metropolitan discourse of the eighteenth-century. For example, The Society in Scotland for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge (SSPCK) wrote a report in 1774 which blamed Highland ‘problems’ on “superstition, popery, feudal relations”. It claimed that the majority of Highland people were “enslaved” by their chiefs and attributed their “rude, ignorant and disaffected” to an “obstinate adherence of the inhabitants” to their own Gaelic tongue.⁶⁰ Such pejorative and pervasive imagery of backwardness and barbarity placed more elite Highland Scots in complex and contradictory positions, even as they themselves often employed and propagated this imagery. On the one hand, elite Scots looked to Highland “traditions,” landscape and legend to define Scottish nationality. On the other hand, they sought to “civilise” the Highlands, erasing the very differences that they looked to in order to demarcate national identity.⁶¹ More so than Lowlanders – men like James Boswell and Walter Scott – Highland Scots seeking access to metropolitan networks, tended to emphasise the ‘barbarity’ over the beauty of the Highlands. In a letter of 1806, Anne Grant (1755-1838), the well-known author of *Highland manners and customs*, noted Highlanders’ disdain for the Highlands. Writing of her Edinburgh-based, Highland-born friends, she stated their belief that, ‘our Celtic ancestors were little better than ourang-outangs; that we should never think of or mention our ancestors, unless to triumph in our superiority over them; that the Highlands should be instantly turned into a great sheep-walk, and that the sooner its inhabitants leave it, the better for themselves and the community.’⁶²

Anne Grant’s comments are evidence of the attitudes that had led to the gradual erosion of clan links and Highland culture, achieved by the seemingly irresistible pull that market forces held for Highland elites.⁶³ Particularly in aftermath of the Jacobite rebellion of 1745, government initiatives to ‘civilise’ the Highlands led to increased commercialisation, dependence on the import of Lowland and English goods and the selling of land to the highest bidder rather than keeping it within the clan. This led to soaring rents, increased competition, greater initiatives to exploit the land, predominantly through sheep farming, the beginning of the clearances and the

⁶⁰ An Account of the Society in Scotland for Propagating Christian Knowledge. From its Commencement in 1709. In which is Included, the Present State of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland with Regard to Religion (Edinburgh, 1774), 1-2.

⁶¹ McNeil, *Scotland, Britain, Empire*, 4.

⁶² Letter XIII Anne Grant to John Hatsell, London, Stirling 27th November 1806 in Memoir and Correspondence of Mrs Grant of Laggan author of ‘Letters from the Mountains’, ‘memoirs of an American Lady’, ed. J.P Grant (London, 1844), vol. 1, 81-2.

⁶³ T.M. Devine, Clanship to Crofters’ War, 32-34

concomitant emigration from the Highlands to North America.⁶⁴ The drive for such changes came as much from Highland elites as from state actions in the aftermath of the ‘Forty-five. The measures to ‘civilise’ the Highlands were laid out in an ‘Act for Annexing certain Forfeited Estates in Scotland’.⁶⁵ Having outlawed Highland dress and the carrying of arms in 1746 and abolished heritable jurisdictions leading to the centralisation of justice in 1747, the Crown took possession of over fifty Jacobite estates.⁶⁶ The estate of one Lachlan Mackintosh was amongst them. Cluny, where Mackintosh was raised, was also amongst those named but unable to be forfeited because held by superiors.⁶⁷ The majority of these estates were sold at auction to the highest bidder but thirteen forfeited estates were to be annexed with the intention of using their rents and profits to promote Presbyterianism, good government, industry and loyalty to the crown. Thus, the means of “civilising” the Highlands rested upon securing tenancies, enabling agricultural improvement through enclosure, creating parishes, building schools, churches and prisons and encouraging law and order. Eight years after the Annexation Act, the SSPCK, alongside commissioners, began to work with the Annexed Estates. Their schemes of ‘improvement’ were not necessarily either immediately forthcoming or successful but they marked the beginnings of a momentum that would lead, eventually, to land clearances and the displacement of the Highland poor. The economic boom of the 1760s and 1770s that saw the industrialisation and urbanisation of the Lowlands, ultimately destroyed ‘traditional society’ in the Highlands leading to a “new order based on quite different values, principles and relationships.”⁶⁸

One significant change in “values, principles and relationships” came about as more opportunities to serve in the British army were presented to young Highland men. Whilst Highland men had always been involved in military pursuits, often serving as mercenaries in European armies, after 1750 there were increasing opportunities in the British army and navy

⁶⁴Bruce Lenman, *The Jacobite Clans*, 213-214; Stana Nenadic, *Lairds and Luxury: The Highland Gentry in Eighteenth-Century Scotland* (East Linton, 2007), 5-6; Robert Dodgshon, *From Chiefs to Landlords*, 243. Andrew MacKillop, “Highland Estate Change and Tenant Emigration” in *Eighteenth Century Scotland: New Perspectives*, T.M. Devine and J.R. Young (East Linton, 1999), 247.

⁶⁵ *A Bill Intituled, An Act for Annexing Certain Forfeited Estates in Scotland to the Crown Unalienably; and for Making Satisfaction to the Lawful Creditors thereupon; and to Establish a Method of Managing the Same; and applying the Rents and Profits thereof, for the Better Civilising and Improving the Highlands of Scotland; and Preventing Disorders there for the Future*, 1752, n.p.

⁶⁶ Peter Womack, *Improvement and Romance: Constructing the Myth of the Highlands* (Basingstoke, 1989), 4.

⁶⁷Alexander Mackintosh Shaw, *Historical memoirs of the House and Clan of Mackintosh and of the Clan Chattan* (London, 1880), 497

⁶⁸ Devine, *Clanship to Crofter’s War*, 30-32

across the empire and in Europe.⁶⁹ For Highland gentry, a commission in the military was a practical, high-status and occasionally lucrative means of providing for younger sons, whilst recruiting adult male tenants from their lands could oil the cogs of patronage networks.⁷⁰ The pitfalls of military opportunities, however, were manifold. As Stana Nenadic has illustrated, the lure of active service, foreign travel and new experiences made many young men of gentry origin desperate for a commission in the military.⁷¹ This placed immense pressure on relatives (and particularly wealthy widows) to pay large sums of money to buy commissions, uniforms and advances to cover preliminary expenses. Sometimes these investments paid off, with a salary and status for life and, when combined with trade during peace-time could bring in revenue for the wider family. Yet across the late eighteenth century, as trade became increasingly looked-down upon and military glory appeared far more exciting than managing an estate, Highland families often suffered rather than gained from their military relatives. Reliant on the revenue from estates in which they had little interest, young Highland officers often lost more money than they gained by service, through trying to afford the luxuries that a military lifestyle demanded. Entering a world whose status-orientation was heavily based upon conspicuous material consumption and expensive sociability, women and older men who remained in the Highlands often found that the young men who they had supported very soon had little identification or sense of attachment to their Highland origins.⁷²

James Mackintosh's own father offers an example of such a trajectory. The younger son of a younger son, Lieutenant (later Captain) John Mackintosh (d.1788) gained a commission in the British army, although by whose means remains unknown. Unlike many of the Highland officers whose career paths and lives Stana Nenadic has traced, John Mackintosh did marry and returned intermittently to the Highlands.⁷³ It is not clear whether he met James' mother, Marjory (née Fraser, d.1778) in South Carolina where her father and mother lived or, more likely, in Inverness, where her birth was recorded and from where the family originated.⁷⁴ What is almost certain is that Marjory Mackintosh spent a lot of her time in Invernesshire whilst her husband travelled around Europe and the British colonies serving in the 23rd Regiment of Foot, which later became the 68th Regiment of Foot. John Mackintosh had been seriously injured in the

⁶⁹ T.M. Devine, 'Soldiers of Empire, 1750-1914' in Scotland and the British Empire, 180-1.

⁷⁰ Nenadic, Lairds and Luxury, 8; Lenman, Jacobite Clans, 214; Charles Withers, Gaelic Scotland: The Transformation of a Culture Region (London and New York, 1988), 79. Nenadic, Stana, "The Impact of the Military profession on Highland Gentry Families," The Scottish Historical Review, 1, 219, 2006: 75-99.

⁷¹ Nenadic, Lairds and Luxury, 91.

⁷² Nenadic, "The Impact of the Military," 93.

⁷³ Ibid., 93-4.

⁷⁴ O'Leary, Sir James Mackintosh., 1-2.

Seven Years' War but continued to serve, in Antigua, then Gibraltar, where his wife accompanied him and where she died, and Dublin.⁷⁵

Like many Highland officers, Captain John Mackintosh was clearly a source of frustration and worry to his relatives. Writing to Bailie John Mackintosh of James' paternal aunt, Mrs MacGillivray, noted the disagreeableness of mentioning their cousin, James' father. Hoping that John Mackintosh would "soon see the impropriety of his former conduct," Mrs MacGillivray urged Bailie John Mackintosh to support the boy's education and board.⁷⁶ The exact nature of that "impropriety" remained un-stated, but it most probably referred to the Captain's desertion and ultimate separation from his second wife, to whom he was married a year or two after the death of James Mackintosh's mother.⁷⁷ It was a marriage on which his son had congratulated him only two years' previously, in a letter that is illustrative of his father's negligence and lack of attachment to his Highland family.⁷⁸ Having requested money in several previous letters, James Mackintosh, then seventeen years old, apologised for reminding his father of his needs but stated that "they are now become so distressing that I can no longer delay intreating [sic] that you would answer my letters."⁷⁹ Money, however, was not the only problem. The connections that Captain John Mackintosh had gained through military service were flung across the British imperial world. Arriving in Edinburgh to embark on a very different career path to that of his father, James Mackintosh appears to have found his father's connections to be few and fairly useless for the scholarly career that he desired. Having set his heart on gaining the affections and hand of a young woman, James Mackintosh sought a position as professor at Aberdeen in order to afford to marry. His father, he wrote in his autobiography, "was of no help in getting him the position," having only one contact, a Major Mercer, to whom Mackintosh implored his father to write but to no avail.⁸⁰

Young men of the Highland gentry were not, however, the only Highlanders to physically move away from their Highland origins. Across the eighteenth century, non-gentry members of Highland society "formed a steady stream" to America and exploited opportunities for gaining land and particularly accessing trade.⁸¹ In 1735, one hundred and sixty-three members of the Clan Chattan responded to a call by the recruiting agents of James Oglethorpe to go to Georgia

⁷⁵ Autobiography, Bombay 1804, BL Add MS 52436b, 1.

⁷⁶ Mrs MacGillivray to Bailie John, Inverness, February 1774, BL Add MS78771a, 1-2.

⁷⁷ O'Leary, *Sir James Mackintosh*, 9.

⁷⁸ James Mackintosh to John Mackintosh, 29th December 1782, BL Add MS52451b,6.

⁷⁹ *Ibid*, 6.

⁸⁰ Autobiography, 14.

⁸¹ Lenman, *Jacobite Clans*, 199.

to serve in America against the Spanish.⁸² Amongst them was probably James Mackintosh's maternal family, the MacGillivrays, who earned their money through trade in South Carolina. Trading predominantly in pelts, the extensive family of MacGillivrays lived and worked alongside American Indian tribes with whom they not uncommonly inter-married.⁸³ Lachlan MacGillivray, one of the clansmen who emigrated in 1736, married a part-French, part-Creek woman, Sehoj Marchand.⁸⁴ Their son, Hobi-Hili-Miko or Alexander MacGillivray, was brought up in the culture and language of his Wind tribe and educated in English at Charlestown. Hobi-Hili-Miko formed for himself a powerful position within his own tribe and amongst imperial powers that was enabled by his straddling of cultures.⁸⁵ More commonly, however, marriage and business partnerships were formed within the clan, leading to networks of kin and clan that spread across a widening imperial world. For example, Lachlan Mackintosh, the laird of Kyllachy in the early eighteenth century left Kyllachy to his brother, Alexander, on his death. Alexander lived and traded in India but had married Elizabeth Barbour of Aldourie; Aldourie was part of the parish of Dore in which James Mackintosh's birth was registered in 1765.⁸⁶

Another member of the clan whom Mackintosh encountered in India had left the Highlands at the age of nineteen, sailed to China and then settled as a merchant in India. He wrote to James Mackintosh in 1805 describing the family and dependents that comprised his household. Claiming that, "I can be of more use to those who need my assistance as a resident here than at home," L. Mackintosh wrote that, "I have heretofore been unable to tell my worthy mother when to expect the fulfilment of her wishes in my return."⁸⁷ L. Mackintosh presented his Highland family as remaining in close proximity in his mind and sense of attachment. The letter book in which James Mackintosh's own letters are found suggests economic ties and business links with Bailie John Mackintosh in the Highlands. "Possessed of an independence which would be equal to my wants and indeed to my wishes," L. Mackintosh suggested that he was torn between his family commitments in Calcutta and those of his kin in the Highlands.⁸⁸ Retaining the use of 'home' to refer to the Highlands, L. Mackintosh nonetheless saw little

⁸² Letters of Two Centuries, Appendix number 6, 386; M. Mackintosh, The Clan Mackintosh, 50.

⁸³ The most famous example being Alexander MacGillivray. See John Walton Caughey, MacGillivray of the Creeks. (Norman, 1938), 9-11; "MacGillivray, Alexander," American National Biography Online <http://www.anb.org/articles/20/20-01687.html> (02/08/2009).

⁸⁴ "MacGillivray, Lachlan," American National Biography Online <http://www.anb.org/articles/20/20-01686.html> (03/08/2009).

⁸⁵ "MacGillivray, Alexander," ANBO

⁸⁶ Letters of Two Centuries, 317

⁸⁷ L Mackintosh to James Mackintosh, Bombay 25th November 1805, MS 6360, National Library Scotland (NLS),94.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

possibility of return and, not wanting the “relinquishment of present comforts,” seemed determined on staying with his family in Calcutta.⁸⁹

Emigration to other parts of the British empire and service in the British army dispersed families and put intense strain on networks of kin and clan. Yet perhaps more than geographical distance, it was practices of socialisation and cultural, class and ethnic identification that led to the diminishing of traditional Highland culture and kinship bonds. One fleeting reference to speaking Gaelic with a colleague in Bombay is the only evidence that Mackintosh spoke Gaelic, probably fluently and from childhood.⁹⁰ He made no further mention of Gaelic but frequently commented upon English usage as a marker of civility, taste and elegance.⁹¹ The lack of affective ties to culture, not even a romantic attachment to the Highlands, was mirrored in Mackintosh’s breaking of ties with his Highland relatives. Despite the fact that Mackintosh returned intermittently throughout his adult life to the Highlands to visit relatives, his identification with them seems to have faded rapidly upon leaving Scotland. Imagining his ideal situation upon his return ‘home’ from Bombay, Mackintosh located himself and his family on the outskirts of London.⁹² The family and friends he longed to reconnect with, the space and society upon which he based his sense of belonging resided far from the Highlands. Turning to Mackintosh’s own reflections on his childhood in his unpublished autobiography, I explore the ways in which his detachment from his own family was mapped onto his representation of the Highlands.

The main source for James Mackintosh’s Highland Scottish childhood comes from an unpublished and unfinished autobiography penned in the early years of his residence in Bombay.⁹³ In his opening preface Mackintosh discoursed apologetically on the egotism of autobiographical writing, emphasising the modesty of his pursuit with self-effacing remarks about the lack of achievement in his life to date. Mackintosh claimed that he was preparing a document for the amusement of his old age or, should he not reach it, for his friends and family to remember him by.⁹⁴ Yet slightly concealed by heavy marks of erasure, is evidence of a more ambitious reason for recording his own life. “Whether England and Europe will ever feel any curiosity to know the events of my life and the feelings they excited in my mind I cannot

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ 24th June 1811, BL Add MS 52438b, 28.

⁹¹ 16th February 1811, BL Add MS 52438a, 65. For a discussion of language and imperialism see Janet Sorensen, *The Grammar of Empire in Eighteenth-century British Writing* (Cambridge, 2000).

⁹² 12th September 1810, BL Add MS 78769, 66.

⁹³ *Autobiography*, 1.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

presume to conjecture.”⁹⁵ Mackintosh wrote nonetheless, in the “hope that at some future time I may hope to be better known to the public than I now am.”⁹⁶ From current obscurity in Bombay, Mackintosh projected himself onto an imagined and hoped-for future of fame that resided away from Highland Scotland in “England and Europe.” The nature of such fame, he suggested elsewhere in letters and diaries, was undecided. Would he be “a man of action or letters,” a lawgiver or a historian, a member of Parliament or a reclusive but productive scholar?⁹⁷ Whichever life-pursuit he chose, they had in common the desire to be recognised by an unspecified public domain and to assert influence over that domain in the present and the future. Access to this ‘public,’ however, was fundamentally reliant upon passing as, and properly performing, a specific gender, class and ethnicity. In order to belong to this public and to shape its nature and course, it was necessary first to establish and mould an identity, to create a character, that would allow him to perform his belonging.⁹⁸

In 1804, when Sir James Mackintosh, Recorder of Bombay, sat down to narrate his life and to set his identity upon the page, he made no mention of either the Clan Mackintosh or the Clan Chattan confederacy of which the Mackintoshes were chiefs. When he set out his origins, instead of locating himself in the genealogy of the clan, Mackintosh began by placing himself on a map of male relatives who had served in various parts of the British empire. His father, Captain John Mackintosh, was defined through his service in the British army, with emphasis laid upon the fact that he was wounded in the Seven Years’ War. His mother, Mackintosh described in relationship to her own male family and particularly, also, those who served the British empire. She was, Mackintosh relates, “Marjory MacGillivray of Mr Alexander MacGillivray by Anne Fraser, sister of Brigadier General Fraser, killed in General Bourgogne’s army in 1777, aunt to Dr Fraser, Physician in London and to Mrs Fraser Tytler, wife of Lord Woodhouselee, now a judge of the court of session in Scotland.”⁹⁹ It was through this catalogue of more distant male relatives that Mackintosh established his maternal family in the context, not of the Clan Chattan of which they were also a part, but of the British imperial world of the male, professional middle classes.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ James Mackintosh to Catherine Mackintosh, Bombay, Tuesday April 15th 1810, BL Add MS 78769,13-15.

⁹⁸ For a discussion of belonging see Nira Yuval-Davis, “Belonging and the politics of belonging,” *Patterns of Prejudice* 40, 3, 2006: 197-214.

⁹⁹ Autobiography, 2.

¹⁰⁰ For a very different formulation of identity see Matthew Brown, “Gregor MacGregor: Clansman, Conquistador and Coloniser on the Fringes of the British Empire” in *Colonial Lives Across the British Empire: imperial careering across the nineteenth century*, ed. David Lambert and Alan Lester (Cambridge, 2006), 49-54.

Thus, Mackintosh began his autobiography by locating himself in relationship to a network of male relatives, serving, wounded and dying in the British empire or practicing professions in the metropole, all far beyond the Highlands. Then, in stark contrast to these far-flung men, he turned to present a huddle of women in a “small house called Cluny” in which he spent his infancy. “The only infant in a family of several women” he wrote, “they rivalled each other in kindness and indulgence towards me.”¹⁰¹ His mother, Mackintosh claimed, was unhappy, an unhappiness that “contributed to her extreme affection which she felt for me.”¹⁰² Not sufficiently provided for by her husband, whose pay was “not too much for his own expenses,” she was forced to rely upon her own family and lavished her love upon the only dependent she had.¹⁰³ From the centre of this scene of feminine fixation, Mackintosh, pondering his younger self “at the distance of twenty years and of fifteen thousand miles,” gazed out. Out of the window of “our little parlour” to view “the Lake with its uninterrupted expanse of twenty-four miles and its fortifications of perpendicular wooded rock.”¹⁰⁴

The focus of Mackintosh’s gaze, however, was fixed far beyond the Highland landscape, on the activities of his father and uncles fighting the wars of American Independence and the fortunes of Great Britain in the wars against France and Spain during the 1770s. Mackintosh wrote that his first poem was an elegy to his uncle, Brigadier General Fraser, a man who he probably never met but would have heard about through family and in letters. By recording and placing emphasis upon his attempts at poetry – written, presumably in English or Latin - Mackintosh was projecting onto his youth his status as a man of letters, a member of the literati that he was later to become. Furthermore, his description of this poetry, one apparently based upon Rollin’s Ancient History, illustrated his patriotism, his interest and involvement in the activities of a country whose centre of power was far beyond his immediate geographical location. “I thought it a noble example to Great Britain,” he wrote, “then threatened with invasion when the combined fleets of France and Spain were riding triumphant in the Channel.”¹⁰⁵

Whether concerned with the battles fought across the British empire, or with ancient classical literature, Mackintosh represented himself as a youth immersed in worlds that were, for the most part, temporally, linguistically and spatially far removed from his day-to-day existence. It is only in matters of religion that he suggested his immediate experiences informed his choices. Saying

¹⁰¹ “Autobiography,” 2.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 6.

nothing about the religious beliefs and practices of his own family, Mackintosh recorded that his experience of religious prejudice against one of his fellows at school “contributed to make my mind free and inquisitive.”¹⁰⁶ Having read Burnet’s Exposition on Thirty-Nine Articles and witnessed the Orthodox Calvinism of his boarding mistress and school parson, Mackintosh claimed that he “became a warm advocate for free will ... probably the boldest heretic in the Country.”¹⁰⁷ By proudly declaring what he called his youthful “heresy,” Mackintosh distanced himself from his context. His emphasis on his own inquisitiveness and use of the superlative is set in implicit contrast to the mentality of the country in which he resided. Thus, he painted a suggestive picture of a country in which orthodoxy reigned supreme and in which expressions of “free will” were lacking. Finally, he linked his own personal trajectory to what he saw as the much broader progress of nations, stating that “theological controversy has been the general inducement of individuals and nations to engage in metaphysical speculation.”¹⁰⁸ In his discussion of his community’s culture of orthodoxy, conformity and lack of “metaphysical speculation”, Mackintosh represented himself as standing apart from, and implicitly above, the context in which he grew up. In a note briefly reminiscing on Mackintosh’s youth, Pryse Gordon recalled a story from a relative who had taught Mackintosh and described his zeal in putting forward the Whig case against the wars of independence in America.¹⁰⁹ What other people remembered of his childhood and what Mackintosh himself chose to record in his autobiography laid emphasis upon a political and scholarly identity that looked far beyond his local and immediate context.

For James Mackintosh, his period of schooling between the ages of ten and twenty-two mark some of his first steps towards becoming a professional man, an intellectual, a lawyer and ultimately a historian. From the moment of his arrival at Fortrose, Mackintosh’s autobiography becomes a narrative dominated by the impact of books and study that he directly related to the formation of his character. The picture of Cluny as a closed, affective and feminine sphere stands in contrast to the male-dominated world of scholarship into which Mackintosh first ventured when he went to school in Fortrose. Mackintosh related his dreams of power as a young boy inspired by Erhard’s Roman History to imagine himself emperor of Constantinople: “I distributed offices and provinces among my schoolfellows. I loaded my favourites with dignity and power and I often made objects of my dislike feel the weight of my imperial resentment.”¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 3.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Extract from the portfolio of Pryse L Gordon, BL Add MS78771a , 225.

¹¹⁰ Autobiography, 4

Mackintosh connected the attributes and prowess of ancient heroes to those of his distant male relatives, borrowing the form of ancient verse to give content to the lives and actions of absent uncles. In The Gender of History, Bonnie Smith has argued that early readings of the ancient classics encouraged school boys to identify with their hero-scholars and promoted the idea that scholarship itself was a masculine activity.¹¹¹ Mirroring the activities and disposition of those ancient heroes, Mackintosh wrote of the dreams of castle-building and imperial dominance that he stated remained with him throughout his life. Of his propensity towards “castle building,” Mackintosh stated that “I have no doubt that many a man surrounded by piles of folios and apparently engaged in the most profound researches is in reality often employed in distributing the offices and provinces of the Empire of Constantinople.”¹¹²

Across James Mackintosh’s narrative of his childhood, it was nation, power and conquest that stood at the heart of his reflections on boyhood experiences and pre-occupations. Passing rapidly over the details of his life ‘at home,’ Mackintosh located the influences that shaped his character largely in the world of literature. Yet Mackintosh’s education did not begin at Fortrose grammar school. Such schools expected boys to arrive, usually between the ages of eight and ten, with a knowledge of English reading and writing.¹¹³ Mackintosh, it would seem, arrived significantly better equipped, and was, according to the reminiscence of a relative of his school master’s, “by far the cleverest boy” the teacher had ever taught.¹¹⁴ That his mother, Marjory, took her son’s education beyond the rudiments of literacy is also suggested by her husband’s disapproval that she would render the boy a “mere pedant” through too much learning. Where Marjory gained her own education and what methods and tools she used to teach her son remains unknown. Described by the Calcutta Review as “a woman of a very superior stamp,” it was probably she who introduced Mackintosh to the volumes of Swift and Pope that he claims to have “found” on his grandmother’s shelves.¹¹⁵ Yet Marjory Mackintosh’s role in her sons’ education is given neither mention nor significance and is only briefly mentioned, as quoted below, in his own autobiography:

She loved me with that fondness which we are naturally disposed to cherish for the companion of our poverty. The only infant in a family of several women, they rivalled

¹¹¹ Bonnie Smith, The Gender of History: Men, Women and Historical Practice (Cambridge, Mass, 1998), 82.

¹¹² Autobiography, 5.

¹¹³ Henry Grey Graham, The Social Life of Scotland in the Eighteenth Century (London, 1899), 443.

¹¹⁴ Extract from the portfolio of Pryse L Gordon, 225.

¹¹⁵ “Article 12: Memoirs of the Life of the Right Honourable Sir James Mackintosh,” The Calcutta Review, vol XIV, July- December 1850: 481; Autobiography, 2.

each other in kindness and indulgence towards me and I think I can at this day discover in my character many of the effects of this early education.

Placed in a context that is overwhelmingly concerned with love and emotional affect, his mother's labour, and that of his aunts and grandmother, is entirely separated from his formal schooling. This separation enabled Mackintosh to represent his world as divided into two spheres. One, which was dominated by adult men and boys whose vision extended outwards and beyond, to power, empire, intellectual pursuit and war, the other, dominated by women and occasionally older men, was based in the household and characterised by affect. Any blurring of those boundaries was dismissed from Mackintosh's narrative. Thus, despite the education and instruction that Marjory Mackintosh gave to her son, her impact on James Mackintosh's learning and sense of scholarly self goes almost entirely unrecognised. Indeed, it was Marjory's dependence on her family, rather than his own dependence on her that Mackintosh emphasised in his autobiography. Far from seeing her efforts as the fundamental building blocks upon which his own intellectual achievements rested, Mackintosh presented his life with his mother and female relatives in Cluny as an enclosure against which he was straining.

Less than a year after beginning his autobiography, Mackintosh wrote a letter to his brother-in-law, John Allen, in which he made evident his sense of disconnection from the family and society into which he was born. "I have been gradually detached from my own relations, I had formed many most invaluable friendships – but till I met you I had found nothing that I could take to my heart as kindred."¹¹⁶ In asserting his sense of belonging to his wife's family as "kindred", Mackintosh turned away from his Highland kin and looked, instead, to a more metropolitan form of society, politics and sociability that was embodied in the Allen-Wedgwood family. Catherine, née Allen, was born in 1865 and raised in Pembrokeshire, one of eight sisters and a brother and the daughter John Bartlett Allen, a wealthy, if highly unpopular landed gentleman with coal mines on his estates that generated a significant income. The family's connections to the Wedgwood circle through the marriage of Catherine's older sister, Elizabeth (Bessy) to Josiah (Jos) Wedgwood, brought them close to a wide circle of Whigs – both landed gentry and wealthy professionals and businessmen.¹¹⁷ When Mackintosh met Catherine in 1797, the young women

¹¹⁶ Mackintosh to (John) Allen, Parell House Bombay, 22nd February 1805, BL Add MS78768 , 61.

¹¹⁷ Inglis-Jones, *A Pembrokeshire County Family*, n.p.

of the Allen family were assembled at Cote House in Bristol, which had become a fashionable centre for ‘young intellectuals.’¹¹⁸

If Mackintosh had severed affective ties to his Highland family, however, occasional encounters appear to have been unavoidable. In 1810 Catherine Mackintosh wrote to her husband about an afternoon spent in the company of his family in London.¹¹⁹ Catherine had returned from Bombay with their children in 1810, with the intention of securing her husband’s ‘release’ and the pension he had been promised for his service. She wrote to Mackintosh about her meeting with his family in a tone that left no uncertainty as to her opinion of his “thousands of relatives.” “Your female cousin the citizen Ann is a mighty plain spinster and spinster I think she will be likely to remain, for there is nothing piquante in her ugliness and she seems besides to have no accomplishment except that of speaking the head Highland Scotch like Henry”, Catherine wrote of one, and was equally disparaging of the others.¹²⁰ With no social circles in common and not being “literary ladies,” Catherine found herself at a loss for conversation. Making evident her distaste towards Mackintosh’s female relatives, Catherine laboured their difference from their “southern neighbours.” The “simplicity” of these northern women she found endearing but condescendingly commented that, “Your Scotch women have no heads for metaphysics nor much for the lighter thinking or reading.”¹²¹

For Catherine Mackintosh, her husband’s family was a rather foreign curiosity, somewhat rustic and distasteful. Her emphasis on the size of his family drew subtly and probably unconsciously on popular English stereotypes of the Scottish and is evidence of the pervasiveness of ‘English’ prejudice against Scots.¹²² Yet of far greater concern was her sister-in-law, Mary, who would have to be dispatched immediately back to Scotland before Mackintosh himself arrived back in London. Having established a lodging house in London, his sister was apparently boasting of her relationship to Sir James Mackintosh. It was a situation which would afford extreme social embarrassment to James Mackintosh whose own position amongst, and patronage by, London’s respectable Whig elite was not without fragility. “Nothing but Scotland or every scheme of fame for yourself or respectability for your family is out of the question,” Catherine wrote. “How could you live in London with any comfort with so near a relation keeping a lodging house?”¹²³

¹¹⁸ Barbara and Hensleigh Wedgwood, *The Wedgwood Circle, 1730-1897* (London, 1980), 106.

¹¹⁹ Catherine Mackintosh to James Mackintosh, 20th October 1810, BL Add MS 78769, BL, 106.

¹²⁰ Catherine Mackintosh to James Mackintosh, 20th October 1810, BL Add MS 78769, BL, 106.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

¹²² See Linda Colley, *Britons : Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (New Haven, 1992), 120-2.

¹²³ *Ibid.*

Catherine's alarm about her sister-in-law's activities in London are illustrative of the profound socio-economic differences that separated her own origins from that of her husband's. Mackintosh's marriage to Catherine in 1798 had elicited several expressions of concern from her relatives. Writing in early 1798 from Cote House, Catherine mentioned dining with two female cousins who 'congratulated me in private on my happy prospects but lamented that we should not be richer.'¹²⁴ Yet in the networked world of politics, clubs, dinners and balls, it was less the disparities in disposable income and more disparity in cultural conventions and conversation that marked people as different and, in this case, inferior. As Catherine's description of her encounter with her husband's relatives and her fears about his sister's activities in London make evident, being associated with the women of the Mackintosh family threatened to compromise her family's prospects. To be associated with them in the "civilised" world of London, where reputations had to be carefully protected, represented a threat to their own social status.

Catherine Mackintosh's meeting with her husband's female relatives brought together people separated by distances that spanned more than just miles. As the eldest son, the resources devoted to Mackintosh's education were prioritised over his siblings, neither of whom he mentioned in his autobiography. His younger brother, John, was given fewer opportunities and spent the first few years of his schooling in an institution far inferior to his older brother's school in Fortrose. Writing to Bailie John Mackintosh, the boys' father, Captain John Mackintosh, expressed his intention to remove his younger son to a "more respectable" school.¹²⁵ Whether this move ever took place, John (junior) appears never to have followed his older brother to college or university. His father eventually gained a position for his son as an ensign in the army, albeit only on half-pay.¹²⁶ John Mackintosh (junior) went to the West Indies, but not before suffering hardship and uncertainty, unable to afford the voyage out.¹²⁷ When he did finally manage to travel with his regiment to Honduras, Mackintosh wrote to his aunt that, "His society and situation are not the most agreeable in the world. I wish I could remove him to more agreeable quarters but my interest is so small that I have little hopes of doing it soon."¹²⁸ John junior died in Honduras, sometime between 1799 and 1800. Mackintosh's sister, Mary, was given still fewer opportunities. She may have been educated by her mother or attended the local parish school but girls' education was focused on activities that would make them good wives,

¹²⁴ To James Mackintosh from Cote House, (28th February, 1798), BL Add MS 78768, 19.

¹²⁵ Captain Mackintosh to Bailie John McIntosh, Inverness, North Britain, 11th May 1783, BL Add MS 7876827, 29.

¹²⁶ O'Leary, *Sir James Mackintosh*, 14.

¹²⁷ James Mackintosh to his Grandmother, 14 Serle Street, Lincoln's Inn, London, 16th November, 1796, BL Add MS 78768, 3.

¹²⁸ James Mackintosh to his Grandmother, 15th November 1799, BL Add MS 78768, 34.

with anything beyond reading discouraged.¹²⁹ In his occasional letters to his aunt, Mackintosh did not deny that he had a financial responsibility towards his sister, yet it was one that he appeared never to have fulfilled.

Gender inequality and the prioritisation of the eldest boy's education, could lead – did lead, in Mackintosh's case - to intellectual and class gaps within families.¹³⁰ Indeed, it was at the intersection of socio-economic class and Highland ethnicity that the sense of radical alterity was generated. It was this sense of difference that Mackintosh endeavoured to disassociate himself from. Through dis-identification with the space of his childhood, Mackintosh smoothed-over and erased the complex and overlapping worlds into which he was born. Instead, he constructed himself as always identifying with a socio-economic elite, British imperial world, with London at its centre. That Mackintosh was able, eventually, to inhabit that centre was the result of an education and socialisation that he received in school, college and university in Fortrose, Aberdeen and Edinburgh, all at the expense of his Highland relatives, many of them women. It was an education that gave him access to networks of patronage and the skills which, combined with his intelligence, enabled his first forays into the world of journalism and his ultimate fame – later infamy – with the publication of the *Vindiciae Gallicae*. However, as the generation of Scottish scholars who taught Mackintosh in Aberdeen and Edinburgh understood and related better than most, access to metropolitan, “polite” society and its patronage networks was dependent upon a way of being, identifying and performing a metropolitan, middle class civility, which left little room for significant cultural difference.¹³¹

It is twenty years since the publication of Linda Colley's *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1832*, in which she illustrated the dominant role played by Scottish men in the expansion and consolidation of the British Empire. Colley's argument that ‘Britishness’, based upon Protestantism and forged by war, provided an umbrella identity under which other regional and national identities could nestle, has been widely criticised and significantly complicated.¹³² On the face of it Mackintosh's public prose would seem largely to support Colley's argument. In a speech to the ‘Loyal North Britons’ in 1803, he made clear the interrelated role of empire and

¹²⁹ R.D. Anderson, *Education and the Scottish People, 1750-1918* (Oxford, 1995), 8.

¹³⁰ Nenadic, *Lairds and Luxury*, 55-57.

¹³¹ Phillipson, Nicholas, “Adam Smith as Civic Moralist” in *Wealth and Virtue: The Shaping of Political Economy in the Scottish Enlightenment*, ed. Istvan Hont and Michael Ignatieff (Cambridge, 1983), 180.

¹³² See for example, Theodore Koditschek, “The Making of British Nationality,” *Victorian Studies*, 44, 3 (2002): 389-398.

European warfare in forging a bond between individual nations: 'I know I speak the sentiment of every honest man, Englishman, Irishman or Scotchman, when I say, that we will maintain inviolate that noble union which was consolidated on the plains of Egypt and Syria, where every nation was represented by her hero.'¹³³ 'Britishness', in this instance, allowed Mackintosh to assert his belonging to a masculine empire whose tentacles of political, cultural and socio-economic power seemed ever expansive.

Yet this 'Britishness' was far from being an umbrella that allowed room for other forms of identity and ways of being to co-exist. Mackintosh's performance of a British imperial identity relied upon distancing himself from the Scottish Highlands as a space and a society whose differences, marked as barbaric, threatened his own ambitions to belong closer to the centres of imperial power. Colin Kidd has argued that the Scottish Whig tradition failed to contribute to an over-arching British identity, falling back instead on a definition of 'the British' based around the nexus of legal institutions, and moral and economic 'improvement', for which England was the torch-bearer.¹³⁴ Kidd's argument is reflected both in Mackintosh's thought and in his more intimate construction of identity and belonging in relationship to the Highlands. Imagining the world as a concentric circle at the centre of which stood London, the pinnacle of 'civilisation', Mackintosh's spatial hierarchy brought imperial-nationalism and stadial theory closer together than his Scottish enlightenment forbears ever had. Part of a wider trend towards more triumphalist theories of progress in the early nineteenth century, Mackintosh's conceptualisation of 'progress' and 'civilisation' had little or no room for cultural or class-based differences, including that of his own family and kin.¹³⁵

As a Highland Scot who gained status and a sense of belonging to the centre of imperial power in the early nineteenth-century, Mackintosh has few contemporaries with whom to make a comparison. Few, if any, early nineteenth-century Highlanders have left behind such extensive documentation of their thoughts and deeds as Mackintosh did.¹³⁶ Yet, whether representative or not, Mackintosh's history complicates the picture of Scots and 'Scottishness' in relationship to the British Empire. It illustrates the necessity to distinguish between Highlands and Lowlands in

¹³³ Proceedings at A General Meeting of the Loyal North Britons, held at the Crown and Anchor, August 8th, 1803; containing a correct copy of the celebrated Speech of James Mackintosh esq. (London, 1803), 18.

¹³⁴ Colin Kidd, Subverting Scotland's Past: Scottish Whig historians and the creation of an Anglo-British identity, 1689-c.1830 (Cambridge, 2003), 270-274.

¹³⁵ Jennifer Pitts, A Turn to Empire: the rise of imperial liberalism in Britain and France (Princeton and Oxford, 2005), 240.

¹³⁶ Charles Grant would be a notable exception and a useful comparison but the majority of his papers have been lost.

particular, but also to consider the ways in which differential access to power, even between Scots of a similar status, led to different relationships to Scotland, empire and identity. If some Scots were keen and able to configure a sense of 'Scottishness' because of, or in spite of, their participation in a wider British imperial project, others, such as Mackintosh, were eager to dispense with the markers of difference or to forge new and hybrid identities.¹³⁷ Marriage out of Scottish kin networks provided the means of tapping into new avenues of power and resulted in new configurations of belonging, affective communities, spatial imaginaries and identities. These histories of the reconfiguration of identity, of loss, erasure and disassociation represent another angle on the history of people whose origins, ancestry and heritage pertain to Scotland as a social, political, geographical and cultural space. They are histories of entanglement that necessarily confuse any contained narrative of nations, peoples and places but in their telling they provide further insights into the configuration of identity and its relationship to networks of power.

¹³⁷ See Angela McCarthy, 'Scottish Migrant Ethnic Identities in the British Empire since the Nineteenth Century' in Scotland and the British Empire, 118-146.