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# Enlightened Agricultural Improvement in Eighteenth-Century Scotland

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ENLIGHTENED AGRICULTURAL IMPROVEMENT IN  
EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY SCOTLAND

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A Thesis

Presented to

The Graduate Faculty

Central Washington University

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In Partial Fulfillment

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Master of Arts

History

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by

Amanda Marie Widney

May 2019

CENTRAL WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

Graduate Studies

We hereby approve the thesis of

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## ABSTRACT

### ENLIGHTENED AGRICULTURAL IMPROVEMENT IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY SCOTLAND

by

Amanda Marie Widney

May 2019

Eighteenth-century Scotland is marked by the impact of new ideas from the Scottish Enlightenment that influenced agricultural revolution. Practices that had been used for over hundreds of years with little change, went through a dramatic agricultural reimagining during this time period. Scottish Enlightenment “improvers,” like Henry Home, Lord Kames, demonstrate this push towards “progress.” In particular, Lord Kames represents a conundrum. He, like many other Scots, believed in the authenticity of Ossian’s translated poems by James Macpherson. This patriotic devotion to Scottish culture influenced the way that Kames went about “improving” his own lands and who he chose to work on them. There were parts of Scottish culture that were depicted in these poems regarding Gaelic culture that Kames wanted to preserve. Even though Kames, like many Scots of his time, wanted change, they also wanted to preserve traditional Scottish culture portrayed in Ossian’s poems.

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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

“There is no European nation which, within the course of half a century, or little more, has undergone so complex a change as this kingdom of Scotland.”<sup>1</sup> Sir Walter Scott, a nineteenth-century Edinburgh native, wrote this in *Waverley*, his 1814 work that described the history of Scotland. Looking back on eighteenth-century Scotland, Scott explained the intense transformation that occurred in Scottish society throughout its political structure and economy. Scotland is well known for many highly influential discoveries, inventions, and literary works. A small, mostly rural country, Scotland flourished in the eighteenth century in political, economic, and social ways that have become cornerstones of Scotland’s legacy as inventors and survivors. The cluster of individuals and ideas that emerged in eighteenth-century Scotland gained more attention from scholars in the 1970s due to the resurgence in interest for Scottish history. These Scots contributed to the distinctive Scottish Enlightenment through their written works and applied agricultural methods.

The Scottish Enlightenment was part of the larger Enlightenment movement, but there were clear differences between the two. There was never an anti-clerical, anti-church, or anti-religious character to the Scottish Enlightenment, in contrast to its counterpart in France.<sup>2</sup> There also was an emphasis on empirical knowledge, with questions focused on the what and how of things, instead of the why.<sup>3</sup> The Scottish Enlightenment was more concerned with the application of this newfound empirical knowledge regarding morality, conduct, and public affairs. Scots

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<sup>1</sup> Sir Walter Scott, *Waverley, or ‘Tis Sixty Years Hence*, accessed May 14, 2019, <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/5998/5998-h/5998-h.htm>.

<sup>2</sup> William C. Lehmann, *Henry Home, Lord Kames, and the Scottish Enlightenment: A Study in National Character and in the History of Ideas*, Archives Internationales D’histoire Des Idées; 41 (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1971), xii.

<sup>3</sup> Lehmann, *Henry Home, Lord Kames*, xii.

believed that the sense of morality and bettering human kind, especially those in Scotland, was crucial to Scotland's progression to a commercial society. Also, unlike in France where French Enlightenment thinkers demanded radical reform of society and the state, Scotland centered on human betterment in a more moderate, pragmatic way. Scottish thinkers like Henry Home (more well-known by his judicial title, Lord Kames), were able to spread these new ideas quickly by educating the public; their system of dissemination stemmed from universities, clubs and societies, and progressive churches (parishes). Many know what the European Enlightenment was, but there are fewer who are aware of the drastic shift in agricultural Scottish practices that occurred in the eighteenth century due to the distinctive characteristics that comprised the Scottish Enlightenment.

The eighteenth-century Scottish agricultural improvements were carried out in the Highlands and Lowlands of Scotland and forever changed its agricultural production. Before the Scottish Enlightenment, agricultural practices had not changed for hundreds of years. The systems of run-rig and antiquated farming tools did little to increase the agricultural output in Scotland. Scottish "improvers" like Lord Kames ushered in an era of "improvement," pushed by the Union with England in 1707 that made Scots believe there were vast economic opportunities within the British Empire, but only if they could leave behind their "backward" views on agricultural production. Scotland's "improvers" implemented enclosures to create smaller fields, and advocated new crops and animals to alleviate problems with crop yields. They also wanted to increase the amount of arable and pastoral lands, by using new tools to get the most profit out of the land they had to work with. Most of the land in Scotland during the eighteenth century was either arable or pastoral, being used to farm crops or for animals to graze. The effects of these



“improvements” were long lasting and felt in both the Highland and Lowland populations and environments, at times in devastating ways for both the land and its people.

All of these “improvements” were carried out by a man who exemplifies this transition in Scotland, Lord Kames. He implemented them on his own lands and captured them throughout his written works. Themes of patriotism and education are constant throughout his works, as is his passion for agricultural improvement in Scotland. While some Scottish thinkers wanted to do away with any “Scotticisms,” Kames used them frequently. Scotticisms were used by Scottish authors instead of Latin to communicate their ideas in order for them to be more widely accepted in Europe. For example, according to David Hume, a Scot would say “conform to,” while an English-speaking person would say “conformable to”; or a Scot would say “tender,” while an English-speaking person would say “sickly.”<sup>4</sup> Scotticisms were just one way in which Kames was trying to preserve and amplify Scottish culture.

Kames took pride in his country, and patriotism for him was a critical element of any successful society. This pride and patriotic tendency was clearly evident with who Kames chose to work on his lands. Kames made sure to hire Highlanders, not just because they were perceived to be hard working, but also to preserve their culture. By hiring only Highlanders to work on his lands, Kames kept them from emigrating. The cultural aspects of Highlanders that Kames was trying to maintain were the manners described by Ossian (Oisín in Gaelic). Kames was a fervent believer in the authenticity of James Macpherson’s 1762 and 1763 published epic poems *Fingal* and *Temora*, in which a third century Gaelic Irish warrior-poet named Ossian described heroic tales about Finn MacCumhaill (MacCool) and his war band known as the Fianna Èireann. Ossian and Kames believed that the Gaelic culture was an important component of Scottish history that

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<sup>4</sup> David Hume, “A List of Scotticisms by David Hume” in *Scots Magazine*, vol. 22 (D.C. Thomson & Co., 1760), 686.

had to be kept. After the widespread success of these poems came a time of uncertainty and questionability about the authenticity of such works. They were “discovered” and then “translated” by James Macpherson; this was later found out to be false, but many Scots, like Kames, maintained their belief that the Ossian poems were genuine. Kames’ legacy lived on long after he passed, with his son taking up the cause of improving Scottish land and society. Kames is a case study of an agricultural improver, a gentleman farmer, and a Scottish philosopher. The dichotomy between Scottish Enlightenment “improvements” and the preservation of the antiquated Gaelic culture embodied Kames’ personality and influenced the way he carried out his improvement schemes.

Lord Kames has been studied by Scottish historians such as William Lehmann and Arthur E. McGuinness. Lehmann’s work *Henry Home, Lord Kames, and the Scottish Enlightenment: A Study in National Character and in the History of Ideas* provides great insight into the literary works and life of Lord Kames. Lehmann’s purpose was to:

present the life and work and thought of a remarkable pioneering figure on the Scottish scene over the middle half, broadly, of the eighteenth century, in their dynamic relations with that most extraordinary intellectual awakening and scientific, educational, literary and religious development of his time generally known as the “Scottish Enlightenment.”<sup>5</sup>

Lehmann’s work provides evidence for a truly Scottish Enlightenment, as well as demonstrating the influential “improvements” carried out by Lord Kames. The work *Henry Home, Lord Kames* by McGuinness is similar to Lehmann’s. McGuinness felt that Lord Kames had been neglected by Scottish historians, and he wanted Kames to “be given the place he deserves in the history of eighteenth-century British literature.”<sup>6</sup> Both of these works provide the

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<sup>5</sup> Lehmann, xv.

<sup>6</sup> Arthur McGuinness, *Henry Home, Lord Kames* (New York: Twayne Publishers Inc., 1970), preface.

background on Lord Kames' life, his literary works, his patriotic mindset, and Scottish Enlightenment thinking.

While Lehmann and McGuinness give great insight to Kames, they fall short on providing information regarding Scotland's agricultural transition from a run-rig traditional system to a new "improved" system of enclosures and crop rotation (growing different types of crops in the same area in sequenced seasons). Scottish historian T. M. Devine's works *Farm Servants and Labour in Lowland Scotland, 1770-1914*, *The Scottish Nation: A History, 1700-2000*, and *The Transformation of Rural Scotland: Social Change and the Agrarian Economy, 1660-1815* all demonstrate the change in agricultural methods and production in eighteenth-century Scotland. *Farm Servants and Labour in Lowland Scotland* is a collection of essays that present a clear history of farm service and labor in the Lowlands of Scotland during the eighteenth century to WWI. Devine detailed the climate, topography and change in farm sizes during this time period. *The Scottish Nation* is Devine's presentation of a "coherent account of the last 300 years of Scotland's past with the hope of developing a better understanding of the Scottish present."<sup>7</sup> Devine in this work gives an overview of the facts, data and arguments that developed in this period of time by scholars such as T. C. Smout. The emphasis of this work is on the social and economic history of Scotland, with a consideration of politics throughout, but it does not detail the Scottish Enlightenment or its thinkers. Devine, in *The Transformation of Rural Scotland*, used archived material such as poll taxes and estate records to explore the social revolution of the old society. It stays true to the current thesis that there was a remarkable shift in agricultural practices in the eighteenth century through planned development. It details the rural social structures, as well as the tenant-landlord relationships before and after the eighteenth

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<sup>7</sup> T. M. Devine, *The Scottish Nation: A History, 1700-2000*, 1<sup>st</sup> American ed. (New York: Viking, 1999), ix.

century. He does assert in this work that landowners in Scotland had a power over tenants on a scale that was not experienced in England because of the differences in tenant-landlord relationships in the Highlands, especially with clans. Because of this, the tenant-landlord relationships played an integral part to the changes that occurred in eighteenth-century Scotland agricultural methods.<sup>8</sup>

This new agricultural production would not have occurred had there not been a shift in the thinking of Scots. This happened because of the distinctive Scottish Enlightenment. Lehmann argues for the idea of a unique Scottish Enlightenment, as does Bruce P. Lenman, author of *Enlightenment and Change, Scotland 1746-1832*. The work by Lenman is a dense review that looks primarily on the political history of the Scottish Enlightenment period. He argued against historians that lump Scottish industrialization together with the rest of the British Isles. Instead, like Lehmann, he asserts that there was indeed a Scottish Enlightenment, separate from the larger European Enlightenment based upon characteristics such as not being anti-clerical, and focusing more on the betterment of their society instead of philosophizing.<sup>9</sup> These two historians place the Scottish Enlightenment between the mid-eighteenth into nineteenth century. Arguably, the Scottish Enlightenment occurred earlier in the eighteenth century and had long lasting implications into the nineteenth century. The Scottish Enlightenment is the outcome of Scots' inspiration during the eighteenth century to examine critically the world around them and to figure out Scotland's place in the English Empire as expressed in their agricultural improvement schemes, methods, and research.

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<sup>8</sup> T. M. Devine, *The Transformation of Rural Scotland: Social Change and the Agrarian Economy, 1660-1815* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1994), 5.

<sup>9</sup> Bruce Lenman, *Enlightenment and Change: Scotland 1746-1832* (New History of Scotland Series. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 10.

During the Scottish Enlightenment period there was an important and marked shift in agricultural production. This was driven by the new ways of thinking, as well as the 1707 Union with England. The Union promised economic gain for Scotland and pushed some Scots to examine their economic role in the Empire and how they would retain their own Scottish identities within it. Scotland no longer had a separate king or parliament. This left a void that elites were determined to fill in order to participate in and improve their country. There were several groups of men that stayed in Scotland instead of moving to England, including leaders from universities, medical establishments, and the Church of Scotland. Union with England was very much part of the dichotomy Kames experienced. Many Scots were discontented with the Union and clung to the romantic heritage of an independent Scotland. Historian Devine stated:

The essence of nineteenth-century Scottish history was the fact that the nation was yoked to the Union connections with England and was also emphatically a part of the British Empire. The material rewards of the English connection were obvious-but how were 'Scottishness' and 'Scottish identity' to be retained?<sup>10</sup>

Scottish identity was challenged through Union with England, and improvers like Lord Kames fought to hold onto the Scottish culture of his day. His agricultural "improvements" on his own lands demonstrates the confusion Kames dealt with in wanting modernistic ideals and romanticized notions of an "improved" Scotland. Kames wanted to hold on to the ancient manners of Highlanders, but also wanted them to be commercially successful in the modern period. Being Scottish for Kames encompassed not only the idea of improving agricultural production to move Scotland into the commercial stage of development, but also to retain the culture of Scotland described in the third century poems from Ossian. With these two conundrums, Kames represents the duality for eighteenth-century Scottish Enlightenment thinkers between modernization and preservation, between commercial success and Scottish

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<sup>10</sup> Devine, *Scottish Nation*, 10.

cultural heritage.

This duality was for Lord Kames and other agricultural improvers intrinsically tied to a deep connection to the lands of Scotland. Being half the size of Wales and England, Scotland only has a fifth to sixth of the land that is arable and pastoral land compared to the other two. Most of that productive land is in the east and the south. There are pockets of arable and pastoral land in both the north (Highlands) and the south (Lowlands). The Lowlands have a significantly larger portion of arable land than the Highlands. This is due to several natural and environmental reasons. In the early Middle Ages, the fifth to tenth century, changes in climate affected the lands. During this time, sharp drops in temperature and increased rainfall negatively impacted the small amount of arable and pastoral land available. Then, between 1150 and 1300, drier, warmer, summers and less severe winters became the norm.<sup>11</sup> This shift in climate was helpful to the lands and allowed farming to grow throughout Scotland. At this time, it was focused mostly in the Highlands, Galloway, and the Southern Uplands. The significant rainfalls resulted in dense peat bogs forming all over the lands, infringing on productive areas.

The climate not only affected the location of farms, but farming practices. Scottish agriculture before the eighteenth century was unproductive and semi-feudal. Systems of infield and outfield agriculture, and run-rig, were practiced from the Middle Ages up until the eighteenth century. Infields were the most productive lands and were usually close to the housing structure. These lands were also intensively and continuously farmed for crops such as legumes, rye, and oats. Outfields were used mostly for oats and were often left unused for a period of time for the land to recover. Essentially every farm used this system and the run-rig system, with unenclosed fields and short tenancies. The run-rig system was for arable land and used ridges

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<sup>11</sup> Jane E.A. Dawson, *Scotland Re-formed, 1488-1587*, New Edinburgh History of Scotland; 6 (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 8.

and furrows to allow for more crops to be planted. These agricultural systems and tenancy structures stayed in place for hundreds of years. New leases in the eighteenth century demonstrate the shift in attitude because they contained several conditions that tenants were required to meet, including making the land more profitable and altering it to make it less communal and more “improved.” Many of the leases were not renewed, and if the conditions had not been met to the satisfaction of the landowner the lease was terminated. In the Highlands farmers were forced off their lands in order to make room for larger pastoral farming, unlike in the Lowlands where individual farmers were pushed off to make room for commercial arable farming where surplus would be exported for profit.

The differences in environment greatly affected the methods employed during the eighteenth century by Scottish “improvers” in the Lowlands and the Highlands. The “improvements” created discontent among Highlanders, as most were pushed off the land to make room for sheep to graze. A clear cultural division between Lowlanders and Highlanders became cemented during the eighteenth century. Historian Michael Fry described the turmoil that began to unfold during the end of the eighteenth century:

The lowlands had seen spectacular progress and now boasted one of the world’s most advanced economies. Amid the upheavals there had been, and still was, much individual suffering, yet nobody doubted the net benefit to society. Still, while the Lowlanders’ good intentions paved a road to hell, it is as well to recall that they could not agree themselves about the way forward for Highlanders-only that they should take one.<sup>12</sup>

Fry is describing the change in attitudes towards one another. Lowlanders and Highlanders had few cultural differences between them before the eighteenth century. As soon as agricultural “improvements” began, and the clearing of people from the lands to make way for them, a cultural divide was created. There is a distinction made between the two groups of

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<sup>12</sup> Michael Fry, *Wild Scots: Four Hundred Years of Highland History* (London: John Murray, 2005), 162.

people by Fry. Most “improvers” of the eighteenth century were Lowlanders. Highlanders felt that they were being made to “improve” and clung even more onto their heritage and traditions. “Improvements” began in the Lowlands first and moved to the Highlands, all with the same goals and intentions for bettering Scottish society. For the “improvers” it was imperative that Scotland modernize.

Kames and other “improvers” believed that agricultural modernization was key to the economic success of Scotland in the new English Empire. They modernized Scotland through their innovative agricultural methods and experimentation. These “improvements” were not just a private act, but a civic and patriotic responsibility. Kames, like other Lowland Scots, viewed the alleged backward nature of Scotland’s agricultural practices as a social and political problem that could not be ignored. However, even though Kames wanted Scotland to modernize and become a player in the Empire’s economic markets, he wanted to preserve those antiquated parts of Scottish Highland culture depicted in *Fingal* and *Temora*. (These are the two of the epic poems believed to have been written by Ossian, that were found and translated by Scot James Macpherson in the eighteenth century.) Kames’ passion for his country and patriotism affected the way he thought about his “improvements” and how he implemented them. “Improvers” introduced new crops, improved farming implements, set up new farm management structures, and improved cattle, horse, and sheep breeds. They also experimented with deep plowing, reclaiming of marshland, innovative livestock breeding methods, new crop rotations, as well as using various methods to improve soil such as lime. Kames and other “improvers” were precise and paid great attention to detail. They were economically influenced and through their experimentation were striving to have the maximum output from the least amount of land.



These “improvers” experimented on the Scottish lands and actively fought to reform agricultural practices. Scotland’s elite who had country estates and land in the eighteenth century took up the act of gentleman farming as described by Kames in his work *The Gentleman Farmer*. In this work he described crops, crop rotation, new farming tool designs, among various other topics. This work and the three-volume set *Sketches on the History of Man*, effectively demonstrate Kames’ methods, mindset, passions, and personality. *Sketches on the History of Man* examines humans’ progress that Kames wrote later in life. Volume one described his interpretation of stage theory; volume two examined the development of government, taxation, and states; and volume three focused on the progress of science.

Scottish “improvers” influenced by their newfound Scottish Enlightenment ideals transformed the natural environment around them in ways that seemed impossible before the eighteenth century. Traditional modes of agriculture such as the run-rig system, were held in place for hundreds of years before the swift currents of change came in the eighteenth century through “improvers” like Lord Kames. New crops and animals were introduced, and enclosures were built. The intersections of agriculture, improvement, and Scottish Enlightenment philosophies allowed for new and quickly implemented improvement projects. They disseminated new scientific information and agricultural practices.

Chapter II examines this more by analyzing Kames’ Scotland. This chapter delves further into the Scottish Enlightenment, the values and matters that they chose to emphasize in the eighteenth century. It also describes in more detail the agricultural practices in Scotland before the eighteenth century. There is a short discussion noting the differences in Highland and Lowland terrain and culture relevant to the progressive attitudes in Scottish society during this time period.

Chapter III examines Henry Home, Lord Kames, as he represents a Scottish “improver” who changed Scottish agricultural society. He embodies the values and beliefs of the Scottish Enlightenment. Kames wanted to modernize Scottish agricultural practice on rational lines while still preserving some elements of traditional Gaelic/Highlands culture. His attraction to the natural environment and belief in patriotism recur throughout his works and significantly influenced the ways he viewed implementing change and progressive agricultural methods. His critiques of Scottish agricultural practices came with suggestions for improvement. Kames implemented change on his own estates and lands, most notably Blair Drummond.

The final chapter describes the effects of the improvement schemes on Kames’ lands, as well as the reception of Kames’ work. It looks at how Lord Kames’ son took up his environmental and patriotic causes and continued with the project even after Kames passed. Kames was a man that truly represents the eighteenth-century Scottish Enlightenment “improver,” who through his own actions changed Scottish agricultural practices. His passion for patriotism rooted his desire to change Scotland environmentally, but also to keep it proud and preserve the Scottish identity. Kames is a representative of the ideals of the Scottish Enlightenment because of his patriotism and his mentality for “improvement,” but his career also presents a conundrum. Kames had a dual objective for the progress in Scotland; it needed to modernize but not in a way that Scots would forget where they came from and what made them Scottish in the first place, Gaelic culture. This antiquated culture was meant to be preserved, even though it was viewed by many Scots as being part of the “backwards” picture of Scotland.

## CHAPTER II

### KAMES' SCOTLAND

In “Gaelic Antiquity and National Identity in Enlightenment Ireland and Scotland,” Colin Kidd stated:

Enlightened Scots argued that the past was a foreign country; that the mental world of primitive man, including one’s own ethnic and national forebears, and hence by extension the primitive institutions of one’s nation, were far removed conceptually from the concerns of civilized, commercial modernity. Antiquity in Scottish Enlightenment terms was no touchstone for the present.<sup>1</sup>

Kidd in his passage is representing one part of the Enlightened thought moving around Scotland, but Kames represents the other side of this outlook. Kames did not believe that in order for Scotland to be commercially modern it needed to disregard the Gaelic culture, or, as Kames viewed it, Scotland’s origins. These needed to be preserved and exemplified in the newly Enlightened Scotland in order to retain Scottish identity within the English Empire. The Scottish Enlightenment was influenced by other European Enlightenments, most notably the French Enlightenment. The Scottish Enlightenment had similarities with, but also marked differences from, other European Enlightenments. According to Lehmann:

While this movement was, at least on its more intellectual side, very much a part of the European-wide movement generally known as the Enlightenment, and was, like the movement elsewhere, an outgrowth of a new philosophy initiated largely by Bacon, Locke, and Newton and a form of protest against a traditional theological authoritarianism and an ecclesiastically controlled religious life, it nevertheless took on in Scotland a character of its own—both as a philosophy, as a literary movement and as a form of moral, social and political endeavor.<sup>2</sup>

Lehmann asserts that there are about six points of differentiation between the Scottish Enlightenment and the other European Enlightenments. Unlike in France, there was no anti-

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<sup>1</sup> Colin Kidd, “Gaelic Antiquity and National Identity in Enlightenment Ireland and Scotland in *The English Historical Review*, vol. 109, no. 434: 1210.

<sup>2</sup> Lehmann, xiii.

clerical, anti-church, or anti-religious character in Scotland's Enlightenment. The Kirk remained a prominent part of Scottish society and played a major role in the dissemination of new information during the eighteenth century. The Scots concentrated on empirical knowledge. They were concerned with the how and what of human emotions, agricultural progression, and stage theory for example, rather than with the why. Scots also wanted empirical knowledge to be applied to matters of morality, public affairs, and conduct. In Scotland there was no demand for radical reform of the society and the state, a major difference between the Scottish and French Enlightenments. Scottish "improvers" were demanding instead "human betterment," a "more pragmatic character—improvement of living conditions, more humane laws of land-tenure, advancement of education, removal of the survivals of feudalism and of superstition."<sup>3</sup> Scots wanted all knowledge, philosophy, and science to be aimed at human improvement and action, instead of being merely studied for one's own intellect. Many of the works by Scottish thinkers in the eighteenth century represent these characteristics, especially the works of Lord Kames. His works are policy-oriented, aimed at improvement and not reconstruction like that of the French Enlightenment, as well as focused on action rather than just analysis.

Scottish Enlightenment thinkers were searching for information to give them a broad knowledge base of several different subjects in order to understand what improvements were possible and how to go about "improving" Scotland. Subjects and disciplines crossed over from one to the next. This allowed for several academic fields to advance, including politics, economics, philosophy, architecture, medicine, engineering, law, agriculture, archaeology, sociology, and chemistry. The interconnections that Scots made with one another between disciplines remained a key feature throughout the Scottish Enlightenment. Economists and

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<sup>3</sup> Lehmann, xii.

chemists would work together, church ministers and architects, as well as lawyers and farmers. Kames represented the intersection between being involved with law, as a judge, and being a gentleman farmer. This cross-fertilization between subjects promoted one of the Scottish Enlightenment's main values: education and the bettering of human society.

While the Scottish Enlightenment was not anti-clerical, there was still reform within Scottish churches that began earlier during the Scottish Religious Reformation. The Kirk transitioned as well from practicing intolerance and conformism to becoming more reflective of tolerance and community; this happened after the Scottish Religious Reformation period. Historian T. C. Smout notes that the church members of the Scottish Religious Reformation period laid some foundational groundwork for Enlightened men, like Lord Kames, of the eighteenth century. He said:

the singleminded drive that is seen so often in business, farming and trade in the eighteenth century, and which appeared in cultural matters in men as diverse as Adam Smith, James Watt and Sir Walter Scott, is strangely reminiscent of the energy of the seventeenth-century elders in the kirk when they set about imposing discipline on the congregation. Calvinism thus seems to be released as a psychological force for secular change just at the moment when it is losing its power as a religion.<sup>4</sup>

The Church's transition made it a key component for the dissemination of information during the Scottish Enlightenment, including papers and proposals written by Scot thinkers like Lord Kames on agricultural improvements. Parish schools were a main source for education and helped to foster religious beliefs. These schools, like the Kirk, aided in helping the new information from the Scottish Enlightenment period reach the majority of Scottish society.

Universities, parish schools, and kirks all worked in tandem to distribute all of the new flowing information from the Scottish Enlightenment. The value of education for Scotland is

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<sup>4</sup> T. C. Smout, *Nature Contested: Environmental History in Scotland and Northern England since 1600* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), 92.

evident in its number of universities established in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Even though England had five times the population and thirty-six times more wealth than Scotland, by the 17<sup>th</sup> century England had two universities while Scotland had five.<sup>5</sup> Scottish universities provided a clear lecture-based curriculum that embraced science and economics, as well as a liberal education. Even though the Kirk had traditionally been very conservative, it was open to these new ways of thinking and embraced the changes coming to Scottish society. The church was not threatened by the new ideas circulating; many parish leaders and church officials were the first professors at these universities.

Another influential facet of this dissemination was through organizations such as the Board of Commissioners For the Forfeited Estates and the Board of Trustees for Manufactures and Fisheries in Scotland, both organizations of which Kames was a member. These organizations “were characterized by a major dependence on an educational rather than a legalistic, authoritarian or coercive approach-education in a very practical, down-to-earth manner, teaching by example, by practical demonstration in better methods of farming.”<sup>6</sup> These individual members, like Kames, tried to accomplish their goals through the distribution of pamphlets and materials describing the findings of their research and applications to plant and animal husbandry, soils, tree-culture, industrial processes, and food preservation.<sup>7</sup> Unlike the French Enlightenment that was based in salons, the Scottish Enlightenment was carried out in clubs, reading societies, libraries, and universities. The schools, the church, the organizations, the reading societies, periodicals, museums, masonic lodges, and libraries all existed harmoniously and circulated the ever-growing amount of new information into an eagerly awaiting Scottish

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<sup>5</sup> Lehmann, *Henry Home*, 105.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

society. Most Scots, especially in the Lowlands, clung to these new societies and ways of thinking, while those in the Highlands were less likely to trust the information presented to them. The Highlands were clan based and very much traditionalists; they were not ready to forego all of their culture and heritage in order to modernize. This became clearer throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and was evidenced in the conundrum faced by Kames.

This new information generated mostly from the major cities in Scotland that developed an intellectual infrastructure, similar to that in France. The main active cities were Edinburgh, Glasgow, and Aberdeen. Scottish cities were relatively small, which allowed for a more intimate atmosphere for the Scottish intelligentsia. Many clubs were formed during the eighteenth century. There were drinking and dining clubs among the medical and agricultural clubs, demonstrating the wide range of interests and cross fertilization between subjects. These societies and clubs, inspired by those in France, were interested in more than just theory. They were interested in methods that could be implemented in a broad sense all over Scotland. They conducted fact-finding and research expeditions to areas that were affected by their improvement programs. For example, the Board of Commissioners for the Forfeited Estates routinely sent out members on fact-finding surveys of estates and to see the general husbandry situation in Scotland.<sup>8</sup> These had great value to Lord Kames who saw these educational methods as “fulfilling the public trust” and became an outlet for his “crusading zeal for righting wrongs,” as well as his “broad understanding of economic principles, especially in their practical application.”<sup>9</sup> The people who usually forfeited estates were Highlanders; another thread in the relationship between Kames and the Highlanders. Many saw Kames’ contributions within these organizations as benefiting the “development of the Highland economy” through his work of

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<sup>8</sup> Lehmann, *Henry Home*, 105.

<sup>9</sup> Lehmann, 108.

implementing land surveys in the region.<sup>10</sup> Kames was especially focused on the Highlands during his time with this Board, demonstrating his interest in Highlanders and preserving their culture, even though he was himself a Lowlander. Kames knew that he could influence change within Scottish society because Board of Commissioners for the Forfeited Estates members “were always keenly aware of their role as national improvement and administrative bodies, aimed at the overcoming of existing handicaps in the national economy and at the enhancement of the national welfare generally.”<sup>11</sup>

Several other boards, clubs, and organizations sprang up in eighteenth-century Scotland. The Aberdeen Philosophical Society, or “Wise Club” was founded in 1758 and the Medical Society of Edinburgh was founded in 1731. The professors of medicine at Edinburgh University started the Medical Society and were vital in disseminating scientific information and conducting medical research. After a few years the Society broadened its scope and included all topics regarding philosophy, resulting in the changing of its name to the Philosophical Society. Members included many of the most influential Enlightenment thinkers of the time including David Hume, James Hutton, Joseph Black, and Adam Smith. In 1783 it was given a royal charter and emerged as the foremost scientific society of Scotland, the Royal Society of Edinburgh.

It is clear from the number and diversity of societies that Scots wanted their information and newfound knowledge to get to every member of society, part of the Scottish Enlightenment value of bettering humankind and society. While only Scots that were elite or middle class were able to participate in the Scottish Enlightenment, Scots still maintained their desire to see that every Scot was able to obtain the information. Scots had wide publishing practices during the eighteenth century. The *Encyclopedia* that was started in the 1760s by Denis Diderot and Jean le

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<sup>10</sup> Ian Simpson Ross, *Lord Kames and the Scotland of His Day* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 320.

<sup>11</sup> Lehmann, 105.



Ron d'Alembert, along with contributions from hundreds of intellectuals of the time including Rousseau, Montesquieu, and Voltaire, was published during this time. While most lower-class Scots might not have read Voltaire, they were able to read the works being submitted throughout Scotland. William Smellie, a printer, produced the work in Edinburgh. Between 1768 and 1771 it was published in three volumes. It was 2,659 pages and included 160 engravings. The translated work became a standard reference for much of the English-speaking world rather quickly. Many Scots had the opportunity to obtain the information presented in this work, a component of the Scottish Enlightenment. Another example of this is the *Edinburgh Review*. This was a journal that reviewed the arts, politics, economics, and science. It was an influential journal in Scotland and gained a positive reputation in Britain. Scottish intellectual life was focused on books; in 1763 there were six printing houses and three paper mills in Edinburgh. By 1783 there were sixteen printing houses and twelve paper mills. The Scottish literacy rate was extremely high in this time period and many poor Scots were able to read and access this new information.

While the Scots were able to build an infrastructure and network of disseminating information, they had to work very hard to get to that point. They also had to acquire that new information through various experiments and “improvements,” such as the ones Lord Kames implemented on estates. Even though Scotland and England were united in 1707, they were far from being one nation. Not only were they culturally divided, but their environments were also different and affected the way they implemented Scottish Enlightenment methods. A quote from Sir Walter Scott’s work *Tales of a Grandfather* describes the differences in Scotland’s environment compared to England’s:

England is the southern, and Scotland is the northern part of the celebrated island called Great Britain. England is larger than Scotland, and the land is much richer, and produces better crops. There are also a great many more men in England, and both the gentlemen

and the country people are more wealthy, and have better food and clothing than in Scotland. The towns, also, are much more numerous, and more populous.

Scotland, on the contrary, is full of hills, and huge moors and wildernesses, which bear no corn, and afford but little food for flocks of sheep and herds of cattle. But the level ground that lies along the great rivers is more fertile, and produces good crops. The natives of Scotland are accustomed to live more hardily in general than those of England.<sup>12</sup>

Before the Scottish Enlightenment, Scotland's population was less than one million in the 1760s with many living off the land, barely able to afford it. The largest city at the time, Edinburgh, was only a 140-acre medieval walled enclave. The city was overcrowded with fifty-five thousand people who rented unheated rooms in fifteen story buildings. There were few roads outside of the city, and it took twelve hours by coach to travel to Glasgow and up to a month by boat to London.<sup>13</sup> Because of this setting, most people lived and worked on farms. The arable land was "separated by hedge and ditch, surrounding compact, single farm steading," that "remained virtually unaltered" for hundreds of years.<sup>14</sup> Lord Kames wanted Scotland to be a competitor in all aspects of commercial society, and in order for this to be achieved he needed to implement changes to the heart of Scottish society, agriculture, and do away with the traditional modes of agricultural production that had been practiced for hundreds of years. He saw the run-rig system as antiquated. He also believed that the way farm animals were being used was not in the most profitable manner. Kames wanted to implement crop rotation and different soil usages for maximum crop benefit.

However, even though Scottish "improvers" like Kames thought they could do this for the entirety of Scottish lands, they soon realized the drastic environmental differences between

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<sup>12</sup> Sir Walter Scott, *Tales of a Grandfather*, accessed May 14, 2019, [https://play.google.com/books/reader?id=UwXLRyLN\\_V8C&hl=en&pg=GBS.PA9](https://play.google.com/books/reader?id=UwXLRyLN_V8C&hl=en&pg=GBS.PA9).

<sup>13</sup> Ross, *Lord Kames and the Scotland of His Day*, 45.

<sup>14</sup> Devine, *Transformation of Rural Scotland*, 50.

the Lowlands and the Highlands. Scotland's natural landscape barriers in terms of land suitable for agriculture was a regular point of contention for Scottish farmers. In the early Middle Ages, from around the fifth to tenth century, climate changes affected the already unproductive lands even further. There was a sharp drop in temperature and an increase in rainfall. There were pockets of arable and pastoral land in both the Highlands and the Lowlands, however the "general quality was low and the vast majority of highly-productive land was located in the Lowlands."<sup>15</sup> Scottish farmers used the traditional systems of run-rig agriculture for hundreds of years before the swift change in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries completely altered this. The run-rig system allowed farmers to use both the dry and wet lands for farming, which helped to alleviate some problematic climate conditions. It was a furrow and ridge style system, with alternating furrows (runs) and ridges (rigs). The plough, again used for hundreds of years, was pulled by oxen and made from heavy wood with an iron coulter attached. Teams of eight oxen pulled these ploughs, and four men were needed to operate them. With this system only about a half an acre a day was able to be worked. Oxen were used because they were cheaper to maintain than horses and were more efficient on the heavy soils. Sheep and goats were mostly used for milk sources, and cattle used for meat. These traditional agricultural practices existed, in both the Highlands and the Lowlands, but the Lowlands had broad valleys, while the Highlands were more mountainous. When the soil and terrain were at their worst conditions, or if it was a cold and rainy season, it would create conditions that "proved disastrous to thousands," in both the Lowlands and the Highlands.<sup>16</sup>

The soil and terrain were constant problems for Scottish farmers, leading landowners like Kames to introduce several new crops in the eighteenth century in order to promote the practice

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<sup>15</sup> Dawson, *Scotland Re-formed*, 8.

<sup>16</sup> Lehmann, 98.

of crop rotation. The 1700s saw the introduction of crops such as turnips, which helped clean the land of weeds, while potatoes helped maintain the Scottish population. Crop rotation replaced the old traditional run-rig and husbandry systems. The new crop rotation practices included growing different types of crops in the same area in a set sequence of seasons. This helped the soil of the farms and allowed for higher productivity. The soil was not just being used for one set of nutrients anymore, which decreased erosion and increased crop yields and soil fertility.

Rotating crops helped the soil and because of increased crop surpluses, Scotland was able to feed previously winter-starved cattle, oxen, and horses that were needed to work the land. Scotland's animal husbandry practices demonstrate the differences in the lands of the Highlands and Lowlands. The 1700s introduction of the Blackface and then the Cheviot sheep steeply increased the levels of competition between sheep, cattle, land and people in the Highlands, but not in the Lowlands, which were mostly arable farms used for growing crops. The Highland sheep in particular used before the eighteenth century "were small, skinny and shaggy, almost like puppies, yielding little meat or wool."<sup>17</sup> The sheep that came after were larger on account of being better fed after crop rotation emerged. The Lowlands were used more for large scale farming, and the Highlands for animal grazing due to their difference in environments.

Scottish Enlightenment "improvers" tried to implement their agricultural changes in both the Lowlands and the Highlands, but many of the Scottish elites and philosophers came from the Lowlands. This area was focused on establishing ties with their English-speaking neighbors to the south, whom they saw as having a more urban, commercial society. Many of these men did not want to be associated with a "backwards" culture that they associated with Highlanders or Gael culture. Scottish intellectuals like David Hume did not want to be identified with what he

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<sup>17</sup> Fry, *Wild Scots*, 146.

viewed as an outdated national culture. Hume on his deathbed is reported to have not confessed his sins, but his “Scotticisms.”<sup>18</sup>

These Scotticisms, or remnants of Scottish traditions viewed as “backwards” by some, were discussed by Lord Kames. While some Scots like Hume made conscious efforts to disassociate themselves from Scottish traditions, other Enlightenment “improvers” like Kames revered selective traditions and wanted to preserve them. He particularly wanted to preserve the ones described by James Macpherson in *Ossian*, such as Highland manners and their origin myth. In *Sketches volume one* Kames wrote about the preservation of Highland or Celtic language:

The mother-tongues at present, though numerous, bear no proportion to what formerly existed. We find original tribes gradually enlarging; by conquest frequently, and more frequently by the union of weak tribes for mutual defense. Such events lessen the number of languages. The Coptic is not a living language any where. The Celtic tongue, once extensive, is at present confined to the Highlands of Scotland, to Wales, to Britany, and to a part of Ireland. In a few centuries, it will share the fate of many other original tongues: it will totally be forgotten.<sup>19</sup>

Kames expressed the need to preserve the Celtic tongue so it would not be forgotten; since linguistic disappearance was akin to dissolving into the English Empire and losing one’s “Scotishness.” This is part of the reason why Kames was so patriotic, in written themes and throughout the “improvements” he implemented on his lands. Kames, like other Scots who were discontent after the Union of 1707, did not want Scotland to be amalgamated into the English Empire. Yes, Scots did want the economic benefits from being part of the Empire, but they wanted their Scotland to live on, without being consumed and obscured by an English identity.

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<sup>18</sup> Lehmann, 98.

<sup>19</sup> Henry Home, Lord Kames, *Sketches on the History of Man Considerably enlarged by the last additions and corrections of the author* edited and with an Introduction by James A. Harris (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2007), vol. 1, accessed May 14, 2019, <http://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/2032>, 201.

Scotland's economic way of life was greatly impacted by the traditional farming practices that began in the early Medieval period and changed little throughout the Renaissance and Religious Reformation periods. According to S.G.E. Lythe in his essay "Economic Life" from *Scottish Society in the Fifteenth Century*, throughout the 1400s "there were still vestigial remains of thanages and of serfdom, and ancient land units such as 'davoch' still persisted, by 1500 the Lowlands at least were beginning to move towards systems of tenure."<sup>20</sup> Scottish farms operated at subsistence levels for centuries, barely producing enough food for the family that lived off the land. Farming practices were centered mostly on single family homesteads where cattle were the primary source of animal husbandry practices. That all changed because of the Scottish Enlightenment, when "improvers" applied new agricultural practices based on Enlightenment philosophies.

Scottish land "improvers" believed that "stubborn traditionalism" influenced landowners' decisions in using methods such as run-rig for hundreds of years with little change.<sup>21</sup> Kames and other "improvers" believed that Scottish farmers were being led "by custom in chains." Kames believed that Scots were clinging to antiquated systems of agricultural production. Scotland's lack of status in the growing, globalizing capitalist market was the fault of the "indolence of the landholders, the obstinate indocility of the peasantry, and the stupid attachment of both classes to ancient habits and practices," rather than of problems with the soil and climate.<sup>22</sup> The land before the eighteenth century was a "mixture of arable, meadow, and waste lands" that comprised about

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<sup>20</sup> S.G.E. Lythe, "Economic Life," in *Scottish Society in the Fifteenth Century*. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1977), 67.

<sup>21</sup> Lehmann, 82.

<sup>22</sup> Henry Home, Lord Kames, *The Gentleman Farmer: Being an Attempt to Improve Agriculture by Subjecting It to the Test of Rational Principles* (Cambridge Library Collection—Botany and Horticulture, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), ix.

one-fifth of the English landscape.<sup>23</sup> The areas that were arable “were farmed in scattered strips, unfenced, but often marked off by rough balks of unplowed land as a sort of property line.”<sup>24</sup>

The strips were owned singly or in lots by individuals, and livestock were routinely underfed and “had to be killed in the autumn rather than carried through the winter.”<sup>25</sup>

As Scotland’s arable and pastoral lands were being developed in the eighteenth century, Scotland was unable to support its growing population. Many landowners raised rents in order to force renters into the cities. The Highland lands were divided into smaller and smaller units that essentially became “scarcely sufficient to support their tenants, who were in no position to pay rents.”<sup>26</sup> Higher rents were not the only change that people who stayed on the farms experienced; many leases contained a number of conditions from their landlord that tenants were required to meet. These included making the land more profitable and altering it to make it “improved” and less communal.

Changing leases, higher rents, new crops, and different crop rotation practices were all components of the eighteenth-century Scottish agricultural revolution. Agricultural practices before the eighteenth century were used for hundreds of years with little to no change. This great movement that occurred in the eighteenth century, driven by “improvers” like Lord Kames, was an intrinsic part of the Scottish Enlightenment. The values of education, patriotism, and modernization aligned with the goal of attaining a place in the emerging global market of the English Empire.

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<sup>23</sup> Russell Lord, *The Care of the Earth: A History of Husbandry* (New York, N.Y.: Nelson, 1962), 166.

<sup>24</sup> Lord, *Care of the Earth*, 166.

<sup>25</sup> Lord, 167.

<sup>26</sup> Charles Roy MacKinnon, *The Scottish Highlanders: A Personal View*, 1<sup>st</sup> U.S. ed. (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1984), 115.

## CHAPTER III

### SCOTTISH IMPROVER HENRY HOME, LORD KAMES

The Scottish Enlightenment influenced many Scottish agricultural “improvers.” Henry Home, Lord Kames “contributed more than any other man to the development of a scientifically-based agriculture, and as a leading member of two national planning boards, he played a major role in revolutionizing agriculture...and thus indirectly at least, the commercial life of his country.”<sup>1</sup> Kames was a Scottish philosopher, agricultural “improver,” lawyer, judge, writer, and gentleman farmer. His varied interests reflected the Scotland of his time and the characteristics of the Scottish Enlightenment. His “improvements” on his own lands and his writings demonstrate the dynamic relationship that he had with his Scottish identity and the land. Kames on one hand was very much a product of his time “influenced and challenged in a great variety of ways by what was going on around him and by the needs of the hour as he felt them; while, on the other hand, he contributed in no small measure to the development of that broad cultural movement itself of which he was so much a part of.”<sup>2</sup> Kames wanted to “modernize” Scotland, to move it in the direction of progress, at the same time he also wanted to preserve parts of Gaelic culture that were highlighted in Ossian. Having a feeling of belonging to the country and having a strong affinity for the rural landscape and nature made Kames grasp onto the traditional Gael culture as described in Ossian. He wanted the Highlanders to go back to this stage in their development, as part of his stage theory explanation, or the progression of man through various stages of development (hunting, pastoral, agricultural, commercial society). He believed that through his written and civic work, that he was able to reconcile these two ideas that seem irreconcilable. Kames was truly a remarkable pioneer in Scottish agricultural development in the

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<sup>1</sup> Lehmann, xvii.

<sup>2</sup> Lehmann, xvii.



eighteenth century and his literary and agricultural work demonstrate the conflicts of a Scottish society caught between modernization and the preservation of Gaelic tradition from Ossian.

Henry Home was born in 1696 at Kames in Berwickshire, a town on the border of lowland Scotland and northern England. He came from a relatively poor Episcopalian family and his father was a laird and farmer. Home was the oldest of his four siblings; he had three sisters and one brother. Due to his father's "accumulating debts and large family burdens, Home was educated entirely at home."<sup>3</sup> Mr. Wingate, one of his tutors, was a clergyman who taught Home and his siblings some mathematics, Latin, and traditional subjects.<sup>4</sup> However efficient at teaching Wingate was, Home found this tutoring to be ineffective. Kames knew that his father's economic situation did not afford him the luxury of college or university education at institutions such as Cambridge or Oxford, like many of his other elite contemporaries. But he was not deterred from following his passions for law and the environment.

This thirst for knowledge eventually led Kames to Edinburgh where he began working as a clerical aide at around the age of sixteen.<sup>5</sup> He studied law as an apprentice in the "Writer's Chamber" of civil lawyer and Berwickshire neighbor John Dickson.<sup>6</sup> It was during his training as a lawyer that Kames "began to inquire into the reason of things."<sup>7</sup> He knew that law did not deal "primarily with rules and statutes and court decisions to be found in law books and court records, but with human behavior and human relations." Because law dealt more with human relationships and behaviors, law was "very much a part of life itself."<sup>8</sup> This attitude he had

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<sup>3</sup> Henry Home Kames, Andrew Millar, T. Cadell, Alexander Kincaid, and John Bell, *Elements of Criticism* (The Fourth Edition, with Additions and Improvements. ed. Edinburgh: Printed for A. Millar and T. Caddel, London, and A. Kincaid & J. Bell, Edinburgh, 1769), introduction.

<sup>4</sup> Lehmann, 7.

<sup>5</sup> Lehmann, 8.

<sup>6</sup> McGuinness, *Henry Home*, 18.

<sup>7</sup> Lehmann, 9.

<sup>8</sup> Lehmann, 11.

towards law played out in the way he dealt with his “improvements” on his own lands, including the tenant-landlord structures he put in place with the Highlanders.

Kames’ love for the law and for education led him at twenty-seven to become an advocate, a position held in high esteem in eighteenth century Scottish society. This enabled him to plead cases before the Court of Session and Court of Justiciary. In 1752, when he was fifty-six, Henry Home of Kames was elevated to the highest civil court in Scotland, the Court of Session. This promotion granted him the title of Lord Kames. Interestingly, Kames’ rise to the court was a bit later than many expected because “his Jacobite family connections had temporarily raised some questions that might have stood in the way of his appointment,” but an inquiry showed these claims to be without merit.<sup>9</sup> Kames in his later years as a judge became interested in soil chemistry, cross fertilization, and plant nutrition. To Kames all of these subjects had “either direct bearings upon problems of agriculture, forestry, industry or even commerce, or could at least be readily so applied.”<sup>10</sup> A vested interests in education and new methods relating to agriculture began early for Kames and lasted his entire life.

Kames’ interests and passions towards agricultural matters were demonstrated throughout his written works, such as *The Gentleman Farmer*. Gentleman farmers, for Kames, were the new burgeoning class of society that would be influential in changing and shaping eighteenth-century Scotland. Kames’ relationship to Scottish lands, not just the ones he owned, is very reminiscent of the bond between all gentleman farmers and land. In *The Gentleman Farmer* he wrote “how delightful the change from hunter to the farmer, from destroyer of animals to the feeder of men: men who live in the country, have become active and industrious. They embellish their fields,

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<sup>9</sup> Lehmann, 31.

<sup>10</sup> Lehmann, 288.

improve their lands, and give bread to thousands.”<sup>11</sup> For Kames it was not enough that men just work the land, they needed to “improve” it by means of the new research and methods developed in the eighteenth century. This quote also hints at his ideas of stage theory; the theory that humans progress through different stages: hunting, pastoralism, agriculture, and commercial society. The hunting stage was considered the savage stage and was categorized by property being that which one person could carry. The second stage, pastoralism, was characterized by shepherding and animal property. It was also viewed as barbaric in nature. Agriculture, the third stage, was the stage in which humans progressed to civilization. This then led to the final stage of a commercial society that had been defined by eighteenth-century Europeans, in and out of Scotland.

Kames not only believed in this agricultural stage theory and the idea of being a gentleman farmer, but he also believed that agriculture itself was healthy, like a form of exercise. The act of farming was a “preservative of health,” because it “requires no hurtful fatigue, on the one hand, nor indulges, on the other, indolence, still more hurtful.”<sup>12</sup> Kames believed agriculture was a profession that was “fit for every man.”<sup>13</sup> This thinking led Kames to make specific choices when employing farmers to work on his lands; he brought in Highlanders to work on his lands to help guide them back to the qualities described in Ossian and represent traditional Scottish culture. Kames argued in his 1776 work *The Gentleman Farmer* that “of all occupations the best adapted to gentleman in a private station” was agriculture.<sup>14</sup> This was because Kames believed farming, agriculture, and building a relationship with the land was not only a way to show patriotism towards Scotland, but also a way to exhibit one’s own Scottish identity.

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<sup>11</sup> Henry Home, Lord Kames, *The Gentleman Farmer*, xx.

<sup>12</sup> Kames, *Gentleman Farmer*, xvi.

<sup>13</sup> Kames, *Gentleman*, xvi.

<sup>14</sup> Kames, *Gentleman*, xix.

Similar to how Kames linked together agriculture and stage theory in *The Gentleman Farmer*, Kames also linked stage theory with patriotism. Agriculture fostered patriotism, since “every gentleman farmer must of course be a patriot; for patriotism, like other virtues, is improved and fortified with exercise.”<sup>15</sup> Kames had a deeply held belief in patriotism, he was a vigorous supporter of his home nation and its economic growth. Kames regarded the hunting stage as the lowest stage of human progression because there was “not a spark of patriotism.”<sup>16</sup> *The Gentleman Farmer* was not the only work in which Kames discussed stage theory. He further explained his feelings on stage theory in his preceding 1774 work *Sketches on the History of Man*. Kames believed that the commercial society stage was where Scotland was heading in the eighteenth century. He wrote in *Sketches*:

...patriotism is the corner-stone of civil society; that no nation ever became great and powerful without it; and, when extinguished, that the most powerful nation will totter and become a ruin.<sup>17</sup>

Kames felt that while Scotland was heading towards this last stage of human progression, Scots needed to be reminded that they should head there with the thought of the Scottish nation in mind. Their patriotism was what was going to propel Scotland into the future, and make sure it was a unique and productive nation within the British Empire. He further explains his feelings and beliefs regarding stage theory and patriotism in *Sketches*:

...members of a tribe in their original state of hunting and fishing, being little united but by a common language, have no notion of a patria; and scarce any notion of society, unless when they join in an expedition against an enemy, or against wild beasts. The shepherd-state, where flocks and herd are possessed in common, gives a clear notion of a common interest; but still none of a patria. The sense of a patria begins to unfold itself, when a people leave off wandering, to settle upon a territory that they call their own. Agriculture connects them together; and government still more: they become fellow-

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<sup>15</sup> Kames, *Gentleman Farmer*, xviii.

<sup>16</sup> Kames, *Gentleman Farmer*, xix.

<sup>17</sup> Henry Home, Lord Kames, *Sketches on the History of Man Considerably enlarged by the last additions and corrections of the author* edited and with an Introduction by James A. Harris (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2007), vol. 2, accessed May 14, 2019, <http://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/2032>, 156.

citizens; and the territory is termed the patria of every person born in it. it is so ordered by the Providence, that a man's country and his countrymen, are to him in conjunction an object of a peculiar affection termed amor patriae, or patriotism; an affection that rises high among a people intimately connected by regular government, by husbandry, by commerce, and by a common interest.<sup>18</sup>

The patria that Kames spoke of was patriotism. He described how through the progression of stage theory, humans start with having no patriotic tendencies in the hunting stage. Then as they move through the pastoral stage to the agriculture stage, people were connected with one another and the land they inhabit together. This brings them a sense of patria that strengthens as they progress through the last to the last stage of a commercial society. These common interests that hold the people together make up their sense of patriotism towards their nation. This overview from Kames on stage theory clearly demonstrates the way he viewed Scotland at the time. He thought Scotland was in a "low state of patriotism" and through agricultural improvement, Scottish society would benefit and move from the agricultural stage through the most advanced commercial stage.<sup>19</sup> Kames criticized men who spent their time in the House of Commons, "where most of them are mere mutes, instead of serving their country and themselves at home, which is genuine patriotism."<sup>20</sup> Kames believed:

A nation in no other period of its progress is so flourishing, as when patriotism is the ruling passion of every member: during that period, it is invincible. Athenus remarks, that the Athenians were the only people in the world, who, though clothed in purple, put formidable armies to flight at Marathon, Salamine, and Platea. But at that period patriotism was their ruling passion; and success attended them in every undertaking. Where patriotism rules, men perform wonders, whatever garb they wear.<sup>21</sup>

Patriotism was a key feature for Kames' stage theory and was one of the main components that was going to allow Scotland to be commercially successful. However, while

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<sup>18</sup> Kames, *Sketches*, vol. 2, 318.

<sup>19</sup> Kames, *Gentleman*, 400.

<sup>20</sup> Kames, *Gentleman*, 35-36.

<sup>21</sup> Kames, *Sketches*, vol. 2, 321.

this stage theory represents Kames' notions for "modernizing" Scotland, he still believed in the preservation of what some saw as primitive (Gaelic culture). Some Scottish thinkers, like David Hume, used stage theory to "distance themselves emotionally from Scottish Gaeldom as from any primitive society."<sup>22</sup> According to historian Colin Kidd, most eighteenth-century Scottish sociologists shared this view of their fellow countrymen, and had rendered them a "primitive people who had more affinity with the other savage communities of the world than with the civilized core of their own nation."<sup>23</sup> Other Scots, such as sociologist William Robertson, saw the "values of her Highland Gaelic culture."<sup>24</sup> Robertson, like Kames, saw the significance of the Highlanders, as one of the true original Scottish cultures.<sup>25</sup> Kames wrote:

No source of enjoyment is more plentiful than patriotism, where it is the ruling passion: it triumphs over every selfish motive, and is a firm support to every virtue. In fact, wherever it prevails, the morals of the people are found to be pure and correct.<sup>26</sup>

These morals of the people that are to be pure and correct are the Gaels' characteristics described in the epic poems by Ossian (translated by James Macpherson). Kames valued the portrayal of the Highlanders and Gaelic culture and felt that even though eighteenth-century Highlanders were viewed as "primitive," with some guidance they could transition back to ideals from Ossian and become major players in furthering Scotland's patriotism. Kames saw Highlanders as part of the nation, not something to be rid of in the stage theory progression of Scotland from agricultural to commercial society. Kames truly believed that these morals from Ossian would allow for Highlanders to be part of the agricultural solution, not a problem. Kames

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<sup>22</sup> Kidd, 1212.

<sup>23</sup> Kidd, 1207.

<sup>24</sup> Kidd, 1206.

<sup>25</sup> Kidd, 1206.

<sup>26</sup> Kames, *Sketches*, vol. 2, 320.

believed that through his work as a gentleman farmer, “improver,” and advocate he was bringing honor to his country with his discoveries.

Kames’ ardent support for the authenticity of the epic poem *Ossian* by James Macpherson greatly influenced the methods of “improvement” implemented on the lands he owned. According to Kames:

There certainly never happened in literature, a discovery more extraordinary than the works of *Ossian*. To lay the scene of action among hunters in the first stage of society, and to bestow upon such a people a system of manners that would do honour to the most polished state, seemed at first an ill-contrived forgery. But if a forgery, why so bold and improbable? why not invent manners more congruous to the savage state?<sup>27</sup>

Although these works translated by James Macpherson in the 1760s were based upon authentic Gaelic ballads, most of the content was made up by him. The fifty-year controversy surrounding the authenticity of *Fingal* and *Temora* began immediately after the publication; many who read the work sought the original Gaelic manuscripts that Macpherson had supposedly translated, to no avail. Macpherson to buy time for himself kept promising that he would produce them, but he never did. After he died, scholars examined his sources and it was then in the nineteenth century that they clearly found the works to be mostly written by Macpherson himself, and not the supposed bard *Ossian*. Even though they were mostly invented works readers around Europe identified with the simple virtues of the heroic characters depicted in the poems in contrast to the deceitful modern world they lived in. The ancient Caledonians that were depicted in these poems had manners that Kames believed to be remarkable during the hunting stage. The characters portrayed always had elevated and tender sentiments, and women were always treated with delicacy and respect. Kames made a comparison to the time of Homer, saying that in Homer’s works “heroes were greedy of plunder; and like robbers, were much

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<sup>27</sup> Kames, *Sketches*, vol. 2, 465

disposed to insult a vanquished foe. According to Ossian, the ancient Caledonians had no idea of plunder: and as they fought for fame only, their humanity overflowed to the vanquished.”<sup>28</sup>

Kames throughout his writings in *Sketches*, compares these ideas with other noble Scandinavian epics to prove that the Caledonians from Ossian were not unique, and therefore helped to prove its authenticity. This desire to prove Ossian demonstrates Kames’ tendency towards nostalgia and primitivism, thoughts clearly at odds with his Scottish Enlightenment values of “modernization.”

Kames’ writings and thoughts seemed to be fixated on the manners of the Caledonians in Ossian. Highlanders in eighteenth-century Scotland were viewed by many as “backwards.” Kames even believed that in their present state they were, but with what was presented of the Highlanders in Ossian, Kames believed that they had just lost their true selves over the years and needed to be reminded of their old values. Kames wrote:

Hitherto there appears as great uniformity in the progress of manners, as can reasonably be expected among so many different nations. There is one exception, extraordinary indeed if true, which is, the manners of the Caledonians described by Ossian, manners so pure and refined as scarce to be paralleled in the most cultivated nations. Such manners among a people in the first stage of society, acquainted with no arts but hunting and making war, I acknowledge, miraculous. And yet to suppose these manners to be the invention of an illiterate savage, is really no less miraculous: I should as soon expect from a savage a performance equal to the elements of Euclid, or even to the Principia of Newton. One, at first view, will boldly declare the whole a modern fiction; for how is it credible, that a people, rude at present and illiterate, were, in the infancy of their society, highly refined in sentiment and manners? And yet, upon a more accurate inspection, many weighty considerations occur to balance that opinion.<sup>29</sup>

These are the morals and manners Kames felt should be preserved in the Highlanders of his time. He believed that in bringing them back to this sense of refinement they would be representing patriotic values. It also reflects Kames’ argument for the authenticity of the poems.

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<sup>28</sup> Kames, *Sketches*, vol 1, 224.

<sup>29</sup> Kames, *Sketches*, vol. 1, 425.



He believed that there was no possible way Macpherson could stay true to the Gaelic manners and represent them in that stage of human development, without showing some sense of modernity. This demonstrates Kames' duality between wanting change and progress in Scotland's agricultural methods, but also in wanting to keep sacred the best parts of Scottish identity. He felt were kept in the Gaelic Highlanders of the third century and therefore could emerge again in the Highlanders of his time. Kames further described his beliefs regarding these refined manners, the value of Highlanders, and the authenticity of Ossian:

From a thousand circumstances it appears, that the works of Ossian are not a late production. They are composed in an old dialect of the Celtic tongue; and as, till lately, they were known only in the highlands of Scotland, the author must have been a Caledonian. The translator saw, in the Isle of Sky, the first four books of the poem Fingal, written in a fair hand on vellum and bearing date in the year 1403. The natives believe that poem to be very ancient: every person has passages of it by heart, transmitted by memory from their forefathers. Their dogs bear commonly the name of Luath, Bran, &c. mentioned in these poems, as our dogs do of Pompey and Caesar. Many other particulars might be mentioned; but these are sufficient to prove, that the work must have existed at least three or four centuries. Taking that for granted, I proceed to certain considerations tending to evince, that the manners described in Ossian were Caledonian manners, and not a pure fiction. And, after perusing with attention these considerations, I am not afraid that even the most incredulous will continue altogether unshaken.<sup>30</sup>

Kames' beliefs in its authenticity were representative of many readers of the eighteenth century. Although there were several doubters, there were numerous admirers of the work. This draws on the specific reasons why Kames felt that Macpherson could not keep up a charade like the ones the nonbelievers argued he did. Kames points out that Macpherson would not have known the language because it was only known by Highlanders, the dogs' names were appropriate for Ossian's time period, and the most important to him that the manners depicted were those of Caledonians (Highlanders). The fact that he believed these manners of refinement were unable to represent the Highlanders of his time shows how he wanted them to progress

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<sup>30</sup> Kames, *Sketches*, vol. 1, 426-427.

from their current state to an antiquated one, filled with Scottish patriotic values. However, he also wanted them to adopt the agricultural innovations of the eighteenth century. Kames wrote that:

Every scene in Ossian relates to hunting, to fighting, or to love, the sole occupations of men in the original state of society; there is not a single image, simile, or allusion, but what is borrowed from that state, without a jarring circumstance.—Supposing all to be mere invention, is it not amazing to find no mention of highland clans, or of any name now in use? Is it not still more amazing, that there is not the slightest hint of the Christian religion, not even in a metaphor or allusion? Is it not equally amazing, that, in a work where deer's flesh is frequently mentioned, and a curious method of roasting it, there should not be a word of fish as food, so common in later times? Very few highlanders know that their forefathers did not eat fish; and, supposing it to be known, it would require singular attention, never to let a hint of it enter the poem. Can it be supposed, that a modern writer could be so constantly on his guard, as never to mention corn nor cattle? In a story so scanty of poetical images, the sedentary life of a shepherd, and the industry of a husbandman, would make a capital figure: the cloven foot would somewhere peep out. And yet, in all the works of Ossian, there is no mention of agriculture; and but a slight hint of a herd of cattle in one or two allusions. I willingly give all advantages to the unbeliever: Supposing the author of Ossian to be a late writer, adorned with every refinement of modern education; yet, even upon that supposition, he is a miracle, far from being equalled by any other author ancient or modern.<sup>31</sup>

Kames' opposing viewpoints on Highlanders is quite interesting. The dichotomy he had in wanting them to improve agriculturally and culturally, but with two very different processes involved shows the changing eighteenth-century Scottish society. His belief that the Highland culture exhibited in these poems was authentic and in no way represented the Highlanders of his time, is evidenced in his statement about clans not being mentioned and the lack of knowledge current Highlanders had on their forefathers. In all of the passages above, Kames fervently believes in this poem's authenticity and its historical significance for Scotland's culture, especially regarding the Highlanders. The refined manners described in Ossian were to Kames the complete opposite of what the Highlanders of the eighteenth century had. According to Kames the eighteenth-century Highlanders were "rude and illiterate; and were in fact little better

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<sup>31</sup> Kames, *Sketches*, vol. 1, 428.

than savages.”<sup>32</sup> He further describes Highlanders as being “a small part of the inhabitants of Britain; and they have been sinking in their importance, from the time that arts and sciences made a figure, and peaceable manners prevailed.”<sup>33</sup>

While Kames believes Highlanders to be lacking in some areas, he also believes that they still contain remaining features and characteristics described in Ossian from their Caledonian forefathers. He believes that Highlanders have a “disposition to war, and when disciplined make excellent soldiers, sober, active, and obedient. They are eminently hospitable” and in characters from Ossian “innocent and devoid of malignity.”<sup>34</sup> He asserted that there are clear reasons as to why Highlanders of his day did not have the same heroism and benevolence as Ossian’s Caledonians. Kames wrote:

The Caledonians were a free and independent people, unawed by an superior power, and living under the mild government of their own chieftains; compared with their forefathers, the present highlanders make a very inconsiderable figure: their country is barren, and at any rate is but a small part of a potent kingdom; and their language deprives them of intercourse with their polished neighbours.<sup>35</sup>

This dichotomy for Kames between wanting Highlanders to go back to their manners and culture represented in Ossian and still “modernize” with the sentiments of the Scottish Enlightenment demonstrates his mind set while he began improvements on his own lands. He wanted to preserve and cultivate this Highland culture. Not only was Kames concerned with Highlanders and the preservation of their culture for patriotic reasons, Kames was also concerned with the Scottish environment. Kames’ love for the land and for working it is evidenced throughout his writings. Kames was thoroughly entrenched with researching topics on “soil-chemistry, plant-nutrition, plant-fertilization and cross-fertilization, the absorption and retention

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<sup>32</sup> Kames, *Sketches*, vol. 1, 429.

<sup>33</sup> Kames, *Sketches*, vol. 1, 464

<sup>34</sup> Kames, *Sketches*, vol. 1, 464

<sup>35</sup> Kames, *Sketches*, vol. 1, 464

of moisture by different soils, and similar subjects.”<sup>36</sup> These subjects “had direct bearings upon problems of agriculture, forestry, industry or even commerce.”<sup>37</sup> *Sketches on the History of Man* does more than highlight Kames’ stage theory and patriotic devotions, it also demonstrates Kames’ interest in Scots’ abilities to develop new “modern” agricultural skills; skills he thought would help Highlanders attain the manners represented in Ossian. Not only were these new “modernized” agricultural skills important to him for the Highlanders’ sake, but they were also important to the Scottish nation, as a way to differentiate themselves from England and France. In *Sketches on the History of Man*, Kames described the differences in British and French nobles’ outlook on farming and agriculture. Regarding the French and British noblemen, he wrote that “French nobles had deserted the country, fond of society in a town-life” while “landed gentlemen in England, more rough, and delighting in more hunting and other country amusements, found leisure to practise agriculture.”<sup>38</sup> Scottish agriculture of the eighteenth century was much closer to the British gentlemen’s mindset. The French it seemed were more content with focusing on town-life, whereas the British saw more value in their lands and agricultural practices. Scottish noblemen, like Kames, were trying to take that one step further and express their values through “modernizing” agricultural practices in the eighteenth century. Other differences between Scots, the French and the British, for Kames, were vested in the tenant structures. Kames believed tenants were better off in Scotland because of the “modern” agricultural skills given to them from their landlords. For Scottish landowners, like Kames, they needed to be able to garner support from the Scottish tenants and educate them in ways that

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<sup>36</sup> Lehmann, 288.

<sup>37</sup> Lehmann, 288.

<sup>38</sup> Kames, *Sketches*, vol. 1, 97.

made their lives and the whole of Scottish society better off, both intellectually and economically. Kames believed this was accomplished through agricultural “modernization.”

The differences between the Scottish, British and French was just one part of the argument presented by Kames for agricultural “improvement” in the eighteenth century. This transition from a sense of agricultural traditionalism to a more “modern” and “improved” agricultural practice was clearly identified in Kames’ work, *The Gentleman Farmer*. Kames chronicled the changes of moving from the run-rig system to enclosed fields, and described the farmers of his time as being “ignorant and indolent.”<sup>39</sup> He described that prior to his time period there was “nothing to be seen but weeds and trash” on the landscape of Scotland, and there was not a “single field in order.”<sup>40</sup> By putting blame on the people of Scotland and not on the actual environment of Scotland, it allowed Kames and other elites to believe that they could fix the agricultural woes in Scotland based on newfound sciences and Enlightened practical thought. It also allowed them to believe that they could reform the Highlanders back to their golden age depicted in Ossian. These ideas also coincide with Kames’ beliefs regarding patria or patriotism. Not only were these agricultural fixes good for the economy, they were also good for bolstering Scottish culture and society.

The problem with agricultural practices of Scotland being antiquated and needing “improvement,” led Kames to make many “improvements” on the lands he owned. Kames spent his adult life researching and experimenting on these lands. He was not a gentleman of leisure like other elites of his day, and he was not one to show off. He would “himself be lifting stones from the field, breaking stubborn clods, mending fences.”<sup>41</sup> He would personally supervise the

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<sup>39</sup> Kames, *Gentleman Farmer*, v.

<sup>40</sup> Kames, *Farmer*, v.

<sup>41</sup> Lehmann, 84.

workers in his fields and observe the draft animals' performance. Kames was most at home while doing these activities, which he ultimately found pleasurable and relaxing. He believed that when a "gentleman" was working he "becomes daily more active and is daily gathering knowledge: as his mind is never suffered to languish," and he in doing so will keep his spirits high.<sup>42</sup> This is one of the many reasons why he wanted Highlanders to come and work on his lands. He believed that through this type of work they would reclaim their Ossianic manners and be brought back to their glory days.

Kames' lifestyle choice of a gentleman farmer clearly reflects his values and firmly held beliefs. Kames was trying to relieve the agricultural problems he felt were part of eighteenth-century Scotland. According to historian Lehmann, Kames had:

great faith in the possibility of improvement along many lines, and he saw clearly the main lines that efforts at improvement needed to follow: improvement—which for him meant rationalization—of agriculture first; next, improvement in the means of transportation and communication, particularly through road and turnpike and canal building; the encouragement and financial support, so far as possible, of new developments in industry, and also of improved commercial and credit facilities; and along with all of these, the inculcation of habits of industry and the development of new skills among the people.<sup>43</sup>

The habits of industry and their inculcation into Scottish society refers to education and agricultural "improvements" and "modern" practices. For Kames the last two were "seriously lacking, particularly among the Highlanders," and Kames dedicated his estates to rectifying this and bringing the Highlanders back to a time revered in Ossian. This act demonstrated his patriotic tendencies, his Scottish Enlightenment values, as well as his devotion to preserving the traditional manners of Highlanders. This constant conundrum between the modern and the ancient for Kames affected every aspect of his being. Whether he was inventing new tools,

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<sup>42</sup> Kames, *Gentleman*, xvi.

<sup>43</sup> Lehmann, 289.

improving on agricultural planting methods, or writing works that favored the Scottish environment, he was consistently at odds between these contradictory views.

Kames put his Scottish Enlightenment values of education, improvement, and patriotism on display when he began his improvement scheme at Blair Drummond. At the time the estate included a mossy area of about fifteen hundred acres. It was a two-mile-wide and four-mile-long strip of peat-covered bog between the Teith and Forth Rivers near Stirling. These acres of moss needed to be drained in order to reach the alluvial clay beneath. The nearly twelve feet of peat and other decomposed vegetable matter needed to be removed in order to expose the potentially fertile land.<sup>44</sup> Before Kames inherited Blair Drummond, the previous owners had tried several other methods to clear this piece of land, including peat-digging for fuel.<sup>45</sup> There were “raised hopes that the removal of the moss would uncover the lost arable land beneath it,” because of what the previous owners had managed to uncover with their attempts.<sup>46</sup>

Kames began the work by cutting a three-mile channel across the Carse (flat vale, or area of fertile, low-lying land occupying Scottish river valleys) with a team of workmen to start the draining process. Kames’ method differed from the previous owners’; he cut trenches (or ‘goats’) parallel to the Teith in order to channel water at a higher level to the Forth, which was at a lower elevation. These trenches were then used to float the loosened peat down the river. Workers achieved Kames’ idea by digging with spades. They removed the moss, grass, and tree roots at the bottom, “leaving only a six-inch stratum of moss to be burned in the spring to yield fertilizing ashes for the first crop.”<sup>47</sup> According to *An Encyclopaedia of Agriculture*:

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<sup>44</sup> Lehmann, 88.

<sup>45</sup> Lehmann, 88.

<sup>46</sup> Fredrik Albritton Jonsson, *Enlightenment's Frontier: The Scottish Highlands and the Origins of Environmentalism* (Lewis Walpole Series in Eighteenth-century Culture and History, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 11.

<sup>47</sup> Jonsson, *Enlightenment's Frontier*, 11.

The moss of Kinkardine or Blair-Drummond is situated in the parish of that name not far from Stirling, and contains upwards of 2000 acres, 1500 of which belong to the estate of Blair-Drummond. It lies upon a bed of clay, which is a continuation of the rich alluvial soil which forms the flat vales called *Carses* of Stirling and Falkirk. This vale or plain had been covered with trees, which appear to have been felled by the Romans, and this, by stagnating the water, ended in producing the moss. This moss consists of three different strata: the first, black and heavy, appears to have been formed of bent grass and fallen trees; the second is composed principally of *Sphagnum palustre*, and is brown and of an elastic texture; the third is about a foot thick, and consists of heath and a little bent grass. In general these three strata occupy to the depth of seven feet. Lord Kames took possession of this moss in 1766, and, soon after, conceived the idea of floating off the moss into the Firth of Forth, and exposing the alluvial soil for corn culture.

This demonstrates the amount of work that had to be done in order to get Kames' lands to the condition he wanted them to be in. His idea of floating the moss down the Firth of Forth allowed him to "improve" his lands in ways that previous owners had been unable to do. Kames was not able to do this work without a large quantity of workmen. Kames knew using hired workmen to clear the moss would have been too costly, so Kames advertised for tenants in the Callander area in the Highlands with offers of thirty-eight-year, eight-acre leases. These leases were generous for the time period with most leases being shorter and with smaller acreage. Kames also focused on the Highlanders in order to preserve their culture and allow them to continue to be part of the Scottish economic backbone of agricultural production. Highlanders would be provided with timber to build a house and oatmeal for a year. They did not have to pay rent for seven years, and after that their rent was at a very reasonable rate. The first Highland tenant came to Blair Drummond in 1768. By 1774 another eleven had come. Kames first leased the Kinkardine Moss into sections and brought Gaelic-speaking people from the parishes of Callander, Balquhidder, and Killin.<sup>48</sup> Kames knew that Scottish elites were "more privileged than others in wealth, education and community standing," but he also believed that these

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<sup>48</sup> Ross, *Lord Kames*, 362.



privileges needed to be matched with duty, service, and responsibilities to the community.<sup>49</sup> This is one reason why he wanted to bring people from the Highlands to work on the project, so he could help relieve “population pressure in the Highlands” and show “that the Highlanders could make good agriculturalists.”<sup>50</sup> When Kames died in 1783 at 86, there were twenty-nine tenants living on 400 acres of cleared moss. Kames had placed forty-two families, evicted from their farms in Perthshire, onto his lands at Blair Drummond before he died.<sup>51</sup> He did not ask them to pay rent while the land was being cleared, and they were “given financial and material help until the peat was taken off their plots.”<sup>52</sup> In 1793 there were one hundred and fifteen families living on the moss with a house, some livestock, and seven to eight-acre land holdings.<sup>53</sup> These tenants “had cleared 300 acres down to the Carse, raising as much as sixty bolls of oats per tenant on the recovered clay soils.”<sup>54</sup>

Removing moss from Kames’ estate was not an easy feat for the Highland tenants to achieve. Not only did Kames implement new methods for draining and clearing the moss, he also implemented new agricultural tools. Kames made changes to farming tools such as the harrow (a tool that covers and prepares the soil for seeds) and roller (crushed clods in the soil), and he used a new Scottish plough invented by Scot James Small in the 1750s. Kames believed that by implementing new tools such as the harrow and the plough that Scottish agricultural industry would be set up for success. Kames wrote:

Can greater encouragement to industry be wished, than a ready market for every thing the soil produces? how different from the condition of Scotland, not more than forty years ago! Can a landholder be employed more profitably for his country, or more honourably as well as profitably for himself, than to rouse emulation among his tenants, by kind

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<sup>49</sup> Lehmann, 137.

<sup>50</sup> Ross, 362.

<sup>51</sup> Lehmann, 88.

<sup>52</sup> Ross, 362.

<sup>53</sup> Lehmann, 88.

<sup>54</sup> Jonsson, *Enlightenment’s Frontier*, 11.

treatment, by instruction, by example, and by premiums. What if he should bestow on the deserving, a plough or harrows of the best construction?<sup>55</sup>

Similar to the agricultural method of the run-rig system, tools like the harrow had been used for hundreds of years with little to no change throughout. It was not until the eighteenth century with the Scottish Enlightenment that “improvers” like Kames drastically changed them. Kames in *The Gentleman Farmer* described what the harrow was before he made changes to it:

The harrow commonly used is of different forms. The first I shall mention has two bulls, four feet long and eighteen inches asunder, with four wooden teeth in each. A second has three bulls and twelve wooden teeth. A third has four bulls, and twenty teeth, of wood or iron, ten or twelve inches asunder. Now, in fine mould, the last may be sufficient for covering the feed; but none of them are sufficient to prepare for the feed any ground that required subduing. The only tolerable form is that with iron teeth; and the bare description of its imperfections, will shew the necessity of a more perfect form. In the first place, this harrow is by far too light for ground new taken up from the state of nature, for clays hardened with spring-drought, or for other stubborn soils: it floats on the surface and after frequent returns in the same track, does nothing effectually. In the next place, the teeth are too thick set, by which the harrow is apt to be choked, especially where the earth is bound with roots, which is commons the case. At the same time, the lightness and number of teeth keep the harrow upon the surface, and prevent one of its capital purposes, that of dividing the soil. Nor will fewer teeth answer for covering the seed properly. In the third place, the teeth are too short for reducing a coarse soil to proper tilth; and yet it would be in vain to make them longer, because the harrow it too light for going deep into the ground. Further, the common harrows are so ill constructed, as to ride at every turn one upon another. Much time is lost in disengaging them. What a pity it is, than an industrious farmer should be reduced to such an imperfect instrument, which is neither fit to prepare the ground for feed, nor to cover it properly.<sup>56</sup>

The old Scottish harrow had terrible teeth for covering seeds. It made it so seeds were sown improperly and therefore unproductive, affecting the Scottish economy. It also did not crush up coarse soil which was a huge problem because much of the soil found throughout Scotland is rough. The problems described by Kames were instrumental in motivating him to change the old Scottish harrow. His ideas to fix these problems are outlined in detail in his work *The Gentleman Farmer* as well. According to Kames:

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<sup>55</sup> Kames, *Gentleman*, xi.

<sup>56</sup> Kames, *Gentleman*, 18.

Rejecting the common harrows, as in every respect insufficient, I boldly recommend the following. I use three of them of different forms, for different purposes. They are all of the same weight, drawn each by two horses. Birch is the best wood for them, because it is cheap, and not apt to split. The first is composed of four bulls, each four feet ten inches long, three and a quarter inches broad, and three and a half deep; the interval between the bulls eleven and three fourths inches; so that the breadth of the whole harrow is four feet. The bulls are connected by four cross-bars, which go through each bull, and are fixed by wooden nails driven through both. In each bull five teeth are inserted, ten inches free under the bull, and ten inches asunder. They are of the same form with those of the brake, and inserted into the wood in the same manner. Each of these teeth is three pounds weight; and where the harrow is made of birch, the weight of the whole is six stone fourteen pounds Dutch. An erect bridle is fixed at a corner of the harrow, three inches high, with four notches for drawing higher or lower. To this bridle a double tree is fixed for two horses drawing abreast, as in a plough. And to strengthen the harrow, a flat rod of iron is nailed upon the harrow from corner to corner in the line of the draught.<sup>57</sup>

Kames was an interesting “improver” and demonstrated the Scottish Enlightenment values of “modernization” by not just depicting the problems within Scottish agriculture, but also offering his views on the improvements to them. He further argued and summed up his improvements to the harrow:

These harrows I hold to be a considerable improvement. They ply to curved ground like two unconnected harrows, and when drawn in one plain, they are in effect one harrow of double weight, which makes the teeth pierce deep into the ground. The imperfection of common harrows, mentioned above, will suggest the advantages of the set of harrows here recommended. The first is proper for harrowing land that has lain long after plowing, as were oats are sown on a winter-furrow; and in general, for harrowing stiff land: it pierces deep into the soil by its long teeth, and divides it minutely. The second is intended for covering the feed: its long teeth lays the seed deeper than the common harrow can do; which is no slight advantage. By placing the seed considerably under the surface, the young plants are protected from too much heat; and have sufficiency of moisture. At the same time, the seed is so well covered that none of it is lost. Seed slightly covered by the common harrows, wants moisture, and is burnt up by the sun; beside, that a proportion of it is left upon the surface uncovered. The third harrow supplies what may be deficient in the second, by smoothing the surface, and covering the seed more accurately. The three harrows make the ground finer and finer, as heckles do flax; or, to use a different comparison, the first harrow makes the bed, the second lays the feed in it, and the third smooths the clothes. These advantages are certain. If any man doubt, let him try the experiment, and he will find the effect of them in his crops. I can say so with assurance from the experience of many years. They have another advantage not inferior to any mentioned; they mix manure with the soil more intimately than can be done by common harrows; and upon such intimate mixture depends greatly the effect of

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<sup>57</sup> Kames, *Gentleman*, 19-20.

manure, as shall be explained afterward. To conclude, these harrows are contrived to answer an established principle in agriculture, That fertility depends greatly on pulverizing the soil, and on an intimate mixture of manure with it, whether dung, lime, marl, or any other.<sup>58</sup>

These passages from his work demonstrate his intellectual prowess, research ability, experimentation, and his passion for “improvements” in Scotland. The descriptions for the improvements to the Scottish harrow by Kames also have an underlying current of patriotism, because he tried to help every Scottish farmer, who in turn helps the Scottish economy. Kames’ invention of a new roller for crushing clods and evening the seed bed is yet another example of his dedication to Scottish agricultural “improvement.” The more fertile the soil could become, the more economical advantages Scottish farmers would have at their disposal.

While Kames did not invent a new plough, he did promote the one invented by James Small. In *The Gentleman Farmer*, Kames describes the problems of the traditional Scottish plough. Kames wrote:

The only plough used in Scotland, till of late, is a strong heavy instrument, about thirteen feet from the handles to the extremity of the beam, and commonly above four feet from the back end of the head to the point of the sock. It is termed the *Scotch plough*; to distinguish it from other forms; and it needs no particular description, as it may be seen in every field. It may well be termed the *Scotch plough*; for of all forms it is the fittest for breaking up stiff and rough ground, especially where stones abound; and no less fit for strong clays hardened by drought. The length of its head give it a firm hold of the ground: its weight prevents it from being thrown out by stones: the length of the handles give the ploughman great command to direct its motion: and by the length of its head, and of its mouldboard, it lays the furrow-slice cleverly over. The Scotch plough was contrived during the infancy of agriculture, and was well contrived: in the soils above described, it has not an equal.<sup>59</sup>

This traditional Scotch plough did a mediocre job of breaking up ground that was “stiff and rough,” with a lot of stones. Kames recommended James Small’s plough because:

...it avoids all of the defects of the Scotch plough. The shortness of its head and of its mouldboard lessen the friction greatly: from the point of the sock to the back part of the

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<sup>58</sup> Kames, *Gentleman*, 22-23.

<sup>59</sup> Kames, *Gentleman*, 3.

head it is only thirty inches; and the whole length, from the point of the beam to the end of the handles, between eight and nine feet. The sock and mouldboard make one line gently curving; and consequently gather no earth. Instead of a wrist, the under edge of the mouldboard is in one plain with the sole of the head; which makes a wide furrow, without leaving any part unstirred. It is termed the *chain-plough*, because it is drawn by iron chain fixed to the back part of the beam immediately before the coulter. This has two advantages: first, by means of a muzzle, it makes the plough go deep or shallow; and next, it stresses the beam less than if fixed the point, and therefore a slenderer beam is sufficient.

This plough may well be considered a capital improvement; not only by saving expence, but by making better work. It is proper for loams, for carse clays, and, in general, for every sort of tender soil free of stones. It is even proper for opening up pasture-ground that has formerly been well cultivated.<sup>60</sup>

This new plough from James Small exhibited the new agricultural “improvements” Kame was trying to implement throughout Scottish agricultural practices. The new plough being lighter in weight and more solid in construction allowed for different soils to be plowed in ways that were not capable with the old plough. Tools were not the only aspect of Scottish farming that Kames knew to be inefficient and outdated; he also believed tenant structures and crop rotation practices could be improved upon. Longer leases were granted in Scotland, as evidenced by the lease terms for Highlanders on Kames’ Blair Drummond estate. The land was divided “on a more equitable basis, timber planted, enclosures made, the ground drained, limed, and manured.”<sup>61</sup> This allowed for more efficient agricultural practices and methods, instead of the traditional run-rig, large farming methods previously used. Enclosures “when combined with the new rotations and effective liming of the land,” became “the fastest means of increasing productivity and rental” of Scottish farms.<sup>62</sup> The soils’ nutrients from these practices allowed for more fertile soil in places where agricultural production had been stagnant. Once the lands had

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<sup>60</sup> Kames, *Gentleman*, 5-6.

<sup>61</sup> Andrew Charles O’Dell and Kenneth Walton, *The Highlands and Islands of Scotland*, Regions of the British Isles Series (London: T. Nelson, 1962), 132.

<sup>62</sup> Devine, *Transformation of Rural Scotland*, 51.

been divided into more convenient separate units through enclosures, Kames and other Scottish improvers introduced “new crops such as turnips, sown grasses and potatoes, and enabled the more effective planning of the cycle of improved rotations” on the land.<sup>63</sup> Introducing new crops was a way to alleviate the problem of feeding a growing Scottish population, as well as a way to experiment with different Scottish soils, like Kames did on his properties.

The introductions of new crops and farm enclosures allowed for the practice of crop rotation to replace the traditional run-rig system in Scottish agricultural practices. Rotating crops helped to keep the ground more fertile and allowed it to reach its maximum level of possible profit. By avoiding “frequent repetition of the same species,” farmers were able to utilize the land in ways that they had not been able to before. Kames introduced new fertilizers like lime, whereas before they used primarily dung, and he also practiced crop-rotation on his lands. He improved roads on his estates and the breeds of farm animals that he used; instead of using horses, he chose to use oxen. He introduced nitrogen into the soil by planting legumes, and he “improved breeds of plants and animals, and introduced turnip-culture for animal food and potatoes on a larger scale for man.”<sup>64</sup> His concern with the soil was due in large part to his belief that fertility depended on the nutrients in the soil. If cropping had depleted these nutrients, then they needed to be “restored by the plough, by dung, or by other manure; and that to restore an exhausted field by such means, is the sole object of agriculture.”<sup>65</sup> Kames’ experiments on his own estates showcased his ability to implement Scottish Enlightenment ideologies of agricultural “improvement,” as well as the value he placed on Scottish lands. He wrote on the matter of crop rotation and new crops in his work *The Gentleman Farmer*:

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<sup>63</sup> Devine, *Transformation*, 51.

<sup>64</sup> Lehmann, 83.

<sup>65</sup> Kames, *Gentleman*, 348.

No branch of husbandry requires more skill and sagacity than a proper rotation of crops, so as to keep the ground always in heart, and yet to draw out of it the greatest profit possible. A horse is purchased for labour; and it is the purchaser's intent to make the most of him. He is well fed, and wrought according to his strength: to overwork him, is to render him useless. Precisely similar is land. Profit is the farmer's object; but he knows that to run out of his farm by indiscreet cropping, is not the way to make a profit. Some plants rob the soil, others are gentle to it: some bind, others loosen. The nice point is, to intermix crops, so as to make the greatest profit consistently with keeping the soil in order. In that view, the nature of the plants employed in husbandry, must be accurately examined.<sup>66</sup>

Crop rotation was a very important matter to Kames as evidenced in the passage. He believed that not every crop was proper for creating the progress that he saw for the agricultural practices of Scotland. As detailed in *The Gentleman Farmer*, Kames listed potatoes as being good for opening the soil, but they would not thrive in a soil that has previously been sown with wheat. The same is true of turnips since they need light soil.<sup>67</sup> Rotating crops and educating the masses on these new agricultural methods was Kames' life's work and demonstrated his patriotism. He knew that with these "improvements" to the agricultural practices of Scotland that had been in place for hundreds of years he was ushering in new economic opportunities for his homeland.

Kames' passion for agricultural "improvement" was evidenced through his use of crop rotations on his lands and his literary works that showcased his practical observations. These observations led to experiments with different and new crops, soils, fertilizers, and livestock on his lands. In *The Gentleman Farmer* he described in detail his use of rye, wheat, oats, and barley for human and cattle consumption. He also experimented with manures to see the best application practices, and how different manures affected different soils and crops. His careful crop selections also extended to the animals he chose to use for ploughing. Kames saw the use of

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<sup>66</sup> Kames, *Gentleman*, 136.

<sup>67</sup> Kames, *Gentleman*, 142.

oxen as being more beneficial for Scottish farmers than horses. Kames wrote extensively in *The Gentleman Farmer* on this matter. He argued that horses commonly used on Scottish farms were not promoting the interests of the gentleman farmer. According to Kames:

There is not in agriculture any other improvement that equals the using of oxen instead of horses; they are equally tractable; and they are purchased and maintained at much less expence. As this improvement is obvious to the meanest capacity, one might expect to see every farmer greedily embracing it, as he would a feast after being famished. Yet few stir. How is this to be accounted for?<sup>68</sup>

Economics was the motivating factor for Kames to use oxen instead of horses in Scotland for farming practices. He believed that the amount of oats consumed by horses did not balance out financially with the work that they were able to do. For Kames, it was “grievous to be reduced to the necessity of importing annually vast quantities of oats; all of which would be saved by employing oxen only in a farm.”<sup>69</sup> Not only did oxen eat less than horses, they also lasted longer on the farm. Oxen required “no corn, and he works to perfection upon cut grass in summer, and upon hay in winter. He does well even upon oat-straw, Thus by using oxen, a farmer can make money of his whole crop of oats, except what is necessary for maintenance of his family. The bulk of that product, on the contrary, is consumed by farm-horses.”<sup>70</sup> Horses also needed to be changed out every ten years, while oxen could last “for ever” and could be “sold to the butcher when past the vigour of work, and their price will be more than sufficient to put young oxen in their stead.”<sup>71</sup> Horses as they became lame would be useless, while an ox could always be used for other things, such as “fatted for the shambles,” or fattened up to be taken to

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<sup>68</sup> Kames, *Gentleman*, 28.

<sup>69</sup> Kames, *Gentleman*, 29.

<sup>70</sup> Kames, *Gentleman*, 32.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*



the slaughterhouse.<sup>72</sup> Horses also had to be tended to more than oxen; oxen did not require any other care than feeding.<sup>73</sup>

Kames' use of oxen over horses and his passionate writings about them demonstrate his patriotic values for Scotland's future and its people; his "improvements" were influenced heavily through Scottish Enlightenment values of education and science, but also through his idea of being a gentleman farmer. Kames' experiments and practices on his own land demonstrated the many ways he was a "gentleman farmer."

Kames' work on his own lands demonstrates the characteristics that make him a truly influential "improver" in eighteenth-century Scotland, as does his work with governmental boards. Kames was on several governmental boards, the most influential were the Board of Commissioners for the Forfeited Estates and the Board of Trustees for Manufactures and Fisheries in Scotland. Kames wrote several papers and proposals while a member. One was a seventeen-page paper titled "Hints by Lord Kames to the Commissioners of the Annexed Estates." Kames expressed regret that "their forefathers' sad neglect of the nation's forest reserves" had "necessitated 'the importing of great quantities of [timber] annually for ready money,' and how 'the Commissioners have endeavoured all in their power to make up for the indolence of our forefathers.'"<sup>74</sup> His patriotic values shine through in this quote and paper, as well as his desire to bring Scotland into the modern era with environmental and economic success. The rest of this paper proceeded to criticize other neglected agricultural opportunities, and then laid out "specific recommendations for afforestation and forest-care, the dividing of large farms and the complete elimination 'without delay' of run-rig strip-farming, and similar matter."<sup>75</sup> This

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Kames, *Gentleman*, 33.

<sup>74</sup> Lehmann, 118.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

paper demonstrated how important Scottish lands were to Kames, and how passionate he was about “improving” agricultural practices. Kames, in another paper, proposed to plant oaks in Argyleshire in June 1778. The proposal was intended to be submitted to Parliament, and began with a reminder of a “threatening national emergency, namely a growing shortage of oak-timber urgently needed by the Royal fleet, and now further exaggerated by the cutting off of the supply from the American colonies due to war.”<sup>76</sup> This fleet, according to Kames, was part of Scotland’s national defense and therefore needed to be protected. Kames also described the natural topography of Scotland and gave “specifications as to planning, ‘weeding’ (i.e., thinning), and cutting, spaced over a period of years with due safeguards against misappropriation of payments received without corresponding benefits to the community.”<sup>77</sup> His desire for the Scottish fleet to be protected also helps to demonstrate more of his patriotic values and how intertwined all of the facets of his personality and passions were.

Kames’ papers also show the values of improvement, education, and patriotism for modernizing for the benefit of all in society. Kames as part of the Board of Trustees for Manufactures and Fisheries in Scotland encouraged skills and manufacturing, agriculture, and fisheries. The Board of Trustees focused on the nation’s economy and aspects that they felt needed attention like animal and plant husbandry, fisheries, forestry, salt for fish preservation, markets and commerce, wool, transportation, linen and iron industries, and agricultural “improvement.”<sup>78</sup> For Kames there were several solutions to the problems that he saw and he tried to implement them while working on these governmental boards, whether it was through papers that he wrote or through his own experiments on his lands. The overarching theme of his

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<sup>76</sup> Lehmann, 112.

<sup>77</sup> Lehmann, 112.

<sup>78</sup> Lehmann, 104.

literary works and his “improvement” schemes was education. Kames believed that using easy-to-understand demonstration projects would allow for more people to be able to implement the new farming methods, as well as “giving out information on improvements that were successful elsewhere, establishing spinning schools, and aiding in the establishment of parish schools where they were lacking.”<sup>79</sup> Kames not only wrote about his firm beliefs on the topic of patriotism, he also practiced them in his personal life. There is a “strong demonstration of it in his services on the two national planning boards, and another in his passion for the advancement of letters in Scotland,” noted historian Lehmann.<sup>80</sup> Kames viewed patriotism as the “great bulwark of civil liberty,” and through his civil service endeavors pursued these matters.<sup>81</sup>

While working on these two governmental boards, Kames was able to affect much of what contributed to the agricultural transformation of eighteenth-century Scotland. The Board of Commissioners’ first act was to organize a fact-finding survey for all of the estates that were under their supervision. Kames valued these surveys and recommended that they survey the Hebrides and the Highlands, because he wanted to see the “conditions and improvement needs and possibilities.”<sup>82</sup> Kames’ irreconcilable differences within himself and his beliefs are demonstrated in these endeavors with the Boards. He had a soft spot for the Highlanders of his time and wanted them to improve to the time of their forefathers depicted in the epic poems. He also wanted to make sure that the land could be improved upon for agricultural productivity that would benefit Scotland’s economy and place within the global market.

Kames was very much an eighteenth-century Scot through and through with his devotion to Scottish Enlightenment ideologies. His passion for improvement on a national scale was

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<sup>79</sup> Lehmann, 289.

<sup>80</sup> Lehmann, 139.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Lehmann, 109.

demonstrated through his emphasis on research such as different crops, manures, soils, and farm-stock. He placed great value on education and patriotism. Kames' literary works like his magnum opus *Sketches on the History of Man*, along with his other works, represents his immense contributions to Scottish history. His work *The Gentleman Farmer* outlines several solutions and problems that Kames saw within eighteenth century Scottish agricultural practices and methods like antiquated farming tools and long-held systems like run-rig. Through these works we can gain a big picture sense of what Lord Kames was trying to accomplish through his improvement schemes, such as those on Blair Drummond, for not just his own personal pursuits, but for the overall betterment of Scottish society. The two opposing sides of Kames' personality and values were demonstrated on Blair Drummond through the tenants he chose to employ. He sought out Highlanders in order to guide them back to the manners described in Ossian and "improve" them through new agricultural practices and methods. His passion for this cause was so strong that it filtered down into his son, who after Kames died completed the project his father had started. Lord Kames influenced the Scottish Enlightenment with his own modernization efforts on his lands and expounded upon his improvement, education, and patriotic values and beliefs in his writings. Lord Kames epitomizes the idea of a gentleman farmer.

## CHAPTER IV

### EFFECTS AND CONCLUSION

Today in Scotland you can walk down the Royal Mile in Edinburgh and come across a statue of David Hume. The legacy of the Scottish Enlightenment and thinkers like Hume and Lord Kames are still very prevalent in Scottish society. Even in the eighteenth-century, Hume's and Kames' contemporaries were moved by the Scottish Enlightenment; in 1762 Voltaire wrote that "today it is from Scotland that we get rules of taste in all the arts, from epic poetry to gardening."<sup>1</sup> The effects of the Scottish Enlightenment extended further than Scotland and the European continent. Scottish achievements are held in high esteem outside of Scotland, including attitudes and ideas of the Scottish Enlightenment that were carried all over Europe and across the Atlantic through the Scottish diaspora and others who studied Scottish history. Ideas from the Scottish Enlightenment had a significant impact on the founding fathers of the United States, especially regarding ideas of practicality and common sense.

The new scientific activity in Scottish society led many thinkers like Lord Kames to begin implementing their theories into practical and applicable experimentation. Patriotism and education were a significant part of the reasoning behind his improvement schemes. He believed that through these he was teaching the next generation conservation and agricultural prowess. This was most certainly the case with his son George Home Drummond; he continued the project at Blair Drummond, but with new methods. The High Moss and Flow Moss comprised the remaining 1100 acres; the High Moss was over twelve feet deep, while the Flow Moss seemed

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<sup>1</sup> Lehmann, 115.

never ending.<sup>2</sup> A person was unable to walk across this moss unless they put boards on their feet “to spread his weight, and a stamp of the foot made the moss quake for fifty yards.”<sup>3</sup>

This new situation that Kames’ son George dealt with was a bit different from that of his father’s predicament in the eighteenth century. The Highlanders left from his father’s time still resided there on the land. Over the years, more dispossessed Highlanders came and joined the improvement project. This was not easy work; the Highlanders worked soaking wet all day long and got little reprieve from their hut. The leases changed under George as well to accommodate these harsher conditions. The term was still a thirty-eight-year lease, but they did not have to pay rent for nineteen years.<sup>4</sup>

The Highlanders faced other problems while working on the Blair Drummond project besides the harsh work and living conditions. The local farmers would obstruct the Highlanders’ work, and “the surrounding population ostracized the new settlers and mockingly referred to them as the Moss Lairds.”<sup>5</sup> The community that formed in response to this was very isolated and retreated into its own traditions and culture, so much so that they would only speak Gaelic.<sup>6</sup> George Drummond eventually had to hire a Gaelic-speaking teacher in 1795 at a school on the moss.<sup>7</sup> This was just one way that the Drummonds tried to make the Highlanders comfortable in their new home. The estate made sure that no one went hungry, all had clothes, and the opportunity to see a doctor.<sup>8</sup> A census report in 1811 of the population on the Moss “showed 764 men, women and children living there along with 264 cows, 166 horses, 375 hens, 30 pigs, 168

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<sup>2</sup> Archie MacKerracher, *Perthshire in History and Legend* (Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers, 1988), 129.

<sup>3</sup> MacKerracher, *Perthshire*, 135.

<sup>4</sup> MacKerracher, 136.

<sup>5</sup> MacKerracher, 139.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> MacKerracher, 140.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

cats, and 8 dogs,” a very large growth since Lord Kames’ time.<sup>9</sup> All the land that Lord Kames wanted to clear in order to reach the alluvial clay was completed by 1840; an estimate determined that “over twenty million cubic yards of moss, vegetation, and ancient tree trunks had been excavated solely by human power.”<sup>10</sup>

There were several consequences to this project began by Lord Kames in the eighteenth century and finished by his son in the nineteenth. Kames’ reclamation of the land on Blair Drummond was admirable for the time, but it was found to later have negative effects on the land. By 1865, “the method of peat-floating was declared a public nuisance, and the reclamations came to an end, but they had already drastically affected the ecology of the region.”<sup>11</sup> The salmon population and oyster beds of the Forth were negatively affected. However, Kames’ “improvements” ultimately changed the “geography of Scotland by creating a broad corridor of good dry land where in previous centuries had lain only a narrow passable track.”<sup>12</sup> Other criticisms focused on what happened to the tenants when the project was done. Most had sold their leases at a profit, but many also just “drifted off the Moss on the expiry of their leases.”<sup>13</sup>

Today this area is flat and fertile. It is well known for its dairy cattle and producing Timothy grass. The ditches that drained the Carse in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries can still be seen in some areas today. Lord Kames and his son George are both buried next to the Moss Lairds in the little graveyard on the Blair Drummond estate. Kames lives on through his improvement projects, and through his highly influential literary works.

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ross, *Lord Kames*, 362.

<sup>12</sup> Lenman, 72.

<sup>13</sup> MacKerracher, 141.

Kames' improvement projects, as well as his literary works *Sketches on the History of Man*, *Elements of Criticism*, and *The Gentleman Farmer*, went over well in the British Isles and beyond, and *Elements of Criticism* was used as a standard text in nineteenth-century North American colleges. *Sketches* had a varied reaction; most reviews were positive, but several were skeptical of Kames' conclusions and ideas. David Hume predicted that the work would not be very popular; however, in 1778 a second edition with four volumes, and a subsequent third edition ten years later were published demonstrating the public responded well to the work. Not only were his literary works popular, but also many of Kames' contemporaries thought that his agricultural experiments and innovations were "imaginative, usually quite significant and worthwhile in themselves" and "contributed significantly to the stock of knowledge and to the improvement of the nation's well-being."<sup>14</sup>

This sense for the nation and for Scotland, was very much part of the large patriotic theme that went through all of Kames' literary works and agricultural "improvements." There was a "sense of patriotic devotion and of rivalry" with England, and a strong urge to separate culturally and linguistically from their southern neighbor.<sup>15</sup> The identity of a person is closely tied to where one comes from, and in the eighteenth century it became very important to distinguish oneself in Scotland from those in Britain. The distinctive beliefs that Kames held regarding patriotism influenced his ideas about Highlanders in a way that separated him from other eighteenth-century Scots.

Other eighteenth-century Scots had begun to cement a separation between Highlanders and Lowlanders. It began with the land "improvements," including the enclosures that pushed some people off of their lands. What was brewing in the eighteenth century amongst Lowlanders

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<sup>14</sup> Lehmann, 91.

<sup>15</sup> Lehmann, 222.



and Highlanders became more prominent in the nineteenth century. There were three types of perspectives found within nineteenth-century newspapers that Lowlanders had when judging Highlanders: contempt, sympathy and romance. Historian Krisztina Fenyő argued that from Scottish newspapers a picture emerged showing that one group “regarded the Gaels as an ‘inferior race’ deserving only deep contempt; another looked at them with sympathy and pity, vowing ‘to lift them from the dust’; and the third had very romantic notions about the ‘inherent poetic’ nature of this ‘noble’ people.”<sup>16</sup> Kames definitely fit into the romantic notion of the Highlanders. He believed that their nobleness came from the manners described in Ossian and believed that Highlanders’ could be “improved.” Newspapers such as the *Scotsman*, *Glasgow Herald*, *Inverness Courier*, *Fife Journal*, and *Perthshire Constitution* played a prominent role in continuing to promote the disparaging ideas of Highlanders.

The negative views of the Highlanders did not affect the way that Kames felt about them. Kames’ idea to have the dispossessed Highlanders move to his Blair Drummond estate and aid in his improvement project was part of his patriotic mission. By the 1850s a “strong sense of giving up on the Highlanders and Highland Improvement” had set in according to Fenyő.<sup>17</sup> Public opinion, government officials, and “improvers” like Kames believed the “only permanent solution to the Highland problem was to transport the Highlanders from their native land, where they grew up in ‘habitual indolence,’ to other parts of the British Empire where they would learn industry and find plenty of work available.”<sup>18</sup> Most Scots who thought this of Highlanders truly believed that Highland emigration was good for Scotland and the Highlanders, because the change in environment would make them “finally become ‘improved’ and become part of the

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<sup>16</sup> Krisztina Fenyő, *Contempt, Sympathy, and Romance: Lowland Perceptions of the Highlands and the Clearances during the Famine Years, 1845-1855* (East Linton, East Lothian, Scotland: Tuckwell Press, 2000), 1.

<sup>17</sup> Fenyő, *Contempt, Sympathy, and Romance*, 3.

<sup>18</sup> Fenyő, *Contempt*, 3.

modern civilised world.”<sup>19</sup> Kames however differed on this point; he believed they should stay part of Scotland, demonstrating his patriotic values. While many Scots began to hold this perspective, there were others who still “considered the Celtic Highlanders so inherently inferior a race that no improvement could help them, and again, the only solution for the problem was to get rid of them and send them off their land.”<sup>20</sup> These ideas about Highlanders were caused by the “improvements” carried out by men like Lord Kames on the Scottish lands in the eighteenth century. The effects rippled through the nineteenth century and affected thousands of Highlanders and Lowlanders.

The elites of Scotland in the eighteenth century were concerned about being seen by the rest of the world as poor, backward, and stagnant. These fears lasted throughout the eighteenth century and continued into the nineteenth century as evidenced in newspapers.<sup>21</sup> Enlightened elites and landowners wanted to make Scotland known as an economical force to be reckoned with, not just an extension of England in the eighteenth century. These concerns about backwardness and modernity fueled agricultural improvements implemented by elites like Lord Kames. Henry Home, Lord Kames lived during an exceptionally progressive time in Scottish agricultural practice. Kames is remembered for being a “man of iron frame and sardonic voice, who combined learning and bawdy, wit and indecorum, refinement and coarseness, authority and conviviality, in a manner peculiarly satisfying to the Scot.”<sup>22</sup> Kames’ authorship was extensive throughout his life, focusing mostly on agriculture, law and improvement. Kames had a lifelong interest in maximizing agricultural production and practices. His beliefs and values centered on agriculture, education, patriotism and its benefits to the nation. Kames, like many other Scottish

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ross, 372.

elites, wanted to expand knowledge and promote the welfare of humanity. The Scottish Enlightenment was characterized by interdisciplinary study, employed by Scots such as chemists and economists, church ministers and architects, philosophers and surgeons, or lawyers and farmers. Like Kames, they all worked together towards the common goal of improvement. The fact that the Scottish Enlightenment was not anti-clerical, anti-church, or anti-religious like France allowed ideas from “improvers” like Kames to disseminate throughout Scotland. There was a strong concentration on empirical knowledge. “Improvers” like Kames were not trying to restructure all of Scottish society, they just wanted to improve on the antiquated and traditional modes of agriculture that were not working any more. The focus for human betterment was a cornerstone of the Scottish Enlightenment, as well as for Kames. Kames’ agricultural experiments and literary works exemplify the Scottish Enlightenment motivations to step away from traditional methods and practices, and to shape a new commercially successful Scottish nation. Yet, he also clung to the romanticized idea of Highlanders from Ossian, two opposing views that cannot be reconciled. The change in agricultural practices in the eighteenth century was a direct result of the actions of men like Lord Kames. His own values and beliefs that influenced his improvement schemes, literary works, and membership on the Board of Trustees for Manufactures and Fisheries in Scotland and the Board of Commissioners of Forfeited Estates also influenced the agricultural practices and methods of eighteenth-century Scotland. Kames was a very interesting Scot, who continuously throughout his life pushed through irreconcilable notions regarding “improvement” and the preservation of Highland traditions depicted in Ossian. The Agricultural Revolution and Scottish Enlightenment of the eighteenth century forever altered Scotland’s people, natural landscape, and agricultural modes of production.

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