The Creation of a British Musical Identity: The Importance of Scotland's Music in Eighteenth-Century Aesthetic and Philosophical Debates

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During the second half of the eighteenth century, traditional Scottish melodies were heard on a regular basis in London's private homes, pleasure gardens, and even concert halls. In his seminal work, *Concert Life in London from Mozart to Haydn,* Simon McVeigh justifies this trend as follows:

> Folk-song impinged on art-music through a number of interlocking causes: a nationalistic preference for British sources; an attempt to appeal to a 'popular' taste; a more general search for pre-romantic exoticism; [and] a desire for simplicity and pathos, often allied to an evocation of pastoral innocence.[1]

While this rationalisation is in some respects accurate, it may be, however, that these commonly stated reasons mask a far more complex objective—in other words there is far more than 'popularity,' 'exoticism,' and 'simplicity' at stake.

Historically, the relationships between England and the nations of the so-called 'Celtic Fringe'—Scotland, Ireland and Wales—have often been hostile and are still constantly changing.[2] Often perceived as the most powerful element in the British union, England has at all times possessed both its own monarchy and government, whilst over the centuries the other three nations conceded their monarchies and political autonomy after varying degrees of struggle. Wales was partially incorporated into England as early as the sixteenth century;[3] Scotland's monarchy was adopted by the English in 1603, then deposed in 1688 prior to political unification in 1707;[4] and in Ireland (then a united country) political union was finally achieved

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[1] Simon McVeigh, *Concert Life in London from Mozart to Haydn* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993) 114.

[2] Keith Webb and Eric Hall, *Studies in Public Policy No.15—Explanations of the Rise of Political Nationalism in Scotland* (Glasgow: Strathclyde UP, 1978) 22.

[3] Laurence Brockliss and David Eastwood suggest that 'Wales's … integration into the English State … in 1536 and 1543 … robbed Wales of real institutional distinctiveness.' *A Union of Multiple Identities,* ed. Laurence Brockliss & David Eastwood (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1997) 2.

[4] James VI of Scotland became James I of England in 1603, his ancestor, Charles II being deposed during the so-called 'Glorious Revolution' of 1688.

in 1800.[5] As Stephen Haseler has noted, 'There is little question that since 1707 the English have dominated the Union, and that the idea of "Englishness" has determined British "national identity" and "national culture".'[6] Haseler's concept of 'Englishness' as the defining element in the British national identity is not only common, but almost universally accepted by scholars. Gerald Newman in his work, *The Rise of English Nationalism: A Cultural History 1740–1830*, for example, regularly substitutes the words 'England' and 'English' for 'British,' although he does not state his intention to do so quite as vociferously as Haseler.[7] In many respects this attitude is entirely justified, because although most Europeans and even Britons themselves viewed the British state in terms of three or four distinct nations, common British attitudes were seen to be fundamentally English.

> [T]he British State embodied something approaching the political and cultural primacy of the English, but here primacy should not be equated with hegemony. Other identities persisted [but] an English identity was the most fully developed: born of 900 years of political and administrative unity.[8]

In fact, the long history of animosity between the Scots and the English dates back to at least the fifteenth century, their relationship outlined in a tract dating of *c*.1549:

> There are no two nations under the firmament that are more contrary and different from each other than are Englishmen and Scotsmen, albeit that they be within one isle, and neighbours and of one language … it is impossible that Scotsmen and Englishmen can remain in concord under one monarch or prince, because their nature and conditions are as different as is the nature of sheep and wolves.[9]

Even following political union at the beginning of the eighteenth century, a significant degree of antipathy remained on both sides. Throughout the centuries the same issues predominated, as George Ridpath, the author of a pamphlet produced in 1705 suggests: 'while [the English] pretend to fight for their own Liberty, and that of all *Europe*, they are very niggardly in dispensing it to any other People over whom they can have Influence.'[10] Just one year later, in 1706, the political pamphleteer and author of *Robinson Crusoe*, Daniel Defoe, was sent to Scotland as an English governmental spy with a mission to discover the reasons behind the Scottish aversion to union with the English. Once in Edinburgh, Defoe quickly realised that if union, and in particular the formation of a unified British national consciousness, were ever to be feasible, then elements of both the existing English and Scottish identities would require

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[5] *Union with Ireland* (1800) 39 & 40 Geo.III.C.67.

[6] Stephen Haseler, *The English Tribe: Identity, Nation and Europe* (London & New York: Macmillan, 1996) viii.

[7] 'It was no coincidence that "pre-romanticism" and the English nationalist movement rose simultaneously in time, from the second quarter of the century, or that the famous "precursors of romanticism," authors like James Thomson and Joseph Warton, inveighed so often against the "corrupting arts" of the of the "circling junto of the great," with the dreadful result that "Britannia's well-fought laurels yield / to slyly conquering Gaul".' Gerald Newman, *The Rise of English Nationalism: A Cultural History 1740–1830*, 2nd ed. (London & New York: Macmillan, 1997) 111. Thomson was a Scottish poet.

[8] Brockliss & Eastwood, 'Preface,' *A Union of Multiple Identities* 2.

[9] Quoted in Nigel Tranter, 'Foreword,' *The Growth of Nationalism in Scotland*, by Keith Webb (Glasgow: The Molendinar Press, 1977) 17.

[10] George Ridpath, *The Reducing of Scotland by Arms, And Annexing it to England, as a Province, Considered* (London, 1705) 16.

to be incorporated when creating a new, 'British' identity. Defoe's *Essay* on the subject notes that any true union must be 'a Union of the very Soul of the Nation, all its Constitution, Customs, Trade, and Manners.'[11] However, his suggestions went unheeded, and the Jacobite risings of 1715 and 1745 only served to remind many Englishmen that the Scots were, to quote Henry Fielding, 'Huns and Vandals,' interested only in 'Rapine [*sic*] and Massacres,'[12] and therefore not to be trusted, or considered to be truly 'British.'[13]

Given this background, it is hard to imagine how traditional Scottish melodies became one of late eighteenth-century Britain's most popular musical entertainments. However, a proliferation of cultured arrangements of Scottish folk tunes and songs appeared, together with thousands of examples of art music that incorporated traditional tunes. Most famous among these are probably Haydn and Beethoven's arrangements of Scots songs made around the turn of the nineteenth century, but these works are merely the culmination of a century of developments in this genre.[14] Bizarre as it might seem, the origins of this fascination lie in the intellectual hotbed that was Enlightenment Scotland.

During the Enlightenment (*c.*1730–90) Scotland moved to the forefront of European academic culture.[15] The achievements in literature, philosophy and science made by figures such as David Hume, Adam Smith, James Watt and their contemporaries during the second half of the eighteenth century might, in another country, 'have served as a platform for a vigorous movement of national assertion.'[16] However, Scotland did not develop a specifically nationalist movement until the mid-nineteenth century, probably because the Scots never, at any stage during the late-eighteenth or early-nineteenth century, felt that their national identity was in danger of being eclipsed by that of the English. As Hugh Seton-Watson suggests:

> [I]t is arguable that during the nineteenth century [English national consciousness] disappeared, merging into a British national consciousness, which the English tended to appropriate to themselves. Many Scots and Welsh also acquired this British national consciousness.[17]

British nationalism drew on the anti-Catholicism which had united Lowland Scots and English by the Jacobite Rebellion of 1745, the Gallophobia of all but the upper-most classes, and the British imperialist conquests on which the populations of all Britain's constituent nations were led to believe their futures depended (and in which many Highland Scots, otherwise disenfranchised by Britain, had taken part).[18] Seeing this, the British aristocracy were faced with a distinct choice between becoming more nationalistic, or facing a nationalist rising along the lines of that which was to occur in the French Revolution of 1789. Popular

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[11] Daniel Defoe, *An Essay at Removing National Prejudices Against a Union with Scotland* ([Edinburgh], 1706).

[12] Henry Fielding, *A Serious Address to the People of Great Britain* ([London], 1745).

[13] This, despite the fact that as many Lowland Scots fought with the English as non-conformist or Catholic Englishmen joined the Jacobite cause.

[14] See Claire Nelson, 'Tea-table Miscellanies: The Development of Scotland's Song Culture, 1720–1800,' *Early Music* 28.4 (November 2000): 596–618.

[15] See *The Scottish Enlightenment, 1730–1790: A Hotbed of Genius*, ed. David Daiches, Peter Jones and Jean Jones (Edinburgh: The Saltaire Society, 1996).

[16] Colin Kidd, *Subverting Scotland's Past: Scottish Whig Historians and the Creation of an Anglo-British Identity, 1689–c.1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993) 268.

[17] Hugh Seton-Watson, *Nations and States* (London: Methuen, 1977) 33–34.

[18] Kidd, *Subverting Scotland's Past*, 206–7.

sentiment regarding the aristocratic obsession with France was damning—the Reverend John Brown suggesting, as early as 1757, that the effects of Francophilia included not only a growth in English effeminacy and a decline in moral stature, but also that these tendencies were being encouraged by the French as a means of conquering the English—'We adopt every Vanity, and catch at every Lure, thrown out to us by the Nation that is planning our destruction.'[19]

Aristocratic fears about the consequences of such attitudes resulted in an unprecedented abandonment of the European symbols of their status, the aristocracy instead placing themselves 'at the head of what amounted to a nationalist cultural revolution.'[20] From the 1760s onwards, and with increasing momentum, unprecedented aristocratic patronage of nationalist literature and other specifically British art-forms began to emerge. Evidence, it could be argued, of the desire for a cohesive British culture.[21]

One of the major factors in the development of a clear national identity in all of central Europe's developing nations was the establishment, or re-establishment, of its national literary history through the publication and republication of literary works in a few genres. These included national epics, like James McPherson's Ossianic tales,[22] together with historical novels, travelogues, dictionaries, and collections of folk songs.[23] The importance of these new literary genres cannot be underestimated, for their role in creating and projecting the images that helped to define and describe the developing national identities is crucial. As Gerald Newman has argued, 'it is *the artist-intellectual* who first … creates and organises nationalist ideology, the machinery at the heart of the nationalist movement.' Newman defines the 'artist-intellectuals' as 'writers and intellectuals—an articulate minority,' who are responding to

> … cultural provocations and social humiliations … [that] cannot be entirely foreign and external to the nation, or otherwise there could not arise the sense of a substantial threat to native culture and identity. In most cases the critical stimulus to nationalist 'anger and self-assertion' is the patronising and culturally disparaging—the anti-national—attitudes of *the domestic elite, perceived as cooperating too freely with a foreign power*.[24]

In Britain the intellectual community at the forefront of the re-establishment (or rather, establishment) of 'British' national identity was based in Scotland, while 'the domestic elite' were primarily the members of the English aristocracy—Scottish aristocrats historically holding a position that supported the artistic achievements of their fellow countrymen. In actively promoting distinctly nationalist themes and subjects, Scottish writers and other intellectuals,

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[19] John Brown, *An Estimate of the Manners and Principles of the Times* (London: L. Davies & C. Reymers, 1757) vol. 1, 144, quoted in Robin Eagles, 'Beguiled by France?' *A Union of Multiple Identities* 65.

[20] Haseler, *The English Tribe*, 22–23.

[21] Katie Trumpener, *Bardic Nationalism: The Romantic Novel and the British Empire* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1997) 149–50.

[22] James Macpherson, *Fragments of Ancient Poetry, Collected in the Highlands of Scotland and Translated from the Galic or Erse Language*, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: Hamilton & Balfour, 1760); James Macpherson, *Fingal, A Poem in Six Books, by Ossian: Translated from the Original Galic by Mr. MacPherson; and Rendered into Verse from that Translation*(London, 1762); James Macpherson, *Temora, An Ancient Epic Poem. In Eight Books: Together with several other Poems, Composed by Ossian, the Son of Fingal* (London, 1763).

[23] Trumpener, *Bardic Nationalism*, 149–50.

[24] Gerald Newman, *The Rise of English Nationalism: A Cultural History 1740–1830*, 2nd ed. (London & New York: Macmillan, 1997) 56–57. Italics in original.

such as philosophers—Newman's 'artist-intellectuals'—responded to a perceived threat to their native culture. In addition, they portrayed luxury, avarice, dishonesty and corruption as leading to decline and ruin, and emphasised this as the natural consequence of the abandonment of national character.[25]

The rise in popularity of Scottish music began in the period almost immediately following the 1745 Rebellion, when intellectual interest in so-called *natural* forms of expression, combined with a dramatic change in political sensibilities, conspired to propel Scots tunes into the public domain. This cultural development had its origins in Jean-Jacques Rousseau's concept of simplicity, which focused on the natural relationships and methods of expression of the people.[26] John Baillie's *Essay on the Sublime*, published in London in 1747, was the first intellectual work to associate Scottish music with this concept.[27] In particular, Baillie noted the power of the bagpipe on the Scottish psyche. The 1745 Rebellion had finally ended less than one year prior to the publication of Baillie's *Essay*, its repercussions including not only the proscription of the plaid (an early form of kilt worn by the Highland people), but also the playing of the bagpipes themselves.[28] Therefore Baillie's discussion of the power of bagpipe music can be seen either as supporting the reasoning behind the governmental ban on pipe music, or as the beginnings of the association of Scottish music with ideas of purity or natural simplicity represented by the sublime.

In 1765, Benjamin Franklin again emphasised the role of simplicity in the success of Scottish music in a letter to Lord Kames, noting:

> I have sometimes at a Concert attended by a common Audience plac'd myself so as to see all their Faces, and observ'd no Signs of Pleasure in them during the Performance of much that was admir'd by the Performers themselves; while a plain old Scottish Tune, which they [the performers] disdain'd and could scarcely be prevail'd upon to play, gave [the audience] manifest and general Delight.[29]

In Franklin's opinion, the success of Scottish music lies in the unity of its melody and harmony—as he puts it 'their Melody is Harmony'—in other words, each of the strong beats in the melody falls on a note that is also contained in the tonic chord. Franklin, whose musical tastes were definitely old-fashioned even in his day, suggests that a simple folk song accompanied by nothing more than a harp is better music than 'modern opera.' He criticises more modern music 'for not having the natural Harmony united with their Melody, it has

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[25] Newman, *The Rise of English Nationalism* 58.

[26] See R. Wokler, *Social Thought of J.J. Rousseau. Rousseau on Society, Politics, Music and Language, an Historical Interpretation of his Early Writings* (New York & London: Garland, 1987) and R.A. Leigh, 'Rousseau and the Scottish Enlightenment,' *Contributions to Political Economy* 5 (1986): 1–21.

[27] 'I know so little of *Musick*, that I will not pretend to determine the *Sublime* of it. This I know; – all *grave* Sounds, where the Notes are *long*, exalt my Mind much more than any other Kind; and that *Wind-Instruments* are the most fitted to *elevate*; such as the *Hautboy*, the *Trumpet*, and *Organ*: – For, as *Pope* has it, "In more lengthen'd Notes and slow, / Deep, majestic, solemn Organs blow."
In all *acute* Sounds, the *Vibrations* are *short* and *quick*; on the contrary, in the *grave*. And may not all long Sounds be to the *Ear* what extended Prospects are to the *Eye*? Here also *Correction* takes great Place; the most fantastic *Jigg* of a *Bagpipe* shall elevate a *Highlander* more than the most *solemn* Musick; for to such they have been ever accustomed even in their Marital Engagements.' John Baillie, *An Essay on the Sublime* (London: R. Dodsley, 1747) 38–39.

[28] *Disarming the Highlands, etc.* (1745), 19 Geo.II.C.39.

[29] *Benjamin Franklin: Writings*, ed. J.A. Leo Lemay (New York: Library of America, 1987) 812–13.

recourse to the artificial Harmony of a Bass and other accompanying parts.' Franklin's expression of personal taste concurs with contemporary aesthetic theory, however he is alone during this period in expressing the musical reasoning behind his ideas. Most other writers discuss Scottish music in an attempt to define the true nature of music, under the guise of an inquiry into the origins of music. It is clear that Scottish philosophers desired to clearly link their ideas on Scottish music with the theories that had been propounded by Rousseau and his French contemporaries on the music of other savage nations.[30] For example, the parallels between the Homeric references to music within the Ossianic texts and the references to Greek music within Rousseau's *Lettre sur la musique française* (Paris, 1753) are startling—essentially Rousseau's writing summarises the contexts in which music is later used by Macpherson.[31]

The fascination with simplicity displayed both by Baillie and Franklin was both nationalistic and primitivistic. National because it focussed on the music of the native peoples of the country, and primitive because Baillie and Franklin considered that it was the *simplicity* of these airs, more than any other factor, that was the key element which allowed people to believe that they were an early form of personal expression (in this case specifically musical). During the 1760s these naturalistic arguments were given a boost through the publication of James Macpherson's Ossianic translations. Macpherson was a poet, scholar and writer who claimed to have recovered, from manuscript fragments and oral recitations, a bardic epic of literary and historical standing equivalent to Homer's *Iliad*. The impact of these poems, alleged to be by the third century Scottish bard Ossian, was extensive. They were discussed at length in the writings of all the period's key philosophers, historians and other academics for many years following their publication. In addition, Ossian influenced countless writers, artists and composers, not only throughout Britain, but also throughout Europe. Musically, this interest came to fruition during the nineteenth century in works such as Mendelssohn's 1830 *Hebridean Overture*, which was subtitled *Fingal's Cave* after one of Macpherson's early collections of Ossian's poems. However, Ossian had considerable musical influence during the eighteenth century itself.

Ossian was popular because its sentiments were those of its readership, whose interests at that time were primitive and exotic cultures. Ossian was funded, and acclaimed, at least initially, by some of the Scottish Enlightenment's most powerful figures, who were hopeful that it would provide them with justification for their claims as to the antiquity of the Scottish nation.[32] Although revelations about the authenticity of the poems subsequently coloured the critical reception of the works, their popularity amongst the general public was overwhelming. For example, the Bluestocking Elizabeth Montagu helped to spread Ossian's fame amongst London's female literary circles, and even contributed some of her own money for

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[30] 'No one who reads the work of the French and Scottish pioneers of the 1750s can fail to notice that all of them without exception were very familiar with the contemporary studies of the Americans: that most of them had evidently pondered deeply upon their significance; and that some were almost obsessed by them. The ignoble savages of America, as Robertson pointed out, proved one of the very few remaining examples of "the rudest form in which we can conceive [man] to subsist".' Ronald L Meek, *Social science and the ignoble savage* (Cambridge: CUP, 1976) 128–29.

[31] See, for example, J.J. Rousseau, 'Letter on French Music,' *Essay on the Origin of Languages and Writings Related to Music,* trans. & ed. John T. Scott (Hanover, NH & London: UP of New England, 1998) 145–46.

[32] Sir John Sinclair and the Highland Society of London, Hugh Blair, Henry Mackenzie and Alexander Fraser Tytler were amongst those who provided financial support for Macpherson's 'research' in the Highlands.

Macpherson's journey to the Highlands in search of the Fingal epics. The poems were also popular because they did not focus on the barbarism and danger of the Highland people, but instead provided Highlanders with a historicity that outclassed that of any of the other peoples of Britain. By focusing on the obsolescence of the Highland clan culture and instead celebrating heroism only as a romanticisation of the memories of an elderly, blind hero and bard, Ossian concentrated attention on Highland culture, but at the same time effectively disabled the threat that had previously been embodied by that society.

Significantly, there are clear similarities between Pope's translation of Homer's *Iliad* and Macpherson's *Ossian*.[33] Macpherson had never denied that there were parallels between Ossian and the writings of Homer, but preferred to suggest that these similarities were present only because of the similarity of the ages in which the two bards lived.[34] However, it is more likely that Macpherson had based his 'translation' of *Ossian* on Pope's work. In the *Iliad*, Pope is content to translate Homer's writings, and to contextualise them with reference to the writings of Greek contemporaries. Macpherson, on the other hand, makes a deliberate attempt to draw parallels between the Ossianic era and the mid-eighteenth century, thereby authenticating the whole Ossianic myth, and providing the ancient history upon which Britain's emerging national culture could be based. Whilst he does not make any specific claim as to the significance of Ossianic music, he nevertheless compares it to contemporary music:

> The war-song of Ullin varies from the rest of the poem in versification. It runs down like a torrent; and consists almost entirely of epithets. The custom of encouraging men in battle with extempore rhymes, has been carried down almost to our own times. Several of these war-songs are extant, but most of them are only a group of epithets, without beauty or harmony, utterly destitute of poetical merit.[35]

By his reference to the continuation of this tradition 'almost to our own times,' Macpherson may be suggesting its preservation until around 1745, until which point clan society was thought to have operated in a manner almost identical to that of antiquity. It is therefore possible that Macpherson's translations, whether based on genuine bardic recitations of the third century or not, strove to interpret Ossian in a way that indicated not only the antiquity of the Scottish nation, but also the proximity of Ossianic culture to that of its readership. Macpherson's real achievement was in combining elements of contemporary sentimental literature and enlightened philosophy in such a way as to provoke reader identification.[36] Music, for him, then, provides a medium by which ancient and modern Scottish society can be viewed as interrelated.

From the publication of the first Ossianic epics in 1759 until the mid-nineteenth-century discussions of Scottish culture, in particular the Gaelic language and traditional Scottish music,

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[33] Throughout the writings of both Homer and Ossian, for example, the harp, playing only the most basic harmonies, is cited again and again as the principal instrument utilised by the bards. Although the principal functions of Homer and Ossian's bards are the singing of songs and the narration of legends, most of the other characters that appear in each work also participate in singing at various points in the texts. It is clear that vocal music, accompanied by the harp, is an integral part of the life that both Homer and Ossian are attempting to describe.

[34] *The Poems of Ossian and Related Works*, ed. Howard Gaskill (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 1996) 479, fn 2.

[35] *The Poems of Ossian*, 430, fn 19.

[36] See John Dwyer, 'The Sentimental Savage: A Re-appraisal of *The Poems of Ossian*,' *The Age of the Passions, an Interpretation of Adam Smith and Scottish Enlightenment Culture* (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 1998) 140–71.

appeared in all forms of literature. However, although they often describe music in its most natural state, merely by describing it in a medium that is itself cultivated, music is lifted from 'folk' status to that of 'high art.' As with the Homeric associations that led to the widespread acceptance of Ossian, the necessity of providing a more cultivated setting for Scottish music in order for it to be accepted by the English is clear. Samuel Johnson, a man who claimed to be 'very insensible to the power of music,'[37] listens to songs sung in Gaelic at a cultivated social event, the enjoyment of which he compares to that of a cultured English audience at an Italian opera. Yet on hearing similar songs (perhaps not embodying the same sentiments, but sung in the same language, and of the same origin) sung by peasants in the field, he is unable to appreciate in them any kind of aesthetic value.[38] In almost every literary example such as this, Scottish national music is described by an antiquarian, or narrator on some kind of ethnographic mission, who by inference attempts to lift it from its natural state to that of art music.[39]

Literary discussions of the 'benefits' of folk music, although presented in this falsely cultured manner, formed one part of the English artistic world's response to the domination of their culture and art forms by foreign values and ideas. Anthony D. Smith suggests that there are two different kinds of cultural development associated with nationalist movements.[40] One is an increasing interest in simplicity, represented by a fascination with the cultural symbols of the populace, for example a rise in the popularity of folk music. The other involves the acceptance and then development of elements of popular culture by academics and philosophers. By developing popular culture as a means of contextualising the nation's history, the *zeitgeist* of that nation becomes more accessible and comprehensible to a wider audience. Thus the nation's identity is more firmly established in the eyes of the wider world.

In music, theorists and composers of art music began to establish a connection between music and nationality from the latter half of the eighteenth century. It was argued that the 'sounds' of music could literally express the soul, and that the soul had a national character, thereby suggesting that music itself had the ability to express national characteristics.[41]

James Beattie, writing on 'some peculiarities of National Music' in his *Essay on Poetry and Music, as they affect the mind*, is amongst those who argue this point, despite the fact that, as a philosopher, he appears to feel obliged to present it alongside its rational counterargument:

[37] James Boswell, *The Life of Samuel Johnson, LL.D.* (London: Routledge, 1867) 314.

[38] Samuel Johnson, *A Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland*, ed. Peter Levi (1775; London: Penguin, 1984) 74–75, 77.

[39] See also Thomas Amory's proto-Johnsonian *Memoirs: Containing the Lives of Several Ladies of Great Britain. A History of Antiquities, Productions of Nature, and Monuments of Art* (London: J. Noon, 1755: 157) which includes the following description of music from the Hebridean island of Lewis: 'Many of [the natives] are bards, that is natural Irish poets; and compose extempore the prettiest songs relating to the heroes of former times, who lived in those isles; and to the bravery of the present race in climbing the rocks for eggs, and such like feats; and their own chast amours. They sing those songs extremely well, and many of them play the fiddle by the ear. They have not the least notion of art in music, but some of them perform in a wonderful way. I believe they had never heard any one that played by notes til I came among them, and they were so transported by such music as I could make on the fiddle, that they seemed as it were distracted by ravishments.'

[40] Anthony D. Smith, 'Introduction,' *Nationalist Movements*, ed. Anthony D. Smith (London: Macmillan, 1976) 8.

[41] Alun Howkins, 'Greensleeves and the idea of national music,' *Patriotism: The Making and Unmaking of British National Identity*, ed. Raphael Samuel (London & New York: Routledge, 1989) vol. 3 [National Fictions] 89–90.

It is true, that to a favourite air, even when unaccompanied with words, we do commonly annex certain ideas, which may have come to be related to it in consequence of some accidental associations: and sometimes we imagine a resemblance (which however is merely imaginary) between certain melodies and certain thoughts or objects. Thus a Scotchman may fancy, that there is some sort of likeness between that charming air which he calls Tweedside, and the scenery of a fine pastoral country: and to the same air, even when only played on an instrument, he may annex the ideas of romantic love and rural tranquillity; because these form the subject of a pretty little ode, which he has often heard sung to that air. But all this is the effect of habit. A foreigner, who hears that tune for the first time, entertains no such fancy. The utmost we can expect from him is, to acknowledge the air to be sweet and simple. He would smile, if we were to ask him, whether it bears any resemblance to the hills, groves, and meadows, adjoining to a beautiful river; nor would he perhaps think it more expressive of romantic love, than of conjugal, parental, or filial affection, tender melancholy, moderate joy, or any other gentle passion. Certain it is, that on any one of these topics, an ode might be composed, which would suit the air most perfectly. So ambiguous is musical expression.[42]

Beattie's examination of national music not only specifically refers to Scottish music in his discussion of the national character of the soul, but also to its great antiquity. Just as the antiquity of the Ossianic myth can be seen to have provided both context and impetus for the development of a common British literary culture during the second half of the eighteenth century, it would seem that through the references to music found in *Ossian*, Scottish music was developed by composers working in London's cosmopolitan society for much the same effect.

The nationalist theoretician, Monserrat Guibernau, has suggested that when a new nation such as Britain is established through the unification of a number of pre-existent nations, each with their own established cultural emblems, the people of the new nation must be homogenised by the creation of a common culture based on elements of all existing traditions.[43] In addition, Ernest Gellner notes that the successful integration of individual cultures requires 'the imposition of a high culture on a society where previously low cultures had taken up the lives of the majority.'[44] In other words, if some elements of the pre-existent British folk culture were raised to the status of high art, this would seem to provide the compromise between the strongest pre-existent cultures that would allow the newly formed nation to develop its own cultural symbols, with their own historical basis. By incorporating traditional Scottish music within the framework of classical genres, such as orchestral overtures, orchestrally accompanied songs or accompanied sonatas, the music could be designated 'British' whilst at the same time complying with a more generic Western European musical taste. Through the compositions of native musicians such as James Hook and Thomas Hamley Butler; and more significantly through the commissioning of high-profile foreign composers such as J.C. Bach, J.B. Cramer,

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[42] James Beattie, 'An Essay on Poetry and Music, as they affect the mind. Written in the year 1762,' *Essays* (Edinburgh: W Creech, 1776), Section II, 159.

[43] Monserrat Guibernau, *Nationalisms: The Nation-State and Nationalism in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996) 48.

[44] Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983) 57.

Dussek, Haydn, Pleyel and many others; traditional Scottish music came to play a prominent role in the development of a British national musical profile.

The general approbation of Scotland and Scottish culture developed partly because the philosophies of key figures in the Scottish Enlightenment movement, which was itself based on the moral strength of Rousseauian ideas of simplicity, suggested that the deeply historical foundations of Scottish culture provided a better basis for the development of a *British* national identity than English culture could. In addition, since the Rousseauian ideal rejected the perception of the monarchy or ruling classes as the embodiment of the nation, and firmly identified 'the nation' with the people themselves, it is Scottish *folk* culture that can be clearly identified as the motivating force behind the development of a *British* national aesthetic, even if it is the upper classes who continued to provide the financial backing for such works.

In attempting to account for the late eighteenth-century obsession with Scottish music, then, the following factors should be taken into account. First, that Scottish culture had a distinctive style all of its own. Second, that Scottish melody was simple, and therefore also memorable and particularly emotionally expressive. Third, that issues about Scotland and the Scots had been prominent in British politics until the late 1760s, thus making all aspects of Scottishness newsworthy and a popular topic of conversation. And last, that the English believed, without justification, that they had no national music of their own.[45]

The exposure and popularity of Scottish music in London in the latter half of the eighteenth century can be attributed to the aristocracy, to a curiosity derived from awareness of Scotland's political profile, or to the simplicity and beauty of the music itself. However, in view of the example provided by James Macpherson's Ossianic poetry, Scottish music must also be considered to have been utilised to help establish a cohesive British national cultural profile. Ossian can be seen to have provided both context and impetus for the development of a common British literary culture during the second half of the eighteenth century, and it would seem that Scottish music was developed by composers working in London's cosmopolitan society for much the same effect. Philosophical interest in the historicity of the Ossianic myth, and the consequent interest in Highland culture, particularly language and music, provided the platform from which Scottish culture was developed as a defining element of the emerging culture of the new British nation.

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[45] 'It is *imagined* that the old tunes are all lost; but I cannot conceive this nor should I wonder if many of them were familiar to us at the moment. Who knows the origin of Derry down, Can love be controlled by advice and a hundred other that will never be forgot … It is not, therefore, certain, because we know of no tunes written down and handed forward, that we are not in possession of them.' Charles Dibdin, *Lecture 3—National Music*, GB: *Lbm* MS Add. 30 968, f.28. See also Trumpener, *Bardic Nationalism* 15–16.