

A NEW SCOTTISH ENLIGHTENMENT?

A NEW Enlightenment is quietly under way in modern Scotland. Iain Fraser Grigor interrogates some of the key players in this modern renaissance, locates its origins in the last twenty five years of cultural and political turmoil, and identifies some of the consequences we can expect from it in the next twenty five.

FOR LONG AND DARK ages the past - that hot and mighty torch in the present of any people - was for Scotland a very simple one. Even as late as the early 1960s, things were very clear as far as Scotland's place in the wider world order was concerned. The richly-illustrated books of the time made that quite evident to Scottish children.

Here was the King 'showing himself' to the populace at the Delhi Durbar, there were 'native troops' dancing barefoot with their spears. Here were sturdy riveters stoking the Clydeside furnace of industrial fortune, there was the manly glitter of bayonet at Anzac Cove; and there too in the far North British distance - for that patrician touch of all-inclusive authenticity - were Highland dancing-lasses at Braemar, to entertain the Queen.

For here, on the threshold of Tet Offensive and Prague Spring, of May Events and Derry Rising, older values were in play: 'Notice the different tartans worn by the dancers, which show the clans to which they belong'.

And when they were older, these children? For many generations of Scottish university students, their own country - as far as academic study went - was a foreign land of which little was known and little more sought. For in the universities that past was firmly in the gift of timeserving mock-bourgeois kilties for whom

Scottish identity was one long garden-party in a tartan ghetto, at which a barely-virginal Mary Queen of Scots, along with Bonnie Prince Charlie in ruffs, trews and pistols, handed round the canapes in the brazen shadow of a truly gigantic Union Flag: held aloft - ideally - by John Knox, in a condition of entirely agreeable civility and transcendent sobriety.

But times have changed dramatically in the last 25 years, and today a cultural revolution is rolling its way through the universities of Scotland, with an explosion of interest in all things Scottish. It is a revolution - and that word is merited - to be observed across all areas of the country, and in all the key humanities disciplines, from history and education and philosophy to literary studies and sociology and politics. And it has implications that can, at the very least, be described as interesting indeed for the Scotland of 25 years down the line.

At Glasgow and Strathclyde, there has been a massive growth of interest in Scottish matters in recent years, not least under the mantles of history and literature, and these universities' rather new joint post-graduate - and highly inter-disciplinary - School of Scottish Studies.

Its convenor is Alexander Broadie, professor of philosophy at Glasgow and author of various books on the 18th century Enlightenment. He has also written, for the Saltire Society, a little book called *Why Scottish Philosophy Matters* - one of those very rare 'little books' which will in time have a huge influence, and away beyond the traditional borders of philosophy too.

Broadie says, 'There's no doubt there is a whole new re-assertion of Scottish identity under way. Four years ago, I introduced for the first time ever a first-year undergraduate course in

Scottish philosophy. It was entirely optional, but we got 130 students and numbers have not dropped below 100 since then. Even more significantly, these students were not all of the sort who would normally take philosophy - in other words, they were taking it specifically because of its Scottish content. So it is quite clear that there is a growing interest in all of this'.

Broadie adds that recently 18 countries took part in a conference on the 18th century philosopher Thomas Reid - he who quit, for the university at Aberdeen, the thatched manse of Strachan at the grand old age of 12 years. But while Scottish Studies is of necessity a highly inter-disciplinary field, Broadie is sharply critical of the way that the existing system of university financing militates against inter-disciplinary schools such as his own and others like it.

He says, 'The entire system of research assessment is seriously hostile to the work of our school, and this is why Scottish Studies should be recognised as a legitimate academic discipline'.

In the field of Scottish literature at Glasgow, meanwhile, there has also been big expansion in recent years. While there was just one lecture a week on the subject at Glasgow for many years, a separate department of Scottish literature was finally established in 1971. When Douglas Gifford, professor of Scottish literature, came to Glasgow in the mid-eighties, he had 35 students in his first-year class. Now he has 160. And in one class composed almost entirely of Americans and Europeans, there are nearly 80 students. At any one time there are also ten to fifteen students doing PhDs in a subject that - not so long ago - scarcely existed in the university.

Meanwhile the university's professor of Scottish history, Ted Cowan, has noticed a similar growth in his field. Cowan, who spent 15 years teaching Scottish Studies in Canada before arriving at Glasgow in 1993, says, 'When I came here, the first year class was

about 100. Now undergraduate numbers have doubled in the space of 7 years, while post-graduate numbers have similarly increased. It is far too easy to come up with a facile explanation for this, but there is a growing confidence in things Scottish. Scottish identity is being taken for granted right across the spectrum’.

Cowan adds that in the ‘sixties, historians of Scotland were often ploughing a lonely furrow, as Scottish history was deemed to be parochial. He says, ‘We can’t underestimate the effect on the growth of interest by historians like Archie Duncan and Christopher Smout. There’s no doubt that Scottish Studies were not particularly encouraged in the ‘sixties, there was sometimes an attempt to ghetto-ise Scottish history, as if somehow it was not as good as other history. All this has changed’.

And the figures are much the same all round the country. A survey conducted at Edinburgh in 1995 showed that 10% of that university’s students were formally undertaking the study of some aspect of Scottish affairs, though the actual level of interest was deemed to be much wider, if less measureable. In the late 1980s, for example, just 15 students - half of them foreign - did a class in Scottish government and politics, which ran every alternate year only. Since then, however, there has been a six-fold increase in student numbers for that class, which is now annual, and a similar rise in the proportion of academics with an interest in the subject.

Education - and school teachers are the core intelligentsia in any culture, often with an influence away beyond the confines of their given subject - tells the same story. Lindsay Paterson has the chair of educational theory and practice at Edinburgh. He says, ‘Our intake is very Scottish, and ninety percent of them go on to teach in Scotland. In my six years here, I have seen people become much

more self-consciously Scottish. Questions about Scottish education are being asked much more, and this is due to the foundation of the Scottish parliament. Scotland isn't just a background any more to decisions made in London. Scottish teachers regard themselves as far more Scottish than British. There has been a subtle but profound shift in Scottish society's perception of itself. In the past the British Empire was the norm - that norm has now gone almost entirely'.

At St. Andrews, Douglas Dunn, professor of English and director of the university's Scottish Studies Institute (which offers a degree course for undergraduates) is more cautious. Dunn - perhaps best known as a poet - says, 'I don't know how true it is to say that there has been an explosive growth in the last decade, but there has certainly been a closer focus, and far more is being seen to be done. Maybe it has something to do with the demographics of St. Andrews, but we find it quite hard to attract attention'.

Dunn adds, however, that American students are very interested. He says, 'In one recent semester we had 22 students in our modern Scottish literature course, which covers Barrie to Welsh, and half of them were American. Our summer school for US high-school pupils also shows a steady increase year on year. And of course since the development of Scottish Studies in the schools, there has been a marked rise in interest, because people can get jobs. There has definitely been a big increase of activity in the last ten years in history and literary criticism - interesting ideas, books, syntheses. And women have been making a major contribution - this has not happened before. So the Academy has made a very big contribution in these respects, it has certainly made its mark'.

In Edinburgh, Cairns Craig, professor in the department of English literature and director of its centre for the study of the history of

ideas in Scotland, has no such doubts about the growth of interest, or its significance.

He says, 'Twenty years ago, there was just one course for first-year students in Scottish literature, which involved no more than 30-odd students. Now there is a 4-year degree programme, and all told around 300 students are studying the subject. Plus there is a huge number of Scottish-subject researchers in other departments throughout the faculty of arts and social sciences'.

Craig's books include the *Modern Scottish Novel*, while he is general editor of the 4-volume *History of Scottish Literature* (published by Aberdeen University Press). He adds, 'It's a massive transformation. In the past the English course specifically left Scottish literature out of the curriculum. There has been a complete transformation of the academic culture at Edinburgh'.

And at the same university the professor of sociology David McCrone agrees. McCrone's books include the *Sociology of Nationalism*; *Scotland - the Brand*; and, *Understanding Scotland - the sociology of a stateless nation* (a newly-entitled edition of which should be out by now, in recognition of Scotland's somewhat changed status with regard to its former condition of complete statelessness).

McCrone says, 'When I was an undergraduate at Aberdeen in the late 'sixties, Scotland didn't exist, it was utterly invisible. It was really embarrassing in foreign bookshops - all you would ever see about Scotland was something about Bonnie Prince Charlie or some rubbish called the *Life and Times of the Scottish Midgie*. Now Scotland is a proper area of scholarly interest, along with other stateless and semi-stateless nations like it. I have witnessed enormous changes in my lifetime in the study of Scotland in the social sciences. In Edinburgh we now see an enormous output of

work on Scotland, at undergraduate, postgraduate and research levels’.

And at Aberdeen, the historian Tom Devine agrees. He says, ‘There has been a huge increase in serious Scottish history in the last two or three decades - a boom related to the whole devolution dynamic. And though academic interest pre-dates the political debate, it is certainly aligned with it’.

Devine is the author of numerous books, notably the recent best-selling *The Scottish Nation*. As well as research professor in Scottish history, he is director of the Institute of Irish and Scottish Studies. The institute, which spurns traditional Anglo-centric approaches to Irish and Scottish history, includes on its advisory board the poet Edwin Morgan, has the writer Bernard MacLaverty as an honorary research fellow, and Cairns Craig is an honorary professor.

Devine says, ‘We have seen a substantial increase to our taught Master’s programme. Interest comes from all over the world - Japan, USA, Greece, France and Australasia. We are attracting students and funding and strategic thinking as never before - you could say that our day has come’.

And on a much smaller but no less significant scale, things at the all-Gaelic Sabhal Mor Ostaig on Skye appear equally positive. The college represents the disproportionate significance of the Gaelic experience to Scottish identity, and its director, Norman Gillies, claims that there is a growing interest in all things Gaelic.

Gillies says, ‘We started in the early ‘seventies with an occasional summer school. By 1983 we had eight students. Now we have 86 full-time, 50 part-time, and 600 at summer-school. They

come from all over the world, as there is a huge international interest in the history, literature and music associated with the language’.

This - for a language that until very recently was effectively banned in the schools of Scotland - may be counted as something of a success: to understate the matter somewhat.

But is all this really a New Scottish Enlightenment? Well, it might well be, because something important is certainly going on. Of course, it is in its early stages. The 18th century Enlightenment is generally reckoned to have run for sixty or so years - and in modern Scotland, we have had at the very most just 25 years to date, while some observers would say that we have hardly had ten. But the spirit of the thing is in at least one respect certainly the same: an intellectual ferment in which old ideas are overturned and new ones explored. The shape of the thing is different, of course: the age of the Internet is not the age of the new steam-engine.

Nor have the giants of the 18th century like David Hume yet found their modern equivalent, though the ferment of the 18th century is anyway ill-served by the ‘big name’ shorthand that historians are wont to adopt. And of course, major trends in cultural development are seldom apparent at the time they are happening: few in the 18th century were aware that their times would later be celebrated as some golden age of creative thought.

But something, without any doubt, is certainly going on: and it is certainly new. It can not be, after all, an exact copy of the 18th century Enlightenment all over again. Nor is it the Scottish Renaissance once more: that florescence of culturally-significant but politically-marginal writers like Hugh MacDiarmid, whose creative fires so wonderfully evoke Jean Jacques Rousseau’s celebrated admonition to the people of Poland: ‘Vous ne sauriez emp□cher

qu'ils ne vous engloutissent; faites au moins qu'ils ne puissent vous digŽrer'. (A farmyard translation: 'they might swallow you, but make damn sure they don't digest you').

For unlike the 18th century, this New Scottish Enlightenment involves huge numbers of people, relative to the handful of teachers and students at Scottish universities 250 years ago. And unlike the Renaissance of the 'thirties, this one is politically mainstream. But above all, Scotland now has a parliament - of sorts - once more, and a bright window of opportunity may as a result be opening on the synergy that intellectual endeavour and political opportunity can often bring to each other.

This is not before time either. After all, attempts to re-assert Scottish history and literature and identity have not always met with unqualified approval. In the middle of the 19th century, for instance, a proposal was floated to erect a monument at Stirling to William Wallace, overlooking the site of his famous defeat of the English army of Edward I at Stirling Bridge. (The principal moving force behind the proposal was John Stuart Blackie, who would later campaign for a university chair of Celtic at Edinburgh).

The idea met with a storm of savage English derision, which rather overlooked the hard fact that Wallace was a Scot, from an independent Scotland, who was executed by the English as - a traitor. Over two tombstone columns, the Times of London, in what may be the longest sneer in the political literature of Europe east or west (and by God, that is some achievement!), editorialised that, 'Scotland is a country manifestly in want of a grievance. Never was a territory north of latitude 55 so favoured before. Good fortune has joined her inseparably to the richest and most enterprising nation of modern times'.

The paper added that Scottish literature was merely a faint and worthless imitation of old models, and went on, 'Poems in the style of Burns can be written by any human being who can write at all By their exclusiveness, and what we will make bold to call their provincialism, the Scotch have not only kept out English influences which might have done them good Englishmen have thrown away those confined notions of nationality which still prevail in Scotland We south of the Tweed have risen to the conception of a United Kingdom; nay, more, of a British Empire but In Edinburgh the cry, or at least the feeling, still is, Scotland for the Scotch'.

Or from much more recent times, consider the case of the school text-book, a Study in Standard English, prepared by Messrs. Barclay, Knox and Ballantyne, and published from Glasgow, in endless editions, until the dawn of the 'sixties. Consider the implications of the coldly dismissive observation, 'The 20th century has seen a Celtic revival, especially in Ireland and Scotland, which may eventually enrich modern English' (and this was published in 1959, almost 40 years after the first appearance of Ulysses!)

Or consider the following injunction, under a heading which the elegant messieurs were pleased to call Laws of Style: 'A Barbarism is the use of a word not found in classic English. The leading forms of this fault are the use of Scotticisms - as gigot, sort (repair), the cold, canny'.

Need one really be a pea-brained conspiracy-theorist of colonialism to demand to know just what we should expect of those children on whom this was imposed, or make of those who taught it, or wrote it, or published it: or the entire value-system of the educational and political culture which sustained it?

It is unlikely - to say the least - that such sentiments would find a publisher today. Rather, a clutch of publishing houses - almost all of them Scottish - are identifying a growing market for serious works from within the spirit of the New Enlightenment.

Mainstream of Edinburgh has seen its James MacKay biography of William Wallace sell well over 100, 000 copies, at least half of which have been abroad. The company's Bill Campbell says, 'Yes, call it what you will, but there is some sort of second Renaissance or New Enlightenment under way. Scotland is a buzz word in international publishing. It has grown slowly over recent years, helped by the work of the likes of Alasdair Gray and James Kelman - and of course *Trainspotting*'.

Campbell adds, 'Publishing has grown in tandem with other forms of cultural endeavour - it all points to a qualitatively new level of self-assertiveness. It has gone very much with the political debate of the last twenty years, and more recent political change. So talk of a New Scottish Enlightenment is not too far-fetched a notion at all'.

Meanwhile a Canongate author wins the Booker Prize, and the Polygon imprint of Edinburgh University Press has passed into new ownership.

Polygon published the highly-influential *Determinations* series, with Cairns Craig as general editor. As early as 1990, Craig commissioned *The Tradition of Scottish Philosophy* from Alexander Broadie, while the imprint issued a string of other influential titles too. Edinburgh University Press has also recently launched its 'Polygon at Edinburgh' imprint to cover - in the broadest sense - current Scottish affairs. Two recent titles give a flavour of its editorial tastes: *New Scotland New Politics?*, by Lindsay Paterson and Alice Brown; and *Women in Contemporary Scottish Politics*,

edited by Esther Breitenbach and Fiona Mackay (who are, with Alice Brown, associated with the university's department of politics).

Jackie Jones, editorial director of EUP, says, 'A ferment has been under way for the last 10 years, and we want to be part of it, mediating and anticipating change. We want to reflect what is happening to the nation, and to the imagination of the nation. It's all part of a broader cultural, political and literary renaissance, though what is going on now is much broader than what happened in the 'thirties. It is very mainstream, so a new Scottish Enlightenment might well be a better description of it'.

And according to Simon Winder of Penguin in London, who published Devine's *The Scottish Nation*, 'There seems to be an overwhelmingly larger market for serious Scottish history than ever before. Devine's book has been phenomenally successful and for a time was even outselling the Harry Potter books in Scotland'. Citing the *New Penguin History of Scotland*, by Rab Houston and Bill Knox of St Andrews university, as an example, Winder adds, 'These books have hit a mood, there's no question about that'.

But it may be the Tuckwell Press, based in East Linton in the Lothians, which has played a greater role than any of the others. It is run by John Tuckwell, who in the 'seventies helped publish James Hunter's economic-history doctoral thesis from Edinburgh University as the enormously important *The Making of the Crofting Community*.

Says Tuckwell, 'There is a steady increase in interest in things Scottish, which is not unrelated to the creation of a parliament in Edinburgh. This has provoked international interest in Scotland, while Scots themselves are also increasingly interested in their own history. There has been an explosion of activity at academic level too. Of course, in some quarters Scotland is still believed to be marginal. Despite exceptions, there is nothing you can do about

England's supreme indifference to Scotland - it is deep-grained and inerradicable'.

According to Tuckwell, earlier generations of academic historians largely failed to arrange the publication of huge amounts of top-quality doctoral and post-doctoral research. Here, in particular, he recalls Gordon Donaldson (author of two books on Mary Queen of Scots), who in his day enjoyed the title of Historiographer Royal in Scotland - a concept that not even the old Soviet Union had ever the impudence to try-out in any of its occupied nations in eastern Europe.

'Not much of it ever saw the light of day', Tuckwell says. 'From the 'seventies, I took a leading part in publishing these books which hitherto had been supposed unsaleable. There was an unspoken agreement among Scottish publishers that they would not issue anything that might rock the boat, and London publishers were just not interested. All they wanted was the same old stuff about Bonnie Prince Charlie and Mary Queen of Scots'.

And if much of this is a recent experience for Scottish publishers, it is also a new experience for Scottish universities. It is, after all, perfectly proper on occasion to judge the past by the standards of the present: and in that respect to ask just what the humanities academics of the Scottish universities were doing with themselves, or not doing with themselves, throughout the 19th and most of the 20th centuries. (What proportion of them, one idly wonders, was Scottish?)

The question may itself constitute a posthumous injustice, at least to some of them, of course: though that is unlikely to disturb the anonymity they enjoy in death, as they largely did in life.

And anyway, things may not in this respect be entirely simple. As has been observed in a dazzling Edinburgh doctoral thesis (and an entirely other context) by the socio-linguist and amerindian Bible translator Bill Mitchell, 'the dialectic of appropriation and alienation is an inherently ambivalent process'. (Mitchell, a miner's son from Fife, is also a graduate of Aberdeen and St Andrews).

Was, for instance, the 19th century one long catalogue of Scottish sublimation within the British imperial experience? Cairns Craig cites as a key text in this respect Graham Norton's *Unionist Nationalism* (published - of course - by John Tuckwell). Craig says negative perceptions of the Scottish experience in this period have given the impression of a series of failures - but they may be better interpreted as a series of successful transformations.

Craig adds, 'These were not failures except from an Anglo-centric point of view - they were actually successes, and recent scholarship has begun to recover them as such'.

Craig points to the 19th century recognition of Walter Scott as the greatest world novelist of the time, and cites the influence of Scott on the formation of Russian literature. Similarly, in the last 10 years there has been a reclamation of James Macpherson's *Ossian*. For long, it was scorned as an absurd and fraudulent failure. But now it is recognised as a landmark event in the culture of its time: admired by Schiller, carried by Napoleon (who knew it via an Italian translation) on his campaigns, translated by Goethe, revered by Jefferson, 'and everywhere in European and American culture'.

Craig also suggests that it is proper to talk of a second Scottish Enlightenment in the second half of the 19th century, when Scotland was once again at the forefront of intellectual endeavour: 'but all this was overwhelmed by the kailyard, which actually was

just a small part of the process. Everywhere you look, we are now engaged with a re-definition of the Scottish past’.

And of more recent years, meanwhile, Craig says, ‘It is all clearly related to the rise of nationalist politics from the ‘sixties and ‘seventies. It began in the theatre in the ‘seventies with Bill Bryden’s Willie Rough. Authentically Scottish voices were on the stage, dramatising a sense of continuing Scottish culture. It created a profound sense of community, actors and audience in a shared identity, in a re-exploration of the Scottish past, a new sense of your relationship to the Scottish past’.

Craig says that the Gaelic and English poetry of Sorley MacLean, Norman MacCaig and Robert Garioch, along with the likes of Edwin Morgan’s Sonnets from Scotand, were also important: ‘A distinctive Scottish voice was being reclaimed, and that was a very important element in the cultural renewal of the time’.

Craig points to the Irish experience in the late 19th century, and says that cultural revival there began after the fall of Parnell and the failure of the political movement. In the wake of Scotland’s 1979 devolution referendum, there was much soul-searching, but literary efforts, ‘showed that it was possible to be ambitious despite a political failure’. Alasdair Gray’s Lanark was published in 1981 - ‘it changed the literary landscape absolutely, as the Scottish equivalent of Ulysses’, says Craig. (Gray, of course, in company with James Kelman and Tom Leonard, presently occupies a chair - or more accurately one-third of a chair - of creative writing at Glasgow).

Says Craig, ‘Writers were re-exploring the relationship between Scotland’s past and its present - and, in the case of Lanark, its future too. The energy of politics was diverted into culture. At all levels, from pop culture to high culture, after ‘79 things became much more distinctively and self-consciously Scottish’.

But what will the consequences be of all this? Any student, after all, merely mimics on an individual scale the proper purpose of any university: to challenge old ideas and develop new ones. So what will become of the present generation of students - the next generation of teachers, lecturers, writers, creative artists, intellectuals? Internationally, after all, there are endless examples of political affairs being driven by a cultural impetus: so what happens when the re-assertive spirit of today's universities works its way (as it most assuredly will) into the presently-cautious hearts of our mainstream political parties: and Holyrood itself?

Hundreds, thousands, of graduates with one or two degrees, sometimes even more, will pour out of our universities over the next decade or two. What will their priorities be, what will their books say; what might we yet read in doctoral theses being researched and written right now: or researched and written by authors who are not yet out of primary school? What will the contours of their cultural landscape be: one made for them by the present generation of writers and teachers, but one which in time they will reform in their own fashion?

And what of the writers and teachers who presently inspire and guide these students? Do they aspire to a feat that that not even the great names of the 18th century Enlightenment would have dared: which is - pace Watt - to boil the kettle and expect no steam?

Well, nobody can be sure what comes next - but the signs are certainly hopeful.

David MacCrone says, 'For too long we focussed on states and ignored the rest. But now there is a proper confrontation with Scotland as it is - what type of society is it and where is it going? Scotland is now much more visible in the scheme of things. And this

is the way it should be. Is there another Enlightenment under way? That is always a historical judgement - a judgement for people who come after us. But the next 25 years will be even more exciting than the last 25, that's for sure'.

As for Douglas Dunn, he is sceptical. He says, 'I would like to think that now we have a parliament and a certain battle has been won, that a major change is under way. But I don't know what influence the parliament has been. Cultural confidence came before political confidence. So something really big could be going on. I amn't sure. it is probably too early to say - anything can happen'.

But Cairns Craig take a much more positive view. He says, 'Things have changed enormously since the 'sixties and 'seventies. I have a sense now of a very dynamic literary and intellectual culture with a distinctly Scottish focus'.

And Lindsay Paterson agrees. He says, 'There are still parts of the universities which remain thirled to the Old British Thing. They eschew a Scottish focus under cover of a universalist focus - which always turns out to be a British focus. And we all know what they mean by that, of course. But generally yes, there has been a sea-change, especially in those disciplines which have had most chance to exercise it - the social sciences and the humanities'.

He adds, 'Something is certainly going on, but I don't know what we should call it. The Scottish parliament has provoked a lot of new discussion on politics, but politics is only the vague context - this thing is not being driven by politics. Something quite deep is going on. It's not another Scottish renaissance, which was a handful of poets on the fringe of society - this thing is central and widespread. The analogy with the 18th century is very valid. The Enlightenment then was all about taking Scotland into the mainstream. Now it is the opposite - something to do with the fact

that we can now look at things through the lens of smaller countries, that for the first time for centuries we can do our own thing without forever having to look over our shoulder at bigger neighbours. So it is certainly comparable - the same goal of universality by different means in different circumstances'.

And Alexander Broadie also recognises that we may well be in the early stages of something very important.

He says, 'We are definitely feeding a cultural hunger. I wouldn't say the obvious about all this being a product of the Scottish parliament, because the parliament is itself a product of ideas which pre-date it, but for some time now there has been a growing thoughtfulness about the place of Scotland in the British state. There is a gradual re-think under way'.

And he adds, 'There is a buzz in Scottish culture now, a buzz with a Scottish accent. Something quite special is going on, there has been nothing like it in the past few centuries. If you can say that the Idea has its day, then that day has certainly come'.

But there may, however, still be rather a lot to do. After all, in the current (1997) edition of Chambers' Biographical Dictionary, the careful reader encounter in the entry for Rousseau the immortal revelation: 'He became mentally unstable at about this time, quarrelled with his English friends (particularly Hume), developed a persecution complex, and fled back to France in 1767'.

And where is this biographical dictionary published? Why Edinburgh, of course: that dazzling seat of our oh-so-recent Scottish parliament and capital of that ever-so-favoured semi-state to the north of latitude 55 which we are all pleased to call - Scotland.

For: New Edinburgh Review.

