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Peter Morgan

Francis Jeffrey as Epistolary Critic



I

James Grahame (1765-1811) was born in Glasgow, the son of a prominent lawyer and Whig. In 1791 he was admitted a member of the Society of Writers to the Signet and four years later he became an advocate. Dissatisfied with the law, Grahame was ordained in 1809. He published his dramatic poem *Mary Stewart*, with which the first letter deals, in 1801, *The Sabbath* (1804), and *Poems* (1807).

Francis Jeffrey (1773-1850) belonged to a younger generation. Born in Edinburgh, the son of a Tory legal official, he attended the Universities of Glasgow and Oxford. Himself a Whig, he was admitted to the bar in 1794. He was involved in the setting up of the *Edinburgh Review* (1802) and quickly became its editor, a post which he held until 1829. Soon after this he embarked upon an important political career at Westminster. Jeffrey as editor and contributor to the *Edinburgh Review* made it a most influential periodical throughout Western Europe and the United States. He established an essay form in which Carlyle, Macaulay, Arnold and many others did outstanding work as cultural critics throughout the nineteenth century. Jeffrey's role indeed provided a model for F.R. Leavis and the contributors to his more limited Cambridge

journal *Scrutiny* in the twentieth century.

Jeffrey's long letter to Grahame, here printed, provides a good illustration of his epistolary and critical tact. He begins modestly and ends on a personal note. He plays down the importance of the critic, even going so far as to acknowledge that an author is the best judge of his own work "--and knows both the defects and their causes and cures a thousand times better than any critic of double my size." Here he makes fun of himself both intellectually and physically. However, despite these concessions, the letter is the product of an elaborate critical effort, in the course of which Jeffrey appeals to the highest critical and creative authorities, Aristotle and Shakespeare. As a critic he typically insists that Grahame take his audience into account: the English audience which will not appreciate his Scotticisms, and the sophisticated public which will be insensitive to his "truisms and...infantine simplicity." This last was the criticism directed by Jeffrey later against the poetry of Wordsworth. He also feels that in his simplicity and naturalness Grahame falls short of the "full dress dignity of tragedy."

Jeffrey's elaborate strictures Grahame seems to have largely ignored in the publication of *Mary Stewart*, a fate which his critical remarks will meet with regularly. Perhaps Grahame's later non-dramatic poems show that he came to recognise with his critic that his true vein was not the tragic.

Edin.^r 8th April 1801^l

My Dear Grahame,

I have this moment finished the perusal of the work you have so obligingly put into my hands--and have to thank you in the first place both for the pleasure I have received from it and for the confidence you have put in me by so early a communication--This confidence I think I may say I am incapable of abusing--and you shall certainly have no positive cause to regret having honoured me with it--but I am afraid you will be disappointed if you expected any advantages from my perusal of it--beyond the little additional confidence that is to be derived from the approbation of a friend--I have but little reliance on my own judgment as to works of this nature at any time, and feel a peculiar diffidence in speaking to an author, of a performance to which I have been able to give so little undivided attention as the present--It would be mere affectation however to say

that I had formed no opinion of it--and I am so well convinced that you have applied to me for my opinion and not for my praise that I cannot refuse to give it you, as the worthiest return I can make for the favor I have already acknowledged--I have scarcely anything to say upon the choice of your subject--It is undoubtedly interesting--but perhaps a little too much used--Mary of Scotland has been the theme of many a puerile declamation and many a frigid lament--it is a subject too apt to strike a boy to be without its dangers to a man--and the public have been too much accustomed to find it in the hands of vulgar scribblers not to feel some prepossession agt the author who holds it out to them anew--It is fit however that a subject of such capabilities should be redeemed from this profanation and it will be more honorable than painful for you to surmount the prepossession I have spoken of²--of the *conduct* of the piece I have almost as little to say--In general I think it is judicious, and calculated to produce that rich variety of effect which gives such a magical attraction to the historical drama of Shakspeare--I am not sure however if I am perfectly satisfied with your choice of a point to *conclude* it--Shakspeare I imagine would have brought you to the block at Fotheringay--the catastrophe at which you drop the curtain is rather the Catastrophe of Douglas than of Mary--as to her it is no more than the recurrence of one of those incidents or disappointments from which the reader has been used to see her emerge so frequently--her friends are still numerous and active--the plot agt her life has misgiven and nothing has taken place so decisive or important as to send the auditors away in the full assurance of her destruction--Aristotle would scarcely have allowed that your piece has any *end*--he would have insisted that you had stopped in the middle³--all this however is in my opinion of very little consequence--It is not by these things that authors rise to fame or that readers are moved to admiration--It is upon the execution and not upon the design that the *effect* must always depend--vivid imagery and natural sentiments will delight however you arrange or introduce them--the irregularity displeases nobody but the critic--and even he poor man is obliged to torment himself in inventing an excuse for it when he finds that everybody else is pleased--a very little judgment and a very little attention can always make an unexceptionable design--genius is wanted only for the execution--it is that alone that is worth

criticism--but it is not so easy to criticise⁴

Your play has certainly very great merit in this department--but its merit is rather poetical than dramatic--it captivates the fancy and touches the heart--but it interests much more by its sentiments than by its events--and very frequently by sentiments that have no very necessary nor appropriate relation to the events but are introduced gratuitously and accidentally by the characters--this may often be said of Shakspeare--but you know the danger of walking within his circle--The turn of your own mind as I have long known, is to the more gentle and generous affections--it leads you to express beautifully all sentiments of tenderness philanthropy and compassion and carries you to the representation of those private and domestic virtues and scenes of endearment upon which all those who deserve to enjoy them must dwell with peculiar delight--The passages therefore in which these sentiments and descriptions occur are incomparably the most masterly and striking parts of your performance--If I cared much for the observance of historical truth in a drama I would say it was highly unnatural to write a play of this description and in this tone of feeling upon the adventures of brutal bigots--licentious princesses and blackish [?] warriors--such I fancy were undoubtedly the real characters of the age--but Mary and Douglas are but *names* on the stage and I can never have any objection to see something pass under them a great deal more interesting that what they originally denoted--It is from the same turn of mind I imagine that you have generally fallen short of yourself upon those occasions where the nature of the story affectually [*sic*] prevented you from indulging it--you certainly do not succeed half so well in representing objects of hatred as of love and admiration--*all* the scenes of Elizabeth are evidently below the ordinary note of the composition--some of them are even very faulty--She speaks out her malice a great deal too readily--her dissimulation is not represented with half enough of address and refinement--you should show but a tip of the hags nose or a bristle of her eye brow thro' the nymphlike mask--you make her pull it off at the second word and almost throw it in the hearers face--She wants dignity too--and all the *business* part of the play is deficient in that pomp and circumstance that the *costume* of the buskin has accustomed us to require--I could point out this I think to your satisfaction if I had an

opportunity of going over the play with you--these things are not of much consequence in themselves and do not even strike us very forcibly in the reading but they would be felt very sensibly as defects in the representation produce the same sort of effect as any conspicuous meanness in the *dress* of the performers--as a hole in Douglas elbow or the edge of a dirty flannel petticoat under Elizabeths robes

There are only two other defects in your execution that I have been able to discover--and both of them applicable only to a few detached passages--you are sometimes rather too simple and natural for the full-dress dignity of tragedy--and you have sometimes indulged your imagination in the pursuit of a poetical image till the style is encumbered with figures and approaches to the borders of bombast and extravagance--In all your excesses of this kind however there is an originality and a vigor that would easily induce me to forgive them--you are likest Shakspeare in these passages than in any other--but still it is Shakspeare in a frenzy, however fine⁵--the places where you decline into truisms and a sort of infantine simplicity cannot be so easily pardoned--I would not have you trust the work to the public without correcting them It is a style indeed that has much beauty in it and very frequently a great deal of tenderness--but it is not fit for the profane ears of the multitude--it is liable to ridicule, and will often appear silly to those whose minds are familiarised with grosser interests or have been little accustomed to the unambitious playfulness of affection--Every man that appears before the public appears before a company to whom he owes respect upon whose sympathies he ought not to reckon too securely and with whom he should not be too familiar--there should be a certain dignity therefore as well as energy in all his behaviour --We never think of entertaining a drawing room full of strangers with the prattle of our children nor think of giving way in their presence to any of those simple emotions which constitute the charm of our domestic society--I have expressed this I see injudiciously--and a controversial critic might reply to me with great advantage--but you will understand what I mean I believe --and that is perfectly sufficient

None of your characters I think can pretend to be original--but I am one of those that doubt if any character can now be devised that shall be at once original and natural⁶--*portraits* indeed will always have

peculiar traits--but their merit exists only for those who can judge of the resemblance--I cannot conclude without saying a word of your Scotch scene--it is very much in the manner of some of Shakspeare Jack Cades counsels--and has certainly a great deal of spirit and a considerable share of humor and effect--Yet I wish it had been in English--your play certainly is not written for the Scottish part of the nation alone with the English this scene will be a strong objection agt the whole piece--not only because it will not be understood but because it will be associated in their minds with a certain vulgarity and lowness of conception that will not easily harmonise with tragic propriety--you may tell me that it is natural--but in a play that is to be read all over Britain it should be the natural dialect of Britain and not of Glasgow that is exhibited--besides the Burgesses in Marys days certainly did not speak the kind of Scotch you have put into their mouths --any more than Mary herself did the English and the verse with which you have supplied her--Scotch is a foreign language in England but all foreigners must speak English on our stage--what would you think if a Campbell or a MacDougall should write an English play and make his highlanders speak a whole scene in Erse in the heart of it?--Plautus has one scene in Carthaginian indeed--and Shakspeare has once or twice introduced Frenchmen that could speak no English--but most people are agreed I believe in condemning these passages--and tho' a single character may be allowed to speak in a provincial dialect to add to the humor of his part I am in doubt whether a whole scene would be permitted to pass [?] with the same indulgence--I am not certain however as to this point and should be sorry for my own part to lose the nature and vivacity of many of your phrases--*I am* sorry to think that they must be lost to many of your readers'--By the way there are rather too many Scotch words in the other parts of the play--The diction is generally elegant--but in some places very careless--so is the versification--but both are very capable

I do not think I have any other observations to make --I fancy you think these are enough--my very tediousness however will convince you I hope of the interest I take in your success, and the whole strain of the remarks of my sincerity--When I began this long letter I intended to have marked with a pencil upon the first and second acts those passages which I either admired

or was less pleased with, together with a short note of my reasons This would have given you a truer notion of my judgment of the whole piece than any detached observations, and would have served as a key to some of the general remarks I have hazarded in the beginning But I set off for St Andrews tomorrow morning and find that I shall have no time for this survey at present-- If you are not to come forth very suddenly perhaps I may still have an opportunity of going over a scene or two with you in this way

After having told you so much of my own opinion I hope you will not be so unreasonable as to put me upon prophesying as to that of the public--at present I do not think it very much in unison with mine--and at all events I think the success of a *small* work depends very much upon accident--the booksellers you [MS damaged] assessors I [page torn] can never prognosticate with any assurance--The play how[ever you] may be assured can do you no discredit--That there are powers [?] and beauties of the highest order too will not be denied even by [those] that may condemn it--It contains most indubitably such indications both of genius and of goodness as a private man should be proud of having given to the public

I have wearied both myself and you I am afraid with this unprofitable discussion--for an author after all is always the best judge of his own performances--and knows both the defects and their causes and cures a thousand times better than any critic of double my size--I have told you already however the motives that have induced me to trouble you--they have [MS damaged] farther I confess than was necessary--and farther I am afraid than you have been able to accompany me with pleasure-- Believe me

Dear Grahame always very Faithfully yours

F. Jeffrey

P.S. Will you write me soon to St Andrews to let me see that you are not offended with my impertinencies?-- I shall be there for ten days or more I believe--But I shall return unmarried I beg the damsels of Edin^r may be assured as yet⁸--I return your play [?] sealed up into the hands of the Miss Hills⁹--remember me very kindly to your sister--your brother and my fair Anne--¹⁰

II

Archibald Alison (1757-1839), like Grahame, belonged to an older generation than Jeffrey. Like Jeffrey he was educated at Glasgow and Oxford. He took orders in the Church of England and in 1800 became minister of the Episcopal Chapel, Cowgate, Edinburgh. He held this post for the rest of his life. Alison published *Essays on the Nature and Principles of Taste* (1790). It was perhaps echoing this that Jeffrey produced a paper on beauty and association whilst at Oxford (1791-92).¹¹ The two men met in 1803.¹² For a revised edition of the *Essays* Alison consulted Jeffrey: his reply is given here.

As with Grahame Jeffrey puts forward at some length a sympathetic yet critical point of view. He pleads for a more clear and full argument on Alison's part. This is necessary, he believes, so that the aesthetician can vindicate himself before "that great and last judge," the public. (There is a touch of irony in this phrase, used towards an Anglican clergyman.) Jeffrey asserts his claim to act as the spokesman of the public in a disarming way, characteristic of these personal letters: "Where I am puzzled the herd puzzle too." However, Alison appears to have been little moved by Jeffrey's elaborate critique.

Edin^r 29 July 1808¹³

My Dear Sir

There is scarcely anybody thinks so clearly as you do--and nobody can express their thoughts more luminously--Yet your book is generally complained of as obscure--and those who are most delighted with it confess that there is something unpleasing and unsatisfactory in the *doctrinal* part--the explanation and statement of the theory--I once thought that this was owing in some degree to the *eloquence* of the style, and the richness of the images and illustration that were over the philosophy--upon looking at the book again I perceive that it is owing to the *incompleteness* of the theory you have hitherto expounded, and to your having reserved the *statement* as well as the illustration of the other parts of it to some future publication--Now as I have no great trust in *futurity*, and as the present work may be made very valuable by a very little addition I must insist on your supplying this defect and opening up *your whole theory* so far in the introduction as to give the reader a notion

of the conclusion towards which he is tending and of the propositions which you expect ultimately to make out--Even if you were more resolved than I am afraid you are to favour the world with the sequel of these Essays¹⁴ you would neither impair the interest nor hurt the form of the subsequent parts by this brief annunciation of their contents--and I do assure you,--with all the authority I can borrow for the occasion--that it is *absolutely necessary* for you so far to anticipate the remaining part of the work as to enable the reader to say *what is your theory of taste*--and what is the proposition which you have begun to prove

It is extremely unpleasant to be detained long upon premisses when we do not so much as know whereabouts the conclusion is to be for which they are to prepare us--and indeed it is quite usual as well as comfortable to *begin* with announcing the points we mean to establish--and then to array our proofs--and gradually bring them to bear on it--Warburton has done this--and Locke and Dr. Reid¹⁵ do it always It is the greatest objection to Butlers admirable work that he (like you) has omitted it

If you understand me rightly you will have the satisfaction of seeing that you will have very little to do--all I want is that *you explain the nature of the Simple Emotions* in the succession of which the pleasures of taste consist--explain it in two sentences--dogmatically--without illustration defence or commentary--just say what your doctrine is--and leave the proof of it to the second part of the work--I have said that you *must* do this--and you will forgive me for adding that without this explanation the theory in your present work is not only unsatisfactory but inexplicable--When you tell me that external objects are not beautiful or sublime in consequence of any *material* quality--but on in consequence of some association which enables them to *suggest ideas of Simple emotion*--I *must* know what you mean by ideas of simple emotion before I can admit or deny, or at all understand your proposition--The only truly simple emotions are pleasure and pain--and of pleasure and pain some are of the body and others of the mind--If you mean ultimately to maintain that everything is beautiful or sublime which accompanies or suggests *any* of these emotions--then you ought distinctly to say so--and--right or wrong--nothing can be more easily said--If on the other hand the feelings of beauty etc only arise from the suggestion of *some particular classes of emotion*,

you ought in the very beginning to tell us what they are and let us have the pleasure and entertainment all along of observing the occurrence of those qualities in the illustrations you successively introduce for other purposes--at present while we are left in the dark as to the nature of these particular emotions an inquisitive reader is painfully perplexed with the very diversity and apparent incongruity of these illustrations--From what I myself have been able to collect there seem to be at least *three* separate classes of emotions recognized by you as the sources of the pleasures of taste. 1st the direct emotions of pleasure or pain foreseen or apprehended by the individual himself--as in thunder--tempests--battles and many other causes of the utmost sublimity--where the whole grandeur depends on a sense of immediate danger and a mixture of terror--2 Emotions of *sympathy* with the pleasures or pains of others--or of sentient beings in general--This seems to be your most copious source--It is to it you refer the beauty of spring and autumn--and almost all landscape as well as everything dependent on a sense of *utility*--which can be a source of emotion only by sympathy--3dly Emotions arising from the perception of a certain analogy between material and mental qualities or relations¹⁶--as in the peculiar expression of spring, morning, ruins¹⁷ &c and the delicacy or strength of vegetables--works of art &c --I believe there may be still more classes--but I enumerate these only to show you how much your theory in its present shape must bewilder and distress an attentive reader--who feels the anxiety of all readers to know what it is that is meant to be proved by so much eloquence and ingenuity--These three classes of emotions, are totally distinct in their own nature and are connected with the objects to which they impart beauty or sublimity by quite different relations--yet while you intimate that it is only a particular description of simple emotions that have the power of exciting feelings of beauty &c you cautiously abstain from dropping any hint by which we may discover what it is that constitutes this particular class--

I have made all this a great deal too long because I am anxious that you should understand my meaning--and I have no time to reduce it into aphorisms--The little addition I wish you to make will be placed in the Introduction--and may perhaps need to be alluded to once or twice afterwards--It cannot require more than three or four pages--and probably a good deal less

Since I have set my reviewing hand to a sheet of letter paper I must tell you further that I think you might improve your book by abridging some of your illustrations, on the points that are most obvious and likely to be admitted--and throwing in a few more quotations of beautiful passages--I must tell you too that I stumble a little at the threshold of your theory not being able to see that emotions of taste are necessarily or even usually received in the form of *extended trains of thoughts*--Both beauty and simplicity it appears to me are most commonly perceived in an instant --and in nine cases out of ten this perception is not followed by any *train of thought* at all--but gives place immediately to some other impression--and yet the sensation may have been very distinct and lively--How then can the emotions of taste be justly defined by the character of the *trains of thought* which suggest them?

You know what makes me say all this--and therefore I make no apology for it--I think your book by far the most rational original and philosophical of any that has yet been published on this interesting subject--and I am sincerely anxious to secure to it that general and high estimation to which it is so well entitled--There is something terribly like *accident* in the fate of philosophical writings--not from any want of judgment in the public--but from such a want of interest in the subject as prevents them from coming to the knowledge of that great and last judge--By the help of the review I think I can now secure you a fair hearing--and should feel still more gratified if I thought I could contribute by any hints of mine to render the sentence glorious I have the less hesitation in telling you what I take to be the main fault of the book and the chief obstruction to its popularity--that from my careless and hasty way of reading I have generally found my own impressions those of the great reading multitude--Where I am puzzled the herd puzzle too--and where I grow impatient to know what an author would be at, I reasonably presume that ordinary readers will weary a little also--your accurate and careful students do not afford so good an average--

Do not take the trouble to answer all this--but make such use of it as you can in preparing your copy for reprinting--I am in the middle of the fret and vexation of my review--I have done Fox¹⁸--I hope impartially [MS torn] a sufficient infusion of Whiggism--my London [contribu]tors distress me with ill-timed perfidy--and I have no resource at home--Write one line to say that you are

well and enjoying idleness and long remembered scenes-- I still hope to see Smith here next month--and have no doubt of Brougham¹⁹--Playfair and Seymour will be back too in a fortnight²⁰--so I hope you do not mean to prolong your stay immeasurably--and that you will be so much stouter on your return as to be able to attend a great club dinner of the *Conditori*²¹--Morehead is quite well--and his wife too--tho not very stout yet-- I have great comfort in their vicinity²²--Stewart I hear talks of *three* quartos on the Mind--which is something too much²³--The Spanish patriots will not do I fear--nor do I see any salvation for Europe--as things are²⁴--Tell me what I can do to serve or to please you and believe me

Most affectly Yours

F. Jeffrey

[Addressed to "The Reverend/ Arch^d Alison"]²⁵

In his second edition of 1811 Alison disregards Jeffrey's adverse comments in his letter on "trains of thought." However, he extends his Introduction, as his correspondent had suggested, elaborating the argument and making it more fluid. Perhaps he has in mind Jeffrey's criticisms of "simple emotions" when he asserts that this phrase has characterised the views of the past as put forward by both artists and philosophers. In concluding his new Introduction, Alison, like Jeffrey, takes a middle ground. He appeals beyond the specialising artist and philosopher to the experience and thoughtfulness of the common reader. To the second edition Alison also adds a chapter "of the Beauty of the Human Countenance and Form." Evidently feeling more strongly his sacerdotal responsibilities than he did in 1790, he extends his Conclusion to deal with "the Final Cause of this Constitution of our Nature." He now presents the aesthetic experience as moving progressively from the aesthetic to the moral and the religious planes.²⁶ This flight is more Wordsworthian than in the vein of Jeffrey.

Possibly at the suggestion of his cousin Morehead, Alison's assistant,²⁷ Jeffrey reviewed the second edition of the *Essays* in the *Edinburgh Review*, 18 (May 1811). At the end of both editions Alison claims to be expressing a Platonic doctrine of beauty, in the line of Shaftesbury and Reid. Along with this, he asserts that "Matter is not beautiful in itself, but derives its Beauty from the Expression of Mind,"²⁸ In response Jeffrey accepts the priority of Plato.²⁹ In his own general

aesthetic views he eagerly endorses the principle quoted, together with Alison's references of beauty to emotion and character. The insistence of both Alison and Jeffrey on the psychological will be challenged by critics later.

There are strong pre-Wordsworthian elements in Alison's theory, as has been noted.³⁰ Alison stresses the spontaneity of the response to the beautiful, and the important to it of such generally neglected objects as the cottage and the sheep-fold. Wordsworth would approve of Alison's distinction between the imagination and the critical faculty, to the detriment of the latter. On the other hand, Jeffrey warms to Alison's distinction between associations general, social and individual. For him the last are ephemeral and not to be inflicted on the public.³¹ He might also sympathise when Alison expatiates on the beauty of the costly and the fashionable. He certainly agrees with the assertion that taste is more fully developed in the "higher stations" of life.³² He might share Alison's fear of the baneful effect of the artist himself on his art, when in periods of decadence he concentrates on its technique at the expense of the expression of sensitively felt and generally understood emotion and character.

The letters of Jeffrey printed here, together with his reviews, indicate the perseverance of his critical attitude. He has standards and a strong sense of the author's responsibility to the public. Both are clearly present in the letters, as in the well-known severely critical reviews of Wordsworth, in the later personal correspondence with Carlyle where he tries to persuade his fiery young contemporary to follow the path of sociability,³³ and finally in the encouraging letters to Dickens. Though Jeffrey was not immediately effective in persuading his correspondents and the authors whom he reviewed, nevertheless he made them aware of the challengingly real existence of the critic and of readers in general. Even with Wordsworth one feels that there was a subliminal response to Jeffrey's critiques, or the attitude behind them. The poet felt bitterly towards Jeffrey, but, to judge by the comments of F.R. Leavis, the situation has deteriorated much further in the twentieth century. Jeffrey's attitude, as the letters show, had an element of benignity as well as reason in it.

Alison's book was widely read, reaching a sixth edition in 1825. The British Museum Catalogue also records editions of 1853 and 1879, the last with Jeffrey's essay. According to W.M. Charvat, there were nine American editions.³⁴ Jeffrey's article was included, with some changes, in the Supplement to the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* published in 1824, and occupied a

place in later editions until the eighth (1854). The article took first position in Jeffrey's *Contributions to the Edinburgh Review* (1844), a volume itself reprinted several times both in England and the United States. Alison's *Sermons* (1814) reached six editions in two years. They were favourably noticed by Jeffrey in the *Edinburgh Review*. He admired them, not for their theological speculation, but for their polished appeal to the evidence of the natural world in support of morality and faith. As he did so he looked back to "the beautiful Essays in which this author has unfolded the true theory of material beauty and sublimity, by resolving them into symbols of mental loveliness or grandeur."³⁵

There is no doubt of the influence of Alison, with Jeffrey, on the nineteenth century sensibility, though from the early days the theory of association met opposition. In particular, Coleridge commented, "explaining every thing, it explains nothing; and above all, leaves itself unexplained."³⁶ Later Carlyle mocked:

O Parson Alison, What an *Essay on Taste* is that of thine! O most intellectual Athenians, what accounts are those you give us of *Morality* and *Faith*, and all that really makes a man a man! Can you believe that the Beautiful and Good have no deeper roots in us than "Association," "Sympathy," "Calculation?"...You strive ... "to work from the *outside* inward," and two inches below the surface you will never get.³⁷

On the other side significantly stood James Mill who in his *Analysis of the Phenomena of the Human Mind* (1829) took over Alison's view holus bolus; no changes were made by John Stuart Mill when he annotated and reissued the work forty years later. However, the younger Mill could not assimilate Ruskin to the associationist position. Ruskin himself characteristically both rejects associationism and renders it subservient to his own idealist view.³⁸ A forceful mid-Victorian Scottish critic of Alison and Jeffrey was J.S. Blackie who set them disparagingly against Carlyle and Ruskin. For Blackie the latter recognised Platonically that "ALL ART...IS THE TRUE EXPRESSION OF AN ETERNAL VERITY."³⁹

In the twentieth century associationism lingers on. On the one side, I.A. Richards, after Alison, Jeffrey and the Mills, is sceptical of what he calls "the phantom aesthetic state."⁴⁰ On the other, Yvor Winters names Alison as a source of Pound's unfortunate associationism.⁴¹ It looks as though the controversy will be a permanent one, with critics on both sides feeling the stress on the unavoidable associa-

tionism of the need for more solid and profounder principles.

Jeffrey's letters, here printed, show a man deeply involved in public life who is yet thoughtfully concerned over critical values and especially over human notions of the beautiful. In the light of the developments which have been too briefly indicated above, the letters constitute noteworthy and poignant documents in the history of culture.⁴²

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NOTES

¹National Library of Scotland MS 3519, ff. 3-6. I wish to thank the Trustees of the National Library of Scotland for allowing me to publish this and the following manuscript. Excerpts from the letter to Grahame were used by John Clive, *Scotch Reviewers* (Cambridge, Mass., 1957), p. 158f. Jeffrey's friendship with Grahame had begun in 1796: see Grahame's letter of 20 April that year in the National Library.

²In the notes to *Mary Stewart* (Edinburgh, 1801) Grahame answers this point by referring to his struggle against the prejudice that his subject is exhausted (p. 161).

³In the notes (p. 170) Grahame also defends his catastrophe. The play ends with the death of Douglas and his beloved Adelaide, Mary's follower. But with this experience and the prospect of imprisonment for life Mary is brought, in Grahame's view, to the lowest pitch of desolation.

⁴There is a long dash in the manuscript at this point. Here and later this indicates a major shift in thought. At the suggestion of Mr. Alan Bell, I have indicated this by opening a new paragraph.

⁵See *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Act V, sc. 1), "The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling."

⁶Note Jeffrey's Whiggish consciousness of the problems besetting literary modernity.

⁷Probably in response to this weightily expressed criticism Grahame abandoned the Scotch in the revised edition of the play as published in *Poems* (London, 1807), II, 100-103. Compare the "fear of Scotticisms" expressed by David Hume and