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There is a moment when the present-day A701 road from Edinburgh South to Ecclefechan crosses the high watershed between the rivers Tweed, Annan and Clyde, makes a short level dash across high moors, then drops precipitously towards Moffat and the more distant Annandale, Lockerbie, Ecclefechan, the English border, Carlisle. To the left, as the drop begins, is an extraordinary natural hole carved in the hillside, dark, brooding, dangerous to travelers in mist and fog before the modern road: the Devil’s Beeftub. Into it, legend has it, stolen cattle were driven to their deaths on murky nights. Today, it is a place to pause and consider the countryside ahead, the distant view of Annandale and of England beyond. In the early nineteenth century it must have been with relief that the walker (or carter) reached the end of the long days of effort from Edinburgh, and contemplated an easier journey ahead once the steep sides of the Beeftub (for then there was no easy road) had been negotiated.

The recently-discovered Peter Lithgow, acquired by the National Library of Scotland in 1995 and reproduced by the permission of the Trustees,¹ is Carlyle’s obvious recalling of this moment of emotion when in 1830,² in his impe-

¹Thanks are due to the Trustees of the National Library, and to Drs. Ian Cunningham and Iain Brown for their assistance. The manuscript is 9pp. folio, and is catalogued as Accession 11254.

²The fragment is dated from the draft on the verso of one page of Carlyle’s introduction to Jean-Paul’s review of Mme de Staël’s Allemagne, published in Fraser’s Magazine, February
curious Craigentuttoch years, he sat down to try his hand again at fiction, to draw on memories of his student days and his long walks to and from home, and see if he could perhaps make something better than the abandoned Wotton Reinfred or Illud Charis or even Crabbes and Jonson which was to find its way into print in his lifetime. It was a time when Sartor was taking shape, and Carlyle was to learn there to handle autobiographical experience skillfully by interposing the narrator, the double interposition of Teufelsdrockh and editor re-arranging the paper bags of scribblings; while later claiming that Sartor as more "symbolical myth" than autobiography, Carlyle ensured that the early story of Teufelsdrockh and Blumine had urgency and authenticity by drawing obviously and heavily on his own unhappy affair with Margaret Gordon in Kirkcaldy. Likewise Peter Lithgow gains its undoubted authenticity by drawing on a number of identifiable parts of Carlyle's early life.

It is a strange feeling that will now and the come over the traveller when, turning some hill in his desert road, he sees lying far below, en bosomed among its groves and green natural bulwarks and all diminished to a toy-box, the fair Town, where so many busy souls, as it were, seen and yet unseen, are driving their multifarious traffic. Its steeple is then truly a starward-pointing finger: the canopy of blue smoke seems to him like a sort of life-breath; for he thinks how for a thousand years some glow of material Fire, kept alive from day to day from hearth to hearth, has not gone out in that little circuit, and of immaterial Fire no less, as generation after generation 'has seized and transmitted like the Lamp of Life' so that this little Dwelling-place of men attains for itself a separate existence and we count it as an individual thing, yet fancy lending it a sort of feeling and almost personality and we love it in its remote contractedness and wish it well. The place indeed is but a congeries of stones and mortar; it is we, our manner of conceiving, that make it one, and weave the disconnected incidents it has passively witnessed into a continuous Romance of History for it.

How much livelier more intimately present are such thoughts, if the place has been or must be to us the gazers on it an arena of joyous or mournful experiences; if we have longed and lived in that little spot, if our Loving ones still dwell there, or our Buried rest there, and the natural hues and shadows of the scene are deepened a thousand-fold by the many-coloured, spiritual hues of memory or hope!

Some such feelings might be Peter Lithgow's, as he checked his horse, or rather garron, on the shoulder of Pendrake Fell, where the brave borough of Drumbrash first meets the sight as you journey from Edinburgh, not by the mail, but by the moorland road. Peter, as we said, checked his garron, a flame-coloured nag, seemingly of Irish birth and nurture, who paused nothing loth, as Peter with earnest eye looked down over the prospect. It was a grand June morning, some 1830. The manuscript of the final version is not traced, but this draft is close to it. Carlyle's self-disgust is expressed in his apostrophe half-way through but the manuscript, though resumed, breaks off in mid-sentence and the page is unfinished.

half-hour after sunrise. Day stood flaming on the mountain-tops, calling to the Earth, once more arise be busy, be happy; but as yet only the heath and heath-fowl and a few inferior creatures had begun to hear his voice; of the children of men, all lay deaf, wrapped in thick of sleep, from hut or hall no smoke ascended. Is there any many alas there are many) that has never heard sphere-music of this Universe, let him climb the nearest mountain, alone, after prayer, at sunrise, and listen thro' that deep gorgeous summer solitude; if he hear it not, no tone of it. no faintest echo, let him return weeping, that he is indeed without an ear for this sphere music, and till the fleshly coil be unrolled from him his soul's sense must even let the narrow bone-and-cleaver melody of this manufactured week-day existence suffice him.

Peter had an outward and an inner ear for all concord of sweet sounds; a heart wherein, as in some clear still well all heavenly appearance were softly mirrored back. And had it not been so, this borough of Drumbrash was his birthplace, and he had not seen it for twenty years!

"There thou liest, said he, still shone on by the sun, still visited by the skyey Painless Summer! Silent clear art thou as a Flemish picture; No kettle yet hisses on thy hearth, thy many-voiced clerks and traffickers writers are mute, the new light faintly struggling thro' rests idle on their desks and inkstands: no Sin or Sor­row is yet awake, for men are still sleeping. That they cannot always sleep then mightest though remain in very deed a picture, little birth-town! But the malady of Life is in thee, thou art even as a whitened wall; fair to look on from without, inwardly full of deceit and contradiction, longing with disappointment, envying, un­charitableness. Drumbrash Drumbrash, or rather, 0 Earth Earth, how I love thee and how I hate thee!"—Peter spurred his garron which again set forth at a sham­bling trot.

Peter had business of moment in Drumbrash that day, he had been appointed thither from a far country; and looked forward to the issue with an interest to which his heart, time-worn and grief-worn, had for many years been a stranger. "What is it that thou hidest from me," said he; "thou scurvy little spot? It is as if I could carry thee about on my head like an Italian Hawker, so tiny seemest thou, yet to me thou are a very Urn of Destiny, and there may lie within thee wherewith to gladden or sadden all my remaining days. Give a prize though ware little urn! And yet I know thou wilt not, for to me thou has none to give".

Could we paint out Peter, as he was and seemed at this moment, plodding forward on his Irish garron, at the rate of five miles an hour, it is certain there are few courteous readers but would take an interest in him. A long, spare, sinewy man, of an adust, tough, vehement, half-grim, half-loving aspect, in neat, yet coarse if not mean equipment, at the first glance you all but overlooked him, at the second you knew not in the least what to make of such a figure. For Peter's face irregularly shaded with thick locks of grizzled auburn, had once been rather hand­some; not tanned in many climates and furrowed perhaps with many cares he still looked fearlessly and even cheerfully abroad, less in scorn than in pity: his large thin nose was arched into a form of real mildness, the lips lay gently yet perfectly compressed, and in those fine grey eyes dwelt a lambent fire full of love and quick clear understanding. All this bespoke a man of culture, an intellectual, and polished man. And then what to make of his apparel, that cream-coloured large­brimmed hat, those antique drab vesments, and the stout leathern belt that girt
him? No less strange a multangular beast with little flesh, but that little hard as oak, with untrimmed fetlocks, tail that had acknowledged no scissors but the scissors of Tear-and-wear. There was a saddle of the strongest leather, but made in no civilized district, for it was shod on a exposed places with clear brass, and a broad deep expanse of saddle-bags (horresco referens) hung behind and before, in which as in those of Sir Hudibras, it might be the strangest ingredients lay concealed. In short both horse and man seemed accoutred for rough service, and with a total disregard for what did not tend thitherward.

Many were the theories which passing travellers, hostlers of inns, and other idlers on the public highways formed of Peter. Coopers, Smiths, and other artisans who work with open doors were attentive observers of him; sometimes in passing through weaving villages he has suspended every shuttle in the quarter, and a hundred sallow faces have poked out of as many windows to scrutinize him. Some took Peter for a Yorkshire wool-stapler, a sheep-dealer, horse-dealer, cattle-dealer, or other jobber in live stock: but the instant he spoke, or even looked, that theory vanished. Nature had written a wondrous record on Peter’s face, and the very ostler saw well that could he read them the words would mean something far different from theirs. Others again thought him a itinerant preacher, and that his saddle-bags held Methodist sermons. But was not Peter a man of secular appearance or might he not be as some thought him a tuner of pianos a jesuit a spy—some mad-nondescript. To all which theories, even when expressed in word or act, Peter answered only with a smile. “He is a wise man”, said Peter, “that knows what himself is: no wonder fools should misknow what their neighbour is.”

In truth, Peter’s history had been as wayward and heteroclite as his appearance and accoutrement now were. Strange it seemed that John Lithgow, whilom Laird of Priestpans, and Provost of Drumbrash, a man noted only for his quiet sense, his resolute honesty, and skill in all manner of shipping traffic, should with his wife Margaret, a women in like manner of quiet still and household nature, have produced such a son as Peter. For the boy, who moreover was their only child, seemed to inherit simply no single feature of one or the other parent either in body or in mind. He was of a lath figure as we have hinted, with long neck and nose; whereas both John and his spouse Margaret were squat-shaped, nay in their latter years verging towards pudding-shape. In temper and general inward endowment, also, nothing could be more unlike these two. Peter in fact was like nothing: only himself could be his parallel. The parents were of common disposition, or if varying therefrom, varying only in superior perfection of it: the boy again was the strangest mixture of wit and sheer ineptitude, of weeping despondent timidity and choleric vehemence; he walked stooping and slouching, all expositions and inflictions notwithstanding; he excelled or delighted in no boyish sport; associated with few other boys; never fought except in uttermost extremities, and then with uttermost impetuosity more like a demon than a boy; at one time he would learn school-learning with the clear intelligence of a seraph, at another, insolence inapprehension had irrecoverably laid hold of him, he was dull as the fat weed that roots on Lethe’s wharf. All which made men shake their heads over Peter, and bode no good of him; as indeed, if good mean money-making, or other temporal prosperity, the sequel had in fair measure justified. Nevertheless, Provost Lithgow, in his still way, had remarked that the boy was of a generous and even deep affection, nowise without courage or active resolution in season of necessity,
and at times manifesting in many a pithy little speech, which would burst like sun-
shine from his usual dreamy haze a sense, an accuracy and extent of reflexion far
beyond his years. "Let him alone", said Provost Lithgow, "there is much in the
boy. I have never known a true heart that had not or did not make for itself a clear
head." Wherein we cannot but partly agree with Provost Lithgow; for it is in spirit
as in matter: Fire always exhibits or promises Light; tho' not vice versa; nay in
some poor dry-rotten souls we have seen a kind of Light (sufficient for calculating
that farthings make a penny) which, as in the material case, only indicated
that we were near decayed timber, or some viler instance.

Peter was in his fifteenth year before I knew him; and truly then all these sor-
rowful predictions of his childhood had well nigh vanished or charged their charge
downbent; for the boy was not erecting himself into a youth, and one of more than
common capabilities, in whose clear genial soul lay singular attractions for those
he could comport them to. The isolation, and partial persecution of his younger
years had indeed left traces in him, for indeed the causes still there, his whole na-
ture and demeanour (now that I understand it) was a mixture of burning love
checked by the most immeasurable self-distrust: he was shy, bashful as a school-
maiden, till you reassured him, or provoked him; and then, indeed in either case,
he had fire enough. The strangest turns of fancy, the softest, highest breathings of
feeling; an impetuous enthusiasm that could have longed to mount the chariot of
the thunder, or flow abroad with the whirlwinds, yet trembled responsively to every
faintest tone in the music of creation: read no poetry in thought, and deed; the
hatching sparrow the meadow floweret was a poem to him, in the poorest moorland
rivulet he found a transit to Infinitude; he viewed its scant water with thoughts that
wandered from Eternity to Eternity. At the time, I was far too young to know
whither much of this was tending; and how dangerous an Empire of the Air Nature
had made my friend Lord over: I felt only that in all moods, meditative or idle, in
summer glory or winter desolation, in sadness or joy, he was the choicest compan-
tion, the truest social heart I had ever known. Peter also seemed to love me: I was
his chief or rather his sole intimate; his acquaintance among other young men was
slight and rare; with young women, except the transient courtesies of social life he
had no acquaintance, or rather I should say no other than a speculative acquain-
tance; for little as we spoke on that Subject. each of us I believe had already para-
dise opening within him, cheered by some fairest Eve, where amid the longdrawn,
green vistas, and stately foliage and flowerage of that Garden, the Tree of Knowl-
edge of good and evil rose beautiful and awful in the midst thereof. Perhaps, too
the whole was but the lovelier that cherubim and a flaming sword divided it from
the footsteps of men, and left us only the sight not the entrance of the scene.
Happy scene of youth, where Shame is still an impassable, mysterious celestial bar-
er, and the air-cities of Hope have not shrunk into the mea, clay-hamlets of Re-
ality, and man by his nature is yet infinite and free! Of first love we often hear that
it is the only love: with my friend if ever with anyone of it was likely to prove so:
he was a man to love not wisely but too well.

We walked together to the College of Edinburgh; in high, copious discourse,
full of strange expectations, and passing thro' manifold adventures, such as in
these poor days of mail-coaches no one can look for; of all which, it may be, the
world shall one day have some notice. Only I shall mention that on Pendrake Fell
we both turned round to take our last look of Drumbrash, some fifteen mile from
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us; and there, in mock inspiration, not unmingled with real heart-sickness, which
indeed this oratory mainly strove to hid, he delivered a poetico-satirical farewell to
that loved burgh, characterising its chief aspects, edifices, inhabitants with light
humorous touches, and calling on the Lares and Lemures and Penates, and espe-
entially any god or gods that might preside over cattle-dealing to guard it benignly
till his return. Since that bright October morning, Peter has never to my knowl-
edge seen it again. For two years Peter was my mess-mate, my fellow-student, I
may say my bosom friend. We had no secrets from each other; indeed our whole
purposes and businesses were so simple that we needed little secrecy. The third
year, our pursuits, and with them our abodes, came to be divided: Peter was fol-
lowing what is named a liberal course of study, that is, studying with the views of a
man of fortune; so John Lithgow, strangely enough for such a person, had arranged
it: I again was to earn bread by these studies, and so found myself seated by a
Lawyer's desk, listening to orders, where now thank Heaven I can stand and give
them.

About the middle of this winter he became estranged from me, I knew not
how. Our evening or rather midnight conversations could no longer have place,
these trustful meetings, all that taking of sweet counsel together, was at an end.
When I hastened to his lodgings, by late lamplight, when my day’s work was over,
Peter was not there: he had gone out early, it was not known when he would re-

The next page continues...
me more!" The young man seemed moved to the heart: he burst into tears, but dashed them, haughtily away. Astonishment held me speechless, as he continued: "Justify me!" cried he: "Tell my Father, tell the world, that I had an honest heart. Tell her, too! — O farewell!" said he in a hurried voice grasping my hand with both his, "I linger too long."

"Good heavens!" cried I detaining him, "what is all this? — "Ask me not", repeated he: "thou wilt hear it all. Farewell! Be happy! But stay, wear this for my sake," said he, and hastily loosened the silver shirt-clasp, or double button from his left wristband, and exchanged it with mine which was of brass; then clasping me in his arms, nay kissing my cheek, he said in a low fervent voice: "Think of me, Brother love me, and God bless thee forever!" With these words he snatched himself away; dashed hastily into a neighbouring alley, and was gone. Gone without return! It was moments before I recovered my consciousness, so rapid, so stupefying was the whole scene: I too hurried up the Alley; saw my Friend with long steps emerging from the end of it, into a crowded street; I hurried still faster but in vain; once more I thought I saw his head among the shifting multitude, but lost it next instant, and that glimpse, if it was one, proved the last. At his old lodgings, no one could give tidings of him, he had formally left the place two days ago, the people knew not why or whither. Equally fruitless were all other inquiries: at his old haunts no trace of him could be found. I wandered the streets, hoping I might meet him. It began to rain, it grew dark, I continued wandering. My thoughts were in a whirl, I felt as one dreaming. Not till late at night, did I find myself in my own chamber: Peter's shirt-clasp was still in my hand, I had held it clenched there for many hours, as if in this poor relic, still lay some tie with my Friend. I confess that I wept over it, and fondly wore it, tho' the fashion of these things is long gone. It is a silver button that I would not give for any diamond one.

In the course of time, somewhat of this mystery cleared away. Peter Lithgow had indeed left Scotland; and his friends to wonder and mourn over him; for it was years before they could learn even so much as that he was in life. His father had no tidings of him; seemed unwilling to speak at all on the subject; yet on the whole bore his loss 'with more equanimity than could have been expected. 'It was a forward boy', said John; 'but if he live, time will teach him a thing or two.' For the next six months, Drumbrash in general, and that part of Edinburgh which held of Drumbrash (for every Scottish district has its colony in Edinburgh) abounded in censures, inquiries, theories on this obscure event; which after all would nowise fully disclose itself. So much only was clear, that unreason, on one or on all sides, had been at work; a fact which the moral censors of Drumbrash, that is to say, ninety-nine hundredths of all the articulate-speaking mortals in the place, did not fail to comment on with emphasis; for man has such an innate reverence of virtue, that he cannot even see his neighbour transgress in any point without giving the alarm, without acting, a thing he otherwise hated, the character of spy. It came to light also that Love had been concerned in the matter: a young Englishwoman had won the young Scotichman and been won by him; they had met that winter in Edinburgh; had sworn eternal constancy; blind to all insuperable barriers, for Jane Seymore was of rank, and mingled by right in those circles to which Peter Lithgow had been admitted, much to the suspicion of his acquaintance, as a matter of favour. It was conjectured that John Lithgow hearing of this adventure, had dealt
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sharply with his son; had exacted some promise from him which he would not give; nay it was said that the young Lady too, after an interview with John, had resolutely taken his view of the question, and forbid the young man her presence. To me it seemed not improbably; so much as this, I well knew acting on the passionate heart of my friend, might have driven him into utter despair. I myself saw [the young Lady] soon afterwards, once and only once: she was very young of a blonde, meek, most graceful aspect, and indeed tho' pale, and seeming to suffer much, one of the loveliest figures I had or have ever beheld. Me she did not know; it was in a prim circle where we met, so that except some poor formalities I could have no speech with her. Soon afterwards, as I was told, she had returned to England, to Norfolk her native country; and never afterwards did her high path cross my low one in this world. I felt deeply for the fair being: she was with hard cold people; with some half of them a boarder in some poor proud dowager's establishment, and seemed to have no counsellor or friend. I noticed a quiver in her face when my birthplace chanced to be named: I now doubted not, but the name Lithgow which however I could not mention, would have produced still greater agitation.

On the whole business, as hinted above, John Lithgow himself declined throwing almost any light; and with such meagre outlines of a hypothesis the public could obtain no rest. However, it chanced about this time, fortunately for the Lithgows, that not only a bankruptcy but also an irregular marriage occurred in the burgh; whereby the channels of public speculation diverted; and other scenes in the little Drama of Life at Drumbrash displaced this scene of the Lithgows, and it ceased to be more than a remembrance, growing fainter from year to year. John Lithgow, as we said, nay even his wife Margaret seemed to bear the matter with patience: in the long run it was understood that from time to time they got tidings of their son, who still led a wandering life in remote regions of the world; but they spoke not of him, except darkly and afar off, and did not seem to hope, nor even to wish that they might see him again. Nay words had once dropped from the Provost, in the warmth of some trustful moment, which led to strange inferences, little spoken of except among his friends. Some remembered a high Lady said to be from London, who more than once, for what reason no mortal could ascertain, had visited the Provost: it was noted too that Peter Lithgow did not in the least resemble either of his parents; so that hints were given as if a strange mystery hung over the birth as well as the fate of this young man; which however, as no one had the means of clearing it up, remained a mystery, and grew at last a half unheeded one, related now and then with seriousness by the old, and listened to as interesting fable domestic *märchen* by the young. In a good old age, John Lithgow died, his wife having gone before him; their possessions went to children of distant cousins: Peter returned not; and now all memory of him had well nigh faded away at Drumbrash.

In such circumstances had I parted with my early friend; and little did I imagine that I was this morning to meet with him again. For the reader is to understand

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*No attempt has been made to normalize Carlyle's draft, which is transcribed literally from the MS.*
The moment's relief at the Beeftub will have been familiar enough to him from his early walks home in Springtime from Edinburgh University: when he could afford a horse, he would still have paused to take in the view. On occasion, he had used one of the farm's horses to ride North from Ecclefechan to the foot of the Beeftub to pick up transport to Edinburgh and he writes to his brother Alexander (who had ridden with him) that if the weather South of the Beeftub had been as bad as it was North, you and the mares would be in a sorrowful condition. It rained upon us heavily from the time we approached the summit of that mountain, till we had arrived within twenty miles of Edinburgh, and one of my chief employments was picturing out the situation of poor Alick, fronting the tempest from which I was lucky enough to be retiring...

This was 1820 when he could afford the coach. In 1817, "Sandy accompanied me to Moffat," and left him to climb the Beeftub to his own, and "I looked down through the long & deep vale of the Annan, remembered my friends upon the dim horizon, and half-uttering the wish that rose within me for their welfare, I turned me round & pursued the tenor of my way." It is not hard to read into the early part of Peter Lithgow literal memory: the last view of home on the way North, the first enjoying view on the return.

Nor is it hard to read more biography into the whole business of Peter Lithgow and Jane Seymore. Of course, there is obfuscation: by the time Peter Lithgow was written Edward Irving, one of the obvious originals, was married to Isabella Martin (though he would probably have been more than interested in marrying Jane Welsh had he been able to); though Irving was in Kirkcaldy while Thomas Carlyle and Margaret Gordon had their brief affair he was not (so far as we know) concerned. Undeniably social class played a part in Margaret Gordon's aunt forbidding the affair with an impecunious Carlyle.

While the chaotic years of teaching and freelance writing which Carlyle spent in close contact with Irving (1818 onwards) were spent in Kirkcaldy and

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6Collected Letters, I, 106.

7Carlyle remembers his last view of Ecclefechan from the Beeftub on his way to Edinburgh University, and his joy at his father meeting him on his first return from Edinburgh on the Langlands Road out of Ecclefechan—today a quiet road to Middlebie, but at the time the way in to Ecclefechan from the high road. See Reminiscences, ed. Ian Campbell (London, 1972), pp. 309, 30. A new edition in the World's Classics is due for publication in 1997.

Edinburgh, and while both men saw one another very often and enjoyed a close friendship before distance and the development of the careers parted them, many of the features attributed by this narrator (who physically resembles Carlyle) to Peter Lithgow are in fact Carlyle's—the nervous impetuosity, the difficult relations with a strong father and pious mother, the gloom, the sudden self-absorbed disappearance. It was Irving who was the sunnier of the two, seeking out the reclusive Carlyle, “quiet, cheerful, genial” in their earlier years; during the worst years, when Irving was sinking into premature senility and death in London, it was Carlyle who had to seek him out. In 1830, when Peter Lithgow was being written, both Carlyle and Irving could have reined their horse at the scene described, and looked down on a native countryside where their parents still lived, Carlyle's in Ecclefechan and Irving's in Annan.

If we assume that the sketch is dated in 1830, then he is developing material which will take shape in Sartor: legal training is literally behind him (as it was behind the narrator of Peter Lithgow), along with a long period of poverty and uncertainty. While Carlyle in 1830 was far from secure financially, he was clearly on the way to a career of some kind, and only months from his extended visit to London with the manuscript of Sartor in his pocket, seeking the publisher he was not to find in the Reform-troubled literary circles of London. The atmosphere of troubles endured with uncertainty ahead which permeates Peter Lithgow is very much connected with its author's state of mind.

So, too, is the recurrent theme of the changing relationship between two strong characters whose relationship is at a crucial moment. When he wrote Irving's obituary, Carlyle noted he had been beaten-on from without, undermined from within, he has had to sink overworn-ed, as at nightfall, when it was yet but the mid-season of day. Irving was forty-two years and some months old: Scotland sent him forth a Herculean man; our mad Babylon wore him and wasted him, with all her engines; and it took her twelve years. He sleeps with his fathers, in that loved birth-land: Babylon with its deafening inanity rages on; but to him henceforth innocuous, unheeded—forever.

"Death of Edward Irving" was published in Fraser's Magazine in 1835: it is an eloquent tribute to a friend now lost, lost indeed several years earlier when his religious obsession with the "gift of tongues," and his involvement with the Apostolic Church in London, broke what had been the closest of friendships since 1816: "But for Irving, I had never known what the communion of man with man means. His was the freest, brotherliest, bravest human soul mine ever came in contact with: I call him, on the whole, the best man I have ever, after trial enough, found in this world, or now hope to find."10 Traits of identifiable

9Reminiscences, p. 229.

character are found in Carlyle's Reminiscences of Irving: "My friend was kind to me as possible; and bore with my gloomy humours (for I was ill and miserable to a degree), may perhaps as foil to the radiancy of his own sunshine he almost enjoyed them."11 "From the first we honestly liked one another, and grew intimate; nor was there ever, while we both lived, any cloud or grudge between us, or an interruption for a day or two. Blessed conquest, of a Friend in this world!"12 Or, annotating Althaus' biographical sketch of 1866, Carlyle was to say categorically that Irving "was a brother to me and a friend, then and elsewhere afterwards, at heart constant till he died." "He was as the sun in my firmament, where all else was become so wintry. We were in constant correspondence, & he knew all my secrets."13 Clearly, Carlyle writes Peter Lithgow with the intensity of memory of such a friendship, intimate, unprotected—and the hurt of such a friendship broken through unilateral withdrawal.

Other less clearly identifiable autobiography can be adduced: Gavin, Irving's father, was a figure of modest public importance in Annan (though hardly provost), but Irving's mother "had developed the modest prosperity of her household into something of a decidedly 'genteel' (Annan 'gentility'). . . her Gavin was never careful of gentility, a roomy simplicity and freedom . . . his chief aim."14 Edward's marriage to Isabella Martin, a minister's daughter of Kirkcaldy, would doubtless have given her satisfaction, as would a marriage to Dr. Welsh of Haddington's daughter. While social ambition never caused a rift in either household, the Irvings or the Carlyles, it may have been in Carlyle's mind when he wrote Peter Lithgow. Certainly the first description of Irving in the Reminiscences carries the memory of a certain enviousness, the young rustic Carlyle in 1808 surveying the richer and more traveled young man, on holiday from University, revisiting his old school where Carlyle was still a pupil, "scrupulously dressed, black coat, ditto tight pantaloons in the fashion of the day; clerical black his prevailing hue and looked very neat, self-possessed, and enviable; a flourishing slip of a youth . . ."15

Peter Lithgow is a trial run of something larger never finished: it bears signs of autobiography uncertainly expressed, and like Sartor an obvious indebtedness to Henry Mackenzie's Man of Feeling (1771) with its observer of heightened emotions in friends and family, its narrator interpreting that emotion in a social context, its deliberate use of missing information and absent years of

11Reminiscences, p. 238.
12Reminiscences, p. 186.
13Two Reminiscences, p. 38.
14Reminiscences, p. 172.
the plot—Mackenzie's device of a partly-destroyed original manuscript being a fairly obvious source for some of Carlyle's narratorial games-playing in *Sartor.* Many other literary antecedents could be suggested: in addition to the physical resemblance to Thomas Carlyle, Peter Lithgow's exterior (and horse) have debts to Cervantes and to Fielding, and Goethe's *Bildungsroman* influences on Carlyle have a clear bearing on the handling of Peter Lithgow's absence in the world while he learns from his earlier experience and mistakes—then returns to his native countryside to face his responsibility. Had Carlyle continued writing a little longer, *Peter Lithgow* might have been a more clearly Goethean piece of fiction: as it is, it carries a measure of wish-fulfillment that Irving should return to his native country, as Carlyle had done in Craigenputtoch, and that both men should come to terms with a past left behind, but by no means outgrown.

Carlyle was to be touched when, in 1834, he heard that the dying Irving had said to Henry Drummond he regretted he had been "so estranged from his old friend Carlyle of late years." Carlyle goes on to say "It was indeed a pity for him; a great loss for me, who like yourself owed him much; more, I may say, than man usually owes to man." 16 In 1830 (probably about the time he was writing *Peter Lithgow*) he was to write with some envy to his brother John who was staying in London with Irving, "whose like, take him for all I all, I have not yet looked upon. Tell him that none more honestly desires his welfare—O were I but joined to such a man! . . . With one such man I feel as if I could defy the earth." 17 Clearly at the time of writing *Peter Lithgow,* Carlyle's feelings for Irving were still strong: there is a touching portrait in the *Reminiscences* (also of about this time) of Irving's visit to Craigenputtoch, and how glad Carlyle was to see his friend out of London, and restored to something of his Dumfriesshire vigor.

He was again on some kind of Church business, but it seemed to be of cheer-fuller and wider scope than that of Scriptural-Prophecy . . . I brought him up to Craigenputtoch; where he was quite alone with us, and franker and happier than I had seen him for a long time. It was beautiful summer weather; pleasant to saunter in, with old friends, in the safe green solitudes, no sound audible but that of our own voices and of the birds and woods . . . In Scotland I never saw him again. 18

Perhaps not: but the fragment we now have is a revealing insight into how Carlyle saw his past, and Irving's, and how he thought he might fictionalize it into the present. When he wrote the *Reminiscences* in 1866, he may well have


forgotten Peter Lithgow when he described his parting from Irving after a walking-tour together,

. . . on the top of a hill, commanding all Upper Annandale and the grand mass of Moffat Hills, where we paused thoughtful a few moments. The blue sky was beautifully spotted with white clouds, which, and their shadows on the wide landscape, the wind was beautifully chasing: 'Like Life!' I said, with a kind of emotion; on which Irving silently pressed my arm, with the hand near it or perhaps on it, — and, a moment after, with no word but his farewell and ours, strode swiftly away.¹⁹

The emotion survived in 1830, and from it the writing of Peter Lithgow. We can only regret Carlyle did not persevere, for we will never know what meetings, and what reunions, he planned for Peter Lithgow when he rode down Annandale to confront his past.

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¹⁹ Reminiscences, p. 208.
Tobias Smollett: The Scot in England

In volume two of *The Present State of All Nations* (1768-69), Tobias Smollett wrote that “Glasgow is the most beautiful town of Great Britain, adorned with a great number of public edifices, such as the cathedral and five or six other elegant churches, the tolbooth, town hall, and several hospitals, whose lofty turrets and spires yield a magnificent prospect at a distance” (p. 104). What we hear in these words is the late-life nostalgia of a Scottish writer who had in his youth removed himself to England, felt the dislocation caused by a collision of cultures, and kept alive a vision of his homeland as a kind of locus for all that was good, beautiful, and safe. *The Present State*, published only a few years before Smollett died, contains other tributes to Scotland—to its people, its landscape, its rich cultural heritage; his last novel, *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker* (1771), echoes many of these tributes, personalizing them in the voice of the autobiographical Matthew Bramble and thus giving them a kind of power and poignancy that reveals (in a way that the more detached *Present State* does not) the depth of Smollett’s feeling about the land he had left behind at the age of eighteen, when he went down to London full of hope and ambition, his pocket stuffed with a tragedy called *The Regicide*, with which he expected to make his reputation as a writer in the world of English letters.

It was from the city of Glasgow that Smollett departed for London in 1739. He had spent three years there as apprentice to the eminent surgeons William Stirling and John Gordon, and he had also attended lectures at the university—“the most flourishing” in all of Scotland, as he described it in *The Pre-
sented State (II, 104). We know too little of Smollett’s time in Glasgow to say
with any certainty what his attitudes toward the place were. What we do know,
however, is that Glasgow furnished Smollett with his very earliest impressions
of urban life, and his observation in The Present State, where he remembers the
“magnificent prospect” of the city from “a distance,” strongly suggests what
those impressions were. As a novelist Smollett was obsessively, though by no
means exclusively, preoccupied with the city as an environment in which were
concentrated all the most important conditions of modern life—the alienation of
the individual amidst the bustle of commerce, the ugliness of urban sprawl, the
chaotic racket of the streets, the corruptions of politics, the horrid realities of
poverty and crime, the violent confusion of class identities created by accelerat-
ing social change. One could get lost in a city, be hurt by its unexpected cruel-
ties, as the young Roderick Random is upon his arrival in London; one could be
overwhelmed by the crowding, the filth, the noise, the frenzy, the perceived
hostility of a city, as Matt Bramble is in Bath and then, more painfully, in Lon-
don. Seen in the light of Smollett’s harsh treatments of the city in his novels,
and keeping in mind his nostalgic observation in The Present State, the beautiful
image of Glasgow seems always to have loomed large in his imagination, projec-
ting for him an ideal standard against which to measure the meaning of life in
the other cities he knew, where the people of his fiction encountered some of
their hardest and most vexing experience.

What I have just written is, I must admit, no more than speculation
grounded in a strong hunch; Smollett is tantalizingly vague on the subject of
Glasgow’s personal importance to him, even in Humphry Clinker. There can
be no question, however, that Scotland as he remembered and imagined it pro-
vided him with standards of judgment, while it also enforced on him a trou-
blingly fragmented sense of personal identity: Was he a Scot or an Englishman?
The tension embedded in that question is often reflected in Smollett’s work; it
is, I believe, a source of the power with which he was able to represent the dis-
locations of modern life in his novels, and a major reason why he struggled so
hard in much of his non-fiction, especially the historical writings, to strike a
balance between praise and criticism of both his native and his adopted lands.

To put this point more succinctly: Smollett, like many other Scotsmen of
his day who sought recognition in English public life (physicians, politicians,
and such writers as James Thomson, Allan Ramsay, James Macpherson, David
Hume, John Home, James Boswell, and Henry MacKenzie), was deeply ambiva-
 lent about national and personal identity. The Union of 1707 was a powerful

1Smollett actually left Glasgow with mixed ambitions. He wanted to practice as a surgeon,
but he wanted even more to achieve success as a writer. He did establish himself as a medical
man, thus putting to use his early training with Stirling and Gordon; but he struggled in this
career, which he all but abandoned after about 1750, the year when he purchased a medical
degree from Aberdeen University for £28 Scots. Thereafter he focused almost exclusively on
his writing.
political fact that greatly intensified such ambivalence; traditional English hostility toward the Scots was exacerbated by the Jacobite rebellions of 1715 and 1745, and it combined with an abysmal lack of information about Scottish culture, even its geography, to promote a dislocating divisiveness. Smollett felt this divisiveness keenly, and at a personal level. The English, he wrote to his friend John Moore in a letter of 2 January 1758, will gladly countenance any author who “attacks our Nation in any shape. You cannot conceive the jealousy that prevails against us.” In Humphry Clinker, he made Jery Melford say that “South Britons” are in general as “woefully ignorant” about Scotland as his aunt Tabitha, who believes that one can get there only by sea. Between “want of curiosity,” Jery laments, “and traditional sarcasms, the effect of ancient animosity, the people at the other end of the island know as little of Scotland as of Japan.”

The problem of cultural identity was perhaps especially acute for Scottish writers trying to achieve commercial success with the English reading public and critical success among those who counted in the English world of letters. The issues faced by these writers were hard ones: how to write convincingly in polite English, thus dislocating from that dimension of personal definition that is determined by one’s native linguistic heritage; how far to go—through choice of subject matter, adaptation of sensibilities, abandonment of native traditions—toward assimilation by the adopted culture. Smollett was less comfortable, it seems, than other writers—Thomson, Mackenzie, and Boswell in particular—with the project of finding a balance between the strong urges generated by his two identities as Scottish man and English writer. He assimilated, though only so far. He remained always a Scot. But still he is, in the phrase of the Scottish-American A. D. McKillop, one of the “early masters” of English fiction. And scholars can be specialists in Smollett while by no means claiming expertise in Scottish literature or culture.

Kenneth Simpson, in his excellent book The Protean Scot, has written convincingly and at length about the crisis of Scottish national identity catalyzed by the social and cultural effects of the Union, and about the resulting “cultural dissociation” (p. 10) felt by Scottish writers, including Smollett. Simpson has made it unnecessary for me to linger further over such matters, even if I were

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4 See the chapter entitled “Tobias Smollett” in McKillop’s Early Masters of English Fiction (Lawrence, KS, 1956), pp. 147-87.

5 The full title of this work is The Protean Scot: The Crisis of Identity in Eighteenth-Century Scottish Literature (Aberdeen, 1988).
Tobias Smollett: The Scot in England

capable of treating them with anything like his authority. So I should like to
turn now and look directly at Smollett’s own writing.

Beginning with “The Tears of Scotland” (1746), his first important pub-
lished work, Smollett made it clear that the issue of his homeland would be a
crucial one to him as a writer. The poem is a moving reaction to “Butcher”
Cumberland’s harsh punishments against the Scots in the aftermath of the rebel-
lion of 1745. Somewhat surprisingly perhaps, for a man so passionate about his
origins and their personal and moral significance to him, Smollett made Scot-
land explicitly his subject matter only rarely—or, I should say, his explicitness
seems rare given the accumulated great bulk of all his work. This was surely in
part the result of a common human phenomenon—the attempt, never fully suc-
cessful, to escape the power of one’s past when entering new arenas of experi-
ence, whether that past is remembered as good, painful, or indifferent. In
Smollett’s case, the earliest memories of life were a mixture of pleasure and
pain, as he reveals in the semi-autobiographical opening chapters of The Adven-
tures of Roderick Random (1748). The sweetly nostalgic reflections upon
Scotland in Humphry Clinker came late in his career, when he brought recol-
lection to bear on a personal history of frenetic labor, frequent conflict and
hardship, and, finally, illness. Except in these two novels (interestingly, they are
his first and last), Scotland hardly ever figures directly in Smollett’s fiction as
setting or subject. As I shall try to show presently, however, the idea of Scot-
land, and of his own Scottishness, was always centrally important to him as a
novelist who was also a fierce satirist of contemporary English and European
public life, characters, and manners.

For the moment I want to focus on the other work, which shows us
Smollett the professional writer trying to balance fairly and honestly his two
identities as Scot and Englishman; or, more accurately, trying to be an English
writer without ceasing to be a Scot. The overall range of his work is cosmo-
politan, not provincial; as historian, journalist, and translator (of Le Sage, Cer-
vantes, and Voltaire, among others), as travel writer, even as novelist, he has
much more to say about England and Europe than about Scotland. In these
proportions he reflects the reality faced by Scots in his time. By the parliamen-
tary acts of Union, as Simpson has so emphatically reminded us, Scotland en-
tered into a new phase of relations with the British and European political
communities—not altogether happily or gracefully, and at great risk to its tradi-
tional provincial ways. In the mid-eighteenth century, the period of Smollett’s
career, Scotland was (so to speak) still “old”; England and Europe were “new.”
Progressive changes in politics (with the expanded possibilities of corruption
they brought), in literary culture, in relations among classes, in mobility and
communication, and, increasingly, in work and the means of production, made
the modern world seem at once exciting and dangerous—disorderly, chaotic,
uncertain.

Many struggled to meet the challenge of reconciling old and new (think of
Swift, Pope, Fielding, Johnson, Hume, Voltaire, Rousseau); the struggle was
especially difficult for Scots, and for Smollett it was intensified by a sensibility naturally raw and nervous. But he tried; and, though he never fully accepted the new, he certainly did recognize the need for its reconciliation with the old. Growing middle- and upper-class obsession with material luxury continually troubled him, as John Sekora has shown; the widespread abuses of power associated with rising democratic politics always outraged him; the mixing of classes dislocated him. Yet in *Humphry Clinker*, after a lifetime of agitation and sometime fragmentation of response to these vexing matters, he allowed his imagination to move from severe censure of the English and ecstatic praise of the Scots toward a vision of reconciliation that validates the Union, thus promoting a new order grounded in the notion of one Britain; that renews the familiar idealism of the rural estate as the locus of tranquillity and harmony, an idealism common to both the Scottish and the English literary traditions; and that, through its several marriages at the end, not only unites nations but also brings classes closer together.

Following "The Tears of Scotland" and *Roderick Random*, Smollett wrote comparatively little about his homeland until undertaking his four-volume *Complete History of England*, published in 1757-8. His youthful tragedy *The Regicide*, never produced but published privately by Smollett in 1749, ought to be mentioned here in passing. Its subject is Scottish; the play is based on the historical episode of the assassination of James I in 1437. That Smollett should have taken up such a subject for a work written when he was very young, and before he left home, is not surprising. His having done so tells us little about his later views toward Scotland, even less about his troubled sense of himself as a Scottish writer in England—except that the preface he published with his play is an angry account of the disappointment of all his hopes for its success. Smollett the alien surfaces in this preface.

But not in the *Complete History*. Reviews of this work sometimes criticized it for a Scottish and Tory bias, but it is on the whole a reliable chronicle that simply incorporates Scottish history into the large breadth of its coverage, which begins with the arrival of Julius Caesar in Britain and concludes with the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle in 1748. The same may be said generally of the *Continuation* (five volumes, 1760-5), which carries the history forward to the mid-1760s. There are some moments of severity against the English: the account of the reign of William and Mary, for example, and specifically of William's abuses (as Smollett saw them) both of the principles of the Revolution Settlement of 1688 and of Scottish national interests during the years preceding the Union, the description of the 'Forty-Five and its aftermath; and, in the *Continuation*, the hostile record of the treaty arrangements by which William Pitt, at first so admired by Smollett, increasingly perplexed the conduct of the Seven Years’

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4Luxury: *The Concept in Western Thought, Eden to Smollett* (Baltimore, 1977); see esp. Chaps. 4-9.
War during his terms as prime minister. But in these historical works Smollett was clearly writing as an Englishman, one whose naturally alien status as a Scot perhaps colored his view of things somewhat, but did not entirely prevent his detachment or undermine his authority. In this he was very like his celebrated countryman David Hume, whose popular *History of England* began to appear in 1754 and actually prompted Smollett’s rival work.

In *The Present State*, the major historical project of his later career, Smollett took equal—if not greater—pains to provide a reasoned view of Scotland and England as lands separated by ancient national traditions but joined by modern political arrangements and progressively integrative cultural relations. In this connection it is symbolic that he placed his accounts of the two countries one after the other in successive volumes of the work (the last 100 or so pages of volume one through the first 349 pages of volume three), that he began with Scotland and turned then to England, and that he gave the latter proportionately lengthier treatment while still devoting more than 250 pages to the former. Louis L. Martz has suggested, rightly in my judgment, that Smollett was in part addressing the very English problem of deplorable ignorance about Scotland—the same ignorance lamented later in *Humphry Clinker*. By Martz’s count, before the publication of *The Present State* the eighteenth century had already produced almost two dozen multi-volume, comprehensive accounts of England (not including travel books, county histories, and specialized works), but only five extensive descriptions of Scotland—the latter all buried in more general treatments of Great Britain, such as the revised versions of Defoe’s *Tour*. Smollett’s care, and his method of combining personal knowledge with consultation of several of the five major accounts preceding his own, made for the most thorough and authoritative description of Scotland ever written.

*The Present State* does include the occasional jarring expression of national prejudice. Early in the geographical description of Scotland proper with which volume two begins (the last pages of volume one are devoted to the islands), Smollett bristles and recites the old English proverb: “In every corner of the earth, one may find a Scot, a rat, and a Newcastle grindstone.” To the offensive chauvinism of this proverb he replies in kind, but more subtly. The Scots are, he says, “for the most part, sober, industrious, circumspect, shrewd, and insinuating, well aware of their interest, which in foreign countries they prosecute with perseverance and success, even among people by whom they are envied and discomfited” (II, 10).

Such moments as this are relatively rare. Throughout his accounts of both nations, Smollett distributes praise about equally with candid reservations and criticism. Of England he says, for example, that its constitution is possibly “the best that ever was reduced to practice in any part of the world,” though it

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"contains in itself the seeds of its own dissolution. While individuals are cor-ruptible, and the means of corruption so copiously abound, it will always be in the power of an artful and ambitious prince to sap the foundations of liberty" (II, 161, 165). The Scots, as "soldiers, seamen, traders, and tradesmen," match the world's best, while modern Scottish culture is distinguished for "learning and genius" (II, 11); the men of England "are the most comely, and the women the most beautiful, that any kingdom of Europe can produce," and, "in point of cleanliness, the English excel all the nations in Europe" (II, 212, 213)—the latter a virtue sorely lacking among the generality of Scots. And so on.

Martz argues convincingly for dating the composition of the Scottish section of *The Present State*, and probably the English section as well, in the early 1760s (*Later Career*, pp. 106-8). But he errs, I think, in assuming that Smollett could not have written the English section at a later date, since its fairminded-ness would have been impossible to the disillusioned and rancorous man who almost simultaneously, in 1769, published *The History and Adventures of an Atom* (p. 130). By the middle and later years of the decade, Smollett was in-deed disillusioned with England and its party politics—of this more presently; but he was not prevented from writing *Humphry Clinker*. More to the point, the poise displayed in *The Present State* is, as I have already suggested, consistent with Smollett's usual determined attitude and practice in his most public role as historian.

Even in his *Travels through France and Italy* (1766), an imaginative work of frequent cantankerousness, based on personal experience (Smollett had taken pretty much the same trip he recorded) but nonetheless partaking significantly of the historical, Smollett reached for equilibrium and balance. The *Travels* appeared only two years before *The Present State* and some three years after the events that so entangled Smollett in party politics and left him embittered. The point is that Smollett was able, when he chose to do it, to suppress or at least control private feeling and personal judgment in the interest of public pur-pose. This, I think, is what Martz fails to understand. Besides, rancor was a fact of Smollett's life long before the composition of any of the later works, including *The Present State*. The letter to John Moore already quoted was written in 1758; four years earlier, in March 1754, he had written bitterly from Chelsea to his friend Alexander Carlyle, longing for Scotland and almost de-spairing of England; perhaps he was responding to the poor reception given his second and third novels, *The Adventures of Peregrine Pickle* (1751) and *The Adventures of Ferdinand Count Fathom* (1753). "I am heartily tired of this Land of Indifference and Phlegm," he complained, "where the finer Sensations of the Soul are not felt, and Felicity is held to consist in stupifying Port and overgrown Buttocks of Beef, where Genius is lost, Learning undervalued, and Taste altogether extinguished, and Ignorance prevails" (*Letters*, p. 33).

The more public Smollett of the *Travels* made his persona actually leave England instead of merely dreaming about doing so, firing off (in his first letter) violent shots at its scenes of "malice," "faction," "illiberal dispute, and incredi-
ble infatuation, where a few worthless incendiaries had, by dint of pernicious calumnies and atrocious abuse, kindled up a flame which threatened all the horrors of civil dissension. Significantly, in his very last letter (the forty-first), the same persona expresses delight over the prospect of his imminent return home from France:

I am at last in a situation to indulge my view with a sight of Britain, after an absence of two years; and indeed you cannot imagine what pleasure I feel while I survey the white cliffs of Dover, at this distance. . . . I am attached to my country, because it is the land of liberty, cleanliness, and convenience: but I love it still more tenderly, as the scene of all my interesting connexions, as the habitation of my friends, for whose conversation, correspondence, and esteem, I wish alone to live. (p. 341)

The disillusionment alluded to in the first letter of the Travels, and on which Martz rests his argument for the early composition of the English portion of The Present State, arose from Smollett’s involvement in the affairs of the Bute ministry, which was continually beset by violent controversy and alarming public unrest. Lord Bute, a Scot and a Tory, became prime minister in May 1762. He had anticipated the need for a new periodical in behalf of his policies, and he asked his countryman Smollett, at the time writing and publishing his Continuation of the Complete History, to take up the editorship. Smollett agreed, and The Briton, a weekly, began publication before the end of the month in which Bute assumed power. The blatantly partisan purpose of this enterprise led Smollett inevitably into passionate rhetorical defenses not only of Bute’s policies, but of his Scottishness. The Briton was ineffectual; Bute ignored it, and Smollett grew bitter. He was in any case unhappy in the midst of the partisan fray, which became especially vicious after John Wilkes and Charles Churchill joined it with their fiercely anti-ministry North Briton just about a month after the first number of Smollett’s magazine appeared. And he was not comfortable with the kind of shrillness required of antagonists in the pitched political battle carried on by the periodical press. He gave up The Briton in February 1763, not three-quarters of a year after beginning it.

Smollett was certainly capable of acidity and rhetorical violence; we know this from his letters, from several of his pamphlets, from his Travels, and of course from his prose fiction, including the Atom. But these were all expressions from his most private self, or from an unleashed imagination. The more public role he adopted in his other journalism, for the Critical Review and the British Magazine, and in his historical writings, required him to take a position that distanced him from faction, from the conflict of ideological warfare, and from the divisiveness inherent in his own double identity as Scot and as Eng-

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lishman. Occasionally the distance was little more than an illusion; Smollett accurately assessed his aim and his achievement when, in January 1758, he wrote to John Moore, protesting that in the *Complete History* he had, "before God" and as far as he was able, "adhered to Truth without espousing any faction," though he admitted to writing "with a warm side to those principles" in which he was educated (*Letters*, p. 65). His work for *The Briton* gave him no choice but to espouse faction, which he hated, and he could not do it for very long. In any event, his experience as a political journalist soured him forever on party politics, on national as well as ideological factions, and on politicians, including Bute, with whom he became almost as disillusioned as with Pitt. The direct result of this experience was the *Atom*, which takes no prisoners, Scottish or English, Tory or Whig.

Smollett's hatred of faction and its divisiveness manifests his awareness of a deep and complex division within himself—a division between irascibility and sweetness, between his two national identities as Scotsman and Englishman, between the private self who wrote irritated letters and satiric fictions and the more public self who mediated, using historical writing (quite apart from its practical, money-making value to him) in part as an exercise of restraint to gain equilibrium. The best and clearest evidence of Smollett's alert understanding of the division within him is to be found in the mock-dedication to *Ferdinand Count Fathom*, where he addresses himself (as Doctor *****), deploring his pride, obstinacy, jealousy, and intemperance, while owning and celebrating his integrity, sanguinity of disposition, and general worthiness of friendship and esteem. The sense of personal alienation is unmistakable. In this same dedication, however, Smollett goes on to acknowledge his alien status as an author writing to an antagonistic world: "We live in a censorious age," he says, and "an author cannot take too much precaution to anticipate the prejudice, misapprehension and temerity of malice, ignorance and presumption."

Smollett's expression of anxiety over his position as outsider in the world of letters externalizes the internal fragmentation he appears to have felt; in the configuration he creates, he is by implication all goodness, decency, and wisdom, whereas the world is all meanness, hostility, and stupidity. The anxiety itself may well have arisen in large measure from self-consciousness of his identity as a displaced Scot. If in his historical work he strove for a discipline that allowed him to play the role of detached public servant and citizen, in his imaginative writing he relaxed the discipline, still yearning for and striving toward balance but giving full expression to a private sense of the self as alien. This is true throughout all the novels; it is true of the persona in the *Travels*; and it is in a peculiar way also true of that odd little being the atom as it recites its most curious adventures in a most bizarre world—though without ever arriving at any resolution in order or equilibrium, for the narrative simply stops with

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references to Bute’s fall from power in 1763 and his departure for self-exile in France some years later, in the midst of the Wilkes riots of 1768. These works, *because* they were products of the imagination and thus not limited by the rules and the discipline of historical writing, gave Smollett release into the full and creative display of the internal and external conflict that beset him nearly all his life and that, perhaps paradoxically, he most nearly resolved (as I have already noted) in his last work of fiction, *Humphry Clinker*.

I want to turn directly to the novels now, lingering only very briefly over *Peregrine Pickle*, *Ferdinand Count Fathom*, and *The Adventures of Sir Launcelot Greaves* (1760-61), which give little attention to Scotland, though they do pursue the theme of alienation which is always Smollett’s great subject. In these three works, published during the decade 1751-61, Smollett most emphatically preoccupied himself with the experience of the Englishman. In *Peregrine Pickle* and *Ferdinand Count Fathom*, as he was later to do in the *Travels*, he extended his narrative scope to the larger European community, thus simultaneously broadening the range of his definition of the alienated modern individual. The protagonist of each novel is most definitely an outsider. Perry is a wayward adventurer, Fathom a criminal, Greaves a latter-day Quixote who sets about doing good in a world that clearly does not want him in its midst. Perry, like Roderick Random before him, is torn between native decency (sometimes, it seems, seriously in remission) and his violent, frequently uncontrollable urges to scourge the fools and knaves—they are legion—he encounters in his pathway, whether in the English or French countryside, in London, or in Paris. Fathom, whose characterization is a thoughtful study of the criminal mind and life, is almost literally a man without a country; he is born in a wagon as it maneuvers across the border between Holland and Flanders. In the major cities of Europe he practices his art of confidence man, is duped as often as he dupes, and then travels to England—his legal homeland, because his mother was an English citizen, and a place he regards as a “land of promise, flowing with milk and honey, and abounding with subjects on which he knew his talents would be properly exercised” (p. 77). He is wrong; or rather, the land is abundant all right, but in the end it gets the better of him. At the novel’s conclusion he receives his comeuppance and, like Perry, is brought into submission to the prevailing moral order—an order imagined by the author and not broadly manifest in the world as Fathom knows it, in England or elsewhere.

Greaves simply persists, moving past scenes of perfidy and through encounters with the inmates of an insane asylum and a prison, until finally he triumphs. He is a representation of goodness who transforms not the world, but individual characters affected by the power of his example. The often noticed connections of *Peregrine Pickle* and *Ferdinand Count Fathom* with the picaresque as narrative of the roguish outsider are telling, as is the connection between Greaves as naïve reformer and the Quixote as madman. All three novels are episodic, as indeed *Roderick Random* and *Humphry Clinker* are, and their structure signifies something important about the plight of the solitary individ-
ual, caught in the violent uncertainties of the modern world.10 “I am old enough,” Smollett wrote to David Garrick (in April 1761) not long after the final serial installment of Sir Launcelot Greaves had appeared in the British Magazine, “to have seen and observed that we are all playthings of fortune, and that it depends upon something as insignificant and precarious as the tossing up of a halfpenny whether a man rises to affluence and honours, or continues to his dying day struggling with the difficulties and disgraces of life” (Letters, p. 98).

This is all commonplace stuff. I have rehearsed it only because I believe Smollett the Scot, a lifelong outsider in his adopted England, identified very closely with the alien characters he created, and that in fact he created them out of his own sense of alienation. Furthermore, it seems clear that both Perry and Fathom, and Roderick Random as well, are expressions of that darker self portrayed in the mock-dedication to Ferdinand Count Fathom, the self alienated internally and externally by the loneliness of cultural dislocation and by the exercise of a raw sensibility aggravated into indignation, even meanness, as it responds to a world that proves especially sordid, erratic, and unsafe to anyone departing from its generally depraved norms. That world must be punished, and vigorously. Greaves figures forth the other side of the same self-portrait, the side that is sweet, generous, full of integrity and good purpose, worthy of esteem. But he, too, is an alien in a hostile world—a moral stranger, really; and, like Roderick, Perry, and Fathom, he represents only a fragment of the total self from which his author created him.

The angry Scot who felt that he could never gain full and unqualified acceptance in England—as a writer and as a man—surfaced in the deviant, sometimes ferocious conduct of Roderick, Perry, and Fathom; the self-righteous Scot who associated goodness with the best old traditions of his own country, and danger, even wickedness, with the progressive ways of the English, received loving expression in the character of Greaves. In all four novels there is final resolution in the establishment of order and harmony; the resolution always works, for it proceeds from the satiric strategy of retreat from the world—or, in the case of Fathom, total reformation and banishment.11 But retreat is repudiation; it cannot signify reconciliation and the integration of culture and self, and it does not parallel the kind of balance Smollett sought in his historical writing.

That would come in Humphry Clinker. A comparative glance or two at the earlier Roderick Random may help to underscore the degree to which, very near the end of his life, Smollett, did in fact finally manage to articulate a vision.


11 Many readers have found these endings forced. I do not agree, especially in the case of Roderick Random: see Jerry C. Beasley, Novels of the 1740s (Athens, GA, 1982), pp. 113-25.
of reconciliation—reconciliation of cultures and of the divisions in an imagined self. Still a young man when he wrote *Roderick Random*, and still smarting at the rough treatment *The Regicide* had received from theatrical managers, Smollett made his hero’s Scottishness a central fact of his experience and a source of his suffering in the England to which, like his author, he had traveled to make his fortune. Roderick had suffered in Scotland too, at the hands of family members, a schoolmaster, an apothecary for whom he worked, and others. Smollett did not represent his homeland as perfect. But Roderick, a fellow of “modest merit” (as he is described in the preface), is literally brutalized upon his arrival in London. First he is mocked for his speech; then he is viciously teased by a tavern wag who tells him that his red hair (the mark of a Scot) makes him resemble a fox whose “tail was not yet cut.” He is bedaubed with mud by a coachman, and he is humiliated (by a Scottish pedagogue!) for his awkward country dress and—again—his “carroty locks.” “No christian will admit such a figure into his hawse,” Roderick is told: “Upon my conscience! I wonder the dogs did not hunt you.... you look like a cousin-german of Ouran Outang” (p. 67). Roderick is thus shamelessly reduced to subhuman status by tormentors who are themselves grotesques in a grotesque world; he is moreover taken by sharpers, tricked by innkeepers, and misled by officials of the naval administration whom he petitions for a commission as a surgeon’s mate. Eventually, and in part because of his vulnerability as an alien, he is captured by a press gang and forced into service aboard a British man o’ war: called the *Thunder*, and during the controversial expedition to Carthagena he is subjected with particular cruelty to the mindless horrors of shipboard life.13

It can hardly be doubted that Roderick’s story, told in his outraged voice, is to a great extent his author’s own. Roderick is of course not the only sufferer in the world Smollett imagines, but the misery he feels so deeply begins in his alien Scottishness. In projecting him as one among the many who are pained by experience, Smollett made him an extreme representation of the plight of the individual assaulted by the conditions of modern life; he made common cause, in other words, between the Scot as cultural alien and every individual as an alienated being. Roderick moves from such extremity into fierce scourging of the world, expressing that darker side of his author’s self described earlier; he suffers further for such conduct, is severely punished for it in a kind of self-reflexive gesture by Smollett, but is at last redeemed after sinking into utter degradation and imprisonment. At last he discovers the father he thought he had lost, marries his beloved Narcissa (also thought lost to him),

13 The story of Roderick’s adventures aboard ship occurs in chapters 24-27; it is in part autobiographical, for Smollett himself sailed as a surgeon’s mate aboard the *Chichester*, which was involved in the Carthagena expedition of 1741.
and escapes to his ancestral estate—a paradisal place of great beauty, regulation and order, tranquility and joy.

Like Peregrine Pickle, Count Fathom, and Sir Launcelot Greaves, Roderick leaves the world behind him, rejecting its power while affirming its meaning as a place of depravity and danger. It is clear from the ending that in Roderick Random the example of the Scottish estate is intended to provide a final and, retrospectively, an absolute standard against which the rest of the world as the hero has known it is to be judged. The representation of the Random estate is brief, but the references to its old and stable traditions of fine hospitality, and the celebration of communal affections extending to all classes, must have been an exercise in nostalgia for Smollett. In any event, upon his arrival there Roderick is an alien no more; the conditions of modern life are suspended.

That is not the case in Humphry Clinker. In this novel, instead of suspending the conditions of modern life by a resolution signifying retreat, Smollett gives them new interpretation. Certainly the Scottish section of the work defines standards of judgment, and it must also have served Smollett as a vehicle for nostalgic reflection. Matt Bramble’s letter from Cameron is so well known as to require only the briefest comment. “This country,” Matt writes of the surrounding Dumbartonshire, “is justly titled the Arcadia of Scotland”; and he encloses a copy of some verses “by Dr. Smollett,” the lovely “Ode to Leven-Water” (p. 241). Like Roderick Random, Humphry Clinker locates some of the most important experiences of its characters in the city. In the earlier novel it is only London that is represented, but in the later work the travelers pause at Bath, London, Edinburgh, and Glasgow. Matt’s outraged reactions at the racket, disorder, folly, meanness, and stupid pretensions observed in the English cities are as famous as his later celebrations of the Scottish countryside. His responses to Edinburgh and Glasgow, however, are enthusiastic. Edinburgh he describes as a “hot-bed of genius” (p. 227); Jery Melford, calling Glasgow “the pride of Scotland” and observing that it “might very well pass for an elegant and flourishing city in any part of Christendom,” reports that his uncle is “in raptures” with the place (p. 231).

We are reminded of Smollett’s description of the latter city in The Present State. Clearly, in Humphry Clinker Glasgow defines a retrospective ideal that clarifies Matt’s reactions to Bath and London. It is a beautiful city, warm in its hospitality, full of agreeable and interesting people, including men of real talent and genius. Neither Roderick Random nor any of the other novels makes any such issue of Glasgow, but, as I remarked earlier, it is nearly impossible to avoid the speculation that the image of this fondly remembered city rose always to consciousness whenever Smollett was detailing the usually difficult experiences of his fictional characters in the midst of any scene of urban life—and this was often.

Scotland does not escape criticism in Humphry Clinker; Matt deplores the lack of proper sanitation in Edinburgh and finds Scottish agricultural methods inferior to those practiced in England. There are other criticisms, but Matt
finds his health in Scotland, physically and emotionally; the internal divisions that have pained him for years are dissolved. As he journeys back across the Tweed into England, he sees more clearly than he could ever have done before the possibility of reconciliation in the external world as well—reconciliation between old and new, between the individual and society, between the admired traditions associated with Scotland and the progressive ways of England. He assists his friend Baynard in the rescue of his dashed fortunes by persuading him to organize the affairs of his estate on the well-regulated model of another friend, Dennison, who is a practitioner of modern English agricultural economy but whose estate equals the best of Scotland in the important respects of beauty, productivity, hospitality to guests, and communal harmony among its residents. Matt even finds himself promoting the idea of the Union, over the strenuous objections of Lismahago, who laments the loss of Scottish national identity and the political sacrifice it had entailed, proclaims the dangers of increased freedoms and the inevitable excesses of growing commercial prosperity, and insists on praising the good dietary effects of the oats that Matt would have a prosperous Scotland feed to its livestock instead of its people (pp. 265-70).

The debate between Matt and Lismahago occurs as the novel is winding toward its conclusion in the several marriages that will join Welsh and English estates, unite people of different nationalities, and alter the structure of relations among classes. Lydia will marry young Dennison, the son of her uncle's English friend; Tabby will marry the half-pay Scottish officer Lismahago; and the servant Win Jenkins will marry the English-Welsh Humphry Clinker, born as the result of one of Matt's amorous adventures while a student at Oxford. Not all members of the traveling party will return to Wales. The overall effect is unifying, despite the impending separations, because the families created by the marriages will replicate the political configuration of the recently formed United Kingdom. The manner in which the marriages are treated is comic, festive, unmistakably celebratory. There can be no doubting the meaning of this resolution. Indeed, its function as a kind of metaphor signifying the establishment of a new order has long been recognized by readers of the novel.

Before concluding I should like to return briefly to the episode of Matt's conflict with Lismahago over the subjects of Scotland and the Union. In the crochety voice of the latter, Smollett registers the anxiety of many Scots, surely including himself, over the threatened absorption of their homeland and its culture. Many events since the Union—the virulently anti-Scottish government policies established following the 'Forty-Five, for example—had given cause for such anxiety, which was further intensified by the continuing national prejudices already mentioned several times in the preceding pages of this essay. In the voice of Matt, however, (as a Welshman he is, like Smollett, an alien in England) we hear distinctly the personal tones of conciliation. It is hard to account for these, just two years after the appearance of the Atom. Students of Smollett have already acknowledged that Matt is a self-portrait, and so his voice may be
considered to represent his author’s own. Account for its tones in some way we must.

The most likely explanation is that, mellowed by the terminal illness that killed him before he ever saw a printed copy of *Humphry Clinker*, distanced by his residence at Leghorn in Italy, and vented by the writing of the *Atom*, Smollett had simply gained a new perspective. Scotland was now united with England; that was a fact. A Scot could adapt to English culture without giving up all sense of native identity—as Smollett himself, through Matt, was able to remember Dumbartonshire, the Highlands, and the cities of Edinburgh and Glasgow, but still return imaginatively to England. A private integration of identity and consciousness, paralleling the balance Smollett maintained in his most public role as historian, could be achieved, and the private and public selves brought into a harmonious relation. Irascibility, one form of sensibility, could be melted into benevolence, another form, without sacrificing energy, wisdom, or sharp awareness of the world. The divided self portrayed in the dedication of *Ferdinand Count Fathom* could thus be made whole.

The kind of reconciliation—internal and external, private and public—promoted in *Humphry Clinker*, and specifically in the character of Matt Bramble, was impossible for the young author of *Roderick Random*. Perhaps we should be glad. The dislocation Smollett felt for most of his life did, after all, help to give us all the works I have been discussing, and a good many more besides. Finally, of course, it is in the novels that our greatest interest as modern readers naturally centers. For in these works Smollett, more than any other literary figure of his time, made the crisis of the individual’s alienation in the modern world his focus, giving it all the force of his tremendous imaginative energy and his extraordinary sensitivity to the facts of injustice and the threat of perpetual isolation. Had he not been a Scot, perhaps he would not have written in this way, and we would be without the benefit of his prophetic, and troubling, vision. But then if he had not been a Scot who, in his many writings of many kinds, struggled continually toward a separate, much more elusive vision of unity that would save him from the dangers of his own alienation, we surely would not have *Humphry Clinker*, the novel in which at last he found such a vision and gave it expression. That would be a loss indeed.
Knowledge of a writer’s life can often help readers glimpse how that writer crafted fictional worlds. Robert Louis Stevenson’s *Treasure Island* (1883) is a case in point.1 Because *Treasure Island* is an imaginative work of fiction specifically designed for younger readers, contemporary audiences seldom see the relevance of Stevenson’s life to the novel they read. Yet an examination of what Stevenson was doing in 1881, when he wrote the original narrative, provides us with some understanding of how it was written and why Stevenson used certain fictive elements in the fabric of the novel.2 Knowing that Stevenson wrote part of the novel in Scotland and part in Switzerland—with a long interruption between the efforts—forces us to consider the differences between these two parts.

Stevenson began the novel in late August 1881, basing the setting on a map he had drawn to entertain his stepson (Samuel) Lloyd Osbourne (the S. L. O. of the book dedication). Writing in Braemer, Scotland, at the family’s vacation cottage, Stevenson produced about a chapter a day until he, his wife Fanny, and

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1 Citations to the text of *Treasure Island* are to the first edition (London, 1883), the only reliable text. We have added chapter numbers to citations in the text for the convenience of readers without access to this edition. We should note that the manuscript is no longer extant.

her son Lloyd left for Switzerland for reasons of Stevenson's health. Since Young Folks had already begun the serialization of the novel, Stevenson was pressured to get copy to the magazine; then, about the middle of the book, he seemed to be stuck with what we now call “writer’s block.”

What we will focus on in this essay is how Stevenson, after being away from his novel for almost the entire month of October 1881, regained his ability to write the concluding chapters (19-34), when Jim resumes the narration. We believe the odds that had been set up in the earlier part of the novel—that is, the relative strengths of the opposing parties, expressed in numbers of fighting men on each side—provided Stevenson with a “war of attrition” and helped him get on with his writing. We will examine, first, how Stevenson uses the odds up to Chapter 15, how they are continued through Dr. Livesey’s narrative (Chapters 16-18), and how they become more significant in the last sixteen chapters.

Throughout the novel, Stevenson is responsive to the demands of the genre: the young protagonist and his older friends must succeed against apparently overwhelming forces. For maximum reader satisfaction they must carry away the treasure; for best effect they must snatch it from the very grasp of the pirates. The readers' interest would be fixed on exactly how the treasure was to be wrested from the villains and sustained by thrills generated out of their ruthlessness and barbarity. One of the pleasures of reading Treasure Island, then, is the way Stevenson has the underdogs succeed. Convention required Stevenson to keep the reader informed of the odds against the loyal party. Poorly handled, his account of the action could have read like the summary of a chess match, with the reader merely following a tabulation of the moves. But Stevenson deftly keeps the odds in the background, giving his audience the intellectual pleasure of constantly re-calculating the forces opposed to the protagonist, guessing how effective they are likely to be, and considering methods of countering them. Although readers are aware of the changing numbers from the pirate attack on the inn until the final return to England, Stevenson only occasionally insists that we attend to them, in order not to impede the action.

The technical problem facing the novelist was to maintain suspense over the course of the fiction by keeping the pirates strong enough to threaten the loyal party, but not so superior a force as to overwhelm it. Stevenson's solution was both to keep track of the odds and to make the reader aware of them. Almost from the beginning, the pirates outnumber Jim and his allies. Early in the tale the odds seem insurmountable. “Seven or eight” buccaneers, led by Blind Pew, come to the Admiral Benbow Inn, seeking Captain Flint's treasure map, stolen by the first mate Billy Bones and found by Jim and his mother in Bones's sea chest after his death (pp. 33 ff, Ch. 4). They are pitted four to one against the Hawkinses. When Mrs. Hawkins faints, Jim can merely observe the pirates plundering the inn, searching for the map he has taken. Not finding it, they fall to quarreling, neglecting Jim and his mother; the forces are evened by the sudden arrival of Supervisor Dance and “four or five” armed men
(p. 41, Ch. 5), routing the pirates. Pew, the initiator of the quarrel, blunders onto the road in the face of the oncoming horsemen and is trampled to death.

This incident is prototypical of the tale's usual situation: the pirates typically outnumber Jim and his friends; they attack only with security of numbers, avoiding conflict with equal forces. While the pirates never actually calculate the odds, they simply assume they are stronger than their foes. They blunder by acting rashly on this assumption. The pirates usually fail, however, because they quarrel among themselves. The implied moral lesson is, of course, that good prevails against evil: right makes might. This Victorian cliché is summed up by Tennyson in "Sir Galahad" (1842): "My strength is as the strength of ten/Because my heart is pure."3 Jim, a pure (if naive) boy, brings the pirates' "whole business . . . to wreck" (p. 231, Ch. 28) because they are his moral inferiors. Jim's values are the accepted ones of Stevenson's middle-class audience; he wins because his middle-class values are superior. For instance, when he sees the wasteful pirates "so careless of the morrow," he knows they cannot endure a long campaign (pp. 257-58, Ch. 31). Ultimately, most are shown to be cowards as well as wastrels, whereas Jim insists on the honorable course (as in refusing to break his word to Silver [pp. 250-51, Ch. 30]). Jim's integrity even leads Silver to claim that Jim is more manly than some of his pirate cronies (p. 234, Ch. 28).

Having established this adversarial pattern before he left England, Stevenson returned to the use of odds in the novel once he was settled in Davos. In the latter part of the novel, written in Switzerland, Stevenson keeps the thrilling adventures on Treasure Island moving swiftly through fights which continually redefine the odds that Jim and his friends face. Having lost the opening skirmish, the pirates plot to ensure their superiority of numbers. Thus, when Squire Trelawney goes to Bristol, planning to recruit "a round score of men," he meets, "by the merest accident" Long John Silver, who promptly gets "rid of two out of the six or seven" that Trelawney had recruited. These are replaced by "the toughest old salts imaginable" (p. 56, Ch. 7). Many of them are, of course, Silver's former shipmates from Flint's *Walrus*. Long John's villainy is not fully revealed, nor does the reader grasp that the pirates have established their desired advantage of three to one.

*Hispaniola* sails without the pirates' plans being detected. In the course of the voyage, the first mate Arrow is lost (or thrown) overboard (p. 79, Ch. 10). Then, just before their arrival at Treasure Island, Jim discovers the planned pirate mutiny and tells his friends. At the outset of the main conflict, then, "the grown men on [Jim's] side [are] six to [the other side's] nineteen" (p. 101, Ch.

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4 For a more detailed discussion of conservative ethical lessons found in the text, see David Jackson, "Treasure Island as a Late-Victorian Adult's Novel," *Victorian Newsletter*, 72 (1985), 28-32.
Upon arriving at Treasure Island, Captain Smollett, wishing to avoid an outright mutiny, allows thirteen of the crew, including Long John, to go ashore, while six remain aboard. When Jim stows away on one of the boats going ashore, he is apparently outnumbered thirteen to one, while the odds aboard ship are even—six to six.

The nineteen presumed pirates include six former members of Flint’s crew: Long John Silver, quartermaster; Job Anderson, boatswain; Israel Hands, coxswain; George Merry; Tom Morgan; and O’Brien, a seaman. There are also thirteen recruits, including Dick Johnson, the youngest hand; John; and eleven unnamed sailors. The six adults in the loyal party are Captain Alexander Smollett, master of *Hispaniola*; Squire John Trelawney; Dr. David Livesey; Tom Redruth, Trelawney’s gamekeeper; John Hunter, Trelawney’s servant; and Richard Joyce, Trelawney’s valet.

The reader observes, over the next few pages, rapid changes in these tallies. First, the pirate numbers are reduced: two presumed pirates, Alan and Tom, are murdered by the buccaneers for refusing to throw in with them (pp. 114-15, Ch. 14). Second, the loyal party is augmented by Ben Gunn, a sailor from Flint’s crew who has lived alone on the island since being marooned several years before. Finally, Jim’s original tally omits the youth himself, although the captain regularly counts him. Thus, by the end of Jim’s shore adventure (Ch. 15), the opening phase of the encounter is well begun: battle lines have been drawn, some pawns have been sacrificed, and the loyal party has a potential ally in Ben Gunn.

The inaccuracy of the rolls constitutes Stevenson’s subtle reproducing of what historians and wargamers call “the fog of war.” No one person in battle ever has exact knowledge of the forces on both sides; since casualties constantly alter the numbers, participants can never be sure of how many survive. Nor can any person know whether friend or enemy will fight effectively. In *Treasure Island*, Stevenson incorporates this “fog” by reminding us of the differences between Jim’s knowledge of the odds, the Captain’s, Silver’s and the reader’s. For instance, though the Captain believes they are opposed nineteen to six, we and Jim know the count is different, for Alan and Tom have been murdered. Likewise, Silver and Jim don’t know (though the reader does) that Gray has defected to the loyal party. Although the reader almost always has enough information to construct the real odds, Stevenson sometimes deliberately misleads us into accepting apparent odds miscalculated by one of the characters. This tactic serves, of course, to heighten suspense and keep the reader turning the pages. That Stevenson deliberately manipulates real and apparent odds is confirmed by the footnote he appended to the end of chapter 21 of the book text: “The mutineers were soon only eight in number, for the man shot by Mr. Trelawney on board the schooner died that same evening of his wound. But this was, of course, not known till after by the faithful party” (p. 174).
Three chapters (16–18), narrated by Dr. Livesey, complete the opening phase of the war of attrition. The captain persuades Abraham Gray to join him on the last trip from Hispaniola; the squire wounds one of the pirates who are firing the ship’s gun at the departing jolly boat. Thus, at the end of Chapter 17, the loyal party has seven, plus Jim, against eleven pirates ashore and five aboard Hispaniola. Odds, originally reckoned at three to one, are now nearer two to one.

At the beginning of Chapter 18, “seven mutineers—Job Anderson, the boatswain, at their head” attack the stockade, which they believe to be defended only by Hunter and Joyce. Arriving from the ship, the remainder of the loyal party surprises the attackers; “one of the enemy” falls in the brief skirmish, and Tom Redruth is shot from ambush immediately afterward (p. 143). After Redruth’s death Captain Smollett sets down the roll of the loyal party in the log book (p. 147): Smollett, Livesey, Gray, Trelawney, Hunter, and Joyce. When Jim returns at the end of the chapter, their number becomes seven; the pirates now boast fifteen, ten ashore and five afloat.

The shift of the narrator from Jim to Dr. Livesey establishes a different tone in the narration. A reliable adult is entrusted with the narrative not only for reasons of the plot (to tell us what happened aboard Hispaniola, while Jim is ashore), but also to assist Stevenson in composing these three chapters. In his letter to Henley in September 1881, Stevenson said he had written up to Chapter 9. But twelve years later when he recalled the events, he had only written through Chapter 15 before he was stymied. To make sense of these two conflicting accounts, we posit that Stevenson was far more confident about Jim’s description of events in the opening fifteen chapters than he was about Dr. Livesey’s narration. Perhaps he began his work in Switzerland by reworking the doctor’s three chapters before having Jim resume the tale in Chapter 19. This part of the composition process required Stevenson not only to regain his mastery of Jim’s voice, but also to reduce the cast of characters by slowly eliminating the pirate band.

With the war of attrition begun in earnest, Stevenson slowly reduces the pirate forces. The next morning, under flag of truce, Silver complains that during the night one of the pirates had his head “stov[ed]” in. Jim realizes that Ben Gunn “had paid the buccaneers a visit while they all lay drunk together


round their fire, and I reckoned up with glee that we had only fourteen enemies to deal with” (pp. 162-63, Ch. 20). However, nobody—including Jim—yet counts Gunn with the loyal party, and of course the pirates know nothing about his presence on the island. By reducing the odds against the loyal party, Stevenson can more easily resume his composition after the disrupting move to Switzerland, as well as regain the thread of the story.

Confident in their numerical superiority, the pirates again assault the stockade (Ch. 21). In this main battle the number of attackers is unclear: four scale the palisade, while at least seven fire in support from the woods (p. 170). During the battle five mutineers fall; the loyal party loses Hunter, Joyce, and the captain, who is disabled by a wound. Nevertheless, the captain gloats, “Five [dead] against three leaves us four to nine. That’s better odds than we had at starting. We were seven to nineteen then . . . “ (p. 174, Ch. 21). As usual, the Captain counts Jim.

When Jim leaves on his sea adventure, the pirates in fact number only eight, including Long John Silver, Israel Hands, a fellow in a red nightcap (later identified as O’Brien), George Merry, Dick Johnson, Tom Morgan, and two others. (Stevenson makes this clear to the reader in the footnote at the end of Chapter 21.) Most of these survivors are former members of Flint’s crew, presumably more experienced and canny than their recent recruits—though one of Flint’s crew, Job Anderson, has been “cut down” during the fight in the stockade (p. 172, Ch. 21).

Several other members of Flint’s old crew had been lost to them earlier. Ben Gunn, of course, was marooned on Treasure Island several years before. Billy Bones, who betrayed his old shipmates by stealing the map, has died of apoplexy brought on by his confrontation with Blind Pew, himself soon killed by Dance’s horsemen. And Black Dog has been left behind because Jim would recognize him as the pirate sent to convince Bones to return the map. Thus, the pirates’ numbers have been whittled away from the first by internecine strife. By framing the tale with two defections from their ranks—Bones’s theft and Gunn’s aiding of the loyal party—Stevenson underscores another aspect of his conventional moral point: there is no honor among thieves.

Jim observes this when he boards *Hispaniola* and finds O’Brien dead as the result of a quarrel (p. 200, Ch. 25) with Israel Hands, who is scarcely alive and badly in need of a drink. A cat-and-mouse game between Jim and the coxswain culminates in a chase up the rigging, where Jim must face Hands alone. As we have previously seen, the implicit tactical favoring of a morally-superior force occurs in incidents pitting one against one. Livesey, earlier, faced down the drunken Bones (pp. 8-9, Ch. 1), armed only with the authority of a magistrate and correct demeanor. Jim, however, is better armed, having two pistols against the pirate’s concealed knife, but this is offset by Hands’s experience and cunning. When Hands hurls his knife and pins Jim’s shoulder to the mast, Jim fires his pistols without his “own volition, and . . . without a conscious aim”
Having involuntarily killed the pirate, Jim, for the first time, has himself altered the odds in favor of the loyal party.

That Jim and his allies are winning the war of attrition is confirmed when, having beached *Hispaniola*, Jim discovers his adversaries in control of the block-house.

There were six of the buccaneers, all told; not another man was left alive. Five of them were on their feet, flushed and swollen, suddenly called out of the first sleep of drunkenness. The sixth had only risen upon his elbow; he was deadly pale, and the blood-stained bandage round his head told that he had been recently wounded... (p. 227, Ch. 28).

Shortly afterward (p. 231), we can deduce from Silver's conversation with Jim that the two parties are of equal strength. Silver reports that Livesey bargained away the stockade and the map on behalf of four (himself, Trelawney, Gray, and the wounded Smollett); however, since Ben Gunn is now an ally and Jim has proved himself, each side actually has five able-bodied members and one wounded.

The next morning, with Jim in tow, the pirates set out to retrieve the treasure. When they discover that the cache is empty, the pirates blame Silver. Though Silver has armed Jim, they are outnumbered five to two (p. 276, Ch. 33). At the crucial moment, Jim and Silver have help from the loyal party, the doctor, Gray, and Ben Gunn (p. 278). The man with the bandaged head and George Merry are shot; the three remaining pirates flee, ultimately to be marooned on the island. The loyal party (now for the first time outnumbering the villains) loads the treasure and sails for Central America.

There Silver (who has been brought along to stand trial) escapes with some of the treasure, leaving Jim to make one final count:

Five men only of those who had sailed returned with her. 'Drink and the devil had done for the rest,' with a vengeance; although, to be sure, we were not quite in so bad a case as that other ship [the pirates] sang about: 'With one man of her crew alive, What put to sea with seventy-five' (p. 291, Ch. 34).

A tale that began with a rough listing of the survivors ("Squire Trelawney, Dr. Livesey, and the rest of these gentlemen" [p. 1]) ends with an exact recapitulation of them.

What appears to be incidental in the text of *Treasure Island*—recurring tallies of the odds—is thus more important than has been acknowledged. Stevenson accomplished two purposes by taking care with the odds in writing and revising the text, one literary and one practical.

First, Stevenson creates suspense by having the tale depend on the odds against the loyal party. Readers still take pleasure in accounting for all the sailors and landsmen who go to the island. Moreover, the gradual manipulation of the odds to favor Jim and his allies reinforces the implied ethical lesson.
Victorian audiences would have expected, a lesson summed up by reversing the cliché already cited: in this text "right makes might."

Second, and more important, the constantly changing odds have a raison d’être beyond their helping readers keep track of the action. Through Stevenson’s increased attention to the odds, he provided a framework enabling him to regain his writing momentum. By slowly reducing the numbers facing the loyal party, Stevenson could view the plot as a series of episodes in which the threat of the hostile party is slowly reduced. After all, he had begun by writing a chapter a day. Thus he could work his way to the end of the story by a similar chapter-a-day method. What appears to readers as a simple tally of the wearing down of Jim’s enemies functioned also as a way for Stevenson to continue the tale. In fact, the odds are so thoroughly interwoven into the story that most readers absorb the count unconsciously. If we take time to examine Stevenson’s use of the odds, we can see the care that went into the construction of the tale. It is this care in writing and revision that makes Treasure Island a masterpiece.

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8“`My First Book,” p. xxxiii.


10We wish to thank Professors Barry Menikoff (University of Hawaii), William J. Gracie, Jr. (Miami University), and Susan Garland Mann (Indiana University Southeast) for their helpful suggestions on earlier drafts of this essay.
John Gibson Lockhart’s Memoirs of the Life of Sir Walter Scott, Bart, or the Absent Author

John Gibson Lockhart’s Memoirs of the Life of Sir Walter Scott, Bart (1837-38) is considered the best biography in the English language, after Boswell’s Life of Samuel Johnson (1791). Both use the “inductive,” accumulative method, stringing together various kinds of documents—letters, diaries, memoirs—sometimes merely juxtaposing them, but more often linking them by narrative.¹ Lockhart’s book, however, was published nearly forty years after Boswell’, and reflects the intervening changes in episteme,² especially the historicization of all forms of knowledge. This study will investigate how the image of the biographical subject—Walter Scott—is constructed and how his inscription into history is achieved. This will entail analyzing the effects of Lockhart’s biographical method.

What image of Walter Scott ultimately emerges from his seven-volume biography? What are we told about this “Great Unknown,” and does he become

¹Francis Russell Hart has examined the major differences between these two major biographies in his Lockhart as Romantic Biographer (Edinburgh, 1971).

(as he said of himself when anticipating a financial calamity in December 1825)
the "Too-well-known"? 3

Two levels, and their interaction, will be considered: first that of narration and text, and then that of story. 4 The most striking fact about the text of the biography as a material entity is its discontinuity; it is made up of heterogeneous materials: the biographer's narrative takes up only about a third of the book, and Lockhart is at pains to emphasize that the generous excerpting from, or in extenso reproduction of, primary material is what his biography is about. The criteria for inclusion of documents are their intrinsic interest, their representative nature but also, quite simply, their availability (p. 91, Ch. 10). Lockhart's main compositional axiom is that documents speak for themselves (p. 184, Ch. 19). If no letter from Scott or one of his friends and no memoirs are available about a particular episode in Scott's life, Lockhart will quote from one of his own letters, thus preferring to appear as a character in the story he is telling rather than as the narrator of it (pp. 557-64, Ch. 63). Again, rather than assuming narrative authority, he refers the reader to writings by Scott which will give him the necessary data about an event; thus, about Scott's journey to Waterloo in 1815, Lockhart urges the reader to consult Paul's Letters to his Kinfolk, these Letters, though their framework is fictional, are described by Lockhart as "that genuine fragment of the author's autobiography" (p. 316, Ch. 35).

In the biographer's narrative assessment and comments are, though not as scarce as has been said, unemphatic and restrained; Lockhart is usually a chronicler of events, eschewing psychological analysis and synthesizing portraits of Scott; rare exceptions are his depiction of Scott at the beginning of his literary career, around 1800-1802 (pp. 93-4, Ch. 10) and the great closing assessment in the last chapter (84) of the book. This careful avoidance of narrative guidance is also displayed in Lockhart's emphasizing that association of ideas sometimes dictates choice of material (p. 213, Ch. 22). It is significant that he only explains and justifies his biographical method at the very end of the Life (p. 754, Ch. 84); there he stresses that he wanted his biography of Scott to be an autobiography, and claims that he "refrained from obtruding almost any-

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3 Diary entry for 18th December 1825, in J. G. Lockhart's Life of Sir Walter Scott, Bart (London, 1893), p. 587, Ch. 65. Further references to this Life will be given in the text. Because of the considerable number of editions of this work, chapter numbers will also be supplied.

4 V. Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics (London, 1983), p. 3: "Story" designates the narrated events, abstracted from their disposition in the text and reconstructed in their chronological order, together with the participants in these events. Whereas "story" is a succession of events, "text" is a spoken or written discourse which undertakes their telling . . . . The act or process of production is the third aspect—"narration."
thing of comment.” This, which chimes in with the usual view of Lockhart’s biography, while broadly true (there are far fewer comments and judgments than in Boswell, for instance), is unwarranted, as it ignores the assessments of Scott’s works that nearly always accompany information about their publication, and also his appraisal of Scott’s personality (Lockhart is mostly laudatory, his main reservations concern Scott’s levity in business matters, a puzzle to which he repeatedly reverts). In this same passage at the end of the book Lockhart also declares that he will not conclude his biography with the usual panoptic purple patch, pronouncing “ex cathedra, on the whole structure and complexion of a great mind”, yet after this disclaimer he launches into just such a moral portrait. Significantly, this is also a historical portrait: Lockhart, starting from Scott’s early fondness for genealogy and family histories, shows how this expanded into an interest in Scottish and English history. Thus Lockhart, who describes himself as “the compiler of these pages” (p. 361, Ch. 41) can be said to have an ideal image of himself as a biographer which does not correspond to his practice.

The prevalence of documentary material over authorial/authoritative telling is a correlative of a splintering of narrative focalization: there is no single unifying perspective on events and persons. Lockhart does not seem to impose his vision of Scott; he would like the reader to believe that he merely selected the material—if that. It is rather as if the material presented itself. In other words, what is offered the reader is mimesis rather than diegesis. This goes with a refusal of emplotment—planning Scott’s life-story teleologically, viewing the various stages of his life as part of a pattern. Emplotment is an essential aspect of fiction, and the Life is predicated on the idea that it will seem all the more truthful as it stays clear of fictional techniques, as it is made up of “historical” documents. History tells itself.

It has already been noted that Lockhart passes judgment on Scott’s character mostly when he tries to explain his blindness in his business dealings with Archibald Constable and the Ballantyne brothers. Interestingly, just as Lockhart’s narrative presence asserts itself at this point, the Life has a plot from the time of the collapse of the printing-house in 1826; from then on Scott is shown as an epic hero, bent on defeating Debt, and racing against time in the form of age and ill-health. Even before that crisis is reached, the language of the Life flittingly becomes that of a novel when Lockhart, after mentioning the essential part played by Alexander Gibson Hunter and James Ballantyne in these difficulties introduces James’s brother John thus: “a third person, hitherto unnamed, was about this time beginning to exercise (influence) over the concerns of James Ballantyne” (p. 166, Ch. 18). He then proceeds to give contrasted and evaluative portraits of the two brothers—an unusual device in the Life.

Except in those sections of the Life that concern Scott as a businessman, Lockhart does not follow a narrative or a psychological model—which might have been Scott’s life doomed to end in disaster, Scott as Prometheus or tormented hero, or even Scott as the produce of his Scottish environment. Of
course, Lockhart’s anti-systematic, anti-organizational stance is in itself a posi­
tive choice, which has as many implications as any other rhetorical and narrative
model.

The image of Walter Scott develops gradually, thanks to the accumulation
of documents, of data and details. The succession of documents is the textual
equivalent, and sign, of the passing of time, and it “creates” the identity of a
man which, for Lockhart, is essentially psychological. The logic of time, which
is that of reality (especially in an *episteme* which views reality in historical
terms, and for which events happen not only *in* time, but *through* time) prevails
over the structural constraints of plot, which is a manifestation, and an effect, of
imagination. This “text-time” progressively creates an image of Scott which, in
turn, provides the succession of miscellaneous documents with its focus.

While on the level of narration the law of reality (characterized by the use
of “raw” material and multiple focalization) prevails, on the level of the story
(the events in Scott’s life related in the *Life*, considered apart from the way in
which they are told) the imaginary wins over the real. In other words, Scott’s
life seems to have been ruled by precisely those plots, those fictional patterns
that his biographer studiously avoids.

Of course, Scott’s everyday life was anything but romantic or romance-
like, rigorously divided as it was into periods devoted to well-defined activities.
There was no plot in that life, only a repeated pattern with variations. The
major events in it were the quick succession of the publication of his works; the
most important were his historical romances in verse and in prose which
changed the course of Western literature, and also found their way back into
Scott’s life, through his hubristic desire to become a Scottish laird with a vast
estate. His compulsive buying of land at high prices, his ever more ambitious
plans for Abbotsford were a projection of his fantasies onto life; Scott was
aware of this, when he said that Abbotsford would be “a romance of a house”
(p. 474, Ch. 55). In other words, it is a kind of fictional discourse, just like his
published works. Another major instance of a projection of the imaginary onto
reality is the “staging” by Scott of George IV’s visit to Scotland in 1822.
Lockhart stresses that this elaborate pageantry, the tawdri ness of which Scott
was totally unaware of, displayed “the extent to which he had allowed his imagi-
nation to get the mastery over him” (p. 485, Ch. 56), and considers Abbotsford
as a product of the same imaginary powers as presided over the production of
his best writings (p. 755, Ch. 84). He sees the ambivalence of Scott’s “day-
dreams” (*ibid.*), of his living “more than half his life in worlds purely fantastic”
(pp. 756-7, Ch. 84), and adds that Scott “became the dupe of his own delu-
sions” (p. 757, Ch. 84). Lockhart concludes that “He [Scott] must pay the pen-
alty, as well as reap the glory, of this life-long abstraction of reveries, this self-
abandonment of Fairyland” (p. 576, Ch. 44). Scott himself, after his financial
disaster, wrote in his diary “My life, though not without its fits of working and
strong exertion, has been a sort of dream" (p. 592, Ch. 64). It is worth noting that this projection of fantasies onto reality constitutes a denial of time, of the passing of time—the Highland pageantry of George IV’s visit re-enacts Scotland’s past, though things are rather more intricate, as this past is itself largely mythical; Abbotsford collapses the difference between past and present. The logic of dreams, which governed Scott’s life, is fundamentally achronic. Interestingly, it is precisely this order of time that structures Lockhart’s biography, as has been seen above.

It is in the workings of the mechanism of projection—fantasy into book or house—that one glimpses the inner recesses of the mind of the writer. Lockhart makes no attempt at delving into that psyche: empathy or sympathetic identification are made difficult by the multiple focalization and the primarily mimetic mode of the *Life*; besides, Lockhart states that he wanted to do no more than “lay before the reader those parts of Sir Walter’s character to which we have access, as they were indicated in his sayings and doings” (p. 754, Ch. 84). That “character,” as presented by Lockhart, is not essentially that of a writer, though it is as a writer that Scott was interesting to Lockhart’s readers. The author appears only in connection with mostly mundane or factual references to his literary works, and with his financial collapse. The image of Scott (except in his diary, kept more or less regularly from November 1825, just when financial difficulties were looming) is that of a man with little inwardness. Indeed, he is very much an ordinary man, with mostly worldly concerns, bent on accumulating material possessions, writing mostly so as to finance his purchases. As Hart puts it “Lockhart’s conception of Scott was less literary than social; Scott was the centre of a society grounded in paternalistic fidelity, the incarnation of a rural aristocracy which was no more.”7 Scott himself only saw literature as an activity of much less moment than avocations that had a direct bearing on life, as we learn from John B. Saurey Morritt’s Memorandum:

Keenly enjoying literature as he did, and indulging his own love of it in perpetual composition, he always maintained the same estimate of it as subordinate and aux-

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5More quotations, exemplifying both the beneficent and harmful effects of imagination in Scott’s life can be found in Hart’s final chapter, pp. 164-252.

6It is symptomatic that Lockhart only belatedly—in the second edition of the *Life*—provided a description of Abbotsford, and then not his own, but Allan Cunningham’s (pp. 551-4, Ch. 62). Initially, such a description had not seemed necessary to him, though the house had become a synecdochical equivalent of Scott the writer, and attracted thousands of visitors.

7Hart, p. 177.
iliary to the purposes of life, and rather talked of men and events than of books and criticism. (p. 163, Ch. 62)\(^8\)

Lockhart's Scott is neither a prophet, as Leslie Stephen remarked in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, nor a romantic hero.

In fact, he only becomes a tragic hero after that most worldly event, the failure of his printing concern. Then at last he becomes an archetypal figure, a sort of Sisyphus. He is tragic because imagination has forced him back to the real world; his life and his works have finally come together. Lockhart says of Scott in the autumn of 1827:

His Diary shows (what perhaps many of his intimates doubted during his lifetime) that, in spite of the dignified equanimity which characterised all his conversation with mankind, he had his full share of the delicate sensibilities, the mysterious ups and downs, the wayward melancholy, and fantastic sunbeams of the poetical temperament. (p. 671, Ch. 74)

While tragic romance and life merge, Scott feels that impecuniosity and his commitment to pay off his debts will make it impossible for him to write fiction:

The feast of fancy will be over with the feeling of independence. He (the Unknown) shall no longer have the delight of waking in the morning with bright ideas in his mind, hasten to commit them to paper, and count them monthly, as the means of planting such *scours*, and purchasing such wastes; replacing dreams of fiction by other prospective visions of walks by

"Fountain heads, and pathless groves; Places which pale passion loves."

This cannot be; but I may work substantial husbandry, *i.e.* write history and such concerns. (Diary entry for 18th December 1825; p. 587, Ch. 65)

The real kills the imaginary. When Scott becomes a romantic hero he stops being able to write romances.

His attempt to bring romance to or into life by becoming a Scottish laird was brought to an abrupt end by his confrontation with the symbolic value of

\(^8\)Lockhart repeatedly makes the same point. See p. 204, Ch. 22; p. 322, Ch. 35 is particularly explicit: "Scott never considered any amount of literary distinction as entitled to be spoken of in the same breath with mastery in the higher departments of practical life—least of all, with the glory of a first-rate captain. To have done things worthy to be written, was in his eyes a dignity to which no man made any approach, who had only written things to be read. He on two occasions, which I can never forget, betrayed painful uneasiness when his works were alluded to as reflecting honour on the age that had produced Watt's improvement of the steam-engine, and the safety lamp of Sir Humphry Davy. Such was his modest creed—"
money; Scott discovered to his cost that money represented his role in society as a "businessman," that it involved him in transactions in the book market, and was not just a wonderfully easy way of exchanging the figments of his imagination for stone and land.

Until 1826 Scott had not fully existed as a responsible being in so far as he had never investigated the financial soundness of the printing business. Lockhart wonders at the inconsistency in Scott's behavior: while he kept very precise accounts of his small domestic expenses, he never once—even after a first crisis in 1813—went through the printing business's accounts (p. 765, Ch. 84).

This material "unaccountability" coincided with Scott's anonymity as the author of the novels. It took the collapse of his worldly prosperity to get him to acknowledge his prose fiction; his name—an essential symbolical aspect of individual and social identity—had so far been missing from the title-pages of his novels. He lost affluence, but acquired a name, thus becoming part of society as a novelist; his social "inscription" was strengthened—however painfully—by his decision to try to pay his creditors rather than becoming a bankrupt. He now needed money not to expand his "romance of a house" and his estate, but to leave an untainted name. All this is well thematized in Lockhart's emplotment of the end of Scott's life as a stoic struggle against age and disease. (Scott chose to believe that he had achieved his aim: when in Italy in 1832, and already much confused, he often referred to his relief at clearing off his debts.)

Through its accumulation of documents, its multiple focalization and its refusal of emplotment and of a teleological view of the life of its subject, Lockhart's biography, on the level of discourse, aims at a certain kind of truthfulness and objectivity, at meeting the demands of the real. This method results in a very pointillistic picture of Scott, whose personality unfolds slowly as the chapters go by, and this picture is unified only by the faculty of imagination which, while it caused Scott to live long outside time, also brought him back to the harshness of empirical reality. This multiple portrait, which is homological to the variety of material used by Lockhart, is also that of a very worldly man, who only belatedly turns into a stoic hero.

Can one conclude, as F. R. Hart did, that J. G. Lockhart is a romantic biographer? His narrative stance is tantamount to rejecting an individual voice (though any narrator has such a voice, whether he likes it or not), and his avoidance of diegesis and of sympathetic identification with Scott, added to the absence of any intimate material except for Scott's late diary, tend to blur the subjective identity of the biographee; the world of mind and passions is not the world in which Scott is shown to move. To that extent, Lockhart is not a "romantic" biographer. As it is only far into the book that Scott is shown as coming to terms with what made him the writer he was—the world of imagina

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9 See for instance his letter to Mrs Scott of Harden, dated 6th March 1832 (p. 744, Ch. 82).
tion—should not Lockhart’s book be described as the life of an absent writer by an absent biographer?

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Marco Fazzini

Edwin Morgan
Two Interviews

Marco Fazzini: When did you start to write?

Edwin Morgan: Quite early, actually, in school. I loved writing anything: prose as well as poetry, long stories, long essays. The kind of poetry I was taught when I was at school was mostly romantic. It was in the early 1930s and at that time modern poetry as such wasn’t taught at all. We did the Romantics: Keats, Shelley, Tennyson, and I quite enjoyed that. I think the earliest poems I wrote—I don’t have them now—were nature poems. Although I was living in the city the first things I wrote were not related to that; somehow I didn’t take up that theme until a lot later and I suppose my first poetry was a kind of indulgence, a kind of escapism. I am thinking about Keats and Tennyson’s language with its splendid, luscious phrasings which interested me at that time.

F: What were your interests at that time?

M: Although I probably feel, when I try to decide what my interests were, that it would be poetry, I think it was very often prose or the cinema. That was a great cinema-going time and Glasgow was a great cinema city in the 1930s, particularly before the war. There were tremendous queues all around the cinemas and you could see a great range of foreign films at the old Cosmo, now called Glasgow Film Theatre. Those films made a big impression. And prose too: the novels of Conrad, Hardy, Melville, the Brontës because I hadn’t done very much
of them at school. It's really hard to say just exactly what interests you when you come to your own writing, but that background certainly gave me a great excitement and it's entered into my poetry in a certain way. As for poetry, I was really attracted by the French symbolists and by the Russians in particular, but also by the modern poets such as Eliot and Pound. But I, who took an English degree and was Professor of English Language and Literature, had to go through the process of learning both Old English and Middle English because the language component was very considerable at that time. I also had to know a lot about the history of English language through Germanic back to the Sanskrit.

I mention that simply because this was the time when I could read and enjoy Anglo-Saxon poetry and I liked it tremendously; that was why I translated Beowulf and the rest of the poetry too. And I think this kind of alliterative four-stressed line keeps surfacing and resurfacing in my work. Not as a conscious, deliberate device but as something which had imposed its typical metrical system, that way of counting not the syllables of each line but the number of beats. So the patterning was not a patterning of syllables but of stresses and of alliteration. I liked that but also liked the nature of the poetry too, the heroic poetry and that kind of stoic philosophy.

F: Your poetry alternates between innovative and traditional structures. Can I ask you how much value you attach to the more conventional structures of poetry?

M: I don’t think I have one view of the matter. It seems to me that for certain things I have done I wanted to be free to follow what was around in recent poetry. That would allow me to move in unexpected ways. At other times I felt I really had to use strict form and the sonnet is still very much available as a form. In a sense, each poem presents its own problem which has to be solved; sometimes it is a strict metrical solution and other times it is a free form kind of solution, or maybe a mixture of the two which even contains elements of concrete poetry in a traditional patterns. I am not sure, really, but I have always liked the idea that poetry, like the other arts, is definitely entitled to explore its own formal potential even though it may make mistakes or may go into a cul-de-sac. But, occasionally, it may go into some interesting region and bring back something from somewhere else. I think that it is what happens to concrete poetry or sound poetry.

F: But what's the origin of a poem? Does it take its shape first as a sound, a rhythm or as an image?

M: It can be either. I think it very often begins with a rhythmical sense of something that's in your mind and it hasn't been very well defined at all. But it can be an image. I don’t think it's easy to generalize about that but I would say that the rhythm is very important to me. Even if there is a free form without a regular metrical structure I would try to pay a lot of attention to the way it moves rhythmically from one line to the next. I think any good poetry, whether it's free or not,
must please the ear, must be music. So I think rhythm is always important and that’s probably why when I am writing a poem I vocalize it and read it aloud from line to line.

**F:** Emmett Williams, introducing his Anthology of Concrete Poetry, says that this new poetry “was a poetry far beyond paraphrase, a poetry that often asked to be contemplated or activated by the reader, a poetry of direct presentation . . . a kind of game, perhaps, but so is life. It was born of the times, as a way of knowing and saying something about the world of now with the techniques and insights of now.” Would you accept the idea that concrete poetry contains this element of game? And who do you think enjoys the poem most, the poet in composing it or the reader in activating it?

**M:** Yes, I think there is an element of game, in the sense you have a play of words, a play of letters and perhaps also a play of sounds. But I suppose the hope is that what you produce is something that would give pleasure to other people because there is always an element of game in art in any case. Perhaps there is more of an element of that in concrete poetry. But the argument would be that it has something to do with structure, and although there are certain playful elements it may also be a way of discovering new means of structuring a poem which is not related to any of the previous metrical or free verse arrangements at all. Sometimes a poem becomes an object of contemplation on the page and although the reader or the viewer may enjoy the play or the humor or the satire that there may be in a concrete poem, other kinds of concrete poems are made for you to meditate on what is a surprising and beautiful object like a work of art. It can become very visual. Some of them cannot be read aloud at all and some people do not want to accept them as real poems. I suppose it divides people: I know that from the reaction to my own concrete poetry.

**F:** If we look back to the origins or the first attempts of a visual conception of poetry we discover that the permutational poems of the cabalists, the anagrams of the early Christian monks, the carmina figurata of the Greek bucolic poets, the pattern poems of the Babylonians, Herbert’s and Thomas’s poetry in England and Apollinaire’s Calligrammes in France have underlined that picture-writing was an ever-present impulse which had only to wait for the right moment to burst. Could you suggest any particular reason for this new development of concrete poetry from the early 1950s up to the 1960s? In other words, do you think that concrete poetry was an international movement because there were suitable social, technological and poetical situations for it to grow, or would you rather say that its internationalism was mere chance?

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M: It is quite difficult to be sure where exactly it rose. It depends on how closely or not you can trace it back to the preceding decades. It began in German-speaking Switzerland and in São Paulo, Brazil. You mentioned Apollinaire: you can certainly trace it back to the earlier part of the 20th century, but the fact that those poets came together at that time around the 1950s and the fact that most of the early practitioners were in contact with each other would argue that there was something going on, some groups which started to come out. I am quite sure there is some relation to the development of computer technology. The element of combination or re-combination of elements is quite strong in concrete poetry and it began to be written at the very time when computers began to be used. I do not know how far this affected South American poetry but I think in Switzerland and among the other German or German-Swiss poets who came on the scene that was a strong influence. Other factors are related to what was happening in the plastic arts. Just before that there was a thing called concrete art and the sculpture of Max Bill particularly. Hamilton Finlay is fond of saying that Max Bill was the originator of concrete poetry although he was a sculptor. And again the question: why his art was connected at that particular time? If it is a postwar situation one might expect something different to emerge, something like Dada. But one has this kind of thing which is partly abstract, partly playful and partly, as critics have said, a kind of neo-Modernism. I felt that there was a kind of new Modernism around after the 1930s, not just in concrete poetry but in other fields as well.

F: In your essay on concrete poetry “Into the Constellation” you quote Eugen Gomringer who says that “the aim of the new poetry is to give poetry an organic function in society again, and in doing so to restate the position of the poet in society.” In which way do you think concrete poetry can give back the poet a social dimension?

M: Hamilton Finlay’s idea was that the poem would become a kind of object in society. If “concrete” implies something solid or perhaps tri-dimensional, the poem can get away from the books, becoming an object as many of Hamilton Finlay’s poems di= did; they were made in glass or wood or stone or metal of some kind and you might have seen something that was literally an object, even a concrete poem. Finlay, who had the reputation of being a great experimenter, wanted to place his works where people could see them, possibly in the streets. One of his poems is called “Acrobats” and its letters are arranged in such a way that you get an image in your mind of acrobats on each other’s shoulders forming a pyramid. We get concrete poetry in a book, on a postcard, also on the wall of a house, so that children of the school nearby could see it. One of the aims is that the poem

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can go out somewhere and people will not feel that a poem is something that is not for them. This has not really happened to any great extent but when it has people seemed to like it.

**F:** In your essay “The Poet and the Particle,” before discussing Robert Garioch’s “The Muir,” you suggest that “if it is not the duty, it should at least be the delight, of poets to contemplate the world of science.” Could you say which fields of science you have tried to describe in your poetry?

**M:** I have never felt this split between science and the artist that many people feel. Nowadays one comes up against the sheer problem of specialization, of mathematics, of very technical vocabulary. I admired Hugh MacDiarmid for his attempts to deal with this problem of how to bring scientific and technological words into poetry. I found these poems very interesting. In my own poetry it was not so much the problem of bringing into it a lot of technological words as of taking certain themes which seemed to be pressing—this was in the 1950s and 1960s. It was partly with regard to biology, but I think astronomy and space explorations were also two of my early scientific interests. I think that when space explorations began to be possible, when they began to be part of human experience and not just science fictions as they had been when I was a boy, I started to write about these things. I did it in such a way that actually the scientific content in my own science fiction poems, the “Particle Poems,” try to say something about the particle. I also like to imagine projection into the future. In “In Sobieski’s Shield,” which is a kind of heroic poem, I go back to Anglo-Saxon poetry, and although it is a science-fiction poem where people are pushed into a very difficult situation in a far future, it still revolves around human experience, it says something about survival and heroes.

**F:** And what can you say about your personal experience of the gestation of a poem?

**M:** Very often gestation is a kind of physiological thing. I cannot find the exact words to define these strange feelings but I am disturbed in some kind of way, troubled or worried and become bad tempered to my nearest and dearest. I learned to read the signals that this is going to be a poem but it may be something that is so vague that I could not even say what it is going to be about. But when I get this feeling I usually find that it does relate to something and it is very often a phrase or a line, not so much an idea, that comes into my head. I am not quite sure whether I might relate it to a landscape, to a city or to people but it comes into my head very strongly and instantly. It seems to fix itself to these vague feelings of discontent and then I know I have to get going otherwise I feel as if I have let myself down.

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4*Essays,* p. 17.
The process of getting into a poem is one of the great anxieties of composition but I have to put up with it somehow. There is an invisible strange command which tells the poet to produce a poem and he cannot neglect it even if he has to sacrifice himself.

F: Looking back over all your work what do you think is its most characteristic feature?

M: I think it is a difficult question because I have written quite different kinds of poems. Maybe it is easier for others to answer but, personally, I think it is probably something to do with that heroic hope that I talked about in "In Sobieski's Shield" that we also find in Anglo-Saxon poetry.

I very often like to have poems about people facing difficult and crucial situations but not going under. I like to think of people surviving very difficult things, like the old man in "In the Snack-bar" or the people in "In Sobieski's Shield." I think the characteristic of these people is that they accept real challenges or real problems but they do manage somehow to come through. There is a kind of stoic note about it but it is hopeful rather than despairing. I like to think about the idea of overcoming something desperate.

F: Would you expect to keep writing regularly?

M: Writing is not regular for a poet because poetry is the most precarious of all arts. If you are a novelist or a writer of short stories you have the chance to have a regular task every day, a certain amount of pages or words. I know many fiction writers who can really do that. In poetry it is very hard to plan things and one must wait. Obviously I try to write something every day even though I am not writing poetry, just to get myself in touch with language. But it cannot be made regular. Even with long things like Paradise Lost in which you ought to keep a great deal in your mind, the poet did not write regularly. He had bad moments too.

F: Do you consider yourself a Scottish poet writing in the United Kingdom or a British poet?

M: A Scottish poet. For me the word "British" does not mean very much and I feel I am Scottish as Geoffrey Hill is English and Seamus Heaney is Irish. I think the United Kingdom, or dis-United Kingdom, is a strange body. It must be very strange to an outsider to understand what we are in this island. That is why we do not use the word "British" very much. But if your work possesses any international appeal you are just a poet even though there is the local flavor. For me it was more Glasgow than Scotland.

Glasgow, August 1988
F: The translator has always to face the problem of faithfulness. A crucial question which arises for the translator is: "What does it mean to be faithful? Do I have to be faithful to the formal and linguistic structures of the original or to its literary beauty?" And again: "If it is true that it is impossible to produce a perfect translation, what should I sacrifice in this work, meaning or music?" How do you react against these theoretical problems?

M: This is the central problem of translation and it seems nearly unanswerable. I try to get both kinds of faithfulness, as far as I can. If it is not possible to reproduce the exact form of the original, then there must be an equivalent form the translator can use. When I was doing *Cyrano* I was conscious of the difficulty of reproducing the original French rhyming alexandrines. I thought that rhyming pentameter couplets in English would be the closest equivalent form for it. It seemed to work quite well on the stage, but you cannot always find a metrical equivalent for the original form. If it is a sonnet, well, in Italian it would be relatively easy to reproduce the rhymes, but that is very difficult in English. Sometimes I do not reproduce the exact rhyme patterns of the original, especially if it is a poem in Portuguese, Spanish or Italian. I like to try, anyway.

As for Anglo-Saxon poetry, it seemed to me that they were relatively straightforward poems. Occasionally I was not sure if I could identify some creatures like the seagull, the cuckoo. Apart from that, the poems seem to contain few details about things which would be very different from one culture to another. There are some common elements like storms, sea, darkness, birds' crying which I could easily transfer into a modern English version.

F: Did you decide to translate *The Wanderer* and *The Seafarer* because you were unsatisfied with the previous translations or did those two elegies contain any hidden clues to the art of your own creative writing?

M: When I was writing *The Seafarer* in particular, I knew Pound’s version and I disliked it so much that I felt it had to be done again. When I started to study Anglo-Saxon language I found it very hard to enjoy Pound’s version so I felt I had to do it differently. I could see that Pound’s translation was important in his development but looking at it as a contemporary person I thought it was a strange old-fashioned kind of translation, full of archaic words which I thought not right for that poem. For a man who was supposed to be re-vitalizing or re-modernizing English poetry that was a strange work. Of course I understood that he wanted to...

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reproduce the flavor of the Old English poetry but I am still convinced that there are better ways of doing that; you can still use the contemporary language and yet suggest a great deal of what that old poetry was like.

When war broke out I had to join the Army and during the five years I spent in the Middle-East I could not write poetry at all. I felt very bad about that, I felt guilty about it. When I went back to Glasgow to finish my University courses and get my degree I felt that I had to get back into poetry somehow, and one of the ways was through translation. I wanted to write something in verse, even though it was not my own. I probably found Anglo-Saxon versions useful in that kind of way and they also reflect something of my own feelings, especially The Wanderer and The Seafarer.

F: Introducing his translations from the French poets, the Italian poet, critic, and translator Mario Luzi observes that he has never thought about constructing a theory about an object which is eminently empirical. Distinguishing between theatrical translations, which are intended for performance, and lyrical translations, which contain a certain arbitrary element, the poet stresses the aesthetic and creative prerogatives of the latter. There is no need, he says, to require a performative verification for lyrical translation because its quality lies in the unpredictability of its creative work and in its being a moral and linguistic appropriation or estrangement of the original text. Don't you think that in the case of Anglo-Saxon poetry we are half-way between the lyrical and the performative, the written and the oral, the personally confessional and the objective historical?

M: Yes, very much so. It is an arguable point how much of the oral element was in Anglo-Saxon poetry. Some of the poetry we think is quite difficult would be able to be enjoyed by people gathered to listen to it at a recital, probably in a hall and with a musical accompaniment, even though we do not know much of it. So I think the performative element is there, but the Anglo-Saxon poet wanted to get both effects: he/she wanted to have something that could be seen on the page, something to be meditated and appreciated for its aesthetic elements and, at the same time, something which could be performed and delivered to an audience. The translation from Anglo-Saxon poetry has to reproduce these two effects, these two functions. I was very much conscious of this double task for the translator. One of my friends was a good guitarist at that time and he tried to accompany a piece of my translations. It seemed to be possible to have that for the actual metrical effects of the English texts. You can also get a way of accommodating the words to a regular beat if you want to. Obviously, some of the lines in Anglo-Saxon poetry have a lot of small words so that they appear as long lines. But

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when you speak them aloud there is necessarily elision so that poetry can be adapted for a public and oral performance.

F: Accepting what Francis Newman has to say in his study of Homeric translation, literary assessment is “culture-bound,” and any evaluation of the intrinsic values of a work relies on the particular audience it confronts. Would you comment on this statement? And did you think about an audience in particular when you translated Anglo-Saxon poetry?

M: I do not think I was primarily concerned with an audience when I was doing translations from Anglo-Saxon poetry. I did it just because I liked it so much that I wanted to make new versions of some of the best poems of that period. I was probably also thinking about a general audience interested in poetry and able to enjoy that particular archaic style. I suppose there was also the feeling that what I was writing had, educationally, some kind of interest for academies and schools. At that time, the study of Anglo-Saxon was almost everywhere a compulsory part of English courses. I thought it would be useful to people actually studying Anglo-Saxon to have a new translation of that literature, especially Beowulf. But this didactic purpose of my translations was almost unconscious because the whole work mainly came out of my enthusiasm. Anyway, my Beowulf is still in print in the USA and it seems to be a standard text for college students. From what I can recollect The Seafarer was translated in May 1947 and revised in February 1950. The translation of the poem was first published in the magazine called The European. The Wanderer was translated in June 1947 and revised in February 1950. It first appeared in an anthology called Medieval Age. I started translating Beowulf in the same period.

F: Renato Poggioli, in an essay published in 1959, follows André Gide’s concept of “disponibilité” and he states:

At any rate what moves the genuine translator is not a mimetic urge, but an elective affinity: the attraction of a content so appealing that he can identify it with a content of his own, thus enabling him to control the latter through a form which, though not inborn, is at least congenial to him.


No. 14 (April 1947).

Angel Flores, ed., Medieval Age (New York, 1963). It also included the translation of The Seafarer.

Do you believe in what Goethe called “elective affinity”?  

M: Yes, I think I do. I think it is an important idea! I have done translations in different ways. Sometimes it started off because I felt an affinity with the other poet and other times I was asked for translations. I prefer if I discover some poet for myself and particularly if that poet has not been translated, or has been translated badly, before. It is a big challenge to do a new version of it. The life and the feelings of the poet I translate seem to be things I can be very close to. With Montale that started by being suggested to me by somebody else, as I said before. In the case of Anglo-Saxon poetry the reader can feel that the atmosphere of the poems reflects the society of the period, obviously, even though it is difficult to know who the poet was. In particular, in the case of The Wanderer it is fairly clear that he/she is somebody that was put into exile, somebody who is not part of the society he enjoyed so much. The state of mind of this isolated figure (maybe a historical figure?) is probably related to some of the themes recurring in my poems. I think there is something in this. There is something similar in Beowulf too. The hero does his job, helps others, goes to a different country, kills monsters but he does not really belong to a particular social group. It is quite like the two figures in The Wanderer and The Seafarer. Now that I carefully try to look at the period in which I translated the two elegies, it occurs to me that there was a kind of unconscious substratum in my mind. I did them in the late 1940s, just after the war when I came back from the Army. I was myself a kind of “wanderer,” or a “seafarer.” (I think I identified with the piece far more than I realized at that time.) Both figures in the elegies were concerned with death, war, cities being destroyed, sense of loss. That was exactly what I had to experience in Palestine, Lebanon and Egypt during the war.

F: In a recent book on translation written by Hatim and Mason\textsuperscript{11} the two writers see the text as a social event and they suggest that the reader and the translator must study the three main elements in a text: the text producer, the meaning, and the text expression. Would you speak of your ideas about:

a) the text producer of the two main Anglo-Saxon elegies, that is your idea about the period of composition, the possible interpolator or monastic editor;  
b) your opinion about the most important meaning or cluster of meanings in the two elegies;  
c) their mode of expression?

M: The texts of the two main Anglo-Saxon elegies are of course open to discussion. When I was doing the translations there was not much discussion about the possibility of the texts being unstable. I took them as they were, as they had been printed. I tried to see the poems as wholes. I do not think that the

\textsuperscript{11}Basil Hatim and Ian Mason, Discourse and the Translator (London and New York, 1990).
Christian elements at the end were added. They seem to me to emerge logically from the poems. I took the opposite point of view of Ezra Pound. He said that there must be an interpolator in the poems, so he cut the Christian references out. If you stress the metaphorical function of the language of the two elegies you obviously try to get at a Christian interpretation of the images contained. In that case it is not just a man who is away from his family and his retinue but he becomes a kind of spiritual pilgrim. It seems to me that the spiritual sense of exile and longing was something that could very easily be part of the original poems. I would like to know more about those two poems. It is hard to see exactly where the background of the elegies comes from. There must be some Scandinavian influences and references. That was the period of the great voyages in the cold latitudes. Even so, it is not easy to place the poems geographically. I think that at the end it is more a mental than a geographical landscape that is being described.

The term "elegy" we use as a label to define these poems is a very rough kind of description. I do not think that the strict meaning of elegy as a lament for a dead person can be applied here. It is a lament for a previous state of existence and the man who wanders is thinking about that lost, stable society I was speaking of before. If the poems were written in England when the Danes were looking for incursions, that would increase the writer's sense of the uncertainty of life. I think you can always describe them as dramatic monologues or dramatic meditations.

**F:** Endeavoring, sometimes, by the choice of the prose medium, to avoid infidelity to the meaning of the original or super-translation, the translator should hope to move the reader towards the author, to reproduce the author's manner and matter in the spirit of what Rolfe Humphries has to say in his essay on translating Latin into English verse:

> A good translation . . . ought, for the sake of the contemporary reader, to sound, on the whole, more familiar than strange; yet in justice to the original, some hint, at least, of his quality, some soupeçon of his foreign accent, must be kept.\(^{12}\)

Would you like to speak about your achievements?

**M:** I did not, myself, follow the alliteration. I used it but I did not follow it as a system. Perhaps if I had to do the translation again I might add more alliteration, but what I did want to retain was the rhythm and the music of the original poem, more than Pound himself did. So I wanted that my version should have a good sense of the rhythm so that the sounds could move well in a four-beat line. I did attempt sometimes to use rhymes more than alliteration, especially internal rhymes. There is a large difference between Old English and Modern English but on the whole it is quite possible to have similar rhythmical effects. I tried to make it as modern as possible without using too many archaic words. I wanted my

translations to be accessible to the modern reader from both a musical and a linguistic point of view.

F: J. R. R. Tolkien, speaking about the problems of translating Beowulf into English, observes that “For many Old English poetical words there are (naturally) no precise modern equivalents of the same scope and tone: they come down to us bearing echoes of ancient days beyond the shadowy borders of Northern History.” Do you agree that the modern writer lacks modern lexical equivalents? If you do, how did you treat these particular problematic words?

M: I do not have a theory about the translation and the transition that some old terms require. It depends on the context and, as Mario Luzi states in the passage you quoted, translation is a very pragmatic thing. You must decide if you want to be totally modern or if you want to remain half-way between the old and the new. But there are, of course, problematic words. When in The Seafarer, the speaker says that his mind’s desires again urge his “soul” to set out, I was not really sure what the word *hyge* means there. You can call it the man’s senses and memory rather than “soul” if you try to imagine that man traveling over the waves and recollecting his past life. It is a poem about memory in the past and he re-creates his memories in his mind so strongly that they seem present. I took that image not to be metaphorical. The image contains an almost erotic feeling. I think you would not get an emotional charge if it was only a spiritual voyage. If that line had been written by an ecclesiastic or a priest or a monk you would not have got that emotion of senses.

Other problematic words were *goldgiefa* which I translated “gold-giver,” *byrne* (I say “mail-coat”), *duguth* (I say “retinue”), and *beorh* (I say “barrow”). As for *meoduheall* I thought that “mead-hall” was the best translation because it suggests a kind of gathering place. You can keep the phrase “mead-hall” as meaning “wine-hall.” We have the modern word “wine-bar” today and perhaps mead-hall sounds a little bit strange because we do not very often drink mead, even though you can buy mead.

F: As Wilhelm von Humboldt states, there is a basic human sensibility of a sort and it is possible to find a non-linguistic and ultimately universal “deep structure” underlying all languages. Translation can thus be considered as a “recoding” or change of surface structure, in which nearly everything in Text 1—the original Anglo-Saxon text, in this case—can be understood by the readers of Text 2—the English translations. According to this view, almost everything is translatable because all languages are integrated in the totality of their

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“Intentions,” that is “pure language” as Walter Benjamin has defined it. Would you comment on this?

M: The idea of the existence of a “pure language” in poetry, as described by Walter Benjamin, did attract me. I used that idea in one of the articles I dedicated to the translation of poetry and what I was saying in that article was that when you translate a poem that is important to you, you want to stay very close to the text so that the task of the translator becomes a very hard task. You get to a stage where you feel that the poem exists in your mind, almost without language, and you have a sense of it as a non-verbal object. You feel its presence in an almost physical way so that the poem seems to be reduced to some basic universals. The American poet and translator Jerome Rothenberg has tried to translate American Indian poetry and he has some recordings of American Indian poetry (Navajo poetry) which is extraordinarily different from anything we know. He got some recordings of Navajo poetry which involve very strange sound effects, sometimes trying to imitate the neighing of horses and things of that kind—half verbal, half sound-poetry. How do you translate that, how do you ever get a sense of that as an American Indian would feel it? But he did try. He would possibly argue that, even there, there may be something that is universal. But there must be some kind of difference between the two very remote languages and it would be very hard to get towards that deep structure. But I think with a European poetry that probably is quite possible.

Glasgow, August 1994


Catherine S. Cox

Froward Language and Wanton Play: The “Commoun” Text of Henryson’s Testament of Cresseid

In the Testament of Cresseid, Henryson’s treatment of Chaucer’s Criseyde is mediated textually by a voice that is itself a participant in the text; the Testament narrator may be read as both narrative voice and literary character, the former existing discursively, as a rhetorical construct, and the latter as mimetic reality, having an imagined history and psychology. The narrator embodies Henryson’s reading of Chaucer’s text as the protagonist of sequences in which he re-reads and re-writes the story of Cresseid’s “woefull end.” As well, the narrator’s central character, Cresseid, further embodies these layers of reading and writing, and thus problematic and compelling parallels exist between the narrator and his construct. Cresseid, we shall see, incorporates the errant text of both the narrator’s reading of the “quair[s]” and Henryson’s own reading of Chaucer.

What will become apparent also is that the Testament is a text obsessed with errancy, and, as such, it is a text obsessed with decorum. As the text attends to demarcations of propriety—sexual, discursive—it locates scenes of transgression, places where illusory borders of ideological confinement are confronted. Sexual and discursive errancies, which are manifest thematically in the Testament’s treatments of lust, blasphemy, and punishment, coincide with metaphorized representations of gender. These discursive configurations call attention to the narrative’s own sense of errancy, its metatextual attention to itself as froward language, as discourse that engages its own “errant notions.”

1Mark C. Taylor, in Erring: A Postmodern A/theology (Chicago, 1984) discusses “errant
Apropos the text’s representations of sexual and discursive errancies, my goal in this essay is to reassess Henryson’s treatment of cultural and literary decorum in relation to gender.

Cresseid is introduced by the Testament narrator as a figure of sexual errancy, an abandoned woman, scorned owing to sexual improprieties, who, as a result of that disdain, further errs:

Than desolait scho walkit vp and doun,
And sum men sayis, into the court, commoun.²

The phrase “walkit vp and doun” evokes the aimlessness and uncertainty of errancy (errare, to wander); Cresseid belongs nowhere and has no place properly of her own. She has been excluded from proper social order owing to violations of decorum, for by becoming the property of everyone she has become the property of no one. Within the immediate context of the story as informed by Chaucer’s Troilus, Cresseid is left to fend for herself; her body being her only asset, she participates in its exploitation, making it “commoun.”³

Contextually, the narrative’s treatment of Cresseid’s sexual errancy in the Testament is informed by antifeminist traditions, made evident in part by the narrator’s reified sexual perspective: that the feminine is repulsive. Widowed and celibate, Cresseid is described as “fair,” a figure of beauty and virtue, but once sexually active, she is described by the narrator as filthy, foul, and tarnished:

O fair Cresseid, the flour and A per se
Of Troy and Grece, how was thou fortunait
To change in filth all thy feminitie,
And be with fleschelie lust sa maculait,
And go amang the Greikis air and lait,
Sa giglotlike takand thy foull plesance! (ll. 78-83)

In medieval Christian theology’s antifeminist tenets, “feminine” and “carnal” are linked; all that is perceived as negative and threatening about carnality is as-notions” and supplies a lengthy list of the concepts included under this rubric, e.g., transgression, impropriety, subversion, desire (pp. 11-13); I would add to his list promiscuity, which intersects these other notions.

²Robert Henryson, The Testament of Cresseid, ed. Denton Fox (London, 1968), ll. 76-7. All subsequent quotations are from this edition; line numbers will be given in the text.

cried to the feminine: feminine = flesh = corruption, sin, filth. Hence the Testamento narrator, following Christian anti-feminist decorums, links the feminine with the carnal/filth even before Cresseid’s leprous transformation: “in filth all thy feminicie,” “fleschelie lust sa maculait,” “[s]a giglotlike takand thy foull plesance.” Indeed the oxymoronic euphemism “foull plesance” is quite telling in the narrator’s denigration of the feminine.

And Cresseid is her female body; it represents her public identity and, accordingly, her “commoun” subjectivity. By defining her in this way, the text associates the concepts of promiscuity and errancy thematically; both identify gestures of deviation from some prescribed set of behaviors. The narrator calls attention to Cresseid’s “womanheid” first as she represents proper adherence to masculine decorum, and then as a figure of subversive impropriety. The celibate Cresseid represents the feminine carnal subject to masculine control; the “commoun” Cresseid suggests the threat of unleashed carnality, the potential of the feminine to corrupt inherently vulnerable patriarchal decorums. Furthermore, while the Troilus narrator has likened Criseyde to the letter “A” by a simile of prioritization—“Right as oure first lettre is now an A” (l. 170)—the Testament narrator equates the two: Cresseid is the Letter, not merely likened to it in primacy. As well, she is the Carnal, with all its negative feminine associations played out in the narrative. For the “carnal” is “literal” in Pauline theology, and hence the feminine, as carnal, is literal; in effect, Woman is Letter, and the Letter is Death. Cresseid, the “A per se,” is representative of a twofold feminine threat to Christianity’s spiritual man: the carnal Letter and hence carnal Death.

But within the Aristotelian antifeminist tradition, the feminine is “unlimited” as well, and, as such, is always more than carnal, always more than the letter. According to the Aristotelian/Pythagorean paradigm, epistemological duals—including male and female, one and plural, limited and unlimited—define and schematize meaning. Howard Bloch comments:

This association translates into what might be thought of as a medieval metaphysics of number, according to which, under the Platonic and Pythagorean schema, all created things express either the principle of self-identity (principium ejusdem) or of continuous self-alteration (principium alterius). The first is associated with unity, the monad; the second with multiplicity, dyadic structures. Also they are specifically gendered, the monad being male, the dyad female.

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4The association of “carnal” and “literal” derives from St. Paul, esp. 2 Cor. 3.6 and Rom. 8.6.


The ancient association of the feminine and the unlimited suggests a complex, unpredictable, and mutable feminine nature. Further, as Shari Benstock notes of the feminine, when "[a]ppropriated as a signifier of difference, [it] has been commonly understood to mark difference from a masculine universal." Thus this gendered epistemology contrasts feminine mutability, errancy, and plurality with the stability, consistency, and certainty implied by a masculine universal. Cresseid, "the flour ... Of Troy and Greece" (my emphasis), is mutable and unstable, belonging to neither and yet associated with both.

By unremittingly inscribing anything culturally construed as negative to be feminine, early Christian and medieval patriarchal discourses ensured that the negativity of the feminine would be patristically authorized and culturally perpetual, which was further exacerbated by patronizing assertions of compassion and respect. The negativeness accorded the feminine is manifest in the hierarchical value structure attached to conventional ideologies of gender difference, for the asymmetrical value structure of gendered ideology has conventionally devalued the feminine. Indeed, Toril Moi notes, "It doesn't matter which 'cou­ple' one chooses to highlight: the male/female opposition and its inevitable positive/negative evaluation can always be traced as the underlying paradigm." Medieval antifeminism may indeed be traced to the paradigm of contraries—further distorted by Christianity's applications—and the influence of the underlying antifeminist male/female, superior/inferior paradigm is ubiquitous in the Middle Ages. As Caroline Bynum notes: "Male and female were contrasted and asymmetrically valued as intellect/body, active/passive, rational/irrational, reason/emotion, self-control/lust, judgment/mercy, and order/disorder." The irreducible difference of masculine and feminine finds the feminine associated with negativeness in both theological and epistemological representations. Both use the feminine to privilege the masculine, though theology pretends, by trumpeting the virtues of virginity, to valorize the feminine by denying what makes the feminine feminine, sexuality. And, as Karma Lochrie argues,

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7This epistemology is articulated in contemporary theory by Irigaray in This Sex Which Is Not One, (Ithaca, 1985), pp. 23-33 and 205-18. My analysis of the textual feminine corresponds not to an internal privileging of an écriture féminine but to a medieval epistemological metaphor of paradigmatic distinction.


When virgins are then instructed not to break that which seals them together with God and with themselves, they are being called to enclosure at many levels. The unbroken flesh ultimately means bodily closure and silence.\textsuperscript{11}

Hence theological rationales are used to castigate feminine sexuality, just as feminine sexuality fuels patristic exclusion and condemnation—hence, too, codes of decorum are designed to valorize non-sexuality (virginity) and to condemn those who resist constraint.\textsuperscript{12}

The contradictory directions in which gender is understood and represented in medieval thought resist reconciliation, and this resistance enables the text to dictate its gendering through conventional, though conflicting, associations and patterns. In evoking a twofold tradition through metaphorized representations of flesh and mutability, Henryson exploits the discrepancies between the two components in relation to language. Cresseid is representative of not only the carnal—the feminine flesh from which further meaning might be conceived—but also the potential multiplicity of meaning that gives rise to the polysemy necessary if language is to transcend literal constraints. This relationship of the feminine to language is articulated in conjunction with a medieval poetics that identifies language in terms of property and decorum. Figurative meaning is imposed, “improper”, such meanings are not the literal, “proper” (proprium, one’s own) definitions of words (to the extent that a truly literal or proper sense can exist) but rather they are extra-literal, additions that are neither property nor proper; they are, in effect, “commoun.” While the signum proprium represents proper association, the signum translatum suggests improper, erring senses effected by usurpative, transgressive, and arbitrary transfer.\textsuperscript{13} The narrator’s description of Cresseid as “A” means that the property of “A”—the first character of the alphabet, the glyph that denotes the capital letter—is transferred to and imposed upon “Cresseid” reflexively, improperly describing her as both primary and literal, and by extension identifying Woman as Letter, as Carnal. As the carnal flesh, the feminine is limited; but as the unlimited translatio, the feminine sense of language is its errancy, its extraliteral, improper senses. The feminine signa, as improper, are “commoun”—they are, in effect, promiscuous (mixed,


\textsuperscript{13}See Augustine, Contra mendacium 10.24.
confused, indiscriminate), for they resist constraint and challenge masculine insistence upon ordered decorum.

Cresseid, then, is the errant text, the "commoun" feminine that resists the limitedness of proper masculine stability and inherently challenges the oppressive rigidity of patriarchal propriety. She recuperates the potential of multiplicity to defy decorum and hence to resist control, for the sense of plurality associated with the epistemological feminine finds thematic representation in the errancy/promiscuity alignment attributed to Cresseid by the narrator and his text. There is no *usurpata translatio* without impropriety, and accordingly the "improper" woman is shown to be the subject of masculine scorn. Thus the correspondence of the feminine to language, problematized by the inhering contradiction of theological and epistemological origins, is itself figurative, and hence metaphorized feminine representations are both unstable and destabilizing, for even as the narrator's portrait of Cresseid's feminine promiscuity might arguably reify the patriarchal order that has both created and appropriated prostitutes, the narrator's construction of Cresseid's identity ultimately transgresses his narrative control. But while the female association with "unlimitedness" is largely negative owing to the positive/negative valuation of the pairings, in medieval poetics, with its emphasis on the polysemy of "improper" signification, the unlimitedness of the feminine may be understood as representative of polysemy and hence of poetic language itself, with all its ambiguities and uncertainties and with all its capacity to facilitate the construction of meaning in its necessary errancy. The narrative's emphasis on "commoun" subjectivity and its conjunctive insistence upon sexual errancy as a trope of affronted patriarchal decorum underscore Henryson's attention to his own "feminine" poetics.

The *Testament* elucidates the interconnectedness of the feminine and the "commoun" in its treatment of Cresseid's offenses and punishments. Cresseid's overt discursive errancy—her blasphemy—corresponds to her insinuated sexual errancy, both are presented as promiscuous behaviors within patriarchal parameters, and hence both challenge decorum. Just as Cresseid's alleged sexual errancy problematically confronts a patriarchal order, so, too, her blasphemous language both participates in and destabilizes a patriarchal decorum of appropriate language, in effect both validating the existence of the patriarchally constructed metaphysical hierarchy of the gods and yet destabilizing that very hegemony by exposing its underlying ideology. Cresseid's offense of blasphemy is described as froward language, a discourse of errancy that violates boundaries of decorum:

... "Lo, quhat it is," quod sche,
"With fraward langage for to mufe and steir
Our craibit goddis; and sa is sene on me!
My blaspheming now haue I bocht full deir." (ll. 351-4)
Cresseid is actually shown to be punished in the Testament for blasphemy, not for her alleged betrayal of Troilus, though a connection between word and deed is implied:

"Lo," quod Cupide, "quha will blaspheme the name
Of his awen god, outhr in word [or] deid,
To all goddis he dois baith lak and schame,
And suld haue bitter panis to his meid." (ll. 274-7)

Blasphemy, in the context of the narrative, represents Cresseid's unwillingness to accept the consequences of her so-called "fleschelie lust", that is, her blasphemy articulates her anguish and frustration at finding herself occupying the stigmatized space of the undesired, uncoupled in a social context that recognizes the validity of the feminine only in relation to the superior masculine. In addition, her sexual errancy perhaps qualifies as the "deid" to which Cupid alludes; although Cresseid identifies only her "fraward langage" as the "blaspheming [she has] bocht full deir," the "word" is perhaps prompted by her "deid," that is, her "commoun" behavior. In challenging masculine decorum—in transgressing the boundaries of proper, pious behavior—Cresseid's blaspheming rejects propriety at tremendous personal cost. Blasphemy is treated as a feminine abuse of language that corresponds to a masculine perception of a feminine abuse of sexuality, and hence the punishment is sexualized: "to all louers [Cresseid will] be abhominabill" (l. 308).

Sexual and discursive errancy further coincide in the text's emphasis on the interconnectedness of mutability and substitution. Cresseid, feminine *translatio*, has herself been subject to exchange; once transferred to the Greeks, she is proper to them—their property—and yet improper as well, having been purchased, in effect, usurped. Cresseid is shown to be unfixed, mutable, and the Testament narrator equates mutability and promiscuity. Cresseid substitutes Diomeid for Troilus and validates the exchange through a transfer of emblems—"O Diomeid, thou hes baith broche and belt / Quhilk Troylus gaue me in takning / Of his trew lufe!" (ll. 589-91)—but thematically, the circumstances are governed by a decorum of gender: Chaucer's Criseyde has herself been betrayed by the Trojans in their handing her over to the Greeks, but the Testament narrator suggests that feminine change or feminine agency is, regardless of circumstance and by definition of moral absolutes, negative or wrong. Thus Cresseid is held accountable for the exchange of which she herself is a victim, and she is accordingly scorned by men for her "brukkilnes," her daring to acclimate herself to the alien culture into which she has been sold. Mutability is

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14Cupid's subject is "he" who would blaspheme the name of "his awin" god; it is curious that Cupid uses the convention of a masculine pronoun sufficing for gender-neutral—which gives a false sense of inclusiveness—when he is in fact speaking of an instance of abuse perpetrated by a woman, whose punishment will be sexualized and therefore gender-specific.
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equated discursively with promiscuity; to confront decorum is to privilege impropriety, to flaunt violations of propriety in a demonstration of "commoun" subjectivity.

Cresseid further substitutes the appropriated yet inappropriate language of blasphemy for the authoritative language of prayer, using a metaphor of mutability—errant change/replacement—as the core of her blasphemous outburst:

O fals Cupide, is nane to wyte bot thow
And thy mother, of lufe the blind goddes!
3e causit me alwayis vnderstand and trow
The seid of lufe was sawin in my face,
And ay grew grene throw 30ur supplie and grace.
Bot now, allace, that seid with froist is slane,
And I fra luifferis left, and all forlane. (ll. 134-40)

The sexualized imagery of seeds and sowing—one of the ubiquitous medieval fertility images that corresponds to both eros and language, akin to "facound toung" and "pregnant sentence" (ll. 268, 270), for instance—describes Cresseid's acknowledgment of divine give-and-take. The sexual gesture of dispensation, "sawin in my face," foreshadows Troilus's sexualized gesture of charity—"And in the skirt of Cresseid dou can swak" (l. 522)—and emphasizes the prominent role of exchange in this text. The "seid of lufe," once freely sown and fertile, has given way to sterility—in the sense of wasted potential—and hence Cresseid is "fra luifferis left." Her blasphemy identifies change as the origin of her plaint, and it is this change for which the narrator holds her responsible; undesired change, the narrator asserts, is the fault of women, for replacement entails plurality, and plurality is negatively construed as feminine. Within the textual parameters, then, promiscuity is marked as feminine; it represents the unwillingness of the feminine to respect the proper masculine limits of decorum both sexually and discursively.

The narrative attests that mutability—ideologically inscribed as feminine—not only elicits a fear of the unknown, but provokes a concomitant frustration owing to incapability, ineffectuality, and impotence in response to a lack of control. The anxiety inhering in the text's concern with change is therefore connected to a fear of the feminine Other. (Indeed, the text of Cresseid is the "vther quarter." ) The sense of difference construed as Other adheres to ideological convention in its associations of gender: the feminine Other represents a negative alterity. Images of difference articulated as exchange or replacement may thus be read as narrative indictments of feminine Otherness. Hence the punishment described by Saturn—"I change thy mirth into melancholy, / Quhilk is the mother of all pensiuenes . . ." (ll. 316-7)—is articulated in a lexicon of contraries which evokes the Aristotelian/Pythagorean paradigm and suggests that change is itself punishment for change, for feminine errancy/mutability. Hence Cynthia—the Moon, representative of change—has the last word, inflict-
ing illness—"And to thy seiknes sall be na recure / Bot in dolour thy dayis to
indure" (ll. 335-6)—and mutilation.

As a conventional and ubiquitous feminine representation, the Moon clearly
suggests change in her cyclical patterns, instability, and conjunctiveness.15 Indeed,
acting "quhen Saturne past away, / Out of hir sait" (ll. 330-31), Cynthia’s
sadistic punishments effectively illustrate antifeminist conventions of feminine
mutability and duplicity at their most negative, far more even than the
narrator’s description of Venus in the same nightmare16—"dissimulait,"
"provinciat," "suddanely changit and alterait," "punkitue with wordis odious"
(225-30). The leprosy itself corresponds metaphorically to Cresseid’s twofold
feminine crime of errancy; conventionally, leprosy is associated with moral
punishment for blasphemy and for sexual wantonness and, as has been well
demonstrated, the Testament clearly draws from conventional etiology in the
implicit association of Cresseid’s blasphemous or errant behavior/language with
her disease. The words of Cynthia ensure that Cresseid will indeed "to all
louers be abominabill" as punishment for her twofold errancy, thereby depriv­
ing Cresseid of objectivity in relation to masculine desire in atonement for her
violating masculine decorum through sexual and discursive promiscuity.

But that which is "commoun" here defies constraint and instead asserts its
discursive promiscuity. Cresseid is not rendered sterile despite being "to all
louers abominabill," "fra all luifferis left," for the errant text is a fertile text,
and it insists upon the capaciousness of its signa translata. Promiscuity is thus
used by Henryson as an unstable and destabilizing erratic metaphor, and
through textual occasions of sexual and discursive promiscuity, Henryson chal­
ing the narrative/normative presuppositions of decorum. There is an am­
bivalence inhering in the text’s treatment of promiscuity, a sense of inevitable
failure in attempting to limit the feminine signa coupled with an anxious impulse
to pursue the fantasy of umitigated subjection. Henryson’s ambivalence apro­
pos the promiscuity of discourse is manifest in the narrative’s obvious misog­
yny, a connection that invites further scrutiny.

In the narrator’s initial description of Cresseid, coinciding with Cresseid’s
suggested sexual errancy is narrative errancy. Each exposes its own subjectivity
in relation to violations of decorum, sexual and discursive. With regard to the
specific detail of Cresseid’s continued sexual errancy, for example, the narrator

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15 Chaucer’s Criseyde has pledged loyalty to Troilus by Cynthia (4.1696-10). Henryson fol­
ows Chaucer in using both Cynthia and Diana, the former overtly identified with the moon,
the latter ambiguously aligned with women. It seems appropriate given the texts’ concern
with mutability and gender that feminine change should be manifest in double(d) representa­
tion.

16 The Testament is a poem that contains a dream episode rather than a “dream poem” proper.
Cresseid’s dream would not be considered a formal nightmare (insomnium) in medieval
dream theory deriving from Macrobius.
displaces authority—"sum men sayis"—thereby insinuating that his report is gossip.\(^{17}\) But the narrator’s affected modesty is betrayed as his text unfolds, for while he may claim to abhor gossip, he of course perpetuates it through his own repetition. Hence his profession of concern—

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\begin{align*}
3it \neuertheles, quhat euer men deme or say \\
in scornefull langage of thy brukkilnes, \\
I sail excuse als far furth as I may \\
Thy womanheid, thy wisdome and fairnes, \\
The quhi[1]k Fortoun hes put to sic distres \\
As hir pleisit, and nathing throw the gilt \\
Of the—throw wicki! langage to be spilt! (ll. 85-91)
\end{align*}
\]

—is undermined by the narrative that contains it. It is with stunning hypocrisy that "sum men sayis" she is "commoun" and that "men deme or say / In scornefull language of [her] brukkilness," for if indeed Cresseid is "commoun" it is because "men" have made her so: she is subject to men’s sexual exploitation and, consequently, to their "scornefull langage." By recording the subject of men’s language in his own narrative, the narrator implicates himself as the most egregious slanderer of all, for, participating in her condemnation and scorn, the narrator shows himself to be her violator, not her protector. Hence his claim to "excuse als far furth [he] may / [her] womanheid" demonstrates instead arrogant condescension and limitedness; the narrator’s introductory remarks suggest that he is not at all prepared to "excuse" her sexual errancy even as he purports to excuse her "womanheid."\(^{18}\)

Cresseid’s textual reality is constructed and manipulated by a narrative voice that seems at once to desire and to detest her.\(^{19}\) Indeed, the infliction of

\(^{17}\)"Men seyn—I not—that she yaf hym hire herte”; note also the irony of V, 804, where the narrator repeats the men's gossiping about Diomede's being free with his tongue. Criseyde predicts such gossip: “O, rolled shal I ben on many a tonge! / Thonghout the world my belle shal be ronge” (V, 1061-2), though she arguably misjudges gender: “wommen moost wol haten me of alle” (V, 1063), a prediction reiterated in C. S. Lewis’s condescending and sexist remark that “[t]here have always been those who dislike her; and as more and more women take up the study of English literature she is likely to find ever less mercy,” The Allegory of Love: A Study in Medieval Tradition (Oxford, 1936), p. 182.

\(^{18}\)The narrator, then, is willing to excuse her for being a woman, but not for acting like one; Cullen’s argument that Henryson’s purpose in writing the Testament is “to vindicae Cresseid’s ‘womanheid’ by showing that her fate was caused, not by promiscuity, but by Fortune and ‘wickit langage,’ i.e., the blasphemy punished by leprosy” (156) overlooks the narrator’s zealous interest in sexual matters. “Cresseid Excused: A Re-reading of Henryson’s Testament of Cresseid,” Studies in Scottish Literature, 20 (1985), 137-59.

\(^{19}\)My thinking here has been informed in part by Hansen’s chapter on the Wife of Bath—
punishment is described in lingering detail by the narrator, who feigns outrage even as it is his own text that obsesses over Cresseid's sexualized punishment with an incongruous relish. Further, narrative inconsistencies betray the narrator's futile striving for decorum and show decorum to be betrayed, particularly by way of the narrator's arguably misogynistic voice. Every aspect of Cresseid is condemned by the narrator, even her nightmare, which is described in erotic language as "ane extasie," and Cresseid as "[r]auischit in spreit" (ll. 141, 142). In using the language of erotic mystical experience the narrator would seem to be oblivious to the undesirable, unerotic particulars that he is about to describe, but he has already stated that the narrative will "report the lamentatioun / And wofull end of this lustie Cresseid" (ll. 68-9), thereby precluding the plausibility of curiosity at specific events as they unfold (hence the after-the-fact labels of "doole dream" and "uglye visoun" (l. 344) serve to maintain narrative illusion). Throughout the narrative Cresseid is subjected to control from both the characters within the story and, more important, from the narrator without; though she is presented as a reality within the parameters of the fiction, she is no more self-determined than any other literary character.

It seems that Henryson uses narrative inconsistency to challenge the illusion of narrative control; just as Cresseid is the narrator's, so the narrator is Henryson's, a textual instrument that reflexively dissects its own processes. Through the construction of narrative voice Henryson betrays the narrative's ideological underpinnings, destabilizing the effect of his own narrative method. For example, the fiction of an inclusive audience—as implied by the first person account of the framing stanzas—is necessarily betrayed by the narrator's moralitas, which overtly and directly targets only women:

Now, worthie wemen, in this ballet schort,  
Maid for your worship and instruction,  
Of cherity, I monische and exhort,  
Ming not your lufe with fals deception.  
Beir in your mynd this sor[e] conclusioun  
Of fair Cresseid, as I haue said befoir.  
Sen scho is deid i speik of hir no moir. (ll. 610-16, my emphasis)

"The Wife of Bath and the Mark of Adam"—which interrogates the majority view of the Wife as "agent, speaker, and, most recently, reader" (26); Hansen argues that while poet and character are similar in their telling of stories, the analogy breaks down because "the Wife's performance demonstrates that Chaucer's Woman ... disarm[s] the very threat of women's silence and unrepresentability that the poet acknowledges, appropriates, and strategically counters" (39). Chaucer and the Fictions of Gender (Berkeley, 1992).

While the *Troilus* narrator addresses his final remarks to an overtly gendered and inclusive audience: "O yonge, fresshe folkes, he or she?" the *Testament* narrator's platitudinous instruction that only women need use Cresseid's "commoun" example as motivation to observe patriarchal dictates of behavior is problematic. Despite his self-deprecating identification of his text as "ballet schort," the narrator's patronizing identifications of his audience as "worthie wemen" and Cresseid as "fair Cresseid"—even as he condemns feminine sexuality—divert attention away from Cresseid and back to her critic. Indeed, as the narrator purports to assert more and more control over the text of Cresseid, he reveals further the text's refusal to submit to such constraint. The narrator's pretense of respect and closure in the final line likewise calls attention to his inevitable failure, both in its transparent insincerity and in the *reductio ad absurdum* of the deceased body of Woman; the dead Cresseid is not a proper subject of narrative, the narrator insists (though obviously the narrator knows of her death before recounting the text). The narrator shows Cresseid as ventriloquizing this misogynistic narrative voice in her articulation of commonplaces: "O ladyis fair of Troy and Greece, attend / My miserie... And in your mynd ane mirrour mak of me" (ll. 452-3, 457). Cresseid's lines here are similar in their platitudinous didacticism to the narrator's own *moralitas*, thereby making her an apparent conspirator in her own misogynistic victimization, and she ostensibly addresses a wholly female audience as well, thereby exposing her own "commoun" subjectivity. But as a textual construct, existing as a reality only within the parameters of an idiosyncratic narrative, Cresseid's words are not only mediated by the narrative voice but produced by it as well. Cresseid and the narrator share a "commoun" voice. As such she seems to lose her "own" voice as the narrative progresses, becoming more and more coincidental with the sanctimonious narrative voice and the limiting postures expressed therein.

For example, Cresseid's absurd descriptions of herself and Troilus after the implausible non-recognition scene work in tandem with the narrative commentary to create the illusion of a redeemed character, who has come to appreciate the narrator's sense of decorum in her apparent privileging of misogynistic fantasy:

For lufe of me thow keipt continence,
Honest and chast in conversatioun,
Of all weamen protector and defence
Thou was, and helphit thair opinion;
My mynd in fleschelie foull affectioun

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Indeed Cresseid seems to advocate the repression of the feminine, to deny the feminine both body and voice; her words underscore the coincidence of the sexual and discursive—“Honest and chaist in conversation”—but privilege a masculine decorum in their desire for feminine chastity (celibacy and silence). These virtues are attributed to Troilus by Cresseid—coincidental with the narrative voice—in order to enhance the narrative’s juxtaposition of Good Troilus, Bad Cresseid; Troilus represents all that is masculine and good, Cresseid all that is feminine and bad. The paradigmatic simplicity of the distinction corroborates the text’s earlier evocations of antifeminist binary epistemology, and underscores Cresseid’s own sexual and discursive errancies, her promiscuous affronts to patriarchal decorum. Otherwise one must wonder at the logic of Cresseid’s ascribing to Troilus the label “[o]f all women protectour,” for this is Cresseid’s tragedy—Troilus’s failure becomes her blame, and she is scorned for his own ineffectuality. Hence Troilus reiterates this misogynistic conspiracy most egregiously in the superscription—“Lo, fair ladyis . . .” (l. 607)—which follows his utterly selfish deflection of blame: “Scho was vntrew and wo is me thairfoir” (l. 602).

Returning full circle to the narrator’s introduction of the character and her “womanheid,” Cresseid’s “own” testament echoes the narrator’s misogynistic discourse in its disdain for the feminine flesh:

Heir I beteiche my corps and carioun
With wormis and with taidis to be rent;
My cop and clapper and myne ornament,
And all my gold the lipper folk sall haue
Quhen I am deid, to burie me in graue. (l. 577-81)

Images of filth, debasement, degradation, and passivity are again associated with the feminine as flesh; her body is to be “rent” by “wormis and with taidis,” corrupted and violated. The odious sexual metaphor reiterates Cresseid’s having been corrupted and violated by men as well; she has been an object of their lust and, accordingly, is a subject of their scorn. Thus while Cresseid’s body and language die together—“And with that word scho swelt” (l. 591)—the narrative continues; Cresseid’s “own” voice is silenced not by death, but by a narrative line that excludes her even as it purports to tell her story. Her testament serves to corroborate a distorted history, for her perceived transgressions are validated by language that vivifies them; her history, in effect, becomes “commoun,” taking on a life distinct from the woman who is supposed to have occasioned it.

But there is perhaps a liberating irony in her conclusion, for although Cresseid has no voice of her own, she is depicted as articulating her own wishes via her own testament, and thus the narrative, in effect, gives her the illusion of
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voice. The broken and dejected Cresseid, then, wills her soul to a place wholly of women—“My spreit I leif to Diana quhair scho dwellis / To walk with hir in waist woddis and wellis” (ll. 587-8)—and thus her intended final dwelling place is “waist,” uninhabited by “men [who] saysis . . . commoun,” and those who “deme or say / In scornefull langage of [her] brukkilness.” (77, 85-86) Cresseid’s final act of defiance provides the text with a definitive final moment of discursive promiscuity. Cresseid, the embodiment of engendered translatio, not only resists narrative constraint but foregrounds that very resistance, thereby insisting upon the value of the (much maligned) feminine in textual poetics and reinforcing Henryson’s insistence that the more one strives to control and to purify language through decorum, the more language will foreground its own resistance to that control and show itself to be promiscuous. Throughout the Testament the narrator is exposed as attempting to restrict, reduce, and repress the feminine through conventional tropes of misogyny. He rejects the body of the feminine, yet desires it; he resents his own dependency, and pun­ishes the feminine because his desire cannot be satisfied without her. The narrator’s treatment of feminine sexuality in the text corresponds to Henryson’s treatment of language; through the narrator, Henryson argues that decorum cannot purify language, that—like Cresseid (the feminine text)—discourse is indeed “commoun.”

Metatextual attention to such difference informs the Testament’s relationship to Chaucer’s Troilus. Henryson’s “vther quair” is not a sequel but a supplement, an overlapping version of the story’s conclusion which presupposes familiarity with the Chaucerian text (“me neidis nocht reheirs” [I. 57]). As such, the Testament corresponds—or speaks—to the Troilus; indeed, a theme of correspondence is framed by the opening lines: “Ane doolie sessoun to ane cairfull dyte / Suld correspond and be equiualent” (ll. 1-2), which not only evoke a decorum of association but also foreground the Testament as a text both compared and comparing, a text not only of “double sorwes” but of doubled—or paired—sorrows. The Testament further associates itself with Chaucer through overt comparison:

Quha wait gif all that Chauceir wrait was trew?
Nor I wait nocht gif this narratioun
Be authcreist, or fenziit of the new
Be sum poeit, throw his inuentioun
Maid to report the lamentatioun . . . (ll. 64-68)

In effect the Testament competes with the conclusion of the Troilus, fulfilling in part the Troilus narrator’s naive fear that the Troilus will itself be corrupted by

22I am not suggesting that the Testament advocates a feminist utopia, but it is, I believe, fitting that a woman who has been so abused by men would seek solace in a place uninhabited by them.
feminine instrumentality, subject to mutability ("So preye I god that none mys-write the" [V, 1795]). Henryson’s handling of the Troilus/Cresseid story demonstrates, through narrative manipulation, the necessary errancy of narrative and text, which will necessarily transgress its own parameters of decorum, and will, in effect, become promiscuous. Indeed, Henryson’s appropriation of Chaucer’s text demonstrates Henryson’s awareness of literary promiscuity; he has made the *Troilus* “commoun,” subject and subjective.

Disfigurement operates for Henryson as a destabilizing metaphor of narrative method, a self-referential critique of literary promiscuity manifest in representations of behavior and decorum. And through its images of defacement and infliction, the Testament recovers the cruelty and suffering of human existence largely absent from Chaucer’s romance. Chaucer’s *Troilus* does contain depictions of fear, disappointment, and anguish, and, as Louise Fradenburg has recently demonstrated, the *Troilus* “both participates in, and analyzes, cultural practices of violence in the later fourteenth century.” But the *Troilus* privileges the sentiment and nostalgia of romance, and it is primarily through this kind of attention that the *Troilus* articulates its own metatextuality, its awareness of itself as poetry and romance, as a critique of the language of poetry and romance. The Testament does not wholly reject the sentimentality of Chaucer’s romance, but complicates it, looking at the world of romance with ambivalence and suspicion—"with ane eye lauch, and with the vther weip" (l. 231).

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23 Louise Olga Fradenburg, ""Our owen wo to drynke": Loss, Gender and Chivalry in *Troilus and Criseyde*," in Chaucer’s *Troilus and Criseyde* "Subgit to alle poesy": Essays in Criticism, ed. R. A. Shoaf and Catherine S. Cox (Binghamton, NY, 1992), p. 88.
Caroline McCracken-Flesher

Speaking the Colonized Subject in Walter Scott's
Malachi Malagrowther Letters

In *The Tempest*, Shakespeare demonstrates the malforming power of the colonial gaze when directed at the colonized subject.1 The Caliban who "first was mine own king" (I, ii, 342), once drawn within range of the colonizing eye stands new-created as morally and physically repulsive. Thus, when Caliban tries to possess Miranda, whatever his motives—whether instinctive or emulative of Prospero's appropriation of the island—he is refigured as bestial and primitive, as "Filth," to use Prospero's term (I, ii, 346). Indeed, within the colonial orbit Caliban becomes a grotesque body speaking only the colonizer's

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1Trevor R. Griffiths details the provenance of postcolonial readings for *The Tempest* in his article "'This Island's mine': Caliban and Colonialism," The Yearbook of English Studies, 13 (1983), pp. 159-80. Griffiths cites Andrew Lang's article "The Comedies of Shakespeare," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, 84 (April 1892), as the first defence of Caliban within a colonial context. Lang wrote: [Caliban] was introduced to the benefits of civilization. He was instructed. The resources of his island were developed. He was like the red men in America, the blacks in Australia, the tribes of Hispaniola. Then he committed an offence, an unpardonable offence, but one that Caliban was fated to commit. Then he was punished. Do we not 'punish the natives' all over the world, all we civilized powers? We are like Ulysses and the Cyclops, as briefly but accurately described in the rhyme:

"Ulysses to the Cyclops came,
To see what he could spy out;
He stole his sheep, and shot his game,
And then he poked his eye out" (p. 660).
language—a language denying him any speech that does not further deform and subject him. When Miranda, in apparent innocence, asserts that “I pitied thee, / Took pains to make thee speak... / endow’d thy purposes / With words that made them known,” Caliban notoriously replies: “You taught me language, and my profit on’t / Is, I know how to curse” (I, ii, 353-4, 357-8; I, ii, 363-4). And when Caliban speaks his resentment against his servitude, Prospero responds by appropriating and redirecting his servant’s curses so that they exacerbate his grotesque otherness. The master declares, “For this, be sure, tonight thou shalt have cramps.” Most importantly, here, the cramps Prospero prescribes are “Side-stitches that shall pen thy breath up” (I, ii, 325-6). For Shakespeare, then, the colonized subject is first and foremost a body, specifically, a deformed and othered body, but it is also effectively a voiceless body. Within colonial discourse, it lacks any power to speak itself except as a grotesque, colonized subject.

So the colonized subject faces two major difficulties: first, to see itself past a body rendered grotesque not only by the colonial gaze but also by its own attempts to voice itself through colonial language; second, to speak itself despite its negatively self-voicing and colonially voiceless body.

But how can the colonized subject escape its othered body? Walter Scott modeled one possibility in an 1826 series of three letters purportedly by one Malachi Malagrowther. The colonized subject, spoken into colonial insignificance by its bodily difference, might logically seek to articulate itself around the body, that is, to ignore the body. Such a strategy, however, inevitably defeats itself, for in trying to avoid the malforming voicing of the body, the subject refuses its one point of articulation, that same grotesque body; in trying to voice itself, the subject exacerbates its voicelessness. Scott overcomes this problem not by avoiding the repulsive Scottish body, but by grasping it to him. Rather than shrinking from the body malformed by its colonial subjection, Scott acknowledges and occupies it. He infuses into it both his own and the nation’s separate subjectivity, and thus bodies it forth as grotesque excess so that it obtrudes into and cannot be contained by the colonial narrative. He speaks the native, even takes control of the national tale, not by abjuring the subjected body, but by flaunting it.

Yet what can Scott have to do with the dynamics of colonization? Although Scotland never technically has been a colony, when she joined with

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2 The letters were published in sequence under the rubric: To the Editor of the Edinburgh Weekly Journal, from Malachi Malagrowther, Esq. on the Proposed Change of Currency, and Other Late Alterations, as they Affect, or are Intended to Affect, the Kingdom of Scotland. The first appeared on 22nd February, the second on 1st March, and the third on 8th March. Each immediately was reissued as a pamphlet. I will refer by letter and page number to the first pamphlet editions, gathered together in David Simpson and Alastair Wood, eds., Thoughts on the Proposed Change of Currency & Two Letters on Scottish Affairs (New York, 1972).
England in the Act of Union of 1707, she brought herself within range of England's inevitably colonizing power. As for Scott, up to 1826 he functioned in many respects as a colonized subject thoroughly complicit in his own and his nation's subjection. Those Scots instrumental in securing the Union had sought from it a complex of advantages, not the least of them financial. Nonetheless, they had expected to maintain their separate Scottish identity. And through the early years of the nineteenth century, Walter Scott's works strove to convert such expectations into reality; Scott composed pieces that appeared to foreground Scottish difference, but that sold well in England, and that thus inscribed their author as successful within both England's economic narrative and Scotland's national one. Moreover, when, courtesy of George IV, Scott presided as "Sir Walter" at the baronial residence his works had purchased, he seemed to manifest Scotland's continuance within a successful economic Union; he appeared to stand for Scotland as a subject transcending colonization. But in fact, to a degree debated by critics, Scott had facilitated the decline of Scottish difference; he had presented to England the bland face of collusive colonial subjection. Then in 1826, events conspired to reveal to him that he stood not as transcendent Scot, but as grotesque Other. He began to see himself as a voiceless subject written into and deformed by England's colonial narrative, as a subject suffering a deformation for which he, having tried to speak himself within England's economic narrative, bore partial responsibility.

What catastrophe could have produced such a revolution in Scott's perspective? Through his novels' money-making propensity, Scott not only had inscribed himself in England's economic narrative, he had written himself into its heart. He stood to benefit not just from the operations of his Edinburgh

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3 In The Union of England and Scotland (Manchester, 1978), P. W. J. Riley argues that the main aims of pro-Union Scots were political. Still, Riley notes that political and economic success were linked for contemporary politicians. Further, he lists the economic concerns prevalent in pro-Union propaganda. He writes, indeed: "That union would make Scotland easier to manage could hardly be avowed in public. There seemed only one safe argument for selling union to the Scots: the increase in trade and wealth it would supposedly generate. Few would declare themselves averse from prosperity" (p. 226). It seems fair, then, to see the Union as motivated by political and perhaps social factors, but to see its ideology as largely economic.

4 John Prebble views the King's visit to Scotland, orchestrated by Scott, as the author's best and most unfortunate achievement in selling an outmoded and ultimately oppressive view of the Scots to themselves and to the English. He writes: A bogus tartan caricature of itself had been drawn and accepted, even by those who mocked it, and it would develop in perspective and colour. With the ardent encouragement of an Anglo-Scottish establishment, and under the patronage of successive monarchs who took to kilt and cromach with Germanic thoroughness, Walter Scott's Celtification continued to seduce his countrymen, and thereby prepared them for political and industrial exploitation. See John Prebble, The King's Jaunt: George IV in Scotland, August 1822 (London, 1988), p. 364.
printer and publisher, but from those of his publisher’s London affiliate, Hurst, Robinson and Company. However if Scott could profit from Hurst-Robinson’s success, he also stood liable should they fail. Predictably, in 1825, along with many other businesses which had speculated freely—which had presumed on the narrative power of England’s economy to generate funds, without much caring that those funds enjoyed a more than fictive reality—Hurst-Robinson collapsed. Worse still, as the company struggled to survive, it drew into ruin Scott’s publisher, his printer, and Scott himself. Scott lost his fortune, his independent property—even his books, whose profits from now on were to be devoted to repaying debts spun out from London. Yet worst of all, Scott lost his separate subjectivity; he discovered that like his economic success, it had been a fiction, sustainable only so long as England’s narrating energy was directed elsewhere. Through the years, Scott carefully had maintained his anonymity as “The Author of Waverley”; he was the God paid outside the machine. Now, just at the moment when his books lost their power to generate income, to construct him as transcendent Scottish subject within England’s economic narrative, he was named as author, and bound to a process of narration that served not to re-narrate his separate subjectivity, but to reconstruct the economic dominance of others. Events exposed Scott to himself as grotesque, colonized subject, and as the more grotesque because now the cynosure of every eye. To all and sundry, Scott feared, “The Author of Waverley,” “the Unknown,” was horribly visible as the “Too well Known,” as a pitiable “poor man.”

Still, if Scott was grotesquely represented as Other, exposed to the public gaze, and rendered voiceless within the colonial narrative, so too was Scotland. The London government, seeking to avert future crises like this one that had ruined Scott, sought to regulate private banks, whose power to print notes in small denominations they thought had contributed to the panic. Here, the obvious problem for Scotland was not whether the London ministers were correct, but that they sought to extend their legislation to the Scottish banks, which

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5 Edgar Johnson rehearses the details of Scott’s problematic business dealings through this period in his Sir Walter Scott: The Great Unknown (New York, 1970), II, 941-87.


were not implicated in the crash, and that they consequently risked devastating an economy successfully supported by promissory notes. However, behind this problem lay another, more serious one. In seeking thus to legislate across Scotland in England’s interests, the London ministers once again revealed to the Scots that they considered the Treaty of Union not a prohibitory code rendering Scotland’s rights and privileges narratively impenetrable to England’s colonizing dynamic, but an old tale subject to colonial retelling. They revealed that Scotland stood voicelessly subject to her southern neighbor’s malforming gaze.

It was in this circumstance, then, with self and state exposed as voiceless colonized Others, that Scott struggled to seize the right of personal and national narration. And it was perhaps because of the hideous publicity he now suffered as Walter Scott, the failed Author of Waverley, that he chose to conflate the suspect colonial authority of himself as novelist with the grotesque subjected body he had created or become, and the national body malformed by the colonizing gaze—that is, to represent Scotland as a plenitude of bodily difference, and thus to render it unnarratable, impossible to contain within narrowly colonial plots.

How did Scott accomplish his strategy? What body does he infuse with difference? He turns to one of his own Scottish grotesques, Sir Mungo Malagrowther. Sir Mungo appears in The Fortunes of Nigel (1822). From his early days as James VI’s whipping boy, Mungo manifests in his body the extent of the king’s and thus the nation’s moral deformity. When the adult Mungo appears in London with the king—now James I of England—his deformities have multiplied. He lacks three fingers and walks with a halting gait. Both injuries he has acquired in brawls with fellow Scots subject to his satiric remarks. Consequently, he figures as a comment on Scotland’s self-deformation, her collusive drift south for English money. Now, in his Letter[s]... on the Proposed Change of Currency, Scott invokes this grotesque Scottish body, this body whose very deformity speaks Scotland, through a character who insists he is Sir Mungo’s lineal descendant, Malachi Malagrowther. And blurring the line between narrator, character and author, between Malachi, Mungo and the now too-well-known and inherently grotesque Author of Waverley, Scott claims for himself and for Scotland an inheritance and an excess of subjected otherness and resistant voicing.

Through Malachi, Scott acknowledges his nation’s grotesquerie in some detail. Malachi discourses at length on Scotland as a body subject to experimentation. He writes:

[Scotland] has been bled and purged ... and talked into courses of physic, for which she had little occasion. She has been ... a subject in a common dissecting-room, left to the scalpel of the junior students, with the degrading inscription,—Fiat experimentum in corpore vih [Experiment on this vile body/body of little worth] (MM, i, 10-11).
Further, through his narrator—thoroughly understood by the public as a mask for Scott—the author acknowledges his own bodily malformation, and its vocal potential. Malachi speaks as the most ugly of beasts, but crucially, as one that utters its difference and its warning. He declares:

... it often happens that [my hasty and peevish] disposition leads me to speak useful, though unpleasant truths. . . . A lizard is an ugly and disgusting thing enough, but, methinks, if a lizard were to run over my face and awaken me, which is said to be their custom when they observe a snake approach a sleeping person, I should neither scorn his intimation, nor feel justifiable in crushing him to death, merely because he is a filthy little abridgement of a crocodile (MM, I, 4).

In Malachi, the subjected Scot figures as an abject animal, but through its abjection, the animal that is Scotland speaks itself, expresses operative power, Scott, then, through Malachi recognizes, comments upon, embodies himself within, and bodies forth the grotesque Scottish subject.

How successful was Scott in obtruding the colonized subject, in all its grotesque excess, across the colonial narrative? N. T. Phillipson, the letters' most thorough modern critic, considers that despite Scott's apparent assertion of Scottish difference from and danger to England in the Malachi Malagrowther letters, ultimately, "with their furious flights of fancy swiftly brought to earth by realism and common sense [the letters] express . . . a mood of impotence and of frustration" (Phillipson, p. 184). Phillipson dwells on Scott's tendency to suggest his nation's violent potential, but then to undercut his own comments. When Scott exclaims through Malachi: "The heather is on fire far and wide; and every man, woman, and child in the country are [sic] bound by the duty they owe to their native land, to spread the alarm and increase the blaze," and when he refers to England as "the foreign enemy," Phillipson observes "we think [he] is about to raise the spectre of revolt" (MM, II, 4, 14; Phillipson, p. 8).

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8 Malachi's attackers and defenders both identified Scott as author. On March 13, the exasperated Chancellor of the Exchequer obliquely named Scott, exclaiming in Parliament: "as long as I am armed with the consciousness of seeking to diminish the burdens, and to increase the happiness of the people, I can look without terror upon the flashing of the Highland claymore, though evoked from its scabbard by the incantations of the first magician of the age." See Hansard Parliamentary Debates, 2nd ser. 14 (2 February-17 March 1826) col. 1319-20. In turn, Christopher North (John Wilson) defended Scott by name to James Hogg and thus to the Blackwood's readership: "James, only think of an infuriated dunce in the Scotsman declaring, that Sir Walter Scott is not entitled to offer his opinion to the public on the Currency!" See Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, 19 (April 1826), 507.

9 For consistency's sake, I will continue to cite the first pamphlet editions of the Malachi Malagrowther letters as they appear in Simpson and Wood. These vary from Phillipson's sources only in punctuation.
183). But instead, Phillipson notes, Scott temporizes. In the first case, “Scott’s honesty forced him to climb down and to face the facts” (Phillipson, p. 184). Scott writes: “[this] is not a hostile signal towards [England] ... the last time the celebrated fiery cross was circulated in the Highlands ... the clansmen were called forth not to fight an enemy, but to stop the progress of a dreadful conflagration” (MM, II, 29-30). And in the second case Scott maulders: “I was about to eraze [sic] the last word [enemy], but let it remain, with this explanation—that the purpose of this invasion of our rights is acknowledged to be kind and friendly; but as the measure is unauthorized by justice, conducted without regard to the faith of treaties, and contrary to our national privileges, we cannot but term the enterprise a hostile one” (MM, II, 14). For Phillipson, then, hesitations in the Malachi Malagrowther letters that arise from Scott’s competing desires as loyal Tory and resistant Scotsman transmute the author’s efforts once more into complicity with the Union; Scott provides “not a call to action but a substitute for it” (Phillipson, p. 185). In our terms, from Phillipson’s perspective the colonized subject does not obtrude across but rather conforms with the colonial narrative.

Still, the contemporary response to Scott’s letters indicates that both his compatriots and the London government registered not the letters’ hesitations and reservations, but their threat. Numerous Scots identified with Malachi’s nationalist cause and acknowledged his body’s expressive force so far as gleefully to force themselves into his malformed shoes. Although Phillipson questions the results achieved by such apparently perverse cross-dressing, he nonetheless acknowledges:

Before [the letters’] publication, petitioning [against the proposed legislation] had been confined to politically experienced bodies. ... By the end of March, having been extracted in many local papers, and having gone through three editions in as many weeks, [the letters] had become widely known. And by the end of March, the petitions had begun to flow in from a plethora of tiny interests. ... Moreover, [the letters] provided a genre. The idea of explosive letters about slights to national honour, written in a spirit of bitter but humorous grumpiness, caught on. ‘Saunders Saunderson’ of Prestonpans wrote on these lines in the broadest Scots. ‘Paddy Blake’ put the Irish case, and so on (Phillipson, p. 184).

Meanwhile, to the south, the government was not mollified even by the bathos of Phillipson’s least favorite phrase: “We had better remain in union with England, even at the risk of becoming a subordinate species of Northumberland” (Phillipson, p. 183; MM, I, 17). They responded to the Malachi Malagrowther letters as thoroughly and as hysterically as if Scott had been inciting rebellion. J. G. Lockhart wrote from London to his father-in-law: “The Ministers are sore beyond imagination at present and some of them I hear have felt this new whip on the raw to some purpose” (4 March 1826; Journal, p. 104).

Among the flurry of comment, John Wilson Croker’s pamphlet stands out. Here, in two letters that respond (significantly, I will argue) only to Malachi’s
first publication, Croker speaks for his party against his fellow Tory in fascinating terms. 10 Croker was quite the representative Englishman. Although born and raised in Ireland, he was the child of an English father who traced his descent from before the conquest. 11 Since 1806, Croker had served in Parliament (at first, as a member for Ireland, but from 1819—apart from a brief stint as member for Dublin University—as a member for various English constituencies), and since 1808 he had held a succession of government appointments; in 1826, he continued as Secretary to the Admiralty, a post he had filled since 1809. So much of an Englishman was he, indeed, that the Dictionary of National Biography credits him with coining the name “conservative,” for the Tories. And he made his national allegiance quite clear when in 1832, after the Reform Bill was enacted, he refused to re-enter Parliament, claiming that he could not “spontaneously take an active share in a system which must in my judgment subvert the church, the peerage, and the throne—in one word, the constitution of England” (DNB, V, 129). Yet in 1826, in the wake of Malachi’s first letter, this scion of the English government expends considerable effort trying to claim for himself—and thus for England—the inheritance of the Great Unknown’s colonially authoritative voice. Constituting himself as “Edward Bradwardine Waverley, Esq.,” as a descendant of Scott’s first and, significantly, English hero, he claims a closer relationship with his authorial progenitor than that enjoyed by the Scottish Malachi. He utters his amazement at finding Malachi “so little resemblance to our common parent [Scott]” (Croker, p. 2). Apparently the Author of Waverley, so admired to the south, so embedded in “British” tradition and in Tory policy, has bodied forth his separate subjectivity and bonded it with that of the grotesque and distinctly Scottish Malachi to the extent that Croker is desperate to divorce the two. Further, this representative Englishman seems remarkably squeamish about his Scottish consanguinity—especially for someone who wants to claim a closer bond of kinship with the Author of Waverley. On one hand, Croker/Edward Bradwardine Waverley asserts he has “Scotch blood in my veins, derived from my grandmother, the celebrated Rose Bradwardine,” but on the other, he can barely bring himself to acknowledge the blood tie with Malachi (as equal descendant from Scott) that presumably authorizes him to comment on his cousin. He stresses “the re-

10 Two Letters on Scottish Affairs, from Edward Bradwardine Waverley, Esq. to Malachi Malagrowther, Esq. Croker’s letters first appeared in the Courier, then were published in pamphlet form (London, 1826). They appear, with Postscript, in facsimile in Simpson and Wood. Since they are continuously paginated, I will refer to them by page number.

11 In The Croker Papers: The Correspondence and Diaries of the Late Right Honourable John Wilson Croker . . . Secretary to the Admiralty from 1809 to 1830 (1885; rpt. New York, 1972), the editor, Louis J. Jennings, indicates the Croker family’s extensive English pedigree through a Devonshire rhyme: “Croker, Crwys, and Copelston / When the conqueror came were at home” (p. 4).
moteness of our relationship” (Croker, pp. 1, 2). Croker’s rhetorical strategy requires him to intervene between Scott and Malachi, to claim Scottish blood, but he is horrified at the proximity this forces upon him and the colonized subject, terrified at the possibility of receiving a taint from Malachi’s more abject fluid. Evidently, Scott’s fully-bodied colonized subject enjoys a circulation that threatens the colonizer with infection, and that forces him to deal with it at a distance.

One odd aside demonstrates the extent of Scott’s accomplishment in constructing for Scotland a body whose grotesque excess renders it impossible to contain within colonial narration. It confirms the othered body as the locus for Croker’s anxiety. Croker uneasily opines:

In most unions the bride is expected to assume the name, share the fortunes, and assimilate with the manners of the husband. Your notion of what was to be expected from Scotland, on her union with England, seems on the contrary, to be like that which your renowned relative, Sir Mungo, entertained of Mrs Martha Trapbois, when she condescended to intermarry with Mr. Ritchie Moniplies. ‘It seems to me,’ said the knight, ‘that this bride of yours is like to be master and mair in the conjugal state’ (Croker, pp. 5-6).

To Croker, the Scotland bodied forth through the Malachi Malagrowther letters brims with unnatural and uncontrollable passions. It is thus horribly and androgynously gendered. As a result, despite Croker’s own equation of political and marital union, Scotland is a bride he cannot bring himself to clasp.

Yet if, in his first letter, Scott managed to obtrude his nation’s othered body as an excess too awful for colonial employment, did he manage to speak Scottish subjectivity across that body? Insofar as it is the Scottish body’s hideous articulation as androgyne that Croker dare not grasp, he certainly did. But the Scottish subject more than speaks itself, here. Across Malachi’s second letter, the Scottish body extends its obtrusive presence and its voicing power, progressively forcing the colonial narrative into silence. If Croker couldn’t bear the touch of Malachi’s grotesque body that his own strategy forced upon him for the first letter, in Malachi’s second letter, the reader feels the Scottish body swell against him. Here, Scott draws his compatriots’ complicit grotesquerie to their attention; he points out to them that like Esau, their “sottish facility ... aggravates the unfeeling selfishness of [their] artful [English] brother.” Further, he encourages them to bond together in recognizing their colonial malformation. He calls on them, in fact, to celebrate their subjected selves, to combine into a multiply grotesque, massively assertive body. It is here that he exhorts: “do not let us ... fall to jealousies among ourselves, when heart, and voice, and hand, should be united against the foreign enemy” (MM, II, 14). Moreover, if in his binary reality as governmental representative and complicit colonized Irishman Croker had been concerned by Scott’s earlier hint of violent resistance modeled on Ireland, in Malachi’s second letter Scott encourages the now massive, multiple, and thoroughly grotesque Scottish body
to combine with that of Ireland to resist England's malforming operations. In the first letter, Malachi coyly suggested that "claymores have edges" and that "Pat" had gained attention by wielding his pike and shillelagh (MM, I, 9, 17); "Edward Bradwardine Waverley" responded: "Good God! Cousin, what were you thinking of, when you allowed your pen, or even your mind, to wander into such perilous pleasantries?" (Croker, I, 26). Now Malachi asserts: "the [English] line of conduct of which we complain, may be compared to a well-known operation resorted to for taming the ferocity of such male animals as are intended for domestication and to be employed in patient drudgery." Then he turns to Ireland, to ask, "Patrick, my warm-hearted and shrewd friend, how should you like this receipt for domestication, should it travel your way?" And he draws Ireland aside to whisper "why should not you and we have a friendly understanding, and assist each other, as the weaker parties, against any aggressions, which may be made upon either of us, 'for uniformity's sake'?" (MM, II, 22-4).

It is particularly important to our understanding of Scott's nationalist success, in the Malachi Malagrowther letters, that Croker remains silent in face of these egregious extensions of Scottish presence and Scottish voicing power. To give Croker some credit, Scott's third epistle adds little to the Malachi Malagrowther letters from our perspective. Here, Scott replies to specific criticisms leveled against his data in the earlier letters. However, when Croker decides not to tangle with either of Malachi's final two pieces, even though they were published before he issued his own, he indicates that the Scottish body has spoken the colonial narrative into silence. Indeed, when he goes so far as to declare of letters two and three together that "they add nothing new to the principles of the questions which we have discussed," he by his reluctance to acknowledge the development of Scott's argument indicates the wide and threatening reach of Scotland's rediscovered voice (Croker, "Postscript").

But Scott does not stop at extending the range and pitch of the subjected body's obtrusive grotesquerie. Having spoken Scotland through the body, in letter two he also asserts her distinctive voice. Repeatedly he stresses Scotland's ability and responsibility to speak effectively. He claims that he "[speaks] for my Country" to the English Parliament and calls on the Scottish MPs, in

12The Chancellor of the Exchequer similarly was spoken into silence. In his speech on the Financial Situation of the Country (March 13), he sidestepped the matter of currency, and engaged Malachi only with regard to a throw-away example in the letters about the Scottish Boards of Customs and Excise. The intensity of his attack on this side issue indicates the degree to which he had ceded the currency question to Scott. He declaimed: "I trust we may long continue to contemplate [the glory of Scotland's great men] with instruction and delight, although [Scotland's] revenue boards have lost the affected importance of their imaginary independence, and have been swallowed up. O! dreadful catastrophe! in the all-devouring vortex of English uniformity." Hansard Parliamentary Reports, 2nd ser. 14 (2 February-17 March 1826) col. 1317-20, esp. 1319.
their combination, to do the same (MM, II, 29). He exhorts them: "Let each, in his own style . . . state to administration the sentiments of his constituents, and those of his own breast; let it be perfectly understood that the Representatives of Scotland speak in the name of their country" (MM, I, 15). He threatens, furthermore, that those Scottish representatives who do not speak will be spoken against. "If the voice of the public in streets and highways did not cry shame on [the wayward Scottish nobleman's] degeneracy," he declares, "even inanimate objects would find a voice of reprobation. The stones of his ancient castle would speak" (MM, II, 18-19).

And if England's voice was silenced, Scotland's voice was heard. The banking legislation's application to Scotland was quietly huddled away in committees. As for Croker, he wrote apologetic, ingratiating letters to Scott—to which Scott replied politely but obdurately, interestingly continuing to evoke the specter of that body most grotesque in governmental eyes, the mob. Scott wrote on 19th March 1826:

... if you unsotch us you will find us damned mischievous Englishmen. The restless and yet laborious and constantly watchful character of the people, their desire for speculation in politics or any thing else, only restrained by some proud feelings about their own country, now become antiquated and which late measures will tend much to destroy, will make them, under a wrong direction, the most formidable revolutionists who ever took the field of innovation (Letters: 1825-1826, IX, 472).

Within the Malachi Malagrowther letters, then, Scotland has become a voicing body, a body capable of uttering resistance and even of shouting down the colonial narrative.

However, if Scott's experience demonstrates that the colonized body can be foregrounded as grotesque excess, can be occupied and fleshed out beyond the grasp of the colonizing narrative—that it can be made to speak—it also manifests the limitations of his approach. Scott's strategy requires his compatriots to recognize and celebrate their grotesque subjectivity. Unfortunately, some Scots proved unable to accept their compatriot's vision of what England's colonizing dynamic had made of them, and what, in their complicity, they had made of themselves. Lord Melville, Lord Prv seal of Scotland (from 1811) and First Lord of the Admiralty (1811-1826), constitutes such a case. In the middle of Scott's attempts to body forth Scotland as separate because grotesquely subjected, Melville circulated a letter uncannily reminiscent of Croker's missives in its anxiety to claim Scottish subjectivity, to distance Scott the repulsive Scottish subject, and to separate Scott from mutual friends. He writes, for instance:

I have perused within these few days two letters in the newspapers from a certain Mr. Malachi Malagrowther, and I should not now have mentioned them if I had not heard with sincere regret that they are from the pen of Sir Walter Scott. I
know the people of Scotland as well as he does, and I also know full well how they ought to be dealt with; and I am much mistaken if the period is far distant (if it has not already arrived) when every person in that country, whose good opinion he would most wish to cultivate, will not join with me in condemning, on public grounds (I will not condescend to advert to private feelings), the style and tone of those letters.¹³

Scott described the screed as “between thirty and forty pages in angry and bitter reprobation of Malachi, full of general averments and very untenable arguments, all written at me by name but of which I am to have no copy and which is to be shown to me in extenso and circulated to other special friends to whom it may be necessary to ‘give the sign to hate’” (9 March 1826, Journal, p. 107). He commented that same day: “I do not wonder that [Melville] is angry though he has little reason for he ... has from time to time sufferd [sic] all manner of tampering to go on under his nose with the institutions and habits of Scotland” (Journal, p. 108). Clearly, the colonized subjects most heavily implicated in their own subjection may never manage to accept their subjected ugliness. In this circumstance, the author who strives to bring colonized subjects to a liberating awareness of their abject state may find himself, Scott noted, playing the role of “the Jacobite wife who was drowned by the mob at Carlisle, [while all the time screaming] Charlie yet!” (Letters: 1825-1826, IX, 506). He may find himself shrilly asserting Scottish difference through a body grotesquely and androgynously exposed only at the moment he too is silenced—permanently.

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I have been asked to outline some present-day trends in Gaelic writing in Scotland as I see the situation from where I stand; while some of these trends may appear to be contradictory, I believe that these apparent contradictions are part of the authentic pattern. Having mentioned this fact, it might be as well to begin by referring to two trends which fall into the category, even though we might be expected to deal with them nearer the end of this essay.

The first of these (rather a negative one) is a mood of hopelessness which is hard to define or pinpoint, and which paradoxically evidences itself more in what is not written than in what is. By that I mean that some of our very competent Gaelic writers have given up in despair because of the absence of any meaningful response to their work. It is not entirely, or even mainly, a question of money, though that, of course, comes into it. There are good grants available from Scottish Arts Council funds channeled through the Gaelic Books Council for those writers whose work is approved by the Council, and there are very few complaints from unsuccessful applicants. But if books languish unsold for years (in some cases forever), the publisher and/or author will be out of pocket, and, far worse, the aspiring writer suffers a severe psychological blow. I have no knowledge of supporting statistics, but anecdotal evidence suggests that very few Gaelic works of a serious nature make enough money to provide even a modest living for the writers.

One such writer, probably the most richly idiomatic Gaelic author writing in Scotland in our day, has come to the conclusion that the evidence is overwhelming that, whatever efforts may be made to revive the language, it is already under im-
minent sentence of death. Laboring under such a burden of disillusion, he has come to the further conclusion that the efforts of those who still continue to write are in vain so long as the great bulk of native Gaelic speakers show so little interest. An afternoon spent in the company of such people can be both chastening and depressing, all the more so because we all know—though not everyone will admit it—that what they say is undeniable. Too many native speakers are apathetic to any Gaelic offering other than undemanding entertainment—in stark contrast to the evident interest of Gaelic speakers in Eire who will travel many miles to be present for an evening’s program where the recitation of poetry is as prominent as singing, and apparently as highly valued. One of our foremost scholars recently traveled from Glasgow to give a lecture in the heart of Gaeldom to be met by a tiny audience of hard-core enthusiasts. And were it not for the contribution of national and local Mods (Gaelic festivals) the situation would be even worse.

Secondly, and more positively, the other side of the paradox is that there is evident at the same time a new sense of buoyancy and optimism among many young people who are involved in projects, such as playgroups, drama groups, music groups, and learners’ groups, through which they feel they are doing their bit to keep the language alive. It has to be admitted that Gaelic learners’ classes frequently suffer heavy casualties in the course of their first year as the realization is borne home that Gaelic is a completely separate language, and not another Scots dialect. But for those who survive to the stage of simple conversational competence—and even to writing their first “poem”—there is a sense of elation which is infectious. Herein surely lies a main hope of a revival of our language as a vehicle of communication, both oral and written. And for proof of this second trend, one has only to study the pages of the excellent magazine of Comunn Luchd-ionnsachaidh (C.L.I.), the Association of (Gaelic) Learners, now sited in Dingwall.

These first two trends are of a very general nature. So also are the next two, which similarly have to be set over against each other.

There is a trend among writers, and not only of the younger generation, to regard their upbringing in the traditions of Gaeldom as a negative, constricting experience, rather than as a good and valid foundation for the rest of life. Perhaps the most frequently quoted illustration of this is D. S. Thomson’s short poem found in Nua-Bhàrdachd Ghaidhlig:

‘Water and peats and oats’—
a word in a stranger’s mouth,
in the throng of the town,
in the town of the strangers.
Madness! The foolish heart
lapping along these ancient rocks
as though there were no sea-journey in the world
but that one.
The heart tied to a tethering-post, round upon round of the rope
till it grows short,
The last line says it all! In fact, Professor Thomson provides us with a perfect "generational" example of this trend in that his father, James, was also a poet, and a model of all that was best in the traditions of Gaeldom. It is most illuminating to set Professor Thomson's poetry side by side with his father's published work in *Fasgnadh* (Winnowing, 1953). The basic relationship surfaces occasionally, but the trend from veneration to questioning, from freedom enjoyed in a secure tradition-respecting milieu to the freedom which renounces the "tether" of tradition in order to be free is the dominant impression created.

In short, *Nua-Bhràdfachd*, which has parallel English translations offered by the authors for all the poems, and which is an anthology of poems by Sorley Maclean, George Campbell Hay, Iain Crichton Smith, Derick Thomson, and Donald MacAulay is essential reading for any who would understand this third trend. (There is some internal evidence that the Introduction was originally written in English, then translated into Gaelic—sometimes rather painfully—but this is perhaps an advantage for the non-Gaelic reader.)

Conversely to this third trend, we find a trend to regard the loosening of traditional ties as a liberation. In this sense, Gaelic writers are following what is common in the arts in general. By "following" I do not mean any sheep-like conformity to a wider fashion; for to our surprise we find that the hide-bound Highlander of popular myth is in the van of the process—I will not say "progress," for that would seem to pre-judge the issue of merit. In this matter, as in so many serious ethical, moral, and religious questions, we Highlanders are sharply divided. There are those to whom anything that smacks of modernism is anathema; there are also those who are prepared to jettison anything older than the date of their own enlightenment as being traditional baggage—or worse. As in all questions which seem to resolve themselves into extremes, the middle ground is hardest to hold, is most exposed to the cross-fire of bitter controversy, and, by the same token, is the one most needing to be manned. Regrettably, any trend for the coming to the fore of writers filling this category in our day is not easy to trace.

At the same time, the work of two sisters from Skye, Morag and Catriona Montgomery, may be seen as a bridge between the traditional and the new forms. Their work is notable also in its portrayal of emotional themes from the woman's perspective—and they are not afraid of explicitness! Their *A' Choille Chiar* (*The Bleak Forest*) appeared in 1974. And of course we need go no further than *Nua-Bhràdfachd* to read poems which are not committed to any extremist philosophies or even confrontational categories, such as practically all the poems of George

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Campbell Hay. These writings are not bland, but I don't think they either create or buck any significant trends in terms of our present remit.

This leads us to the more specific consideration of trends in Gaelic poetry, which shares with poetry in other languages the trend toward free rhyme, or, as in the case uniquely of Sorley Maclean, an alliteration of vowel sounds which, especially when narrated by himself, makes an impact on the hearer comparable to the effect of the "séis" or intonation of some preachers. Maclean and Colin Mackenzie have voices particularly suited to declamation, and it is true of both writers that for best effect their poetry should be heard, not read. This in passing raises a small but interesting point: whether a poet's vocal expression influences the shape of his writing.

Hand in hand with free rhyme, we come to the matter of abstruseness. Free rhyme in most cases involves a loosening of the discipline of traditional forms—no matter how much its practitioners (and I am one) may protest. Is it fanciful to suggest that a loosening of discipline in the matter of thought explains at least some of the abstruseness of modern poetry? I refer again to Nua-Bhàrdachd, which I take to be pivotal to my present remit. I have again read it through, reading the Introduction in both English and Gaelic. I have again read the poetry, much of which is very impressive, some of which the average reader can understand, and with which he can identify, but much of which I would say is abstruse and far beyond the average reader. Poets of today sometimes need to be reminded of the words of an immortal poet who lived nearly two thousand years ago, who said he preferred to utter five words which his hearers could understand rather than ten thousand which they could not (see 1 Corinthians 14:19).

There is an ever-present danger of equating depth and incomprehensibility, with professional bards busy making poetry for each other. The ambitious edifice of uncritical adulation which MacAulay builds in the Introduction to Nua-Bhàrdachd is also an impressive piece of work, but it is not always well supported by the infra-structure. It would be more convincing if he were not both judge and jury of his own work, and he were to point to a single flaw in all the 140 pages under review. I have never yet read the complete works of any extensive poet, including our own national Scottish bard, without being acutely aware that some poems are better than others.

I do not believe that it is because of my own interest in theology that I find the theological poems have a cutting edge which makes them immediately comprehensible. Indeed, in some cases, one feels that one can enter upon a meaningful dialogue on the poet's own terms. This is perhaps best explained by quoting part of a poem by Iain Crichton Smith, which I give in English, together with my answer:

The Letter.

Here is my letter to you out of the mirror,

God who created us.
Why did you put the rabbits in the bellies of the foxes?
Why did you put man in the middle of the days?
Why did you raise us with frail bones?
Why did you give us hearts
that will feel hubbub and injustice,
why aren't they like watches
small, round, and golden?

Why did you not make angels or beasts of us
with cold wings, with barbarous heads?
Why did you raise the sea in front of us
with wide absurd face?

* * *

In the mirror there is your book with a steel fastening,
with an edge red as a rose.
In the mirror there is one rose,
our hope growing
red, shaking in the winds,
in a circle of dew.²

A Reply to The Letter.

What a pity it was out of the mirror
your letter came, my son,
—the constriction is too severe.

The rabbit is inside the fox, no doubt,
as man is in the midst of the days,
but, unlike the beasts of the field,
man's days
are within the compass of eternity,
and his frail bones
due for transformation.

If your heart were like a watch
—even of the finest gold—
insensitive to hubbub and injustice,
then were you no free-willed man,
but a robot out of control.

I created man with free-will;
man opted for the image of his choice,

²*Nua-Bhàrdachd*, pp. 186-8.
beast or angel, according to his preference;
and the sea in front of you
is the symbol of mercy without limit.

Put away the mirror
and the steel-bound book,
inflexible and hard.
One Word only is supreme,
with the redness of the blood
marking his pity.

And that rose of Hope,
which you saw growing
a-quiver in the storm
is your secure anchor.

Having said all that, I discern here again a counter-trend. There is a salutary change in that many new poets, not all young, assert their right to be heard, are turning their backs on abstruse "profundities," and, without ever saying so in so many words, claming their right to a fair say in the setting of poetic standards. Herein lies a bright hope for the future of Gaelic poetry.

Turning more briefly to prose and drama, of which latter at least there is far too little, we find quite discernible trends, which again run parallel to trends found elsewhere in such writings. There is a departure from conventional, traditional language in favor of local, colloquial, or even vulgar expression. A good example of this may be found in Tri Dealbhann Cluiche (Three Plays, 1990) by Alasdair Campbell, a well-known writer from Ness in Lewis. A native of another parish in the same island commented jocularly at the end of a performance of one of these plays that he could have done with an interpreter! The use of English expressions is commonplace, even where there are perfectly good and understandable Gaelic equivalents, on the grounds, presumably, that that is how the Gaelic-speaking community now expresses itself. Without impugning the right of the playwright to reflect actuality, many older people and purists find this trend hard to thole. Implicit in this lies the question and dilemma: if writing for drama is one way of helping to keep the use of Gaelic alive, does it matter whether the Gaelic used—and presumably saved—is relatively pure or utterly corrupt?

Of course, not all drama writing is at this level, nor is humor and entertainment the only ingredient. Mention of humor reminds us of the fact that Gaelic writing is not noted for the presence of this element. But if we may refer to popular Gaelic songs with a parochial appeal, it is probably true to say that the volume and quality of production of this genre is as copious, and perhaps more robust, now than ever in recent times. Humor even finds a place in the solemn corridors of Nua-Bhàrdachd. Derick Thomson has a charming, yet pungent, piece called "Clann-Nighean an Sgàdain" ("The Herring Girls") which contains the collection's
The word "cutach" is given the two meanings, "pertaining to gutting" and "short-arsed."

The only Gaelic book (actually a booklet) that I know which devotes its whole effort to the subject of humor is Charles Macleod's *S'fhéirde Duine Gaire* (One is better of a Laugh). It has over a dozen stories, some of which are very funny. The eponymous chapter is the last in the book, and, perhaps true to the Gaelic psyche, is given the full title, "Doubtless, one is better of a Laugh, yet, at times one would be none the worse of a Cry." The theme of this chapter is Lewis and Harris Sabbatharianism! The author says he belongs to the rather strict denomination, the Free Church.

The writing of short stories, novels, and other popular prose forms is enjoying a belated revival, although this is applicable to short stories rather than full-length novels. There is a recently founded Association of Writers, based in Edinburgh, which runs courses of instruction in the writing of novels. *Gairm*, the B.B.C., and *An Comunn Gaidhealach* have done much to encourage short-story writing, and the response has been encouraging, in both quantity and quality. For further information on this topic, reference is made to *Briseadh na Cloiche* (The Breaking of the Stone), edited by Kenneth Macdonald (Glasgow, nd, but post-1968).

It is maintained by students of demographic trends that whereas there are now fewer native Gaelic speakers in Scotland than ever before recorded, the number of learners in Scotland and England is at an all-time high. This latter fact, of course, is to be welcomed. Yet it poses problems from the point of view of trends in Gaelic writing. There are several people (some indeed from a Gaelic background) who cannot converse adequately in Gaelic, yet presume to write Gaelic poetry. One of the most difficult things to master in any language is idiom, and Gaelic being a language rich in idiom, no composition, prose or verse, can be truly convincing if this element is missing. Roderick Macleod gave some examples.

On radio and television one often hears "De tha air a nochd?" for "What is on tonight?" One well-known writer quaintly translated "at the mercy of the sea" as "aig trocar na mara", while a visitor to the USA on his return used the phrase, "eader a' chreag agus aite cruaidh"—which greatly puzzled some of his hearers until they heard a visiting American use the phrase which had been literally translated, "between a rock and a hard place.‖ (It so happens there is a perfectly good idiomatic Gaelic expression which conveys the same meaning.) Macleod went so far as to suggest there should be classes for Gaelic speakers as well as for learners, especially for those who write or speak in public, before the trend to English-based Gaelic gets out of hand and Gaelic idiom dies.

True to pattern, the final main trend which we note is also fortunately counter-indicative to the previous one—namely a trend, or rather an explosion, in writing for schools and young people which does not patronize but is based on sound educational psychology. Some of this writing is for the media, like Donnie Macleod's "Dotaman" ("Spinning-top") which is celebrating its two hundredth emission, and has made Donnie a cult figure among his young audiences—and their mums!
We have only to scan the book-lists of "Acair," the Stornoway-based publisher, and pick out the titles at random, to find examples. The colorful covers and pictures tell their own story. As we compare the Blackie’s School Readers of yesteryear with their bright present-day successors, we may be convinced that no class of reading material has undergone a greater transformation. Many present-day writers for young people attempt to enter the child’s mind, and see the world through his eyes.

Readers will perhaps excuse a quotation which comes out of the writer’s own experience as a grandfather—although it inevitably suffers in translation:

A very old man is my Granpa;
Lichen-like fur grows round his ears,
And when I asked him his age,
He said “As old as the rocks”.

A kind old man is my Granpa;
Whatever my mother refuses he will give me -
Coke and biscuits a-plenty,
And twenty pence every Friday.

A funny old man is my Granpa;
He doesn’t care who laughs
When he pretends to be daft—
But if he is daft, no one in the village is sane.

Not an old man in the world is like my Granpa;
Whatever would we do without him?
Indeed I very much hope
God will forget to come for him.

(From “Traoghadh is Lionadh,” 1991)

This trend (or explosion) applies also to writing for regular weekly newspaper columns, of which there are now half a dozen, compared with only two a few years ago; as well as writing for radio and television. “Can Seo” (“Say This”), the learners’ program shown on television a few years ago, combined education and entertainment so successfully that it became the most popular language-learning program ever screened in Scotland. Eilidh Watt largely pioneered child-oriented stories, and so many others have followed her that this is probably the best catered for class of Gaelic writing today.

Other trends which might profitably be pursued may be summarized. Gaelic writing has benefited from the number of Gaelic writers who are completely bilingual in their output; this is undoubtedly a source of enrichment. In the case of Iain Crichton Smith, who comes into this category, it is notable that one of his well-known efforts is space fiction—for example “Iain am measg nan Reultan”

Long gone and seeming far away are the days when Gaelic poets’ preoccupations were mainly with stags and bens, or chieftains and heroics, or the elation and heartbreak of love. We find Aonghas MacNeacail in 1992 penning a Gaelic poetic tribute on the death of one of the world’s secular goddesses entitled "lily marlene in the western isles" [sic]. I quote, "you were always, marlene, a web to the ear. your wistful song luring the memory, and today that dulled eye shed a tear... for you."

And we even have extra-terrestrial Gaelic writing in Cemore, by M. and D. Halpin (Stornoway, 1991); while in Fergus MacFhionnliaigh’s Iolair, Bru-dhearg, Giuthas (Eagle, Robin, Pine-tree, Glasgow, 1991) we have a further sample of very contemporary, even futuristic themes originally expounded by the author in "A’ Mheanbh-chual eag" ("The Midge") which appeared in Gairm in 1980. Presently topical and futuristic are also some of the poems in D. S. Thomson’s latest book Smeur an Dòchas (Bramble of Hope, Edinburgh, 1992), with such topics as Chernobyl and Romania taken by the writer in his stride. It will take longer reflection to decide whether this title itself may prove to be a trend in present-day Gaelic writing—but at this stage I suspect it could.

In conclusion, no claim is made that these trends listed are exhaustive or that they are necessarily the most important. But from whatever angle the subject is approached, I believe they are significant, and have a bearing on the present and future health and survival of the Gaelic language as a vibrant vehicle of communication—in addition, of course, to pointing the personal and national dilemma of a people in a state of transition, if not retreat.

Donald MacAulay succinctly expresses the difficulty of communication in his poem "Prionsan" ("Prison") which concludes Nua-Bhàrdachd:

's mi a’ stri ri uimeag
fhasgadh
a’ stri ri ruighinn air mo sheòlaid.

as I strove to get a window
open
strove to make contact with my element.

Derick Thomson expresses the same thought in one of his earlier poems, "Marbhrann" ("Elegy," 1951):

A’ sniomh seann saoghal ann an saoghal úr
Le iomadh bristeadh snatha, mar bu dual.
'S mar b’ éigin do luchd d’eilein 's luchd do dhúthch.
Spinning an old world in a new,
With many a breaking of the yarn, as was customary
And necessary for your islesmen and compatriots.³

In conclusion, it will be seen that, like all aspects of human endeavor, there are many pluses and minuses in the field of contemporary Gaelic writing. Gaelic writing will continue longer than spoken Gaelic; there is therefore no fear for its demise in the foreseeable future: the fear is that as the spoken language becomes more corrupt and less idiomatic the standard of writing may similarly decline. The best safeguard against such deterioration is the inculcation of a deep and genuine interest in all that is best in our language. “Education” in the widest sense is perhaps the key word here, suggesting a launch-pad for a further development of this important subject.

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Choosing a Play: A Critical Survey of Neil M. Gunn's Drama

Neil M. Gunn, one of the principal Scottish novelists of the twentieth century, began writing plays from the mid-1920s, and continued to write drama and (especially latterly) radio dramatizations up until the 1960s. It is the aim of this essay to look again at this much-neglected aspect of Gunn's work, to demonstrate how his drama tried to appeal to as wide an audience as possible, how it was both a didactic and political drama, and yet how it contained elements which can be securely described as "experimental."

This is not to evade the generally accepted view that the formal nature of Gunn's plays tends to be less innovative than his novels, nor the view that his overall stagecraft was undeveloped. With important reservations, I believe these judgments, which underlie Hart and Pick's referring to Gunn's drama as a "Detour," to be correct.¹ The argument here, rather, will attempt to establish how, despite what might be considered to be flaws, his plays attempted to permeate every level of the dramatic infrastructure in Scotland. Of further issue is how these plays directly confronted issues of Scottish society few Scottish plays of the time seem to have referred to, and how, in a climate hostile to experimentation, some attempted to incorporate presentational techniques disruptive of a naturalistic mode of narrative.

In 1922, Christopher Murray Grieve described the contemporary situation:

¹F. R. Hart and J. B. Pick, Neil M. Gunn: A Highland Life (London, 1981), p. 84. All future references to this work will appear in parentheses in the text as NMG.
[George] Blake, [John] Brandane, Neil Grant, J. J. Bell, Hugh Robertson, and others are writing plays superficially Scottish—or at any rate superficially subscribing to the stock-conception of what is Scottish—but, apart from the fact that these plays are in every respect inferior to English or Irish plays in their respective genres, and are entirely destitute of literary distinction or significance, it must be emphasised that in embodiment and effect they are not only not Scottish but anti-Scottish. . . . The appetency for such entertainments exists in direct ratio to the denationalisation of those who produce and patronise them; and—for example—is any Scot more denationalised, more incapable of reacting in a typically national way, than the Scot who imagines that extensions of village idiocy or calf-love akin to those with which the music hall genius of Harry Lauder has so long proliferated, or the exhibitionism due to inbreeding and sectarianism exemplified in Kailyard productions, or the cinema excesses of Celticism, are in the slightest degree Scottish? These things bear the same relation to that which is essentially Scottish as the average best seller bears to what is really literature.  

The picture is of a drama which has not learnt from the new plays of other countries and which, like the novel, has been distressingly infected by the Kailyard and the Celtic Twilight. David Hutchison notes that a large number of plays of the interwar period, though written by Lowland writers, dealt with the Highlands and these usually treated Highlanders stereotypically and as figures of fun. At the time, comedies which bore the strong influence of the music hall were common, but there were also plays which borrowed popular genres from abroad. Specifically in Inverness, for example, Gunn would have found a staple fare of Kailyard plays, but also thrillers and plays about American gangsters.

Grieve's blanket survey has to be handled carefully. There were some attempts at more intelligent plays in Scotland, though it is notable that they occurred some time after Grieve's criticism. For example, J. A. Ferguson’s *The King of Morven*, staged at Glasgow’s Lyric Theatre in 1926, although still based in what appears to be the early nineteenth century, is a disturbing Munro-like fable of Highland emigration. James Bridie had *Sunlight Sonata* performed in Glasgow in 1928, and went on to write more important plays. Moreover, because Grieve focused on drama in Scotland rather than Scottish drama, and perhaps because he held a very dim view of Scottish successes in

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England, he was also dismissive of Barrie’s considerable non-naturalistic achievements on the London stage, a prejudice which only R. D. S. Jack’s *The Road to the Never Land* (Aberdeen, 1991) has begun to redress in Scotland.

That said, Grieve’s mention of superior Irish plays would have found favor with Gunn, who was enthusiastic about the Abbey Theatre in Dublin which he visited in the 1920s (NMG, p. 85).

Characteristically, the poet also favored “high” and avant-garde drama which did not just deal with important issues but created its own techniques and modes of presentation. In the same article he suggested that the innovations of a new Scottish drama might include:

The extension of the theatre into the midst of the audience, or the abolition of platform and scenic detachment altogether—the extensive re-adaptation of the method of progress by soliloquy along lines appropriate to Scottish self-disclosure—the deliberate extirpation of English influences and rejection of English expedients of all kinds and the search for effective Continental affiliations—all these must be considered.  

In short, Grieve was suggesting the disruption of dramatic conventions along the principles which we recognize now in Brecht and Pirandello, in political and in modernist theater.

Nationalism framed Grieve’s modernist argument. The Scottish National Players, a company operating from Glasgow and presenting new Scottish plays, were saved full censure from Grieve only because, he argued, they unconsciously disseminated “the idea that there is (or rather should be) a difference between Scottish and English drama, [though] intelligent people who witness these productions will see that nevertheless no such difference exists and ask why?” Grieve’s ideas for a new drama—that it should be experimental as well as politically challenging within a specifically Scottish context—were in part shared by Gunn, who sent two of his earliest plays to Grieve for advice. One of those plays, “The Ancient Fire,” performed by the Scottish National Players at the Glasgow Lyric in late 1929, is a good example of a play which uses non-naturalistic techniques to deal with nationalist issues.

In the correspondence between Gunn and the Scottish playwright John MacIntyre (“John Brandane”), it is clear that Gunn identified with Grieve’s

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6 “Causerie,” p. 91.


8 A typescript copy of “The Ancient Fire” is kept in National Library of Scotland, Deposit 209 and another in the Lord Chamberlain’s collection at the British Library (L. C. P. CORR. The Ancient Fire. 1929/9244). The latter text has handwritten emendations which may, or may not, be the censorship of the Lord Chamberlain. They warrant further scrutiny.
ideas. Though Gunn's letters do not appear to have survived, his attitude can be ascertained from MacIntyre's desire to steer him away from attempts at the innovative:

About your modernist Scots drama. I don't think the "modernist" element should obtrude itself much. Seek first drama—a very elusive and not easily characterised affair—and the rest shall be added unto you. But of course take it in Scots rain and wind and snow if you can for the Auld Mither has need of its wings and its song: modern then if you like or very ancient, so long as the elfin thing is Scots drama. And if propaganda comes in, why not? So long as it [is] ancillary to drama it can do no harm. To make drama servant to a sermon, however, needs the genius of a Shaw, doesn't it?9

Even MacIntyre's diction—"the elfin thing"—betrays his Celtic Twilight influences. In this paragraph and elsewhere he rejects for Scotland all of Grieve's tenets: the experimental (which I take to be what "modernist" means here), the expression of contemporary issues ("modern"), the polemical ("propaganda"), and, at least by implication, the national preoccupations. The latter MacIntyre rejected more explicitly by arguing that the great contemporary innovators did not workout of a consciousness of their own country's traditions and culture:

Pirandello, Tchekov and Ibsen developed techniques all different for anything that had gone before—but these were expressions of individual character and not of any Italian, Russian or Norwegian outlook.10

MacIntyre's disregard of historical context, the legacy perhaps of a late Victorian aestheticism which divorced political considerations from art, would not have found sympathy with Gunn who argued, again and again, for the need to understand authors within a historical and national perspective. Commentators today on Pirandello, Chekhov, and Ibsen are rather less ready than MacIntyre to dismiss national influences.

The repertory theater, as represented by the Scottish National Players, was one area of dramatic activity in which Gunn sought to have his plays placed, succeeding, as already noted, with "The Ancient Fire" (that this was the only three-act play thus performed indicates a minimal success). But this was not the only area. By 1926, approximately the time Gunn started writing plays, a new fashion in Scottish theater was entering what became its boom decade.

Utilizing new short plays (usually only one act), "community drama" operated through local amateur companies who could produce plays in local halls and, if they so chose, present them at competitions organized by the newly-cre-

9MacIntyre to Gunn, November 11, 1928, in NLS, Deposit 209.

10MacIntyre to Gunn, December 29, 1928, in NLS, Deposit 209.
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ated Scottish Community Drama Association. It recognized a previously unplumbed need for involvement in the performance arts and, though more often used in a solely entertaining fashion (if anything is "solely" entertaining), its popularity meant it was a potentially powerful means of disseminating art and ideas to those who might not otherwise think in terms of high art and radical politics. Community drama was also widely reviewed in Scottish newspapers. As such it was an attractive form for Gunn, both in artistic and political terms, and he wrote at least seven one-act plays in the community drama mold. C. J. L. Stokoe’s *A Bibliography of the Works of Neil M Gunn* (Aberdeen, 1987) shows that many of these were published in *The Scots Magazine*, but some were published individually by Porpoise, by Faber, Walter Wilson (Glasgow), and by Nelson, and some were collected in anthologies, notably Back Home in Harraps’ *The Best One-Act Plays of 1931*, selected by J. M. Marriott. As the unqualified title and English publisher of Marriott’s selection suggest, Gunn’s drama made some small impact beyond Scotland.

A final important area of drama for Gunn was that of radio. This developing and increasingly influential medium he targeted early in its history. His one-act play *The Hawk’s Feather*, for instance, was broadcast from Aberdeen by the BBC in September 1929. Though a play suitable for community drama might translate into radio, Gunn also wrote specifically with broadcasting in mind (for instance “Old Highland Ballet,” though never performed, was written for this purpose). He also adapted short stories as dramatizations for radio. A further illustration of his creative versatility was the technique he used in the 1940s to write essentially non-fiction broadcasts about the Highlands and Islands within a dramatic format. “In The Land We Defend: The Western Highlands and Islands of Scotland,” for instance, he personifies the various regions and the sea and makes them dispute with each other. This latter, very different, category is not discussed further in this essay.

Gunn’s plays can be seen, therefore, not only as spanning the distance between a vision of cutting-edge theater, the unrealized potential represented by the Scottish National Players, and the humbler aims of the community drama movement, but as infiltrating perhaps all the categories of drama available to him in Scotland. His plays also maintained his presence at large at a time when, despite the critical success of *The Grey Coast* (London, 1926), his novel *The

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12"Old Highland Ballet," dated November 24, 1945, NLS, Deposit 209. Stokoe’s bibliography is particularly helpful in tracing examples of changes from written text to broadcast, e.g., see the entries for “Black Woollen Gloves.”

13“The Land We Defend: The Western Highlands and Islands of Scotland,” broadcast on the Scottish Home Service, 30.8.40. Typescripts of this are held at the BBC in Glasgow and in NLS, Deposit 209.
Lost Glen (Edinburgh, 1932) was being refused by publisher after publisher. In the end, his writing of a third more congenial novel Morning Tide (Edinburgh, 1931) resolved this problem and The Lost Glen was published on the strength of that book’s success. Acceptance of the plays of this early period, he wrote to Nan Shepherd, “All means that our forces are beginning to make a slight impression.”

Perhaps the most immediate characteristic of many of these plays is their head-on presentation of political and economic problems. Though it is fair to regard The Lost Glen as a polemical exception among the novels, the plays reveal much more than a passing interest in writing creatively with politics in mind. Some of the plays, but by no means all, are contemporaneous with the creation of The Lost Glen. This suggests that the late 1920s were a time in which Gunn, becoming increasingly attracted to nationalism and involved at an organizational level in the National Party of Scotland, felt an urgent wish to translate his political convictions into art. While national politics do not surface so explicitly in his novels as a whole, the later plays which concentrate on political topics show that Gunn did not rule out serious discussion of “domestic” issues even when he was better established as a novelist. Margery McCulloch’s observation that Gunn’s non-fiction articles joined his plays in constituting a “recurrent investigation of [Highland] decline” can be re-expressed in terms of Gunn differentiating between media, finding in the one-act play and the essay a direct platform for the practical business of politics, and reserving the novels for longer-paced ideas which, though broaching political subjects, had a more traditionally universal artistic framework.

Gunn did not deal only with the Highlands, however. The unpublished “The Ancient Fire,” for instance, while having its second act set in the Western Highlands has the first and last act set in Glasgow. This play presents on the one hand a city whose virtual mono-industry of shipbuilding has made whole communities dependent on warship contracts, and on the other, a Highland estate controlled by a member of the American nouveaux riches. It opens and closes in a draper’s shop in Glasgow’s Gorbals, with the wives of unemployed shipworkers trying to buy shirts on credit for their husbands. It describes a city where the police monitor, arrest, and even deport those with Bolshevik sympathies (Act, I, S. 1). With such a scenario, it is difficult to see why Gunn and the play were omitted from Hutchison’s survey, especially given Hutchison’s analysis of the drama of the period as failing to address urban problems while elic-
“Choosing a Play: Neil M. Gunn’s Drama”

Choosing “an obsession with the past, with rural life and with the Highlands.”

“The Ancient Fire” shows an early and unrecognized artistic treatment of the twentieth-century city—not only within Gunn’s oeuvre but within Scottish drama as a whole.

It also shows not only a tension between images of city and countryside but a servant-master relationship common to both. One character in thrall to the American laird says to him:

You think money can experience anything. It can’t. It gives the power that kills, that destroys. It makes everything its slave. It degrees. Its power is a terrible crime. It builds the cities and slums you come from [. . .]. It makes poverty—and that’s worse. (Act 2, Sc. 3)

In short, the play attempts to unite Highlands and Lowlands through a critique of capitalism, another artistic response to contemporary Scotland worthy of note.

The one-act Glendaruel, printed in The Scots Magazine in 1929 and therefore contemporary with “The Ancient Fire,” is even more a city play. Wholly based in Glasgow, its subject, a discussion of the murder of a prostitute, again tries to relate countryside issues with urban ones: the murderer is apparently an immigrant from the Highlands. The characters, a Highlander (Mac), a Lowlander (Armstrong), and an Englishman (Smith), escape the joke-scenario such a dramatis personae suggests and, as the Scottish characters compose satirically romantic versions of the story, the play becomes a short but sophisticated investigation of fictions which have created, and controlled, contemporary Scotland. The prostitute’s name, Mary Stewart, and the song which is sung at the scene of her death (“Deirdre’s Farewell” or “Glendaruel”) provide bitter antagonistic entertainment for the journalists as they make the name and song symbolic:

ARMSTRONG: (Lays down paper and proceeds to dictate. His compressed expression suggests that he may have in view the satisfaction of getting at Mac indirectly.) A shocking tragedy was discovered this evening in Doordre Street, Cowcaddens. A young woman, named Mary Stewart, was found with her throat cut in a small room which she tenanted along with her grandmother, Nell Stewart, better known in the neighbourhood as Nell-the-Tink, the street player and spaewife. It is believed that these Stewarts originally belonged to the fairly well-known tinker clan of that name—

SMITH: (writing)—Ah, that’s the stuff!

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16Hutchison, op. cit., p. 176.

17Glendaruel, in The Scots Magazine 12:3 (December, 1929), 177-87.
ARMSTRONG (after a sardonic glance): And—and sometimes referred to still in this country as the Clan Royal. Ah—ah—

MAC: You've put him off his stride, Smith.

SMITH: Shut up, Mac! Proceed, Armstrong. I'll give you a typed dup. of your own eloquence toute de suite.

MAC (to Smith): The Clan Royal touch should be rather good for your write-up for the People's Weekly.

SMITH: Thanks awfully for nothing. My dear fellow, it's going to be the feature. Good Scotsmen—that is, Scots buddies—will discuss it on the way to—to kirk. I shall make them look forever after on the tinkers clan royal with a wild amazement—all the way from the blue peaks of Assynt to the church spires of (swallowing it) Eclefeckan. Mr. Armstrong, Sir?

ARMSTRONG: How Nell Stewart came to leave her clan, why she abandoned many years ago the roving ways of her people, the encampments by lonely roads, the crying of peewit and whaup across the stillness of moors in the night-time—

SMITH (his shorthand pencil flying): Oh nyum-nyum!

ARMSTRONG: Will make a story that is old as the Gaelic race itself, that only a Gaelic journalist could write—but that no Gaelic journalist will write, because it gives away his dark secret, strips it (with a slight gesture) of its most enigmatic politeness.

SMITH (charmed): Shades of Cookoein! (p. 180)

Once again, the mere outline of this play, its engagement with urban problems outside the propriety of the middle classes, and especially its interest in fictional representations of Scotland, show that Gunn was writing a drama that was socially aware and intellectually searching. His interest in the effect of the Stewart myth on Scotland, the radical reinterpretation of which Murray Pittock identifies as a constituent part of the Scottish Renaissance, also surfaces in The Hawk's Feather, discussed below.18

Distinct from these national plays are those which, though with nationalistic undertones, deal much more specifically with Highland problems. These are one-act, one-issue plays: Old Music, about emigration from the Highlands, Hail, Caledonian!, about the Scottish contribution to the failure of a Westminster Bill which would have given the Highlands hydro-electric power at a much earlier date than the region eventually received it, and Net Results about the

bankruptcy of North-east herring fishermen.\textsuperscript{19} Like his overtly national plays and \textit{The Lost Glen}, the issues are deliberately and provocatively up-to-date.

In \textit{Net Results} for example, a fisherman, Tom, and his father are hosts to their bank manager who is effectively threatening to foreclose on the loan taken out to buy their boat. In their defense Tom reels off statistics, detailing the mark-up for seilers of fish, as well as the overall decline in prices. This involves contemporary cash values and the effect is to show that the fisherman is fully aware of the financial side of his work, and that he is neither a spendthrift nor financially naive. Tom’s lengthy and climactic presentation of these statistics before the banker—they take up some forty lines in the printed text—is a deliberate attempt to present a set of alternative accounts, to show that the figures in which the banker prides himself in having mastered to professional proficiency have parallel figures that are as fully realized, and costed, by the fishermen. Tom is not mystified by arithmetic or professional status. Rather, it is the banker who has, indeed requires, a selective view of the economic system in order to play his part in it. This refusal of larger meaning paradoxically allows the banker to be omnipotent, as Tom’s satirical but exasperated final flourish implies:

\begin{quote}
TOM: Yes. During these last ten years we have put hundreds of tons of the finest fresh fish on the market. Hundreds of tons of food for the people of this country. Hundreds of tons of food. If we had got half the average retail price we would have made a fortune. Yet here we are being sold up as bankrupts, reduced to beggars, as if we had committed a crime.

BANKER: I see your point. I sympathize with you. But that does not meet the present difficulty. Without the bank you would have had no boat at all.

TOM: The bank has given, the bank has taken away, blessed be the bank. \textit{(p. 28)}
\end{quote}

Gunn realized that those likely to be presenting this community drama might find the fishing data difficult to convey naturally, and so he supplied special instructions in his Acting Notes:

\begin{quote}
Though these lines are full of what, at first sight, may appear to be statistics on the fishing industry, the actor must realize that these speeches contain the dramatic justification for the play. There is a passionate truth behind “figures” when these very figures spell disaster for the man who is quoting them. As the three men discuss their business, drama is provided in the strong contrast in character. \textit{(p. 31)}
\end{quote}

These directions, which are over and above those which intersperse the conversation, are accompanied by advice on making the other characters behave as realistically as possible, and the text also has Gunn's stage diagram. These details illustrate Gunn's commitment to the craft of theater and they show, even when writing in the framework of community drama, how he consciously tried to bring to Scottish drama difficult and problematic situations.

As the serious playing with Scottish myths in “The Ancient Fire” and Glen­daruel illustrates, Gunn’s drama makes the sophisticated connection between fictive representations of Scotland and its reality. In Old Music, the Highlands are shown to be a particular victim of romanticization. While the grandson of Mrs. Ross embarks on a steamer bound for Canada, Mrs. Ross is asked to sing mournfully for the benefit of an English collector of Gaelic songs, the comically-named Mrs. Smith-Wanders who says:

‘You see, what I am trying to do: is to preserve the old lovely music you have—before it dies out altogether. I think it would be an awful tragedy if it died with the old folk and no record was kept.’ (pp. 15-6)

The paradox of the English treatment of the Highlands is encapsulated in the circumstances of this speech: the culture is admired but the people are irrelevant (indeed, their irrelevance adds to the value of their cultural “products”). The exploitive nature of the collector’s intrusive and almost palaeontological approach to “sublime” Highland culture links it with the emigration of Mrs. Ross’s grandson. Old Music offers, therefore, a critique of the representations of Highland society, identifying such images with the destructive economic forces of which emigration was, and is, one result.

In his grasp of this inter-relationship, and his creative expression of it, Gunn anticipates Peter Womack’s analysis of the effects of centuries of romanticization of the Highlands: “the more elevated the Highland image becomes, and the more poignantly gratifying its evocations of human nobility, the more ruinously it pays for its moral splendour by its separation from practical life.”20 The first words spoken by Mrs. Smith-Wanders as she sees Mrs. Ross singing in an expression of grief are: "Isn’t she perfect" (p. 13). “Does she always do it like that? [her nephew asks.] No. Musical emotion. Really carried away. They’re marvellous like that. Do you feel the Celtic gloom?” (p. 14)

What the plays offer us, therefore, is not only a political aspect of Gunn one might not have gleaned from a casual reading of most of his novels, but his understanding of the potentially destructive nature of myth. Indeed, what amounts to a caricaturing of the music collector in Old Music, like the caricature of the ex-colonial officer Hicks in The Lost Glen, returns, as it were, the

20Peter Womack, Improvement and Romance (Basingstoke, 1989), p. 169.
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serve of stereotyping into the English court. The English cease to have reality, while Highlanders become flesh and blood.

While this in itself is a partial view, an antagonism Gunn worked through in his novels, it is important to realize that this was occurring while he was writing books. Though the precise time cannot be pinpointed, Old Music and Net Results are products of the middle to late 1930s and as such were written in the same period as the writing of Wild Geese Overhead and Second Sight (itself a re-working of a three-act play of the same name). The Silver Darlings was in genesis in these years, too. With this in mind, the sensitivity to the implications of fictive constructions as expressed in the plays invite us to read Gunn’s novels much more as a re-negotiation of vital myths not only of the Highlands, or of Scotland, but of the individual and his or her world view. This, I would suggest, is how Gunn’s novels are increasingly being read. The plays can be seen therefore as introducing what amounts in the novels to a deliberate choosing of stories and images which connect with reality, positing a carefully balanced and constructive alternative to the centuries-old paradox of praise-in-print but destruction-in-deed.

In his novels, Gunn’s forging of an optimistic poetic on to a hard-headed attitude towards problem-solving took the best part of the 1920s and the early 1930s to achieve. What has become regarded as a characteristic of Gunn’s fiction, the upbeat resolution of his plots, is not so evident in earlier books such as Butcher’s Broom and of course The Lost Glen, both novels whose denouements are tragic. This can be related not just to Highland decline but to the Great Depression itself. Indeed, even an apparently optimistic mid-career novel such as his magnum opus The Silver Darlings is undercut by the hints (and hindsight’s certain knowledge) of the economic slump about to affect the eastern seaboard as the novel draws to a close. In the plays, which extend into the late 1930s, there is almost always a pessimistic, inconclusive ending.

In Old Music, the old woman and her son agree that she will not sing for the music collector after she has been persuaded to return tomorrow, but their last words recognize the finality of the emigration which has touched them both so personally. “He’s gone,” she says. Her son says simply, “Yes,” and the curtain falls (p. 25). Again, Gunn provides Acting Notes for the handling of this. He stresses the difference between his play and other representations of the Highlands:

Usually the acting of plays from a Gaelic background is too thickly steeped in gloom, with a tendency to have speech drawn out in a mournful ochone tone. Actually the characters in this play, as in real life, do their best to fight against exhibiting sorrow. (p. 26)

As a letter from John MacIntyre to Gunn shows, the latter was sensitive to contemporary misrepresentation of the Highlands, finding the comic parts of MacIntyre’s Argyll play The Glen is Mine, published under his pseudonym John Brandane, close to Harry Lauder. Brandane replied:
And even when my comedy is broad, I claim I am fighting against the caricature of the Graham Moffats and the Harry Lauders and the Will Fyffes and "Punch’s" Highlanders and that of the Londoner’s squint-vision. That you should think I link up with these, I can only attribute to your previous acquaintanceship with the poor stage versions of *The Glen is Mine* as done in Inverness . . . and to your lack of acquaintance with the people of Argyll.  

This, then, is one reason why Gunn gives extra advice to the actors on how to play the Highlanders in *Old Music*. This establishes his play as one set against Celtic Twilight distortions or indeed music hall influences, clearing the way for an avoidance of a lachrymose or histrionic closure: “The play ends quietly on a note of fatal acceptance, and life in the old place goes on” (p. 26).

A “note of fatal acceptance,” however, characterizes the presentation, rather than indulgence, of fatalism which constitutes many of the plays. “The Ancient Fire” ends with the death of the main protagonist’s friend and the resumption of dependency on naval contracts for the Gorbals’ survival. *Net Results* ends with the banker’s intransigence and the fisherman’s forlorn hope of finding new guarantors for his loan. Another play, *Back Home* (Glasgow, 1932) concludes with the hero, a student returned to the Highlands from studies in the Central Belt, despairing at the enervated way of life he finds waiting for him; he finally deserts his family.

Once again, the trenchancy of *The Lost Glen* can be seen in microcosm in the plays. Coming after a presentation of the contemporary Highlands, or (more rarely) contemporary Glasgow, both areas exhausted from within and pressurized from without, the endings of the plays pack a polemical punch rather than re-tread the Twilight enjoyment of woe. Unlike most of the twentieth century dramatic presentations of Scotland before he began writing plays, Gunn’s arise from a basis not only of wishing to describe Scotland as it exists in the Now, but from his ability to present these issues seriously and movingly. While it would be fatuous to compare Gunn’s drama to Brecht’s on technical criteria, the unease with which Gunn’s plays end, while avoiding the idea of the completion/purgation of grand tragedy, shares the penetrating discomfort of Brecht’s endings. Gunn seems to ask the same questions asked in the Epilogue to *The Good Woman of Setzuan*:

> We feel deflated too. We too are nettled
> To see the curtain down and nothing settled.

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21 Macloudy to Gunn, October 25, 1929, NLS, Deposit 209.

How could a better ending be arranged?
Could one change people? Can the world be changed?
Would new gods do the trick? Will atheism?
Moral rearmament? materialism?
It is for you to find a way, my friends.
To help good men arrive at happy ends.
Yes write the happy ending to the play!
There must, there must, there's got to be a way!23

There is a tendency for Gunn to use realism in plays where a realistic portrayal of the victim-characters is of the essence. Centuries of fantastic portrayals of the Highlands and its inhabitants meant that one strategy of a modern Highland drama was to strip the myths away. The Glasgow plays do not fail to acknowledge Glasgow's profound problems of poverty either.

As we have seen, in the plays which use realism there is a special sensitivity towards the reality gap. In Glendaruel, for instance, this amounts to the difference between a prostitute being murdered in a Glasgow slum and, discussed by the main characters, the all-too delicious tragic myths of Mary Queen of Scots, the Stewarts, and of Deirdre leaving Scotland for her death in Ireland. Formally speaking, the action of the play is merely the discussion between three journalists, eventually broken by the entrance of the old woman who had been singing "Glendaruel" and who rather disconcertingly has been muttering offstage for some time previous—this surely constitutes a non-traditional device, and can be calculated to have a disturbing effect when performed. In other words, Glendaruel is a play of ideas: the static form of the play, though deliberately undercut by those whispers, focuses on discussion and psychological interaction between the characters rather than physical action.

However, Gunn also used non-realistic narrative techniques. "The Ancient Fire" has a nightmare sequence which shows more clearly how Gunn was willing to at least press at the edges of experimentation. The hero of the play, the middle-aged shopkeeper Lachlan, accidentally knocks himself out on the troublesome antlers of a shot stag he had earlier found terminally wounded and had destroyed. The stage is darkened and Gunn instructs there to be only a "thin spectral greenish-blue light" illuminating it. Lachlan's double rises from what for all the audience knows might be a corpse. There then follows a sequence in which Lachlan tries to strangle his friend the caged-bird seller, an American tries to seduce a Highland girl, and an elderly woman interjects by singing a Gaelic air. When the American sees the stag and cries out that a man has been "crucified on a stag's horns" Lachlan wakes up and the disturbing dream is over.

The technical difficulty of Lachlan rising from his own body seems to be have been solved by having an extra lie on the horns, the actor playing Lachlan subsequently taking up a position elsewhere on the stage for the duration of the dream. Unfortunately, on the first night the extra was not visible from the dress circle of the Lyric and this caused some confusion! From the beginning of their correspondence, MacIntyre tried to have the whole scene and other parts of the play changed, enclosing pages of amendments. While MacIntyre’s stage sense has to be acknowledged as that of a playwright with considerable experience, Gunn’s marginalia to these suggestions show again how distant the two were in ambition and artistic understanding. For instance, Gunn insists that stage technology should be used to help tell the narrative: the use of special lighting should be enough to indicate that the sequence is that of a dream, whereas MacIntyre had suggested partitioning the stage. Gunn’s curt “No!” in the margin occurs where MacIntyre tries to give the Highlanders dialogue which had more business in the music hall. For example, MacIntyre suggested the addition of phrases such as “och, och.”

MacIntyre wanted to write the stag out of the scene altogether, admitting that the symbolism of the antlers would be lost, but Gunn was adamantly: “But it mustn’t be lost. If the symbolism is lost I’d rather it not played at all.” In fact, the stag is central to the play. Satirically glancing at Landseer’s “The Monarch of the Glen,” it is used by Gunn in the same way as the self-impaling aspect of the thistle in MacDiarmid’s A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle: “The Presbyterian thistle flourishes, And its ain roses crucifies...” (ll. 2246-7). Indeed, in the final act, one character, significantly a communist (Gunn and MacDiarmid anticipate the alleged left-wing interests of the “Auden generation” by years) actually likens the stag to a thistle, a comparison which constitutes an early artistic echo of MacDiarmid’s masterpiece. As in the poem, Scotland’s own myths seem to crucify Scotland. The lungs of Lachlan’s friend are punctured by the antlers in the crush of Gorbals people who follow the strange sight of a man in Glasgow with a stag across his shoulders. As the communist tells Lachlan, what could have been a triumphal procession of defiance of the law (the stag is technically poached), becomes an embarrassed and pathetic fiasco:

A Scotsman hasn’t it in him to be a rebel, I know. But—to see a man like you—the fire of our race—followed by the people like a conqueror... acting as if you were hunted, hiding the damn thing, ashamed of it... crawling back here—for what—to sell to a miserable woman for her workless husband—a cheap shirt.

MacIntyre to Gunn, October 8, 1929, NLS. Deposit 209.

MacIntyre to Gunn, December 23, 1928, NLS, Deposit 209.

The dream sequence therefore is not expendably detached from the rest of the play. It concentrates the play’s symbols, of which the stag is but one, and in so doing alerts or confirms to the audience that the play is working at a deliberately symbolic level outside the nightmare itself. MacIntyre felt that it plunged the audience from a basically realistic narrative into one they would not be able to understand.

It seems to me that you may have had Pirandello’s *Six Characters in Search of an Author* in mind when you wrote the ‘Unconscious’ scene. But Pirandello’s Play has only 2 pages (and those the first 2) out of 71 pages where the Plane of Reality alone is made use of. The following whole 6 pages are concerned with the intermingling of the Planes of Dream & Reality—whereas your ‘Unconscious’ Scene is one scene of the Dream World interjected into a world of Reality (so-called) [. . .] Pirandello’s play has a unity yours hasn’t, and there is therefore no puzzlement introduced by a sudden leap such as you make.27

Today, it is difficult to see how an audience could misunderstand the intention of the scene. At the time, however, MacIntyre was, practically speaking, right: it did lead to some in the audience failing to grasp the idea of the play, and it contributed to reviewers lamenting in the play as a whole the lack “entirely of any semblance of dramatic form” (*NMG*, p. 89).

While part of the problem was also what John MacNair Reid called an “amateurish” cast and a “middling” producer (Tyrone Guthrie, whom Gunn expected to produce the play, had left, unexpectedly, for the South), this reception, I would argue, is more revealing about the state at the time of Scottish drama, and the consequent receptivity of its audience, than it is of failings in “The Ancient Fire” (*NMG*, p. 88). In the late 1920s, when theater-going Scots had been receiving by and large formally and intellectually simplistic plays, even Gunn’s tempered experimentation was treated as outlandish. The political aspects of the play, some of which MacIntyre also wanted to cut, as well as erotic elements, may have proved difficult, too.

The symbolic in “The Ancient Fire” almost as much as the ‘Unconscious’ scene represents an aspect of Gunn’s drama that sets it apart from the work of most of his Scottish contemporaries and it is this that is taken further in the one-act play *The Hawk’s Feather*.28 In this play a brother and sister, Charlie and Flora, are showing a bothie to William, a self-made entrepreneur who is due to buy their land. While they are doing this a character, “The Visitor,” arrives at the hut. He resembles Charlie and is dressed like the Young Pretender. He regrets the past and wishes it to be put aside. Then his “Keeper,” a man who

27 MacIntyre to Gunn, December 29, 1928, NLS, Deposit 209.

resembles William (who, we learn, is from Cumberland), arrives. The Keeper reveals that the Visitor is kept in an institution funded by Scottish benefactors with a Whiggish temperament, and then Keeper and Visitor leave. Charlie blows the candles out, and leaves, too. William, who, symbolically enough, has made his fortune from petrol lighters, lights one candle. Flora, hoping to keep the land in the family by marrying the prospective buyer, looks invitingly at William and the curtain descends.

The idea of the Institution, especially its association with a national mental illness, is ingenious, especially as it is never absolutely clear whether The Visitor is a real escaped patient with delusions or in fact a supernatural or surreal apparition. This blurring contributes to the play's suspenseful nature, but also emphasizes how ambiguously discomforting the Bonnie Prince Charlie myth actually is. This aspect of the play walks the line (in my view, successfully) between contrivance and suspension of disbelief, as the discussion of the murdered woman, Mary Stewart, had in Glendaruel. However, the foil for the Young Pretender myth—the contemporary characters Charlie, Flora, and William—makes the symbolic interpretation of the play the primary one. The significant names, and especially the use of recurrence—the transfer of military triumph (Culloden) to the contemporary triumph of the Cumberland magnate, with Flora's prostituting herself to retain any share in her own estate—produce a drama that is more wholly symbolic than any other play Gunn wrote.

Such self-consciousness is taken even further in Choosing a Play. As the title suggests, the play is about drama itself. The main characters are a man and woman who are arguing over what play to put on for the forthcoming Community Drama Festival. The woman, Flora, prefers an historical Highland tragedy; the man, Don, favors a "kitchen comedy" in the Scots kailyard tradition. Don objects to seeing tartan on stage, arguing that it is an essentially comic element of costume for a serious play, while Flora sees kitchen comedy as stereotyping the Scot as "canny." In a rousing finish, Flora eventually persuades Don and their Producer that they have been too complacent about the portrayal of Scotland on the stage.

Flora, in a way that is reminiscent of The Lost Glen's mimicking "Interlude," also questions the grounds on which Community Drama is based:

Here we are come to choose a play for the Festival, and you say the very spirit of the thing doesn't matter. I say it does. We're dealing with drama—not with a mild way of amusing well-fed people who have come to see us get ticked off by an adjudicator in a boiled shirt. Drama. That which lifts the mind and shows us to ourselves. Shows us ourselves and our race and—and—purifies us, as the old

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Gunn’s realization that the Community Drama movement had not been long in reaching a state of atrophy (if its aims had ever been artistic) are illustrated by the fact that drama itself should be his subject here. He chose not to write for its apparently low expectations but, despite Flora’s spirited championing of a poetic historical drama of the Highlands, decided against the grand tragic form “that purifies us”—indeed, there is a suggestion that he is parodying this in Flora’s speech, too. Rather, his plays present Scotland’s problems as artistic, economic, and mythical. His plays seek a framework for further art as they do for further political action. They are essentially plays demanding, pun intended, further acts.

Unfortunately, some of the plays suffer in this reader’s view from Gunn’s failure to incorporate convincing dialogue. Thus, in Hail, Caledonian!, almost the whole play is taken up by a discussion between rival socialists, one for hydroelectric power in the Highlands (Ewan) and one against (Tom). The result
is what one character at the beginning jokingly calls "the Socratic method," an interchange of opinions and, especially, facts:

TOM: The issue is quite simple and obvious, if you would only face it. We object to private ownership of what should be public works. The water power should be used in native industries, run by the people for the people. That's what we're fighting for. And you know in your bones that that's right.

EWAN: Of course I do. I agree with it absolutely. We'd throw the Caledonian Company to the devil—if we could get a Socialist scheme instead. But the point is—there is no Socialist scheme. Now, as for these native industries—at least let us be fair. Isn't it a fact that, under this Bill, any local industry started up anywhere by anyone within the area of the Scheme would have first call on the electricity generated by the Company itself? So that if you wanted to start a tweed mill, or a wood-pulping concern, or a place for making horn spoons out of Glen-garty antlers, or any other nice little dream of a business, the Company would be bound to supply you with electricity, and to supply it—at cost price. At present you cannot start such an industry because of the immense initial outlay before you can generate the electricity. Even with all the rateable value of the County behind them, the Inverness County Council couldn't face up to a scheme such as you have in this Bill. But under this Scheme, as I say, the electricity would be generated for you and you would have first call on it at cost price. Is not that the case?

TOM: Possibly. But we want to have a scheme of our own. And to hell with the Caledonian Company—even if it's a Scots company.

EWAN: Stout fellow! Little girls dream of getting presents of their own from Santa Claus. But in Fort William we're not interested in dreams, not as an economic proposition (p. 120).

The presentation of facts was important in *Net Results* not merely for the purposes of Gunn's propaganda but as a means of asserting the fishermen's complex and conscious identities against the rationalizations of the banker. Here, however, the argument for hydro-electricity is surely supplied by Gunn for the sole requirement of informing the audience. The play's primary role is to teach and to persuade—the Socrates joke is not just a joke. The plot is simply a political discussion brought to an end by the barkeeper calling time. It is social criticism with little wish to portray the psychological nature of its dramatis personae or to work on any other of the levels one normally expects from drama, or indeed from Gunn.

If this succeeds on the terms the play seems to establish for itself, faults arise in the other plays not because of ideological intent but because of self-contradiction. I mentioned earlier the caricaturing of the music-collector in *Old Music*. In fact, with the exception of William in *The Hawk's Feather* every English character in Gunn's drama has his or her language peppered with phrases such as "Phew," "By gad," "You chaps," "Cheero," [for "Cheers"], and
"Bally," comic phrases satirically used of course but perpetuating English stereotypes nevertheless. More serious, though rarer, in some plays Gunn's didacticism gets the better of him and he supplies an ending which, uncharacteristic in the plays as a whole, rather than just showing the contradictions of Scottish patriotism, tries to remodel sentimental feelings into more practical even radical ones. Because Gunn does not want to rid himself of all the Scottish icons—rather he wants to remake them for something more useful—his appeals to pride in traditional cultural baggage, such as tartan or legendary personal qualities in the Scottish personality, can read uncomfortably. For example, Flora in Choosing a Play, stirs the lead participants in the community drama with the speech:

That's the spirit. Smash the furniture. Do anything wild or mad or splendid—but never give in. Remember, never give in—or you're lost. Never, never let us give in. The old Scots spirit of adventure and courage and the great cause. Forward! (p. 140)

At this, the producer's wife and her son begin singing "March! March! Etrick and Teviotdale" and, as they take up a tartan shawl, are accompanied by the producer himself with clenched fist "as if inspiration had got him at last" (p. 140). The curtain then falls.

It could be argued that Gunn is here presenting a dialectic—between the kitchen comedy and the historical drama—and in so doing is standing back somewhat from the rousing element on which the play finishes. Flora could be portrayed in a way that would satirize her own stance—an actual production of the play could, I think, offer an interpretation either way. However, the mere fact that the play does end in this way contributes, as the earlier favorable depiction of Flora does, to the suggestion that Gunn approves of it in spirit. Flora's energy, if not the way that she channels and expresses it, has an affinity with the author's own wish to recognize the value in Scottish history and use that to change the present. The question of how to use that energy constructively is still open.

Similarly, The Bridge Builder has a "stiff-upper-lip" ending which may seem sentimental today. Here, the hero of the play is the chief engineer Melford, modeled on the true-life bridge builder Thomas Telford, but interestingly stripped of historic detail so that the play, ominously, could be taking place in the here and now. At the close of the play, his bridge just mined by "enemy agents," Melford converses with this subordinates, Cameron and Davidson:

CAMERON (uncertain): Will this now mean—that we are being paid off, that—that the work will stop?

MELFORD (with quiet if intense deliberation): The work will never stop. The blind and bloody forces of the world can destroy and destroy and destroy: but we'll build and build and build.

CAMERON (after a moment, with conviction): Sir, if you speak to the men like that, they'll be with you.

MELFORD: Some of them, Mr Cameron. True men like yourself. (CAMERON goes hurriedly out. MELFORD looks over the table and picks up a blueprint as if going about his business. DAVIDSON watches him.) It has taken the enemy to see the importance of our work, Mr Davidson. A nice compliment.

DAVIDSON: Ay. It's what you might call a shattering compliment. But there are whiles these days when I think God has gone deaf.

MELFORD: The architecture of the universe was no inconsiderable feat. Before adventuring on its criticism, we should possibly remember that we have a long leeway to make up. (Rolls print and puts it under his arm.)

DAVIDSON: Are you going out—now?

MELFORD: Yes. We must go out and see what damage has been done, and make our arrangements for clearing away all obstructions.

DAVIDSON: Are you—going ahead on the bridge—at once?

MELFORD: We have got to build the bridge, haven't we?

DAVIDSON: Yes...yes...but it's war[...]

MELFORD: If you mean our fight against the forces of unreason is only beginning, you are right. But we go on. We go on. They may be deaf to our plans. They may destroy us. But—the bridge will be built. (They face each other. DAVIDSON'S head droops in a nod of grim acceptance and satisfaction.) Come, let us go. (As they go out)—

CURTAIN (p. 140).

Published just after the outbreak of war, with candid commentary on the contempt of central government for the regions, and on the manipulation of public works contracts by landowners asking for over-the-odds purchase payments, the play is not as idealistic as this rhetoric might seem to imply. Rather Melford's passion for literally constructive enterprise is placed in opposition to humankind's destructiveness, with the suggestion that it will indeed triumph. Davidson's bringing in of the question of divine will as a question which war raises most forcefully is also, interestingly, an anticipation of the religious questions asked in *The Green Isle of the Great Deep*. Nevertheless, Gunn could
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have ended the play with much more reticence. Melford is making a speech rather than speaking to Cameron and Davidson. Cameron clearly responds favorably to this—"Sir, if you speak to the men like that, they'll be with you"—and it was, I would argue, Gunn's hope that his audience would be too. The sense of portentousness, for myself at least, remains.

Other examples of poor dialogue punctuate the plays, including those which avoid a speechified conclusion, and it is on this—after all, the primary means of communication in drama—that Gunn's drama wobbles. Grieve's early comments about two unnamed plays suggested that Gunn had not fully understood the multi-media nature of the stage:

Your two plays—I like them both—in a way. Even in a literary sense, however, I do not think they're quite in final form—I think they can come through a great deal further. But what I've been mainly troubled about is with them from a purely producer's or actor's point of view. Technically they won't do—they say too much (drama can dispense with so much verbiage—gesture, posture, etc., facial expression, and so forth are all auxiliary means of expression which render so many words superfluous—how often in real life do we complete a sentence?—it is only necessary in 9 cases out of 10 to start a sentence, and it completes itself in our faces, etc.). You say too much—on the other hand (I'm thinking mainly of the three-act play)—you don't say enough—to clarify the intended underlying action—it doesn't transpire—clogged with words that do not advance it

Gunn makes his plays do much of their work through dialogue, and debating dialogue at that, and he is generally less interested in plot or action unless they have symbolic importance. This can be seen as the result of political and didactic concerns smothering rather than integrating with artistic ones—in spite of the care he takes in directing the actors away from the damaging models of the prevailing Scottish drama. Alternatively (and I want to admit this alternative), we can read this as a drama of ideas where Grieve's wish for realism—despite his counter-realism comments quoted earlier in this chapter—for dialogue to be patterned on speech as it is spoken in ordinary life—is inappropriate.

In this latter way Gunn's interest in drama can be read as deliberately suggestive of a future drama, as it is suggestive of new political possibilities for Scotland. Rather than creating that drama, or those possibilities, his plays strive to clear the ground for future work—when Choosing a Play was reviewed by a community drama judge, Dennis Arundell, he wrote that it "amusingly tears to pieces community drama and adjudicators (every adjudicator ought to be forced

Gunn presents arguments, cases; he sketches and debates.

Unlike his novels, which are marked by their fusion of depicted psychological states, the emotional realism that takes the reader right into the head and senses of Gunn's characters, his plays are in general less concerned with individual psychology. Similarly, Gunn's gifted story-telling is to some extent lost in the dwindled narrative interest of the plays. However, in 1935, the playwright O. H. Mavor ("James Bridie") felt that in novels like *Sun Circle* and *Butcher's Broom* Gunn had shown himself too personally involved in his subject, and that drama gave him a chance to do more artistically sound work. Gunn had been writing drama for some ten years, so Mavor, an involved supporter of his plays, had a fair range of his work on which to base what might now be seen as an extraordinary judgment: "I think the theatre is the place for you. You are not tied up in it by the invisible ends of your own guilty soul, but by silly restrictions that you can see & get round."  

One way of de-personalizing one's work, of circumnavigating one's own "guilty" soul is to throw off voices—to distance oneself from one's characters—and to make formal gambles. Gunn's experience with the mild experimentation in "The Ancient Fire," however, may have suggested to him, rightly or wrongly, that Scottish audiences were simply too backward in their knowledge of art of that kind (though this is not to say in art of other kinds, for example folk song) to appreciate all but the most obvious of techniques. "The Ancient Fire" may even have been the three-act play which Grieve found oblique. For Gunn there was a need to state and re-state Scotland's political and artistic problems: the form of rational debate rather than more subtle dramatic effects seems to have been one way of presenting problems clearly in an unashamedly didactic way. The cultural infrastructure—mainly consisting of community drama and a single serious theater group which could not afford to allow its playwrights time and even critical failures to develop—could not be said to be conducive to any playwright's success in Scotland. In 1938, prompted to write about the establishment of a "Theatre Society of Scotland," Gunn certainly saw the situation as dire:

... we need a theatre ... to which Scottish writers may bring their conceptions of life, born out of heredity and environment peculiarly their own. These conceptions

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33 Mavor to Gunn, May 28, 1935, NLS, Deposit 209.

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may be defeatist, disruptive, rebellious, constructive, but at least they would refer to elements of conflict in our own country that are profoundly real, from the tragic and heroic sea-fisheries of the north to the desperate industrialism of the south, from the Highland glen to the Lowland farm, with all the vital inter-play of character and thought and aspiration such scenes inevitably imply, for portrayal through the essential Scottish conception of fantasy, comedy, and tragedy. At present a Scottish writer has no theatre to which he can take any such drama. Just as his country suffers from having no focal point, no vitalising heart, so the native playwright suffers, in this single element of the drama, from having no central stage, no national theatre, to which he may bring the fruits of his talent and have them read and judged as drama, not as hopeful commercial efforts at understudying the London stage. Even in the immense growth of the Community Drama Festival Movement, he has proved to himself already that only a certain type of play is preferred for competitive purposes. To a large degree it has become a game of acquiring marks, and the more cunning amateurs have become expert at the game (p. 198).

Gunn’s drama, in infiltrating what drama scene there was, including the newcomer of radio broadcasting, in using it for intellectual and political concerns, and in attempting some more adventurous techniques within that small circumference, asks for a revision of the history of the Scottish drama of this century. In a surely disingenuous but nevertheless tantalizing remark, Gunn went on to hint in “The Theatre Society of Scotland,” that the choice he made between writing novels and writing plays was not so clear-cut as we might have expected.

What the Scottish playwright, who feels he may have something to say or to evoke, needs is a theatre, run by professional players, to whom he can entrust the expression of adult thought and irony and imagination. Without such a theatre he is crippled in expression or simply does not write plays at all and turns to some other medium, like the novel (p. 198).

In one sense, at least, we can be grateful that Scotland’s dramatic infrastructure in the first half of the century was so poor. If it had been at all adequate we may have lost one of our finest novelists.

*The British Library*
“A Strange Apartment”: The Watch-Tower in Carlyle’s *Sartor Resartus*

What if many a so-called Fact were little better than a Fiction; if here we had no direct Camera-obscura Picture of the Professor’s History, but only some more or less fantastic adumbration, symbolically, perhaps significantly enough, shadowing forth the same! [. . .] Could it be expected, indeed, that a man so known for impenetrable reticence as Teufelsdröckh, would all at once frankly unlock his private citadel to an English Editor and a German Hofrat, and not rather deceptively in-lock both Editor and Hofrat, in the labyrinthic tortuosities and covered ways of said citadel (having enticed them thither), to see, in his half-devilish way, how the fools would look?¹

*Sartor Resartus* teems with wit, irony, fun, either in the guise of, or gently mocking from beneath, its seriousness and downright difficulty. It also playfully generates uncertainties between fiction and fact, disguise and the naked truth. The text’s humor, often lurking in obscure absurdities and a Sterne-like play with its own fictionality, tends to give way to a gravitas and profundity which many nineteenth-century readers, particularly at first in America, found both fascinating and a solace for their evanescent religious faith. Carlyle’s mathematical prowess (acquired during his studentship at Edinburgh University), his keen interests in astronomy, the years of the 1820s and early 30s spent working


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in Edinburgh and Craigenputtoch as a translator and reviewer for David Brewster, Francis Jeffrey, and Macvey Napier, and his wide reading all assisted toward enriching this dense and densely allusive text which Jane Welsh famously declared was a work of genius, and yet which so many readers today, overawed by or insensitive to its complexities, find dull or virtually unintelligible. And yet it is a text that rewards exploration, beckons its readers to play with it as scholars and thinkers play, a text that provides clues and hints that take the reader back into the world of its predominantly Scottish intellectual origins and which voices perennial concerns about the nature of human existence.

In this article I shall pursue just one interpretative journey that begins by noticing something strange about the place in which the text’s central figure, Diogenes Teufelsdrockh, lived and wrote his philosophical treatise on Clothes. The strangeness of this place, coupled with some other tantalizing hints and correspondences with historical details from Carlyle’s life and some important fragments from philosophical discourse, seems to invite the reader to treat the Teufelsdrockh’s watch-tower apartment as a metaphor or symbol for the mind of Teufelsdrockh and thus humankind. If one accepts this as at least a possibility, the model or metaphor for the mind to which the watch-tower most likely refers is the antecedent of the modern camera, the camera-obscura, a model used by Locke for describing the mind’s perceptual operations and later adopted and adapted by Hume in his formulation of the theory of ideas, the basis of his skeptical epistemology. However, as will become clear later, this metaphor of the camera obscura to which the watch-tower initially seems to refer, or which the reader may be led into thinking it suggests, through sheer vagueness and the pressure of a multiplicity of possible interpretations, ultimately defies one’s attempt to secure the watch-tower as Carlyle’s own adoption of this physicalist metaphor of the mind. Fascinatingly the text seems to allow the reader to commence a journey of interpretation and research which suggests that Teufelsdrockh’s watch-tower symbolizes his mind and that this symbol incorporates eighteenth-century mechanical metaphors for the mind, most notably the camera obscura and its constituents of a mirror to reflect images from the external world admitted through an inlet or tiny window. Such metaphoric descriptions of the mind were known by writers whom Carlyle either knew personally or may have read. But ultimately interpretation of the watch-tower as some kind of observatory tower housing a camera obscura, and all this as symbolizing Teufelsdrockh’s mind, is defeated, a defeat, however, that meshes nicely with Carlyle’s own hostility to materialism and the insistences in *Sartor Resartus* that human existence, human identity, the mind, soul, or spirit, is unfathomable, unknowable, mysterious. If the questions, what does the watch-tower symbolize? and, does it symbolize the mind? begin with a puzzle, they also end as a puzzle, a mystery. But so to end in puzzlement, mystery, wonder, is a crucial part of Carlyle’s aim in attempting to recover wonderment in an age of increasingly austere materialism, utilitarianism, and the rationalist dogmatism that envisaged a brave new world of limitless progress in
the physical sciences. That the text prompts the reader to make such interpretative journeys is itself one of the distinguishing characteristics of *Sartor* and it is to such prompting that we must first attend if we are to venture beyond mundane interpretation.

*Sartor Resartus* was first published in *Fraser's Magazine* from November 1833 to August 1834. Though much of the humor of Carlyle’s parodying of the review article style is now thwarted by its topicality, there is abundant amusement in the Clothes Philosophy’s attention to details of dress, habit of seeing into the significance and influence of clothes, and incongruous juxtaposing of humble garments with abstract thought all delivered with a Germanic high-seriousness. However, the reader is repeatedly made aware that the Clothes Philosophy addresses some of the most serious and fundamental issues concerning human existence, that, as one gradually discovers, it writes a poetry of metaphysics utterly hostile to the advancing materialism of the nineteenth century. Construed as an epic metaphysical poem in prose, the text is open to a wide range of interpretative possibilities, something to which it repeatedly draws the reader’s attention.

The text includes a seemingly disordered biography of the German Professor of Things in General, Diogenes Teufelsdrockh. This biography is presented as a translation and constructed account which the Editor has labored to produce from a chaotic jumble, the contents of six paper bags. These bags—the Biographic Documents—include everything from fragments of the Professor’s writings to his laundry bills. Containing the shreds and tatters of a life, the six paper bags are provided for the Editor to sort and interpret by the shadowy figure of Hofrath Heuschrecke, Teufelsdrockh’s disciple. The Editor himself claims to have met Teufelsdrockh and provides his own reminiscences of this strange, wild-looking, unaccountable man. With a curious attention to detail, the Editor also describes Teufelsdrockh’s watch-tower, the place in which he wrote his philosophical treatise on clothes. The Editor, who so often suggests our role as readers of *Sartor Resartus*, struggles to understand this Philosophy of Clothes and to convey it to the British reader through the periodical press. Sorting, connecting disparate threads, weaving them together into a linguistic garment that we have then to interpret as signifying meaning are some of the processes that *Sartor’s* Editor suggests are involved in our activity as readers.

The Editor forewarns the reader at the end of the “Reminiscences” chapter’s account of the watch-tower to dig deep in the forthcoming sections from the Clothes Volume since Teufelsdrockh’s soul is there enclosed or buried beneath the surface. Is something hidden in the description of the watch-tower also? The Editor suspects Heuschrecke of failing to provide a “direct Camera-obscura Picture of the Professor’s History.” Has the Editor, on behalf of the reader, done what he suspects Heuschrecke of doing? Has he received “as lit-

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2See the allusion to *Gil Blas* (SR, p. 21).
The Watch-Tower in Carlyle's Sartor Resartus

erally authentic what was but hieroglyphically so" (SR, p. 161)? If at the end of the "Reminiscences" chapter, after having described Teufelsdröckh's appearance and his watch-tower, Teufelsdröckh's "Life, Fortunes, and Bodily Presence, are as yet hidden from us" (emphasis mine), has the watch-tower both revealed and hidden something about Teufelsdröckh's mind or non-bodily presence (SR, p. 21)? Is the watch-tower, like the Biographic Documents, "only some more or less fantastic Adumbration, symbolically, perhaps significantly enough, shadowing forth" some facts about Teufelsdröckh's perceptual apparatus or abilities, about the workings of his mind in perceiving the world from his watch-tower (SR, p. 161)?

Apart from the huge fun of underlining the fictive status of the text by placing Teufelsdröckh in the highest house (the watch-tower) in the Wahngasse (Delusion Lane), at "that considerable City," Weissnichtwo (Know-not-where), and calling his publishers Stillschweigen und Cognic (Silence and Company), each of these names contains another possible signification relevant to Teufelsdröckh's mind.3 The text indicates that "thought" is signified by "Silence" (SR, p. 174). Teufelsdröckh suffers many delusions such as the "sick ophthalmia and hallucination . . . brought on" by "Mechanical Profit-and-Loss Philosophies" (SR, p. 131). Weissnichtwo itself reflects an important aspect of the text's philosophy of Mind. When Teufelsdröckh, searching for his essential self asks, "Who am I; what is this ME?" and later, after claiming that Space and Time are not realities but merely modes of Sense, answers, "WE are—we know not what,—light-sparkles floating in the æther of Deity," he is claiming that the soul/spirit/intelligence/mind is not a spatial or temporal entity (SR, pp. A1, A3).4 If the mind is an immaterial substance, unbounded by Space and Time and hence invisible, its place unknowable, then the Mind is a Know-not-where, a

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3The McSweeney and Sabor edition of Sartor translates "Wahngasse" as "Fantasy Lane"—see, Sartor Resartus, ed. with an introd. and notes by Kerry McSweeney and Peter Sabor, The World's Classics (Oxford, 1987), p. 251n. This seems quite unaccountable as the German word "Waha" means delusion or illusion. Barret's edition gives "Illusion Lane", Perry's "Dream Alley" (p. xvi); Sussman's "Delusion Lane"; and Wood, perhaps following Frothingham's "Whimsey Street" (see, Nathaniel L. Frothingham, "Sartor Resartus", Christian Examiner, 21 (1836), 74-84 (p. 74), gives "Private-whim Street". G. B. Tennyson, Sartor Called Resartus: The Genesis, Structure, and Style of Thomas Carlyle's First Major Work (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965), p. 190, gives "Dream Lane." Harrold's edition gives "Dream-lane, illusion street, etc." and notes that Grune Gans and Wahngasse were actual places in Munich which Carlyle's brother John visited and described (see, p. 20 n.1). Carlyle himself translated this word as delusion in "German Playwrights." Works, XXVI, 386.

4Tennyson, p. 190 n.28, claims that "Weissnichtwo is evidently Carlyle's translation into German of Kennaquhair from Scott's The Monastery"—as also in Harrold's edition of Sartor, p. 8 n.1.
Weissnichtwo. But Teufelsdröckh’s watch-tower apartment in Weissnichtwo, since located within this non-spatial or spatially indeterminable realm, is therefore itself conspicuously a non-spatial entity.

Carlyle devotes some four pages to the description of the watch-tower and what is “for the most part visible there” and it is briefly mentioned later in the text (see SR, pp. 15, 236). In addition to the strangeness and playful humor of situating Teufelsdröckh at the top of a tower in the Wahngasse, the watch-tower itself “was a strange apartment” (SR, p. 18). So private is this place that the Editor assures the reader that, “We enjoyed, what not three men in Weissnichtwo could boast of, a certain degree of access to the Professor’s private domicile” (SR, p. 15). As Teufelsdröckh’s mental operations in working out the Clothes philosophy were described as the workings of a loom, the tower itself re-places those mental operations, for it is “Here ... in his ... watch-tower ... that the indomitable Inquirer fought all his battles with Dulness and Darkness; here, in all probability, that he wrote this surprising Volume on Clothes” (see SR, pp. 12, 20). The watch-tower is that private place in which Teufelsdröckh composed his Philosophical discourse, a place whose named location sets itself in a non-spatial realm, the realm of fiction, and, for the anti-materialist, the realm of the mind.

Carlyle’s anti-materialism in Sartor was not a new concern nor was it unique to him. In several of his writings pre-dating the publication of Sartor, he attacked descriptions of the mind which used a physicalist or mechanistic language, metaphors which seemed to endanger moral liberty as they ossified into a literally understood terminology. His most notable direct attack on Materialist philosophy’s mechanistic construal of the mind was stated in “Signs of the Times” (1829). Prior to this Carlyle had written his aborted and posthumously published novel “Wotton Reinfred,” an attempt to write fiction which, though allegedly committed to the flames, was reborn with the radically different Sartor. As I have argued elsewhere, in vehemently attacking materialistic philosophy one of the main characters in “Wotton Reinfred,” Dalbrook, provides just one strand of evidence which suggests that, far from being drenched in German idealism as many have believed, Carlyle’s writing embroidered upon the vital canvas of the major philosophical debates of the Scottish Enlightenment.

5 In addition there are various, more elliptical, possible allusions to the watch-tower. For example, compare “scientific watch-tower” (SR, p. 3) and “Architectural Idea” (SR, p. 27).


7 For example see Works, XXVII, 66.
Notably Dalbrook laments the results of the mechanistic ideal theory or theory of ideas.\(^8\)

The theory of ideas was the most prevalent theory of mind in the eighteenth century and beyond.\(^9\) Excepting earlier manifestations, including Locke’s *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, its more immediate and controversial enunciation is to be found in Hume’s brief outline at the beginning of the *Treatise*.\(^10\) The theory of ideas attempts to explain how the mind, given that it is ontologically distinct from the body, can perceive/know physical entities (body)—that is, how can matter enter mind, how can the mind know that which is distinct from and external to it? A physicalist language of impressions causally determining ideas in a mechanistic sequence of events that prioritized matter over mind loosely characterizes this persuasive theory which formed the basis of Hume’s skeptical metaphysics. Taken as the premises of a highly destructive skepticism which threatened to fragment everything into nothingness and which began with a physicalist/mechanistic description of the mind and the process of perception, the theory of ideas and its whole tendency to result in an absurd absolute skepticism was directly countered by its strongest eighteenth-century opponent, the Scottish philosopher and founding father of the so-called Scottish school of Common-Sense, Thomas Reid.

To crush this infamous thing—the theory of ideas—which described the mind as nothing more than a machine, the human intellectual powers of perception as riven by delusions, became Reid’s principal task and achievement. His work, by striking contrast to that of the infidel Hume, earned him the chair of Moral Philosophy at Glasgow University in 1764. Though modified and subjected to major criticisms and transformations throughout years of continued intellectual debate, Reid’s philosophy had an immense influence in both Scotland and America. In Scotland, Reidian Common Sense persisted as the dominant system of philosophy well into the 1850s, mainly through the work of philosophers based at Edinburgh University—Dugald Stewart, Thomas Brown, and Sir William Hamilton. In the nineteenth century, as Philip Flynn argues, “Common sense . . . [philosophy] was Scotland’s *genius loci*.”\(^11\)

Having attended some of Brown’s lectures as a young student, by the time Carlyle came to write *Sartor Resartus* he had read philosophical works by

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Hamilton, Stewart, Reid, and Hume. He had also read an extensive range of articles in the philosophically literate *Edinburgh Review*. Friends and acquaintances included several writers who had written about Reid’s philosophy—in particular Francis Jeffrey and Sir William Hamilton (perhaps the last major champion of Reid’s philosophy in the nineteenth century). Within certain articles in the *Edinburgh Review* and more importantly as a central strand of Reid’s arguments opposing Hume’s skepticism, a preoccupation germane to Carlyle’s writing emerges: an awareness of the metaphoricity of language which, in Reid’s philosophy, played a crucial role in his attempts to reveal the spurious and dangerous nature of the theory of ideas.

Reid argued against the way of analogy, the use of metaphors, to reach the truth about the mind. He claimed that “Analogies will be apt... to lead... [philosophers and the vulgar] to materialize the mind and its faculties.”

Present also in Reid’s philosophy was a strong insistence on our ignorance concerning the relationship between mind and body in the act of perception, an ignorance which the theory of ideas purportedly aimed to enlighten and remove. This strand of thought in Reid’s work concerning our ignorance of precisely how the mind can know that which is external to it became conspicuous in Hamilton’s influential doctrine of nescience which he first promulgated in an *Edinburgh Review* article extolling the virtue of acquiring “a ‘learned ignorance’ [as] the most difficult acquirement—perhaps, indeed, the consummation of knowledge.”

The article was read by Carlyle in 1829 shortly after its publication. Hamilton would later claim that “the recognition of human ignorance, is not only the one highest, but the one true, knowledge; and its first fruit... is—humility.” For Hamilton, to know that one did not know and to know the vast extent of one’s ignorance conduced one to be humble, but the acquirement of this humility and wisdom was immensely difficult for it involved learning and the discovery of one’s ignorance.

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13 For example, see *Inquiry*, VI.xxi, 187 Ld.


16 Hamilton, *Discussions*, p. 634.
The materializing tendency in metaphorical mind terminology was evident in Hume's outline of the theory of ideas and, according to Reid, in some ancient philosophies of mind and perception. Some of the analogies or metaphors used to describe the mind and its processes, as indicated by Reid, sound closely similar to those pinpointed by Carlyle. For example, sketching the Peripatetics' "general theory of perception" (which Reid attempted to refute and which he linked with Hume's version of the theory of ideas), Reid claimed that according to this theory, "The objects of sense are perceived only by certain images, or shadows of them let into the mind, as into a camera obscura."\(^{17}\) Alluding to Hartley's theory of vibrations (which Reid also attacked), Dalbrook, in Carlyle's "Wotton Reinfred," claims that in these mechanistic times "thought is some vibration, or at best some camera-obscura picturing in the brain."\(^{18}\)

Whether this is a specific allusion to Reid's *Intellectual Powers* is perhaps impossible to determine since the camera-obscura metaphor is a fairly obvious mechanical model for the visual apparatus of the eye and, by extension, for the mind's acquisition of knowledge through the senses. Furthermore, it appeared in other literature available to Carlyle. For example, one of several analogical descriptions of the mind listed as such by Sir William Drummond in his *Academical Questions* (1805) is of "a garret in a castle" which provides "a peep at the country through a hole in the shutter."\(^{19}\) Henry Laurie's interpretation of Locke, in his *Scottish Philosophy*, provides an indication that the camera obscura had become a fairly well-known mechanical model for the mind in the nineteenth century. Laurie claimed that Locke had used a camera obscura as a "more effective simile" for describing the mind than the well-known sheet of white paper.\(^{20}\) Certainly, after describing the mind as a "dark room," Locke does seem to be indicating some similitude between the mind and a primitive camera obscura:

> The understanding is not much unlike a closet wholly shut from light, with only some little opening left, to let in external visible resemblances, or ideas of things without: would the pictures coming into such a dark room but stay there, and lie so


\(^{19}\) Drummond, quoted by Francis Jeffrey, "Drummond's Academical Questions," *Edinburgh Review*, 7 (1805), 169.

orderly as to be found upon occasion, it would very much resemble the under-
standing of a man, in reference to all objects of sight, and the ideas of them.21

In 1852, some twenty years after writing Sartor, Carlyle himself wrote in his
"Spiritual Optics" that "The effects of optics in this strange camera obscura of
our existence, are most of all singular!"22

In Sartor Resartus, observing "the whole life-circulation of that consid­
erable City," Teufelsdrockh's watch-tower provides a wholeness of vision similar
to that of the camera obscura. It was a fairly common feature of observatory
towers of the time to include a camera obscura for observing the ground be­
neath along with a telescope for observing the stars above. For Professor
Teufelsdrockh, his watch-tower is that place where, as he says, sitting "above it
all; I am alone with the Stars" (SR, p. 17). As Sartor Resartus was first being
published in 1834, Carlyle, pursing his interests in astronomy and need for em­
ployment, applied for the new post of Astronomical Professor and Observer at
the Royal Observatory on Calton Hill, Edinburgh.23 He was unsuccessful but it
would seem that he was by no means an unsuitable candidate.24 According to
John H. Hammond, Edinburgh had two camera obscuras both of which were
situated on Calton Hill.25 The camera obscura in the so-called Old Gothic
Tower dated from around 1818 and the other, in the Royal Observatory, from
1830.26 One of Sartor's nineteenth-century editors suggested that the view
from Teufelsdrockh's watch-tower is "Perhaps reminiscent of the view of Edin­
burgh from the Calton Hill."27

by A. D. Woozley, 5th edn. (Glasgow, 1964), II.xi, p. 131.

22Carlyle, "Spiritual Optics," in James Anthony Froude, Thomas Carlyle: A History of the
First Forty Years of His Life 1795-1835, 2 vols. (London, 1908), II, 10.

23Collected Letters, VII, 79.


26Eventually one of these was closed and the other was moved to the Outlook Tower on Castle
Hill where an overhauled version is at present open to the public. Hammond notes that in
July 1836, the Dumfries and Maxwelltown Astronomical Society opened to the public a cam­
era obscura in their new observatory and that Carlyle "signed the visitor's book several times
during the first few weeks after the opening" (p. 109).

27Sartor Resartus, ed. with introd. by J. A. S. Barrett (London, 1897), p. 63 n.1. In a letter
from around 1822, Jane Baillie Welsh wrote to Eliza Stodart, to "look about for a nice pleas-
The Watch-Tower in Carlyle's Sartor Resartus

Given that the camera obscura was used by some philosophers as a model for the mind (more particularly for the processes of perception), and that Carlyle's Dalbrook in "Wotton Reinfred" sneeringly characterizes mechanical philosophy's description of "thought [as] . . . at best some camera-obscura picturing in the brain," is it possible that Teufelsdröckh's watch-tower is modeled on Calton Hill's Royal Observatory and that it incorporates a camera obscura which metaphorically describes the workings of Teufelsdröckh's perceptual/cognitive apparatus, his mind? Certainly the text's heightened awareness of the metaphoricity of language, its obvious preoccupation with the mind, and its repeated invitations to the reader to 'rede' the text and the world as sign and symbol laden may justifiably predispose the reader to read Teufelsdröckh's watch-tower as a metaphor or symbol for the mind.

The text's language describing the Professor's physical appearance also supports this notion. Teufelsdröckh's "thick locks . . . so long and lank" overlap his grave face "roof-wise" (SR, p. 11—emphasis mine). The Editor also mentions Teufelsdröckh's "broad-brimmed steeple-hat" (SR, p. 21—emphasis mine). The description of Teufelsdröckh's physical appearance is inscribed with a language that encases him within the pinnacle of Weissnichtwo, within the steepled watch-tower. A large part of the Editor's presentation of Teufelsdröckh in the "Reminiscences" chapter is constituted by a language of hard physical objects, of buildings, machine, mountain rocks, and sculpture (see SR, pp. 12, 13, 14-15). But as we get closer to the description of the watch-tower itself, there seems to be even stronger grounds for treating it as modeled on an observatory tower housing a camera-obscura. Furthermore, given Locke's use of the camera-obscura metaphor and the other points mentioned above, there also seem to be good grounds for claiming that the watch-tower somehow provides a metaphorical description of Teufelsdröckh's Man's mind.

Teufelsdröckh's domicile in the Wahngasse is a "speculum or watch-tower" from which he views all the surrounding "life-circulation" (SR, p. 15). Clearly, since the Professor's domicile has windows and is "the pinnacle of Weissnichtwo" it is a watch-tower or outlook (SR, p. 15). In what sense is it a speculum? The Latin for watch-tower is "specula" and thus the McSweeney and Sabor edition of Sartor suggests that the use of "speculum" (mirror) may

ant little garret [in Edinburgh] that has a fine view unclouded by the town smoke and out of reach of the camera obscura" (CL, II, 18).

28 Also compare: Heuschrecke's mouth, described as "a free door-way" (SR, p. 20); and the Donnean "pair of Compasses" (SR, p. 141). The "Steeple-hat" may also emblematize the dual aspect of Teufelsdröckh's religiosity and wizardry. Compare also, as an emblem of his Prospero-wizardry and Pilgrim-religiosity, Teufelsdröckh's "Pilgerstab (Pilgrim-staff)" (SR, p. 119).
be an error. However, these may be alternatives and not synonyms—Teufelsdröckh's watch-tower may be a place that either reflects light or admits it. If Teufelsdröckh's Wahngasse domicile symbolizes the mind, its description as a "speculum [mirror] or watch-tower [inlet or window]" may suggest that, following Dugald Stewart's advice, opposing metaphors are being used in order to keep their metaphorical status in focus, that the speculum/mirror and watch-tower/window metaphors are being used as conflicting descriptive devices for what is ultimately beyond the limits of human knowledge but which may be adumbrated by self-announcing symbolism. Another possibility: the sense of "or" is inclusive and therefore this place (Teufelsdröckh's mind) may be both a watch-tower (inlet or window) and a speculum (mirror). Notably the camera obscura combines the functions of both mirror (speculum) and window (inlet) and the typical site of this scientific instrument was a watch-tower or observatory.

For Hume, the mind was entirely constituted by perceptions. In outlining his version of the theory of ideas, Hume divided all perceptions into "two distinct kinds . . . impressions and ideas," further dividing them into those of sensation and reflection. Though his elucidation of the theory of ideas can be given a considerably more complex interpretation, for Hume all simple ideas copy or mirror corresponding simple impressions or sensations—the pain sensed when a needle pierces the flesh is copied in the mind by an idea of this pain and such correspondences between ideas and impressions coupled with an ability to combine ideas in the imagination entirely furnishes the dark room of the mind.

Informing the watch-tower with a Humean theory of ideas, itself imaginable in the physical form of a camera obscura, Teufelsdröckh's mind becomes a physical thing constituted by two main functions, one that assimilates or experiences the external world through its inletting windows (the sensory apparatus) and one that mirrors/reflects (and reflects upon) these sensory experiences like a mirror (the ideas of the sensations admitted through their inletting windows). Teufelsdröckh's watch-tower might thus be read as (or as containing) a figurative camera obscura which re-presents Hume's version of the theory of ideas

29See McSweeney and Sabor edn., p. 251, as also in Harrold's edition of Sartor, p. 20 n.3. For an alternative interpretation of the watch-tower's windows, see Wood's edition of Sartor, p. 52. Wood clearly reads "speculum" as not erroneous.

30Dugald Stewart, The Collected Works of Dugald Stewart, ed. Sir William Hamilton, 11 vols. (Edinburgh, 1854-60), V, 173. Of course there is possibly also a play on "speculation." Compare: "Speculation should have free course, and look fearlessly towards all thirty-two points of the compass" or four "Airts" (SR, p. 15).

31Hume, I.i.i, p. 1; see also, p. 7.
and therefore signifies the mind's mechanically construed functions—it admits impressions and contains ideas both of reflection and sensation.

When first introduced, the watch-tower's six windows are detailed with particular care. Though used in a variety of ways, the window as a metaphor for the sensory apparatus was something of a philosophical commonplace. Locke described the sensory apparatus as "the windows by which light is let into this dark room," the mind. Another philosophical commonplace is the mirror metaphor. Leibniz's monads mirror the universe and both Locke and Hume talked of ideas of reflection. In "The Everlasting No" chapter, describing the reality of his despair as a form of both sensory and intellectual deprivation, Teufelsdrockh says, "How beautiful to die of broken-heart, on Paper! Quite another thing in Practice; every window of your Feeling, even of your Intellect, as it were, begrimed and mud-bespattered, so that no pure ray can enter" (SR, p. 133). Thus the text uses "window" as a metaphor for both sensations/"Feeling" and, though more tenuously so here, reflection/"Intellect." A somewhat more certain use of "window" as a metaphor for reflection/intellect occurs later in the text: "The Understanding is indeed thy window . . . but Fantasy is thy eye" (SR, p. 177).

Thus it is that as Hume's version of the theory of ideas, largely borrowed from Locke, appears to be originally modeled on the camera obscura's literal and mechanical combination of the functions of inletting and reflecting, the watch-tower may act as a metaphor for the mind which combines the functions of inletting impressions of sense and reflecting upon these in the production of ideas of sensation and reflection. Teufelsdrockh mirrors the external and internal worlds in his descriptions of "the whole life-circulation of that considerable City," passages of a reported speech that slides with angelic freedom across all social and physical boundaries and moves between the general and the particular, merging everything much as the contents of the apartment are "united in a common element of dust" (see SR, pp. 15-17, 18, cf. p. 81). This mirroring brings together in his watch-tower a myriad of impressions (received through the windows as inlets) upon which he also reflects. But such merging is hardly the narrative product of a physicalist/mechanistic model of the mind.

32Compare, M. H. Abrams, The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition (Oxford, 1953), pp. 57-69. Abrams traces several analogical descriptions of the mind, principally focusing on the mirror and lamp metaphors. In Sartor, the Editor remarks that there is "a single tallow-light" in Teufelsdrockh's watch-tower which is unilluminating since it is "far enough from the window" (SR, pp. 17-18).

33Locke, II.xi, p. 131.

However, regardless of whether the watch-tower is modeled on a sophisticated camera obscura’s dual operations of inletting and reflecting, a close scrutiny of the possibility that its windows act as metaphors for Teufelsdröckh’s inletting sensory apparatus alone, and thus that the watch-tower is modeled on a simple (mirrorless) camera obscura, tantalizingly pushes towards this possibility and then destroys it:

It was the attic floor of the highest house in the Wahngasse; and might truly be called the pinnacle of Weissnichtwo, for it rose sheer up above the contiguous roofs, themselves rising from elevated ground. Moreover, with its windows, it looked towards all the four Orte, or as the Scotch say, and we ought to say, Airts: the Sitting-room itself commanded three; another came to view in the Schlafgemach (Bedroom) at the opposite end; to say nothing of the Kitchen, which offered two, as it were, duplicates, and showing nothing new. So that it was in fact the speculum or watch-tower of Teufelsdröckh; wherefrom, sitting at ease, he might see the whole life-circulation of that considerable City; the streets and lanes of which, with all their doing and driving (Thun und Trieben) were for the most part visible there (SR, p. 15).

Using the windows as metaphors for sensation, so many permutations are possible that successful literalization collapses. The inletting windows may be placed in several positions. On one distribution, there are six windows that provide five views, one of which duplicates one of these views. Correspondence with the customary enumeration of the senses as five may be forced. However, other correspondences may also be forced. Reid suggested that there were really only four generically distinguishable senses: sight, touch, hearing, and tasting-and-smelling. Taking the kitchen’s duplicating windows as duplicating both themselves and one view from, say, the sitting-room, the four views may map onto Reid’s notion of five nominally/four generically distinct senses.

But this by no means exhausts all the possible interpretations. Democritus had suggested that there was basically only one sense, touch, and others again had attempted to reduce the number of senses to two or expand them to six. Sartor itself includes mention of a sixth sense of hunger (see SR, pp. 70, 97). Leaving aside Democritus’ reduction of the number of senses to modifications of touch, whether six, five, four, or two senses, Teufelsdröckh’s watch-tower windows may be placed in positions that correspond to each of these different numbers of the senses.

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35 See, Inquiry, III, 116 Lc.

With these possibilities and the further possibilities of treating "window" as either a metaphor for sensation or reflection or both (the camera obscura model), the watch-tower’s window metaphor becomes radically indeterminate. After having unlocked Teufelsdröckh’s “private citadel” (which the text entices one to do) the reader may become inlocked in its “labyrinthic tortuosities and covered ways” (SR, p. 161) and must admit to a nescience about what, in the physical domain, its signs for the Mind signify. As Sartor achieves this imprisonment and abandonment of the reader it realizes itself on its own terms as a true book, becoming a “wonder-bringing City of the Mind” (SR, p. 138). Unless, that is, its numerological device for inlocking is merely a hoax (or ‘hum’) that laughs in its sleeve “to see . . . how the fools would look?” (SR, p. 161). To crush the terms of the watch-tower symbol merely into a closed physicalist description of the mind is to become a Malvolio. To seek and yet admit something unknown, some mystery, is to embark on a playful adventure with the text which begins and ends in ignorance concerning ultimate realities and eschews the vanity of materialism through conducing belief in the existence of the incognizable. Carlyle’s text therefore is its own guarantor of the reader’s nescience.

Though interpretation (construed as the literalization of metaphor) begins to collapse through vagueness and under the pressure of the number of variables, interestingly this does not imply hermeneutic failure. Rather, in this instance it suggests its very success. Whether the watch-tower is intentionally a symbol for Mind or a hoax, the collapse of certain interpretative possibilities and the mystification which ensues may be intentional. However, to escape this dilemma of intentionality, even if the watch-tower is neither an intentionally constructed symbol for Mind, nor a hoax, the text beckons the reader to treat it as a symbol, as a strange entity demanding that we rede it and perceive its signification behind its description, behind the garment of language and, as a symbol for the mind, it enables a highly complex literalization which it defeats. However, prompted by some of the text’s suggestions and possible hints, once the reader has taken the watch-tower as a mechanical or physical metaphor for Teufelsdröckh’s/Man’s Mind and has realized the futility of following this way of analogy toward a literal truth about the mind, it becomes clear that it exemplifies, or can be read as exemplifying, what it symbolizes: a place in the city of Weissnichtwo; the indeterminable nature and non-spatial ontological status of the mind and of fictional entities; a deconstruction of analogical descriptions of the mind; a dissolution of the theory of ideas’ construal of mind as machine; and in all this, an imaginary re-tailoring of the driving force of anti-materialist argument in the Scottish philosophy of Common Sense. The watch-tower’s indeterminacy, defying the reader’s attempts to literalize satisfactorily the fluidity

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and self-sufficiency of its metaphors, underscores the text's insistence that, although Teufelsdrockh/Man may be regarded as "a Thing," he is also ultimately unaccountable, an "unutterable Mystery of Mysteries" (SR, pp. 13, 45).

University of Glasgow

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There can be little doubt that, in the context of the “Christ’s Kirk” tradition as a whole, Ramsay’s contribution is an anomaly and represents a direction that tradition was not to take. Many of the carnival elements which lapse with Ramsay are, however, restored in John Skinner’s “The Christmass Bawing of Monimusk,” written in 1739 when the author was only eighteen or nineteen, but not published until half a century later, in September 1788. Skinner had the original “Christ’s Kirk on the Green” by heart before he was twelve, and later in life he translated it into Latin verse. Perhaps it was this intimate acquaintance with the original that allowed him to reanimate its values so faithfully. Although unavailable to Fergusson, and therefore to be discounted as an influence on the latter’s poems in the stanza, “The Christmass Bawing” can be seen retrospectively as constituting a genre through its interaction with the model text.

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Ramsay’s wedding was a celebration involving individuals, and lacked the communal, ideological content which is a crucial feature of carnival. Skinner’s poem deals with a game of football played by members of the parish at Christmas time, and in the village churchyard, both factors establishing powerful links with the festive calendar and the community’s sense of its persistence in time in defiance of mortality. When dealing with “Christ’s Kirk” and “Peblis to the Play,” the question of the relation of these poems to actual social practice could only be adumbrated. Such investigations pertain to anthropology. However, Skinner made a simple assumption, which underpins the “Christ’s Kirk” poems of Fergusson and Burns, namely, that this was an appropriate literary form for dealing with community festivals. In Allan Maclaine’s words

Skinner’s poem represents an attempt to domesticate the Christis Kirk tradition in eighteenth-century Scotland. Ramsay . . . had used more or less generalized scenes and characters with an antiquarian emphasis. But Skinner here portrays a specific celebration (which he has actually witnessed), in a specific place (Monymusk), with some touches of local dialect actually used there. In other words, Skinner is here working away from the Ramsayesque continuation of the original Christis Kirk, and instead is using the genre as a vehicle for a specific, local, and contemporary subject.3

The presence of a literary model influenced the result. The fifteenth-century poem is as essential to “The Christmass Bawing” as the actual football match, and Skinner’s poem springs from an interaction, not between poet and feast, but involving poet, feast and literary model. The genre was marked, not just by a modified stanza form, but by inherited words and phrases (echoing, in Skinner’s text. Ramsay as much as the original “Christ’s Kirk”)4 and, most crucially, an ideology closely related to Bakhtin’s understanding of carnival.

In a study of Dostoevsky first published in 1929, Bakhtin considered the survival of carnival in literature:

But carnival, its forms and symbols, and above all the carnival attitude itself over many centuries seeped into numerous literary genres, merged with their characteristics, formed them, and became inseparable from them. Carnival, as it were, was reincarnated in literature, in a definite and vigorous line of its development.5


4There are echoes of Ramsay at ll. 1-2, 10, 74, 86, 106, 133, 181, 188-9, 199, 291, 295 and 298, and of the original “Christ’s Kirk” poem at ll. 1-2, 25, 74, 181, 199, 298.

The "Christ's Kirk" poems from the eighteenth century are a specifically Scottish phenomenon. Carnival as a literary survival was reanimated by reference to actual carnival or to pseudo-carnivalistic social practices. The crowning poem of this revival, Burns's "Holy Fair," is an excellent example of the complexities involved. Was the communion ceremony Burns took as his subject an actual carnival survival, masked as religious observation? Or is the poem primarily an example of the carnivalization of religion, achieved by applying a literary form of carnival to a predominantly orthodox ceremony? The difficulty of answering this question points to the semantic richness of the texts resulting from the fusion of literary carnival tradition and current social practice.

Skinner's football match presents a mixture of predictability and spontaneity. The prior's man knows well beforehand how things are going to work out:

The prior's man, a chiel as stark
Amaist as giant cou'd be,
Had kent afore o' this day's wark,
For certain that it wou'd be (ll. 154-7).

where "wark" indicates both the movements of the ball and the accompanying punches and scuffles. It is in the nature of the village football match that there should be injuries, but at the same time the game is played according to rules which ensure that serious damage will not be done. The gravity of the strokes is apparent, theatrical but not substantial:

Leitch wi' 's fit gae him sic a kick,
Till they a' thought him slain
That very day (ll. 97-9).

But suddenly frae some curst wight,
A clammyhowat fell'd him
Hawf dead that day (ll. 151-3).

where the crucial word is "hawf." The reader guesses instinctively, in "Sanny soon saw the sutor slain" (l. 208) that the participle is metaphorical. The match abounds in falls (ll. 26-7, 79, 161-2, 214-6), highlighting the grotesque body with references to the backside; "bum-leather" (l. 44), "arse" (ll. 133, 198), "nether end" (l. 206); the bladder (l. 42); "riitin" (belching, l. 83); "bockin" (vomiting, l. 55); and blood streaming from the mouth and the nose (l. 124).

Two falls are particularly interesting. In stanza 10 the "inset dominie" (quite possibly Skinner himself) is attacked and "heels-o'er-gowdie cowpit" (l. 88), while another group sets on the parish clerk in stanza 29 and "Beft o'er the grave divine/ On's bum" (ll. 260-61). Both men have official functions in the community. Both are overturned, and the second dirtied. Most crucially, the possibility of being a spectator, present at the tussle but not involved, is denied them. Carnival violence draws them into the festivity and subjects them to the
same treatment as everyone else present. This motif is strong and persistent. It is more than likely that the real crime of Burns’s “Tam O’Shanter” lies in attempting to be a spectator of the antics in Alloway Kirk, and that the witches’ pursuit expresses the need to force him into being a participant. Nobody may stand on the sidelines.

In contrast to Ramsay’s cantos, Skinner’s poem takes place in the open air. The motif of going home crops up early in the poem, where Francy Winsy, “a sauchin slav’ry sype” (I. 47), is comforted by his mother, and she threatens to take up his defense:

‘Waeworth his chandler chafts,’ co’ Kate,
‘Deil rax his saul a whang,
Gin I had here the countra skate
Sae beins I shoud him bang.’ (II. 64-7).

The gender reversal is comical, and the retreat into domestic space has connotations of unmanliness and cowardice. It recurs in stanzas 14 and 20, and most strikingly in stanza 28 when Tam, who “wadha gien a plack/ T’ ha been safe wi’ his wife/ At hame that day” (II. 250-52), is confronted with the miller’s knife in what may be a potential “knifing related to childbirth” of the kind Bakhtin mentions.\(^6\)

Oaths come from Francy’s mother and a “stalwart stirk in tartain claise” (I. 136). The poem deploys a splendid range of vocabulary for physical and character types. Bakhtin comments that “the popular-festive language of the marketplace abuses while praising and praises while abusing” (Rabelais, p. 415), and these terms have all the rich ambivalence of carnival speech, where praise and blame are inextricably intertwined. The players include “swankies” (II. 12, 109), “fallows” (I. 73), a “gruff grunshy grane” (I. 94), a “gudman” and a “callant” (II. 101, 277), a “cawrl,” a “chiel” and a “huddrin hynd” (I. 95, 132, 127), a “gilpy,” a “wight,” a “carlie” and a “spark” (II. 148, 151, 173, 182), “kendlins,” “rascals” and “ablachs” (II. 134, 170, 232), a “menseless man,” a “trypal” and a “gurk” (II. 195, 203, 221). The tanner is “a primpit bit” (I. 37) and Francy Winsy a “fliep” and a “gilpy” as well as a “slype” (II. 55, 68, 47). A profusion of words describing the kinds of people to be met with in the world, never neutral or with detachment, but always with keen interest and enthusiastic participation, is not deployed accidentally. It is a further instance of the remarkable fidelity with which Skinner’s poem reproduces crucial features of carnival practice.

The same goes for the structure of his poem. The tussle is inexhaustible, constantly renewing itself. Pairs of fighters succeed one another in a potentially endless sequence, occasionally interlocking, as when Tam Tull is incensed by

Rob Roy's striking his friend Geordy (ll. 21-6), only to disappear at once from view. We meet him again, dissatisfied with the extent of the mayhem:

Tam Tull upon him kiest his ee,
Saw him sae mony foolzie,
He gree' d again some prott to pree,
An' raise anither bruilzie (ll. 226-9).

The arrival of reinforcements is a familiar theme from the original "Christ's Kirk." Here the scoring of a goal passes almost unnoticed because of the fighting, and

Some grien'd for ae hawf hour's mair fun,
'Cause fresh and nae sair fail'd (ll. 284-5).

The overall impression is of inexhaustible vitality, of endless renewal. The chaos of Skinner's football match takes on a wide significance when seen through Bakhtin's eyes:

Even the pressing throng, the physical contact of bodies, acquires a certain meaning... the individual body ceases to a certain extent to be itself; it is possible, so to say, to exchange bodies, to be renewed... At the same time the people become aware of their sensual, material bodily unity and community... The body of the people on the carnival square is... aware of its unity in time; it is conscious of its uninterrupted continuity within time, of its relative historic immortality (Rabelais, p. 255).

Whether because the culture of folk humor was still alive in rural Aberdeenshire of the eighteenth century, or because the poet who describes them had a peculiarly sensitive grasp of the literary iconography of carnival, the Monymusk villagers act out, with their blows and kicks and tripping up, a profound perception of human indestructibility in the face of death, authority and power, which finds literary expression through the iconography of carnival, with its peculiar festive character without any piousness, complete liberation from seriousness, the atmosphere of equality, freedom, and familiarity, the symbolic meaning of the indecencies, the clownish crowning and uncrowning, the merry wars and beatings, the mock disputes, the knifings related to childbirth, the abuses that are affirmations (Rabelais, pp. 254-5).

Neither Ramsay's completion of the original "Christ's Kirk" nor John Skinner's creative revival of the tradition in "The Christmass Bawing of Monnimusk" commands a wide audience in Scotland today. If the former was a dead end, a well-intentioned but uncomprehending travesty, the latter, faithful to the spirit of the original, made its world of imagery strikingly contemporary. The poems by Fergusson and Burns in the modified stanza form, however, are central to
our understanding of Scotland’s eighteenth-century revival of vernacular poetry. An analysis of them in terms of the language of carnival posited by Bakhtin offers the possibility of a new approach which complements and in some respects supersedes those offered hitherto.

The core patterns of carnival imagery still subtend texts such as Ferguson’s “Leith Races” or “The Election,” which have so far been interpreted in primarily descriptive terms, as if any coherence they offered was at second hand, mirrored from the events they portrayed. Their structure is neither mimetic nor linear, but a structure of images and ideas enacting a view of the world. “The Holy Fair” by Burns is built upon a series of ambivalences and juxtapositions which are profoundly carnivalesque rather than satirical.

The use made in these poems of the Christ’s Kirk stanza is much more than an instance of cultural nationalism. The intrageneric relations between “Christ’s Kirk on the Green,” “Peblis to the Play” and Ferguson’s and Burns’s new creations constitute a rich vocabulary, largely ideological, in which to couch a critique of both fair and communion, the vocabulary of carnival:

Carnival is an eminent attitude towards the world which belonged to the entire folk in bygone millennia. It is an attitude towards the world which liberates from fear, brings the world close to man and man close to his fellow man (all is drawn into the zone of liberated familiar contact), and, with its joy of change and its jolly relativity, counteracts the gloomy, one-sided official seriousness which is born of fear, is dogmatic and inimical to evolution and change, and seeks to absolutize the given conditions of existence and social order. The carnivale attitude liberated man from precisely this sort of seriousness (Rabelais, p. 133).

Far from being merely imitative of earlier models, or descriptive of social practice, these poems embody “a peculiar point of view relative to the world” which could only be articulated by means of a literary carnival tradition, a continuing “culture of folk carnival humour.” The perspective they offer was “immanent in the traditional popular-festive system of images” Burns and Ferguson inherited (Rabelais, pp. 66, 4, 211). Bakhtin characterizes the potential of this system as follows in his book on Dostoevsky:

The carnival forms, transposed into the language of literature became powerful means of artistically comprehending life, they became a special language, the words and forms of which possess an extraordinary capacity for symbolic generalization, i.e. for generalization in depth. Many of the essential sides, or, more precisely, strata, of life, and profound ones at that, can be discovered, comprehended and expressed only with the help of this language (Problems, p. 131).

The Russian theorist detected a kind of reincarnation of carnival in Dostoevsky’s fiction. While Gogol had an extra-literary experience of carnival through his contact with Ukrainian folklore (Problems, p. 131, fn. 108), Bakhtin attributes Dostoevsky’s knowledge of it to literary sources. Carnival forms
were undoubtedly mediated to Fergusson and Burns through the literary tradition. It is highly likely that they also experienced them directly in the communal events they described. For these events themselves enacted an ideology, a view on the world, with full or partial consciousness. A fair was not just a happening, it was a meaning too.

“Christ’s Kirk” and “Peblis to the Play” are products of an extraordinarily privileged moment in the Renaissance when the culture of laughter was able to animate the high genres of literature. Their attribution to a king reads like a folk memory of that cross-fertilization. Fergusson and Burns wrote in a different world, where a “new official culture” promulgated “stability and completion of being . . . one single meaning, one single tone of seriousness.” The grotesque with its profound ambivalence was banished from the high genres, but continued “to live and to struggle for its existence in the lower canonical genres (comedy, satire, fable) and especially in non-canonical genres (in the novel).” Bakhtin remarks that “all these genres had a more or less oppositional character” (Rabelais, pp. 101-2).

Fergusson wrote in two languages, Burns oftener than not in a creative mixture of two. The choice of Scots for much of their work had a clearly oppositional character in post-union Scotland, and it is also possible that poems in the Christ’s Kirk tradition functioned as a lower or even non-canonical genre in a world whose literary products were frequently modeled on the English Augustans. The availability of such options means that, while it may be accurate to describe the poetry of the vernacular revival as profoundly British in its overall complexity and its range of responses to a transformed political and cultural situation, Scottish literature of the eighteenth century has a radically different typology from that of English literature in the same period. No strand in English writing of the time can match the function within Scotland of poetry in Scots, with its vivacious, eternally destabilizing influence, marginalized and central at one and the same time. The implication is that, if the Union of Parliaments integrated Scotland further into Britain and produced a Scottish literature which can be characterized as British in intent, it also deepened the differences between the culture of the two countries, driving them farther apart.

The oppositional character of Fergusson and Burns' “Christ’s Kirk” poems is evident in their treatment of established authority, both civil and religious, whose presence looms increasingly amidst the carnival celebrations. Fergusson does not miss a chance to lambaste the Edinburgh city guard, and “The Election” is a wry denunciation of the workings of the civil administration. The genre evolved rapidly in the fourteen years that separate the publication of Fergusson’s “Hallow-Fair” from that of Burns’ “The Holy Fair.” With “The Election,” Fergusson introduced the striking innovation of applying the genre, not to the feast of the people, but to the ceremony in which civil authority renews and regenerates itself. Burns took the next, logical step and applied the “Christ’s Kirk” tradition, with its accumulated weight of three centuries of Scottish popular and written culture, to established religion.
It is fascinating to read Bakhtin’s suggestion that Dostoevsky found the literary forms of carnival peculiarly suited to an examination of the phase of nascent capitalism, when the old ideologies, as it were, came unstuck from actual social practice, for it seems probable that this was precisely what was happening in Burns’s Ayrshire, and what led him to seize upon the “Christ’s Kirk” tradition with such alacrity:

By relativizing everything that was externally stable and already formed, carnivalization, with its pathos of change and renewal, permitted Dostoevsky to penetrate into the deepest strata of man and of human relationships. It was an amazingly productive means of artistically capturing the developing relationships under capitalism at a time when previously current moral principles, beliefs and forms of life were turning into “rotten strings”, and the ambivalent, unfinalizable nature of man and of human thought, which until then had been hidden, was laid bare. Not only people and their actions, but also ideas broke out of their self-enclosed hierarchical nests and began to collide in the familiar contact of the “absolute” (i.e., fully unlimited) dialog.

(Problems, p. 139)

An insight of this kind is particularly precious because it demonstrates that there was nothing nostalgic or regressive about the revival of the “Christ’s Kirk” genre by these two poets. Carnivalization helped Burns, a liminal figure, perpetually on the boundary between ages and cultures, to come to grips with the new ideologies emerging in his time. In his treatment of the church he was hardly a beleaguered intellectual defending himself by means of poetry. Economic developments were already undoing the power of the clergy. Their backsides, to use a carnivalesque metaphor, were already visible. Rather than mounting a heroic attack from a position of weakness, Burns was in fact kicking an opponent who had already been felled by other, less personalized antagonists.

Fergusson’s poems are rich in references to the language of the marketplace, where

a special kind of speech was heard, almost a language of its own, quite unlike the language of the Church, palace, courts, and institutions. It was also unlike the tongue of official literature or of the ruling classes (Rabelais, p. 154).

The Hallow-Fair is a place for courting, and the chaffing that goes on echoes the language of the men and women in “Peblis to the Play”:

Here country John in bonnet blue,
An’ eke his Sunday’s claise on,
Rins after Meg wi’ rokelay new.
An’ sappy kisses lays on;
She’ll tauntin say, “Ye silly coof!
Be o’ your gab mair spairin”;

(Problems, p. 139)
He'll tak the hint, and criesh her loof
Wi' what will buy her fairin,
To chow that day.
("Hallow-Fair," ll. 19-27).

Venality, trickery and deception are integral to the marketplace and to the fairground in general. Preparing to attend the Leith Races,

Ilk dame her brawest ribbons tries,
To put her en her mettle,
Wi' wiles some silly chie! to trap,
(And troth he's fain to get her.)
But she'll craw kniefly in his crap,
Whan, wow! he canna flit her
Frac hame that day.
("Leith Races," ll. 48-54)

Men are not the only victims. The poet warns women attending Hallow-Fair to beware of the vendors there:

Ye wives, as ye gang thro' the fair,
O mak your bargains hooly!
Of a' thir wylie lowns beware,
Or fegs they will ye spulzie,
For faim-year Meg Thamson got,
Frac thir mischievous villains,
A scaw'd bit o' a penny note,
That lost a score o' shillins
To her that day.
("Hallow-Fair," ll. 47-55)

Whenever money changes hands there is an implication of uncertainty, of ambivalence, as here in "The Election":

Here politicians bribe a loun
Against his saul for voting.
The gowd that inlakes half a crown
Thir blades lug out to try them,
They pouch the gowd, nor fash the town
For weights an' scales to weigh them.
Exact that day. (ll. 111-7)

7Fergusson's poems are quoted from Poems by Allan Ramsay and Robert Fergusson, ed. Alexander Manson Kinghorn and Alexander Law (Edinburgh, 1985).
It would be wrong to interpret Fergusson as a disapproving satirist of manners in all these cases, though the attack on the politicians is clear enough. Ambivalence is at the heart of carnival and informs not just the exchange of cash but the words in which merchandise is publicized:

these announcements have nothing in common with naive and direct practical advertisements. They are filled with popular-festive laughter. They toy with the objects they announce... Popular advertising is always ironic, always makes fun of itself to a certain extent (Rabelais, p. 160).

In these surroundings, one wonders how far even "the true an' faithfu' list' o' Noblemen and Horses" racing at Leith is to be trusted (ll. 59-60).

Highland English is impishly mimicked in "She maun pe see our guard" and "Pring in ta drunken sot" ("Hallow-Fair," ll. 94, 96). Fergusson brings "Norland speech" into both "Hallow-Fair" (ll. 37-45) and "Leith Races" (ll. 118-27). Sawny the tailor hawking his "protty hose" and the "Buchan bodies" crying their "bunch of Findrums," as well as being samples of the range of dialect to be heard where folk gather from so many different regions, are typical of the marketplace in their ambivalent, self-ironizing praise. They are Edinburgh's equivalent of the *cris de Paris* which echoed in Rabelais' ears:

The city rang with these many voices. Each food, wine, or other merchandise had its own words and melody and its special intonations, its distinct verbal and musical imagery (Rabelais, p. 182).

The "browsters rare" with their "gude ale" make sure the cheese they serve is "fu' saut" ("Hallow-Fair," ll. 14-18), while the "browster wives" at Leith sell "trash," scraping the bottom of their barrels for "drumbly gear" they know they will have no trouble palming off on such a day (ll. 100-108). Everyone is on the make:

Here chapmen billies tak their stand,
An' shaw their bonny wallyes;
Wow, but they lie fu' gleg aff hand
To trick the silly fallows:
Heh, sirs! what cairds and tinklers come,
An' ne'er-do-weel horse-coupers,
An' spae-wives fennyng to be dumb,
Wi' a' siclike Jandloupers,

To thrive that day.
("Hallow-Fair," ll. 28-36).

Bakhtin writes that "France's dramatic culture" at the time of Rabelais was "closely related to the marketplace," and that Rabelais himself was well acquainted with "the marketplace spectacles" (Rabelais, p. 155). Although Fergusson does not mention them, we can be sure that the fairs he describes had
their share of booth theaters to keep everyone present entertained. The entire fair partakes of the nature of theater. Nothing is what it appears to be. Everything aspires to become something else:

Around whare'er ye fling your een,
The haiks like wind are scavrin';
Some chaises honest folk contain,
An' some hae mony a whore in;
Wi' rose and lily, red and white,
They gie themselves sic fit airs,
Like Dian, they will seem perfite;
But its nae goud that glitters
Wi' them thir days.
("Leith Races," ll. 136-44).

The next stanza features the bearers of fake coats of arms, the "mony hunder,/
Wha geck at Scotland and her law" (ll. 146-7). The collusion of all participants is essential to the success of this spectacle. They enjoy it while being (or because they are) conscious of the deceits.

Comic reversal, lowering and besmirching, abounds in both poems, which also articulate the grotesque concept of the body with its emphasis on "that which protrudes, bulges, sprouts, or branches off" and on "eating, drinking, defecation and other elimination (sweating, blowing of the nose, sneezing) (Rabelais, pp. 320, 317). Jock Bell gets not just one "clamihewit," but several, from "a stark Lochaber aix" which "gar'd his feckless body aik,!
An' spew the reikin gore," and he finds himself "peching on the cawsey" ("Hallow-Fair," ll. 79-80, 88-9, 91). The town guard in "Leith Races" is presented in terms of protuberances and outflow. They have "mony a gausy snout/ Has gusht in birth-day wars" and the barber is busy scraping the "whisky plooks that brunt for wooks" off their faces. Their "spaterdashes" will soon be splattered with "weet, and weary plashes/ O' dirt" (ll. 79-80, 64, 69, 71-2), while the ardent debaters in the Robin Hood Club engage in a kind of verbal besmirching, as "dirt wi' words they mingle" (l. 166).

The violence in "Leith Races" is both planned and spontaneous, in traditional carnival fashion. Everyone knows it will occur. The details are left to the workings of chance. The stress on the rear end ("Their tails") is characteristic:

Her Nanesel maun be carfu' now,
Nor maun she pe misleard,
Sin' baxter lads hae seal'd a vow
To skelp and clout the guard:
I'm sure Auld Reikie kens o' nane
That wou'd be sorry at it,
Tho' they should dearly pay the kane,
An' get their tails weel sautit

And sair thir days. (ll. 82-90)
Observing the fine liveries of the town guard, the speaker predicts that “‘ere the sport be done... / Their skins are gayly yarkitl And peel’d thir days’ (II. 160-2). The use of the present tense indicates a ritualistic, repetitive event. Words like “sport” and “gayly” highlight the carnival nature of the violence, paralleled by the effects of drink when “Great feck gae hirpling hame like fools,/ The cripple lead the blind” (II. 174-5).

The correspondeances in iconography, in the vocabulary of actions and images, with “Christ’s Kirk,” “Peblis to the Play” and with the system outlined by Bakhtin are unmistakable. Yet there is a perceptible darkening of tone in Fergusson’s poems. The advice to readers (or listeners) in the closing stanzas of “Hallow-Fair” and in the thirteenth stanza and the closing quatrain of “Leith Races” can just about be read as archly tongue-in-cheek rather than somber. The danger of drink is that it may dampen good humor (“make our spirits thrawart,” “Leith Races” I. 177), and the comparison of a black eye to a bluebell (“een as blue’s a blawartl Wi’ straiks” II. 179-80) is a lightening touch. The same cannot be said for those who will curse the time they “toutit aff the horn/ Which wambles thro’ their weym/ Wi’ pain” (ll. 115-7), or for the pathos, with its striking gender sympathy, of this quatrain:

Bedown Leith-Walk what burrochs reel
Of ilka trade and station,
That gar their wives an’ childer feel
Toom weyms for their libation
O’ drink thir days (ll. 95-9).

Fergusson is not an antiquarian. His aim is not to preserve the earlier system of generic markers and imagery. If it is to live, it must develop in his writing, and the key to the darkening of tone may lie in its oppositional status. In earlier times carnival had been the feast the people gave themselves:...

... all were considered equal during carnival. Here, in the town square, a special form of free and familiar contact reigned among people who were usually divided by the barriers of caste, property, profession, and age (Rabelais, p. 10).

All those present mingled in chaotic, yet subtly ruled participation. By contrast, Fergusson’s poems incorporate the representatives of an authority determined to restrain that chaos. The town guard may be attacked and wounded. It cannot be obliterated. The marketplace and the fairground are no longer “the center of all that is unofficial,” and the “extraterritoriality” they previously enjoyed has been severely curtailed (Rabelais, pp. 153-4). Authority’s invasion of the carnival space extends to the persona of the poet. His speech is infiltrated by at least a semblance of common sense and prudence, in a process which culminates in the rhetorical and attitudinal pyrotechnics of the narrator of “Tam
The accretion of new elements, such as the archaizing prologue to “Leith Races,” with its dialogue between the Poet and Mirth, is a further aspect of this adaptation to new social and cultural circumstances.

“The Election” is Fergusson’s finest contribution to the genre, and offers impressive proof of his talent for evolving and redirecting inherited forms. Assigned a different function, each element gains in vigor. This creative transformation is paradoxically more faithful to its model than any antiquarian reconstruction, or prolongation, could have been. Bakhtin singles out ambivalence as an “indispensable trait” of the “grotesque image,” and describes all carnival images as “deeply ambivalent, being intimately related to life-death-birth” (Rabelais, pp. 24, 149). Fergusson’s treatment of the election adapts this ambivalence to a new context, as Burns will do in “The Holy Fair.”

He describes the “showing of faces” when the fourteen incorporations dined together. The occasion is rich in comic reversal. The poorest tradesmen are kings for a day, gloriously if ephemerally translated like Bottom and like Tam:

The canty cobbler quats his sta',
His rozet an' his lingans,
His buik has dree'd a sair, sair fa'
Frae meals o' bread an' ingans:
Now he's a pow o' wit and law,
An' taunts at soals an' heels;
To Walker's he can rin awa,
There wiang his creams an' jeels
__________
Wi' life that day (ll. 37-45).

There are two transformations here. The cobbler has suddenly become an intellectual, an expert in rules and procedures. He also gets a good square meal for the first time in many moons. Fergusson’s account of his normal diet is veined with pathos.

Ambivalence also colors the treatment of the self-important John, crying to servants to bring his wig, his shirt and scarf. The comments of the neighbors who look on agog have the familiar carnival mixture of praise and scoffing:

“What's Johnny gaun,” cries neebor Bess,
“That he's sae gayly bodin
Wi' new kam'd wig, weel syndet face,
Silk hose, for namely bodin?"
“Our Johnny's nae sma' drink you'll guess,

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9See Longer Scottish Poems, II, 376.
Christopher Whyte

He's trig as ony muir-cock,
An' forth to make a Deacon, lass;
He downa speak to poor fock
Like us the day.” (II. 19-27)

The tone of the fourth, seventh and eighth lines is crucial to the effect of the stanza as a whole.

Irony is sharper in the opening stanza, where the speaker reinterprets the election procedure as a pretext for general carousing, a typical carnival lowering to which the participants are oblivious. Note how the adverb “gayly” crops up once more:

Now ye may clap your wings an’ craw,
And gayly busk ilk’ feather,
For Deacon Cocks hae pass’d a law
To rax an’ weet your leather
Wi’ drink thir days. (II. 5-9)

The diners are first assimilated to birds, then reduced to their gullets, the part of the anatomy where the voluptuous pleasure of drinking is located.

Three stanzas are devoted to the banquet itself, which cannot be characterized in the overwhelmingly celebratory terms Bakhtin uses for banquet imagery in Rabelais:

We will not understand the spirit of grotesque feasting if we do not take into account the deeply positive element, the victorious triumph inherent in every banquet image of folklore origin. . . . The popular images of food and drink are active and triumphant, for they conclude the process of labor and struggle of the social man against the world. . . . They are universal and organically combined with the concept of the free and sober truth, ignoring fear and piety and therefore linked with wise speech (Rabelais, pp. 296, 302).

This is no symposium where truths can be articulated which are normally suffocated by taboos and everyday routine. It is not true carnival but a concession made by an oligarchy to the poor in their midst. According to Bakhtin, from the seventeenth century onwards “the feast ceased almost entirely to be the people’s second life, their temporary renascence and renewal.” But he stresses the word “almost” “because the popular-festive carnival principle is indestructible” (Rabelais, p. 33).

The “Christ’s Kirk” genre permits Fergusson to carnivalize a social function, thereby highlighting its contradictions, its lack of coherence. The meal has the rude energy of a wrestling match. The carnival violence is gastronomic. Diners “stegh an’ connach” their food. Not just their teeth, but their clothes and hats engage in “tassles teugh wi’ slavers” (II. 48-53), and brandy is required to moderate the effects of frenetic, violent consumption:
The dinner done, for brandy strang
    They cry, to weet their thrapple,
To gar the stamack bide the bang,
  Nor wi' its laden grapple. (ll. 55-8)

Will speaks of himself as a barrel, a graphic illustration of his ability to absorb drink which is especially appropriate given that making them is his trade. His reference to the devil echoes the earlier “The de’il may claw the clungest” (I. 47). Oaths and freedom of speech are integral to carnival:

“Weels me o’ drink,” quo’ cooper Will,
  “My barrel has been geyz’d ay,
An’ has na gotten sic a fill
  Sin fu’ on handsel-Teyssday.
But makes-na, now its got a sweel,
  Ae gird I shanna cast lad,
Or else I wish the horned de’el
  May Will wi’ kittle cast dad
    To hell the day!” (ll. 64-72)

One of the kings for a day meets with a comic upending because he refuses to call for a sedan chair:

He took shanks-naig, but fient may care,
  He arselins kiss’d the cawsey
    Wi’ bir that night (ll. 79-81).

The inset tale that follows, where Will finds Jock in bed with his wife, has a drenching with urine and a carnival thrashing neither of which leads to serious consequences:

Wi’ maister laiglen, like a brock
  He did wi’ stink maist smore him
    Fu’ strang that night

Then wi’ a souplic leathern whang
  He gart them fidge an’ girn ay,

But the niest day they a’ shook hands,
And ilka crack did sowder (ll. 88-92, 104-5).

Will empties the chamber pot over his wife and the cobbler, in a gesture with a long ancestry. Urine, like excrement, is “gay matter . . . intermediate between earth and body.” Both “debasing and tender,” it “fertilizes the earth as does the body of the dead” (Rabelais, pp. 175-6). We cannot be sure how much survived in eighteenth-century Edinburgh of the “ambivalent character of drench-
ing in urine, the element of fertility and procreating power contained in this image” (Rabelais, p. 23). Its very presence is a telling indication of Fergusson’s fidelity to the inherited carnival repertory.

The poem has a dazzling alternation of narrative tones which, in the absence of a spoken rendering, modern readers can only reconstruct effortfully and partially. They are unlikely to share in the speaker’s complacent satisfaction that a battered wife pawns her apron the next day to buy her husband drink. But how far can we identify Fergusson with such comments? All we can surmise is that he has one attitude to John and another to the cobbler, just as the angling of the false, semi-official carnival of the banquet must differ from that of the domestic fabliau back home in the cooper’s bed.

His most daring ambivalence occurs in the final stanza, topically as traditional as the drenching with urine. Bakhtin notes the ancient connection between the forms of medicine and folk art which explains the combination in one person of actor and druggist. This is why the images of the physician and the medical element are organically linked . . . with the entire traditional system of images (Rabelais, p. 159).

Medicine partook of the deceitful, ironic, self-advertising atmosphere of the fair, and was connected to the carnival through the untrustworthiness of its practitioners and through “joyous” diseases such as gout or syphilis, the consequence of drinking and sexual activity. Fergusson points out that his banqueters will undoubtedly require treatment. The banter turns to black humor when the electoral term “lang leet” is applied to those who will die from the effects of excessive indulgence:

Ye lowns that troke in doctor’s stuff,
You’ll now ha’e unco slaisters:
When windy blaws their stomacks puff,
They’ll ha’e need baith pills an’ plaisters;
For tho’ ev’ now they look right bluff,
Sic drinks, ’ere hillocks meet,
Will hap some Deacons in a truff,
Inrow’d in the lang leet
O’ death yon night (ll. 127-35).

For Bakhtin, a perception of life and death as interdependent and omnipresent is basic to carnival. The body simultaneously dies and comes alive. It is “a phenomenon in transformation, an as yet unfinished metamorphosis, of death and birth, growth and becoming” (Rabelais, p. 24). Fergusson turns this ambivalence to a grim memento mori. His poem ends, not with the triumphant list of nominees, full of expectation and self-importance, but with the list of those who have succumbed, and who will eat and drink no more.
Fergusson and Burns were very nearly contemporaries. Less than a decade separated their births, and scholars have highlighted the verbal and structural reminiscences which link their poems. Nevertheless, the most striking thing about the pair is the distance which separates them in culture and attitude. If anything, the superficial relationship of model and admirer, the apparent coincidence in intent of poems such as “The Farmer’s Ingle” and “The Cottar’s Saturday Night” or “Leith Races” and “The Holy Fair,” serves to heighten our awareness of a profound difference in world view and approach.

Fergusson’s texts are less accessible to us because he looks back to pre-Union Scotland, to the mastery of Latin, the familiarity with the classics and the patriotic historical perspective which characterized Boece and Buchanan and inspired eighteenth-century vernacular humanism. In his work, a pattern of ideology and imagery such as carnival, which had flourished in the medieval world, could continue to be active and productive. To characterize him as backward-looking is in no way a value judgment. This is how he must appear to a Scotland which has been molded for nearly three centuries by union with England. Fergusson points to different possibilities. He stands at the start of a highway as yet unexplored. And so his work is only partially permeable by a culturally unionist tradition of criticism.

“The Election” demonstrates how easily the literary tradition of carnival could be adapted for satirical use. There is, however, much in the poem which cannot be read as merely satiric. Satire encourages the reader to construct a moral subtext, a scheme of values by which the scenes depicted are evaluated and judged, and which the ambivalence of carnival could only corrode. Carnival does not have a message. It does not invite intellectual comprehension. It was, at least in earlier social practice, a ritual, and moral accounts of ritual are notoriously unilluminating. Not the understanding, but the acting counts. Carnival is ludic, satire didactic. Satire teaches. Carnival plays.

In “The Ordination,” Burns turns the inherited mode to unequivocal satiric use, thereby manifesting his cultural distance from Fergusson. His opening stanza is tantalizingly close to that of “The Election” and has the poignancy of one who in the very act of paying tribute to his master reveals his failure to understand him. Fergusson’s “rax an’ weet your leather” (l. 8), used metaphorically for the gullets of the banqueters, recurs in an incitement to the tanners of

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Kilmarnock, "ye wha leather rax an' draw" (l. 3). The weavers are urged to "fidge an' claw" (l. 1), while Fergusson's electors were to "clap your wings an' claw" (l. 5). A contempt alien to the earlier poet informs Burns's very first lines, and is sustained throughout the poem.

He places "The Ordination" in the mouth of an evangelical extremist. The use of personifications such as Common Sense, Learning and Morality locates poet, persona and reader in a scheme which is the opposite of carnivalesque. Poet and reader are to share an ironic distance from the persona. A perspective of this kind is inimical to carnival, which abolishes distance as all present mingle. Irony not tinged with praise is as alien to carnival as is praise devoid of irony. There is no sense in which Burns can be said to be praising the persona of "The Ordination."

The poem operates a lowering of religion which is not ambivalent and therefore not carnivalesque. If the externals of besmirching are familiar, the dirt involved has lost any sacral quality:

This day M'******* taks the flail, [Mackinlay]
An' he's the boy will blaud her!
He'll clap a shangan on her tail,
An' set the bairns to daud her
Wi' dirt this day (l. 14-8).

The violence evoked is far from playful. It moves in one direction only, from perpetrator to victim, with a predictability that excludes any spontaneity and a coarse vigor that aims to disgust the reader:

See, see auld Orthodoxy's faes
She's swingin' thro' the city!
Hark, how the nine-tair'd cat she plays!
I vow it's unco pretty:

But there's Morality hissel,
Embracing all opinions;
Hear, how he gies the tither yell,
Between his twa companions!
See, how she peels the skin an' fell,
As ane were peelin' onions! (ll. 91-4, 100-105)

At the close we have to imagine humans being rendered to fat, like pigs to lard. Can we be sure that Burns takes no part in the gleeful sadism of the speaker?

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12Burns's poems are quoted from *The Poems and Songs of Robert Burns*, ed. James Kinsley (Oxford, 1968). Further references to this work will appear in the text.
If mair they deave us wi' their din,  
Or Patronage intrusion,  
We'll light a spunk, and, ev'ry skin,  
We'll rin them aff in fusion  
Like oil, some day (ll. 22-6).

Burns's principal device for lowering in this poem is a satirical appropriation of Christian pastoral metaphors. The device is highly amusing. It is as if the preachers had been taken at their word. This deliberate misinterpretation underpins what may have been Burns's first published poem, "The Holy Tulzie" also known as "The Twa Herds":

The twa best Herds in a' the west  
That e'er gae gospel horns a blast  
This five and fifty simmers past,  
O dool to tell!  
Hae had a bitter, black outcast  
Atween themsel. — (ll. 7-12)  

Satire favors animal imagery, but to a different end. Where the church portrays Christ as the good shepherd and the faithful as his flock, satire will reply that human beings certainly do behave like animals, apparently agreeing, but in fact subverting. For the step from viewing the congregation as sheep to viewing them as beasts is a tiny one:

O Sirs! wha ever wad expeckit  
Your duty ye wad sae negleckit?  
You wha was ne'er by Lairds respeckit,  
To wear the Plaid:  
But by the vef'd Brutes eleckit  
To be their Guide — (ll. 19-24)

Those who cast their votes are brutes. It is sobering to find this condemnation of church democracy from Burns's pen.

In "The Ordination" the congregation are compared to cattle, and the words of their evangelical preachers to withered cabbage stems:

Now auld K*********, cock thy tail,  
An' toss thy horns fu' canty;  

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13 The evidence about the publication of this poem is puzzling. Burns wrote, "The following was the first of my poetical productions that saw the light" (Kinsley, I, 70), but there is no record of its being published before 1796. Elsewhere Burns was emphatic that he "first committed the sin of RHYME" before he was sixteen, with the song "O once I lov'd a bonnie lass" (Kinsley, III, 1003).
Nae mair thou'lt rowte out-owre the dale,
Because thy pasture's scanty;
For lapfu's large o' gospel kail
Shall fill thy crib in plenty,
An' runts o' grace the pick an' wale,
No gi'en by way o' dainty
But ilka day (ll. 46-54).

The stanza immediately following has an almost surrealistic rush of imagery. Burns indulges in something very like free association. In a parody of the Jews in Babylonian captivity Babylon becomes Babel and the harps fiddles which, strung along a clothes line, turn to nappies. The pegs fixing them remind Burns of the pegs which turn a fiddle, and his attention darts to the cavorting of the player's elbow as he wields the bow. In its turn this transports him back to the pastoral imagery he has been sending up, becoming a lamb's wagging tail. The transitions are so swift that the stanza verges on incoherence. It is one of the most dazzlingly modern in all Burns's output:

Nae mair by Babel's streams we'll weep,
To think upon our Zion;
And hing our fiddles up to sleep,
Like baby-clouts a-drin:
Come, screw the pegs wi' tunefu' cheep,
And o'er the thairms be tryin;
Oh, rare! to see our elbucks wheep,
And a' like lamb-tails flyin
Fu' fast this day! (ll. 55-63)

There is further lowering in the fourth stanza, which trivializes and demeans three stories from the Bible. Carnival lowering was never purely negative. In Bakhtin's words, "folk humour denies, but it revives and renews at the same time. Bare negation is completely alien to folk culture" (Rabelais, p. 11). The sexual organs, the generating part of the body, had not lost their sacred character, and a redressing of the balance between the intellective and the amorous zones could never be truly degrading. Burns's lowering is. It moves in one, not two directions. The effect is satirical, and the reference to "rams that cross the breed" (l. 43) demonstrates how, in this poem at least, he can only present rule-defying sexuality in the language of its detractors.

With "The Ordination" Burns abandoned carnival for satire. With "The Holy Fair" he wrote what may be the greatest poem in the Christ's Kirk tradition, reformulating the ambivalence highlighted by Bakhtin.\(^\text{14}\) Burns's intro-
duction, in which the speaker encounters Superstition, Hypocrisy and Fun on their way to the communion ceremony, is obviously an expansion of Ferguson's dialogue with Mirth. Fewer readers have detected that Burns took the basic syntactical pattern for his poem from "Leith Races":

Some chaises honest folk contain,
    An' some hae mony a whore in
("Leith Races," ll. 138-9).

Here, some are thinkan on their sins,
    An' some upo' their claes

The figure is zeugma, where two semantically opposed elements are yoked together by an identical pattern of syntax. In the above examples, there are three elements, subject, verb and object. The subject and verb are unchanged, while the first object is replaced by a second with an effect of surprise or incongruence.

Zeugma is the syntactical equivalent of carnival. A term is replaced by an antonym instead of a synonym and the unchanging structure that governs the substitution implies that on some level they are equivalent. The ultimate effect is to make opposites co-present. Each term unstably, dizzyingly, threatens to turn into its own contradiction, carrying its opposite within it. It is the syntactical enactment of the "grotesque image" in which "we find both poles of transformation, the old and the new, the dying and the procreating, the beginning and the end of the metamorphosis" (Rabelais, p. 24).

The passage from Rabelais most relevant to "The Holy Fair" describes Gargantua's confusion when his wife dies giving birth to their son. It is worth quoting at some length:

... seeing on the one side his wife Badebec newly dead, and on the other his son Pantagruel newly born, and so big and handsome, he did not know what to say or do. His mind was troubled with the doubt whether he ought to weep in mourning for his wife, or laugh out of delight at his son. On either side he found sophistical arguments which took his breath away. ... And consequently he remained trapped, like a mouse caught in pitch, or a kite taken in a noose.

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of Bakhtin's theories to "The Holy Fair" and other poems. It appeared after this essay had been completed.

Zeugma is a "figure of speech in which a word stands in the same relation to two other terms, but with a different meaning." J. A. Cuddon, A Dictionary of Literary Terms (Harmondsworth, 1976), p. 761.
‘Oh, poor Pantagruel, you have lost our good mother, your sweet nurse, your beloved lady. Ah, false death, how unkind you are to me, how cruel you are to me, to wrench from me her whose rightful due was immortality! And as he spoke he bellowed like a cow. But when Pantagruel came into his mind, he suddenly began laughing like a calf. ‘Ho, my little son,’ he cried, ‘my ballocklet, my footkin, how pretty you are! How grateful I am to God for having given me such a fine son, such a jolly little fellow, so smiling and gay! Ho, ho, he, ho! How glad I am. Let’s drink, ho, and banish all melancholy!’

Bakhtin chooses this passage to illustrate his thesis that Rabelais’ unconditional defense of life is also inclusive of death. The image of death is devoid of all tragic or terrifying overtones. Death is the necessary link in the process of the people’s growth and renewal... Birth and death meet in this scene. Death is the “other side” of birth (Rabelais, p. 407).

Gargantua looks from side to side, at his dead wife and his newborn son in turn. Each sight provokes a different emotion, and he is unable to reconcile the two. His position is remarkably similar to that of the blacksmith whose account of an open-air communion ceremony may well have been a source for Burns:

At first, you find a great number of men and women lying together upon the grass; here they are sleeping and snoring, some with their faces towards heaven, others with their faces turned downwards, or covered with their bonnets; there you find a knot of young fellows and girls making assignations to go home together in the evening, or to meet in some ale-house; in another place you see a pious circle sitting round an ale-barrel, many of which stand ready upon carts for the refreshment of the saints... in this sacred assembly there is an odd mixture of religion, sleep, drinking, courtship, and a confusion of sexes, ages, and characters... a little nearer the speaker... you will find some weeping and others laughing, some pressing to get nearer the tent or tub in which the parson is sweating, bawling, jumping, and beating the desk; others fainting with the stifling heat, or wrestling to extricate themselves from the crowd: one seems very devout and serious, and the next moment is cursing his neighbour for squeezing or treading on him; in an instant after, his countenance is composed to the religious gloom, and he is groaning, sighing and weeping for his sins: in a word, there is such an absurd mixture of the serious and comic, that were we convened for any other purpose than that of worshipping the God and Governor of Nature, the scene would exceed all power of face.

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17 From Letter from a Blacksmith to the Ministers and Elders of the Church of Scotland, in which the Manner of Publick Worship in that Church is considered, its Inconveniences and
The movement of the blacksmith’s account and of the scene from Rabelais is the same. One can almost see the speaker’s head swivel from side to side, like a spectator’s at a tennis tournament. It is significant that his gaze cannot take in both players, both sides of the coin at once. The visions he alternately sees demand contradictory and irreconcilable reactions from him, and all he can do is to note their co-presence, to acknowledge with a shrug of impotence that they are not, in fact, mutually exclusive.

Zeugma mimics this situation excellently. The identical syntactical structure stands for the single observer and the simultaneity of the phenomena. The changing element stands for their opposite, contradictory nature. If we look at the whole of the stanza quoted above, the underpinning zeugmas are clear:

Here, some are thinkin’ on their sins,
    An’ some upo’ their claes;
Ane curses feet that fyl’d his shins,
    Anither sighs an’ pray’s: [sic]
On this hand sits a Chosen swatch,
    Wi’ screw’d-up, grace-proud faces;
On that, a set o’ chaps, at watch,
    Thrang winkan on the lasses
To chairs that day (ll. 82-90).

The seventh and ninth stanzas of “The Holy Fair” are also built on a “Here... There” structure. In the twentieth, the “lads an’ lasses” are “blythely bent/To mind baith saul an’ body” (ll. 172-3). Alternation of contradictory elements also governs the movement of the poem’s action. The faithful arrive and take their seats, and courting begins (VII-XII). Sermons follow (XIV-XVII), then the focus shifts to the tavern where assignations are formed (XVIII-XX). Further hellfire and brimstone preaching (XXI-XXII) gives way to eating, drinking and lovemaking (XIII-XXVII).

Carnival violence takes verbal and gastronomic in addition to purely physical form in “Leith Races” and “The Election.” Here it appears as disputes over doctrine (fomented by alcohol):

While thick an’ thrang, an’ loud an’ lang,
    Wi’ Logic, an’ wi’ Scripture,
They raise a din, that, in the end.
    Is like to breed a rupture
O’ wrath that day (ll. 158-62).

At the same time, certain opposites are conflated. Burns's indifference to the affiliations of the preachers has mystified some readers. The same treatment is meted out to moderates and extremists, to Moodie's "eldritch squeel an' gestures" and Smith's "cauld harangues," Peebles' "meek an' mim" discourse and the "auld wives' fables" peddled by Miller (ll. 114, 122, 141, 148). Expectations that Burns will favor one side rather than another are disappointed. This is because he has no ideological axe to grind in "The Holy Fair." The poem is not satiric in approach, and any message we may attempt to formulate from it soon reveals its inadequacy. Burns is not complaining that Christian worship should be more sincere, or less adulterated with sex, or that radical preachers should be replaced with moderates, or that communions should not interfere with courting. (Indeed, how would the lovers meet if there were no commun-ion?) He merely shows us that all this is, that preaching and lovemaking, Presbyterian doctrine and extramarital sex are not only compatible, but go extremely well together. And this insight is a profoundly carnivalistic one, an affirmation of that which happens rather than its rejection in favor of an imagined superior world.

The closing stanza offers a riot of zeugmas, with additional internal rhyming to highlight the pairing of equivalents:

How monie hearts this day converts,
   O' Sinners and o' Lasses!
   Their hearts o' stane, gin night are gane
       As saft as ony flesh is.
   There's some are fou o' love divine;
     There's some are fou o' brandy;
   An' monie jobs that day begin,
       May end in Houghmagandie
   Some ither day (ll. 235-43).

If the balance is tipped in any way, this is thanks to the placing of "houghmagandie"; given the predictable, repetitive nature of the following tag, it is, to all intents and purposes, the final and most powerful word in the poem.

There are indications of communal mating in "Peblis to the Play," and the violence in "Christ's Kirk at the Green" may have a sexual significance. Ramsay had sanitized this aspect of the genre by making a wedding ceremony, in which only two participants are joined together, and on a permanent basis, the subject of his third canto. In "The Holy Fair" Burns restores a crucial element to the genre. It is, nevertheless, a poem of opposition. The use of the stanza is polemical. In the earlier poems, the ideological matrix of carnival was shared by characters, poet and audience. Only the modern reader is excluded by its unfamiliarity. In "The Holy Fair," the characters are not aware of the overall picture they compose. They do not consciously carnivalize religion. This is the work of the poet, who shares his perspective with the reader. It is a perspective created by the text, not by the participants. There is no frontal attack on Pres-
byterianism. The spleen and vicarious violence of "The Ordination" have vanished. The poet's evident assent to the communion, in all its aspects, excludes a satirical approach. Nevertheless "The Holy Fair" represents Burns's most powerful undermining of Calvinist hegemony. He does not engage with it, but sets it in a different framework, the ideological framework of carnival. The tradition of carnival-type celebrations in Scotland, and their embodiment and perpetuation in a literary system, made his use of that framework possible.

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Rediscovering William Lauder's Poetic Advocacy of the Poor

Fitzedward Hall, writing in 1864, declares that "So completely was his fame as an author obscured," Scots poet William Lauder (c. 1520-1573) nearly disappeared from literary history: "it was not until 1827—when the Rev. Peter Hall, in the Crypt, reprinted his Compendious Tractate,—that such a person was known to have existed."¹ To account both for a dearth of critical interest in Lauder's surviving poetry of social and political criticism, and for his extant works' artistic significance, it may be useful to think of Lauder's poems (in the 1864/1870 editions, most recently reprinted in 1969) as products of "the critical

¹Ane Compendious and Breve Tractate concernyng the Office and Dewtie of Kyngis, Spirituall Pastoris, and Temporall Jugis (1556), ed. Fitzedward Hall, EETS, Original Series, 3 (1864), viii. All references will be to this edition. References to all other Lauder works will be to The Minor Poems of William Lauder, ed. F. J. Furnivall, EETS, Original Series, 41 (1870). Line numbers will be included in parentheses following all excerpts. There is no denying that Lauder's poetry retains its identity as a product of the Scottish Reformation's turbulent times. Furnivall argued, for example, that the poet's Office and Dewtie of Kyngis was composed specifically to advise Mary of Guise, named Regent in 1554, and her circle of counselors (p. ix). Writing over a century later, Graham Holderness asserts that all cultural texts are "inseparable from the conditions of their production and reception in history; and as involved necessarily in the making of cultural meanings which are always, finally, political meanings," (The Shakespeare Myth [New York, 1988], p. ix). This very simultaneity, however, was precisely situated through the agency of historical parallels first addressed by Furnivall in the 1870 edition (pp. viii-xxxi), the first instance of the critical industry reading and encoding Lauder exclusively as a political writer.
industry," a modification of what Theodor W. Adorno calls "the culture indus­
try," where "industry" denotes the intellectual and historical "standardization"
of cultural products, serving "to reinforce ideology." Poetry and polemic be­
come synonymous under this process, and Lauder's work becomes labeled and
limited as verse created in the service of the Scottish Reformation. As Michele
Barrett has argued in attempting to move beyond the question of use-values in
conceptualizing Marxist perspectives on aesthetics,

in a large number of instances the ranking of the works depends upon criteria that
are not aesthetic (a work is stoical, uplifting, cathartic, illuminating, or whatever).
What is often not shown is how and why the particular formal properties of the
work (situated in an understanding of the different dimensions of particular art
forms) can account for the value assigned.3

With evaluative emphasis placed on the cultural product's original socio-politi­
cal function or context, rather than on the aesthetics of the product itself, the
critical industry produces a way of reading the artistic product (here, as pro­
reform propaganda) as well as the (critically-configured) product itself.4 And
by failing to question the presentation and value of Lauder's work as artist
rather than solely as activist, modern readers have passively read him into liter­
ary obscurity. The Dictionary of National Biography, as one of the few refer­
ence sources commenting on William Lauder, actively perpetuates this view
with its assessment that "Lauder's published verse is more interesting from a
philological than from a literary point of view."

The radical reputations of Lauder's printers, Robert Lekprevick and John
Scot, also may have contributed to the conflation of the poet with his politics.
Adorno makes the observation that the practical operation of the culture industry
includes "distribution and mechanical reproduction, and therefore always
remains external to the object" (14). While the means of (re)production and the


3Michèle Barrett, "The Place of Aesthetics in Marxist Criticism," Marxism and the Interpre­

Kenneth Bayes (Cambridge, 1991), notes that in Max Horkheimer's essay, "Traditional and
Critical Theory," "social struggle is the conflictual counterpart to cultural action" (p. 28).
Studies in cultural materialism attempt to bridge this conflictual gap, for "Culture is not sim­
ply a reflection of the economic and political system, nor can it be independent of it. Cultural
materialism therefore studies the implication of literary texts in history" (Jonathan Dollimore
and Alan Sinfield, eds., Political Shakespeare: New Essays in Cultural Materialism
[Manchester, 1985], p. viii)—and that "implication" includes the reconstruction and recep­
tion of texts by modern readers as well as by historical contemporaries.
object being (re)produced are discrete operations, however, their close causal relationship suggests that once one is associated with a specific code, the other will be considered at least casually (if not causally) related to the same code.

Edinburgh printer Robert Lekprevick (fl. 1561-1581) received authorization from the Scottish parliament to publish the Confession of Faith in 1561. This “principal printer of the reformed party in Scotland” (DNB) also received a special license to print an edition of the Geneva Bible, though the work was never completed. He printed two works for Lauder: _A ne prettie Mirrour Or Conference, betuix the faithfull Protestant and the Dissemblit false Hypocreet_ (c. 1568), and _A ne Godlie Tractate or Mirrour_ (c. 1570), which includes _The Lamentation of the Pure_ and is dated 1 February 1568. Lekprevick was forced to flee to Stirling in 1571 when soldiers were sent by the Earl of Morton to search his house for copies of George Buchanan’s _Chaemeleon_, and he was subsequently arrested for having participated in the defamation of Mary Queen of Scots relating to Lord Darnley’s 1567 murder. Upon his release, Lekprevick was “forbidden to print without a license” on 16 July 1574 (DNB). John Scot (or Scott; fl. 1550) led a similarly politicized career. Dickson and Edmond tentatively identify him as the printer for Lauder’s _A ne Compendious and Breue Tractate concernyng the Office and Dewtie of Kyngis, Spirituall Pastoris, and Temporall Jugis_ (1556). His Edinburgh office was raided in 1562 as he was printing Linlithgow Catholic schoolmaster Ninian Winzet’s _Last Blast of the Trumpet_; copies were confiscated, and Scot was imprisoned. To silence him further, Scot’s impounded printing materials were distributed to rival printer Thomas Bassandyne. Nevertheless, he is believed in 1568 to have printed Lauder’s _A ne trew & breue Sentencius Discriptioun of ye nature of Scotland_, and a short poem, _A ne gude Exempill be the Butterflie instructing Men to hait all Harlottrie_, as well as an edition of Sir David Lindsay’s works. In all, twelve books have been certainly identified as printed by Scot, but numerous others have undoubtedly been lost because their “ephemeral nature and strong controversial tendency favoured their destruction” (DNB). The political taint of this “strong controversial tendency” on the part of both printers seems to have permeated the reception of Lauder’s texts, though ironically Lauder suffered none of the contemporary censure experienced by his printers and was named minister (c. 1563-4) of the united parishes of Forgandenny, Forteviot, and Muckarsie by the presbytery of Perth.

We can even account for a perceived absence of Lauder’s persona from his own works, as he invokes the _vox populi_ of mid-sixteenth-century Scotland,
expressing proletarian outrage at elitist excesses and popular deprivations while admonishing political and spiritual leaders to protect the interests of the poor. Clearly Lauder adopts this choral voice also to generate a popular authority, connoted by the sheer numbers of the oppressed and dissatisfied, for himself as speaker. Yet the message overwhelms the messenger and the content obscures the form. Though Lauder artistically encodes his strings of signifiers in verse, they are read as prosaic political signifieds and the consequence of his emotional populism as a rhetorical strategy is largely to submerge altogether his individual authorship, beyond the occasional assertion of first-person pronouns and a pervasive sense of agitated concern. Lauder’s poet predecessors and contemporaries mediated this loss of voice, while promoting the interests of the impoverished, through a variety of strategies. An advocacy of the poor is implied in the late medieval Taill of Rauf Coilyear, for example, though the presence of King Charlemagne in disguise ensures reader interest throughout. By stanza fifty-nine, after two-thirds of the poem has been introduced, the generous collier, Rafe, has proven himself so meritorious that the king “Befoir mony worthie he dubbit him knicht,” arguing that class can be transcended through merit. Edinburgh burgess James Foullis, an advocate at the court of James V, points in his Calamitose pestis Elega deploratio (c. 1511) to abuse of the poor as one of the causes of the plagues tormenting Edinburgh; yet his neo-Latin poetry lacks the vernacular impact of Lauder’s work. Robert Henryson warns that “Grit abundance and blind prosperitie / Oftymes makis ane evill conclusion” and attaches greatest value and reward to “Blythnes in hart, with small possessioun,” yet this moral and many like it are couched in animal fables or other allegorical structures. Lauder’s subjective voice as poet can be recovered, however, by examining the artistry he employs in the construction and

because the poetry is viewed solely as the vehicle for the dialectic. The illusion of representing the popular voice or some sense of verisimilitude in depicting it contributes to the accessibility—at least for the modern reader—of any work of literature; and the view that realism in art requires a reflection of existing social conflicts is a fundamental tenet of traditional Marxist aesthetics.


8 For a discussion of theme in Foullis’s courtly poetry, see Louise Olga Fradenburg, City, Marriage, Tournament: Arts of Rule in Late Medieval Scotland (Madison, 1991), pp. 47-64.

9 “The Taill of the Uponlandis Mous and the Burges Mous,” in Robert Henryson, Poems, ed. Charles Elliott (Oxford, 1963), p. 12. “The Bludy Serk” (pp. 115-8) is similarly recoded by its “Moralitas” from a romance narrative to a religious allegory. Cf. the personification of the people championed by Lauder in Sir David Lindsay’s figures Ihone the comoun Weill, from The Dreme of Schir Dauid Lyndesay and Ane Satyre of the Thrie Estaitis, and Ihone Upeland from The Complaynt of Schir Dauid Lyndesay.
manipulation of economic metaphors throughout his lyrics. The intent of this study, then, is not to deny the socio-political ramifications of Lauder's poetic theses, but rather to balance this perspective with equal attention to his aesthetics, to the craft which shapes his poetic treatises.

Lauder's unique talent as both poet and polemicist is his ability to translate social and political dilemmas figuratively into economic problems of interest and significance to all people, to construct rhetorical stratagems that seem initially to operate on the universal level but ultimately force the reader to reflect upon personal practices out of a sense of self-interest, if not of altruism. The political-economic leveling advocated on behalf of the poor in *Ane Compendious and Breue Tractate concernyng the Office and Dewtie of Kyngis, Spirituall Pastoris, and Temporall Iugis* (1556)—published, curiously, during a rather lucrative period of creative activity characterized by the dramatic entertainments (now lost) he wrote for the marriage of Lady Barbara Hamilton to the fourth Earl of Huntly in 1548; for the entertainment of the queen dowager, Mary of Guise, in 1554; and for a celebration of Mary Queen of Scot's marriage to the Dauphin in 1558 (for which he received £11 5s., £42 plus “16 crownis of the Sun and ane half,” and £10 respectively)—suggests both Lauder's ideological sympathy with the looming Scottish Reformation and his sense of how best to achieve harmony between state structures and the Scottish people, most explicitly on behalf of the impoverished. Lauder cites the essential equity of Christ's sacrifice as the archetype for his pleas on behalf of the poor:

For Christe did suffer wyllinglie  
To saif Man Vniuersallie,  
And sced, also quha vnderstude,  
Als gret abundance of his blude  
For the pure sely nakit thyng  
As he sced for the Potent kyng  
(*III. 67-72*)

All human beings inherit both the debt incurred, and the benefit acceded, by the death of Jesus Christ. This is the egalitarian umbrella cited in the Edinburgh Covenant (signed 13 July 1559) and its united opposition to Catholicism:

as we be sones of ane Father, partakeris of ane Spirite, and heris of ane kingdome,  
swa sall we maist hartlie, faythfullie and trewlie concur togiddir, nocht onlie in the matens of religioun, but sall lykewise, at our utter poweris to the waring of our la­bouris, substance and lyves, assit, defend, and maynteynes evry ane ane uthir, against quhatsumever that troubles, persewis or invades us... 

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10 Hall, p. vi.

Lauder notes this common aspiration, but moves directly from there to an explicit advocacy of the poor: “kyngs suld heir the pure mans crye, / And helpe thame, rather, in distres, / Nor thame that hes the gret ryches” (ll. 24-6). Significantly, this advocacy is predicated in the first half of the poem on the human essence shared regardless of class status, as in the rhetorical question, “Quhat sis thir kings more than the pure, / Except thair office & thair cure?” (ll. 61-2).

To ensure that the “kyng” invests sufficiently in the welfare of the governed, Lauder produces an equation through which the differences existing between governor and governed are represented as inversely proportional to the governor’s own interests. Under the heading “the discriptioun of the difference betuix the kyng and his vassall, in the sycht of God,” the poet explains that a king’s suffering in hell is greater than that of the monarch’s subjects,

Because the kyng had in his handis
The rewle of hunders and thousandis,
Qahome that he sufferit, in his dayis,
To tyne and peryshe mony wayis,
And the vile Catyue, naikit and pure,
Had of hym-self bot onlye cure. (ll. 93-8)

The mismanagement of the monarch who allowed the “hunders and thousandis” of poor subjects to “tyne and peryshce” is unforgivable here—not for its own sake, but because of the class-bound rule that while the impoverished individual has the responsibility of “hym-self,” the king is entrusted with the care of many.

Lauder is quick to observe in Ane trew & breue Sentencius Discriptioun of ye nature of Scotland Twiching the Interteinment of virtewus men That taketh Ryches that even in post-Reformation Scotland, “And thow Layk substance of thy avin, and geir, / Thow will by Lyttill regardit in this Land” (ll. 7-8)—cautionary advice as applicable to a monarch as to one of the commons. The capricious disproportion between personal value and personal wealth makes it possible for the least worthy to become the most powerful:

Bot thocht thow be ane ideote, or ane fule,
Ane maykles monstour, withoutin wit or lair,
Ane Blunt bubo, that neuer had bene at scule,
And sik as Is of euerey virtew bair.
3it hauy thow gudis and geir, I the declair,—
Thought thow be weked, I put the out of dout.—
And thocht thow war to sathane, Sone & & air,
3it for thy bagis thow sail be takin owt. (ll. 9-15)

Lauder multiplies the pejorative signifiers here to construct a collective image of egregious ignorance. Yet these signifiers with their negative denotations have been recoded, by social convention, as connotatively positive if the igno-
rant individual in question has “gudis and geir.” The poet’s point is made more emphatic with the assertion that even Satan’s “Sone & air” would be accepted if his money-bags were sufficiently full. Value is strictly construed as market-value, so “Neathir virtew nor wit, in to this weked land / Doith proffit thame that hes nocht gudis in hand” (ll. 25-6).

Lauder maintains the crusading advocacy of the poor he began in *Ane Compendious and Breue Tractate*, though as the signified of “poor” he substitutes “virtuous” for “impoverished” or “worthless,” creating thereby something of value, a commodity, from a socio-political liability. This semantic gambit allows the poet to draw attention to the ramifications of continuing to undervalue the virtuous poor:

Allace! heir is ane Cairfull Miserie!
That virtwis men but geir ar of no pryce,
And Beasts, for bags, ar in Authoritye!
I think this change is wonderus strange & nyce!
The caus heirof Is onlie Couattyse,
That blinds so man that he can no waysis se
To cheryse virtew. And ay chaistyce vice:
Allace! heir is ane cairfull misere! (ll. 17-24)

The choral lament repeated in lines 17 and 24 indicates that the problem perceived in the poem is not innocuous or isolated, but one that requires attention as “ane cairfull miserie.” Men identified as “virtwis” paradoxically can be construed as “of no pryce,” while “Beasts” merit high value and “Authoritye.” To mark the seriousness of the issue, Lauder employs contemporary idiom into which sarcasm has already been coded: the inversion through which worth no longer creates value, but rather is determined by it, characterizes a practice “strange & nyce.” The emphasis on “geir” as the measure of an individual’s “pryce” is shown rhetorically not only to devalue “virtew” but implicitly to value “vice,” with “Couattyse” as its only rationale. The problem is indeed an economic one, though Lauder’s semiotic manipulations shift the consideration of the poor away from the question of cost and toward the question of investment.12

In an attempt to retain the poor’s religious faith, and to locate a metaphorical structure that will communicate to the more economically autonomous as well, Lauder proposes an economic exchange in *Ane Godlie Tractate or Mirrour*. Quhairintill may be easilie perceauit quho Thay be that ar Engraffit in

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12 For an overview of the quite different strategies employed by Lauder’s contemporaries (like Sir David Lindsay) to address social issues in their works, see Roger Mason, “Covenant and Commonweal: The Language of Politics in Reformation Scotland,” in *Church, Politics, and Society: Scotland 1408-1929*, ed. Norman MacDougall (Edinburgh, 1983), pp. 97-126.
to Christ that can only result in gain for any individual transacting the exchange. The relationship among Christ, church, and believer is expressed in explicitly economic terms:

The Fructe, the profiteit, and the commodityie
In to this gratius and Godlie Unitie
Betue Christ Iesus and his Kirk most trew,
Lo, Christ he dois heir furthimore ensew.

And for to draw thame till ane constancie,
He schewis thame the grit Utilitie
That followis thame that in him dois abye.
In to few wourds he dois the same discyde:
"Thairthrow 3e sall obtiene grit profittis thre." (ll. 221-24; 227-32)

Belief in Christ proves a "grit Utilitie," which is contracted to return "grit profittis thre" for the believer’s commitment to “Christ Iesus and his Kirk.” These three profits—derived from New Testament scripture (primarily from the gospel of John) and forming sections of the poem called “commodities”—are “Ask Quhat 3e Will, It Sall Be Geuin Vnto 30w,” “Heirin is my Father Glorifyit, that 3e bring furth mekill fruct,” and “And Be Maid My Discyplis.”

The greater the investment, the greater the rewards guaranteed through the three spiritual commodities. What, then, of the ultimate investment of one’s life? Lauder praises those who have patiently suffered “Most cruell death, and mycht haue had thair lyues, / With 3eirle rentis to thame, thair barnis & wyues” (ll. 678-9). Martyrdom is the most extreme example of investing one’s life, though Lauder clarifies that a believer’s death is the final price for all who “sall haue pairt with Christ in Heauinmis giore.” This, however, is the only reasonable capital to offer in exchange for the anticipated gain: “So this last profitt the rest dois fer transcend, / That is Eternall, and neuer sall haue end” (ll. 690-91).

With the poor identified as a commodity and their protection urged as a vital political investment, Lauder can turn to the issue of management and mismanagement under the guise of investment counseling, rather than resorting solely to the minister’s more conventional, purely moral appeal. Lauder doesn’t shrink from shaming those who ignore “3our pure and nedye brethren” (asserting “I der be bauld” with his condemnations [ll. 457, 459]), but moves

13These spiritual commodities are in turn also discussed metaphorically in economic terms: for example:

First, in this Spirituall Unioun we haue
Quhat richtius thing of Christ that we sal craue.
Quhat better thing can man seik for his hyre,
Nor get all thing he lustlie will desyre? (ll. 257-60)
quickly to the question of economic management at the social level. He chides the mercilessness of the economically enabled who fail to help their less fortunate comrades, but identifies the central problem as the unwillingness of those in power to loan goods and grains to the poor. For where “Thair is no credeit,” then “for Necessitie, / The Pure Broder, for Hunger he man die” (ll. 480-81). To complement his economic argument, Lauder employs his ministerial position as censor of cruel deeds and rhetorically transforms inaction on the part of those who control the distribution of food supplies into willful cruelty: though “3e sla nocht pure men with 3our knyues, / 3it with 3our dearth 3e tak from thame the lyues! / Quhet differs deearth frome creuell briganrye, / Quhen that 3e mak the Pure for hunger dye?” (ll. 470-73). The central problem is one of mismanagement of what has been entrusted to some by God to share with others, most particularly with those in greatest need. God sends the “Uictall of the ground” in order “that 3e sould thairof gude Stewarts be, / HeIpand the Pure in thair necessite” (ll. 482, 484-5). In the role of stewards, then, those in power must consider the welfare of the poor as well as their own, and to encourage an altruistic resolution on their part, Lauder proposes their options in terms of investment and return:

Wo be till him that hurdis vp his Cerne,
Syne kepis it vp te dearth, fra morn to mornel;
Bot Gods blissing sall lycht vpon his head,
That latis it furth, that pure men may get bread.
Bot as 3e cloise 3our Girnallis frome the puris,
Quhilkis now thai rybry grit miserie induris,
So God sall cloise on 3ow, for 3our grit Sin,
His Heauenlie Porte, quhen 3e wald faine cum in. (ll. 486-93)

Records of the significant shortage of grains in 1567-1568, due to the combination of a near-drought summer and a very harsh winter that severely inhibited yields, verify that Lauder is exercising no poetic license when describing the seriousness of the problem. After creating a parallel between human generosity with food and God’s consequent blessing on those who are so, however, the poet does manipulate images in a memorable simile: those who close the doors of their granaries to the poor will likewise find the door to heaven closed to

14Cf. the same argument in The Lamentatioun of the Pure. Twiching the miserabill estait of this present warld (1568):

Credit and frist is quyte away,
No thing is lent bot for Usure;
For euerie penny thay wyll haue tway:
How lang, Lord, wyll this warld indure? (ll. 49-52)

15See Furnivall, pp. x-xi.
them when they most need it open. The failure to invest in the poor, then, once again is presented as the most egregious kind of mismanagement, for it ultimately marks a failure to invest in one's own future well-being.

Lauder turns to address landowners in particular, reconfiguring the poor as workers (the "pure Plewmen & labouris of your lands" [l. 528]) in order to press his mismanagement arguments on both economic and moral grounds. He finds managerial exploitation of the poor who are competing for jobs unconscionable, and attacks the practice of replacing needy workers with workers who produce more, "Howbeit the first haue Barnis aucht or nyne" (l. 532): "Quhen tha haue nocht to fill 3our gredie hands, / Quhair 3e can spye ane man to geue 3ow mair, / 3e schute thame furth" (ll. 529-31). Even the workers who initially prove superior producers are treated exploitively, for "Within few 3eris 3e herye him also, / Syne puts him furth; to beggin most he go" (ll. 534-5). The profits for the landowners pursuing such employment patterns are undeniable, for "3e haue, be fer, moir land and rent / Nor euer had 3our Fatheris 3ow before" (ll. 539-40), yet this growth simply whets their appetite for more and Lauder reveals that profit motive has been replaced by sheer avarice. As an example, the traditional practice of "householding," of creating a community of workers both to exhibit the success of the landowner and to provide work for those in the community needing it, has been discontinued, despite the immediate loss of prestige for the landowner: "3our housis halding is down, & laid on syde: / Quhair hunders wount 3our faders to conuoye, / Now will 3e ryde with ane man and ane boye" (ll. 543-5). Of course, the contemporary economic conditions were the primary determinant for the practice's decline. But Lauder's argument is that the landowner is a patron as much as an employer, and is responsible for stabilizing the local economy by expanding the financial base available to the community out of a sense of mutual benefit, rather than shrinking it for the purpose of amassing greater personal gain (or even of protecting personal assets). In an effort to reverse this, Lauder connects the breach of moral and social ethics by landowners in a cause-and-effect relationship with the contrary weather conditions that have resulted in decreased crop production for everyone:

Grit meruell is, of 3ow that getis this muk,
Bot 3e sould haue aboudance with gude luk.
And 3it we se thair dois nothing succed,
Bot barrane ground, with mony frutles weid,
Moir empye now of warldlis gear and gude
Now wes 3our Faders, that fand rycht mony fude,
Quhilks had nocht half sa mekill for to spend,
3it had grit rycies, and honour to thair end.
And 3e ar nedye, thriftles, and threid-bair!

\[16\] See Furnivall, pp. xxv-xxvi.
Of wrangus gude, no better man can fair. (ll. 550-59)

The avaricious landowner is justly doomed to failure because his wealth results not from honest profits, but from “wrangus gude”—ill-gotten gain. Depicting a Midas-like paradox, Lauder observes that while his landowner contemporaries are wealthier than their predecessors, their farmland has become “barrane ground” with “mony frutiles weid” as chief produce, and the result is to lack the “honour” of earlier generations and hence to find themselves “nedye, thriftles, and threid-bair.” The poet returns to his theme of investing in the poor, and delivers his pronouncement of the consequences of investing only in self. Not only are the “grit proffitis thre” forfeited, but disproportionate losses follow what appears initially as gain—and to demonstrate that this is punishment from God, not coincidental misfortune, Lauder expands his arguments into the realm of cultural history.

Toward gathering rhetorical momentum behind the cautionary advice in Ane Godlie Tractate or Mirrour, Lauder presents negative exempla, primarily from biblical passages, to illustrate the results of indifference to class status as displayed through God’s punishment of the famous. He announces the pain of “Hellis fyre” as the certain reward for all transgressors, “As Nero sufferit for his tirrannye, / And Pharaoh for his grit Ydolatrie, / And as the gluttoun quho refusit Lazarus, / With mony mo nor heir I may discus” (ll. 115-8). While the poet makes the credible claim that the range of available examples exceeds his space to describe them, he also wastes no opportunity to build additional persuasion on this foundation of notable violators of God’s laws. In “Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat,” George Lukács suggests that tragic literature is effective when the reader feels

that the great changes in society are being revealed here with a sensuous, practical vividness. This enables their contours to be drawn clearly whereas it is subjectively and objectively impossible to grasp their essence, to understand their origins and their place in the whole process.17

That is, popular recognition of the cited biblical examples makes his entire argument more immediately accessible to his readers, allowing his artistic focus to shift from exposition to explication, to telling readers what the cited characters mean, rather than simply describing them.

Lauder warns that the famous rarely suffer alone: Lucifer’s daily torment in hell is shared “With mony thousandis of his oppynnioun,” and Pharaoh, who in Exodus 14:28 is drowned in a display of God’s power through Moses, dies “with all his Horsis and crewell Companye” (ll. 436, 439). He cites Sennach-

erib as being "put to flycht," but readers familiar with the account of Hezekiah's deliverance in II Kings 19 know that this is another example of followers suffering for the leader's sins, as "the Angel of the Lord went out and smote in the campe of [the King of] Asshûr an hundred foure score and fyue thousand: so when they rose early in the morning, they were all dead corpses" (II Kings 19:35, Geneva Bible); in this case, the leader even departs unharmed. Nebuchadnezzar for his pride is "transformit in ane beist" until he humbly concedes himself "to be ane mortall wicht," and treacherous Aman, who nearly sends Esther's innocent uncle Mordecai to the gallows, "Him self wes hangit, withoutin moir remead" (ll. 444, 446, 451). The example of Achan—who confesses to having stolen forbidden property including "a goodly Babylonish garment, & two hundreth shekels of siuer, and a wedge of gold of fyfte shekels weight" (Joshua 7:21, Geneva Bible)—gives pertinent support to Lauder's deterrent aims, as Achan is stoned to death despite his late admission of guilt. This allows Lauder to raise the doubt, "Gyf 3e haue done with siclyke gudis mell, / I can nocht say; ludge that amangs 30ur sell" (ll. 570-1). Ahab and Jezebel are made "both most miserablie to de / For thair foule Murthour and Cupaten"; Saul "lost his Kingdome throw his gredines"; and while Nabal is temporarily saved from death by his wife, Abigail, in 1 Samuel 25, 3it God maid Naball schortlie for to de, And him bereft frome all his wardlie wrak, For ony fence the churlysche Caill could mak. As sall all wrachit ChurUs layf thair geir, And thairis thairof sall make mirrye cheir, That nocht pertenit to thame be kin nor blude! (ll. 583-8)

Nabal has no "[de]fence" for his actions and inevitably must die; but the poet makes clear that his punishment extends beyond death to the irony of having others "mak mirrye cheir" with the "wardlie wrak" he would not share with David and his servants. Lauder is judicious in his selection of examples: they involve followers as well as leaders, they detail (often in rather visceral terms) the punishments awaiting those who disobey God, and their familiarity cuts across class lines, as they represent names and narrative images available in popular sources from sermons to commentaries. The unbeliever is guaranteed an eventual sentence neither "retreattabill" or "debaittabill," that "sparis King nor Empriour, / Duke, Eri, Lord, nor pussant Conquyor; / It nowthair sparis mychtie men nor pure, / That of the worde of God doith take no cure" (ll. 41-6).

After advising kings on the subject of the poor in Ane Compendious and Breue Tractate, Lauder turns his attention to those individuals explicitly empowered to ensure justice by assigning penalties for disobedience, the civil
judges. The "Vngodlie Iugis," he declares, "Wyll tak bot lytill thocht or cure / But reuth for to oppresse the pure." The "Iust Iugis" act, on the other hand, "with humyll hertis, / To heir the playnt of both the partis" (Il. 411, 413-14, 421-22). Representing the central issue once again as one's disposition towards the poor, Lauder reveals that the "Vngodlie Iugis" are those motivated by greed rather than the protection of the innocent:

For gredie Iugis, I 3ow assure,
Doith sell the causis of the pure.
Geue thare be sic, I knaw of nane:
Thay knaw, thare-selfis, that buddis hes tane,
To hurte the pure, syne latt passe fre
The ryche. O Lord, to this haue Ee;
And help the pure that ar in stres,
Opprest, and hereit mercyles. (Il. 463-70)

Lauder's role as advocate extends here into the seemingly hypothetical, as he claims personally to know of no judges who accept "buddis," or bribes, to release wealthy lawbreakers and to replace them with innocent poor. Yet he applies his personal authority at the same time to insist that such travesties of the legal system do occur ("I 3ow assure"). This allows him to introduce the issue without documentation; no names are named to make his point, for his aim is not to bring down public censure on certain individuals, but to focus public sympathy on the plight of the poor "In stres, / Opprest, and hereit mercyles," and to generate public outrage against those who exploit their vulnerability. Lauder encodes a particular power in this outrage by locating it in the popular voice, again acting himself as an extension of that voice. He warns that the sheer weight of public condemnation will eventually level the class differences between oppressed and oppressor: "The Maledictione of the pure / Sall on 3ow and 3our seid Indure, / Vntyll that 3e be rutit oute" (Il. 479-81). Once again Lauder argues that to protect the interests of the poor is to protect one's own interests as well.

The final component of Lauder's poetic campaign in advocacy of the poor is his explication of dangers lurking under the guise of the church. Although the Regent Moray's first Parliament, in 1567, ratified the 1560 abolition of papal jurisdiction and legally established the reformed church, Lauder was a suf-

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18 Lawyers also become targets of Lauder's admonitions; the poet confides that he is essentially distrustful of legal advocacy "Because it smellis, vnfen3eitlie, / To verray percialtytie" (Il. 431-32).

William Lauder’s Poetic Advocacy of the Poor

Poor Messe, and Eate reformed to think sufficiently. Domesdaye.” Iowking, nycht cal convictions. ‘Ane Godlie churchls influence the poor is. Abhorris the oppression of the poor are “The men quhome God hes rychelie dotit,” for they “Abhorris the emptye Creature” though they are “Cheiflie Protestant” (ll. 9-10, 13-5). In establishing this point, Lauder signals that the oppression he condemns cannot safely be dismissed as originating from the agency of some cultural “other.” To ignore the poor is to connote a rejection of one’s religious faith: “3it ar noch ir Protestantes trew, / Bot Ipocretis, I am most sure, / That hes renuncit Christ Iesu” (ll. 17-9). Every sincere believer, then, is prompted by this rhetoric to identify with “Protestantes trew” by actively assisting the poor, sharing and redistributing the blessings which “God hes rychelie dotit.”

Having blurred the distinction between the genuinely faithful and the hypocritical, Lauder once again polarizes the positions in Ane prettie Mirrour Or Conference, betuix the faithfull Protestant and the Dissemblit false Hypocriet. The sharp virtue/vice distinctions are encoded not simply to signify the difference in positions, but also to provoke particular action in response. Each quatrain opens with what the “godly” man must do in order to earn this designation and answers with what the “ungodly” man does to necessitate the response of the godly.

The godlie men with pietie ar opprest
To see thair brethren in necessitie:
The Hypocreitis ar neuer at ease nor rest
But quhen the faithfull sustenis miserie. (ll. 25-8)

20Donaldson, Scottish Church History, p. 87.
The Godlie men, tha do support the pure,
And genis thame gladilie of thair geir and gude
The Hypocrites dois take more thanht and cure
How tha may reave from thame thair daylie fude. (ll. 45-8)

The Godlie men settts God before all things,
Before thair lyues, thair guds, & geir, or lands:
The Hypocrites, before God puts thair kings,
Dispysing God, his lawis, and his commands. (ll. 85-8)

The sincere Protestant is not merely saddened or disapproving, but actually "opprest" by the fact of others' poverty—and the oppressor here is identified as a devil of flesh: the individual who pursues personal gain regardless of the cost to others, even to the point of denying the needy "thair daylie fude." This is the surest proof of hypocrisy, for in light of the biblical injunction of Mark 12:33, that "to loue his neighbour as him self, is more then all burnt offerings and sacrifices" (Geneva Bible), such an individual loves "thair lyues, thair guds, & geir, or lands" and even "thair kings" more than their fellow man—and hence more than God.

There is ample proof in the 1,552 lines of Lauder's extant verse that he is a poet—an artist consciously manipulating words for rhetorical effect—as much as a social activist, and that the two roles are not mutually exclusive in the context of his writing. Michele Barrett supports such a view, observing that

Works of art and literature are still seen as the passive and innocent terrain on which ideological armies go about their usual battles. This is not wrong, but it is limited. Of course, works of art do encode ideological positions, but we do not exhaust their significance by decoding their ideological content; nor do we explain how the reception and consumption of works sharing comparable ideological ground may vary dramatically over a period of time.²¹

Each of Lauder's poetic creations could have been constructed as prose sermons; but poetry for him is both an ideological vehicle and a unique art of communication. And the critical industry alone cannot be blamed for overlooking his creative skills. Consider the Daniel Berrigan legacy of our own times: radicalclergymen who are also poets tend to be remembered as radical clergymen. Lauder was much more of an ambassador and "insider" than Berrigan (note his apology to both Protestant and Catholic princes at the end of Ane Compendious and Breue Tractate), but both poets attract attention to the indifference of the propertied regarding the life of the poor. Berrigan's poem "And What Is Man" argues that no individual is created by God "like the rich / a fist of worms for a heart; / nor like the poor / consumed with making do, /

rancor at dawn, futility at dusk,” but becomes such through the collective actions and choices of all people. These poets employ their art to attack those who have the power to alleviate suffering and choose not to exercise it, and in so doing offer no easy escape for the righteous or the well-intentioned.

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Critics have often referred to George MacDonald's dualism. Recently a book has been published centered around this concept and opening with an essay entitled "The Two Worlds of George MacDonald." These two worlds are variously seen as those of "reality" and "fantasy", of "intellect" and "imagination", of the traditional and the personal, of the pagan and the Christian and so on. I would suggest that a more useful approach to the understanding of Phantastes, is to see it as the embodiment of multiple worlds, as a text whose subsuming vision may be seen to embrace, not two realms, but the possibility of an infinity thereof.

Phantastes is structured around a system of interconnecting and co-existing worlds, of multiple realms on different spiritual levels interpenetrating at significant moments in which time and space are transcended. Such a system utilizes an approach to time which is essentially very modern and more typical of twentieth, than of mid-nineteenth century, fantasy. The basic premise of MacDonald's system is, however, profoundly religious, and hinges on his conception of God and His relation to His creation, a relationship which must surely have seemed extremely unorthodox to MacDonald's Christian colleagues. From the

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2See for example, Clive Barker, Weaveworld (London, 1988), in which many of MacDonald's favorite ideas are utilized.
The Multiple Realms of George MacDonald’s Phantastes

sacred center is generated a great flux of energy. This energy is embodied in an infinity of forms falling into patterns of time and space which combine to create realms, “the mighty hosts of life bearing worlds” as he calls them in his sermons.³ One of his most specific assertions of this process lies at the heart of Phantastes, in the first of the book’s two central and key chapters. Here he postulates multiple worlds radiating out from the sacred “center” and all, of necessity, interconnected, whether individuals within individual realms can recognize these connections or not. Each individual it is assumed, has both future and past lives:

Worlds cannot be without an intermundane relationship. The community of the centre of all creation suggests an interradiating connection and dependence of the parts. Else a grander idea is conceivable than that which is already embodied. The blank, which is only a forgotten life, lying behind the consciousness, and the misty splendour, which is an undeveloped life, lying before it, may be full of mysterious revelations of other connexions with the worlds around us, than those of science and poetry. No shining belt or gleaming moon, no red and green glory in a self-encircling twin-star, but has a relation with the hidden things of a man’s soul, and, it may be, with the secret history of his body as well. They are portions of the living house wherein he abides.⁴ (XII, 97)

Each world of form in its miraculous dance is struggling towards its next embodiment, a process which ultimately leads to the still center which generates and controls this great dance of forms. Some realms parallel each other, others fall into a sequence whose controlling principle is distance from this center. As MacDonald elsewhere expresses it, “The whole system of the universe works upon this law—the driving of things upward towards the center.”⁵ However, at any particular time, the forms of any one realm (and of any one person within that realm) can be developing towards higher spiritual embodiments or deteriorating towards grosser forms. MacDonald refers to this system of metempsychosis or reincarnation in The Princess and Curdie, where he calls it, “the whole science of natural history—the heavenly sort.” The princess tells Curdie:

...all men, if they do not take care, go down the hill to the animal’s country. ... many men are actually, all their lives, going to be beasts. People knew it once, but it is long since they forgot it ... it is always what they do, whether in their minds or their bodies, that makes men go down to be less than men, that is, beasts ...

³Unspoken Sermons. Series One, (Eureka, CA, 1989), p. 132. All references are to this edition.

⁴George MacDonald, Phantastes: A Faerie Romance. Introd. Greville MacDonald (London, 1940), Ch. XII, p. 97. Chapter and page numbers will be included in the text.

⁵Ibid., p. 195.
They do not know it of course; for a beast does not know that he is a beast, and the nearer a man gets to being a beast the less he knows it.6

When describing the evolution of the goblins' animals in *The Princess and the Goblin* he uses similar terms and in this case, his description is clearly influenced by current theories of evolution:

... in the course of time, all had undergone even greater changes than had passed upon their owners. They had altered ... their countenances had grown in grotesque resemblance to the human. No one understands animals who does not see that every one of them, even amongst the fishes ... yet shadows the human; in the case of these the human resemblance had greatly increased: while their owners had sunk towards them, they had arisen towards their owners. But the conditions of subterranean life being equally unnatural for both, while the goblins were worse, the creatures had not improved by the approximation ... (p. 72).

When Curdie begins to lose his path and become commonplace MacDonald comments:

There is this difference between the growth of some human beings and that of others: in the one case it is a continuous dying, in the other a continuous resurrection (p. 180).

and this concept remains central to all his writings. In his *Unspoken Sermons*, this "resurrection" is seen as "gradations of an infinite progress" (my emphasis).7 All creatures are, of necessity, either going forward towards the sacred center, returning to that center one might say, or drawing further away. However, MacDonald's philosophy is essentially optimistic in that he sees all beings as ultimately returning to the source and being reunited with the divine. As he says, all it requires is time and there is an infinitude of that. The princess tells Curdie that she may take "a few thousand years" to answer his questions. "But that's nothing. Of all things time is the cheapest."8 So too, in his sermons, MacDonald repeatedly refers to the huge periods of time needed to achieve this union: "God ... takes millions of years to form a soul that shall understand him ... "; "God's day is a thousand years": "not by a stroke of grandeur, but by years of love, yea, by centuries of seeming bafflement ... must he grow into the

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7*Unspoken Sermons. Series One*, p. 36.

8*The Princess and Curdie*, p. 208.
heart of (his) sons and daughters.”

Thus the basic challenge offered individuals on their life journeys is to glimpse the sacred process underlying the forms of the adventures that befall them. In this way, they are able to use these experiences, perhaps even transform and thence transcend them. They cannot see the complete pattern, but they can get a glimpse into the true meaning of things, or at least a hint that there is a meaning, a pattern of cause and effect in action. This brief insight is, by definition, elusive, and as so often occurs to Anodos, protagonists spend much of their time struggling to recollect the details of these moments and to express them in words.

The concept of multiple realms controls the text on all its levels. From the moment Fairy Land invades Anodos’ bedroom dissolving its fixed forms into energy, his experiences are characterized by a sense of mystery, of everything being more than it appears to be, of individual forms directing attention beyond themselves to further states towards which they are striving. He feels this sense of expectation all about him:

here I was struck with utter stillness. No bird sang. No insect hummed. Not a living creature crossed my way. Yet somehow the whole environment seemed only asleep, and to wear even in sleep an air of expectation. The trees seemed all to have an expression of conscious mystery, as if they said to themselves, “We could, an’ if we would.” They had all a meaning look about them (IV, 10).

He immediately links this mysterious ambiguity to the processes of the subconscious as embodied in the world of dream and of the night, because it is to these realms that Fairy Land belongs:

I, being a man and a child of the day, felt some anxiety as to how I should fare among the elves and other children of the night who wake when mortals dream, and find their common life in those wondrous hours that flow noiselessly over the moveless death-like forms of men and women and children, lying strewn and parted beneath the weight of the heavy waves of night, which flow on and beat them down, and hold them drowned and senseless, until the ebb-tide comes, and the waves sink away, back into the ocean of the dark (IV, 10).

Later, as he leaves the first cottage, he notices that the woods are full of a strange “feeling of presences.” All about him are creatures whom he cannot quite see, levels of existence which he cannot quite penetrate. As Anodos puts it:

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9 Unspoken Sermons. Series One, pp. 23, 153, 197.

All this time, as I went through the wood, I was haunted with the feeling that other shapes, more like my own size and mien, were moving about at a little distance on all sides of me. But as yet I could discern none of them ... I constantly imagined, however, that forms were visible in all directions except that to which my gaze was turned; and that they only became invisible, or resolved themselves into other woodland shapes, the moment my looks were directed towards them (IV, 28, my emphasis).

We notice therefore that in Fairy Land a mysterious ambiguity characterizes Anodos' adventures. The different forms taken by these adventures, are in flux, in the process of shifting and changing. All is in the process of becoming and much of what Anodos experiences has a dreamlike unreality, at times bordering on nightmare. MacDonald captures this nightmare quality brilliantly. What could be more horrific than Anodos' pursuit by the Ash? In this event the horror lies in what is not stated, in the suggestion of other dimensions on the verge of breaking through into the "normality" of this one. When Anodos is found by his shadow, the horror lies in exactly this shifting of dimensions. From the depths of some distant realm, from the "luminous extremity" of a "night sky" in the "remote" distance, his shadow rushes at him (VIII, 69-70). Even the first cottage which Anodos enters, resonates a sense of sinister anticipation quite at variance with the kind "homeliness" of his treatment there. The woman pushes him back from the window "with an expression of impatience and terror" (III, 13). She predicts "foul weather" and the impression created is one of hostile realms threatening to invade and barely being held at bay. The naive world of garden fairies squabbling and teasing the cat, exists side by side with, and in total opposition to, the nightmare world of the Ash which later reduces Anodos to a state where he is "simply imbruted with terror" (IV, 32).

At key stages in Anodos' adventures, worlds merge, space shifts, linear time ceases and words fail to convey what is happening. These experiences take the form of trances or visions. The fairy "form" who enters Anodos' castle "reality," instigates the first of these visionary revelations. On looking into her eyes he "sank in their waters ... forgot all the rest" and sees the world of form as a great sea of energy, a vision which fills him with an intense longing which she then directs towards the realm of Fairy Land. He experiences a second trance-like vision in the arms of the Beech tree. As always he has trouble describing the experiences her "strange, sweet song" provokes. He is "wrapt in a trance of still delight" and learns the "secret of the woods, and the flowers, and the birds" (IV, 36) and seems to relive "childhood" experiences of nature and its seasons. This reinforcement of childlike insight into the world of nature, is an important experience in MacDonald's scheme of things, and it leaves Anodos strengthened and feeling "as if new born" (V, 38). This encounter is also characterized by suggestions of a potential for different future embodiments. The Beech tree longs "for the world of men" as Anodos "had ... longed for Fairy Land" and she looks forward to being a woman, predicting also that the ash trees will make "horrid men" one day (IV, 35). Anodos' reluctance to leave
The Multiple Realms of George MacDonald's Phantastes

her, is minimized by his comforting himself with the notion that he might meet her again in some different realm: "if ever she is a woman, who knows but we may meet somewhere? There is plenty of room for meeting in the universe" (V, 38).

These trance-like insights into other times and other places are always conveyed in terms of a direct experience defying expression in language. Because they represent revelations into realms transcending that of the protagonist at the time, this fundamental failure of language is inevitable and our attention is repeatedly drawn to it throughout the text. In this experience with the Beech tree, Anodos says of her song that he could not understand it but that it left him with a feeling which he then tries to convey in poetry, at the same time apologizing for the inadequacy of this attempt: "I cannot put more of it into words" (IV, 36). When, transformed by drinking the magic water in the Marble Lady's cave he falls into "a delicious reverie," he describes the "assembly of forms and spiritual sensations" this trance-like state produces, as "far too vague to admit of being translated into any shape common to my own and another mind" (V, 41). Then, as he is inspired by this vision to sing the imprisoned form into life, he comments:

I sang something like this: but the words are only a dull representation of a state whose very elevation precluded the possibility of remembrance and in which I presume the words really employed were as far above these, as that state transcended this wherein I recall it (V, 45).

This failure of memory characterizes his next experience also, that with the Alder Maid. She tells him a tale which he cannot recollect but which "at every turn and every pause" focuses him on her "extreme beauty." Once again he lies "entranced" as her tale draws him into its magic realm "till she and I were blended with the tale, till she and I were the whole history." However, where the experience with the Beech tree left him "new born," this trance-like exposure to the realm of the Alder Maid leaves him with such horror that his very memory of it is "almost obliterated" (VI, 55) and he is left feeling emasculated.

The central section in the Fairy Palace provides keys to the understanding of the text as a whole. It also contains key passages where these concepts are embodied in powerful symbolic form. In such passages MacDonald is at his most brilliant. Every detail of description resonates mysteriously with subtle suggestions of other forms just beyond the experience of the protagonist. Other dimensions, other realms, impinge on, lead out of or into, parallel or contradict, this one, and this complex of relationships in process is brilliantly captured, for example, in Anodos' baptismal bathing or his experience of the dance at the palace's heart. Water, music and dance are powerful symbols for sacred energy, for the paradoxical concept of unity in multeity or motion in stasis and MacDonald uses them in this way consistently throughout his works. I will look at these two sections in detail.
At the center of the palace courtyard is a “great fountain... throwing up a lofty column of water” the top of which “caught the moonbeams, and like a great pale lamp, hung high in the night air, threw a dim memory of light... over the court below” (X, 86). Anodos as usual follows this water energy which leads into the heart of the palace building, where he finds next day a “huge basin... filled with the purest most liquid and radiant water” in which he has a series of baptismal immersions. These baths are conveyed in terms of a shift in dimension, a movement into another realm where all is enigmatic and elusive yet at the same time profoundly transforming so that with each immersion he feels as if he has gained expanded insight into the true nature of this realm wherein he finds himself. The pool itself is, as already stated, deeply symbolic, embodying as it does, this sacred energy underlying all the forms of the palace. It is a “harmonious confusion,” thus combining order and chaos. It looks as if “there was no design” but Anodos realizes that “not one little pebble could be displaced without injuring the effect of the whole.” Realm upon realm is contained within, and yet at the same time “unfolded” by this pool, which ultimately links to the great ocean itself: “Beneath [the]... floor of the water, lay the reflection of the blue inverted roof, fretted with its silver stars, like a second deeper sea, clasping and unfolding the first” (XI, 91). When Anodos plunges in, the waters “seemed to enter and revive [his]... heart.” He swims “as in a rainbow,” and when he dives, finds himself enchanted, in an underwater realm, in “the heart of a great sea.” He is in the great ocean itself, with “wondrous caves,” glowing corals and “the glimmer of what seemed to be creatures of human form at home in the waters.” When he emerges “deeply refreshed,” he feels as if “clothed... with a new sense” and finds that his consciousness is subtly altered. He begins “to discern faint, gracious forms” hitherto invisible to him (XI, 92), although they are still unclear: “Nor were they plainly visible to my eyes. Sometimes a group or... individual, would fade entirely out of the realm of my vision as I gazed.” His insights increase steadily with each bath but he is always aware that he is still only seeing a shadow of what is there. He never sees the Queen for example and is aware that to do so is not his destiny (XI, 93). His needs are different, presumably being on a much lower level than that would imply.

So too his experience of the dancers in the great pillared hall is characterized by this sense of mystery and elusiveness. Just beyond Anodos’ consciousness, realms are lying in “misty splendour... full of mysterious revelations of other connexions with the worlds around him.” He is aware of a great dance of forms and longs to see it in order to glimpse the “music” which controls it:

I seemed to hear something like the distant sound of multitudes of dancers, and felt as if it was the unheard music, moving their rhythmic motion, that within me blossomed in verse and song. I felt, too, that could I but see the dance, I should, from

11This is another favorite MacDonald symbol for this elusive and magical energy.
the harmony of complicated movements, not of the dancers in relation to each other merely, but of each dancer individually in the manifested plastic power that moved the consenting harmonious form, understand the whole of the music on the billows of which they floated and swung (XIV, 135).

He feels that if he could only see it completely, he would understand the music controlling its forms. He struggles vainly to see the solid shapes and patterns of movement and sound with which he knows he is surrounded. He knows there is a great Truth behind and informing these strange occurrences, but he can never get more than the faintest hint as to its real nature. As he says of the Fairy Palace:

I was convinced there must be music in it, but that my sense was as yet too gross to receive the influence of those mysterious motions that beget sound. Sometimes I felt sure, from the way the few figures of which I got such transitory glimpses passed me, or glided into vacancy before me, that they were moving to the law of music; and, in fact, several times I fancied for a moment that I heard a few wondrous tones coming I knew not whence. But they did not last long enough to convince me that I had heard them with the bodily sense. Such as they were, however, they took strange liberties with me, causing me to burst suddenly into tears, of which there was no presence to make me ashamed, or casting me into a kind of trance of speechless delight, which, passing as suddenly, left me faint and longing for more (XIV, 133, my emphasis).

It becomes evident that the revelations that a quester has, are dependent on his spiritual level, a level also controlling the forms created by his imagination. Thus from the multitude of realms with which each quester is potentially surrounded, the path he experiences as his, is directly related to this spiritual level. As a consequence of these ideas, time and space as they are normally viewed, are revealed as an expression of our own limitations. Moments of insight break through these normal experiences of time and space. The protagonists move onto a different level of consciousness in which moments can seem like years and vice versa; space can be experienced as totally illusory or as shifting according to the state of mind of the protagonist. There is some sense in which any world of forms is objectively real, but how the protagonists experience these forms is very much a product of their spiritual states. In fact the suggestion is that the questers produce the forms out of their own needs. One could express this variously: that they free the forms which are specifically needed for spiritual development, or that they attract or even generate these forms from the depths of their imaginations. The imagination, being grounded in the subconscious, is the link which connects human beings to God's divine energy and it is therefore the key factor in a quester's progress.
As MacDonald quite specifically expresses it, the form a man finds to “embody his thought” arises “within him without will or effort” because such embodiments are not the result of the man’s intention, or of the operation of his conscious nature. His feeling is that they are given to him; that from the vast unknown, where time and space are not, they suddenly appear in luminous writing upon the wall of his consciousness... [and he continues] can we not say that they are the creation of the unconscious portion of his nature? (my emphasis).

He answers his own question in the affirmative with the proviso that “that unknown region whence such embodiments come,” be recognized as finding its ultimate source in God’s energy which is, by definition, Truth.

... God sits in that chamber of our being in which the candle of our consciousness goes out in darkness, and sends forth from thence wonderful gifts into the light of that understanding which is His candle. Our hope lies in no most perfect mechanism even of the spirit, but in the wisdom wherein we live and move and have our being. Thence we hope for endless forms of beauty informed of truth. If the dark portion of our own being were the origin of our imaginations, we might well fear the apparition of such monsters as would be generated in the sickness of a decay which could never feel—only declare—a slow return towards primeval chaos. But the Master is our Light. 12

MacDonald repeatedly asserts this distinction between conscious and subconscious levels of personality. The fact that God works through the latter gives it a quite remarkable importance in his scheme of things. As he elsewhere expresses this:

To give us the spiritual gift we desire, God may have to begin far back in our spirit, in regions unknown to us, and do much work that we can be aware of only in the results; for our consciousness is to the extent of our being but as the flame of the volcano to the world-gulf whence it issues, in the gulf of our unknown being God works behind our consciousness. He may be approaching our consciousness from behind, coming forward through regions of our darkness into our light, long before we begin to be aware that He is answering our request—has answered it, and is visiting His child. 13

Thus the freeing of the subconscious is to give play to God’s sacred energy, allowing it to find its own forms which will of necessity, be the right ones for any person’s spiritual development at that time in that place. The freeing of the subconscious in dreams or in trance-like states is therefore of crucial im-


portance. As already stated, it allows individuals key revelations into the true nature of the phenomenal world. In these moments "chinks in time" are created, through which "heaven peepeth out." Time and space are both transformed. The limits of any one realm are briefly transcended and future stages of development embodied in other realms, can reveal themselves, thus giving meaning to present yearnings. Realms can thus invade each other and these invasions take many forms. Sometimes more enlightened realms penetrate lesser worlds, in the process thereof revealing the true direction of the latter. However, individuals can experience insights into past experiences and into events from other time periods and other worlds. The insights therefore can be on the level of the macrocosm or of the microcosm. They can be so profound as to take the form of mystic visions or simple enough to consist merely of a shift in the experience of the protagonist, from for example, dark wood to lonely tower. Thus these experiences can be within one realm or between different realms. However, the purpose is always the same: to gain understanding of present experiences, an understanding which then gives direction to the transcendence of those experiences.

As suggested above, Anodos experiences trance-like insights under the influence of each of the four female anima figures in the first half of his journey, the fairy grandmother, the Lady of the Beech, the Marble Lady and the Alder Maid, and his sojourn in the Fairy Palace is characterized throughout by a sense of imminent revelation. He is aware that these mystical experiences of other realms or other levels of being are potentially all around him if he could only break through into them, and he does succeed in doing so many times over this period. These insights are provoked variously by baptismal bathing or by exposure to the magical literature, music and dance of the palace and because this is the nearest Anodos gets to the "harmony of the centre," they are of profound significance in his quest.

The second half of the book, those adventures which occur to Anodos after his expulsion from the Fairy Palace, take on a more profound multidimensional quality. They are characterized by a more complex and shifting pattern of interweaving dimensions. His experiences through the doors of the wise old lady's cottage are confusing and dreamlike, as are the mysterious transitions between day and night in the square tower. There is no question of dual worlds, of one realm being real and the other not. All is shifting and all is equally unreal and enigmatic until this irrationality takes on the power of claustrophobic nightmare with life and death implications. MacDonald employs a variety of threshold and transition imagery in this section and makes powerful

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14 Cf. MacDonald's statement: "the mind, in the quiescence of its consciousness in sleep, comes into a less disturbed contact with its origin, the heart of creation" (Wilfred Cumbermede [London, 1872], Ch.48).

15 See Phantastes, Epigraph, Ch. XII, 97.
I have already noted the way in which the pool in the Fairy Palace reflects the sky/roof "fretted with... silver stars." When thrust out of the palace into the subterranean world which brings him to the point of despair, Anodos moves down into a bottomless chasm leading into a shaft "smooth as glass" which yet reflects the world of stars and heaven above. He turns determinedly away from this heavenly upward realm and creeps inwards to a world in which the sky is of rock and "whenever a choice was necessary... [he] always chose the path which seemed to lead downwards" (XVII, 151). This symbolic plunge into the abyss (XVII, 150) occurs in some strange timeless realm where Anodos finds "such a discrepancy between the decisions of [his]... imagination and... judgement, as to the length of time that had passed... that [he]... gave up all attempts to arrive at any conclusion on the point" (XVII, 158). He is caught in a gray mist which in some mysterious way embodies his past so that when he "looked back towards the past, this mist was the medium through which [his]... eyes had to strain for a vision of what had gone by." The shedding of this gray mist of his past life is brilliantly conveyed. With Anodos' despairing yet courageous assertion of will,16 the gray entombing ocean with its "hopeless" waves "flung... in raving heaps upon the desolate shore," is transformed into a benign nurturing force in which the waters themselves lift him "with loving arms" (XVIII, 160). The little "rainbow" boat which then rescues him carries him through another multidimensional water realm where reflections are once more from above and therefore benign ("The stars... bent down lovingly towards the waters; and the reflected stars within seemed to float up, as if longing to meet their embraces") and the waves reveal such a vision of his past ("vaguely revealed beneath the wave, I floated above my whole Past" [XVIII, 161]) that he is symbolically freed from its burdens. He awakes "with the feeling that [he has]... been kissed and loved to his heart's content," (XVIII, 162) which then frees him to enter the magic sphere of the wise old/young lady's square cottage.

This cottage appears to be another stable center in this flux of shifting interpenetrating realms, although one presumes it is of lesser symbolic importance than the Fairy Palace. Characteristically too it is portrayed as mysterious and enigmatic, resonant with hidden significance which Anodos is as yet unable to grasp. The worlds of form which radiate out from this still center provide Anodos with the final experiences he needs to come to terms with and shed his past, but that this is only a tiny part of its potential is clear. MacDonald brilliantly creates this sense of everything being in process and containing significances beyond the protagonist's (and the reader's) wildest imaginings. It is the essence of his skill as a writer.

16"I will not be tortured to death... I will meet it half way" (XVIII, 160).
The four doors through which Anodos ventures lead him into realms associated with his past and yet different from it and there is some sense in which these realms seem independently real and not merely projections of his own longings. The complex nature of all this is epitomized by the mysterious world he meets through the “door of Sighs.” He is in the castle of his white lady and her knight. Significantly, she is quite different from his previous experience of her. She is no longer “marble” but “altogether of the daughters of men,” so much so that he feels doubt as to whether it is really she. The implication of this invisible invasion of Anodos into their world, is that theirs is the “reality” and he is being granted a glimpse into it. His form has no place in their mirror although strangely, he sees “a dim shadow of [himself] . . . in the shining steel” (XIX, 175) of the knight’s armor. In this scene Anodos is fully conscious that he is the “unreal” one. He says: “I could not enter the sphere of these living beings . . . I moved in a vision while they moved in life” (XIX, 178). Yet later he is able to rejoin the knight as his squire even asking him about the conversation he overheard when invisible. This puzzles the knight but provokes his long and apparently irrelevant explanation about the beggar girl. The point here is that yet again multiple realms are interconnecting. The girl is one from the “strange planet” read about by Anodos in the library of the Fairy Palace and sent to Fairyland to gather wings with which to fly back to “the country she came from.” Once again, characteristic of this experience is the knight’s difficulty in remembering what she said and in expressing it verbally: “it seemed to me, all the time, as if I were hearing a child talk in its sleep. I could not arrange her story in my mind at all, although it seemed to leave hers in a certain order of its own” (XXIII, 222).

As usual, when realms interconnect, memory and language fail. Reason and intellect cannot grasp the insights gained because they speak of necessity to the subconscious and the imagination.

The interlude when Anodos is imprisoned in the square tower has similar irrational and nightmare qualities. Night time with its connotations of a freeing of the subconscious, rescues him from the nightmare of the day’s deathly barrenness. The rays of the moon touch him and he is free, insisting “I should have died but for this” (XXII, 207). All binary distinctions between reality and illusion, dreaming and waking, conscious and subconscious, are however characteristically confused to the point of irrelevance. His night dream experiences are life-giving and “real.” In them he returns to his “real” home—the castle he initially left—and is welcomed by his sisters. This is the illusion because he wakes back in the tower—or is it? MacDonald plays quite self-consciously with these confusions, moving the text in and out of different levels of experience in what, one realizes by now, is a totally characteristic fashion. Anodos’ night, moon-inspired experiences seem utterly “real”; the deadly tower “vanish[es] away like a mist” and he rejoices: “Oh joy! it was only a dream,” only to have “the glorious night . . . swallowed up of the hateful day” (XXII, 207). The symbolic connotations of intellect battling with imagination are there
but the power of the episode carries it well beyond such a simple opposition. Anodos initially rejoices in the day tower being a dream, but then comes to see his night experiences as "only" dreams, thus reducing them to illusory status, and being unable to get real comfort from them. He is "somewhat consoled" by his dreams, "but all the time I dreamed I knew that I was only dreaming" (XXII, 207). When his "real" world breaks through into this dismal one, provoking the great yearning for primal childlike innocence and thence for freedom, which then permits of his liberation, it is in the form of the original "real" world of his castle, sisters, friends, and the vintage—presaging the events which will actually (?) occur at the end of the book, thus transgressing yet again boundaries of time as well as space. At this point it is the dreams that become reality for Anodos. They are no longer "only" dreams. He is "waiting only for the dreams of the night" to liberate him from the nightmare of the day. Night and day are placed in confrontation but interwoven and confused until Anodos transcends the opposition altogether by discovering that his whole imprisonment was an illusion, his own creation. The door was open all the time. The maiden's songs "suddenly invaded [him] . . . as if something foreign to all [his] . . . senses and all . . . experience" and he strains "to catch every syllable of the revelation from the unseen outer world" (XXII, 208) which then inspires him to open the door and leave. Once again energy from one dimension "invades" another giving it direction, enabling it to transcend the constraints of conflicting oppositions and thus move onwards towards the next trial.

Experiences of this nature characterize each stage in Anodos' quest but, as already suggested, those insights he is granted in the Fairy Palace are key. They place all the others in their true perspective by establishing the scheme of which they are part. The possibility of a "music" governing and subsuming the dance of forms is established. So too is the "harmony of the centre" to which all "worlds" relate in "an interradiating connection." As one might expect, the stories Anodos reads in the palace, are clear illustrations of what MacDonald is saying here. The first opens with the statement establishing the existence of multiple worlds (XII, 97) and then proceeds to give an example of these worlds, in the "strange planet." The second story opens with MacDonald's most specific statement of the failure of language in attempting to convey these experiences, then establishes the nature of the great yearning which drives beings upwards towards the center, through realm after realm in an endless process. The story of the "strange planet" propounds exactly this system of different realms of existence interpenetrating and influencing each other. The world described in the story is profoundly limited; its inhabitants are undeveloped in key ways, in particular in terms of sexuality and loving relationships. However, the very fact that they are undeveloped, creates in them as they approach death, "an indescribable longing" for the next phase in this development and this controls the form (and presumably the world) of their next incarnation. Anodos coming as he does from a realm beyond that of this planet, acts as a kind of spiritual guide to these people. He sees that their wings, "glorious as they are, are but unde-
veloped arms" (XII, 103) and that their male/female relationships are essentially deficient, and he tells these people about birth and sexuality on earth, "in the vaguest manner I could invent" (XII, 102). However, this vagueness is nevertheless sufficient to meet with an instant response, giving form as it does, to what these people already feel as "an indescribable longing for something, they know not what, which seizes them, and drives them into solitude, consuming them from within, till the body fails" (XII, 102), so much so that two of them immediately go off and die in order to hasten this next stage which they now understand to be their direction. There is no suggestion that these deaths have any negative connotations whatsoever. "A great light shone in the eyes of one maiden" (XII, 102) who instantly walks away to her death.

Anodos, during this experience, is shifting in and out of different realms changing function as he does so. He moves from his role as narrator of a fiction into a role as one of its characters, he shifts from outside to inside the text and does it so that we barely notice, yet to such an extent that he directly alters the events he is describing. His penetration into his own story extends his function further, because as already suggested he becomes a spiritual guide to these people, able from the wider knowledge of his own realm to help them direct their energies towards their true future embodiments, instead of merely experiencing a vague longing for they know not what and therefore, presumably, quite possibly, from ignorance, dissipating this energy. In his own quest, the various guides he meets function in a parallel way, giving him insights into how to direct the vague yearning which drives him towards the future forms his spiritual development requires.

The self-reflexive quality of the text, as Anodos relates these central stories, is therefore quite remarkable. As he puts it:

But see the power of this book, that, while recounting what I can recall of its contents, I write it as if myself had visited the far-off planet, learned its ways and appearances, and conversed with its men and women. And so, while writing, it seems to me that I had (XII, 103, my emphasis).

Anodos has slipped from reader of, to narrator of, to writer of, to protagonist in, the fiction, these shifts in function reflecting the shifting nature of the worlds of form in which he finds himself. Sometimes one realm is "real," sometimes another, and sometimes contradictory realms seem to coexist and interact as if they shared the same reality and the same time period. Underwater worlds co-exist and interact with magical boat trips, chivalric knights and dragons with winged maidens from distant planets and with invisible wooden figures of enigmatic origins. Only the Fairy Palace and the island cottage remain stable centers in this flux of forms. All else is like Anodos' bedroom, in the process of dissolving and becoming "fluent as the waters" (II, 7).

The text, in its confusing interweavings of different realms, of different historical periods, of different levels of fiction and literary genre, even of the
different roles filled by Anodos himself (as writer, reader, singer, protagonist, narrator) becomes itself an embodiment of this concept.

We are thus presented with a continuum of parallel and complementary worlds of form, which together participate in a process, a great movement of energy striving to regain the harmony of the center from which it came. Through “chinks of Time” (XII, 97) in the veils between worlds, at each level glimpses are given of further stages in this process. “Forgotten” past lives lie “behind the consciousness” like a “blank,” while future lives, with all their “misty splendour,” lie before this consciousness and “may be full of mysterious revelations of other connections with the worlds around us” (XII, 97). Inevitably these glimpses are difficult to communicate. In particular the language of any one planet or realm or stage in this process, will be unable to do more than hint at the full import of these mystical insights, because naturally this language is restricted to the experiences of this world and has no vocabulary for those resonated back by realms on more advanced spiritual levels. As already suggested Anodos, on the strange planet, can only hint at the extraordinary complexities of human sexuality. So too the wise old lady on the island can only suggest to him what he needs for his spiritual development. She is restricted to his language and the “forms” with which he is familiar. She uses his past earthly life, his failures and his fears, in order to push him beyond them. It is therefore the feelings associated with these revelations which leave the most powerful impression, and words fail totally to convey these feelings because there is always something deeply mysterious about them, which Anodos cannot quite remember. At moments like this, all forms become symbols hinting at mysterious meanings resonating out from them and transcending obvious significances.

The first story in the Fairy Palace establishes the process of progressive and interrelating worlds. The second develops this concept by indicating what drives this process. The motivating force behind the quests of both Cosmo and Anodos is need, a need which translates into a great longing. Initially this yearning is vague and directionless. Anodos’ vague yearning for Fairy Land is what sets him on his journey. Cosmo lies, overwhelmed with a great longing, dreaming day and night, but having no specific object to give form to his needs (XIII, 108) until he finds the lady in the magic mirror. For both Anodos and Cosmo, this yearning is for the ideal feminine. Both must then learn to transcend this kind of egocentric longing or love and move onto the next stage in the process, which is an unselfish love where the welfare of the beloved is more important than one’s own. Love is another term for the great longing which MacDonald sees as driving both individual protagonists and individual worlds ever upward towards the center. This is the driving energy. Each new insight or stage in this process opens up the next. As MacDonald expresses it in his sermons: “Nothing is inexorable but love . . . there is nothing eternal but that which loves and can be loved, and love is ever climbing towards the consummation . . .” and what he stresses here is once again the process that this involves: “It may be centuries of ages before a man comes to see a truth—ages
of strife, of effort, of aspiration... [but] to see a truth, to know what it is, to understand it, and to love it, are all one. There is many a dim longing for it as an unknown need before at length the eyes come awake” (*Unspoken Sermons. Series One*, p. 37); and elsewhere he expresses this principle thus: “The true revelation rouses the desire to know more by the truth of its incompleteness” (*Ibid.*, p. 36).

These are the two key principles behind *Phantastes*, and Anodos' adventures are an embodiment of this process. As already indicated, death is only a stage in an infinite number of embodiments. Any one realm is merely a stage in a process of realms. Nothing could be more compassionate, open-ended, tolerant and undogmatic than MacDonald's philosophy here. He is far from being a conventional or narrow-minded Christian. It is because MacDonald sees individual experience as relative to a person's spiritual level, that this system is so appropriate. The world of forms shifts and changes according to this ever shifting level. As the quester's needs and consequent yearnings develop, so do the forms which characterize his journey. His imagination finds the forms needed by him at any one time because this realm of form in which he finds himself is merely one of an infinite number. The particular "reality" he inhabits at any one time is in constant flux in the process of development which will carry it towards its next stage, driven always by that great yearning "upwards" towards the center of all creation.

George MacDonald's *Phantastes* is then on all levels an embodiment of these ideas. In terms of its story, in terms of its use of language, metaphor and symbol, and in terms of its employment of the quest archetype, it depends on this concept of multiple realms. All these interweavings of different realms and times, culminate in the final two chapters. Anodos' "death" experience is, on all levels, a revelation. As usual the prologue establishes the key ideas, in this case those already established in the stories he read in the Fairy Palace: life as one in a series, worlds as interradiating from a sacred center, and language as inadequate to convey real truth ("the meagre and half-articulate speech of a savage tribe" [XIII, 106]). We imagine this life to be "our Dwelling Place" when it is in fact only "one step" in the "Race," a mere "wretched Inn" along the way. Death is one stage in a long process of passages through lifetimes and through worlds on the long struggle back to the center. The "enlightened" recognize that this death is actually a birth. They also recognize the limited nature of our language and "scorn" its "nonsense." Death and the shedding of "these vanishing earthly garments," as both Cosmo (smiling as he dies) and the winged creatures of the strange planet learned to recognize, is a blessing. Anodos is emphatic: "I was dead and right content" is how this section opens. "I had never dreamed of such blessedness" (XXIV, 231). For a moment the process of death and rebirth and interradiating realms pauses; Anodos briefly lives "an unradiating existence... [his] soul a motionless lake, that received all things
and gave nothing back.”

He experiences the power of being able to embody his spirit at will. (“I felt that I could manifest myself in the primrose” [XXIV, 232]) The world of form is revealed for what it is, a transitory manifestation of “the essential being and nature” of the great mother earth. As has been implied throughout the book, the great play of form with its multiple realms, is all illusion. The truly “real” is the sacred energy underlying these forms, giving them their fragile and transitory beauty, and established once again is the key importance of love in this process. As the Epigraph (from Sir John Suckling’s “Song”) to Cosmo’s story states, “Love is such a Mystery” (XIII, 106) and its transforming power is what drives these shifting forms through their “infinite progress” towards the center. In this final section Anodos affirms this power as the key lesson he has so far learned in this quest. This is the culmination of all his experiences and it is no accident that MacDonald stresses it as an essential aspect of these death revelations. Love is “a power that cannot be but for good” and “all love will, one day, meet with its return... All true love will, one day, behold its own image in the eyes of the beloved” (XXIV, 233).

Anodos’ return to bodily form is a return to “the world of shadows” through “the door of Dismay,” a return in which he feels like a “ghost” (XXV, 236). Death is “bliss.” The return to the world of “normal reality” is conveyed in terms of death and limitation: “a writhing as of death convulsed me; and I became once again conscious of a more limited even a bodily and earthly life” (XXIV, 233). Back in his castle Anodos longs to return to the cottage of the wise lady which he recognizes as a stable factor beside which his present life is a brief vision. (“I often feel as if I had only left her cottage for a time, and would soon return out of the vision into it again” [XXV, 236, my emphasis]) from which he can only escape “through [his]... tomb.” Life is a dream from which one needs to awaken as Anodos is reminded in this concluding section of the book. He dreams under the ancient beech tree with which the revelations on his quest began. The sacred energy subsuming form is all around him threatening to break through the illusory surface of things, taking the shape of the wise ancient woman’s voice and leaving him and us with the final revelation on which all others hinge. Amidst all these paradoxical oppositions, interacting worlds of form, multiple interradiating realms and mysterious interconnecting dimensions of experience, there is this single great and optimistic truth. Ultimately all things are driven by love upwards to the harmony of the center. “Good is always coming;... What we call evil, is the only and best shape, which, for the person and his condition at the time, could be assumed by the best good. And so, Farewell.”

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17 Cf. The Fairy Palace where there was “no reflection... only... a ghostly shimmer” (X, 85).
The Scottish writer best known as Josephine Tey had a successful and influential career as a playwright and novelist over more than twenty years. Her reputation at her death, in 1952, was high.

Film versions of her novels were made, adaptations have appeared on television, and her eight detective novels have been re-issued. The American critic, Sandra Roy, has recently studied her work, and claims that Kif "as a psychological novel fits neatly into the mainstream of literature between Joseph Conrad and Somerset Maugham." Tey is one of the group of writers featured in *Ten Women of Mystery*. Her position is thus clearly established.

Despite this substantial contribution to literature her writing seems virtually unknown to the generation which has grown up in Scotland in the forty years since her death. Her name does not appear in recent reviews of Scottish literature by Alan Bold and Trevor Royle. She is ignored in the respected

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History of Scottish Literature, despite the fact that she qualifies for inclusion under several headings in the volume devoted to the twentieth century; the most surprising omission is from the chapter by Joy Hendry specifically devoted to women writers, which offers no fewer than fifty names as worthy of interest. Hendry makes it clear, however, that Scottish women writers suffer from a double disadvantage by being women as well as Scottish, and it is typical that major talents have been ignored. I hope to show that Tey is fully entitled to a recognized place as a writer in the Scottish tradition.

Born in Inverness in 1896 with the name of Elizabeth Mackintosh, she attended the Royal Academy there, followed by Anstey Physical Training College at Birmingham. After teaching near Liverpool and in Tunbridge Wells, she returned home in 1926 to act as housekeeper for her widowed father, as would be expected of a daughter of that time. She then commenced writing for publication, and continued until her father’s death in 1950 was followed by her own illness and subsequent demise in 1952.

She herself valued most the plays she wrote under the name of Gordon Daviot. Richard of Bordeaux was produced in 1933 at the New Theatre, London, directed by and starring the young John Gielgud, who felt that in this very successful production he “won his spurs.” It was followed in 1934 by The Laughing Woman and Queen of Scots at the same theater. These were less successful than the first play, partly, Gielgud suggests, because she resisted changes to her text in production. At this point she was sued for plagiarism by a biographer of Richard II, who felt that his ideas about the character had been copied, and her publishers settled out of court. Her fourth major play, The Stars Bow Down, about Joseph of the Old Testament, unfortunately opened in 1935 shortly before another play on a biblical theme, The Boy David, by J. M. Barrie. The coincidence provoked criticism and she decided to confine her play-writing for a time to short pieces for performance outside London.

As well as Kif; 1929 saw a mystery novel, The Man in the Queue, which introduced her favorite detective, Alan Grant. It was followed by A Shilling for Candles, which formed the basis of the 1937 film Young and Innocent, directed innovatively by Alfred Hitchcock. Also in 1937 her one historical biography,
Claverhouse, appeared, received respectful scholarly attention, and was widely read. After several years of silence, during which, according to Gielgud, she seemed “depressed and unhappy,” she returned to the detective-story form with the unusual and successful Miss Pym Disposes. The Franchise Affair, published in 1948, was made into a popular film of the same name in 1953. Brat Farrar (1949) was well received, as was To Love And Be Wise in the following year. In 1951 The Daughter of Time, now regarded as a classic of the detective-fiction genre, was published. It used the form inventively and controversially to launch a serious attack on contemporary research methods in history. Her final works were published shortly after her death. They included a collection of the one-act plays she had been continuing to write, a fictionalized biography of the real-life pirate Henry Morgan, called The Privateer, and her final detective novel, The Singing Sands.

Throughout her varied work, Tey returned frequently to subjects and ideas that she found of enduring interest. They include history and our attitude to it, often involving the influence of the church. Striking, too, is her creation of independent women characters, through whom she expressed ideas much in advance of the time in which she was writing. Here I will consider these in turn.

Tey’s interest in historical themes is marked and not in itself surprising in a writer who admitted having difficulty inventing original plots. She did not, however, merely search out useful pegs on which to hang dramatic action. Her fascination is with individual characters rather than events, and her inclination to attempt the rehabilitation of accepted villains. Her most admired play, with which she first established a claim to be a major talent, was her account of the life of the unfortunate Richard II, entitled Richard of Bordeaux. To a London audience which had recently seen the leading actor, John Gielgud, successfully starring in the Shakespearean role of that name, her interpretation was relevant and interesting, with the eponymous hero blessed with a sense of humor and appealing gallantry in adversity. In Queen of Scots, another significant historical figure is examined, but in this case one who has usually been viewed sympathetically, and Tey’s favorite technique of revaluation of the villainous is inappropriate. Gielgud suggests she lacked understanding of Mary’s character, either as intriguer or seductress. Many of her one-act plays are based on historical events. For example Leith Sands deals with public unrest, emanating from Scottish ill-feeling against the English shortly before the Union of 1707.

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10Gielgud, p. x.

11Gordon Daviot, _The Privateer_ (London, 1952)

12Gielgud, p. xi.
Once more her aim is to suggest that the accepted villain of the piece, the condemned sea-captain, is innocent. *The Franchise Affair* is a reworking in a modern setting of an eighteenth-century trial in which an eccentric pair of women find the onus on themselves to prove their innocence of a crime the press and public assume they have committed. Again, truth is not what the public consciousness presumes it to be.

More unusual than her interest in historical themes and vilified characters is innovative interest in, and skepticism about, the very nature of our perception of the past. She wrote two other significant historical works, different from each other but both demonstrating that she considered our perception of well-known figures and events of the past to be important and yet often seriously flawed.

In *The Daughter of Time* she gives the detective-story form an unusual and revealing twist. Alan Grant is lying immobile on his back in hospital and in need of mental occupation. His attention is drawn to the character of Richard III, popularly supposed to have murdered his nephews, usually known as “the princes in the Tower.” Using his normal approach to investigating crime, Grant rewrites the evidence against Richard and finds most of it to be hearsay, and inadmissible in court. We are told that “Grant had dealt too long with the human intelligence to accept as truth someone’s report of what that someone remembered. ... He was disgusted” (p. 72). What evidence is allowable produces a strong case for regarding Richard as a good man incapable of murder.

It is in this book that Tey spells out her proposition that what we regard as historical “truth” is often based on romantic images, as in the case of the martyred Covenanters, or flawed evidence, as in the case of Richard III. She calls such misconceptions “Tonypandy” in remembrance of Welsh “victims” who were no such thing (p. 129), and points out that words are chosen carefully to create the desired images, “dragoons,” for example, being an emotive word to describe a legitimate peace-keeping force (p. 132).

The title of the book comes from an old proverb “Truth is the daughter of time” and illustrates her conviction that truth is both important and attainable and that, as Grant says “The truth of anything at all doesn’t lie in someone’s account of it. It lies in all the small facts of the time” (p. 95). She contends that those who examine these small facts are “research workers” (p. 161), and are like detectives, while historians are involved in perpetuating myths in order to preserve the status quo and thus existing power systems. His colleague’s reaction to hearing that Grant has proved the history books wrong is to point out “I expect there’s a law against that. M.I.5 won’t like it. Treason or lèse-majesté or something like that it might turn out to be” (p. 177). Individuals, too, are resistant to having their received ideas overthrown: “... there was some vague inward opposition to, and resentment of, a revisal of accepted fact” (p. 159). Grant’s immobility is itself a symbol of the paralysis of the mind of the public. He remarks when he is at last able to sit up, “How small and queer
the world looks right way up” (p. 151). Like the world, neither people nor events are what they are assumed to be. This study of Richard III is an essay in deconstruction, a textbook study of how misrepresentation occurs and is perpetuated.

The other serious historical work which demands attention is the biography Claverhouse, which also attempts to vindicate an unpopular leader. A clearer understanding of the facts will illuminate the situation. John Graham of Claverhouse, Viscount Dundee, known as Bonnie Dundee, was a Royalist who supported James II against the heroes of the Scottish reformed church, the Covenanters. The book was agreed to be scholarly and readable, despite clashing with received opinion, moreover it was read, and widely. Roy, the only critic to discuss her work in full, finds the choice of central character completely mystifying. She claims he is so “obscure, even to professional historians,”13 that the book simply cannot be of interest or significance. Certainly the twists of church history in the seventeenth century are such that even well-informed Scottish readers have to think themselves back into the period. Roy, interested primarily in the detective fiction, and not a Scot, finds the subject impenetrable as well as uninteresting and unappealing.

Looking at her work from the perspective of its place in the Scottish literary tradition, however, we can see that Tey’s themes and ideas are ones which have haunted its writers for centuries, and in dealing with Claverhouse she is acknowledging his centrality to Scottish history and consciousness. G. Gregory Smith claimed that “in no other country does the past grip the present as it does in Scotland,” and continues that for the Scottish writer “it is a matter of instinct... to explain himself historically.”14 Many modern Scottish novelists have dived, seemingly unexpectedly, into serious historical writing—John Buchan in his Montrose,15 is one example—quite apart from the very large number, such as Nigel Tranter and Dorothy Dunnett, who have made it their métier in the present day. Most striking is one who can be seen as Tey’s direct predecessor in the twentieth century, Catherine Carswell. After a career as an influential novelist, journalist and critic, she published a biography of Robert Burns,16 which caused a storm of controversy by overturning the accepted sentimental view of his character. Similarly, Tey turned aside from a career in a popular form to examine a character seminal and vital to Scottish consciousness.

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13Roy, p. 39.


To Roy, Tey's turning to the examination of the character of Claverhouse is an inexplicable aberration which can only be dismissed as of no interest and relevance to her other work. Not only, however, is it natural—almost compulsory—for Scottish writers to examine their country's history, but the conflict selected by Tey for attention is the clash between Royalists and Covenanters which was pivotal in the development of the nation. It is symbolic, too, of the traditions and attractions of romantic adventure and ancient loyalties in competition with those of caution, pragmatism and sober calculation. The outcome of the final battle, at Killiecrankie in 1689, was the doubtful one that victory went to the Royalists who were, however, unable to capitalize on it because of the death of their leader Claverhouse. The clash of ideologies represented by this battle has never been satisfactorily resolved in the national consciousness and the resulting pressures make their presence felt, if often unacknowledged, under the surface of twentieth-century literature, even when it appears superficially confident and unruffled. This conflict is memorably and succinctly described by James Kennaway when one of his characters declares that "Under the cake lies Bonny Dundee." "17

Not only in her choice of historical themes and central character is Tey firmly in the Scottish tradition, but also in her attitude to and treatment of them. Kenneth Simpson, discussing Tobias Smollett, tells us that "habitually Smollett's rationalist sense manifests itself in the investigation of the reality beneath appearances" and points to his "skepticism regarding human nature and achievement." 18 This sounds very close to the sharp, factual approach Tey brings to her historical characters. The same conviction comes into play in her detective fiction, where such a commodity as truth is understood to exist, especially regarding the psychological nature of individual human beings. Careful examining of facts in an unbiased manner will reveal this truth.

Closely linked with Tey's interest in history is her knowledge and foregrounding of the institutional church and its influence on people's lives. She grasps the opportunity in her first detective novel to make her position clear. In The Man in the Queue, a detective is required in the course of duty to attend a church social evening. It is an excruciating experience among unpleasant people in a hideous environment. In the same book Grant attends church, endures "mournful Highland 'praise,'" (p. 167), and sits through "a sermon in which Mr. Logan proved to his own and his congregation's satisfaction that the King of kings had no use for the foxtrot." As we have already seen, her historical work goes further to condemn the Covenanters, representatives of the reformed church, as intolerant and in fact vicious. In The Franchise Affair, her detective Robert Blair's casual list of unsavory


Josephine Tey: A Scottish Detective Novelist

characters—"Calvin or Caliban, he did not care" (p. 12)—makes even clearer Tey’s response to the Scottish church. In *Brat Farrar* the Church of England appears in the form of a more sympathetically treated vicar and his wife who escape such bitter condemnation, but when appealed to for help, they are ineffectual. The church and its representatives are at the very best irrelevant. This interest in, and violent condemnation of, the church is almost universal in serious Scottish writers, to the extent that David Craig calls it "almost a test of sanity." Calvinism is clearly something to be escaped from. This condemnation is a common factor in the four authors (Kennaway, Alan Sharp, George Friel and Robin Jenkins) picked out as significant by Glenda Norquay in her essay on them. To them, religious influences have been important in shaping the Scottish psyche in ways that characterize it and it is an understatement to say the result is not advantageous. Here, too, Tey fits strongly into the Scottish tradition in general and into the thinking of her contemporary compatriots.

Turning now to Tey’s depiction of women, it is evident from reading her work in the order in which it was published that she was developing striking female characters and radical ideas about their possible roles. References to the texts will demonstrate this. In *The Man in the Queue*, Miss Dinmont is the most clear-thinking character, "with her logic and her self-containedness" (p. 217), and her conversation surprises Grant, who notices in particular one "unfeminine pronouncement" (p. 191). This is "I’d rather be a brute than a fool." Erica in *A Shilling for Candles* is similarly admired for her lack of conventional femininity, and it is effectively she who solves the mystery. In *Miss Pym Disposes* we find a setting where not only are women positive and independent, they are happily occupying their own world in which men hardly impinge. Attachments between them are strong and form the impetus of the action, in interesting counterpoint to the exclusively male worlds of *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* and *The Thirty-Nine Steps*. That fact is emphasized throughout. When a minor male character does appear he is purely an appendage to his much more memorable wife, and Miss Pym is "relieved to see that the man was the mate she would have chosen for such a woman" (p. 68). A famous actor is treated with indifference by the college as a whole and with contempt by the significantly named Miss Lux, whom he courts. In the "demonstration" of work at the graduation ceremony the highlight is a


dance in which a woman asserts her authority over an imaginary humble suitor. Miss Pym herself is determined to maintain her independent life, despite being conscious of loneliness. In *Brat Farrar*, the main female character, Aunt Bee, has taken on a more conventional female role in looking after the orphaned family. As a “good” substitute mother, she is however a highly unusual figure which works against the traditional “wicked” stereotype. She, too, finally departs for a satisfactory career abroad. In *The Franchise Affair* the same message is stated more clearly and developed further. (“Franchise” of course means freedom and is especially associated with women’s freedom to vote.) That this book is particularly concerned with exploring the role of women is shown not only by the title, but by the attention drawn to minor female characters, like the first woman clerk in the office: “A whole revolution Miss Tuff was in her single, gawky, thin, earnest person” (p. 6). A more traditional woman is also shown: “Linda Bennett led a life of recipes, film stars, godchildren, and church bazaars and found it perfect” (p. 38). The key characters are Marion Sharpe and her mother who are at first depicted as eccentric with the suggestion that they might even be witches. They emerge, however, as independent and attractive characters, happy to contravene received ideas of suitable attitudes and behavior. Marion declares, “I loathe domesticity” (p. 35), and like Lucy Pym is determined to stay single. In the final pages of the book she turns down the solicitor Robert Blair’s proposal of marriage in a clear statement, “I am not a marrying woman” (p. 250). Grant’s actress friend Marta Hallard expresses an independent philosophy, as indeed does Grant himself who finds that his work absorbs his entire emotional energy. It is difficult not to conclude that through these sympathetic characters Tey is setting out her own consistent views and position.

Once again, we can see that Tey is developing the ideas of her predecessors, such as Catherine Carswell, who stressed the need for women to develop roles for themselves and break away from their traditional interests, in *Open the Door* and *The Camomile*. She has affinities, too, with Naomi Mitchison who used similar themes in *The Bull Calves*. Her unusual setting of a novel in the female world of a girls’ college was used again to great effect by Muriel Spark in the much-acclaimed *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*.

Not only, however, does Tey’s work foreground unusual and independent female characters, but her very use of the genre of detective novel itself can be seen as working strongly against its own entrenched values and assumptions.

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The genre is perceived as supportive of authority in all its forms and as creating in its detectives deities of awesome perspicacity who clearly distinguish between good and evil and infallibly restore order in the final pages.

Tey's novels are very different. *Miss Pym Disposes* occupies a pivotal position in her career, appearing ten years after its predecessor *A Shilling for Candles*, and, of course, after the social upheaval of the Second World War. It marks the beginning of her second phase of literary activity and her first use of a detective other than Grant. Lucy Pym is far from a god-like figure who "disposes," but is vacillating, quite unable to identify the murderer and cannot even accuse her when she finally accidentally reveals herself. Authority, too, in the figure of the head-teacher, Henrietta, is criticized, seen to be unreasonable, selfish and vulnerable, and bears a load of guilt for the crime. The atonement for the crime voluntarily suggested for herself by a guiltless, but innocently implicated, character is that of being banished to work for her father in a market town in a Celtic country, which sentence is equated with that of death. (This sentence is of course the one that was imposed on Tey herself in her own life.) Order is not restored. The real criminal does not suffer. Seen in this way, the whole book emerges as a grim ironization of the form and a savage attack on the nature of patriarchal society itself.

Another of the most striking features of Tey's writing is the constant recurrence of the sense of her characters having two identities. She herself in fact adopted two distinct identities as an author, one Scottish and male, and the other English and female, with a perhaps characteristically ambiguous third (F. Craigie Howe) which she used briefly for the light comedy, *Cornelia*, produced in 1946 at the Citizens' Theatre, Glasgow. Interestingly, the Craigie Howe *Cornelia* was followed the next week by a production of *The Little Dry Thorn*, under the name Gordon Daviot. No attempt seems to have been made to inform the audience of the oneness of the two playwrights. There are many cases in her books of mistaken or dual identities and characters painfully conscious that they suffer from a split personality which seems irreconcilable. In *Brat Farrar*, the hero impersonates one of a pair of twins for most of the duration of the novel, and this impersonation eventually seems morally correct when we discover that one twin has in fact murdered the other. In *To Love and Be Wise* the mystery is solved when it is discovered that the character who has disappeared finds it convenient to dress, for professional reasons, for six months of the year as a man and six months as a woman, and actually is a woman with the ambivalent name of Leslie Searle. Miss Pym is tortured by indecision and the sense of having two selves pulled in different directions. "She could never get away from that other half of herself . . . which stood watching her with critical eyes" (p. 191). Alan Grant is a Scot but has an English accent, and he,

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27This information was kindly given to me by the historian of the Citizens' Theatre, Dr. Anthony Paterson.
most of all, has an internal voice which argues with his outer, rational, professional self, creates problems and has to be controlled, but, disconcertingly, is always, in the end, proved correct.

This sense of having two identities is perhaps the feature most individual to, and deeply embedded in, Scottish writing. Simpson tells us that “from Scott to James Kennaway the way of Scottish literature is strewn with split and multiple personalities.”28 The need to create two identities is often seen as having its origin in the need to escape from a rigid religious framework. James Hogg’s *Confessions of a Justified Sinner,*29 and Stevenson’s *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde,* are thought of as seminal examples, used and built on by Scottish authors, including, in detective writing, Conan Doyle. Spark’s character, Jean Brodie, is quite explicitly a descendant of Deacon Brodie, on whom Stevenson based his portrait of Dr. Jekyll.

The phrase “The Caledonian antizysygy” was coined by Gregory Smith to define the problem of conflicting identities.30 It was immediately adopted and used extensively by poets of the time, especially Hugh MacDiarmid. In a recent article W. N. Herbert admitted that the now well-worn concept could be seen as a “little learned joke” or “catchphrase.”31 Herbert goes on, however, to show that Smith was “in pursuit of more complex issues” and had perceived and identified “twin poles” of the native literary imagination. These are, on the one hand, a delight in fantasy and extravagance, and, on the other, an impulse to build a realistic picture from the accumulation of detail. His theory linked with this the struggle to find a coherent national voice which could take account of the traditions of the Gaelic and Scots languages as well as accommodating the powerful force of English language and culture. Smith’s book itself, like much Scottish literature, was, according to Herbert, “the Scottish antithesis to the English thesis” (p. 27).

This concept of division is discussed by Bold in his section “Stevenson and Schism.”32 He describes three “perennially relevant Scottish topics” all three of which are found in Tey’s work. The first topic, or opposition, is the divided personality. Tey constantly presents us with internal divisions, in major and minor characters. They are most notable in the key figure of Grant, whose own mental conflicts threaten his health, and lead eventually to a convincingly por-

28 Simpson, p. 250.


30 G. Gregory Smith, p. 4


32 Bold, p. 103.
trayed nervous breakdown. Secondly, Bold points to the tendency to look back to a happy, rural childhood. Again, Grant offers a prime example, wistfully recalling freedom on Speyside. The third opposition is conflict between father and son, or between authority and subversion. This is clearly seen in Grant’s relationship with his superior, who, in *The Man in the Queue* finds his doubts and intuitions threatening. His instructions are, “You keep a rein on your imagination, Grant” (p. 205).

Also an indigenously Scottish characteristic, according to Bold, in the same passage, is the pretense that there is no moral middle ground, an idea linked with the Calvinist doctrine of the predestination of souls. Tey fits in there too. Her evil characters were born evil and have no chance of escaping their destiny. Betty Kane in *The Franchise Affair* and Simon Ashby in *Brat Farrar* are beyond redemption, their wickedness as inherent as the color of their eyes.

The need to escape from such contradictions often finds resolution in a journey to wild country. Examples are *Kidnapped*, and John Buchan’s *The Thirty-Nine Steps*. Tey uses similar journeys, notably in *The Man in the Queue*, where Grant chases the suspected criminal to the far north and rescues him from drowning in a loch.

The oppositions and contradictions Bold points to are apparent in all of Tey’s books. The solving of a mystery is far from an intellectual quest based on the discovery of hard evidence by an unmoved detective, as the genre of the time demanded. Instead, an emotional struggle is set up within the detective, involving a reluctant clash with authority and necessitating painful discernment between good and evil, right and wrong, the true and the false. Roy draws attention to “Tey’s development of unique detectives whose self-torturing consciences plague them into moral judgements.” In the first pages of *Miss Pym Disposes*, Lucy agonizes over the possible social consequences of minor details of her own behavior. It is pointed out that “Lucy’s mind always worked like that. It wasn’t sufficient for it to visualise one horror: it must visualise the opposite one too” (p. 12). Lucy feels incapable of acting as the narrative proceeds, tortured by the opposing horrors of revealing or failing to reveal the evidence she has discovered.

We have in this book an arresting physical symbol of the “divided self”:

They overtook a small, scuttling figure clutching under one arm the head and thorax of a skeleton and the pelvis and legs under the other arm . . . ‘I really don’t know if I can remember how to hook up his middle’ (p. 16).

In its humorous grotesqueness this image is distinctively Scottish, recalling the physicality of struggles of mind and body together of Burns’s “Tam o’

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34 Roy, p. 5.
Shanter.” In its division and the suggested impossibility of restoring it to wholeness, it is even more so. We are told that the “divided self” is “... characteristic of Scottish culture over the past two centuries to an extent that distinguishes the Scottish among the cultures of Europe; and they derive from, and express, the ongoing crisis of identity.”35 Tey’s use of divided characters demonstrates how strongly her work fits into the Scottish tradition.

It seems undeniable that Tey’s well-established interests, including the interest in divided character, were brought to their sharpest focus in her final detective novel. She might well have developed them further in the theater and indeed she never abandoned hope of returning to her career as a dramatist. Her father’s death in 1950 might have been a suitable time for this. She was, however, mortally ill herself. It was in these circumstances that she wrote *The Singing Sands*, and in it her right to a place in Scottish literature is definitively established. Typically, details of the mystery and its solution are not important, but its effect on the life of the detective is. Suffering from a breakdown and feeling that his other self has finally taken control, Grant takes an agonizingly claustrophobic train journey to his cousin Laura’s home in the Highlands. He is involved in the discovery of a dead body on the train, and through his commitment to the case finds the solution to his problems and spiritual renewal. Familiar themes recur and are discussed with greater urgency. History, especially that of Scotland, is examined closely, and our perceptions questioned. The Church, both Roman Catholic and Reformed, is looked at too, with the same conclusions drawn. Grant is told firmly, “The Presbyterians are much nastier customers to be up against” (p. 78).

The foregrounding of women and the roles available to them recurs. Laura is a contented wife and mother and there is a strong suggestion that traditional family life might offer comfort now for Grant in his extremity, and by association, for Tey herself. Grant views the happy family wistfully and suppresses his resentment at its exclusivity. The familiar self-sufficient woman makes a brief appearance, confident, forthright and capable, discussing airplanes on an equal basis with a surprised pilot. Grant contemplates the possibility of marriage but is diverted by his overwhelming interest in the identity and character of the man who has been murdered. With his returning health and the satisfaction of solving the mystery, his old commitment to independence reasserts itself. The last lines of the book are

What odd notions occurred to one on holiday. He was going to resign, and be a sheep farmer or something, and get married. What an extraordinary idea. What a most extraordinary idea. (p. 202)

The antizysygyn reappears in its three classic forms. The inner voice asserts its predominance, adopting various tones but pushing Grant towards discovery

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35Simpson, p. 251.
of the truth and recognition of its unreasonable importance to him. In the final pages he himself has lost his head in his anger, while the voice inside is reminding him of police procedure and the need for proof of what, deep down, he knows to be true. ""On what evidence?" said his inner voice, nasty-polite" (p. 109). We certainly have a nostalgic, and moving, looking back to childhood days on Speyside, with "hill mornings smelling of pine needles and endless twilights sweet with the scent of clover" (p. 19). Grant is acutely conscious of his superior's lack of understanding of his illness and clashes with his authority; Bryce is "antagonist rather than colleague" (p. 51). Finally, there is certainly no moral middle-ground. The murderer is vain and ruthless, with no redeeming features, and we are not allowed to sympathize with his motives or his fate. The victim is heroic and Grant feels not the professional satisfaction of having solved a crime, but the personal one of restoring reputation where it is deserved, recognizing that "He had paid back the debt he owed that dead boy" (p. 201).

The symbolic journey of escape to the Highlands assumes higher proportions and takes up almost the whole of the book. Merely journeying to Speyside is inadequate and it is not until Grant reaches the farthest shore of the most westerly part of the Hebrides and contemplates the Atlantic that he begins to feel he may recover. Roy points out the importance of the setting, saying that The Singing Sands, of all Tey's works, "... unquestionably has the most significant and colourful atmosphere,"36 but she is clearly unaware that this is a classic journey typical of Scottish literature. Significantly the theme has recently been picked up in Espedair Street, where the central character longs to "be borne north, to where the white sands sing."37

An interest in what in fact constitutes Scottishness runs almost casually through Josephine Tey's books. The Singing Sands attacks the question most forcefully, introducing a professional Scottish patriot who is not only unpleasant but fraudulent and finally criminal. She also discusses the issue of language, so important to the literary Scot, for the first time. Gaelic is spoken, with Grant remembering a few words from his childhood, but it is impractical for official or general use and not considered suitable for the hotel tannoy. Grant's nephew has picked up some Scots in the village but is to be sent to school in England where it will quickly disappear. Grant is half regretful, half relieved. We are told explicitly as well as implicitly that Scottishness must always be diluted: "As an ingredient it was admirable; neat it was as abominable as ammonia" (p. 186).

In returning to Scottish themes for her last work, Tey followed in the steps of other seemingly Anglicized twentieth-century writers. One is J. M. Barrie,


whose *Farewell, Miss Julie Logan* is imbued with a sense of devastating personal and national loss. Like Tey with *The Singing Sands*, John Buchan wrote his final book *Sick Heart River*, in the knowledge of approaching death. It too was published posthumously and involves an agonizing journey in search of lost Scottish roots, becoming a spiritual quest.

Josephine Tey's work fits into the mainstream of literature in English. Roy and Talburt, who have recently praised her work, naturally did not approach it as *Scottish* literature. In fact they perceived her true nationality only vaguely. As Tey wrote largely in the twentieth century genre of the detective novel in English supposedly purely for the purposes of entertaining a wide international audience, it is doubtful whether even she herself thought of her work as specifically Scottish. But in the light of the Scottish literary tradition she comes clearly into focus as a writer whose distinctive voice used its most basic elements to make a highly individual contribution to its development for a new era.

*University of Strathclyde*
In a letter dated 20 July 1827 Goethe responds to a new English biography of Schiller sent to him by the young Thomas Carlyle:

Whoever understands and studies German finds himself in the market, where all nations offer their wares; he plays the interpreter, while he enriches himself. And thus every translator is to be regarded as a middle-man in this universal spiritual commerce, and as making it his business to promote this exchange: for say what we may of the insufficiency of translation, yet the work is and will always be one of the weightiest and worthiest affairs in the general concerns of the world. The Koran says: "God has given to each people a prophet in his own tongue!" Thus each translator is a prophet to his people.¹

In this memorable tribute to Carlyle, who had "learned from the Germans to represent literature as the new liturgy," Goethe offers an assessment of the privileged status of cultural intermediaries in the age of Weltliteratur.² Until Goethe's death five years later Carlyle played the combined roles of Dolmetscher (interpreter), Übersetzer (translator), and Vermittler (mediator) of German culture in Britain with unflagging zeal. Recognized by Goethe as Scott's


²Chris R. Vanden Bossche, Carlyle and the Search for Authority (Columbus, OH, 1991), p. 29.
successor in this endeavor, he introduced a critical approach, under the influence of Goethe's strong personality, that made a lasting impression on the intellectual life of mid- and late nineteenth-century British literary culture. The main vehicle for this effect was a diverse body of writing, including critical essays, translations, and prefaces on Goethe that appeared over the most formative decade in Carlyle's career, 1822-32.

Klaus Doderer has made the point that Carlyle's cumulative critique of Goethe led to a "Vertiefung und eine neue Wendung" [an intensification and a new departure] in the reception of German thought and literature in Britain. "Obwohl gerade Carlyle die German Romance schrieb und Novalis sehr liebte" [although Carlyle published German Romance and very much admired Novalis] he nonetheless put Goethe squarely in the foreground of his meditations on literature, not merely as Germany's but also as Europe's leading poet and critic of comprehensive cultural authority. Accompanying the resulting tendency to consider literature, in Doderer's phrase, "als moralisches Erziehungsmittel" [as a medium of ethical education], is a new emphasis on the "Dichterperson" [the person of the poet] rather than "Dichtung" [poetry]. In focusing on the personality of the poet to a greater degree than the work or text, Carlyle builds upon Germaine de Stael's suggestive approach in De l'Allemagne [On Germany] (1813) and he anticipates Heinrich Heine's portrayal of Goethe's imperial persona in Die Romantische Schule [The Romantic School] (1836). As much as their assessments of Goethe might differ in emphasis and specific detail, all three critics identify his work and his presence as the dominant cultural phenomenon of the time. Moreover, the technique employed by all three critics is fashioned by a fusion of biography and practical criticism. De Stael's and Carlyle's interest in Goethe reveal the impact of interpreting Goethe on the formation of national cultural identity in France and Britain. The naming of a foreign writer as the cultural hero in two national literary traditions more mature and advanced than Germany's reflects the astonishing permeability of national and cultural boundaries in the early decades of the nineteenth century.

Carlyle also anticipates Wilhelm Dilthey's method in Das Erlebnis und die Dichtung [Experience and Poetry] (1905), one of the foundation texts of modern literary hermeneutics. As with de Stael and Heine, both Carlyle and Dilthey derive their concepts of the imagination, literariness, authorship, and the function of criticism from an examination of Goethe's life and works; both critics reach the conclusion the Goethe, perhaps alone of all classic European writers, led a life so soaked with meaning that his lived experiences demand to be inter-

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interpreted for their symbolic value. It is as if the writer’s life and work formed a palimpsestic unity. The following passage from the second chapter of Dilthey’s book, “Goethe und die dichterische Phantasie” [Goethe and the Poetic Imagination], suggests intriguing parallels with Carlyle’s approach in his reverential essays of 1832, “Goethe” and “Goethe’s Works”:

Poetry is the representation and expression of life. It expresses lived experience and represents the external reality of life .... What a lyric poem or a story shows us—and what it fails to show us—can be explained on this basis. But life-values are related on the basis of the totality of life itself, and these relations give meaning to persons, things, situations, and events. Thus the poet addresses himself to what is significant. Surely the primary and most decisive feature of Goethe’s work is that it grows out of an extraordinary energy of lived experience .... His moods transform everything real, his passions intensify the meaning and form of situations and things beyond the realm of the usual, and his restless creative drive changes everything around him into form and image.5

Upon closer examination the comparison with Dilthey seems especially fitting. Indeed, according to Rudolf A. Makreel, Dilthey’s view of literature is biographical “not in the sense of manifesting personal mannerisms, but of revealing a unity of style which derives from the total being of the poet—a being that comprehends more than private states of mind.”6

Biography as an expression of the organic fusion of style and personality also underlies Carlyle’s hermeneutic. In his words “Goethe’s poetry is no separate faculty, no mental handicraft; but the voice of the whole harmonious manhood; nay, it is the very harmony, the living and life-giving harmony of that rich manhood which forms his poetry.”7 It is a curious feature of the history of the transmission of foreign cultures in Britain that, from the outset of Goethe’s reception there, his reputation was not, in contrast to the scene in Russia or France, formed by appropriating or resisting such major texts as Werther, Faust, and Tasso; rather his reputation in Britain grew out of the controversy surrounding Goethe’s personality, his ethics and character. From the publication of the first English translation of Werther in 1780 to the appearance of Carlyle’s translation of Wilhelm Meister in 1824, the whole thrust of the criticism of the time consists of a series of conflicting interpretations focused not on readings of these and other texts—at least not in the sense indicated by Coleridge’s “practical criticism”—but, quite differently, on what George


7The Works of Thomas Carlyle, ed. H. D. Traill (London, 1898), XXVI, 208. All citations that follow are to this edition.
Saintsbury, in his reappraisal of Goethe's impact on Victorian Britain, derided as merely "anthropological" interpretations. Carlyle's predecessors offer what one might describe as pre-Freudian probings of the authorial psyche which were inferred from the text and then projected back onto the author, a process which, as Saintsbury complains, had the effect of overshadowing the textual features of the literary artifact.  

The biographical impulse in Carlyle's criticism was in fact assimilated from Goethe's own reflections on literature. In *Gespräche mit Goethe*, for example, Eckermann quotes his assertion that

Personality is everything in art and poetry, yet there are many weak personages among the modern critics who do not admit this, but look upon a great personality in a work of poetry or art merely as a kind of trifling appendage. However, to feel and respect a great personality one must be something oneself. All who denied the sublime to Euripides were either poor wretches incapable of comprehending such sublimity, or shameless charlatans who by their presumption wished to make more of themselves—and really did make more of themselves than they were.  

In fact, Goethe's remarks on literature almost invariably lead to speculations on the psychology or personality traits of leading authors. An example of this approach, a memorable characterization of Dante, is recorded by Eckermann:

He spoke of Dante with extreme reverence; and I observed that he was not satisfied with the work *Talent*, but called him a *Nature*, as if thus wishing to express something more comprehensive, more full of prescience, of deeper insight, and wider scope.  

Among contemporary poets Goethe admired Byron more than any other and, in all recorded discussions of his prodigious talent, Goethe's emphasis is rarely if ever on the special qualities of his works but on the force and distinctiveness of his personality. On one occasion Goethe cited Byron's importance as the major argument in favor of learning English: "... a character of such eminence had never existed before, and probably would never come again." A meticulous reading of the *Gespräche mit Goethe*, Goethe's criticism, and the voluminous *Briefe* confirms that Goethe only rarely discusses a specific text or specific

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10 P. 75 (3 December 1824).

11 PP. 11-12 (19 October 1823).
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characteristics of a text; instead, his interest in the writer's personality nearly always supersedes textual interpretation.

Thus not only does Goethe validate a critical method or hermeneutic based on reading authorial personality, deciphering his personality emerges as one of the chief organizing principles in the cultural life of nineteenth-century Europe. The critical response to Goethe in de Staël and Taine in France, Heine and other writers associated with the Jungdeutschland movement, and Carlyle and his disciples in Britain, suggests Goethe's broad European appeal. But it is Carlyle whose career is more closely associated with Goethe than any writer before G. H. Lewes, and Goethe, who is credited with opening "a new world to him,"12 is the subject of Carlyle's first significant appearance in print in April 1822, an article on Faust for the New Edinburgh Review. While this modest little piece was excluded from the first edition of Carlyle's complete works, it did in fact mark the beginning of his involvement with Goethe and it suggests that at the outset of his career Carlyle had tied his literary fortunes to the mediation of German culture in the English-speaking world. Moreover, on this same foundation Carlyle staked his first claim to speak with broad cultural authority and, on closer inspection, it is clear that his mature views on art, society, economics, and politics were formed in the crucible of his critique of Goethe and German literature. The process of substituting an emphasis on biography for practical criticism of the artifact culminates in Carlyle's five major statements on Goethe—the "Translator's Preface to the First Edition of Meister's Apprenticeship" (1824), "Goethe's Helena" (1828), "Goethe" (1828), "Death of Goethe" (1832) and "Goethe's Works" (1832). In this body of writing textual exegesis plays an unexpectedly minor role in Carlyle's assessment of Goethe; in its place we find the outline of a full-blown cult of personality and a blueprint for the ideology of hero-worship that is more fully mapped out in such later major works as On Heroes and Hero-Worship (1841), Oliver Cromwell's Letters and Speeches (1845), and The History of Frederick the Great (1858, 1862, 1864, 1865).

As the recipient of a strict Calvinist upbringing Carlyle was initially repelled by what critics before him had depicted as Goethe's tendency to condone licentious behavior in his writings. Even his close identification with Goethe from 1822-32 was initially qualified by feelings of ambivalence, even of disgust.13 Resistance to Goethe in 1822-23 was replaced by sympathy in 1828-32 only after Carlyle had interpolated his own idiosyncratic, self-reflexive interpretation


of Goethe's works, according to which Goethe's writings embody the drama of "a mind working itself into clearer and clearer freedom; gaining a more and more perfect domination of its world. The pestilential fever of Skepticism runs through its stages; but happily it ends ... in clearer, henceforth invulnerable health" (XXVI, 430). Once Goethe's biography had been configured according to Carlyle's plot of redemption his presence in the text initiated a rapturous conversion experience: "The sight of such a man" was to Carlyle "a Gospel of Gospels," which "literally" preserved him "from destruction outward and inward." Goethe, he averred, was the first who had "travelled the steep rocky road" of self-discovery which he, too, had known, and Goethe thenceforth was to be known as "the first of the moderns." Formerly, as Carlyle confessed in a letter to Goethe, he too had been "an Unbeliever ... storm-tossed in my imagination; a man divided from men; exasperated, wretched, driven almost to despair." But Goethe had restored his faith in "the Mercy and Beauty of which it is the Symbol" and helped him attain "to new thoughts, and a composure which I should once have considered as impossible." Thus Goethe played a key role in the development of what W. H. Bruford calls Carlyle's "humanistic religion" and laid the foundation for the cult of personality surrounding Goethe.

There were, of course, contemporary precedents and parallels for Carlyle's valorization of Goethe's cultural authority in Britain. Obviously none was more important than de Stael's De l'Allemande. Her identification of Goethe as a "living classic" seemed to confirm that a "modern" could indeed be the equal of the "ancients." Despite bad country roads and a shortage of decent inns, de Staël joined the procession of foreign visitors flocking to Weimar, which featured perhaps the most remarkable concentration of literary celebrities in Europe at that or any other time. But even after a long journey her personal interviews with Goethe and Schiller could not alter her ideological interpretation of German culture. Having been subjected to strict censorship in Paris,
De l'Allemagne was first published in London in 1813 and it has been credited for revealing Germany for the first time to "die ganze Welt" [the entire world].\(^{19}\) Carlyle found in de Stael's idealized vision of German culture a readily available alternative to the Enlightenment culture of France and England from which he felt alienated. And Carlyle was not alone in coming under the spell of de Stael's portrayal of Germany as the land of poets and thinkers; this picture of German culture dominated British perspectives throughout the nineteenth century and gave impetus to the transformation of Goethe from repro­bate to cultural hero.\(^{20}\) At a time when Goethe's writings fell short of the popularity enjoyed by Kotzebue, Schiller, and Wieland, de Stael made the bold claim that he, and not his more popular contemporaries, "réunit tout ce qui distingue l'esprit allemand" [unites all that distinguishes the German mind] and possessed "les traits principaux du genie allemand" [the chief characteristics of the German genius].\(^{21}\)

Described by Heine as a “coterie book” and “a kind of salon,” in which a cacophony of voices may be heard crying out from its pages, De l'Allemagne is, indeed a new kind of criticism. René Wellek has argued that “the book cannot be judged as primarily a work of literary criticism. It is the picture of a whole nation, a sketch of national psychology and society, and also something of a personal travel book.” Wellek compares De l'Allemagne to Tacitus's Germania in its propagandistic intent: “The French were shown the picture of a good, since pious nation of thinkers and poets with few political ambitions and little national feeling: an idyll which already had been refuted by the history of the years between the writing [in 1810] and publication [in France in 1814 during the occupation of Paris by the Allies].” Wellek notes that this idealized image of Germany “ingered on in France till” the Franco-Prussian War, despite the attacks mounted by Heine and others.\(^{22}\) No doubt de Stael's admirers in England, Germany, and America sustained her authority as a cultural guide. Divided over two issues of Fraser's Magazine, Nos. 1 and 4 (1830), is Carlyle's translation of Jean Paul's review of De l'Allemagne. As he notes in the translator's Preface: “Students of German literature will be curious to see such a critic as Mme de Staël adequately criticized . . . and what worth the best of


\(^{20}\)Oederer, "Das englische und französische Bild von der deutschen Romantik," 397.

\(^{21}\)Germaine de Staël, De l'Allemagne (Paris, 1968), I, 189.

\(^{22}\)René Wellek, A History of Modern Criticism (Cambridge, 1955), II, 224.
[German writers] acknowledge in their chief eulogist and indicator among foreigners' (XXVII, 476). This review and its translation are signs that the authority exercised by de Stael's biased and inaccurate interpretation of German culture was transplanted beyond the national, social, political, and aesthetic contexts of its origins. As a result of this process her interpretation acquired new meaning, since, as Jerome J. McGann has argued, "meaning, in a literary event, is a function not of the text itself but rather the text's "historical relations with its readers and interpreters." In Lilian Furst's analysis of the accuracy of De l'Allemagne as a guide to German culture the book's main source of interest is found to lie in its creative distortions.

That Carlyle should have looked abroad for literary predecessors and models is symptomatic of his marginalized status in late Romantic Britain. This status is also shared by the culturally marginalized exiles de Stael, who wrote De l'Allemagne in Switzerland, and Heine, who wrote Die Romantische Schule in Paris. As a Scot and a member of a tiny Calvinist sect Carlyle was at least twice-removed from mainstream British literary culture. At various times throughout his career Carlyle commented on his predicament: "My case is this: I comport myself wholly like an alien,—like a man who is not in his own country, whose own country lies perhaps a century or two distant." In his adopted language he once described himself as "an abgerissenes Glied, a limb torn from the family of Man." Years later, even after Carlyle was established as a sage among writers living in London, he confided to Froude that his work had been produced by "a wild man, a man disunited from the fellowship of the world he lives in." Carlyle's alienation from mainstream British culture was shared by other contemporaries whose literary careers were launched along the somewhat unconventional path of mediating foreign, mostly German, cultural artifacts. Indeed, the reception of German thought and literature in Britain from the seventeenth through the nineteenth centuries was largely the work of culturally ambitious outsiders—Dissenters, women, and Scots—for whom access to the majority culture was impeded by gender, class, or ethnic identity and by the absence of empowering institutional affiliations with prestigious public schools or with Oxford or Cambridge University. In addition to Carlyle, this group includes William Taylor, Mary Wollstonecraft, Thomas Holcroft, Walter Scott, R. P. Gillies, J. G. Lockhart, Henry Crabb Robinson, Sarah Austin, and Marian Evans. Situated on the margins of mainstream British culture, these writers

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prefaced the publication of their original work with the translation and criticism of German texts. The work of translation reflected their lower-caste status within the majority culture since it was left to them to mediate the immoral and radical elements in German literature before these texts were suitable as commodities for domestic consumption. Their mediating activities also embody the shaman's function of going-out-of-the-self and leaving the familiar in an effort to embrace the foreign and the other.

Carlyle shares de Stael's vision of German literature as ethically superior (since worshipping the sublime and heroic individualism) to the cultural status quo observed in Britain, America, and France, and both critics seek to foster their hermeneutic model with missionary zeal. Heine, by contrast, finds these very same qualities dangerous, because they contradict the communitarian values enshrined by the French Revolution. In his view there is a direct correspondence and a reciprocal relationship between "the lack of political freedom in Germany" and the cultural dominance enjoyed by Goethe's aesthetic "indifference." Peter Uwe Hohendahl's description of Heine's treatise could also be applied to De l'Allemagne and Carlyle's essays on Goethe. He argues that Die Romantische Schule "combines in a highly unorthodox manner personal characteristics, descriptions of works, satire, historical commentary, and critique of ideology." What Heine calls "this constant assertion of my personality" in his satire, which also breaks through in de Stael's highly idiosyncratic interpretations and in Carlyle's worshipful essays (and is denoted by his baroque style), is considered "the most suitable means of encouraging self-evaluation from the reader."26

All three critics' readings of Goethe are based on an interpretation of his personality. While he is actually the one literary figure linking the Sturm und Drang, Classicism, and Romanticism, Goethe's mere presence seems to have so distracted de Stael that she, as Furst points out, "hardly touches the fringe of German Romanticism" proper in her evaluation of German literature.27 Heine condemns Goethe for the "zweideutige Rolle" [ambivalent role] he played in the literary politics of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century: "Offen gestanden, Goethe hat damals eine sehr zweideutige Rolle gespielt und man kann ihn nicht unbedingt loben." [Speaking frankly, at that time Goethe's contribution was extremely equivocal and is not deserving of unqualified praise.]28 Moreover, Goethe is responsible for condoning the formation of a cult of personality that, as Heine notes, surrounded him like a cloud of incense and adversely effected Germany's younger poets, including several of Goethe's most

26Peter Uwe Hohendahl, The Institution a/Criticism (Ithaca, NY, 1982), p. 66.

27Furst, "Madame de Stael's De l'Allemagne," p. 58.

fervid admirers. In Heine’s colorful retelling of their meeting in Weimar, we read that Goethe “brusquely drove the Schlegel brothers from the temple . . . and established his autocratic reign in German literature.” Throughout their conversation “one spoke no more of romantic or classical poetry, but of Goethe and again of Goethe.”

The same could be said of Carlyle after he got over his infatuation with the sublimity of Schiller and the arabesques of Jean Paul. It has often been remarked that the European mind in the modern age “spricht Deutsch.” Goethe’s impact on Carlyle reflects the initial phase of this tendency and is a factor of overwhelming importance in his own intellectual development. The extent of this influence is apparent from the outset of Carlyle’s career. The major essays and translation published from 1822-32 promote the German poet as a viable leader of British culture. Carlyle’s objective in this body of writing is to instigate Britain’s breakthrough into a broader cultural compass and to emulate the cosmopolitanism that Goethe himself embodied and propagated. Goethe’s reputation in early nineteenth-century Britain is not, he reveals, indicative of his true worth. Unlike Kotzebue and other objects of transient literary fashions in London, Goethe is to be revered as a living classic, who possesses “some touches of that old divine spirit” and is worthy of comparison with “the masters of Italian painting, and the fathers of Poetry in England.” Goethe represents that singular example of a writer who is “what Philosophy can call a Man,” and his writings serve as an expression of “the voice of [his] whole harmonious manhood . . . it is the very harmony, the living and life-giving harmony of that rich manhood which forms his poetry” (“Goethe,” XXVI, 207-08).

Carlyle’s preoccupation with Goethe’s “manhood” or humanity encodes a signal tendency of much nineteenth-century literary criticism: the pursuit of a critical agenda combining ethics and aesthetics through biography. This tendency reaches its culmination in the cultural criticism and historiography of Carlyle’s disciples, Froude, Charles Kingsley, and Leslie Stephen. Carlyle puts the matter concisely: “All good men may be called poets in act, or in word; all good poets are so in both.” By equating moral and literary excellence, Carlyle identifies Goethe as the “Teacher and exemplar of his age,” whose writings embody “the beautiful, religious Wisdom . . . which is proper to his time . . . [and] which may still . . . speak to the whole soul” because in addition to “his natural gifts, he has cultivated himself and his art, he has now studied how to live and to write, with a fidelity, an unwearied earnestness, of which there is not other living instance; of which among British poets especially, Wordsworth alone offers any resemblance” (XXVI, 208).

The emphasis de Staël places on Goethe’s genius and the comprehensive greatness of his personality suggests a framework for Carlyle’s own interpretive strategy that evolves in the four major essays. He simply transposes her influ-

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ential reading of Goethe from an overtly political to a quasi-theological key. Goethe thus emerges from Carlyle’s reading as far more than a dominant cultural figure; his works reveal a divine presence immanent in the world, a deus absconditus, a god in the guise of a poet, whose appearance inaugurates a new epoch of faith in a post-Enlightenment world grown weary of doubt and relativism. Carlyle’s identification of Goethe as “the Strong One of his time” (XXVI, 435), exerting religious, ethical, and cultural authority, received corroboration from Matthew Arnold in strikingly similar terms:

when Goethe came, Europe had lost her basis of spiritual life; she had to find it again; Goethe’s task was,—the inevitable task for the modern poet henceforth is,—as it was for the Greek poet in the days of Pericles, not to preach a sublime sermon on a traditional text like Dante, not to exhibit all the kingdoms of human life and the glory of them like Shakespeare, but to interpret human life afresh, and to supply a new spiritual basis to it.... Goethe is the greatest poet of modern times, not because he is one of the half-dozen human beings who in the history of our race have shown the most signal gift for poetry, but because, having a very considerable gift for poetry, he was at the same time, in the width, depth, and richness of his criticism of life, by far our greatest modern man.40

If Goethe served as Arnold’s most eminent example of cosmopolitan literary culture, it was Carlyle’s efforts as a Vermittler of German literature that stimulated Goethe’s expression of a coming multicultural utopia of Weltliteratur. Concerning the broad intercultural value of translation, Goethe asks Carlyle’s opinion of Charles Des Voeux’s English translation of his own Torquato Tasso (1827):

But now I wish to know from you what may be the merit of this Tasso as an English translation? It will greatly oblige me if you will inform and enlighten me as to this, because it is precisely the bearing of an original to a translation, which most clearly indicates the relations of nation to nation, and which one must especially know and estimate for the furtherance of the prevailing, predominant and universal World-literature.31

Starting with his translations and early critical writings, Carlyle instigated the breakthrough of his native insular culture into a broader cultural compass and, at the same time, established a pattern of cultural emulation of Germany that has continued into the present time and is especially noticeable in the pres-

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31 Correspondence between Goethe and Carlyle (1 January 1828), p. 42.
tige of Marx, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Adorno, and Habermas in Anglo-American academic circles. When viewed as a contribution to intellectual history, Carlyle’s essays on Goethe are comparable to T. S. Eliot’s reassessment of the cultural significance of the Metaphysical Poets. But the focus on Goethe and other German writers—Schiller, Wieland, Jean Paul, Novalis, and Friederich Schlegel—suggests that Carlyle’s critical essays are unique among the works of major English critics from after the time of Dryden until the late nineteenth century. As a coherent, sustained critique of an entire tradition, only Johnson’s Lives of the English Poets approaches Carlyle’s essays both in scale and in method, which is best described as a fusion of biography and practical criticism. Indeed, Carlyle’s guiding conviction that biography provides the most authentic basis for literary criticism—”Would that I saw the Poet and knew him [I] could then fully understand him!” (Two Notebooks, p. 128) anticipates Dilthey’s psycho-biographical hermeneutic in Das Erlebnis und die Dichtung, Freuds’ investigations of the psychology of artists and writers, and, more recently, the approaches to biography in the work of W. J. Bate, Harold Bloom, and John Bowlby.32

Carlyle first came to the attention of the English reading public with his translation of Wilhelm Meister’s Apprenticeship (1824) and this text played a key role in situating Goethe on Britain’s intellectual horizon. Indeed, prior to its publication and the appearance of Carlyle’s essays on Goethe (1828-1832), the canonical niche that Goethe would occupy beside Dante and Shakespeare as a representative European poet was not yet established nor even conceivable. Carlyle, however, single-handedly created a context for the reception of Goethe which combined speculation on the links between aesthetics and ethics with homilies on the importance of great men. In additional essays on Schiller, Jean Paul, Novalis, and other German writers, Carlyle anticipates the enthusiastic appropriation of German culture throughout nineteenth-century Europe. Echoing Carlyle’s intuition of the centrality of German thought in forming the modern mind, Taine insists that “l’Allemagne a produit toutes les idées de notre âge historique” [Germany has produced all the ideas of our historic epoch].33

Taken as a body of critical writing Carlyle’s essays provide much more than a rebuttal to the less gifted William Taylor or to ideologically antagonistic critics such as George Ellis and John Hookham Frere writing for the Anti-Jacobin; they also comprise a fulfillment of Coleridge’s envisioned “history of Belles Lettres in Germany” that he wished to combine with “a biographical and critical analysis” of “Goethe as poet and philosopher” plus an additional component


33Hippolyte Taine, Histoire de la littérature Anglaise (Paris, 1863-64), p. 277
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unplanned by Coleridge: a consideration of the relevance of German culture for post-Romantic England, a theme that would recur in Carlyle’s writing and conversation to the end of his life. 34 Despite insisting upon a caveat concerning Carlyle’s “avowed tendency towards ‘philosophical’ rather than ‘formal’ criticism,” even the usually skeptical Saintsbury concedes that “altogether there are few things in English Criticism better worth reading, marking, and learning . . . than the literary parts of these earlier volumes of Essays.” 35

It appears, then, that voices of dissent open and close the nineteenth century. Coleridge denounced Goethe’s works of imagination as “utterly unprincipled” and George Saintsbury, in his massive effort of revisionist literary history, compared Goethe’s reputation as a critic to a “stale superstition” (III, 352). Moreover, Goethe’s neglect of purely literary criteria inspires Saintsbury’s re-evaluation of the legacy of Romanticism, in which a concern for personality, moral conduct, and character is a chief component. Saintsbury’s pre-Modernist critique of Goethe anticipates the twentieth century’s realignment of the canon of criticism. In rejecting Goethe’s emphasis on the personality, Saintsbury re-fashions the predominately ethical or social-cultural function of criticism, which was adopted by Victorian critics. This is the nativity of Modernism. Coleridge’s objection to Goethe, in contrast to Carlyle’s admiration, was based on a concern for morality. As he remarked to Crabb Robinson in 1810, he “conceded to Goethe universal talent, but felt a want of moral life to be the defect of his poetry.” Some time later Coleridge elaborated on this judgment in conversation with Wordsworth. In denying “merit to Goethe’s Torquato Tasso,” he expressed “the improbability of being a good poet without being a good man.” 36 It becomes apparent in further conversations with Robinson that Coleridge’s attitude towards Goethe was capable of modification. The appearance of a complete edition of Faust compelled him to acknowledge “the genius of Goethe in a manner he never did before.” And yet, as in the past, “the want of religion and enthusiasm in Goethe” remains “in Coleridge’s mind an irreparable defect.” In addition, he found fault with the beginning of Faust and with what he describes as the inadequately developed character of Mephistopheles. As for the protagonist of the drama, Coleridge finds that “the character of Faust is not motivirt” because Goethe fails to offer a convincing explanation for the “state of mind which led to the catastrophe.” But Robinson knew Coleridge well enough to remark on his plan to write “a new Faust” that


35 George Saintsbury, III, 497.

“he would never get out of vague conceptions—he would lose himself in dreams.”

At other times Coleridge’s objections to Goethe were based on literary and aesthetic grounds, which he attempted on several occasions to clarify and to defend. For example, in March 1813, Coleridge distinguishes, in a manner similar to the pattern of development later articulated by Carlyle, the chief characteristics of the early and mature phases of Goethe’s career. As Robinson recorded their conversation, Coleridge thought Goethe had, from a sort of caprice, underrated the talent which in his youth he had so eminently displayed in his *Werther*, that of exhibiting man in a state of exalted sublimity. In contrast to his early manner, the later Goethe, Coleridge complained, “delighted to exhibit . . . purely beautiful objects, not objects of desire and passion . . . as a statuary does a succession of marble figures.” *Wilhelm Meister* is the one later work which elicited Coleridge’s approval. On another occasion, Robinson found Coleridge at Flaxman’s house “enraptured” with Goethe’s novel. Although he considered “the conclusion very bad” and the death of Mignon and the incidents in the castle “unworthy of the exquisite earlier parts,” he “repeated *Kennst Du das Land* with tears in his eyes and he praised the ‘Song of the Harper’ which Walter Scott told Coleridge was the original of his Minstrel in the Lay [March 20, 1813].”

Although skepticism contributed to Coleridge’s complex attitude towards Goethe, a week after the conversation in which he notes the irreverent tendencies in *Faust*, he informs Robinson of his plans for “writing a new *Faust*” from the proper moral and religious perspective. The impulse to revise Goethe is expressed a few years later in connection with the *Farbenlehre* [Theory of Colors]. On July 4, 1816, Coleridge makes the astonishing claim that “some years back” he had “discovered the same theory and would certainly have reduced it to form and published it, had not Southey diverted his attention from such studies to poetry.” Writing to Robinson a year later, Coleridge, still preoccupied with the *Farbenlehre*, unveils his intention to publish a study of Goethe that, like so many of his projects (including the aborted “Life of Lessing”), never came to fruition: “As this is the very work I am now taking in hand and shall send to the press within a week after my second sermon [Lay Sermons,

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37Sadler, I, 206-07.


39Cited in Frederick Norman’s *Henry Crabb Robinson and Goethe* (London, 1930-31), I, 70.

40Sadler, I, 207.

41Cited in Norman, I, 75.
1816] is out—namely on Goethe as poet and philosopher with a biographical critical analysis of his writings with translations.42

Coleridge's enthusiasm for Goethe during the mid-1810s, like his interest in Schiller a decade before, did not endure. Inexplicably, his attitude toward Goethe slips back into a familiar mood of moral uneasiness. In June 1824 Robinson records Coleridge's conversation at Charles Lamb's. In a manner reminiscent of William Taylor, Coleridge "set Goethe far below Schiller, allowing no other merit than that of exquisite taste." Then he reiterated "his favorite reproach," namely, that "Goethe wrote from an idea that a certain thing was to be in a certain style, not from the fulness of sentiment on a certain subject." For good measure he also "called Herder a coxcomb" and repeated his conviction that Goethe is "utterly unprincipled." Identifying with the generation of Novalis and his old friends the Brentanos and August Schlegel, Robinson disputed Coleridge's assertion that Goethe was a mannerist without emotion. On the same occasion Robinson met John Irving. Noting that the conversation revolved around Goethe, Irving mentioned a young friend, Thomas Carlyle, who, coincidentally, had just completed his translation of Wilhelm Meister.43

Twenty years previously Robinson published a series of essays that represent the first coherent effort by a British Romantic writer to evaluate and to translate Goethe's lyric poetry and epigrams.44 At the same time he makes the first tentative strides toward an interpretation of Goethe as a cultural authority for Europe. He is, moreover, aware of the symbolic quality with which the events in a poet's life are invested. He recognizes that in such matters there is always an appeal open to nature, which is ultimately the bond between "Dichtung" and "Wahrheit," poetry and truth: "in a truly great man," he writes, "everything is important." And the greatness of Goethe, he suggests, has to do with his concern for realism: "Goethe has done more than any man to bring back the public taste to works of imagination—a faculty which does not refuse all alliance with frightful realities, but which refines and idealizes them."45 The first in his generation to recognize the broader importance of Goethe, Robinson anticipates Carlyle's extension of Goethe's influence from art to ethics. Twenty years later, in his essays for the Edinburgh Review, Goethe is described as a prophet and medium through which supernatural revelation in the modern world has taken place.

42Cited in Norman, I, 76.

43Cited in Norman, I, 91


45Cited in Norman, II, 58.
Carlyle found the British Romantics deficient in the philosophical vision and the moral seriousness which he felt were necessary if poets were to instigate a new cultural dispensation. Scott’s “deep recognition of the Past” is deemed superficial because it lacks philosophical foundation and he is parodied as “the great Restaurateur of Europe.” Byron is ridiculed as “a Dandy of Sorrows,” and Wordsworth is dismissed as “genuine but a small diluted man.” Hazlitt is rejected because he “has discovered nothing; been able to believe nothing.” Coleridge’s “cardinal sin” is a lack of will power: “He has no resolution . . . The conversation of the man is much as I anticipated—a forest of thoughts . . . But there is no method in his talk . . . he is like the hulk of a huge ship—his masts and sails and rudder have rotted quite away” (Life of Carlyle, 1795-1835, I, 222). What is lacking, then, in Britain is a “modern seer,” a genius with the “spiritual eye” to discern the potential for the aestheticization of modern life. Goethe, whom he designates as just such a genius, “had opened a new world to him” and countered the loss of a spiritual center in his existence. Goethe’s writings represent “a mind working itself into clearer and clearer freedom, gaining a more and more perfect domination of its world. The pestilential fever of Skepticism runs through its stages; but happily it ends . . . in clearer, henceforth invulnerable health” (XXVI, 430). Carlyle’s assertion that “Biography is the only History” reflects how, in an age in which literature has usurped functions once served by religion, the lives of the poets—and of Goethe in particular—become as important as Acts of Apostles and Lives of the Saints were in ages of faith (V, 1).

In opposition to “these hard unbelieving utilitarian days” Carlyle was convinced that Goethe’s writings “reveal to us glimpses of the Unseen but not unreal world, so that the Actual and the Ideal may again meet together, and clear knowledge be again wedded to Religion in the life and business of men.” Carlyle admits that his critique of Goethe is intuitive, irrational, unscientific, and wholly “interested” in nature, though he insists that “the merits and characteristics of a poet are not to be set forth by logic,” but rather “by personal, and by deep and careful inspection of his works.” Understanding is gained through an exertion of imagination, sympathy, and openness of mind, without which it is impossible to “transfer ourselves in any measure into his [the author’s] peculiar point of vision” (XXXVI, 208).

The openness and objectivity that is, for Carlyle, the first duty of the critic is once again inferred from Goethe’s personality. Indeed, “clearness of sight” is “the foundation of all talent,” to which “all other gifts are superadded” (XXVII, 430), and Goethe’s and Shakespeare’s superior “Spiritual Endowment” is derived from this “utmost Clearness” and an “all-piercing faculty of Vision”.

For Goethe, as for Shakespeare, the world lies all translucent, all fusible we might call it, encircled with WONDER: the Natural is in reality the Supernatural, for to the seer’s eyes both become one. What are the Hamlets and Tempests, the Fausts and Mignons, but glimpses accorded us into the translucent, wonder-encircled
Goethe's and Shakespeare's writings are vital because they were formed in a process that started from within and moved outwards towards the surface of reality. As a result, those "Macbeths and Falstaffs . . . these Fausts and Philinas have a verisimilitude and life that separates them from all other fictions of later ages" (XXVI, 237). Decisive in this judgment is the perception of Goethe's "sincerity," which here takes on overtones of Hazlitt's "gusto," as Arnold, aged twenty-five, makes clear in a letter to his mother. He contrasts this quality in Goethe's mind with what he finds in Wordsworth: "I have been returning to Goethe's life and think higher of him than ever. His thorough sincerity—writing about nothing he had not experienced—is in modern literature almost unrivaled. Wordsworth resembles him in this respect; but the difference between the range of their two experiences is immense and not in the Englishman's favor."  

As we have seen, this position is opposed to Heine's view of Goethe, whose indifference to politics is contrasted unfavorably with Schiller's openness to real world experience. In the essay "State of German Literature" Carlyle nonetheless stresses Goethe's engagement with the material world and concrete human experience. Indeed, Goethe's greatness is found in his adaptation of "the actual aspects of life" to literature. Goethe's "realism" shows us that "the end of Poetry is higher; she must dwell in Reality and become manifest to men in the forms among which they live and move." In Goethe's works "the nineteenth century stands before us, in all its contradiction and perplexity; barren, mean, and baleful, as we have known it; yet here no longer mean or barren, but enamelled into beauty in the poet's spirit" (XXVI, 66). Goethe's mind is governed by an almost instinctive harmonizing impulse that nullifies superficial differences in the act of penetrating to the common core of phenomena. He is "the Uniter and Reconciler" of "the inward spiritual chaos" of "the most distracted and divided age . . . since the introduction of the Christian Religion." Through the "melodious reverence" and "deep, all-pervading Faith" informing his aesthetic vision, Goethe "was to close the Abyss out of which such manifold destruction, moral, intellectual, social, was proceeding" (XXVII, 434-35). In consideration, then, of Goethe's role as a catalyst for the birth of a new phase of cultural achievement, "his Spiritual History" is thus designated as "the ideal emblem of all true men's in these days; the goal of Manhood, which he attained, men too in our degree have to aim . . . in the dim weltering chaos rejoice to find a paved way" (XXVII, 440-41). Because Goethe sets the individual standard of achievement his homeland—de Staël makes the same argument in De l'Allemagne—"is to be the leader of spiritual Europe." This is the main emph-
sis of Carlyle’s critique; his essays on Goethe seek to elucidate the “deep movement agitating the universal mind of Germany,” whose reverberations are felt across Europe and are in turn mediated by the conflicting positions taken by de Staël and Heine (XXVII, 426).

In the essays “Goethe” and “Goethe’s Works,” which appeared in the *Edinburgh Review* in 1832, the year of Goethe’s death, Carlyle seeks to redress the errors of his predecessors in England and Germany and properly to introduce Goethe as “a world-changer, and benignant spiritual revolutionist” (XXVII, 440). Critics before Carlyle had invoked pallid clichés in place of genuine psychological profiles of Goethe, which led to a failure to appreciate his “real poetic worth” and his importance to “his own people and to us” (XXVI, 199). Correcting this mistake, Carlyle takes the full measure of Goethe’s humanity; the fundamental question underlying his inquiry thus concerns the connection between the writer’s personality and his works: “What manner of man is this? How shall we even see him? What is his spiritual structure, what at least are the outward form and features of his mind?” (XXVI, 199). Carlyle’s approach to Goethe reflects an adjustment in the function of the biographical impulse in criticism from a preoccupation with major life experiences to an interest in the relationship between personality and literary expression.

The result of Carlyle’s critical method is to endow Goethe with a quasi-religious, oracular status. He has earned this distinction by appearing to have reconciled, as evidenced in his writings, “the inward spiritual chaos of the age” (XXVII, 434). He has, according to Carlyle’s explication, suffered from the perplexities inherent in modern life, but he “has also mastered these, he is above them, and has shown others how to rise above them” (XXVII, 438). The other decisive characteristic of Goethe’s life and works, which Carlyle considers the true “test for the culture of a poet,” is his sincerity, a quality which may be measured by an author’s readiness to reveal himself fully in his work. Carlyle’s hermeneutic was therefore derived chiefly from those works which embody Goethe’s renowned confessional impulse, such as *Götz von Berlichingen, Die Leiden des jungen Werthers,* and *Faust.* The passage in *Dichtung und Wahrheit [Poetry and Truth]* from which Carlyle takes his cue reads: “All, therefore, that has been confessed by me, consists of fragments of a great confession; and this little book is an attempt which I have ventured on to render it complete.”

These lines inspired Carlyle’s longing for direct, unmediated contact with Goethe and they correspond, in large part, to Coleridge’s definitions of poetry and the poet in the *Biographia Literaria:* “What is poetry? is nearly the same ques-
In the “Translator’s Preface to the First Edition of Meister’s Apprenticeship” Carlyle offers a reading of the early works Gotz and Werther which emphasizes Goethe’s centrality to contemporary culture. In his view “it would be difficult to name two books which have exercised a deeper influence on the subsequent literature of Europe . . . . Sceptical sentimentality, view-hunting, love, friendship, suicide, and desperation became the staple of literary ware” (XXVII, 431, 435). Moreover, the highest importance is assigned to these works because of their role in awakening the historical consciousness of the nineteenth century and in revealing what would presently be recognized as typically modern forms of experience, especially the “feelings that arise from passion incapable of being converted into action” (XXVI, 210). Carlyle deduces from his examination of Goethe’s life experiences that he, too, had been driven to despair through “Unrest” and “Discontent” and that Werther gives voice to “the cry of that dim, rooted pain, under which all thoughtful men of a certain age were languishing” (XXVI, 215). Affirming Goethe’s cultural authority as an expression of his capacity for redemptive suffering, Carlyle identifies the novel as the product of auto-therapy; it is identified as “a symptom, indeed a cause, of his now having got delivered from such melancholy” (XXVI, 216-7). The salutary effect of Werther is contrasted with Byron’s “life-weariness, his moody melancholy, and mad stormful indignation” (XXVI, 217). Not discounting Byron’s affinity with the Sturm-und-Drang phase of Goethe’s career—“Byron was our English Sentimentalist and Power-man,” Carlyle nonetheless pits the health he construes from Goethe’s efforts at self-healing against what he calls the “spasmodic Byronism” of the age (XXVII, 427). In a well-known passage in Sartor Resartus Carlyle encodes his cultural bias toward Germany and combines it with a rejection of Enlightenment eudamonism that he associates with English culture:

It is only with Renunciation (Entsagen) that life, properly speaking, can be said to begin . . . . What act of Legislature was there that thou shouldst be HAPPY? . . . . Art thou nothing other than a Vulture, then, that fliest through the Universe seeking after somewhat to eat: shrieking dolefully because carrion enough is not given thee? Close thy Byron; open thy Goethe.49

The pattern of authorial development that Carlyle infers from his reading of Werther and other early works is replicated in Sartor Resartus. Presented as the faux biography of the “Clothes Philosopher” Diogenes Teufelsdröckh, who

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is presented as a caricature of a German idealist philosopher, the novel also functions as a satire on the author/editor as a **Vermittler** of German culture. Much of the dramatic interest in the novel is located in the implied symmetry between the protagonist’s psyche and the spiritual condition of Europe. Carlyle simultaneously ventriloquizes Goethe’s depression in *Werther* and his own personal crisis regarding faith and authority. In Froude’s *Life of Carlyle* the contours of this spiritual crisis are distorted through the use of grandiose comparisons:

Thus to poverty and dyspepsia there had been added the struggle which is always hardest in the noble mind, which Job had known, and David, and Solomon, and Aeschylus, and Shakespeare, and Goethe. Where are the tokens of His presence? where are the signs of His coming? Is there, in this universe of things, any moral Providence at all?50

Teufelsdörckh’s spiritual growth—from the “Everlasting No” through the “Centre of Indifference” to the “Everlasting Yes”—mirrors the triadic structure of Carlyle’s construction of Goethe’s biography. He identifies the three major phases of Goethe’s development with *Werther, Wilhelm Meister*, and the *West-östlicher Divan*. As previously noted, *Werther* embodies “a poetic utterance of the World’s Despair.” *Wilhelm Meister*, by contrast, belongs to “the second and sounder period of Goethe’s life” and the at times bafflingly circuitous plot heralds “a free recognition of Life, in its depth, variety and majesty. Anarchy has become Peace; the once gloomy and perturbed spirit is now serene, cheerfully vigorous... For he has conquered his unbelief; the Ideal has been built on the Actual, [it] no longer floats vaguely in darkness and regions of dreams, but rests on light, on the firm ground of human interest and business” (XXVI, 224). While the Romantics, especially Coleridge, Byron, and Shelley, expressed a special affinity for *Faust*, the next generation felt a deeper bond with *Wilhelm Meister* (in Carlyle’s translation). Perhaps an unlikely candidate for the English canon, Carlyle’s *Meister* nonetheless appealed to Victorian readers by suggesting links between the growth of aesthetic sensibility and ethical self-awareness. But there is a key absence in the text that Carlyle notices; there is “as yet no Divinity... recognized here.” Only in the masterwork of Goethe’s last years, the *West-östlicher Divan*, does Carlyle perceive that he expresses anything like transcendental faith; in these imitations of Persian poems a “melodious reverence becomes triumphant; a deep, all-pervading Faith, with mild voice, grave as gay” (XXVII, 431).

In “Goethe’s Works” Carlyle responds to *Wilhelm Meister*’s critics in Germany and England, including De Quincy and Novalis, who derided the novel’s form and morality. Despite its fragmentary appearance, he praises the novel as “one of the most perfect pieces of composition that Goethe has ever produced

50*Life of Carlyle*, 1795-1835, 1, 66.
Carlyle's Critique of Goethe

... [which] coheres beautifully within itself ... [giving] us the notion of a completed fragment.” Goethe's fusion of allegory and realism, wisdom literature and the lyric reminds Carlyle of Spenser's Faerie Queene, but Wilhelm Meister presents an allegory of the nineteenth century and therefore contains “a picture full of the expressiveness, of what men are striving for, and ought to strive for, in these actual days” (XXVI, 232-33). The realism of Wilhelm Meister serves as a counterweight to the “wild suicidal Night-thoughts of Werther,” the signature work of Goethe's youth (XXVI, 234). The appearance of the later novel indicates to Carlyle “that a great change had taken place in the moral disposition of the man; a change from inward imprisonment, doubt and discontent into freedom, belief and clear activity” (XXVI, 242-43). He credits Goethe with having gone further than “any other man in his age” in breaking through the paralysis of reflection and demonstrating the possibility of meaningful action in the modern world (XXVI, 269).

Carlyle offers reflections on Goethe's achievement in the realistic mode. He suggests that his realism has a “supernatural” quality because of its “figurativeness,” that is, Goethe's “singularly emblematic intellect; his perpetual never-failing tendency to transform into shape, into life... the opinion, the feeling that may dwell in him. Goethe's figurativeness... manifests itself as the constructing of the inward elements of a thought, as the vital elements of it.” As Keats notes concerning Shakespeare, that he “led a life of Allegory: his works are the comments on it,” this “emblematic” faculty is, according to Carlyle, "the very essence of Goethe's intellect" (XXVII, 438). Allegory is, as is well known, also central to Carlyle's writings. In Sartor Resartus his idea of "Natural Supernaturalism" suggests that the universe itself is a symbol. It is alternatively "the Godlike rendered visible" and "the living visible Garment of God." For Carlyle, it is in the nature of "the Symbol proper" that "there is ever some embodiment and revelation of the Infinite; the Infinite is made to blend itself with the Finite, to stand visible attained there." Such is the importance of Goethe's achievement that he "conquers heaven for us." Since it is "in and through symbols" that the individual human being "lives, works, and has his being," Carlyle implies that every person, not simply poets and artists, gains his identity as a symbol-maker, homo eidolons. The poet's function differs only in that he exploits the bivalent nature of the symbol itself, in which "there is concealment and yet revelation." 52

The other decisive characteristic of Goethe's mind, which Carlyle considers the "test of the culture of a Poet," is once again his sincerity and, closely related to this, his penchant for self-revelation. This explains Carlyle's interest in those works which give most direct expression of Goethe's personality. Consistent


52 Sartor Resartus, pp. 178, 43, 182, 175.
with his position that the "wisdom" that they contain is of greater value than their status as works of art, his assessment of works other than *Werther* and *Wilhelm Meister* is at times cursory. Of "Wild, apocalyptic" *Faust*, Carlyle remarks that it evokes "a death-song of departing worlds." Although he notes the essentially "anthropomorphic character" of the classical, "Pagan" phase in Goethe's career, he expresses no real sympathy for the masterpiece of this period, *Iphigenie auf Tauris*. By contrast, Carlyle waxes enthusiastic over the "old Ethic tone" of the *Venetianische Epigramme* [*Venetian Epigrams*], which he describes as both "musical" and "joyfully strong" (XXVII, 431). But he is clearly more interested in offering an interpretation of these verses which is consistent with the cult of personality he has derived from his reading of Goethe's works, than he is in engaging in an objective analysis of the texts.

At mid-century, the construction of the cult of personality surrounding Goethe continues in the writings of Arnold, G. H. Lewes, F. D. Maurice, and Walter Pater and exfoliates throughout the century. At first restricted to Goethe and German literature, English enthusiasm for German culture eventually encompasses aesthetics, philosophy, historiography, theology, and, perhaps most important of all, science. Carlyle's critique of Goethe, in which the German poet is identified as the prophet of a new aesthetic, philosophical, and moral dispensation, engendered this decades-long process of cultural appropriation. Thus, beginning with Carlyle's essays in the 1820s, responding to Goethe becomes one of the chief organizing principles in the intellectual life of nineteenth-century Britain.

*St. John's University*
Teacher and Pupil: Reading, Ethics, and Human Dignity in George MacDonald’s *Mary Marston*

Libraries, readers of books, and books themselves pervade George MacDonald’s fiction, classified in an early bibliography as twenty-five novels, three prose fantasies, eight tales and allegories for children, and three collections of short stories. Libraries are central and often symbolic in novels across the spectrum and throughout his career. Similarly, many characters spend time reading. They read Byron, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Scott, Bunyan, Spenser, Herbert, Isaiah, the Gospels, Heine, Hoffman, Richter, Dante, Keats, Burns, Browning, Tennyson, stories by MacDonald himself, and others. They tend to abhor Sterne. This comprises only a sampling of how frequently books and reading occur in MacDonald’s fiction, and it suggests that readers, what they read, and how they read are important to MacDonald.

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1See, for instance, the libraries in *Phantastes*, *The Portent*, *Alec Forbes of Howglen*, *Wilfrid Cumbermede*, *The Flight of the Shadow*, and *Lilith*.

2See, for example, Anodos in *Phantastes* (1858); Duncan Campbell in *The Portent* (1864); Annie Anderson and Cosmo Cupples in *Alec Forbes of Howglen* (1865); Robert Falconer and his grandmother in *Robert Falconer* (1868); Ranald Bannerman in *Ranald Bannerman’s Boyhood* (1871); Richard Heywood and Dorothy Vaughan in *St. George and St. Michael* (1876); Beiorba and Uncle Edward in *The Flight of the Shadow* (1891).

3These issues are discussed with reference to several of MacDonald’s novels in my dissertation, “‘That Rare Thing, a True Reader’: Authors, Readers and Texts in the Fiction of George MacDonald” (U. of Oregon, 1986).
However, assuming that MacDonald cared to depict the typical reader would be incorrect. His concern was with the "true reader," the reader who reads the kinds of texts MacDonald believed essential, who reads them so as to understand them appropriately and experience them fully, and who allows those texts to change the way he or she interacts with the world. Often this true reader goes on to share what he or she has gained with others and thereby becomes a teacher. In fact, the frequency with which MacDonald incorporates teachers suggests that he may think it a necessity both to learn to read and to teach others to read as well.

Mary Marston (1881) provides an appropriate single text in which to examine these concerns both with reading and teaching. The novel tells the story of a chapel-attending shopkeeper who reads literature and teaches the blacksmith/musician she eventually marries to read music, also. This novel exemplifies several of MacDonald's concerns with reading. It shows how MacDonald values literacy, how he sees literacy changing the way a person processes information, how literacy provides both discipline and freedom, and how one of the great gifts one person can give another is to teach that other how to read. It also asserts that literacy and literary tact are not to be limited to the upper classes, and that one's response to what one reads takes place on both emotional and rational levels. Further, the novel also implies that reading simultaneously sets one free to be one's true self and connects one to a community of writers and readers, all sharing their separate selves with each other. Finally, the novel suggests that moral guidelines apply to the activity of reading because it is an interpersonal act.

The stage seems to be set early in Mary Marston for a sort of Cinderella story. Though Mary works in a fabric store partly owned by her father, the narrator insists on defining her as a lady. The Prince Charming figure, Godfrey Wardour, comes into the story first because of Mary's admiration for him. The natural development would seem to be that Godfrey would notice the lovely Mary in her ill-fitting environment, carry her off, and raise her social rank to her natural rank of lady, but this does not happen. Instead, Godfrey occupies such a prominent place in the opening of the novel because he introduces her to "higher literature" by reading to her from Carlyle's translation of Jean Paul Richter. The relationship between him and Mary turns out to be one of mutual helpfulness, though he never appreciates her true worth. She later helps pre-

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4A striking depiction of this also occurs in Sir Gibbie (1879). The title character is a mute street urchin who is thought by everyone to be simple-minded as well until a Scottish laborer's wife teaches him to read and write. His literacy allows him to tell who he is and eventually empowers him to take charge of his inheritance as a baronet with an estate.

5Lady Alice in The Portent learns the conventions of spelling and reading from Duncan Campbell. Her learning allows her to reunite her waking and her sleepwalking selves, which split again when she is kept from reading.
vent him from making a disastrous mistake in marriage. In fact, Mary becomes something like a fairy godmother figure, strict but loving, bringing order out of the chaos of lives she sees around her.

George MacDonald places Mary Marston squarely in the moral center of her story. She does wrong neither intentionally nor unintentionally, and she brings order as far as they will allow it into the chaotic lives of those she serves. Yet she is not only good: she is an attractive character, too. The qualities of listening, understanding, and serving God and others that make her a good reader, a good pupil, and a good teacher also enhance her appeal as a character. Furthermore, she has other qualities which prevent her from being saccharine sweet. Her thin nose, firm upper lip, and large, sharply defined chin all suggest a certain unbending quality, which she shows by standing up for herself and what she believes. She is not as likely to comfort as she is to encourage or confront. Strong-minded and careless of the opinions of others, Mary is more assertive than many good women in literature. We first see Mary holding her own in conversation with two young men. The dialogue shows her to know her own mind, to be guided by firm principles, and to have a temper. The narrator’s description emphasizes her calm self-possession, her firmness, her directness, her simplicity: “Everything about her suggested the repose of order satisfied, of unconstrained obedience to the laws of harmonious relation.”

The eventual marriage of Mary to Joseph Jasper is made in heaven, as their names imply. Both maintain their independence, Mary as shopkeeper, Joseph as blacksmith. “Mary was proud of her husband, not merely because he was a musician, but because he was a blacksmith” (p. 458). MacDonald’s refusal to signify approval by elevating them in social rank carries meaning: there is honor in working honestly for a living. The blacksmith does not need to be transformed into a prince to be a gentleman. The shopkeeper does not need to be promoted in social class to be a lady.

Further, Mary’s sensitivity as reader and teacher means that this novel shows neither the ignorant female being enlightened by the erudite male, nor the crude male being civilized by the gracious female. Instead, MacDonald writes of Mary and Joseph after two years of marriage, “They look up to each other still, because they were right in looking up each to the other from the first. Each was, and therefore each is and will be, real” (pp. 458-9). Because Mary recognized the humanity and giftedness of the nearly illiterate blacksmith, she was never even tempted to condescend to him. Similarly, because Joseph recognized the humanity and giftedness of Mary, he never approached her with anything but respect.

Finally, Mary continues to work in a shop she herself owns. Such an ambition and action demonstrate her independence and desire to serve: “she would

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6Mary Marston (Philadelphia: David McKay, nd.), p. 14. Further references will be cited in the text.
walk steadily back the well-known way to the shop, where, all day long, minis-
tering with gracious service to the wants of her people, she would know the
evening and its service drawing nearer and nearer, when Joseph would come
..." (p. 460). For Mary, "effort and struggle add immeasurably to the enjoy-
ment of life, but those I look upon as labor, not strife. There may be whole
worlds for us to help bring into order and obedience. . . . Seeing we are made in
the image of God, and he is always working, we could not be happy without
work" (p. 461). In her calmly assertive independence, Mary reminds one of the
Florence Nightingales, Octavia Hills, and Elizabeth Gurney Frys of Victorian
England, women who saw the need to bring order out of some aspect of the
chaos surrounding them.7

Some of the intriguing aspects of MacDonald’s description of this exem-
plary woman can be seen more clearly if we compare Mary with George Eliot’s
Dorothea Brooke. In Middlemarch, Dorothea is also presented as a reader
with strong opinions and a strong desire to do what is right. Yet, unlike Mary,
her religion contributes to her need to be dominated by a man: “The really del-
ightful marriage must be that where your husband was a sort of father, and
could teach you even Hebrew, if you wished it.”8 Dorothea has a strong im-
pulse toward martyrdom and asceticism which conflicts with her other strong
impulses toward pleasure, control, and beauty.

Mary cares a great deal for her father’s approval, but, having it, stands up
for her beliefs and dignity against three or four men in her book. Further, she is
the teacher, not the pupil, and the relationship she develops between teacher
and pupil is one of mutual respect. Mary avoids martyrdom of several sorts as
much as possible and praises God for pleasure and beauty. She would never
feel, as Dorothea does, that she should give up riding because she enjoys it.

Dorothea has read many of the Christian classics, and she takes away from
them her impression of “the secondary importance of ecclesiastical forms and
articles of belief compared with that spiritual religion, that submergence of self
in communion with Divine perfection which seemed to her to be expressed in
the best Christian books of widely-distant ages” (p. 47). In other words, she is
looking for a spiritual experience unmediated by formal doctrine or ritual which
results in a relationship to “Divine perfection” similar to the one she envisions

Mary is a strong female character, and there are others in the rest of MacDonald’s fiction.
MacDonald was friends with Octavia Hill and taught at the women’s college in London,
Bedford College. However, as William Raeper writes, “[T]hough [MacDonald] thought that
women ought to be well-educated (if only to become better mothers), and reviled the marriage
market, his view of woman remained fundamentally romantic.” Bearing this in mind, it is
still possible to see MacDonald as being “in many ways . . . liberal, even . . . feminist.” Wil-
liam Raeper, George MacDonald (Tring, Herts & Batavia, IL, 1987), pp. 261, 259.

George Eliot, Middlemarch, ed. W. J. Harvey (Harmondsworth, 1965), p. 32. Further refer-
ences will be cited in the text.
with that husband-father. She has no clear understanding of how to translate her aspiration to do good into the facts of her daily life, though she sketches plans of improved cottages on the estate. She wants to lead "a grand life" when she gets older (p. 51), but she learns instead through hardship a quiet domestic heroism.9

In contrast, Mary has read primarily the Bible until Godfrey widens her horizons. From her reading of the Bible, she sees religion not as primarily a spiritual experience, but as a guide for living; one does not so much submerge the self in communion as discipline oneself in obedience, and Divine perfection for Mary means the personal God incarnated in Jesus. The vagueness of Dorothea’s religion derives perhaps from Eliot’s dissatisfaction with Evangelicalism, her skepticism about the Bible, or her distrust in reading as a way to know truth, while the concrete helpfulness of Mary’s religion to her derives from MacDonald’s belief expressed in several texts that God reveals truth to the heart that takes the risk of obedience.10

The differences between the two arise partly from the social class differences. Dorothea lives in "the stifling oppression of that gentlewoman’s world, where everything [is] done for her and none [asks] for her aid" (p. 307). She resembles most closely the upper-class Hester Redmain in Mary Marston, for whom Mary works temporarily as lady’s maid. Mary must be practical, because she is a shopkeeper’s daughter who works for a living.

Another difference is that Dorothea’s story is one of initiation as she comes to terms with her choices and her society: "For there is no creature whose inward being is so strong that it is not greatly determined by what lies outside it" (p. 896). Nevertheless, Eliot’s narrator insists that while Dorothea has not fulfilled the dreams of greatness she set out with, she is one of the influences in-

9It is true that Dorothea’s Christian impulses are treated with a certain amount of irony, and that unlike Mary for MacDonald, Dorothea seems not to be George Eliot’s ideal woman. She may represent the typical aspiring woman of the times, rather than the exception. Nonetheless, MacDonald’s Mary is presented as an achievable ideal, not as an impossibly heroic woman.

10Paula Reed-Nancarrow discusses MacDonald’s ideas concerning revelatory texts in her dissertation "Remythologizing the Bible: Fantasy and the Revelatory Hermeneutic of George MacDonald," (Diss. U. of Minnesota, 1988). She argues that MacDonald’s views shifted from a Romantic approach which saw all texts—literature, history, and the Bible—as symbolic and capable of revealing God to a more anxious attempt to separate objective history from imaginative fiction, valuing the first over the second. She places this shift approximately in the 1880s and uses the two adult fantasies Phantastes (1858) and Lilith (1895) to illustrate the two hermeneutics. The emphasis on obedience in Mary Marston seems to fit in more with the later position identified by Reed-Nancarrow—that obedience precedes any kind of correct perception (p. 149). However, obedience to what one understands as God’s truth is central to MacDonald’s world-view throughout his life.
strumenental in the “growing good of the world” by living “faithfully a hidden life.” In contrast, Mary begins her story much as she ends it, surviving the tests of her goodness and courage so well that the narrator remarks: “she was one of the lights of the world—one of the wells of truth, whose springs are fed by the rains on the eternal hills” (p. 466). Like Dorothea, Mary also lives faithfully a hidden life. Perhaps the fact that she seems to come out victorious while Dorothea seems at least partly defeated arises from the fact that Mary is not portrayed as being greatly “determined by what lies outside” her; the hardships of her life only reveal her truth and strength. She is like the heroine of fairy tale who proves her worth by endurance and goodness, and who then has the power to bring goodness into the world.

Because MacDonald presents Mary as a strong and good character throughout the novel, we can take note of her responsiveness to the reading of Jean Paul Richter to see the kind of reader MacDonald values.11

What she had heard was working in her mind with a powerful fermentation, and she longed to be alone. . . . She knew almost nothing of the higher literature, and felt like a dreamer who, in the midst of a well-known and ordinary landscape, comes without warning upon the mighty cone of a mountain, or the breaking waters of a boundless ocean.

“If one could but get hold of such things, what a glorious life it would be!” she thought . . . . For the first time she heard the full chord of intellectual and emotional delight. . . . Were there many books to make one’s heart go as that one did? She would save every penny to buy such books, if indeed such treasures were within her reach! Under the enchantment of her first literary joy she walked home like one intoxicated with opium—a being possessed for the time with the awful imagination of a grander soul, and reveling in the presence of her loftier kin (pp. 34-5).

As a good hearer/reader, Mary listens twice before passing judgment, allows the work to touch her heart, works to understand what she has heard, and recognizes the author of his work as one of her own kind. Her emotional responsiveness, her sense of the author behind the text, her understanding, her eagerness to reread, all mark her as one of MacDonald’s exemplary readers.

11 Compare her response to another of MacDonald’s exemplary characters, Gibbie, on his first hearing of narrative poetry:

Gibbie’s eyes grew wider and wider as he listened; their pupils dilated, and his lips parted: it seemed as if his soul were looking out of doors and windows at once—

bat a puzzled soul that understood nothing of what it saw. Yet plainly, either the

sounds, or the thought-matter vaguely operative beyond the line where intelligence

begins, or, it may be, the sparkle of individual word or phrase islanded in a chaos

of rhythmic motion, wrought somehow upon him, for his attention was fixed as by a

Godfrey Wardour’s presence in the novel, however, shows that even well-educated readers may read inadequately on MacDonald’s terms. From the narrator’s point of view Godfrey as a reader is inferior to Mary; he reads intellectually with an eye toward modifying or confirming his theories of life, rather than with “the highest aim of all—the enlargement of reverence, obedience, and faith” (p. 36). Godfrey’s reading and the narrative commentary reveal that he is self-absorbed and cares too much about what and who he is. Mary, in contrast, completely occupies herself with obedience to God, is self-forgetful, and takes care for what she will become. Her emphasis on growth and moral development, in the narrator’s evaluation, places Mary from the start ahead of Godfrey as a reader and keeps her ahead of him as a teacher.

Godfrey’s limitations as a teacher reveal themselves when he sets out to improve his cousin’s mind. He discovers his younger cousin Letty Lovel polishing his stirrups. Godfrey feels indebted to her, and the only way he can think of to repay her is to give her books to read and to teach her to think. However, despite his good intentions and generosity, Godfrey’s teaching methods intimidate Letty. She distrusts her understanding and abilities and thinks herself a fool. She says, “He used not [to talk to me]; but I think he does now more than to anybody else. . . . Now he is always giving me something to read. I wish he wouldn’t; it frightens me dreadfully. He always questions me, to know whether I understand what I read” (pp. 29-30). Though Godfrey is generous, delicate, and gentle in his teaching, he fails to listen to Letty as a person. He talks to her only as a pupil, behaving to her as a pedagogue rather than as the informal tutor he is. His pride prevents him from knowing Letty and from allowing Letty to know him:

Good fellow as he was, he thought much too much of himself, and, unconsciously comparing it with Letty’s, altogether overvalued his own worth. . . . [D]escend he would not . . . from his pedestal, to meet the silly thing on the level ground of humanity, and the relations of the man and the woman! (p. 90)

The distance he places between them makes it easy for Letty to fall in love with the much inferior but sympathetic Tom Helmer, despite the superficiality and selfishness Tom reveals early in the way he reads and explains Milton to Letty.

Mary Marston begins as Godfrey’s pupil, but he severs their relationship over Letty’s love for Tom. Mary continues her reading, however, taking boxes of books with her when she moves to London to serve as lady’s maid to Hester Redmain. While there, Mary meets her own prospective pupil. However, her approach differs significantly from Godfrey’s, just as her reading and moral development are also at a higher level though her social class is lower.

While Mary is visiting Letty Helmer, the blacksmith Joseph Jasper enters the story as a disembodied music-tone. The third time Mary hears the music, she follows it to its source. She invites the violinist to pay for Letty, unwell after birthing her son. Significantly, Mary listens, appreciates, and values
Joseph and his music before she even thinks of teaching him anything. She discovers that his playing has gentleness and delicacy, though it also contains much that is inartistic, incongruous, and lawless. She elicits from him the information that he does not read music but instead plays what runs out of his fingers when he shuts his eyes (p. 288). Listening again, however, with less critical and more emotional attention, Mary finds that the music creates pictures rather than thoughts in her mind. Later she learns from Joseph that he calls the composition "The Ten Lepers." When she connects it with a shared formal text, she appreciates it thoroughly.

An important difference here between Mary and Godfrey is Mary's willingness to hear the other human being before trying to educate him. In fact, she has no thought at this time of improving Joseph's mind or music. Godfrey, in contrast, ignores Letty until he feels indebted and then immediately sets about to improve her mind. But he gives her little of the attention necessary in order to hear and know her accurately.

Almost by accident, Mary discovers that Joseph can hardly read words at all. This prompts her to begin to analyze his abilities and needs, another form of listening or attending to her pupil before setting out to improve him. Joseph has had little education and a working class upbringing. He can barely read aloud, though with great effort he can read for himself. He can write his letters, but he can hardly spell. He is completely outside his cultural heritage—literature, history, or science. However, his music, his conversation, and his workmanship lead Mary to consider him a genius. Furthermore, like Mary, he makes obedience to God his highest priority.

When Mary reads George Herbert aloud to the dying Tom Helmer, she has a chance to see Joseph's ability to respond. Joseph listens to the poem and remarks that

"the old gentleman plied a good bow."

"Tell us how you see it," said Mary, more interested than she would have liked to show.

* * *

"[A]ll the time you were reading it, I heard the gentleman—Mr. George Herbert, you call him—playing the tune to it" (p. 348)

Joseph plays the tune he heard in the poem, Mary identifies the poem from the tune, reads it over again, and Joseph recognizes the tune in the poem. As teacher, Mary discovers first what the pupil's experience of the poem is and allows him to respond in the way in which he is gifted. Having listened to and interested herself in that response, she turns to the task of explaining what she sees in the poem. Her teaching has validity because she has now been reading Herbert—listening to him—for a long time, and she has an experience of life similar to his; she shares with Herbert his love for God, "the secret from which came all his utterance," and can therefore "fit herself into most of the convolu-
tions of the shell of his experience, and [is] hence able also to make others perceive in his verse not a little of what they were of themselves unable to see” (p. 349). Mary has paid attention both to the poet and then to her future pupil, giving both of them the respect other human beings deserve.

MacDonald brings music and language together in his 1893 essay “The Fantastic Imagination,” and he insists that the proper function of both is “not to give [your fellow] things to think about, but to wake things up that are in him; or say, to make him think things for himself.” This is Mary’s goal; she is desirous of contributing to Joseph’s growth—the one great service of the universe” (p. 352). She wants to see Joseph’s musical genius expressed with perfect facility and diagnoses that his main fault lies in his timing. She tries Beethoven on him, but he is uninterested. Though he thinks in music, he lacks the experience and knowledge of form necessary to listen well to others’ music. “The man was open and inspired, and stupid as a child” (p. 351). She expresses to him how nice it would be to play her piano and his violin together. He agrees but sees the main impediment to be the fact that he plays extemporaneously, in fact, formlessly. She suggests that he might learn to write his compositions down. He responds that he doesn’t know how to learn. Finally, she asks him if he will let her teach him how to read music. He expresses interest and soon learns the need to keep good time, to love good music, and to play the works of other composers. Mary laughs at herself for her temerity in “teaching the man of genius his letters” and becomes “afraid lest, in developing the performer, she [has] ruined the composer” (pp. 356, 357). She hasn’t; instead she has moved his music from chaos that communicates little to order and form which makes communication possible.

The main difference between Mary and Godfrey as teachers is the degree of respect with which they approach their pupils. Godfrey patronizes Letty, quizzing her and lecturing her. Mary dignifies Joseph by valuing his music, listening to what he has to say, and finally by asking him if he wants to learn what she can teach. Godfrey’s habits as a reader are less offensive than as a teacher, since he does in fact attend to what the writers have to say and uses it to reevaluate his theories of the world. However, even here he falls short of the ideal; because he does not also listen with his heart, coming as a humble pupil,

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12 This organic metaphor of text as shell shares with Romantic thinking the belief that art develops organically, like a flower, but it shifts the focus to the physical absence of the artist. The shell remains, as does the work of art, with its convolutions peculiarly derived from the “shape” of its maker, but the maker no longer inhabits it directly. However, the reader can make the attempt, according to MacDonald, to form him or herself into the convolutions of the work of art, inhabiting it more or less comfortably.

he participates in what MacDonald condemns elsewhere as "intellectual greed."14

MacDonald’s story suggests that the first quality necessary for both pupil and teacher is humility, and their first behavior needs to be listening. This is equally true of his ideal reader. Furthermore, though intellectual knowledge is a good thing, it is better to involve the heart in how and what we know. MacDonald’s epistemology acknowledges the role of feeling as well as seeing. It issues in an ethic of interpersonal relationships that requires us to recognize others as valuable human beings whose emotions and intellect and perspective matter before we do anything to or for them.

Writing in the 1899 journal Education, Frances Lewis offers an analysis of how MacDonald differs from his contemporaries in his depiction of teachers, a depiction that explores theory and method explicitly.15 According to Lewis, Charlotte Brontë focuses on teachers, but primarily on stories about them, not on their teaching theories or methods. Only in Hard Times does Charles Dickens express any preference about teaching methods, and then, Lewis writes, “his opposition to the teaching of facts exclusively is only a phase of his opposition to that hard materialistic way of looking at life” (p. 358). Comparing MacDonald’s teacher Mr. Graham in Malcolm with George Eliot’s Bartle Massey in Adam Bede, Lewis finds that

Mr. Graham and Bartle Massey are both village schoolmasters, both men of kindly sympathetic natures, both conscientious teachers. Mr. Graham . . . is the more learned, but his learning does not hold a prominent place in his presentation. He is a thinker, and a teacher of thinking; while Bartle is a teacher of reading, writing and casting accounts. But this is not the main difference between the two men . . . . The author’s interest [Mr. Graham], the reader’s also, is in him as a teacher, and in his theories and methods of teaching. Bartle Massey on the other hand is not especially interesting as a teacher . . . . Bartle as a man with all his eccentricities is interesting to [Eliot], Bartle’s pedagogics she cares nothing about. (pp. 359-60)

Though Lewis does not discuss them all specifically, there are numerous tutors or teachers in MacDonald’s fiction. One of the earliest, Duncan Campbell in The Portent, seems to be nearly exemplary. Another tutor, Hugh Sutherland in David Eginbrod (1863), is a self-serving, arrogant reader whose reading heresy, according to MacDonald, is to sever the connection between literature and life; Hugh does recognize the pathology of this way of reading in his pupil Harry, so he immerses Harry in the world around him with the aim of awakening a need to know and the ability to question. Donal Grant particularly in the novel by that name embodies MacDonald’s ideal as a tutor. He says to his pu-

14Ibid., p. 28.
pupil, "You are like a book that God has begun, and he has sent me to help him to go on with it, and I must learn what he has written already before I know what to do next."16

The concern MacDonald shows in Malcolm (1875) and other "tutor" novels to explore the art of teaching is not less prominent in Mary Marston, though Mary is not a teacher by career. Mary is concerned not just for the communication of knowledge but for the growth of the pupil. In a small way, this illustrates the connection MacDonald characteristically portrays as necessary between knowing and doing the truth. Joseph needs to use his new intellectual knowledge of form to give his own composition order and unity. Mary does not want knowing the work of other composers to overshadow or eliminate Joseph's own desire and ability to compose as well. The goal of teaching is not to eliminate individuality but to initiate the individual into the conventions which make it possible to share that individuality with others. In Mary Marston as well as other novels, MacDonald's depiction of teaching makes it a metonymy for sharing anything we know that others do not. It is a means of bringing order out of chaos.

All genres of MacDonald's works, realistic and fantastic, adult and children's fiction, can be examined to see how MacDonald includes reading. In some novels, he uses reading to define how literacy empowers people to suggest how the mind makes sense of what it perceives through the senses; to speculate about the relationships between reader, text, and writer; to describe metaphorically the relationships between human beings and between a human being and God. In Mary Marston, George MacDonald gives us a working-class heroine who reads and teaches as if both activities were interpersonal relationships governed by courtesy and concern for human dignity. She listens first with both head and heart. It seems possible that both readers and teachers in our century can learn something from Mary.

George Fox University

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16Donal Grant (Boston, 1883), p. 130.
The only surviving physical evidence of John Goldie’s skill as a cabinet maker is a clock case in the possession of the Duke of Hamilton. His theoretical work in mathematics and astronomy has been superseded, but his most lasting legacy yet may prove to be the influence that his theological writings had upon the work of Robert Burns.

A neat summary of Goldie’s life is given by James A. Mackay in his headnote to the poem “Epistle to John Goldie” of August 1785:

John Goldie (1717-1809), son of the miller of Craigmill, Galston—cabinet maker, inventor, wine merchant, mathematician, astronomer, theologian, speculator in coal mines and canals, and one of the guarantors for the Kilmarnock Edition—a prime example of the Augustan virtuoso.1

The date of publication of Goldie’s first work, Essays on Various important Subjects,2 immediately precedes one of the most productive periods in Burns’s life. The popularity of the Essays is indicated by the publication of a

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2Essays on Various Important Subjects, Moral and Divine. Being an Attempt to Distinguish True from False Religion. [In Three Volumes]. Vol. I (Glasgow, 1779); probably no more published. All quotations from the Essays are from this edition.
second edition in 1785. In between the first and second editions Goldie had in 1784 produced *The Gospel Recovered from its Captive State*, a five-volume work that became part of the six-volume set whose first volume was composed of the reprint of the original *Essays*. By the time Burns was writing his "Epistle to John Goldie" the *Essays* were being referred to locally as "Goudie's Bible."

Drawing upon Kilmarnock folk-lore, which seems to have emanated from the son of John Goldie, the anonymous author of *The Contemporaries of Robert Burns* credits John Goldie with having made arrangements for Burns to meet with some Kilmarnock men who might assist in the publication of his work. He records Goldie as saying to Burns at Mossgiel, "Come your wa's down to Killie some day next week, an' tak' pot luck wi' me. I hae twa or three guid friends that'll be able to set the press going." Whether or not the story attributing the initiative to Goldie is accurate, undoubtedly he was instrumental in securing financial backing for the Kilmarnock edition, *Poems, Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect* (1786).

The bond of friendship and respect between the two men was established initially through the poet's knowledge of the essayist rather than the other way round. Burns's "Epistle to John Goldie" (p. 121) was written in appreciation of the religious views expressed by the author of the essays, and in congratulation for the publication of a second edition.

Burns had imbibed from his father a milder and less rigorous form of Calvinism than was then prevalent in Scotland. William Burnes's manual of religious belief which he had compiled for the instruction of his children conveys a much gentler and kindlier vision of God and his attitude toward mankind as compared with the theology that emerged from the Westminster Confession of Faith that undergirded the Church of Scotland at that time. Burns, by his own admission, was at that time beginning to "puzzle Calvinism with . . . heat and indiscretion." Goldie's material must have contributed to the fires that were testing the fabric of the established religion of the day. Burns found himself in conflict with such ideas as election, predestination, original sin. He found himself questioning whether faith and obedience must be set over against reasoning and the questioning human intellect. He looked for a place for common

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4[Hugh Paton], *The Contemporaries of Robert Burns* (Edinburgh, 1840), Appendix, p. 5.


sense and understanding and generosity of spirit in matters of religion, and in­ stead found superstition and authoritarianism and small mindedness. John Goldie must have seemed like a kindred spirit. Burns had a natural affinity for a man who set out in his essays to deal rationally and in a common sense way with matters of doctrine and scriptural interpretation.

In his “Epistle to John Goldie,” Burns applauded the attitude adopted by Goldie toward religion. They both believed in its value, but knew it to be suffering from the accretions and distortions brought about by people who sometimes had their own case to make or their own position to protect. Burns warned Goldie that there were those who, had it been permitted, would have been only too pleased to have ended his dispute with orthodoxy by means of:

A toom tar barrel
An twa red peats (p. 122)

Goldie, however, was aware that he would be attacked for the statements he had made, and in his words “To the Reader” of the second edition of the Essays he took pre-emptive action:

Let none who look on these different essays imagine that they are done with a view to expose or to deride real religion. They are intended for a quite different purpose, for the design thereof is only to separate the dross from the metal, or the chaff from the wheat and to expose them to the wind on purpose that the wheat may be cleansed and the metal purged from every pernicious corruption of alloy. 7

Goldie began his Introduction to the Essays with these words: “The Christian religion hath received its worst or deepest wounds from those who style themselves its best friends.” 8

It is surely significant that this is a theme that Burns takes up just one month after congratulating Goldie. In the “Epistle to the Rev. John McMath,” enclosing a copy of “Holy Willie’s Prayer,” he writes,

All hail, Religion! Maid divine!
Pardon a Muse sae mean as mine,
Who in her rough imperfect line
Thus daurs to name thee;
To stigmatise false friends of thine
Can ne’er defame thee. (p. 130)

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8Introduction, Essays, p. 9.
That Goldie and Burns were working in parallel in their thoughts on religion is beyond doubt. But there are certainly some things that indicate a more direct influence of Goldie upon Burns.

In his third Essay, "Thoughts Concerning Persecution and a Blind Zeal in Judging Others," Goldie writes,

Such as these [those who harshly judge] are not serving the true God aright, but are only worshiping a creature of their own mind, and an idol moulded to the dishonour of him that gave them a being (p. 30).

Burns echoes these sentiments in his "Address to the Unco Guid":

Then gently scan your brother man
Still gentler sister woman;

Who made the heart, 'tis He alone
Decidedly can try us: (p. 76)

But the influence of Goldie is sometimes even more identifiable. Throughout his work he makes a plea for the due place of reason in determining religious belief, saying on one occasion, "all such [men] as deny reason and the proper use of these powers are not only half, but full brothers to Balaam" (p. 37). Now this is a motif to which Burns returns again and again. The story of Balaam, the Old Testament character who believed that his ass spoke to him, is referred to in at least five of his letters and two poems. He also makes a more oblique reference to it in a letter to Mrs. Dunlop when referring to the basis of his own religious beliefs. He says, "I am a very sincere believer in the Bible, but I am drawn by the conviction of a Man not the halter of an Ass" (p. 164).

In his "Epistle to John Goldie" Burns lists the things that have been harassed by the writings of the lay theologian—superstition, enthusiasm and orthodoxy—and links Goldie's name with that of Dr. John Taylor of Norwich, one of the "New Licht" ministers:

'Tis you an Taylor are the chief
To blame for a' this black mischief (p. 122)

Taylor and Goldie had both written on the same subject. Taylor's *The Scripture Doctrine of Original Sin* (1740) was one of the books that Burns had read as a boy. He included it in his list of his reading that he gave in a letter to Moore noted above (p. 251). Goldie in his *Essays* had written "An Essay upon what is Commonly Called Original Sin" (p. 108). He sets the tone of his treatment, if not to say his attempted debunking, of the doctrine by giving this description of the contents of the first chapter:
Contents: An immediate deliverance to the enslaved and liberty to the captives; or a release to all such as are enslaved by the doctrines, traditions and commandments of fallible superstitions and bigoted man (p. 108).

Then, despite saying “A few syllables will serve to convey a truth, while many sentences are required to persuade people into error” (p. 109), he goes on for 220 pages attempting to persuade his reader not to believe in what is commonly called “Original Sin.” Goldie does not pull his punches:

Now what a most horrid and shocking theology is this that millions of millions of rational beings, for no fault of their own, but only for an offence committed by another (viz an adult person) thousands of years before ever they so much as had an existence should be given up and delivered over to eternal damnation without mercy for ever upon account whereof (p. 191).

The parallels to be found in “Holy Willie’s Prayer” are, I think, obvious:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Burns</th>
<th>Goldie</th>
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<tr>
<td>And no for onie gaid or ill</td>
<td>for no fault of their own (p. 191)</td>
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<tr>
<td>When thousands Thou has left in night</td>
<td>millions and millions...should be given up and delivered over to eternal damnation. (p. 191)</td>
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<tr>
<td>I, wha deserv’d most just damnation</td>
<td>thousands of years before ever they so much as had an existence... (p. 191)</td>
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<td>For broken laws</td>
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<td>Sax thousand years ere my creation, Thro’ Adam’s cause</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thou might hae plung’d me deep in Hell (p. 93)</td>
<td>eternal damnation without mercy for ever. (p. 191)</td>
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Such a passage as that in Goldie may well have provided Burns with the raw material for his own equally vitriolic criticism of the same year as the second edition of the Essays.

Again the likely influence of Goldie may be glimpsed when we read his comments on prayer: “Where is the sect, or party however grossly wrong in their sentiments or opinions but will petition God that he may prosper them, above all others” (p. 23). Compare this with Holy Willie, who after “praying against” Gavin Hamilton, Robert Aitken and the whole Presbytery of Ayr, concludes:
There in poetic form is precisely what Goldie was criticizing. But the clearest sign of Goldie's influence I have discovered is to be found in several passages in which he expounds the theory of the intrinsic value of things and people:

... if one should take a piece of metal the colour of gold, and impress upon it the coin of a guinea, in order that he may make it pass for the said value, so that by counterfeiting the impression he borrows the King's authority, to deceive his subjects (p. 25).

Further on in the same essay he says, "it is only the quality that gives an intrinsic value and right to the image" (p. 83), and again:

... for the quality lies only in the internal part of religion, and not in the external; for the latter is no more than the stamp impressed on the coin, or quality whereby it may the better pass current from one person to another... as ignorant people value the worth of their coin upon account of its stamp (p. 98).

And lastly:

For as base or corrupt metal having falsely received the King's impression passes current as value with ignorant people, so doth corrupt doctrines or opinions when once they have falsely ascribed God's authority thereto for their sanction (p. 99).

In these passages Goldie has labored the theme of intrinsic value almost to the point of exhaustion, but anyone reading his words could not fail to get their message. Notwithstanding any other influences that brought about "A Man's a Man for a' that," Burns seems to owe much to Goldie for the lines:

The rank is but the guinea's stamp,
The man's the gow'd for a' that. (p. 535)

In a letter to George Thomson in January 1795, Burns had been discussing originality in composition and readily admits that the poem, "A Man's a Man for a' That" is "two or three pretty good prose thoughts inverted into rhyme" (p. 669).
I am only claiming that Goldie's words formed part of the mixture that went into the crucible of the poet's mind. Long years after he had first read them, the lessons of "Goudie's Bible" continued to influence Robert Burns.

*Alloway*
Arthur Sherbo

William Hamilton Reid (fl. 1786-1824):
A Forgotten Poet

The *DNB* devotes a little less than one column to a “William Reid (1764-1831), a minor poet,” born in Glasgow of humble parents. Nowhere is there any indication that Reid’s literary efforts were any other than some minor poems, a number of them being “humorous verse in Scottish dialect.” In the *British Library Catalogue* William Reid appears as “Bookseller, of Glasgow.” Curiously enough, there is another William Reid, William Hamilton Reid, well represented in the BL catalogue, overlooked by the compilers of the DNB, and tersely indexed in the old *CBEL* as “(fl. 1793-1816),” his sole recorded effort being a short prose piece on William Law in the *Gentleman’s Magazine* for 1800. One will look in vain for either Reid in the new *CBEL*. William Hamilton Reid is represented in the BL by a “copious account of the life and writings” of Hugh Blair, as well as by a life of and critical remarks on Archbishop Paley, a book on Napoleon’s *Conduct towards the Jews* (a title in Hebrew tentatively attributed to him), as well as *Memoirs* of Napoleon, a history of the Kingdom of Hanover to 1813, as well as *The Rise and Dissolution of the Infidel Societies in this Metropolis*, *Memoirs* of Colonel Wardle, as well as of John Horne Tooke, and “Hum! Hum! A new song,” and *Criticisms on the Rolliad* (with others). All in all, a fairly full and varied literary output. What is more, and what is of present significance, Reid contributed a large number of poems and prose pieces to the *GM* in the years from 1787 through 1824, displaying, among other things, a working knowledge of Portuguese, Spanish, Italian, French, Latin, Greek, Dutch, German, and Hebrew.
One has, then, two possible Reids. There is the DNB’s William (1764-1831) and the CBEL’s William Hamilton who flourished from 1793-1816. It is well to repeat that William Hamilton Reid contributed a spate of poems and prose pieces to the GM from 1786 through 1824 and was a man of some erudition with a knowledge of several languages, classical as well as modern. With these facts in mind, one can now arrive at some information about, and some estimate of, the relative importance of William Hamilton Reid through analysis of his contributions to the GM. William Reid of Glasgow may be forgotten. The first of Reid’s contributions were in June, July, September, and the Supplement for 1787—four poems, all clearly signed “W. Hamilton Reid.” The first poem, “Moon-Light,” with its opening line, “How sweet the Moon-light sleeps upon the ground,” is obviously indebted to Shakespeare, who is invoked in the next line (p. 529). July’s offering was a sonnet, the first of some fourteen, this one “Written upon the Remains of the Roman Camp near London” (p. 626). The third, entitled “An Elegy on the Unknown Author of the Ballad of Chevy Chase,” has a footnote keyed to the Words “Untimely grand, Sublimely wild,” descriptive of the unknown author’s “lays.” The footnote reads, “This alludes to an anachronism first pointed out by the author. See our Index Indicatorius for February” (p. 818). In the index we find “W. Hamilton Reid does not recollect that the following anachronism in ‘Chevy Chace’ has ever been publicly noticed. In the beginning of this humorous ballad, it is said, the battle began immediately after dinner—‘And when they had din’d, the drovers went to rouse them up again.’ Thus the affray began; but in the conclusion, ‘this fight did last from break of day, till setting of the sun!’” (p. 152). The fourth of the poems in 1778 is an “Elegy on a Poetical Character, that was Shipwrecked,” possibly inspired by Milton’s “Lycidas,” although it is not listed in Raymond Dexter Haven’s monumental Influence of Milton on English Poetry, a matter to which I shall return. The “elegy” is followed by a notice to the effect that Reid was the “Author of a volume of ‘Poetical Effusions’ now publishing by subscription.” The volume was almost surely never published.¹

Reid’s poetry was also published in the Universal Magazine in 1787 and 1788. Indeed, there are nine poems there which do not appear in the GM. “Moon-light” was printed in the May Universal Magazine (p. 264), one month earlier than its appearance in the GM. However, the sonnet on the Roman camp appeared simultaneously in July, both periodicals printing a notice that a volume of Reid’s poetry was soon to be published by subscription. The nine poems printed only in the Universal Magazine are “Sonnet to Flora” (May, 1787, pp. 264-5), “To Phoebus” (July, pp. 44-5), “Sonnet to Autumn” (Oct., p. 208), “Winter: An Elegy,” “Sonnet Supposed to be written in a Mossy Dell,”

¹Raymond Dexter Havens, The Influence of Milton on English Poetry (Cambridge, MA, 1922), p. 690, conjectures a posthumous publication of Reid’s poems.
"To Cynthia," and an "Elegiac Sonnet" (all in the 1787 Supplement, pp. 365-6); "Sonnet, to Spring" (Feb., 1788, p. 98), and "Sonnet to April" (April, p. 211). There is nothing remarkable in any of these.

In any event, the *GM* published Reid's "Deity, a Poetical Attempt," i.e., an attempt to define deity, in February 1788 (pp. 158-9) and "Athenia, An Elegy, on the late J. Stuart, Esq..." the following month, the latter poem followed by an editorial note, "The Author's subscription, now on foot, was honoured by the name of the deceased." James Stuart, known as "Athenian" Stuart because of his joint authorship of *The Antiquities of Athens Measured and Delineated* (1762) was a well-known painter and architect. There is no need, however, to suppose he was personally known to Reid. In July 1788 a correspondent to the *GM* Who signed himself "N," wrote a letter which, while interesting in that the writer compares Reid to Robert Burns, both "modern untutored bards," affords little information about Reid other than that he was in straitened circumstances, N inclosing two guineas for him. The letter, however, elicited a long editorial note which must be quoted in its entirety.

In addition to the notices given of the poetry of W. Hamilton Reid, in the Gazetteer for Jan. 7, 1787, it appears, from authentic information, that his situation as a laborious mechanic, ignorance of prosody, want of reading, &c. are equally true. The Letter, however, must be confined to poetry only, as he is known to have been a mere book-worm in divinity ever since the age of 16, which was never diverted to a poetical channel till, contrary to the generality of bards, he manifested abilities for metrical composition! It was remarkable that, upon his first disposition for reading, after producing a few thoughts in verse, every idea of writing, of any kind, vanished till the year 1781, when he produced some letters in the Gazetteer, signed Philo-Veritas, against a methodistical adventurer, who, in the same print, had abused the Established Church by the most illiberal insinuations, and these letters, though extremely inaccurate in their orthography, were published without any alteration of their sense. But the discovery of his poetical abilities, in 1785, was by a circumstance which, as it were by collusion, excited the flame of this natural poet. A person of the same business had just produced an Ode to Masonry. Surprize, emulation, shame, &c. instantaneously vivified all the dormant seeds of poesy in Reid, and a similar disposition was communicated to him by a kind of electrical contact; which, in fine, produced those effusions so well received by the most respectable prints, and whose rapidity, diversity, harmony, &c. soon left him without a rival in the humbler walks of life. His discovery by the Editor of the Gazetteer was as accidental as his sudden impulse by the poetical fury. He purchased a paper whenever any poetry appeared he furnished it with. Want of employ, fatally the case every winter, had rendered this inconvenient. He requested, by a note, that a paper, on those occasions, might be allowed him, stating, the want of employ. This was followed in a few days by a notice from the Editor, expressing, that if W.H.R. would call at the office, he would find a letter from him. By which it appeared, he had mentioned him to the proprietors, who, in consideration of his merit, had begged his acceptance of a handsome acknowledgement, &c. This was succeeded by an interview, and a private gratuity from
the editor; and a subscription was afterwards opened, which, unfortunately, has not yet answered the expectation of this genuine son of the Muses. The fairness of his moral character can be attested by Mr. P—s, silversmith, in Hosier-lane, Smithfield, for whom he has worked nine years, and other reputable persons who can justify him from the too common charge of neglect of business. Candour will readily grant, that the means of adding distress to a wife and small family would be too insupportable to be indulged by a mind of sensibility. Besides, it is well known that Reid's productions were not the offspring of leisure, and its concomitant, want, where daily labour was depended upon, but were mostly written in the height of business, at those intervals of rest too often devoted by the vulgar to sottish stupidity. So true it is that ease (of mind at least) is the parent of Poetry.

Several important facts emerge from the letter and more particularly from the appended editorial note. Reid, resident in London, working for a silversmith in Hosier-lane, Smithfield, was self-educated, married with a small family, and in want. In February 1789, in a short letter to the GM, Reid expressed his concern at the number of youngsters who came to a bad end because of their preference for Smithfield market over their schools, avowing that "Many masters of charity-schools can well attest, that Smithfield has been the last resort of their most notorious truants." "These hints, Sir, I hope," he concluded, "may be improved by those in power: and I am confident that no philanthropist, or lover of his country, will neglect them on account of the obscurity of the channel by which they are conveyed" (p. 98). Earlier in the letter he had written of "the line I have moved in" as the vantage point from which he had observed these young offenders, giving rise to the belief that, as was stated in the 1788 GM editorial note, he may indeed have been a "laborious mechanic," and that his nine years of work for "Mr. P—s, silversmith, in Hosier-lane, Smithfield" was the "line he moved in." This would explain his reference to "the obscurity of the channel" by which his hints were conveyed. In the light of future discussion, it may be well to stress that Reid was "known to have been a mere [i.e. absolute] book-work in divinity," as many of his prose contributions to the GM will corroborate, a fact that makes more credible his seeming rise from the position of laborious mechanic to that of the well-read, lettered, even magisterial writer for the bookseller he was to become. For example, his second prose piece in the GM, in September 1788, published only two months after N's letter, opens with this sentence:

Observing a curious old prophecy, said to respect America, in vol. XXXVIII, p. 503, published from the papers of Sir Thomas Browne, author of the Religio Medici, by Dr. Tenison, afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury, has induced me to submit the following remarks to your curious readers, upon the very same ground it was previously noticed, as respecting America, viz. from a manifest fulfilment of some other parts of the prediction.
After demonstrating how some of the predictions had been fulfilled Reid concluded, on a religious note and in a style seemingly incompatible with his humble station and lack of education:

As for the sceptical, who run into the same degree of extremes as their bigoted opponents, by denying the possibility of divine impulses upon the minds of men, and by determining on the conduct of eternity from the observation of an hour! if they will still say such is the result of conjecture, enthusiasm, &c. it is for them to account why such a regular set of conjectures, so distant from each other, and so divested of political design, has never arisen from any persons on their side of the question! (p. 787).

In 1781, seven years earlier, according to the editorial note appended to N’s letter, Reid’s letters in the Gazetteer were “extremely inaccurate in their orthography.” Reid had evidently made great strides. And yet in the November 1785 European Magazine an editorial note states that his “late communications are so deficient in grammar that we cannot insert them. He should not suffer himself to be diverted from his proper employment by such pursuits” (p. 392).

Despite N’s likening Reid’s “eccentric abilities [as] unequalled by any of the modern untutored bards, except Robert Burns,” a description more appropriate for William Reid of Glasgow, it is again obvious that the two Reids cannot be confused. And yet it was not long before a certain Philomela wrote a “Sonnet, Addressed to W. H. R. The English Burns” which appeared in the December 1788 GM (p. 1104) and which celebrates W. H. R.’s “native lays.” None of these Burns-like “native lays” had appeared in the GM, and one wonders why both N and Philomela compared Reid to Burns. Among other reasons militating against such an identification were the three poems by William Hamilton Reid appearing in the July, August, and October numbers of the 1788 GM, for they were an “Ode to Reflexion” in octosyllabics (p. 636), an “Ode, On reading Poems by Miss Whateley, now Mrs. Dorval, of Walsal, in Staffordshire” (p. 733), and “To Truth” (p. 915). All are polished, in the most pejorative sense of the word, full of classical mythology and personification, and in no way describable as “native lays” à la Burns. Recognition was soon to come, and in the April 1789 GM, when Anna Seward, the reigning poetess of Lichfield, divided modern poets, i.e., those from Milton to 1789, she included “Reid” (not needing further to identify him, it would seem) among “the unschooled sons of genius” with Burns and other (p. 292).

Perhaps it will be well to recapitulate somewhat before going on to examine the rest of Reid’s poetry. He wrote some fourteen sonnets for the GM and another twelve for other periodicals, four of these being translations.2

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2 See Havens, Influence of Milton, p. 690, noting that I have added four sonnets and one translation to Haven’s list for the GM. The additions will be found at 1791, p. 567; 1794, pp.
tion to the sonnets he contributed another twenty-two poems and twenty-six translations of poetry in Latin, French, German, Portuguese, Italian, Dutch, and Spanish. Many of these translations are of epitaphs or short epigrams; longer ones are “Stanzas (From the French of the King of Prussia)” and “The Nightingale and the Lark; a Fable from the German of Gellert.” In his original poetry he was indistinguishable from most of the minor versifiers of the last two decades of the eighteenth century. His themes were the conventional ones: the poor versus the rich, nature versus art, the country versus the city, the charm of older times, customs, ruined buildings. Not a little of his poetry was occasional, lamenting the untimely death of an infant, of “Athenian” Stuart, and of John Wesley. He wrote “Elegiac Lines to Young Lady on the Death of her Father” (1790, p. 163) and “Stanzas on the Festival of Christmas” (1790, pp. 70-1). That same year, he was given the honor of writing the prefatory congratulatory poem on the completion of another year of publication of the GM, surely a mark of success of some kind. The honor was repeated in 1801, for the poem on the verso of the title-page of the second part of the GM, signed Philo-Urbanus was his. The religious note is strong in his verses, mingled with classical mythology and couched in personifications. Here, as one example, is the concluding verse paragraph of his poem “The Reverie”:

But now, behold, the general God of Day.
On Eastern cliffs pursues his radiant way;
And, 'neath the horror of the pendant rock,
The shepherd, see, attend his harmless flock.
Lo, there the shelving wood, at each rude breath
Of Eurus, seems to threaten the vale beneath:
While, near at hand, the headlong torrent sweeps.
The Fumbling flood adown the trembling steeps.
But here my ravish’d eyes can see no more,
For Ocean copes the long-extended shore.
Ah! See the beauteous face of Heaven o’ercast,
And Furies ride upon the howling blast!
Disturb’d, I start, the airy vision flies,
And life’s low cares once more unwelcome’d rise. (1790, p. 939).

745-6 (a translation from Petrarch); 1811, p. 264 (2 sonnets “Written in 1800”); 1824, p. 457.

3See 1794, p. 165 for translations in these seven languages.

41791, p. 264 and 1793, p. 159.

Reid wrote in blank verse, heroic couplets, octosyllabics, and in various stanzaic forms, sometimes departing from traditional patterns. He even wrote a pastoral dialogue entitled "An Elegiac Fragment upon a Country Pastor" in which Morlan and Thyrsis mourn the death of Theron and sing his praises—but neither in Scots dialect nor in the language of Spenser (1794, p. 165). Perhaps his "Sonnet on Viewing an Ancient Fortress, Armory, &c" may serve as an example of his abilities and interests.

These princely towers, majestic in decline,
To some may give a retrospective eye
To the proud times of ancient chivalry.
Or when the goblets foam'd with gen'rous wine.

Targe, helm, or battle-axe, th' aspiring mind
May with a noon-tide fervency inspire,
And feats of those long since to dust consign'd
In souls congenial wake a kindred fire;

But who from life is wean'd by long distress,
Pleasures more calm and soothing shall beguile;
He most the vestiges of Time shall bless,—
For that he'll think the hands that rais'd this pile.
Sorrow and anxious cares no more await,
Beneath the wail of woe, above the reach of fate. (1791, p. 759).

Whatever one thinks of Reid's gifts as a poet, there can be little doubt that the evidence militates against any description of his as an untutored genius piping his native lays. More startling, in light of the description of him in the editorial note in the July 1788 GM earlier quoted, is the evidence of the prose pieces he contributed to that periodical.

From the poetry one learns that Reid was well read in a number of languages, that he wrote in traditional forms, that he was of a strongly religious nature, and that he was fairly well known in London (his "Monody on the late

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6In his last sonnet, the first quatrain rhymes abba, while the remaining ten lines follow the Shakespearian sonnet form. See 1824, p. 457.

7See also the two "Sonnets written in 1800," in 1811, p. 264.

8See especially The Shechinah, A Sacred Poem, After the Manner of Pope's Messiah, 1790, pp. 1128-9. "Shekinah," according to the OED, is "The visible manifestation of the Divine Majesty, esp. when resting between the cherubim over the mercy-seat or in the temple of Solomon; a glory or refulgent light symbolizing the Divine Presence."
Rev. Mr. J. Wesley” was “Recited at the Great Room in Cornhill.” His last contribution to the GM, the sonnet in 1824, is signed as from “Hoxton,” i.e. Hauxton in Cambridgeshire where, one assumes, he had retired. Much more of a biographical nature emerges from his prose contributions to the GM. Indeed, given the diversity of his interests and the areas of his knowledge, it is remarkable that so little notice has been taken of him. When the full extent of his contributions to the GM and other periodicals is realized, particularly his role in what seems to be an almost forgotten part of the history of the Jews in England (and more especially in London), he will emerge as a figure who deserves to be much better known.

Reid almost surely was a Londoner, one who spent most of his life in that city. Unfortunately, except for the “Hoxton” place designation in 1824, he never indicated where he was writing from, as so many other contributors to the GM did. But his knowledge of London, both past and present, was intimate, as witness one item in the Index Indicatorius for November, 1788: “One of the oldest private houses in London, he is told, is in Catherine-wheel Alley, Bishopsgate Street: It is built of wood, and at present used as a school. There are two ancient paintings in the taproom of the Paul Pindar’s head, in the same street, relating to the comparative state of the Rich and Poor, which have not been publicly noticed” (p. 1007). And while it is too lengthy for quotation, his footnote on “an alehouse near a place they call Moorfields,” in his translation of a French account of England under Charles II, must be read in its entirety (1791, p. 928). Elsewhere too in his contributions to the GM this knowledge of London is displayed in incidental fashion. In 1802 he could claim “an acquaintance of twenty years duration with nearly all sorts of conditions of religious persuasions” (p. 221), almost certainly in London.

As part of the controversy surrounding the efforts of the London Society for promoting Christianity among the Jews, in which controversy Reid took an active part, a certain spokesman for the Society who contributed to the GM under the pseudonym Perseverans, wrote of him:

Your next Correspondent upon this subject is Mr. W. Hamilton Reid, who has favoured the publick with two papers, and who, like his friend Mr. Thos. Witherby, appears to be remarkably in the confidence of the Jews. Mr. Reid is said to be a gentleman who writes for Booksellers. . . . But, if this information is correct (and I had it from a Jew who knows Mr. Reid), is it very improbably that in writing these papers, he is in the employment of the Jews?

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9See the Scots Magazine (Sept. 1791), pp. 444-5.


11Announced as “recently established” in the April 1810 GM (p. 377).
Perseverans also wanted to know if Mr. Reid could "understand a sermon delivered" in Hebrew. At another point he inquired, "what church does Mr. Reid belong to and how long is it since he has left off attending the Unitarian Meeting at Hackney?" He also refers to an incident that remains a mystery. "It is happy for Mr. Reid," he writes, "that in his unfortunate loss he met with some charitable Jew who, without any views or expectations that he would write for them against the London Society, so handsomely assisted him." And as part of his conclusion Perseverans stated that he "might term Mr. Reid a modern Infidel, an advocate for Buonaparte, a Jacobin, and many other opprobrious terms" (1811, pp. 529-34, passim). The reference to a "modern Infidel" was to Reid's book, "The Rise and Dissolution of the Infidel Societies in this metropolis: including the origin of modern Deism and Atheism" (by no means the whole title), published in 1800. "A Jacobin . . . is the result and combination of three kinds of depravity," wrote the Abbé Barreul, as translated and reviewed in the January 1798 _GM_ "Of Deism, or Atheism, as the particular or general enemy of religion, of the hatred of monarchy; and, finally, of the hatred of all social order, and moral restraint upon the passions of men" (p. 39). Reid reacted strongly against these charges.

Reid replied to Perseverans in August of the same year (1811), stating that neither he nor anybody else was hired by the Jews "as their advocate against the London Society" and that although he had known "but very few of them" he believed the Jews loyal and peaceful subjects (1811, pp. 132-3). He returned to the attack in September, beginning by claming to live amicably with all believers of any kind, adding, "When very young, I was in the habit of hearing Messrs. Romaine, Madan, and other popular preachers" but he had abandoned "the doctrine of justification by faith alone." William Romaine, a Methodist and a Hebrew scholar (1714-95), began preaching in 1748; Martin Madan (1765-90) was much influenced by Romaine. His preaching was during the years 1750-1780. Incidentally, in a short contribution on William Law (1687-1761) in the November 1800 _GM_, Reid wrote that "many years since, I was acquainted with some of his admirers," adding that a cheap edition of Law's _Case of Reason Stated_ would be valuable in counteracting the "predilection" the public entertained for the "French goddess of reason" (pp. 1038-9). In answer to another of Perseverans questions Reid replied,

I do not know that Dr. Hirschell always preaches in Hebrew; if it be so, I am not ashamed to say I should not understand him; for though the Hebrew and other dead languages have occupied much of my time, not without some profit, yet with respect to the European which I profess, I have found the living dog better than the dead lion.

In answer to another question he stated that it was nearly three years since he had left off going to the Hackney Unitarian Meetings and that his "whole attendance there never exceeded three or four sermons." He responded angrily to
the assertion that he had been handsomely assisted in his unfortunate loss, but also wrote, “of some handsome assistance I received from the Literary Fund, I have certainly made no secret,” because “there is a species of approbation and encouragement, which cannot be obtained without a character in other respects irreproachable, as well as for some literary ability.” Reid stated that he was a “stranger” to Mr. Thomas Witherby and retorted sharply to the charge that he was a Jacobin, saying that “to hint this against one who has hazarded his personal safety by his repeated exposure of Jacobin principles, particularly in 1800 and 1801, argues extreme ignorance of the character” Perseverans had “assailed.” Finally, he told Perseverans that if he wished to continue the controversy he should reveal his identity and advised him to read “Kings and Kingdoms the Subjects of Prophecy” in “page 627 of your Supplement, to which I also ought to have attached my real name” (1811, pp. 231-5, passim).

Reid, signing himself Anti-Mercator, wrote about the second coming of Christ in the Supplement to Part I of the 1811 GM (pp. 627-32). Incidentally, another writer on the Jewish question praised Reid highly, stating:

Every writer (with the solitary exception of Mr. W. H. Reid) has fallen into many gross errors concerning the Jews; indeed I must give to Mr. Reid (the learned author of ‘The New Sanhedrim; or, Causes and Consequences of the French Emperor’s conduct to the Jews’) my mite of gratitude; for he has indeed been ‘an advocate for the house of Israel,’ and has done ample justice to the Continental Jews as well as English ones.

The praise, in a contribution signed An Unconverted Jew and Englishman, appeared in the September 1810 GM (pp. 235-7).

Further to the matter of Reid’s occupation: in a contribution of December 1792 he began by writing, “Since it has been part of my business to translate some of the papers in the Low Dutch language for a morning print, I could not help observing an advertisement in the Haerlem Courante of October 2” (p. 1082). Earlier that year, in September, he wrote, “Since I have had some acquaintance with the German, I met with the description of London written in that language, and published at Hanover in 1736” (p. 808), further evidence of his linguistic abilities and his interest in London. He seems to have been sufficiently well known so that when “a house was pulled down near Aldgate, and some papers found between the floor and ceilings of one of the upper stories, all in manuscript and principally poetical” the MSS were “communicated” to him “from a carpenter, who, hearing that I had some taste for poetry, &c. thought

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12 Begun in 1790.

13 I assume this is a reference to his Rise and Dissolution of the Infidel Societies, published in this year. The 1801 reference is probably to the “religious publication” of that year.
they would afford some amusement” (p. 556). In a later contribution Reid re­
vealed that he had been engaged “in the original plan of a religious publication
in the commencement of 1801” in which “the department” he had taken soon
called for “a better acquaintance with the originals of the Sacred Writings”
(1802, p. 924).

In his capacity as writer for the booksellers and for the morning prints, as
well as in his participation in more than one periodical publication, Reid saw,
handled, and read many books. I am not sure, on the basis of the following,
whether he may be termed a bibliographer or a bibliophile—or neither. In addi­
tion to those works already noted, something of the range and diversity of
Reid’s reading will be suggested by a few titles of works quoted or cited in his
contributions: Constantin Franf;ois de Volney’s The Ruins, or a Survey of the
Revolutions of Empires, in its 1795 English translation (1802, p. 811), men­
tioning in the same piece Voltaire’s Philosophical Dictionary and his Letters on
the English Nation. In 1794 he took occasion to comment on some letters
written by the late Professor Frederick Sneedorf, author of De Hymnis veterum
Gracorum (1786); following this is another piece in which he asked “whether a
small volume, intituled ‘Fausten, or the Age of Philosophy,’ has appeared in
English since 1780?” adding that he had “another charming work in German, 
\textit{viz.} The Travels of a very intelligent Prussian through several parts of England
in 1782, which has gone through four editions that I know of at Berlin” (pp.
217-18, 435). He owned or had access to a rare small tract, “Account of the
Duke of York’s (afterwards James II.) visit to the city of Amsterdam in 1681,
from the remarks of William Carr, Gent. then Consul for the English nation.
Printed in English in Amsterdam, 1688,” which he quoted in its entirety (1789,
pp. 688-90). He translated some “striking anecdotes [from] a miscellaneous
French work \ldots Amitiiez, Amours, & Amourettes, by a M. Le Pays” (1690)
for the September and October, 1791 issues of the \textit{GM} (pp. 815-16, 928). Two
years later he called attention to a “pamphlet, published on the continent, inti­
tuled, ‘The Remarkable Life, Death, and Character of French Reputation’”
(1793, pp. 893-4). Evident from most of these titles is Reid’s knowledge of
works printed on the continent, almost surely a by-product of his work for the
booksellers. Possibly he may more properly be termed a Grub-street hack, one
who handled many works primarily from necessity and only secondarily for
sheer love; possibly this is to do him an injustice.

Although most of Reid’s contributions to the \textit{GM} breathe an air of sweet
reasonableness, he could adopt a more rancorous tone. In December 1792 he
wrote about a book in the Low Dutch language whose author’s name and title
he translated as “W. de Britain, the Englishman, upon the Prosperity of
Things,” a book he claimed also to have seen “in the German language in sev­
eral sizes and editions” (p. 1082). Somebody wrote that Reid was mistaken and
that the book was no other than the well-known “de proprietatibus rerum, of
the property of things,” by “Bartholomeus de Glanville, an English author.”¹⁴ Reid replied in the February 1793 GM, labeling the assertion of the anonymous critic “ignorant and unqualified” although it came in the “questionable shape” (a gratuitous bit of Shakespeare) “of superior learning, extensive reading, and the like” and hence deserved an answer. Reid likened his adversary to “the poor man, who raved about Alexander the Coppersmith, while his antagonist was talking of Alexander the Great!” (p. 124). Reid himself was taken severely to task by another correspondent, in the August 1793 GM, for having displayed “so much acrimony and so little judgement” in his answer to his anonymous critic. Since the writer in the August GM clearly proved Reid to be in the wrong, he wisely held his peace. His exchanges with Perseverans, already discussed, also bristle with sarcastic remarks. But Reid could admit to error, as a footnote to one passage at arms in the London Society controversy clearly demonstrates, for the note reads

Mr. Reid has very handsomely acknowledged, both personally, and by letter, that the conclusions he adopted and expressed in his letter to Mr. Urban, pp. 12, 13 concerning some passages in Mr. Atkins’s pamphlet, were prematurely formed from the perusal of a partial Review of it, previous to his having seen the Work itself” (1810, p. 239).

Reid’s familiarity with the Bible, particularly with the New Testament, is everywhere evident. His knowledge of English history is manifest in a question he posed in the Index Indicatorius for November 1788:

Since it is well known that the Talbots were successively Earls of Shrewsbury ever since John Talbot, Marshal of France, was created Earl of Shrewsbury, by Henry VI. 1442, by what authority is it asserted in Camden’s Life of Queen Elizabeth, translated in 1675, p. 37, that Francis Talbot was the first Earl, when, on the supposition that John Talbot was the first, he must be the fifth? (p. 1007).

It was in this same Index that Reid noted that if there were “no biographical traits extant of John Sage [sic, for John Sergeant; the book is signed J. S.], the antagonist of Mr. Locke, and the author of ‘Solid Philosophy asserted against the Ideists’, ‘The Method of Science farther illustrated,’ &c. he has some scraps of information for a future day.” Since his letter to the GM on William law contained more than a few scraps of information about that individual, and since among his published works there are biographies of Hugh Blair, William Paley, Colonel Wardel, Napoleon, and John Horne Tooke, one cannot but be convinced that he was fond of that genre. I believe the only

¹⁴I quote Reid’s piece, as his reference to the attack appearing “p. 1082 of your [the GM’s] late Supplement” is wrong. The attack is not in the 1792 Supplement nor elsewhere in the GM that I have been able to find.
references to biographical writings in his *GM* pieces are to Boswell's life of Johnson (1802, p. 221) and to events in Milton's life (1788, p. 784).  

Reid, it is abundantly clear, is a writer who, although his work, both as poet and prose writer, is of a minor order, must be accorded a certain degree of attention. He and his work were sufficiently suited to contemporary taste as to command the attention that he has not been paid since the first quarter of the nineteenth century. But when the history of Grub Street is written to include the years up to 1825, his is a name, and his are works, which will deserve, at the very least, some lengthy mention. I have pointed out omissions of mention of his writings in Raymond Haven's *Influence of Milton on English Poetry* and in Cecil Roth's *History of the Jews in England*. He may similarly have been forgotten by students of other matters about which he wrote. Nor should it go unnoted that there are other forgotten William Hamilton Reids, buried in the pages of the *GM* and other periodicals, awaiting resurrection.

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15John Nichols attributes a piece by "An Occasional Correspondent, and Searcher After Antiquities," with the title "Account of a Grocer in Wood Street, Cheapside, who preserved himself and Family from infection during the great Plague of 1665" (which he quotes in its entirety) to Reid (Kuist, p. 138).
A Source in J. G. Lockhart for Charlotte Brontë’s Pseudonym

Often quoted is Charlotte Brontë’s statement about the names she and her sisters assumed when they published their 1846 book of poems: “[W]e veiled our own names under those of Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bell; the ambiguous choice being dictated by a sort of conscientious scruple at assuming Christian names positively masculine, while we did not like to declare ourselves women, because . . . authoresses are liable to be looked on with prejudice.”1 Barbara and Gareth Lloyd Evans connect the name Currer with Frances Currer, a book collector and friend of the girls’ father Patrick Brontë, and Acton with Eliza Acton (1777-1859), a poet.2 Winifred Gérin claims the pseudonym Bell comes from Arthur Bell Nicholls, their father’s curate.3 Yet when the sisters adopted the name, they had known Nicholls for less than a year. Had Charlotte not married him eight years later, his middle name would not have seemed an inevitable source for the pseudonym. We suggest that the choice of a pen surname was very likely influenced by Charlotte’s fancied resemblance between herself and


Charlotte Bell, the fallen heroine in John Gibson Lockhart’s *Some Passages in the Life of Mr Adam Blair, Minister of the Gospel at Cross-Meikle* (1822).

The precocious Brontë siblings knew Lockhart’s work from an early age. In 1828, when Charlotte was twelve, the children chose “all the chief men of the kingdom” to inhabit imaginary islands. Emily, who was ten, chose “Walter Scott, Mr Lockhart, Johnny Lockhart” as the chief men of her island. This was six years after the publication of *Adam Blair*, the best of Lockhart’s four novels. Lockhart was also a principal contributor to *Blackwood’s Magazine*, which the young Charlotte considered “the most able periodical there is.” At eighteen, Charlotte advised her friend Ellen Nussey to read Lockhart’s *Life of Robert Burns*. She later wrote to Lockhart that she knew his work: “We beg to offer you one [of the volumes of Poems] in acknowledgment of the pleasure and profit we have often and long derived from your works.”

Telling evidence that the Brontë sisters knew the novels of Lockhart and would therefore have known his most famous, *Adam Blair*, is found in the correspondence between Emily’s *Wuthering Heights* (1847) and Lockhart’s *The History of Matthew Wald* (1824). The connection has been detailed by Joseph Kestner, who calls *Matthew Wald* a possible source for *Wuthering Heights* rather than declaring the obvious, that the plot of Emily’s novel is taken from Lockhart’s. Matthew Wald and his cousin Katharine grow up playing together and loving one another, as do Heathcliff and Catherine Earnshaw in *Wuthering Heights*. Inexplicably, Matthew’s father leaves his estate to Katharine at his death, after which Matthew is treated as a poor relation by her mother and stepfather, just as Heathcliff is mistreated by Hindley Earnshaw after the death of Hindley’s father. Eventually Matthew is sent away to school and loses Katharine to the handsome Lord Lascelyne, a situation which clearly anticipates Emily Brontë’s love triangle of Heathcliff, Catherine Earnshaw, and Edgar Linton. Years later, Matthew kills Katharine’s estranged husband in a duel. Katharine dies of shock, leaving Matthew to live on in wealth but subject to great depression, as Heathcliff is to do after him. Clearly the Brontës knew Lockhart’s work well.

The most compelling evidence for Lockhart’s influence on the choice of a pseudonym comes from *Adam Blair* itself. The heroine is “the beautiful black-eyed Charlotte Bell.” Charlotte Brontë had dark eyes and could have enjoyed

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likening herself to the star-crossed heroine with the same initials and the same first name. Adam Blair courts Charlotte’s cousin, Isabel Gray, but Charlotte often “sat beside them, smiling with the innocent waggishness of a kind sister.” That and the following passage would have leapt out at Charlotte Brontë: “In early and untroubled days, Adam Blair and Charlotte Bell were used to sit together, like a brother and a sister.” Charlotte Brontë’s closeness to her brother Branwell is common knowledge. Rebecca Fraser comments that at age twenty-three, Charlotte was “so intimately entwined with Branwell in their glorious imaginative kingdom” that his growing alcoholism and his increasingly morbid turn of mind “contributed to the intense religious crisis which she herself now began to experience.” Fraser observes that Charlotte’s “closest emotional relationship with the opposite sex had been with her brother.” In Lockhart’s novel, Adam and Charlotte become lovers after the death of Isabel. But Charlotte is trapped in a bad marriage, and their adulterous relationship ends unhappily. Charlotte Brontë too might have felt that her life had been blighted by a forbidden love.

Charlotte Brontë could also identify with Charlotte Bell’s religious doubts. Lockhart represents Charlotte’s mind as having been affected by misfortunes she deems undeserved: she “was far from being an infidel,—but there were moments in which she could scarcely be said to be a believer;—and at all times, when she spoke upon topics of a religious nature, expressions escaped her which gave pain to the unsullied purity of Blair’s religious feelings” (p. 116). Of course, Charlotte Bell’s misfortunes are largely caused by the indulgence of her passions. Charlotte Brontë’s spiritual crisis almost certainly resulted from her passion for her brother; she could not “reconcile the conflict between her imaginings and what her awakened conscience told her were unholy thoughts.” She writes to Ellen Nussey, “I am a very coarse, commonplace wretch, Ellen, I have some qualities which make me very miserable, some feelings that you can have no participation in, that few, very few people in the world can at all understand.” In a later letter, she alludes to “uncontrolled passions and propensities” and concludes, “I am glad you are not such a passionate fool as myself.”

Lockhart several times calls attention to Charlotte’s changing her name: “Charlotte would change her name ere the season came to an end”; “the gay lady sometimes doubted . . . whether, after all, Charlotte Bell might not raise a spirit as well as Charlotte Arden” (pp. 65, 70). When Charlotte Brontë was considering a change of name for literary purposes, allusions such as these

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could have helped recall the Bell name to her mind. She would have remembered Charlotte Bell as having a name similar to her own, enmeshed like herself in an unacceptable passion, twice mentioned as having a sibling-like relationship with her future lover, and like herself struggling with religious doubts. And though she further disguised herself with the first name of Currer, she may have privately thought of her alter ego as Charlotte Bell. Most of her business letters she signed simply C. Bell until she dropped the pen name, reverting to C. Brontë.10

On Christmas Day of 1847, John Gibson Lockhart wrote of Charlotte's first novel, "I think it more cleverly written by far than any very recent one," adding four days later that the author was "far the cleverest that has written since Austen and Edgeworth were in their prime. Worth fifty Trollopess and Martineaus rolled into one counterpane, with fifty Dickenses and Bulwers to keep them company; but"—like Lockhart's own Charlotte Bell—"rather a brazen Miss."11

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10Gaskell, pp. 322, 472, for example.

Three more volumes (1845-June 1847) of the Carlyles' correspondence have appeared, and one is impressed by both the correspondence itself (bulk and content) and the assiduousness of the editors, all of whom must be given high praise. Again, as before, one must marvel at the sheer statistics: 572 letters, 47 percent of which have not been previously published. Of these, 448 are by Thomas and 124 by Jane, and one must confess that Jane's are still the more interesting, especially in their tone. While these statistics are not revealing in themselves, because of the fact that a greater proportion of the letters is new, they do present, as K. J. Fielding points out in his pithy Introduction, "an increasingly fresh opportunity to understand and interpret the Carlyles, their circle, and their times."

Other aspects of the careful editing also add to the usefulness of the volumes, particularly the Chronology and the Indexes. The latter are especially noteworthy. There are, as before, an Index of Correspondents, very useful to one wanting to trace a particular person, and a General Index, as detailed as one could wish. Under "Bible," for instance, are 26 entries, from Acts to Zech., while under different facets of Cromwell and Cromwell, the editing of whose letters and tracing of whose activities take up so much of Thomas' time and effort during this period, one finds a fullness of specific detail to enable any reader to focus on any one concern connected to this work and figure. One
cannot neglect mentioning the notes to the letters themselves, some of which, it is true, might seem gratuitous, but most of which are genuinely helpful. Particularly so, in this respect, are those that shed light on the controversy surrounding the personal problems of the Carlyles in 1846 in connection with Thomas’ relationship to Lady Harriet Baring and Jane’s seeming jealousy. The annotations, especially those which show the differences between the interpretations of Alexander Carlyle and Froude regarding this affair, including examples of A. Carlyle’s charge of “Froudulency” (see esp. XXI, 19), are most enlightening and certainly demonstrate their value.

As before, K. J. Fielding’s Introduction, as pithy as it is, helps the reader of these volumes, whether already acquainted with much that is there or coming new to Carlyle studies. He is judicious in his approach to the materials, as an editor should be, but he is helpful as a guide in pointing out what should be the major concerns: the Carlyles themselves; Thomas’ work on *Cromwell* and his great reputation as prophet at this time; Jane’s personal problems, caused by the still unaccounted for attraction of Thomas for Lady Harriet, who was, at this period of their lives, almost constantly in Jane’s thoughts, as revealed in many of her letters.

Thomas during these years is at the height of his career, his reputation at its zenith. It is truly the Age of Carlyle, the Carlylean era. He himself has to acknowledge this fact; “I have had,” he writes to his brother James on 29 July 1845, “three Books printing all at once in these late months,” and he proceeds to give details of each. One senses the combination of pride and sense of accomplishment in this remark, echoes of Thomas’ constant exhortations to do one’s duty. There are, too, the many invitations to dine, to speak, to participate in various ways; he is constantly lionized. The many persons he knows, who write to him, and to whom he writes are the Victorians we have come to know as eminent: Emerson, Browning, Darwin, FitzGerald, Hunt, Wedgewood, Spedding, Peel, Murray, Tennyson, Moxon, Milnes, Mill, Jewsbury, to list just a few. His influence was, in fact, to wane in a few years, but at this period there is no denying the high standing of the man, to some truly a prophet, one who challenged his readers.

At the core of these three volumes, however, one can find the basis of both his rise and eventual fall from that height, for one can trace through these letters both his devotion to his writing, his work, and the attendant problems, both professional and personal, that plagued him most of his life. While Fielding in his Introduction talks of Thomas’ “contradictions,” which are obvious, he also states that his views and “fundamental convictions” were changing, a phenomenon not really evident in these letters. These three volumes reveal a man with a sense of his own rightness and his concern with his own inability to convey that truth to his age. While his letters do, as Fielding asserts, “force us to realize that he was a man of inconsistency, variety, and unexpectedness,” they also force us to realize that his fundamental position was based on his unshakable ideas of duty and truth, ideas that did, in fact, not change at all during his life-
time. In fact, they hardened into dogma as he grew older. This "obstinacy," combined with a sense that he was a prophet destined not to be listened to in his own lifetime, resulted in his constant use of irony and satire and was the cause of his later despair, evident in such works as *Latter-Day Pamphlets*.

His obsession with *Cromwell* during these months is a case in point, and the effect of that obsession on himself and on Jane's life and thoughts and emotions is instructive. He knew he was "right" about Cromwell, and his desire to convey that certainty to his countrymen drove him to the same kind of devoted concern that he gave to all his other projects. One can find throughout this period in the letters the toll the project took on him and on Jane. It was a "living hell" for both of them. Thomas writes to Emerson on 16 February 1845 in this vein:

> The reason why I tell you nothing about Cromwell is, alas, that there is nothing to be told. I am day and night, these long months and years, very miserable about it,—nigh broken hearted often. Such a scandalous accumulation of Human Stupidity in any form never lay before on such a subject. No history of it *can* be written to this wretched fleering, sneering, canting, twaddling godforgetting generation: how can you explain Men to Apes by the Dead Sea? And I am very sickly too, and my Wife is ill all this cold weather:—and I am sunk in the bowels of Chaos, and only some once in the three months or so see so much as a possibility of ever getting out! (XIX, 33-4)

Here is Jane writing to Jeannie Welsh on the same subject on 6 February 1845: "Carlyle is now got about as deep in the *Hell* of his Cromwell as he is likely to get. . . . I wish the Spring would make haste and favour my getting out of doors—for the (moral) atmosphere within doors is far too sulphury and *brimstonish*" (XIX, 26). No wonder the editors speculate that Jane's depression, illness, and suffering from insomnia were due partly to "TC's preoccupation with work and the Barings" (XX, 220n).

This preoccupation, including his belief that he was preaching to a generation of Apes, is evident in other letters. His certainty in his position is clear as he tells Emerson on 3 February 1846:

> Contrary to all human expectation, this Book on Cromwell proves saleable to mankind here, and a Second Edition is now going forward with all speed. The publication of the First has brought out from their recesses a *new* heap of Cromwell Letters;—which have been a huge embarrassment to me; for they are highly unimportant for most part, and do not tend to alter or materially modify anything. (XX, 115)

One can be certain that the "Fifty or Sixty new Letters" that escaped him would not alter his view of Cromwell and his attempt to demonstrate his true character to his godforgetting generation. Even when writing to Duffy, whom he liked very much, on 12 March 1846 he could not resist taking his sulphury and brim-
stonish stance, that moral stance that so infuriated Jane at times:

In spite of all obstructions, my fixed hope is, that just men, Irish and English, will yet see it as God the Maker saw it. It is not every day that the Supreme Powers send any Missionary, clad in light or clad in lightning, into a Country, to act and speak a True Thing there. (XX, 140-41)

Then TC falls back on the rhetoric one finds in so much of his later writings:

and the sooner all of us get to understand, to the bottom, what it was that he acted and spoke, it will most infallibly be the better every way! Nations, and men, that cannot understand Heaven's Message, because . . . it is not agreeable to them,—alas, the sum of all National and Human sins lies there; and our frightful doom is, "To follow the message of the other place, then!" (XX, 141)

One can understand both Thomas' and Jane's comments on Cromwell and *Cromwell*, in all their manifestations, as the project that looms so large in these volumes finally drew to a close. Thomas writes to Forster on 23 March 1846: "I have nearly ended this unspeakable Second Edition: no such job ever came my way in this world before. A transcendent species of Cobbling; no higher craft! To which one is not altogether bred. I shall remember it while I live" (XX, 151). He then adds, without apparently seeing the connection of the two, "My Wife has mainly quitted me for four weeks to come . . . while I continue a bachelor here. Up to the chin in Paper-clippings, and not very far from distracted" (XX, 151). He writes to Jean Carlyle Aitken on 8 April 1846: "I am thro' the Text, as they call it, of my Second Edition, after another distressing struggle (for my whole impulse towards the job is spent, and converted into a kind of weariness and even disgust,—especially in these bilious spring months)" (XX, 161). Finally, there is Jane writing to Helen Welsh, on 24 April 1846:

The Cromwell-turmoil is again subsiding and the second edition will be out in a few weeks. "Thanks God"! And now I hope we shall really be done with that man! if he had been my Husband's Own Father he could not have gone thro' more hardship for him! We have lived "in the valley of the shadow" of Cromwell now, as of Death, for some three years . . . . Carlyle speaks of returning to Scotland and living there "in seclusion for his few remaining years"—I do not look for much practical result to that idea either—Still this perpetual talk of moving takes away all ones pleasure (such as it was) in Chelsea—I feel myself no longer in a home but in a tent to be struck any day that the commanding officer is sufficiently bilious (XX, 180).

The tone of these last remarks, so different from that found in the writings of her husband, especially in his letters, affords a nice transition to her role during these years as reflected in the letters. *Cromwell* looms large, it is true, but not so large as other matters, particularly the affair of Lady Harriet, about the which so much speculation has occurred in books and articles about the
Carlyles. There are, too, the matters of Jane’s incipient “feminism” and her inimitable way of telling a story. From the many examples in these volumes, one can believe the truth of the many reports by various people that hint at her wit and skill at describing people and events; indeed, one can see that in many ways she was a rival to Thomas himself, whose fame at portraying people is widely known and accepted.

Fielding asserts in his Introduction that “the enigma of Lady Harriet remains” (XIX, xiii). He also adds that we may need to see more of the letters before trying to define their relationship, meaning, of course, that of Lady Harriet and Thomas. However, it is clear from the letters in these three volumes that Jane was convinced, despite the seeming peaceful truce worked out, that something indeed was going on. Thomas’ letters seem to support her view, especially in light of his insistence that they spend much time at her various estates. There are, too, other bits of evidence, including her success in getting him to dress for the opera. Jane’s report (28 June 1845) to John Welsh is in her typical ambivalent vein in anything concerning the “triangle”:

I was taken to the Opera the night before with Lady Harriet Baring—my debut in fashionable life—and a very fatiguing piece of pleasure it was which left a headach [sic] and all uncomfortableness which I have not got rid of till this hour—Carlyle too was at the Opera God help us!—went to ride in the Park at the fashionable hour then returned and dressed for the Opera!! Nobody knows what he can do till he tries! or rather till a Lady Harriet tries! (XIX, 89)

There are also Thomas’ own letters to Lady Harriet, including that of 20 February 1846 which begins: “Sunday, yes my Beneficent, it shall be then;—the dark man shall again see the daughter of the Sun, for a little while; and be illuminated, as if he were not dark! Which he very justly reckons among the highest privileges he has at present. Poor creature!—” (XX, 125). It ends: “Adieu my sovereign Lady. Take care of these ugly foggy evenings; we cannot quite afford to have you unwell! Also be patient with the dark man, who is forever loyal to you.”

It is no wonder, then, that Jane’s remarks about Lady Harriet seem always a mixture of resentment, admiration, and suspicion. Perhaps, as Geraldine Jewsbury told her, they had, in fact, a lot in common as far as character was concerned. Here, for instance is an early letter about her (10 October 1845) to Thomas:

“If I promised to spend the whole winter with Lady Harriet”! Bah! When did you know me do anything so green—so pea-green as that? She told me I had promised it formerly; that was all—Oh depend on me for “taking in my ground wisely” in that matter—with a wisdom equal to the solemnity of the occasion! I have already taken in a bit of my ground very wisely, in stipulating that when I did next visit her I should have some little closet “all to myself” to sleep in. (XX, 23)
Her report from Bay House on 16 November 1845 to Jeannie Welsh, the person with whom she always seems most at ease in all of her correspondence, is both informative and revealing.

I feel as if I should get on here in an even, middlingly pleasant sort of a way... I take things now very calmly—almost coolly—Lady Harriet seems a woman of good sense and perfect good breeding—and with a person of that sort one need not, unless one be a fool oneself have any collisions—at the same time she seems to me so systematic and superior to her natural feelings that however long and pleasantly I may live beside her I am sure I shall never feel warm affection for her nor inspire her with warm affection... Bay House will consequently not suit me so well as Seaforth House (XX, 58).

In another letter on 4 December 1845 Jane tells Jeannie Welsh that Lady Harriet has done nothing to “justify the character for haughtiness and caprice which she bears in society,” but adds that “she is not so well employed as she might be—but floats along on the top of things in a rather ignis fatuus [will-o’-the-wisp] sort of way.” Finally, she tells Jeannie: “There is no talk of going home—but I must go—alone if necessary” (XX, 70).

Perhaps the most revealing letter (24 April 1846), one that combines Jane’s “Carlylean” view that character depends on doing some useful work here on earth with her own personal feelings of jealousy and puzzlement, is that to another correspondent with whom she could be completely at ease, Helen Welsh:

The more I see of aristocratic life, the more I wonder how people with the same system of nerves as oneself, and with the same human needs, can keep themselves alive in it—and sane! Lady Harriet especially, who is the woman of largest intellect I have ever seen—how she can reconcile herself to a life which is after all a mere dramatic representation, however successful, fills me with astonishment and a certain sorrow. But like the pigs they “are used to it.”... A great Lady—should she take a notion to wrap herself in a blanket and go to sleep like Beauty... No! it is not easy for a Great Lady in these days to be anything but “an ornament to Society in every direction,” and that her Ladyship succeeds in being—to perfection! (XX, 179).

Jane concludes this letter by wondering what has tempted her into “this moral-essay style,” but by now the reader of her letters knows that the triangle will have to be worked out, as it eventually is after the quarrel and “separation” later in the same year and by Thomas’ apparent willingness to settle for much less of Lady Harriet’s company in the future. One needs again to be grateful for the useful annotation in this matter (see especially XX, 220, 222).

The matters of Cromwell and Lady Harriet aside, the letters again demonstrate Jane’s gift for writing, her wit and incisive commentary and keen observation, her ability at telling a story. There are, too, more hints of her feminist sensibilities, refreshing and salutary in a woman of her time and living in her circumstances. She writes to Forster on 17 April 1845 to tell him of her view of the case of Fraser vs. Bagley, in
which William Fraser accused his barrister friend of adultery with Mrs. Fraser. In printing part of this letter, A. Carlyle had omitted all references to this trial. Jane’s comments are particularly interesting in the light of our own present-day awareness of sexual harassment. “Yes indeed,” she writes,

that accursed Trial threw light for me on several things—especially on the questionableness of ‘Chambers’ and on the danger of calling anyone “My Dear”—before the nursemaid! For visiting one’s Husband’s friend at his chambers, or saying to him “My Dear” in the course of nature; a nineteenth-century married woman, it seems, tho “well up in years.”—“notorious for her house-keeping tendencies” “with no personal attractions to speak of,”—“always mending her own or her husband’s clothes in the evenings” (my own signalement [description] to a nicety) may be dragged before a Jury of her Countrymen and narrowly miss getting herself divorced!

She concludes:

This state of things weighs even on my insubordinate spirit, I can tell you, and clips my wings of impulse, in every direction. . . . I should have gone, now that I am able, to return your invalid visit; seeing that my Husband it too much occupied with the Dead just now to bestow a moment on the Living (XIX, 55).

Other times her comments in this manner are as pungently delivered. Writing to Jeannie Welsh (mid-April? 1845) about the medication she and Thomas take, she cannot resist making her point:

I had been wretchedly bilious for some days and sent him to Alsop’s for my blue pills—he also being in the practise of getting pills there—of five grains—which he swallows from time to time. . . . The pills came and I swallowed one, merely wondering why they had sent me only three instead of my customary dozen—but ten minutes after when I became deadly sick I understood at once how it was Carlyle frankly admitted it was quite likely there had been a mistake—“when he went into the shop a gentleman was with Alsop and he did not like to say send the blue pills for Mrs Carlyle but said instead send the blue pills for our house—Alsop of course had preferred [sic] the masculine gender as grammatically bound to do—and so was delicacy another person’s ‘own reward’ (XIX, 58).

There are many other passages in this vein, but perhaps two short excerpts will suffice to give their flavor and tone. In a self-deprecating conclusion to a letter written to Thomas on 25 July 1845, she writes:

[I] would rather remain in Hell—the Hell I make for myself with my restless digging, than accept this drowsy placidity—yes I begin to feel again that I am not la derniere de [sic] femmes [the last woman]—which has been oftener than anything else my reading of myself in these latter times—a natural enough reaction against the exorbitant self-conceit which put me at fourteen on setting up for a woman of
Genius. Now I should be only too pleased to feel myself a woman—"without the Genius"—a woman—not "a chimera" "a miserable fatuity"! (XIX, 108).

In another letter written from The Grange on 30 October 1846 she describes the Place and People to Jeannie Welsh. After telling Jeannie of the troubles Lady Harriet and her husband have had, especially the death of their daughter "burnt to death in Italy," she writes of Lady Harriet herself: "She has still such a suffering patient look! And this morning she was maintaining against me the Beauty and holiness of marriage even in these days!! Every mortal woman I fancy is born to be made miserable thro one cause or other and with this moral reflection I will conclude" (XXI, 84).

In spite of that sentiment, there is evidence in these volumes to support one's belief that Jane was, in fact, not always miserable and was able to maintain throughout her marriage to the difficult man that Thomas Carlyle shows himself to be, certainly during this period with Cromwell on his mind and soul, a sense of perspective; for throughout this period she never really loses those touches of humor and pleasure found in her earlier correspondence. Again, many examples might be found, but two will have to suffice.

There is her wonderful description of standing up to her uncle, who has tried to make her go to church. She gives Thomas (27 July 1845) all the details:

My Uncle at the last minute came to me in the room where I had fortified myself (morally) and asked with a certain enthusiasm; "are you not going to Church?"—"Ne—I have no thought of it."—"And why not? (crescendo)."—"Because your minister is a ranting Jackass that cracks the drum of one's ears!"—"Who told you that? (stamping like my grandfather)"—"I do not choose to compromise anyone by naming my authority"—"And what has that to do with going to a place of Worship?"—"nothing whatever, but it has a great deal to do with staying away from a place that is not 'of Worship'." He looked at me over his spectacles for an instant as if doubtful whether to eat me raw, or laugh—and "Eventually"—thanks God!—he chose the better part (XIX, 113).

There is, also as charmingly told, her description to Helen Welsh on 15 June 1847 of Geraldine Jewsbury's visit to her and her sense of responsibility towards Geraldine, who was apt to get on "dangerous ground" if not watched carefully:

But I as her Chaperon have had considerable qualms I can tell you!—Especially at Breakfast at Richard Milnes's the other morning—got up on purpose for us two—Carlyle was not asked—and tho' he might have gone if he liked would not go—so I had to be responsible not only for myself but for Geraldine—I thought the first entrance would be the worst of it—but figure my consternation on finding ourselves in a room with eight men! and not one woman! "Lady Duff Gordon had fallen sick"—I never made such a comfortless breakfast in my life—the situation
Typically Jane concludes on a light note: "I did not tell her that the chief apprehension which haunted me—was least I should be mixed up in the minds of these men with the Chapel scene and certain other questionabilities in Zoe."

The last letter of these three volumes is from Thomas to Jean Carlyle Aitken (30 June 1847). He has sent her a parcel of books, including some of his own, and he tells her that his and Jane’s “own movements lie utterly in the vague yet” and his “new book” is as yet "deep-buried; very deep under rubbish, dry and wet" (XXI, 246). He gives her some quotations from his friend, Oliver: “‘we must serve our generations,’ do what is in us while Time lasts, ‘and then we shall get to rest.’” His next published book, we know, was to be Latter-Day Pamphlets, a bitter survey of the conditions in his own nation which caused anxiety among many of his followers. No matter what one ultimately comes to think of the two Carlyles, Thomas and Jane, one does know that both did what was in them and both, Jane in her own way, it is true, did try to serve their generation. The way that they tried and how well they succeeded remains always an open question, but we must be grateful to the editors of the Collected Letters for helping us come to that decision by supplying us with these carefully edited volumes. They truly have, in the Carlylean sense, done their duty.

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CUNY


On 17 November 1868, the eighteen-year old Robert Louis Stevenson wrote from Edinburgh to his cousin, Bob, then at Cambridge:

Do you agree to something? If you keep my letters and I keep yours, what a curious retrospect it will be for us? My letters to you would form a history of myself, which, as I am too indolent to write a diary, I should like to have for future instruction and amusement (I, 169).
The self-consciousness which informs RLS’s wish to have his letters saved for himself (and posterity?) is hardly surprising in a young man whose desire to be a writer could be shared with his fashionably Bohemian cousin at Cambridge but not with his bourgeois parents in Edinburgh.

That Bob, and so many other correspondents, did save RLS’s letters is a measure both of his lively wit and personality and the early recognition by the recipients of a wordsmith in the making. Like many before him, RLS used his letters as a way of gauging and developing his creativity. To the cognoscenti he would send his latest efforts for criticism, and one of the many delights of these letters is witnessing the cross-fertilization that took place between writer and recipient and wondering how significant a part this played in the formation of a writer whose popularity has proved so enduring.

After a long gestation, the mass of Stevenson’s correspondence has at last been brought together in the new eight-volume Yale University Press edition edited by Ernest Mehew and the late Bradford A. Booth. This review looks at the first four volumes which cover Stevenson’s early life, the years from 1854 to 1884 when he moved through the phases of childhood to troubled adolescence, and an even more troubled early adulthood, to the time he married and began to mature as a man and a writer.

Letters have a unique way of revealing the personality, or rather, the personalities of an individual. While the closing signature may suggest coherence and stability, letters—particularly those of a writer—invariably serve as an arena for exploring real and fictional sides of character. And when the writer is someone who would later articulate the idea of multiple personalities—“that man is not really one but two”—then it is hardly surprising to find a multiplicity of contrasts in the letters of RLS. His friend, W. E. Henley, summed up RLS’s many masks:

Buffoon and lover, poet and sensualist:
A deal of Ariel, just a streak of Puck,
Much Antony, of Hamlet most of all,
And something of the shorter catechist.

“Apparition”

Such a cornucopia of personas makes for compelling reading.

The bulk of RLS’s early correspondence is to his mother and father, but the individuals who would play major roles in his life—Bob Stevenson, Frances Sitwell and Sydney Colvin, Charles Baxter, W. E. Henley, and Fanny Stevenson and her children—all emerge before 1884. The new editions provide very useful potted biographies of these dramatis personae which helps to situate their respective places in RLS’s life.

RLS composed his first letter at the age of four. To his adoring mother he dictated a note to his father (frequently away from home working on his engineering projects) urging him to hurry back and bring a book for him and “Mama too.” (1, 88) Predictably, Margaret Balfour Stevenson was the earliest collector of RLS’s
writings and, beginning with each stumbling infant achievement, she recorded his activities in a diary which she kept all his short life. The childhood letters challenge the idea of the stereotypical Victorian family. The Stevensons were a respectable, indeed distinguished, Edinburgh family but they were also fun-loving and enjoyed playing pranks on each other. Their wide circle of friends reads like a *Who's Who* of the period. The house seems to have been constantly filled with visitors and there was much boisterous entertainment—singing, dancing and musical evenings—in their home. But in this famous “Family of Engineers” there were also evening prayers, Bible readings, and the strict observation of the Presbyterian sabbath.

From the first, RLS was seen by his parents as gifted. He was surrounded by books, toy theaters, games—anything which would stimulate the young genius’s imagination was his. An only child, he became the center of Thomas and Margaret’s existence and, even in adolescence, when there were bitter quarrels over religious differences, his love and respect for them never waned. Yet, intense parental love can be stifling and, for a sick child confined to the house in the long dark months of winter, the lack of regular contact with other children must have left a mark. Certainly, his nurse “Cummy” (Alison Cunningham) was his loving attendant during those long nights of fever-induced dreams, but for the child the house must at times have seemed a prison, his parents and nurse his guards. Little wonder that so much of his life and work would be taken up with escape:

> When at home alone I sit  
> And I am very tired of it,  
> I have just to shut my eyes  
> To go sailing through the skies—  
> To go sailing far away  
> To the pleasant Land of Play,  
> To the fairy land afar  
> Where the Little People are...  
> “The Little Land”

It has often been noted that RLS’s enduring book of rhymes for children, *A Child’s Garden of Verses*, speaks with a double voice: the voice of the child and the more subtle, adult voice of the remembered pleasures and anxieties of childhood. The inclusion in his collection of a sequence entitled, “The Child Alone,” is a poignant reminder of childhood angst, and his letters (and later, articles) are witness to his acute sensitivity towards and understanding of a child’s world.

Summer was a time of reprieve. It was then that he could escape from the confines of the house and go to Colinton Manse, his grandfather Balfour’s house at the foot of the Pentland Hills, where he would be looked after by his Aunt Jane and, more importantly, play rough and tumble with his cousins Willie and Henrietta. At Colinton RLS could “recall nothing but sunny weather. That was my golden age” (“The Manse,” *Memories and Portraits*). Because of illness, formal education was irregular. When he was well enough, he attended school, but in his younger years these were invariably for short periods, and most of his education was done by
private tutors. As he grew to adolescence, his health improved, and by 1869 he was attending Robert Thomson's school where he continued until he went to University to follow in the family tradition by studying engineering.

During these years he sometimes worked away from home on his father's engineering projects, usually in remote parts of Scotland, and wrote long letters home to his mother about his experiences. These letters reveal an unusually intense intimacy between mother and son which suggests that the Oedipal resonances of RLS's adult relationships with women, which some critics have noted, is not entirely misplaced. But the letters also record in words and sketches the places and people he visited, material which would later be published as "The Education of an Engineer." This early pattern of recording, then later publishing, his experiences and adventures became a standard practice and led to the production of works like *An Inland Voyage*, *Travels with a Donkey*, *The Amateur Emigrant*, *Silverado Squatters*, and more.

Of the early letters to his mother, those written on his journeys to the remotest parts of Scotland—Orkney, Shetland and Fair Isle—are particularly striking. On Orkney, the magnificence of St Magnus's cathedral, its belfry "criss-crossed by great unpainted wooden beams and hung with the big bells," and its corkscrew staircases and narrow passages, appealed to his romantic sensibility, particularly his sense of place: "I know nothing so suggestive of legend, so full of superstition, so stimulating to a weird imagination, as the nooks and corners and bye-ways of such a church" (1, 179). Like an archaeologist discovering a lost city, RLS's response to a different landscape, structure or human community—his encounter with the "other"—was invariably an impetus to excavation, to uncover the multiple histories and mysteries contained in those material presences. Whether the Hawes Inn at Queensferry on the Firth of Forth or some remote island in the South Seas, the plots of so many of his works seem to have developed from the type of initial encounters he describes in these early letters.

When he reached Fair Isle, RLS was keen to know more about the fate of the Spanish sailors who landed there after the defeat of the Spanish Armada. But, unlike Orkney, this was a place and tale with little romance. He tells how the people were unwilling to talk about these events because "they believe it throws discredit on their ancestors; for many of these unfortunate seamen were murdered in the case of famine, with so many extra mouths to fill" (1, 189). On Fair Isle, the present was little better than the past:

Two twin old women of six and eighty years, literal skeletons, lived in misery and sickness in a wretched den waited on by the daughter of one, now well up in years herself. One of these had burnt her foot the day before, and the cloth she had wrapped about it was no finer than ordinary sacking. Their only hope was death.

Such more or less seems the condition of the people. Beyond reach of all communication, receiving such stray letters as may come not once in six long months, with diseased bodies, and wretched homes, they drag out their lives in the wildest and most barren island of the north. Their crops, raised after hard labour from a cold and stony soil, can only support them for three months out of the twelve. Indeed their only
life is from the sea. It is the sea that brings the fish to their nets: it is the sea that strew's their shores with the spoils of wrecked vessels (l, 191).

At Lerwick in the Shetland Isles, he was confronted by yet more human suffering. A young man who had been "sentenced to forty-five days imprisonment for shooting ducks at Unst [had] hanged himself" (l, 181). As with Fair Isle, so too with Shetland, the past was yet colder comfort:

... leprosy and lazarus houses lingered into the last century in this Ultima Thule of the ancients: and was succeeded by smallpox so violent that it swept away one third of the population. In Foula out of two hundred souls, there were left six men to bury friends, and relatives and neighbours. Shortly afterwards, inoculation was brought [in] in its more violent form when it killed one out of every four or five (l, 183).

RLS was nineteen when he wrote these letters home, and it is a measure of his maturity and humanity that, at so young an age, he could capture so graphically, and so sensitively, the appalling cruelties of marginal survival. This early encounter with human want and suffering stayed with him all his life. Indeed, these lines prefigure much of his writing on the South Seas where he was again confronted by a history of plagues and pestilences which had depopulated even those living in the kinder climate of the Pacific Islands.

RLS gained much from his travels around Scotland in these years. Encounters with varying sea- and landscapes invariably led to a desire to know more, and there were many requests sent home for history books. His most frequent demand was for material on the Covenanters, those rebellious Calvinists whose passionate follies would continue to fascinate him all his life. For a time, he seems to have enjoyed the life of an engineer, particularly the camaraderie of physical labor which often left him tired but satisfied. The contact with so many different types of people whose characteristics he would delight in describing to his mother was another bonus of this life. Like Joyce, RLS seems never to have met anyone he found uninteresting.

But by 1871 RLS had recognized that the profession of engineering was not in his destiny. In what was to be the first of many confrontations with his father, he broke the news that he "cared for nothing but literature," received a predictable response and, by way of appeasement, agreed to study law. Thus began one of the most unhappy periods of his life. RLS loved his parents deeply and that he should be the cause of their anxiety and unhappiness took an immense toll on his physical and mental health. He believed passionately that he had the right to pursue a literary life and was deeply conscious of the divisiveness caused by the contradictory choices he knew he would have to make sooner or later. Meanwhile, that emotional split would be played out in his student life. He would frequent the pubs and brothels of the Old Town in Edinburgh, at once relishing the adventure and despising his self-inflicted degradation, a duality he would subsequently explore in the psychologically rich, "A Chapter on Dreams," and, of course, The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde.
Yet, the letters reveal there was also light in the dark. RLS joined Edinburgh University’s literary and debating group, the Speculative Society, which gave him a much-needed outlet both for his literary interests and his emerging religious dissension. The “Spec” also offered him like-minded companions, one of whom, Charles Baxter, would become his lifelong friend and literary agent.

In the same period, his cousin Bob (Robert Alan Mowbray) Stevenson, returned to Edinburgh. Bob, a few years older than RLS, had graduated from Cambridge with a BA and was now studying art in Edinburgh. His unorthodox social and religious attitudes gave Thomas and Margaret cause for anxiety, but to RLS Bob was an artist, and therefore a soul-mate.

Their correspondence began in 1866 when Bob was first at Cambridge. Literary topics dominate the early letters: Dummies, Edgar Allan Poe, Whitman, Disraeli, Tennyson, Swinburne, Keats, are commented on in some detail, with RLS clearly showing a marked preference for the first three on this list. Some of his comments on the “great” English writers are entertainingly iconoclastic. On Keats’s “highest ideal”—“Beauty is truth, truth beauty”—he writes, “What a grovelling ideal! What an enervating atmosphere” (I, 166). Prolonged readings of Swinburne, he warns, “would either make you mad or moral” (I, 165). And later (to W. E. Henley), Dickens’s Miss Havisham “is, probably, the worst thing in human fiction” (IV, 92). There are plans to collaborate on an historic drama on the Covenanters, “Monmouth: A Tragedy” (I, 124-6). Poems are sent for comments and approval and RLS confides that he is determined to overcome his mood swings and avoid the self-destructiveness of Chatterton and Burns (I, 169). He writes of his nights in the Old Town and of his desire to help the dispossessed he encounters there, but cannot because he does not trust himself. He experiences attacks of “morbid melancholy,” tries to find “Haschish,” determines to get drunk but ends “(as usual) by going to a graveyard.” While these letters suggest that this was a black period in RLS’s life, perhaps they should be read with some skepticism. After all, Baudelaire was then one of his favorite writers.

By 1870 the real crisis which was fomenting in his life was the coming confrontation with his father. Bob’s religious views were seen by Margaret and Thomas as the primary cause of their son’s maladies, but Bob was not the real reason for RLS’s attack on Presbyterianism. He had read widely on religious matters and wanted desperately to discuss the issues of Christian orthodoxy:

Here is another terrible complaint I bring against our country. I try to learn the truth, and their grim-faced dummies, their wooden effigies and creeds dead years ago at heart, come round me, like the wooden men in *Phantastes*, and I may cut at them and prove them faulty and mortal, but yet they can stamp the life out of me. What a failure must not this Christian country be, when I who found it easy to be a vicious good companion, find nothing but black faces and black prospects when once I try honestly to inquire into the words this very Christ of theirs spent all his life in speaking and repeating. When I think of this, look you, I grow as bitter against ministers and elders and the like (I, 255).
In the ensuing family turmoils, RLS continued to look to Bob for support but he also found in Frances Sitwell an even more congenial and understanding correspondent. They first met in Suffolk when RLS was visiting a cousin. Frances was grieving over the death of her child, and her marriage was also in trouble. She had a friendship with Sydney Colvin, already a distinguished critic, who had recently been appointed Slade Professor of Fine Art at Cambridge. Later, Frances Sitwell and Sydney Colvin would marry.

Colvin became RLS's link to the literary world, introducing him to leading writers and encouraging him to publish in journals like the *Fortnightly Review* and the *Cornhill Magazine*. When RLS was established as a writer, Colvin became editor of his works and, posthumously, produced the earliest editions of his letters. While Colvin included some of RLS's letters to Frances in his edition, he understandably omitted those which might be misinterpreted and perhaps call his wife's character into question. The new Yale edition restores the earlier omissions of this important correspondence so that for the first time the reader has access to these long, intimate, youthfully passionate letters.

In Frances he found another "soul-mate," but this time there was a sexual frisson. He addresses her as "Claire" or "Consuelo," or the ideal and unattainable "Madonna":

I want to tell you all manner of small things out of my own life, all sorts of infinitesimal joys and sorrows and disappointments and happy surprises, that I desire to share with my dearest of all friends; and yet these and many other things (do you understand me?) it seems a sort of insincerity to write about between us two, as when people talk of the weather for a long time, warily avoiding something of superlative interest to both (I, 290-1).

Frances is his "confessional," his "faith," and the confidant of his worsening family problems: the long bitter arguments about religion with his father; Thomas's attack on Bob as the man who had ruined his house and his son; his mother in hysterics after each family battle; his increasingly desperate need to be financially independent that he might be free to live his own life (I, 294-7).

But there are also lighter moments and, as with the early letters to his mother, some wonderful descriptions, like this one of Edinburgh when he was on one of his "excursions" with Baxter:

I cannot make things fall into sentences—they only sprawl over the paper in bald, orphan clauses... I was about in the afternoon with Baxter...and we had a good deal of fun rhyming on the names of all the shops we passed, and afterwards buying needles and quack drugs from open-air vendors and taking much pleasure in their inexhaustible eloquence. Every now and then as we went, Arthur's Seat showed its head at the end of the street...there was about the hill in these glimpses, a sort of thin, unreal, crystalline distinctness that I have not often seen excelled. As the sun began to go down over the valley between the new town and the old, the evening grew resplendent; all the gardens and low-lying buildings sank back and became almost invisible in a mist of wonderful
sun, and the Castle stood up against the sky, as thin and sharp in outline as a castle cut out of paper (I, 329-30).

Despite his disclaimer about "orphan clauses" there is clearly an undeclared agreement between the two that he has an exceptional talent and, at this time in his life, she is the one who can best understand his need to explore and develop it. He tells her of his hopes and plans for his life as a writer and shares with her the excitement of his earliest publications.

The correspondence between the two began in September 1873, and while they would remain in contact all of RLS's life, the intensity had run its course by the end of 1875. Was RLS in love with Frances? Yes he was, and with all the fervor, ardor and romantic posturing that is part of a young man's first passion. Did he, as some critics have claimed, have an affair with her? This seems highly unlikely. Separated from her husband, but planning to marry Sydney Colvin, Frances Sitwell had a reputation to protect. No doubt she had feelings for this bright, engaging and talented young man ten years younger than her and, while without access to her letters (at her wish RLS destroyed them) it is impossible to come to a final judgment, it would seem her affection for RLS was more that of a mother than a lover. When they met she had recently lost a son whom she would never see grow to a young man, and RLS, at war with his parents, was feeling and playing the part of an abandoned child. They had a mutual dependence and if he was unaware of this at the beginning of their association, this was not the case towards the end:

my mother is my father's wife...the children of lovers are orphans. O dear mother, I am so pleased, so content, so satisfied; I am very young at heart—or (God knows) very old—and what I want is a mother, and I have one now, have I not? Some one from whom I shall have no secrets, some one whom I shall love with a love as great as a lover's and yet more; with whom I shall have all a lover's tenderness and none of a lover's timidity; who shall be something fixed and certain and forever true.... You have adopted me, consolation of my soul, I am yours and you have a duty to me; you are bound to me, and I am bound to you, by something holier than an oath (II, 103).

What RLS's letters to Frances Sitwell record are a young man's right-of-passage, for by 1876, despite all obstacles, he had acquired a sense of certainty about his future.

But how did Colvin respond to all the attention his future wife was receiving? RLS's description of him as a "true and noble-minded man" seems apt. There is evidence that Colvin cautioned RLS when he felt he was crossing certain boundaries but on the whole his attitude was remarkably tolerant as he played father and mentor to what he clearly recognized was an extraordinary talent. Although later, the conservative Colvin would be critical of RLS's innovativeness, RLS remained grateful to Colvin all his life for the way in which the older man (he was in fact only five years older but clearly more mature) had helped and sustained him through a difficult time.
Perhaps it was Colvin’s steadying influence that helped RLS to deal with his father. In an eloquently understated letter written from Paris in 1877 there is a touching reference to the father and son’s reconciliation:

My dear Father. Thanks for your note, it was so nice I don't know what to say to it; but you know I love you all... And you know, or you don’t know, how much and how dearly I think of you ever since I received a certain letter (of which this somehow reminded me) all about dogs and tobacco, when I was in Patmos at Mentone. We won't say any more about that, but we understand each other, don’t we? (II, 201).

In August of 1876 RLS set out on his first travel adventure. With Walter Simpson, a friend from the Speculative Society, he went to Belgium to begin the journey by canoe, the account of which would later form the substance of his first book, *An Inland Voyage*. After this short expedition, RLS traveled to France to join Bob at an artist’s colony at Grez. It was there, probably in September 1976 (the date is uncertain), he met the woman who would change the course of his life. Fanny Vandegrift Osbourne was an American and, as Alexandra LaPierre has documented in her recent biography, *Fanny Stevenson: Muse, Adventuress and Romantic Enigma*, she was a fiercely self-directed and free-spirited woman. As with Frances Sitwell, Fanny was separated from her husband when she and RLS first met, she was grieving over the death of a young son, and she was ten years older than Louis.

The course of the affair and the eventual marriage is difficult to map for, disappointingly, there are no letters which relate to this most significant event in RLS’s life. What is known was recorded later, mainly by Fanny’s two surviving children, Belle and Lloyd, who were with her at Grez. Certainly, it seems that the attraction on RLS’s side was instant. Fanny’s affection developed more slowly. In the early days, this must have seemed a doomed affair. Fanny was still married and therefore unattainable. RLS, at least at first, seems to have recognized that he had no choice but to accept the situation. When in July 1878 Fanny and her children returned to America, he set out for the Cévennes with the donkey, Modestine, on a travel adventure which also proved a pilgrimage of self-discovery, and the account of which, when published, would redefine travel writing.

Sick and desperate over his longing to be with Fanny, in July 1879 RLS’s situation had become unbearable and, on what seems like an impulse, decided to pursue Fanny by going to America. When he arrived at Greenock to board the *Devonia* for his trip to New York he sent this letter to Sydney Colvin:

The enclosed is to go to my father. I have never been so much detached from life; I feel as if I cared for nobody, and as for myself I cannot believe fully in my own existence, I seem to have died last night... I have a strange, rather horrible sense of the sea before me, and can see no further into the future. I can say honestly I have at this moment neither a regret, a hope, a fear or an inclination; except a mild one for a good bottle of wine which I resist— O and one fear! a fear of getting wet. I never was in such a state. I
have just made my will. . . . God bless you all and keep you is the prayer of the husk which once contained R.L.S. (III, 2-3).

RLS’s constellation of male friends had tried desperately to dissuade him for undertaking such a journey in such a poor state of health. But, as the above letter suggests, RLS was driven.

When the news was broken to Thomas Stevenson, he responded—not by denouncing his son—but by immediately wiring money to him to ease his journey, and would later settle an annuity of two hundred and fifty pounds on him. When RLS landed in New York he had deteriorated physically but he resumed his journey and traveled by train across America to join Fanny in Monterey. It was from Monterey that he confided to Charles Baxter:

I did the right thing . . . the effect of my arrival has straightened out everything. As now arranged there is to be a private divorce in January . . . and yours truly will be a married man as soon thereafter as the law and decency permit. The only question is whether I shall be alive for the ceremony (III, 18).

The couple finally married in San Francisco in May 1880 and quickly moved out of the city to the cleaner air of Silverado, for RLS had been having lung hemorrhages and was indeed at death’s door. Fanny herself was recovering from a bout of diphtheria during which RLS had cared for her but was now well enough to nurse him until they could both undertake the journey to Edinburgh and a reunion with his parents. This alternating pattern of nurse and patient would be played out by the two the rest of their lives together.

Thomas and Margaret Stevenson welcomed their new daughter-in-law, and were probably overwhelmed with gratitude, believing that, whatever her shortcomings, she had saved their son’s life. But RLS was still far from well and he would now renew that search for health which would continue to elude him until he found respite in those few, final years in Samoa.

In October 1880, Fanny and Louis set off for Davos, a health resort in the Swiss Alps which he would return to the following year in the vain belief that it would help cure him. Davos was a miserable place. RLS was often confined to bed, sometimes with his eyes covered and his arms restrained. He would have night fevers and hallucinate from the opium he was prescribed. And he would hardly find comfort in the almost daily death rolls of children and adults who had succumbed to the then unidentified tubercle bacillus, one of whom was Frances Sitwell’s eighteen-year old son, Bertie.

When he was well enough, he would seek out company and was delighted when he met John Addington Symonds, a fellow sufferer and regular resident at Davos and, as RLS readily acknowledged, a man of superior intellect. But RLS also had the company of Fanny’s young son, Lloyd, and they would play games together like two children, rather than man and boy. By way of diversion, RLS had a small printing press sent out to Davos which was used to print the delightful Moral Emblems.
Despite the limitations imposed by his poor health, it was in these years that RLS really began to make his mark as a writer. He had come to the notice of critics and the public with his essays and travel writings, but now he was entering a new phase. In August 1881, when the extended family were holidaying in Braemar in Scotland, he wrote excitedly about a new work to W. E. Henley whom he had collaborated with on several plays, and whom he had first met at Edinburgh Royal Infirmary when Henley, who suffered from tuberculosis of the bone, had had his leg amputated. Louis and Lloyd had drawn a map of an island, and a plot had developed, its title, “The Sea Cook or Treasure Island: A Story for Boys”:

If this don’t fetch the kids, why they have gone rotten since my day. Will you be surprised to learn that it is about Buccaneers, that it begins in the Admiral Benbow public house on [the) Devon Coast, that it’s all about a map and a mutiny and a derelict ship and a current and a fine old Squire Trelawny, . . . and a doctor and another doctor, and a Sea Cook with one leg, and a sea song with the chorus ‘Yo-ho-ho and a bottle of Rum’ (III, 224-5).

The rest really is history. Serialization of Treasure Island in Young Folks’ Magazine (1 Oct. 1881–28 Jan. 1882) was followed by book publication in 1882. RLS, if he had not quite arrived, could not be ignored, particularly when a literary lion like Henry James showered fulsome praise on this future classic. The same year, RLS’s critical debates with James were published in his collection of essays, Familiar Studies of Men and Books, his short stories appeared as New Arabian Nights, and an account of his time in California emerged as Silverado Squatters.

Still in poor health but now determined not to return to Davos, the family went in search of another health resort, this time at Hyères in the South of France. But when they arrived they looked instead for a house and found in “La Solitude” a place where they would settle until June 1884. Thus began another brief period in RLS’s life which, like his time as a boy at Colinton, would prove another “golden age.”

This discussion of the first four volumes of RLS’s letters only hints at the riches that are there. Little has been said about the comic spirit that infuses so many of the letters, or of his self-exploration of the writer’s psyche, or of the extraordinary range of his reading in the classics, history, law, science, and all kinds of literatures, or of his delight in (and analyses of) speech—particularly the richness of his native Scots, or of the love and concern he showed to almost everyone he met and out of which grew the many long and loyal friendships to which these letters stand witness.

And then, of course, there is also the understanding gained from the new biographical material, only a little of which has been explored here, but much of which calls into question the usefulness of some of the biographies published in RLS’s centenary year. These new editions of the letters not only identify the major players in RLS’s life but have also traced, with admirable perseverance, many of the minor ones.

Each of the four volumes is divided into the sequential periods of RLS’s life, and these are prefaced by a commentary which gives a narrative continuity to the
whole. The footnotes are most often concise but where the reference demands some information on the historical or other contexts more details are given. Volume One provides a gallery of portraits of the chief correspondents and a list of “Short Titles” of works referred to in the letters and notes. It would have been useful to have this list reprinted in each volume so that the reader could more easily refer to it. There is the occasional editorial misspelling, and the numbers in the Index of Correspondents are not always reliable, but these are minor quibbles. The editors have performed a remarkable service in bringing RLS’s disparate manuscripts together from public and private sources to give us these long-awaited letters from what must now be recognized as one of the great masters of the form.

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These three volumes, beautifully produced, are the first in the projected Stirling / South Carolina Research Edition of the Collected Works of James Hogg. They each come with an introduction, notes and a glossary. It is in fact hard to see how they could be bettered. The General Editor Douglas S. Mack is to be congratulated and so are the individual editors of each volume, that is Douglas S. Mack again, P. D. Garside, David Groves and Antony Hasler. Edinburgh University Press are also to be praised for the elegant presentation of the books. It is wonderful that at last we are going to have a collected edition of this important author without bowdlerization or linguistic interference.

I suppose that a non-specialist like myself will be looking for something of the quality of *Confessions of a Justified Sinner* in these volumes. *The Shepherd’s Calendar* (very unlike that of Spenser) is a miscellany of documentary,
traditional and creative writing. Thus there are articles about Storms, Dogs, the Lasses, with much vivid interesting writing in each of them. It is in the other writings, however, that we find Hogg's interest in the supernatural—fairies and devils—and in dreams.

These other stories are never simple anecdotes but are entwined with the psychological. Also, when there are murders or attempted murders, they are often punished by divine justice. Thus Mr. Adamson is destroyed by a bolt of lightning for his aggressive and bullying actions, especially towards a beggar who in fact may be the devil. And the villain in "Rob Dodds" is also punished. These stories come from a strange eerie world. Thus in "George Dobson’s Expedition to Hell" a coachman sees in a dream a vision of Hell and suffers his own death in reality. Here we find ambiguities, double meanings, as in his famous masterpiece. "The Souters of Selkirk," on the other hand, has the surrealist logical logic of the folk tale, and the typical variations on the number "three." "Smithy Cracks" (and I sometimes think that for Hogg there was a close connection between hell and the fire and anvil of the smithy) shows a casual remark blossoming out of control towards the extraordinary uncovering of an attempted murder. "Mary Burnet" is about the repeated resurrection of a girl who has apparently drowned while running from a suitor—(the use of the word "drowned" at the top of page 204 (line 6) is very fine).

Hogg has also the power to involve us in his supernatural world because he seems to believe in it. And much of the supernatural emerges in his wonderful Scots language, as a buried body (and there are many buried bodies and resurrections in his works) might emerge from a seething earth. His variety of language is remarkable, as in the mathematical playfulness in "Smithy Cracks" though I must admit that I grew rather tired of what passes for Highland English.

The most interesting story in the book is the last one, "The Brownie of the Black Haggs." The conception here is quite brilliant. Whenever the brownie’s mistress attempts or commits an evil deed, it rebounds on herself like a justly weighted boomerang. Thus in attempting to kill the brownie she kills her son. The manner in which the mistress is dependent on the brownie has the sure touch of a Dostoevsky, who specialized in nightmarish slavish devotions:

... and the last time she was seen alive, it was following the uncouth creature up the water of Daur, weary, wounded and lame.

Hogg is a connoisseur of evil and there is a story here—"The Laird of Cassway"—which is about the feud of two brothers, as the Confessions partly is.

Throughout the book there is, as already said, a wonderfully rich Scottish language, and also the use of the telling detail. Thus in the midst of the lightning in "Mr Adamson of Laverhope": "there was a black Highland cow came running up the glen with her stake hanging at her neck" and also at the end of
the same story, "There were some melted drops of silver standing on the case of his watch, as well as on some of his coat-buttons."

*A Queer Book* is composed of some of Hogg's poems, many of them ballads. In general, the ones written in English are the least successful. Here and there we find echoes of Coleridge's "Christabel," Gray's "Elegy" and the provenance often feels Wordsworthian. He has the fluidity of Scott but his images are often stranger. There hovers over this book (at least the best of it) a kind of gigantic presence, not always malign, like the monster in Goya's painting. Often this image occurs but never so powerfully as in "The Grousome Caryl," which has a wonderful almost Dantean detail, as in the following verse:

And aye they quaffit the reide warme tyde,
Their greide it wals so ryffe,
Then trailit the bodies into the holle
Though fleckeryng still with lyffe. (ll. 226-30)

There is also a grim humor which surfaces now and again as in

But they drappit the fiendis in Gallowaye... 
Als the worste helle they knewe. (ll. 317, 322)

For me this poem is one of the high points of the book.

I was also impressed by; "The Wyffe of Edzel-more" with its transformations of men and women into birds. (This is a constant theme with Hogg, people and sometimes animals not being what they appear to be.) Again in this poem we have wonderful images:

And I can skaille the egellis neste
And skaire him from his eyrie soone
And I can wyng his lordlye necke
Betwein the quhyte cloudde and the moone.
(Fyte the Seconde, ll. 167-70)

It is I think in the twilight world of the supernatural with its changing ambiguous shapes that Hogg is most at home as we can also see in "The Goode Manne of Allowa."

Sometimes, as again in "The Wyffe of Edzel-more," we may find a pure picture of serenity, all the purer for being surrounded by the smoke and flame of the inferno:

And the merlyn haag in the myddel ayre
With his lyttle wyngis outspreadde
Als if let down from the heuinis there
By ane viewlesse sylken threadde.
(Fyte the Fourthe, ll. 93-6)
Often we are brought up short by masterfully imaginative images in poems otherwise not very good. And lines can be unintentionally funny as "A halo of sweets her form surrounded" (l. 14) (in "A Highland Eclogue").

For many of the poems he has also invented a spelling which might appear vaguely mediaeval and which allows him interesting effects. Words slide between different meanings. Thus "could" written as "colde" may evoke a shadowy echo of "cold"; or "Wanbrydlit" for "unbridled" may profit from the resonance of "wan." "Maide" for "made" may in a certain context conjure up the word "maid." So also "saille" for "sale" may summon the word "sail." Thus it is that the very language shimmers and flickers as the supernatural beings shimmer and flicker in and out of "reality." I am sure Hogg knew very well what he was doing in that modern way of seizing on psychological and linguistic nuances. His resources of language are very wide but generally speaking his English poems with their decorum and Christian correctness seem least alive with the eel-like motions of language.

As I have said, some of his poems are Englishly conventional and often spoilt by moralizing. However it is hard to think of anyone else apart from MacDiarmid who has the disquieting sense of the other-worldly which Hogg has. "The Goode Manne of Allowa" also has some fine images drawn from the sea:

And jewylis glowit on hir whyte hass-bane,
And rounde hir hollande serke;
But ane mossell held hir by the nose.
Als harde als hee colde yerke. (ll. 229-32)

In my opinion, such images are beyond Scott (in his poetry). They are to be found perhaps in the ballads to whose provenance Hogg seems to be able to transport himself at will.

The Three Perils of Woman is a puzzling book. It is in three sections, the second and third of which are connected. The sections illustrate Love, Leasing (Lying) and Jealousy though within sections two or three of these can be found. As is usual with Hogg there are deaths and sometimes resurrections, of Gatty in the first section and apparently of Mackenzie in the third. If it was said I think by Shakespeare's Rosalind that no one ever died of love, Hogg seems to be trying to prove the opposite in the first section. Love is considered almost as a disease which may be fatal. There is much fuss around graves in the second and third sections, the latter of which is set in a macabre post-Culloden Highlands.

Hogg calls these Domestic Tales, but David Groves in a fine Afterword seems to have little difficulty in proving that Hogg may in fact be trying to subvert the Domestic Tale. The main feature in the first story is Gatty's apparent

1Shakespeare, As You Like It, IV, I... "men hav died from time to time... but not of love."
death and then her revival (during which twilight period she has a child which later she does not recognize as her own son). David Groves characterizes her malady as a kind of catatonic schizophrenia and points to the sexual undercurrents in the book. This incident and Cherry's death certainly explode any superficial romance elements in the story.

The books are much possessed by death and graves as was common in English literature at a certain period (though one must admit that there is a farcical by-play among the graves which might perhaps be more familiar in a Scottish writer who is willing to mix genres). The chill of the post-Culloden Highlands is well caught in the third story with its mercenary grave digger.

The telling of these stories is very confident. I must say, however, that unlike some critics I do not believe that the book is on the same level as the Confessions. It is hard to know what Gatty's prolonged illness and "resurrection" is symbolic of, though the telling is powerful enough. If it were a subversion of the domestic tale, should it not have a freer (perhaps more humorous) text? In that sense it does not seem to me that the subversion is clearly enough focused. The tone is too serious, not to say grave.

Of course there is humor, much of it coming from Richard Rickleton, in the first book. There are duels, epistolary writing, a discovery of identity. However, if it is meant to be deliberate subversion then certainly it is not done as cleverly and clearly as in Fielding, to take only one example. It seems to me that in the that sense the characters are half in half out his imagination as they are sometimes half in and half cut of graves. However, this is not to say that there is not much powerful writing including a wonderful prayer by Gatty's father who also supplies some humor. But I still feel uneasy about the tone.

It may be that Hogg was trying to compete with Scott in the "national" novel as suggested here, but Hogg's gift was not for Scott's sort of novel, objectively and outwardly conceived.

There is undoubtedly a strongly sentimental and even moving quality about the life and death of Cherry. But it is a sickly, almost Kailyardy power. It may be that Hogg did not "know enough" about the background to his characters to make them truly consistent and interesting. I certainly tend to lose patience with Gatty at times.

The best of this book is in the macabre atmosphere of a post-Culloden Highlands. It is, however, lack of perspective and distancing which is lacking if he meant to compete with Scott, which he couldn't do on Scott's terms for much of Hogg's talent was for the inward, and he bears roughly the same relationship to Scott as Dostoevsky to Tolstoy. That is to say, Scott has the ability to give a panoramic outward feel to his stories. Hogg's gift did not lie in that direction. He is more at home with the exception than with the general. Dostoevsky has some areas of the sickly, but his imagination was able to allow his characters to operate with consistency in the external world.

However, this enterprise is certainly justified in terms of our getting Hogg's texts right. What emerges very clearly is the width of his linguistic
resources, even to his attempt at a Northumberland dialect. This I think is what modern Scottish writers can learn from, that English should not have a privileged position but be one language among many. Hogg is clearly an uneven writer (as indeed Scott was), but he had the gift of spawning extraordinary images as MacDiarmid had. I look forward to the other volumes with much interest and indeed would thank the editors for unfolding this world to me and for showing the original as freshly as it was meant to be shown.

IAIN CRICHTON SMITH
Taynuilt, Argyll


To Dr. Andrew Noble, Senior Lecturer and head of the English section of the Department of English Studies at the University of Strathclyde, must go the credit for proposing the annual conferences which have now become an eagerly anticipated fixture in the Burns season. Since January 1990 these seminars on the life and works of Robert Burns have been staged in Glasgow under the auspices of the Centre for Scottish Cultural Studies and organized and chaired by Dr. Simpson, the Centre’s Director.

Each year, up to six papers are given by recognized authorities on Burns, and from the output of the first four years Kenneth Simpson has distilled the quintessence of contemporary research, in eleven of the papers published in this volume. The twelfth, the chapter entitled “My Tocher’s the Jewel: Love and Money in the Songs of Burns” by Professor Donald Low, was not delivered at the seminar but is a most worthy and thought-provoking addition to the present work.

The seminars themselves have been distinguished by rich variety, both in subject matter and in the manner of presentation. Not included (arguably because it defied editing) was Liz Lochhead’s humorous, irreverent, (and it must be conceded, often irrelevant) discourse, apparently delivered extemore; but something of the rare feast of wit to which audiences have been treated may be found in Iain Crichton Smith’s paper entitled “Some Thoughts of Murdo” which rounds off this volume in cracking style. Murdo (whose collected thoughts were published in 1993) is the sort of Gaelic homespun philosopher which the Island of Lewis seems to produce as prolifically as peat-banks and bog cotton. In this paper, in which the crofter-sage holds forth on Burns and
the Humble Mouse, we are given a hilarious spoof on academic papers, although Iain Crichton Smith (who is a Visiting Professor at Strathclyde University) presents Murdo’s thoughts with a wit, polish and elegance that might well serve as models to his more staid colleagues.

Two of the papers deal specifically with Burns and song. A refreshing approach is provided by Jo Miller, herself a singer and performer, who focuses on “how singers feel and perform songs, and how they are received.” She highlights the differences between text and performance, and graphically illustrates the problems often besetting the singers of songs whose melodies were taken from instrumental (mainly fiddle) settings. She sheds a perceptive light on the poet’s relationship to the song-culture by means of the concept of “participant observation” and what she terms “his creative engagement with the oral and literary environments of his time.”

The year 1993 was remarkable in Burns scholarship for the publication of Donald Low’s monumental *Songs of Robert Burns*, ninety years after James Dick’s pioneering study and handsomely making up for the relative neglect of this aspect of Burns’s work. In his essay, Professor Low draws attention to the fact that although Burns’s career as a song-writer and as a collector and mender of traditional ballads and folk-songs was short (little more than a decade), it was pursued with almost manic intensity, all the more astonishing when it is remembered that Burns was also combining his activities as a farmer with the exacting duties of the excise officer for much of that period. That grossly overworked word “charismatic,” so often applied to Burns in general, was never better merited than in relation to his songs, so many of which form part of the standard repertoire the world over to this day.

Just as in Jo Miller’s paper we have a glimpse of Burns from the other side of the fence, so too we get a different perspective on the poet in the essay by Edwin Morgan. Interestingly, this was apparently the renowned contemporary poet’s first publication on his elder brother in the muse, explaining that “the poetry itself has such clarity, and obviously gives so much enjoyment without having to make a labored case for it,” that he had not felt moved in the past to submit it to deep analysis. This is in marked contrast with Hugh MacDiarmid who published a great deal about Burns, much of it critical. “Now that both Burns and MacDiarmid are a part of history, there is not the same need to take sides” he adds tactfully.

Although going over familiar ground, quoting extensively from Dugald Stewart, Sir Walter Scott and Maria Riddell who had come under the magnetic spell of Burns, Morgan gives us his own impressions. Burns’s ability to switch between pathos and comedy (both ways), “a broad, life-giving, therapeutic comedy,” is something which Morgan responds to most strongly in Burns. He also finds very congenial Burns’s dramatic sense, “his habit of direct address, which goes with his outgoing personality.” So, too, Morgan is attracted to his “racy, unbuttoned, freewheeling verse Epistles”—humorous, yet serious too; these letters in verse were allegedly careless and spontaneous but Morgan
detects the consummate craftsmanship of a fellow practitioner. He also draws attention to Burns's adeptness at conveying, often in a few words, images "which reverberate in your mind and make you wonder where the impact came from."

In "Burns and Nostalgia," Carol McGuirk begins with Henry Ward Beecher's famous aphorism at the New York celebration of the poet's centenary in 1859: "His life was a failure until he died. Ever since it has been a marvelous success." One is immediately reminded of a contemporary parallel when one nameless cynic commented laconically on the death of Elvis Presley, "Good career move." Professor McGuirk defines nostalgia broadly as "our impulse to preserve in memory select details only of what is lost in the course of historical, social and personal change" adding that, unlike grief, nostalgia can be pleasurable because it is quite capable of commemorating losses that never, historically speaking, occurred. Indeed, this is the essence of nostalgia, enabling us to remember the good things while blotting out the bad. She illustrates the selectivity of the perception of Burns through the medium of the enormous volume of material conveniently categorized as Burnsiana, whose focus is predominantly anecdotal or nostalgic rather than critical and factual, and which perpetrated the Burns Myth and perpetuates the Burns Cult. Pictures which have become embedded in the collective consciousness help to reinforce the myth and Carol McGuirk cites in particular some of the artistic representations of the muse of poetry encountering Burns at the plough, and that "cliché of clichés" the rather effeminate portrait painted by Nasmyth. Indeed, by also reproducing the photograph of Jean Armour Burns Brown, the poet's great-granddaughter, superimposed on the Nasmyth bust of her famous ancestor, Professor McGuirk underscores this point (although she also makes out that almost anyone—Napoleon, Elvis Presley, Mary Pickford—would fit just as well, for the original image is so vague. Even more divorced from reality were the nineteenth-century narrative paintings and engravings which sought to recapture or convey dramatic moments in the poet's life, of which "Burns and Highland Mary" was arguably the most popular (and hence ludicrously overworked).

The most intriguing point raised in this paper is the parallel descriptions of the disinterments of Burns (1815) and Robert Wringhim (1824) given respectively by John McDiarmid and James Hogg, leading one to suppose that Hogg's fictional account was written with the other in mind. And, as Carol McGuirk speculates, Hogg did know McDiarmid intimately, so the connection seems very likely. Typical of her lively and provocative approach, McGuirk says that "if Burns was their Elvis, Scotland was the Victorians' theme park, their Disney World. Where did Stanley go after finding Livingstone, upon his triumphant return from Africa? He went to Alloway, to wait upon the Misses Begg, the poet's nieces." In this welter of often contradictory images and icons Carol McGuirk considers that the process will continue until the Scots settle on a single definition of their national identity and character. Somehow, she feels, the "Immortal Memory" is likely to be toasted for many years to come.
One aspect of the Burns Myth, created at the beginning of his career and assiduously cultivated by Burns himself, was the notion of the heaven-taught ploughman. "Heaven-taught" was a term used by Burns himself when alluding to his predecessor Robert Fergusson in "Ode for General Washington's Birthday." The noble savage as poet was a concept dear to the Scottish heart, and Henry Mackenzie's essay in *The Lounger* of December 1786 animadverting on "Surprising Effects of Original Genius" was enthusiastically (although not unanimously) taken up in British literary circles. As Kenneth Simpson shows, in his essay posing the question "Robert Burns: Heaven-taught Ploughman?," Burns collaborated quite readily in establishing this myth, both in the self-conscious preface to his Commonplace Book and in the dedicatory epistle in the first Edinburgh edition (1787). Dr. Simpson points to the irony that Burns's prose is often at its most formal when he is claiming in letters to his social superiors that he is an uneducated peasant. This essay then proceeds to demolish the myth by showing how well-educated Burns was by the standards of the time. There persists, even now, a belief that education consists solely of the knowledge and ideas drummed into the young within the four walls of the classroom, blithely ignoring that the greatest education is often self-education, a process without limits of scope or time. Burns's prolific correspondence is vivid evidence of the quality and scope of his reading, not only in the books which he names or from which he quotes, but also from his knowledge of contemporary affairs (derived from a close perusal of the quality newspapers) or even his grasp of the latest developments in science and technology. For Burns, the learning process was an on-going one which ceased only with his death.

Burns's linguistic abilities may have been challenged concerning his knowledge and understanding of Latin and French, but as regards his mastery of English and the Scottish vernacular he was without peer, moving effortlessly from one to the other in his poetry as the occasion demanded and enabling him to communicate on various levels and to various audiences. Why Burns should ever have gone along with the myth of the heaven-taught ploughman, however, may be simply explained. In modern parlance he was responding to market forces. One of the few contemporary writers who saw through the posture was Robert Anderson, to whom Burns frankly admitted that "It was . . . a part of the machinery, as he called it, of his poetical character to pass for an illiterate ploughman who wrote from pure inspiration." But, as Simpson shows, Burns became trapped behind the personae (the plural is used deliberately) which he had so readily created.

The other essay concentrating on the cultural, intellectual and educational influences on Burns was contributed by R. D. S. Jack and entitled "Burns as Sassenach Poet." Cold print unfortunately does not convey the lively and animated manner of delivery practiced by Professor Jack who belongs to the Peripatetic school of lecturers. Seldom has this reviewer witnessed such a terpsichorean tour de force as that which lifted this paper into another dimension altogether. Briefly the burden of Jack's argument is to refute vigorously the
Scottish tendency to introversion and parochialism, holding up to critical examination the narrow nationalist interpretation of Burns which assumes that he is necessarily most successful when writing in the Scottish vernacular. By using Pope and Wordsworth, Professor Jack isolates in each case the perversions and diminutions perpetuated by those who see the English poets as "Sassenach" threats to Burns's Scottishness. An interesting aspect of this lively discourse is the contention that the influence of John Murdoch's teaching made Burns "an unrepentant rhetorician." Above all, Professor Jack vividly underscores the usefulness of reading Burns in terms of cultural relationships and interactions. "If one thinks in terms of Scots and Sassenachs in the realms of the imagination, one is going necessarily, to misjudge and, simply, to miss out" and this is a view which has serious implications for Scottish literary study in general.

Two papers provide commentary on the social reality out of which the poems developed. John Strawhorn delineates the Ayrshire in which Burns was born and grew up, a part of Scotland that was undergoing tremendous changes. At one end of the spectrum the almost feudal powers of the land-owning classes were virtually undiminished; at the other end, there were dramatic, not to say revolutionary, developments in agriculture, in housing, dress and diet. Society, however, remained largely hierarchical and conservative, and this was manifest in the only method by which advancement could be made. Christopher A. Whatley, in "Work, Kirk and Community in Later Eighteenth Century Scotland," emphasizes the fact that patronage (and hence the goodwill of one's superiors) was the most important factor, and had serious implications for Burns, both as a poet and an exciseman. Whatley identifies Burns's ambivalent attitude to labor: his radical "empathy with the labouring poor" is beyond question, yet in "Bessy and her Spinning Wheel" he idealizes both the work and the situation of the spinner. We must look beyond the obvious distinctions of class and political outlook and take account also of gender, religion, occupation and community.

Ross Roy, who is also the dedicatee of this volume, has contributed a paper providing a succinct overview of nineteenth century editing practices, with specific reference to the poetical works and letters of Burns. At one end of the scale, both chronologically and in degree of liberties taken with the text, stands Dr. James Currie. The egregious Currie and his well-meant but wrong-headed approach to editorship have been the subject of countless studies and endless debate almost since 1800, and although he has been re-appraised in recent years (Robert Thornton's *James Currie the Entire Stranger* is a case in point) the damning evidence of his cuts and alterations as presented by Ross Roy amount to censorship of the most blatant variety. At best, these changes are somewhat mystifying, though usually explained as consonant with Currie's intention of sanitizing Burns for general public consumption; at worst, however, his changes, such as the notorious comment on the collection of bawdy ballads "a very few of them are my own," were to mislead scholars for 130 years or more.
As has so often been the case with reviewing Burns, editing the poet is a process that often reveals more about the editor than the edited.

Just as editing the printed word has often been a matter of interpretation, so too the portrayal of Burns in the latest medium, television, has been subjective to put it mildly. “Superman: Televising Burns” is, in the words of Donny O’Rourke, Head of Arts at Scottish Television, “a dickeyed up and pared down conflation of two talks delivered two years apart; the first a selective tour of the Burns archive, the second, a more personal rumination based upon my own work as a producer and director of Burns programmes.” These wickedly entertaining discourses were admirably illustrated with video clips (including some from films which squeezed into the survey because they had also been shown on television). Although television is a young medium, it is interesting to note how far the televising of Burns has changed over the past three or four decades. Both BBC and Scottish Television began with fairly straightforward programs, recitals of old favorites in the Andy Stewart White Heather genre which prevailed at that time. Such airings were largely confined to January 25, when both commercial and non-commercial channels would be saturated. From the outset, however, it is significant that Burns in general (rather than “Auld Lang Syne” in particular) was also harnessed to the Hogmanay celebrations. In one respect Burns has been denied a third annual airing; St Andrew’s Day (November 30) is largely ignored by the media.

O’Rourke dilates upon the mannered performance style and the adulatory content of Burns programs well into the 1970s. Program-makers tended to concentrate on “safe” aspects of the Bard, as well as stick to mainstream Burns and a handful of well-tried favorites. In more recent years, however, producers have become more adventurous and imaginative, latterly taking a quite irreverent look at a national icon. Donny O’Rourke pulls no punches, having a good old-fashioned flying at *Sweetly Played in Tune* (1984), “a big, showbizzy, and rather tacky” program that teetered precariously and hilariously on the brink of camp. Of the 1970s he writes, “I think of [the decade] as the mixed-fibre ascendancy—all full-flowing, nip-waisted, tulip-collared, sorbet-shades, nylon blouses; and that was only the baritones.” Individual performers are held up to merciless examination: the singer Peter Morrison and the actor John Cairney come in for some scathing comment. By contrast he pays much-deserved tribute to Jean Redpath and her long-time collaborator, the late Serge Hovey whom he regards as ranking with James Johnson and George Thomson in doing the most to promote the songs of Robert Burns in their own time. Modestly he has relatively little to say about his own contribution claiming that it “has mostly been more interesting (if it’s been interesting at all) for its content than for its style.” And he aims a well-deserved kick at the schedules which frustratingly continue to regard Burns as a purely regional subject, aired only when the networks go local. One is left with the impression that BBC London and Channel 4 believe Burns to have been “a parochial ploughman who couldn’t be bothered to speak English.”
The paper takes its title from a program which was screened in 1991, and repeated a year later. I recall that it received very mixed reviews and provoked a great many irate telephone calls to Scottish Television, mainly, one suspects, from the traditionalists who regard the ritual of the Burns supper as one of the sacraments.

Reading this volume and rediscovering some of the excellent papers presented at the annual Burns seminars has been, for this reviewer, a very real pleasure. The book was published to coincide with the 1994 conference, when another half dozen papers were presented—lively, controversial, illuminating, entertaining. How Ken Simpson and Archie Fleming manage to maintain such a high standard and provide such varied fare each year is beyond the comprehension of ordinary mortals. It is to be hoped that a companion volume will not be too long delayed.

JAMES A. MACKAY

Glasgow


I have been very busy with the muses since I saw you, and have composed, among several others, The Ordination, a poem on Mr McKinlay's being called to Kilmick, Scotch Drink a poem, the Cotter's Saturday night, An address to the Devil. &c. I have likewise compleated my Poem on the dogs, but have not shown it to the world.

In this letter of 17 February 1786 to John Richmond, Burns alludes to part of the remarkable output of the winter of 1785-86. Even a reading of no more than the above-mentioned poems suffices to show that Burns conducts his business with the muses in a wide range of voices; and, as Carol McGuirk points out in her admirable introduction, these voices resound through poems of near-simultaneous composition. "What an antithetical mind!": Byron's oft-quoted judgment of Burns's letters has never had fuller substantiation in a selection of the poems.

The merits of Carol McGuirk's edition derive in part from her decision to follow the order of probable composition, with the aim of capturing "something
of the experience of readers between 1786 and 1796 as they first encountered Burns’s poems and songs as edited by his own hand.” The advantages to the modern reader are considerable. It is salutary to be reminded that Burns had from the outset the rare ability to encapsulate intense emotion in words: in only the third item, the song, “Mary Morison,” the point is proved beyond doubt, and above all in the line rightly extolled by Hugh MacDiarmid—“Ye are na Mary Morison.” Yet another aspect of Burns ill accommodated by the designation “Rab the Ranter” is present intermittently in “Epistle to Davie, a Brother Poet,” a poem composed mainly in the summer of 1784. As Edwin Morgan has noted recently, such lines as “To lye in kilns and barns at e’en;/When banes are craz’d, and bluid is thin” evoke “another Burns, not the extrovert Burns of [the] Epistles and similar poems, but something more strange, more mysterious, more secret.” There is evidence from as early as 1782, in “The Death and Dying Words of Poor Mailie,” the first vernacular narrative, of the imaginative transformation of rural commonplaces into means of Burns’s communicating his own breadth and depth of interest.

Reading the poems and songs in the sequence of composition affords fresh insights to both the poet and the man. What more natural conjunction than that “Holy Willie’s Prayer” should be followed by “Death and Dr Hornbook”: the bigot and the quack, each monstrously and pathetically fallible, represent more of a threat than Death himself, who can be embraced into the rural community. It is illuminating, too, to follow in close sequence the various representations of the life of the peasantry, from the dialogic “The Twa Dogs” through the versions offered, respectively, by “The Cotter’s Saturday Night” and “The Auld Farmer’s New-Year-Morning Salutation to His Auld Mare, Maggie.”

From over six hundred available, McGuirk selects one hundred of Burns’s poems and songs. A particularly welcome feature is the inclusion of the music for “Love and Liberty” and each of the songs. The editor justifies her choice of first published version as copy-text by reference to the fact that Burns rarely made substantive changes after printing; when he did, it was to placate “such genteel but poem-deaf ‘mentors’ as Hugh Blair, Frances Dunlop, and George Thomson.” McGuirk’s editorial practice differs from that of Kinsley who printed a composite text, the product of collation. In view of the fact that Burns would personalize a manuscript according to the recipient, Carol McGuirk opts for the version which the poet chose for publication.

In all but one respect McGuirk’s edition is a joy to use, and the exception is simply a matter of individual preference: here the marginal gloss is eschewed on the grounds that it is “intrusive,” whereas for this reader such minor distraction is preferable to thumbing one’s way to a terminal glossary. For all else, however, nothing but praise. The notes to the poems are models of informative comment and lucid exegesis, and in her evaluations the editor is often acutely discerning (for instance, the suggestion that “Address of Beelzebub” “may be Burns’s most underrated dramatic monologue”). The table of dates is a masterpiece of concise information, the product of the editor’s unerring eye for
significant detail. Gilbert is cited on the rigors of the Mount Oliphant years as "in great measure the cause of that depression of spirits, with which Robert was so often afflicted through his whole life afterwards." McGuirk enables her reader to identify a poet of genius who is also a complex and flawed individual. The rules of Tarbolton Bachelors Club included this: "Every man proper for a member of this Society, must have a frank, honest, open heart; above anything dirty or mean; and must be a professed lover of one or more of the female sex." This is helpful, to say the least, as prelude to McGuirk's entry for summer, 1787:

May (or Meg) Cameron, an Edinburgh servant, serves Burns with a writ demanding security for the support of their as-yet-unborn child. (She has exhausted a small amount the poet sent her in May.) Following Burns's compliance with the writ in mid-August (he keeps the document, inscribing it with two stanzas of bawdry), nothing further is said of her; an oblique statement in a letter by Burns, however, raises the possibility that she gave birth to stillborn triplets.

McGuirk neither whitewashes nor sentimentalizes; witness the entry for April 1788: "Acknowledges Jean Armour as his wife, probably after a final unsuccessful attempt to win 'Clarinda' and a hint from the Board of Excise that an appointment would be more likely if he settled down." As with the poet's eldest son's testimony to the "comparatively genteel" lifestyle of the family in Mill Street, Dumfries, the effect is to dispel some of the mythological mist.

For Carol McGuirk the dominant voice of the Kilmarnock edition is not that of "Rab the Ranter," the parish rebel, but that of "Robin," a kindly rustic occasionally interrupted at the ploughing by the Scottish national muse." Burns chose to omit from the Kilmarnock edition some of the best of the songs, written mainly in English, and most of his early, virulently expressive satires. McGuirk sees the effects of this decision:

The continuing popularity of the poems first published at Kilmarnock—'To a Mouse', 'The Cotter's Saturday Night', 'To a Louse', 'The Vision'—vindicates the poet's editorial judgement, but criticism still contends with the difficulty of seeing beyond this volume's largely sentimental focus to the total achievement of Burns's art.

Published in 1985, Donald Low's Everyman paperback, The Kilmarnock Poems, enabled modern readers to appreciate something of the impact of Poems, Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect, 1786 on Burns's contemporaries. The new Everyman, Poems in Scots and English, reproduces the text of the earlier one, extends slightly its helpful introduction, and adds "Holy Willie's Prayer" and "Tam o' Shanter." These major poems augment the edition for teaching purposes, but in order to justify the revised title and—more importantly—to give an indication of the range of Burns's output it would have been desirable to have more extensive representation of those early poems excluded from the
Kilmarnock, the fifteen poems and seven songs added for the Edinburgh edition of 1787, and at least some of the later songs. But the appetite has been whetted.

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However hard-going the detail-oriented exposition becomes at times, Mackay's biography has already established itself as required reading for all serious students and scholars of Burns. He clearly explains episodes hopelessly muddled (or too selectively documented) in other biographies. In covering controversies such as that arising during the 1930s on the identity of the infant's remains found in "Highland Mary's" grave when it was opened in November 1920, Mackay takes his time, presenting a full summary of probabilities, possibilities—and impossibilities.

Indeed, Chapter 9, on Burns's "Two Loves" of 1786 (Jean Armour and "Highland Mary"), shows the strengths of this biography at its best. Using the database of parish records compiled by the Mormon church, Mackay first establishes the true forename and birthdate of Burns's most elusive heroine, showing that she certainly was baptized Margaret and not Mary. Mackay puts in perspective Catherine Carswell's assumption that the infant's coffin found in the Campbell lair at Greenock when the grave was opened in 1920 was that of Mary's child by Burns; he notes that three adult skulls as well as the infant's sodden coffin were found in the grave. (He also notes, however, that "proof" that this was the coffin of Agnes, an infant child of Duncan Hendry's buried in 1827—an argument accepted by Robert Fitzhugh in his definitive 1970 biography—is equally open to doubt.) On the identity of this infant, Mackay sensibly concludes that DNA testing (using one of several surviving locks of the poet's hair as well as the bones of the infant found in Margaret Campbell’s grave) would be the only way of proving or disproving whether the child was Mary's by Burns.

Testing the assumption of earlier biographers that Burns's relationship with Margaret Campbell was a formal betrothal, Mackay had the two-volume Bible that Burns gave her at their last meeting subjected to examination under infrared light, proving for the first time that the M with letters effaced on volume 2
is really Robert’s address, “Mossgavill” farm, not (as has always been assumed) an inscription, later defaced, to Mary herself. Mackay concludes that “the two-volume bible . . . was [the poet’s] own personal bible. . . . That Robert gave the books to his Highland lass is not in doubt, [but] contrary to popular belief, the girl’s name does not appear on the flyleaf. . . . Robert may have meant the bibles as a parting gift, nothing more; at the same time, however, he may have conveyed to the trusting girl that they were a token of betrothal. The biblical quotations . . . would have been regarded as sacred. Significantly, no attempt was ever made to erase the inscriptions, despite the mutilation of the inscriptions opposite” (p. 206).

Finally, in considering the often discredited report of the Train MS that Mary’s character was “loose in the extreme,” Mackay is the first biographer to demonstrate that there was indeed a tavern known as The Elbow located in Mauchline, and that (as the Train MS alleges) Burns may well have seen Mary emerging from a room in that tavern shortly before a brother of a later Lord Eglinton also emerged. Having gone so far in supporting the Episodists over the Mariolaters, however, Mackay concludes that this anecdote in itself does not constitute proof that she was a “kept” woman of loose character. (If Burns was not betrothed to her—as Mackay’s new evidence strongly suggests—it is difficult to see how Margaret Campbell’s attentions to another man could be interpreted either as a character flaw or as a betrayal of the poet.) Mackay’s conclusions on Burns and Highland Mary emphasize Burns’s overwhelming remorse (seen in letters and poems as well as family anecdotes) over her death; also, the strong resentment of the girl’s family, who not only mutilated the two-volume Bible Burns had given her but also destroyed his letters to the family following her death in Fall of 1786. Until there is genetic testing to verify the identity of the infant found in that grave in Greenock, I cannot imagine a more thorough, dispassionate or conclusive summary of this most hotly debated episode in Burns’s life, or a more tactfully argued case, whether or not the infant discovered in 1920 was Burns’s, that Mary’s pregnancy was at least a contributing cause of her sudden death—explaining both the poet’s tormented conscience and the Campbell family’s anger.

In the Highland Mary chapter, where there is much contradictory evidence, Mackay’s leisurely and evenhanded exposition is at its most effective. In more purely rhetorical debate—such as on whether Burns was an alcoholic—Mackay is less effective, which makes the final chapters of the biography, dealing with Burns’s life at Dumfries, less successful than the reconstitution of names and dates in the poet’s early life. This is a defensive biography: Mackay is clearly on Burns’s side in a way that such recent biographers as Richard Hindle Fowler and Alan Bold have not been. But Mackay’s characteristically thorough exposition of the evidence in support of Burns’s occasional drunkenness works against his final but not so well-supported conclusion that Burns had no problem with alcohol. (Can there be an alcoholic century, a drunken milieu? If so, it was Scotland in the late eighteenth century. In Smollett’s *Humphry Clinker,*
young Jery's health is endangered merely by a few weeks' residence in heavy drinking Edinburgh.) Mackay well documents the bias of obituaries and early biographies that wrongly established alcoholism as the cause of Burns's death. But though he shows that Burns died of a fever and not of the drink, the evidence of letters, anecdotes and poems (material liberally quoted by Mackay) suggests—at least to this reader—that the poet himself thought that he drank more, and more often, than he ought. Whether Burns consumed more or less liquor that others of his era and class is really less relevant than whether Burns felt in control of his behavior, and Burns (occasionally) does express a wish that he had more control over his drinking. Besides, whether or not Burns was afflicted with it, alcoholism is a disease, not a character flaw. In debating the old charge of alcoholism, Mackay falls into the trap of accepting it as a charge, an accusation, unwittingly validating the false premise that Burns's drinking (whether he abstained or whether he indulged) was in any way a key to his moral character. Surely the time has come where we might include excessive drinking—if we admit it at all—under the rubric of medical problems rather than "sins," whether venial or mortal. In any case, Mackay well demonstrates that habitual drinking was abetted and encouraged by the culture in which Burns lived.

There is much new material here. Using genealogical information originally gathered by the Mormons, Mackay argues that Nellie Blair (not Nellie Kilpatrick) was the likely heroine of Burns's first song. I found especially interesting Mackay's new evidence, produced by going back to the parish records of Mauchline, that William Auld's and the parish elders' quarrel with Gavin Hamilton (the squabble immortalized in "Holy Willie's Prayer") was at least in part caused by Hamilton's extremely provocative behavior early in the 1780s, though Mackay also shows Auld's remarkable vindictiveness once roused. In a kind of fulfillment of Willie's petition that God blight Hamilton's kail and potatoes, Mackay describes how in 1787 Gavin roused the ire of the "holy beagles" once again: he was censured for ordering his servant to dig new potatoes on a Sunday, thereby breaking the Sabbath. To recent speculations by Richard Hindle Fowler about homoerotic dimensions in Burns's friendships with men (especially Captain Richard Brown, Robert Ainslie, and John Richmond), Mackay provides what factual information there is, while remaining skeptical. As in his discussion of Burns's drinking, Mackay may too readily accept the premises that underlie Victorian and neo-Victorian critiques of the poet's sexuality, even while he diligently refutes innuendo and rumor: Burns's life probably included no same-sex encounters—but if it had, would that really have made him a bad person? DeLancey Ferguson wrote in The Burns Chronicle during the 1920s of the need for new work on Burns to break the mold of pre-existing discourses, rather than allowing the Holy Willies (or the bardolaters) to continue to control the debate. At its weakest points, Mackay's biography, given his method of re-examining the assertions of earlier scholars and biographers,
has the dispiriting effect of actually extending the lifespan of—and giving cre-
dence to—weak and facile scholarship.

This assiduous biography would not be the first I would recommend to a
reader new to Burns studies: the thicket of details is too bewildering; indeed,
the detail precludes the striking overall portrait that emerges in Catherine Car-
swell's or DeLancey Ferguson's eminently readable Lives of the poet. But
Mackay has accomplished something quite different from his dramatizing
(sometimes over-dramatizing) predecessors. His life of Burns, in its emphasis
on verifiable data, is an admirable corrective to the sound and fury of most of
the Burns debate. Mackay's methodical research, advocacy of the poet, and
skeptical sifting of evidence is especially welcome on the controversial matters
of the poet's sexual life and his drinking—although, as mentioned, he some-
times gives small-minded attacks on Burns far too much of his time.

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Rosemary Greentree. Reader, Teller and Teacher: The Narrator of Robert
Henryson's Moral Fables. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang. 1993. x + 120

Rosemary Greentree's study of Henryson reflects both the strengths and
the weaknesses of reading Henryson in the light of New Criticism. Such read-
ings have particularly come to the fore during the last few years in debates
about the extent to which the poetry of Henryson and the other Makars can be
read in historical perspective. Often arguing that previous assumptions of his-
torical criticism are no longer valid, such approaches tend to focus on reader
response, poetic text, and, on occasion, literary tradition.

The strengths of Ms. Greentree's study largely consist of clear and concise
summaries of the impact of a given fable on the reader. For instance, she notes
"How disconcerting then to find in Henryson's Fables that true words are often
put into the mouths of rogues, proverbs are contradicted, sometime with other
proverbs, and obvious morals are ignored in favor of obscure and surprising
ones" (p. 28). This reaction does indeed reflect the response that many modern
readers have to Henryson's work, particularly such tales as "The Cock and The
Jasp." Another instance may involve the characterization of Lowrence the Fox,
who is always a scoundrel but who often includes traditional wisdom in his ca-
pricious arguments. In similar fashion, the arguments of the Paddock in "The
Paddock and The Mouse" seem to reveal a kind of tolerance about physical appearance that many modern readers find congenial. The strength of the New Critical approach to the fables is to point out this kind of discrepancy.

What is lacking, however, is the historical approach to the tales which explains the discrepancy and helps the reader understand the context in which Henryson might have been using such discrepancies for serious or ironic intent. For instance, there is an omission of any discussion of the polar difference between St. Augustine and Quintillian in rhetorical ethics. While Quintillian says that only a good person can be a good speaker, St. Augustine contradicts the idea stating that even a bad priest may bring people to salvation. This difference in historical perspective on the ethics of the speaker or literary character was the subject of a lively debate during the Middle Ages. Knowing that the debate persisted and that certain authors (such as Chaucer) may take apparently contradictory positions on the need for a good speaker to be of good character helps the reader understand some of the intricacies of Henryson’s narration. The speeches of both the Paddock and Lawrence may result from Henryson’s stance on a widely-discussed issue on rhetorical ethics. In similar fashion, the fact that Henryson relied on traditional imagery also brings additional understanding. In "The Cock and The Jasp" for instance, Henryson relies on a traditional and familiar metaphor of a jewel for wisdom, as commonly embodied in sermons. That piece of information helps the reader to understand the relationship between the tale and moralitas. Ms. Greentree omits such background information in arguing simply that the tale is a hallmark of Henryson’s foreboding of irony throughout the fables.

Ms. Greentree equivocates about critical biographical issues. While on the one hand she states “Any specific biographical criticism of the Moral Fables would necessarily be very speculative and I shall not attempt it” (p. 1), she immediately goes on to say with regard to Henryson that “we can probably safely accept that he was master of the abbey school to Dunfermline …” (p. 1). The only non-textual evidence we have for that assumption comes from the title page on an edition of the Fables, printed over 60 years after Henryson’s death. While the assumption is traditional and Ms. Greentree goes on to draw the usual inferences about Henryson’s pedagogical interest in the Fables, she clearly contradicts her initial statement about biographical interpretation. The contradiction appears through out her work. For instance, on page 19, she says that with regard to the narrator of the Fables he “No doubt … gives Henryson’s opinions” but she goes on to add very hastily “we should beware of thinking that he gives nothing more than the views of the schoolmaster of Dunfermline” (p. 19). She also notes “The Narrator himself must balance his audience’s world of reality with illusion, that of the tales, and eventually he chooses to join and remain with the audience …” (pp. 95-6). Little of this is couched in the framework of studies on historical artistic issues such as A. J. Minnis’ Medieval Theory of Authorship which discusses conventions in authorial voice. Because the de novo approach that the New Criticism takes
depends so much on immediate reader response and so little on historical background, it is prone to precisely this kind of ahistorical interpretation.

What is the result? As one might expect, Ms. Greentree's study gives an often perceptive summary of the response of the modern reader. In delineating that response, she provides a concise formulation of important critical problems in dealing with the text. She also provides a helpful focus on the Narrator as a critical element in Henryson. However, answers (which could come from the historical context) are often unfortunately lacking. She provides interesting highlights regarding "the voices of the Narrator which are found throughout the Fables" (p. 71), but only highlights are provided. She goes on to speculate that

he is by no means an impartial observer or transmitter, since his own thoughts are revealed in the words and metaphors he chooses and in the interjections which occasionally give overt comment on the characters and their activities (p. 73).

In great part, Henryson's thoughts and feelings are available to modern readers, but only through close comparison of his tales with known sources and the conventions and cultural background of the period in which he wrote. Indeed, while Henryson's sources are not so clearly identified as are Chaucer's one of the wonderful opportunities for study that his work provides is the chance for insight into the creative process. Ms. Greentree's study has given little attention to that possibility, even at times ignoring the valuable perspectives provided by scholars such as McDonald and Fox.

In certain ways, Ms. Greentree's study is an enigma. She voices her desire not to give a biographical reading of the Fables yet proceeds with significant generalizations about the Narrator. She clearly notes the importance of fifteenth-century Scotland for a reading of the Fables, but includes very little historical background and contemporaneous reference in her evaluation of the poems. What she does best is to provide summary and insightful capsules of a modern reader's reaction to some of the major critical questions in Henryson. The volume would have been much improved had she also attempted to explain more of the context for the problems she encapsulates.

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One of the questions about Robert Henryson that continues to be debated is whether his poetry situates him among late medieval moralist writers or among early humanists, a schism in critical opinion resulting in the occasional fierce battle at conference sessions on Middle Scots literature. In analyzing Henryson’s tragic characters and tragic action, this book inevitably addresses the question of Henryson’s placement in fifteenth-century thought; McKenna explains, for example, that “Henryson’s tragic vision shows us a world in flux between a mythological conception of reality and a reality centered on humanity and its individuality” (p. 83). At the same time, the book illustrates some of the difficulties in addressing this question: the author indicates a desire “to show that Henryson’s medieval tragedy is a good deal more radical and humanistic than it is generally given credit for being” (p. 2), but a central accomplishment in the book is the exposition of a traditionally moral and therefore “choric” narrative voice that functions in opposition to the individualistic tragic figures, and at the cost of their suppression, to protect and perpetuate the conservative ideology of the culture (p. 100).

McKenna begins by relating Henryson’s work to tragic theory as manifest in Dante, Boccaccio, and Chaucer, noting at the outset both “the moral ambiguity of tragedy” and the potential of tragic action “to destabilize the mythological foundations of the cosmos” (p. 6). He explains that not God, the gods, or Fortune, but Henryson’s tragic figure itself, be it Cresseid, the wether, or one of the foxes, is ultimately responsible for its fate by having made a free choice that constituted “poor judgment” (p. 28). Such efforts for freedom position the tragic figure as a destabilizing force in society, since that figure’s struggle against social, religious, or moral constraints “shows us that there is no monolithic ideology, no singular and absolute truth” (p. 16). The tragic figure, in consequence, serves as “a scapegoat whose sacrifice binds the human community . . . to the moral, ethical, and mythical ideologies against which the tragic figure rebels” (p. 57). Analyses of individual poems concerning Henryson’s tragic figures elaborate these concepts.

In the chapter entitled “The Burden of Identity,” for example, McKenna uses “The Testament of Cresseid” to illustrate tragic action as a means of “self-realization in the face of forces that impose limits” (p. 35), and to demonstrate the tragic figure’s “godlike” efforts toward “knowledge about the self and the workings of the cosmos” (p. 36). In examining the nature and results of tragic action, this chapter further establishes the dichotomies in perspective and social function between the tragic figure and the narrative voice. An over-abundance of comments from other critics, however, distracts the reader from some of the author’s own valuable arguments. Such overabundance in this chapter and
throughout the book, in conjunction with endnotes that seem less explanatory and more to record other sources, makes one wonder if this book began life as a dissertation. Whether it did or not, some of the space occupied by such comments and endnotes might have been better used to pursue worthwhile but undeveloped insights, such as the assertion that "Henryson’s tragic figures are in love with their desires" (p. 39), which is buried in the middle of a paragraph.

In other chapters the book carefully defines the tragic figure in its dual roles as hero and outcast, exploring the tragic figure’s search for freedom, its relationship to the dominant system of values, and its estrangement from the culture. We learn that the conflict between the tragic figure and society, and that conflict’s resolution in punishment, inheres in the relationship between the tragic figure and the narrative voice that represents “collective humanity” and its conservative “moral and ethical principles” (p. 113). Therefore, in the downfall of the tragic figure and the supremacy of the narrative voice, we see the efforts of “the poet,” working on behalf of the culture, to make “impotent” the tragic figure’s ideology (p. 100). The book thus posits, in essence, the political function of the poet and of Henryson’s poetry.

The book also explains the notion of “tragic criminality,” which is defined as “a transgression of the dictates of a dominant cultural or otherwise ideological norm” (p. 8). Constituting a threat to the culture, the tragic figure’s criminality must be met and overcome, and McKenna’s book develops at length the premise that the threat posed by the tragic figure’s action is countered, so as to be suppressed and eliminated, by the narrative voice in Henryson’s poetry. This narrative voice is variously referred to as “Henryson” (p. 64), “the poet” (p. 116), “the narrator” (p. 134), “the narrative persona” (p. 54), “the choric poetic persona” (p. 46), “Henryson’s narrative persona” (p. 151), “narrative personae” (p. 45), or, most frequently, “the poet-narrator” (p. 36).

Much is valuable in McKenna’s discussion of tragedy in Henryson’s poetry, but the elision of distinctions among these terms, the lack of explanations for their particular use in this book, and the inconsistency in their use, interfere with the clarity of essential arguments and thus comprise the book’s major weakness. The intention to elucidate Henryson’s portrayal of a “world in flux” (p. 83) between medieval and humanistic perspectives would have been more fully realized had the book decisively delineated Henryson the poet, his narrative persona/ae, and the relationships and distinctions between or among them, or on the other hand boldly asserted that poet and narrative voice are the same, but in either instance then consistently employed clearly-defined terminology. The terms used to speak of the poet and the narrative voice, and whether or not to distinguish between them, reflect larger critical decisions; addressing the matter of terminology would have necessitated those critical decisions, resulting in clearer arguments and a much more valuable analysis.

For example, when the book asserts that “Henryson (if not his narrative persona) suggests ... that designations of ‘good’ and ‘evil’ tend toward matters of perspective” (pp. 59-60), one feels certain that McKenna means to
distinguish Henryson the poet, who wrote the poems, as separate and distinct from his created fictional persona, who narrates the poems. At other times, however, this separation vanishes altogether, as in the discussion of "The Preaching of the Swallow," where we are told that the poet "becomes a character in the story he tells" and "witnesses not only the action, but also the swallow's choric moralizing" (p. 116). Such statements assert the poet and the narrator to be the same.

More confusingly, the book in several instances uses synonymously and interchangeably terms that seem inherently to imply different meanings, terms such as "Henryson’s narrative persona" and "the poet-narrator" in the following passage, one example of a number of similar discussions wherein the terminology used for the poet and/or the narrative voice makes meaning unclear:

For all his insight, Henryson’s narrative persona is in many ways unconscious. He knows that the realm of ‘wrong’ and ‘sin’ exists close at hand, yet it appears, significantly, outside of his reach. The poet-narrator of ‘The Testament’ and of the Fables in his darkest moments does not touch the tragic truths in any but the remotest and abstractest of ways (p. 67).

The first sentence establishes a separation between the poet Henryson and the "narrative persona" Henryson has created. The third sentence, however, amalgamates those differences in the term "poet-narrator." Since the first sentence has asserted that Henryson and his narrative persona are different entities, the reader is bewildered by the appearance then of a "poet-narrator" in the third sentence.

The difficulty, of course, transcends terminology and definition and affects McKenna’s meaning and the reader’s understanding in a most bedeviling way. Although the above passage may mean that Henryson’s "unconscious" and dimly-aware narrative persona is the one who "does not touch the tragic truths," the reader is not at all sure, since the word "poet" in the term "poet-narrator" would seem instead to designate Henryson the poet himself. But surely this book cannot mean that Henryson the poet "does not touch the tragic truths in any but the remotest and abstractest of ways," since Henryson the poet created the tragic figures so as to convey both the suffering attendant on their increase in tragic wisdom and the horror of their punishment and isolation, to which suffering and horror McKenna frequently refers. Since Henryson the poet can hardly be meant by the term "poet-narrator," how are we to interpret that term? More urgently, how are we to understand the meaning of the passage?

Additionally, the recurrent conflation of poet and narrator not only assumes an unwarranted lack of sophistication in Henryson as poet but also impedes analysis of what Henryson the poet does and means when he creates a poem that situates a choric narrator in a conflict of values with a tragic figure. That Henryson the poet creates poems centering on such conflicts suggests a very
fruitful approach to his work, but the uncertain terminology that sometimes distinguishes between, but more often blends, poet and choric narrator, obstructs or disallows this approach. In its repeated use of the term “poet-narrator,” the book not only side-steps the issue of terminology and the critical assessments attendant thereupon, but also stipulates Henryson the poet to be merely one of two sides in a tragic conflict rather than the creator who formulates and presents for consideration the conflict and its two polarities, the tragic figure and the narrator. As a result, examination of the poetry is inhibited beyond the plane of interpretation wherein the poem’s antagonists operate, and the promising and valuable levels of analysis toward which McKenna’s discussion actually point are hindered or precluded.

A few words need to be said as well in regard to the book’s presentation. While one realizes that times are hard everywhere and publishers have undoubtedly had to cut costs, Peter Lang Publishing nonetheless has a fair amount to answer for in regard to the editing of this book. Not only are obvious typographical errors present that ought to have been found and corrected by a proofreader, but stylistic infelicities exist that should have received attention at the editorial stage. In addition to smoothing out some of the shifts in diction, a good copy-editor would have caught the vague references, the word-repetitions in a sentence, and the statements that managed to escape authorial notice but that are imprecise or unclear (“The issue of human reason in the Fables underscores the general point Camus makes” p.78). Many writers benefit from a copy-editor, but Peter Lang Publishing should hire one for the sake of its own reputation.

Despite those aspects which might have been improved by better revision, editing, and clarification, the book contains some valuable insights and usefully relates Henryson’s tragic poetry to medieval and later tragic theory. In consequence, readers interested in tragedy, as well as those interested in Henryson and Middle Scots poetry, will find the book of benefit.

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Anette Degott-Reinhardt’s study of Norman MacCaig’s work proposes to discuss the following questions: What is the relationship between form and content in MacCaig’s work? How did he develop as a poet? How do his views relate to his work? But these were not the questions that were foremost in my mind after reading this book. Nor was it her answers to these questions—in-sightful as they were at times. It was questions such as these: How does Degott-Reinhardt see her role as a critic? How does the critic approach a literary text? Where does she see herself in the triangle between author, work and reader? These questions were only inadvertently raised in the book precisely because Degott-Reinhardt fails to discuss them explicitly.

As this is only the second full-length monograph on Norman MacCaig, its mere existence is something that will be appreciated by many readers of MacCaig’s poetry—and the amount of research that has gone into the project, the thoroughness of Degott-Reinhardt’s approach, certainly tries to do justice to this fact.

The emphasis in this book is on MacCaig’s development as a poet. Degott-Reinhardt’s major complaint about previous studies of MacCaig’s work is that they present only an assembly of isolated aspects of his work. Her aim, on the other hand, is to present a systematic overview of MacCaig’s work, in order to show how his art has developed over the years. To this end she distinguishes three phases in MacCaig’s work which are then discussed in corresponding chapters. The individual volumes of poetry are dealt with in chronological order, firstly showing how they relate to the concerns of a particular phase in MacCaig’s work and secondly analyzing one poem from each volume that is considered “typical.” The three main chapters, the core of the book, are framed by an introduction to MacCaig’s attitude towards poetry (based largely on the poet’s own comments) and a discussion of the recurrent themes and images in the collected works as well as literary influences. The whole study is rounded off by an extensive bibliography and an appendix consisting of several interviews and a letter by MacCaig to Hugh MacDiarmid.

Anette Degott-Reinhardt uses the sentence “Ich sehe etwas” (I see something) as a model for her analysis of MacCaig’s work. The subject of this sentence, she argues, corresponds to the main focus in his early works. The poems in this period are concerned with the subjectivity of perception, upon which the poet reflects in often abstract terms. In his later work the emphasis shifts from the subject to the process of perception, corresponding to the predicate of Degott-Reinhardt’s model sentence. In his middle period MacCaig’s interest shifts away from the subject, because, as Degott-Reinhardt points out, the subjectivity of perception is accepted as a prerequisite. Consequently, the outside world comes more into focus, as does the relation of the subject to the world around it. The last phase in MacCaig’s development, finally, corresponds to the object of the above sentence. Thematically, the emphasis in MacCaig’s later poems is on the things themselves; formally, they are presented in a clear and simple language.
Degott-Reinhardt succeeds in tracing MacCaig's development conclusively and convincingly from his early beginnings to his latest work. She presents the thematic shift from the abstract to the concrete with great clarity and shows how it corresponds to the formal development from a strict metrical form to free verse. Throughout her analysis she takes great care to show how form and content relate to each other in MacCaig's poetry. In fact, her method in analyzing individual poems is that of traditional hermeneutics: she takes the formal analysis as a starting point and goes on to show how those formal aspects contribute to the poem's thematic concerns. The examples she chooses function perfectly within the framework of the analysis of the artist's work which she puts forward. If, during the course of the three main chapters, the reader gets the impression that she puts a little too much emphasis on change and development and neglects those elements and themes that might point to a certain continuity in MacCaig's work, this is counterbalanced to an extent by Degott-Reinhardt's following chapter, which deals with recurrent themes and motifs.

However, the perfect architecture of the analysis does have its drawbacks. Degott-Reinhardt's main achievement is to present a convincing model, which she uses to categorize the poet's work. Unfortunately, instead of being a means to an end, i.e., a means to illuminate the individual poem, the model becomes an end in itself. The poet's work seems at times no more than an illustration for the critic's system and if there appear to be frictions between the two, it is the system that takes priority; the poem is forced to fit in. Here the weakness of Degott-Reinhardt's approach becomes apparent.

In her attempt to show how the individual poem corresponds to each of the stages in MacCaig's development, which she has constructed, Degott-Reinhardt tries to find a suitable explanation for every word, every colon of the poem. While at times these in-depth interpretations are extremely convincing, there are other times when the attempt seems forced and the interpretations far-fetched. For example, does the shape of an exclamation mark really resemble a rose? Not only is there an explanation for everything, but Degott-Reinhardt also seems to think that there can be only one explanation. Perhaps the most telling comment on her own approach is her description of MacCaig's poems as riddles, the solution to which can be found through analysis of their formal features. She offers simple (sometimes simplistic) equations: on the one side she lists formal elements, such as rhyme, metrical structure and alliteration, and on the other she presents the "meaning" of the poem. Interpretation becomes a process of decoding.

While her approach is very thorough and often enough produces enlightening results, it does make her blind to the contradictions and ambiguities both in MacCaig's work and her own analysis. These contradictions, present throughout the book surface in her discussion of the third phase in MacCaig's work. Prompted by MacCaig's comments about his attitude towards literature—his repeated expression of a certain skepticism, if not disgust, with metaphor—she tries to find proof of this attitude in the poems. It is true that in
many of MacCaig's poems he seems to be striving for objectivity and simplicity of description. Yet even in these "snapshot poems" he cannot escape the fact that it is his imagination which transforms the actual incident into a fictional work of art. What is presented on the page is not the thing itself, but the thing itself transformed.

Anette Degott-Reinhardt uses the poem "In memoriam" (from the collection *The Equal Skies*) to make her point that in the third stage of MacCaig's development he is no longer concerned with the subjectivity of perception (as in the first) or with the relationship between subject and object (as in the second), but with "the thing itself," the thing being, in this case, the death of MacCaig's friend Angus MacLeod. However, MacCaig describes the event through an extended metaphor: "On that stormy night / a top branch broke off on the biggest tree in my garden." In other words, he uses an occurrence in the natural world and invests it with personal meaning. Moreover, by using a conventional image to describe a personal tragedy, MacCaig seems to embrace metaphor as a means of expressing himself imaginatively. The poem does not mention the friend at all; there is no pretense at immediacy. Instead, it is the imaginative capacity which is foregrounded and therefore the presence of the poet himself. Degott-Reinhardt notes rightly that MacCaig uses a natural event to describe a personal one, and yet she argues that this poem is "typical" for this particular stage in MacCaig's work in that it presents "the thing itself." This surely contradicts her earlier argument: if MacCaig were interested in presenting the actual object, this would be a poem about a branch which falls off a tree, not one about friendship and loss.

This brings us back to the question I raised earlier on, regarding Degott-Reinhardt's own position as a critic. In her view, the task of the critic seems to be to dissect the poem in order to extract meaning from it. This task she performs thoroughly and faithfully. Unfortunately, this approach does not leave her any room for ambiguities, contradictions, multiple meanings—all that which makes literature exciting and human. Her overly systematic approach leads her to disregard everything that cannot be fitted into these categories. She also displays an obsession with completeness, which, in dealing with something as complex and inexhaustible as a literary work, is a futile attempt from the start. Her main achievement, therefore, the scope and thoroughness of her research, her systematic approach, is at the same time the main flaw, for it leaves the critic little room for originality and creativity.

However, despite its flaws, this book will be of interest to anyone doing research on Norman MacCaig. One aspect of the book which is particularly worth mentioning is the appendix, which consists of both interviews and an extensive bibliography. Degott-Reinhardt includes four interviews with MacCaig, three of which were conducted by herself. She also includes a letter by MacCaig to Hugh MacDiarmid, which appears in print for the first time. Perhaps most importantly, though, Degott-Reinhardt has compiled what is
probably the most complete bibliography so far on MacCaig. The first part of the bibliography features the poet’s own work including all the poetry volumes as well as unpublished manuscripts and letters (in the possession of the National Library of Scotland and the Edinburgh University Library), individual poems which appeared in magazines, articles and reviews, records and tapes, interviews on radio and television as well as anthologies which include MacCaig’s poetry. The second part lists articles and books in which the work of MacCaig is discussed. Thus she provides anyone who is seriously interested in the work of Norman MacCaig with a valuable research tool.

ANDREA HEILMANN
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Recent cultural materialist and gender-based criticism of the prose fiction of the Romantic period, observes Ian Duncan in the Prologue to his Modern Romance, "has tended to overlook Scott, whom one would have thought should have been its central exhibit" (p. 17). Although Duncan steps back from this assertion a sentence later, in acknowledging his debt to Ina Ferris and Judith Wilt, among others, it is this critical blank that his book strives to fill. His project is to reassert, though with a change of emphasis, Scott’s centrality in the history of the novel as genre, describing him as the male author who through “an appropriation of female romance power” became the “personification of a new patriarchal dignity of authorship” (p. 17).

This project entails a thorough and revelatory re-reading of Scott’s novelistic debts to the largely female-dominated tradition of romance and, most centrally, to Ann Radcliffe and Gothic romance. Duncan’s argument commences with a re-description of what he calls “the culture of Gothic” by which he means a translation of a specifically British myth of political revolution “onto the ground of private relations. . . . The covert site of alien, outlaw political forces is that of the liberal subjectivity itself, ostensibly released from historical compulsion, where they take the forms of the private passions” (p. 25). In Gothic, then, the political becomes the personal. Female Gothic, however, separates itself from the male Gothic—typified by Matthew Lewis’s The Monk which “decisively establishes the ground of Gothic themes and figures as that of sexual pathology” (p. 33)—remaining “complicit with an antithetical logic of disenchantment . . . that of detection, rationalization and explanation, devoted to
recalling hidden plot origins in order to enlighten and demystify" (p. 40). That is, for Duncan, Radcliffean Gothic enters the dehistoricized, archetypal ground of romance only provisionally. Once the heroine has seen clearly, mystifications are dispelled and she returns to a bourgeois life very like that depicted in realistic fiction.

There is nothing particularly ground-breaking here except that Duncan registers two peculiarities in the female Gothic conclusion that provide him with his points of entry into Scott. The first is that the return to the realm of realistic fiction is unnarratable, or at least unnarrated: fiction without romance is a blank slate. The second is that the slate isn’t quite blank after all, or rather, the slate may be blank but its frame is ornately inscribed. The common order of bourgeois existence—property, marriage, retreat from the energies of plot—is set in the place of the romance bower of bliss, a “bower of delightful oblivion [that] can only be set in place after the sentence of rational recollection has been spoken over the narrative” (p. 40).

At the end of the Radcliffe novel, then, we encounter what might be called the romance of real life, a genre resistant to narrative but one that exerts immense determinative force on the careers of the romance heroine and hero. And it is in Scott’s grasp of and emphasis on the material effects of imaginary things that Duncan perceives the originality and cultural force of the Waverley Novels. Duncan’s argument proceeds with considerable dexterity on a number of levels. He details Scott’s revision, or invention, of Scottish history, his positing a way of understanding the coming into being of modern social formations, his remodeling of the human subject, and his re-imagining of the idea of the author. All of these, however, are linked through Scott’s “troping with brilliant inventiveness, the major eighteenth-century idea of romance . . . as the narrative form of a ‘historical otherness, a representation discontinuous with modern cultural formations’” (pp. 57-8). Scott’s turn or trope on this eighteenth-century binary opposition is to refuse the absoluteness of the opposition and to find in the negotiation between romance and the material forces of history the foundation of modern subjectivity.

We may interpret two valences of romance in Scott, in fruitful tension with each other. First, romance signifies an individualist estrangement from real life, a puerile narcissism and egotistical delusion; in the progressive, rationalist ethos of a narrative of socialization, it is a condition to be outgrown or cured. . . . Second, however, romance signifies the heritage of a cultural identity that is lost but ethically true, an historically alienated ancestral patriarchy recalled in vision or legend. The field of the tension or contradiction between these versions of romance and history alike is the individual imagination: hence Scott’s delivery of the subjective meaning of romance as map of the imagination, continent of the aesthetic and sentimental springs of a rational morality (p. 59).

As Duncan acknowledges, this model is not too distant from the typical progress of a Scott hero proposed by Jane Millgate, from a romance of the self
to a rationalized romance of a people or a community. Where Duncan’s argument parts company with Millgate, and F. R. Hart, and Daniel Cottom, is in insisting on the continuing determinative force of individually grasped imaginary relations that can only be understood in terms of the first valence of romance described above. “[H]istorical being can only be rationally possessed, recognized, as romance—as a private aesthetic property” (p. 61). Moreover, it is not merely historical being that is maintainable only through romance, it is also being in history, particularly when that history is of the present.

Hence the apparent opposition between history and romance dissolves on one level; on another it manifests itself hierarchically. To illustrate this function Duncan draws our attention to Waverley’s choice of romance icon in the project of restoration with which Waverley ends the painting of himself and Fergus Mac-Ivor, a depiction of “paternal and fraternal heroism.” The painting is of an insistently manly sort of romance but, as Duncan notes, “this is hardly the story we have read. . . . A more accurate picture of Waverley’s outlaw career might have shown him—in the thick of it—supine of his sickbed, ignorant of his place or the identities of his guardians, Rose Bradwardine, old Janet Gellatley and Alice Bean Lean” (pp. 72-3). Waverley’s choice is of one romance archetype rather than another, Redcrosse armed for battle rather than being nursed back to spiritual health in the House of Alma. In this case the narrative irony is clear enough; this is an instance of the sneaking imbecility with which Scott famously charged his first novelistic hero. An analogous strand in Duncan’s argument, though, holds that Waverley’s duplicitous masculinizing of romance sets the patterns for Scott’s ongoing evasion of history’s feminization of the individual male. Building on Nancy Armstrong’s assertion that “the modern individual was first and foremost a woman,” Duncan constructs a persuasive case for Scott’s treatment of romance as a compensation in the individual imaginary for the recognition that “history is the narrative of the loss of patriarchy” (p. 73).

There is a further turn, though, in what Duncan calls Scott’s “romance of private restoration” (p. 105) and here the debt to the ambiguous retreat from and to romance at the close of Radcliffian Gothic is most pronounced. Duncan commences his account of this turn by recrossing the much-discussed ground of Scott’s paired heroines. “Rose Bradwardine is more interesting than a casual reading might grant,” the argument begins and proceeds to align Rose and her successors with the Radcliffe heroine whose promise is a private, mutual acceptance of the masculine subject’s chosen romance. Rose holds out no aristocratically idealized Captain Wogan to lure Waverley into what he fails to recognize as a distinctly female quixotism. She does not snort, as Flora surely would, at Waverley’s self-idealizing portrait. She domesticates romance in ways that permit the maintenance of romance illusions about the self, without which that self would not be possible.

Duncan’s extensive reading of Waverley provides him with a template for his complementary readings of a series of variations: Guy Mannering (read as
the fullest development of the romance of private restoration); *The Bride* of *Lammermoor* (read as a sacrificial reversal of the pattern, with a concomitant demonization of woman as "carrier" of romance); *The Heart of Mid-Lothian* (read as an open confrontation on Scott's part with the tradition of female romance). Each of these readings builds productively upon the conceptual apparatus developed in the treatment of *Waverley* and each illustrates further dimensions of Scott's multi-faceted appropriation of romance conventions. The pages on *Mid-Lothian's* much-abused fourth volume—describing this as a narrative of the supposedly unnarratable idyll lying beyond the author's adieu, an idyll on the belief in which the sustenance of bourgeois society depends—are particularly valuable.

Also valuable, both to our understanding of Scott and to the progress of Duncan's argument, is the consideration of "the figure of the materialistic and literal-minded author-as-editor" (p. 175) with which the discussion of *Mid-Lothian* concludes. What Duncan perceives in the deflationary or bathetic return of Jedidiah Cleishbotham is the heart of Scott's "aesthetic of disappointment" and he calls upon his readers to recognize "the rhetorical seduction of idealizing a de-idealization—a morose delectation if ever there were" (pp. 175-6).

It is in the Author of *Waverley's* refusal finally to be seduced by the romance-magus possibilities of authorship, in his repeated breakings of the wand, that Duncan discovers his way to turning the discussion toward Scott’s "heir," Charles Dickens. For, if Scott resists the lures of authorship and Dickens does not, Scott falls to the equally romance allure of the Lairdship of Abbotsford, a seduction lying at the center of Lockhart's transformation of Scott into one of his own characters in the *Life*. Duncan employs Lockhart's version of Scott—the one received and accepted by Dickens, who insisted on understanding his predecessor’s fall as pathos—as one more demonstration of the effects of romance imagination in the real. This particular demonstration is shown to have had a galvanic effect upon Dickens whose vision of Scott as "a colossus sunken in the quicksands of the market" (p. 191) served him as talisman in his own striving "to distinguish himself from—by claiming a relation of command over—a complex machinery of commodification in which are included his publishers" (p. 190). Thus Scott's career, viewed in the reoriented terms of romance created by the *Waverley* Novels, becomes that cautionary example against which Carlyle's, Dickens's, and, by extension, the Victorian period's romance of authorship was constructed.

This is a large claim and it is one Duncan's book isn't quite up to justifying. When Duncan's argument leaves Scott for Dickens its energy flags producing first a somewhat perfunctory account of the multiple evasions of authorship's implications in *David Copperfield*. The suggestion that "the famous absence of a representation of a literary work in the novel marks . . . the vanishing point where the literary work does not reflect itself because it coincides with itself" (p. 207) is suggestive but no more given the underdevelopment of Duncan's argument. The sense of incompleteness, of notes toward a book to be written
later, continues in Duncan's final chapter which provides brief considerations of *Oliver Twist* and *The Old Curiosity Shop* and slightly more extended discussions of *Barnaby Rudge* and *Dombey and Son*. The sense of lack generated by the latter two is in part contextual. Given the range and detail of Duncan's readings of those Scott novels he considers at length, the reader has come to expect the same with Dickens. While this foreshortening may mirror what Duncan sees, in *Rudge* at least, as Dickens's flattening and rendering generic of the historical past, the reader's sense is that the critic is here representing the novel as he claims the novel represents Lord George Gordon and those around him: "somewhat desultorily" (p. 227). The strength of the chapter is Duncan's summary of what Dickens learned from Scott's fiction, especially from the central place that analysis—"which implies a unified semiotic field informing the dispersed registers and episodes of the narrative" (p. 222)—plays there. Its weakness lies in the relatively canonical readings produced by the application of such insights to specific texts. The occasional reader of Dickens criticism will leave this chapter sensing that little has changed in the thirty years since Steven Marcus published *Dickens from Pickwick to Dombey*.

This is certainly not the case with Duncan's treatment of Scott and Scott scholarship. One of the book's most impressive aspects is Duncan's implied range in portions of the Scott canon that his discussion touches on only glancingly. He offers a range of one-line comments on such works as *Anne of Geierstein* and *Peveril of the Peak* that tempt the reader to rush out and (re)read the "minor" Scott. Similarly Duncan's treatment of his critical predecessors argues that Scott has been remarkably well served by his commentators. Duncan suggests in his Acknowledgments that "this is not a book that clears the ground so much as surveys it from the tree-tops of previous criticism and scholarship" (p. xii). These trees become, as he hopes they will, "part of the view" and they are green and flourishing. It is rare to encounter a book that is both original in its argument and deferential to those who have come before but this, at least as far as it concerns itself with Scott, is one.

A few minor quibbles and demurs, though. The first and most important concerns Duncan's style. From the quotations embedded above, the reader will have gathered that Duncan's prose suffers from some—though by no means all—of the characteristic difficulties of recent, theoretically-informed literary criticism. Duncan assumes considerable readerly facility with what some readers may consider jargon. It is, however, fair to presume that those who blanch at the casual use of such terms as semiotics, patriarchy, polyphonic, commodification, et al. have abandoned literary criticism or disciplined their blood some time past. It is less fair to assume readers willing to follow Duncan through the labyrinthine, polyclausal tracks of his densely packed sentences. There is, certainly, a performative dimension to such writing and it is a performance imitative of what Duncan perceives in Scott: "To read Scott well is to read a narrative syntax that sets different discourses and genres and conventions, different textual planes of narration and editorialization, in dynamic rela-
tion to one another” (p. 94). To read Duncan well is likewise to be addressed by what he calls “the tumult of dialects and jargons,” but a tumult oriented to an end. There are passages, however, when the reader wonders if a more disciplined, Porteous Riot-style, clamor of signifiers might not be preferable. I offer the following as example and challenge:

Such monologic possession is the figure of a death sentence. It signifies the removal of the word from its live context, a more important term than origin or end: for (in Burkean fashion) context means total historical community, always hierarchical and patriarchal, and origin an individualistic interpretive construction, in tendency enthusiastic and fanatical. The Covenanters and Peter Peebles have alike substituted living and dense context with single, rigid text until they themselves are figures locked within it. Bradwardine and the rest are relics and survivors of history, bearing their humours like honourable scars. ‘Context’ has become just that: linguistic differences suspended from the determinism of historical function in a private domain, in the mode of a comedy of aesthetic difference (pp. 95-6).

This is by no means impossible writing to read; neither is it empty or uninformative. No one, however, will mistake working through such prose for fun. Fussy readers, or committed Gothicists, may also be distracted by a number of minor errors, inaccuracies, and doubtful judgments that cluster in his opening chapter on the culture of Gothic. Lewis’s Matilda is not “Ambrosio’s jilted mistress” (p. 34) when she poses for the Madonna portrait; the Venetian Council of Ten does not stamp out “Montoni and his band at the end of Udolpho” (p. 46, my emphasis); Schedoni is the Marchesa di Vivaldi’s “satanic double of arrogance, lust and malice” (p. 38) only if one broadens considerably the common definition of lust (Schedoni may have been lustful once but by the time he attends the Marchesa other sins are preferred). Such falterings undermine the reader’s confidence in the evidence upon which certain of Duncan’s queryable conclusions—that “in Radcliffe’s romances, such legal institutions are impersonal forces, dreadful in appearance but benign in effect” (p. 46), for instance—are based. They do not, however, undercut the persuasiveness of the book’s central arguments. Duncan’s work, by insisting on the importance of Scott’s romance sources, will contribute much to the ongoing rehabilitation of Gothic as a serious cultural form. His forceful decomposition of facile novel/romance and history/romance oppositions will draw necessary attention to the determinative force of the imaginary in historical process. And the depth, subtlety, and conceptual sophistication of his readings of individual Scott novels will help to make the novels accessible and significant to a generation of critics which has tended to ignore them.

**KIM IAN MICHAISIW**

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When only one influence on Sir Walter Scott, in this case that of Gothic literature, is put under a magnifying glass, it inevitably is blown up out of proportion—but no matter: Fiona Robertson shows convincingly that the influence of the Gothic is much more deep-seated and pervading than has hitherto been thought, and her detailed study is ultimately an important revaluation of Scott’s achievement. She begins by exploding the commonly held belief that Scott’s novels show essentially a sound, healthy, masculine mind at work—that they are conspicuous for their good sense and their sanity—that ineffective passages in the Waverley Novels can be explained by Scott’s having lapsed into the Gothic mode in weak moments, or when he was apoplectic, or when the German sickness was upon him—that almost single-handedly he rescued the novel as a genre from the morbidity of its Gothic practitioners. This view of Scott is owing partly to Lockhart’s biography, partly to the writings of Scott’s early critics, and partly to the image he chose to present of himself. But the true picture is quite different, Robertson argues. In fact, the Gothic was a source of Scott’s strength.

Robertson is not so much interested in the paraphernalia of Gothic (its haunted mansions, secret passageways, ghosts, vampires and the like) as she is in its concern with the establishment of authenticity, its anchorage in an historical setting, its political resonances, its narrative patterns that delay the revelation of some dark secret or that create anxiety in the mind of a leading character (and also in the reader), and its propensity to have its characters either unable to express themselves adequately when emotionally excited, or if they can, they do so in language punctuated with literary allusions. These all are traits that Gothic romances of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries bequeathed to the Waverley Novels.

Not only has Robertson read and digested the great monuments of Gothic literature—Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto*, Lewis’s *The Monk*, Radcliffe’s *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, Maturin’s *Melmouth the Wanderer*, Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*—but also the lesser known works of Radcliffe and Maturin and a host of romances by lesser known authors: Charlotte Dacre, Sophia Lee, Eliza Parsons, Clara Reeve, and many others. Robertson’s truly impressive knowledge of her subject enables her to approach Scott with the same literary background and expectations that his original readers had, and thus she can see parallels and connections that most present-day readers, who do not have this context, would not see—and the resulting slant on Scott is both surprising and enlightening.

Another positive feature of this book is Robertson’s readiness to consider not only the mainstream, critically-acclaimed novels but also the ones that are usually not thought of as being among the best. So in addition to discussion of...
The Heart of Midlothian (with its Gothic hero George Staunton, alias George Robertson), The Bride of Lammermoor (and its indebtedness to Maturin’s The Milesian Chief), and Redgauntlet (and the resurgence of past loyalties that cause young Darsie to lose his personal freedom), there are full discussions of the withholding of dark secrets in The Pirate and The Antiquary, of Lady Hermione and her turbulent life-history in The Fortunes of Nigel, of the Gothic machinery of Woodstock and its relevance, and of the secretive and powerful Vehme-Gericht in Anne of Geierstein (and The House of Aspen) and its threat to personal safety and freedom.

There are other good things about this study. Robertson explodes also the commonly held belief that Scott “did not understand, or did not care to investigate, the workings of the mind in states of anger, obsession, neurosis, or desire” (p. 164). She has perceptive remarks about Scott’s use of recurrent imagery—of dead bodies in Redgauntlet and of falling into an abyss, particularly in Anne of Geierstein but also in other novels. She explains how Scott often uses what seems to be a simple hunting-scene to foreshadow later important events in a story. She points out interestingly how a novel’s political complications will sometimes comment indirectly on the politics of Scott’s own time.

Occasionally one may feel that a point is forced or that a connection is a little too clever, but I have found that re-reading and pondering help to convince. Indeed my only gripe has to do with the bibliography. There is a half page citing “manuscript materials,” and then thirty-seven pages of “published materials and dissertations” including primary material, secondary material, much of it contemporary with Scott, much of it not—all of it lumped together alphabetically without any grouping or classification. Another approach—indeed any system of organization—would have been more useful.

Nevertheless this is a fine book. The influences on Scott were manifold. His poems and novels show his indebtedness to balladry and folklore, to classical epics, to Chaucer and medieval romance, to Shakespeare, to the Bible and pulpit oratory, to his legal training—and now Fiona Robertson has shown with enviable erudition and critical acumen that Gothic romance is not the least of these influences, although it was hitherto the least studied and appreciated. Generations of students who were told that Sir Walter Scott was not one of the greats will learn from Legitimate Histories that there is complexity, subtlety, and uncanny sophistication in the Waverley Novels—so much that they may wish to read Scott again (or for the first time) and form their own evaluative judgments. We can all be thankful to Fiona Robertson for a job well done.

JEROME MITCHELL
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This book, consisting of forty-nine essays, is well-produced, but publishers should not allow tiny print in their indices—it is hard on elderly eyes.

In recent years, a swarm of critics has settled on Scott’s works, especially the juicier novels (my metaphor is drawn from bees); here are forty-nine of them, over half from North America, a third from the British Isles, and a handful from Australia or Europe. Most of the essays study the novels; but the poems, the plays, the Swift memoir, the Novelists, the Journal—all receive attention, besides Scott’s links with other authors, with Scottish drama, even with Westerns; only Grandfather and the vast output of editorial and miscellaneous work are merely mentioned.

In spite of this variety, the title is inapt: it evokes the picture of Dr. Dryasdust dancing about in fancy dress and blowing a squeaker; but there is nothing light-hearted about the book.

In “this trackless desert of print which we see before us, winding on and on into the purple distance” (Wodehouse) there are few errors; but note that there was no Union of Ireland and England in 1801 (Brian Hollingworth); Miss Grizel Damahoy is not a character in The Abbot (W. F. H. Nicolaisen); Caleb Balderstone was not a cook (Cyrus Vakil); Rob Roy is not a novel about the ’15, although nearly so; Rob was not a Highland chief; and Scott was not brought up in the Highlands (all Thomas R. Mockaitis); the Scots word “ilk” does not mean what two authors think it does (L. M. Findlay, four times, and Frank Jordan).

There is no obvious political and social partisanship, except that Murray Pittock censures Scott for not being Jacobite enough, and calls Charles Edward’s force “the Royal Army”—old Compton Mackenzie would have loved this. One feels here and there in the book that the author is not quite “county”; but on the whole it is really satisfactory in the matter of prejudice.

Twenty of the papers are written in reasonably plain English, congenial to readers brought up on Swift and Smollett. Brief notes follow:

Jørgen Erik Nielsen: Solid information about two Danish ballads quoted in Lady of the Lake, Note 49.

Peter Garside: Meg Merrilies and India: a connection, at first sight absurd, is convincingly made out with ample evidence.

D. S. Mack notes careful planning in the volume division of certain novels’ first editions; one wonders whether Scott’s construction is so very haphazard after all.

Gillian M. Dale: Jeanie’s moral dilemma. This is an old debate, like that about Hamlet, but its competent handling holds the reader. (Do some of our
humane critics forget that the law under which Effie was convicted was meant
to stamp out an increasingly common crime?)

Graham Tulloch analyzes the use of the Bible in *Ivanhoe*, and makes us
ashamed of the old judgment that *Ivanhoe* is only an adventure story for boys.

Silvia Mergenthal shows how Maria Edgeworth's *Harrington* and Scott's
*Ivanhoe* contributed to the fight against anti-Semitism.

Lars Hartveit studies *The Pirate* in the light of Scott's own views about fic-
tion, instead of those of modern theorists: very refreshing.

J. B. de Groot regards *Redgauntlet* as an exercise in the "what if?" ques-
tion; i.e., what if the Jacobites had succeeded? Unusual approach.

Tom Dale reviews the enormous *Napoleon*. Sound, but seems to miss the
point that Scott saw Napoleon as "a terrible and evil spirit," as the Covenanters
saw Claverhouse.

Thomas R. Mockaitis uses the distinction between faction-fighting inside
the governing class and the war of class against class to explain why Scott symp-
pathized with some rebels but not with others.

J. H. Alexander brings out the pathos of Scott's self-revelation in the *Jour-
nal*, the document which maps out the course of his decline.

Fiona Robertson makes out a case for Scott's plays, and links them with
"Gothic" literature and his own novels.

Barbara Bell treats of the immense influence of the Waverley novels on
later Scottish drama, exercised especially through their many dramatizations.

H. Philip Bolton connects Rob Roy with the old Robin Hood ballads and
plays.

Penelope Fielding shows that Scott shared Swift's faith in Reason, though
with a difference.

Ruth Beckett: Mediaevalism: Scott's was different from that of later writ-
ers like Carlyle and Ruskin.

Frank Jordan: the group of gossips (Saddletree and Co.) in *Midlothian*
considered as a model for Hardy's rustic chorus, especially in *The Mayor of
Casterbridge*; a nice point.

John J. Burke, Jr.: the tone, hopeful on the whole, of Scott's mediaeval
novels, is contrasted with the spirit of despair which informs a recent novel with
a mediaeval setting: Umberto Eco's *The Name of the Rose*.

These twenty articles are informative, persuasive, and clearly expressed. The
other articles, devoted mainly to analysis of the novels, are for one reason
or another less welcome.

There is too much fine-spun theorizing, more ingenious than convincing,
and too much indulgence in the cruel sport of symbol-squeezing: must we be-
lieve that the joint attack on Hatteraick by Brown, Hazlewood, and Dinnmont
symbolizes the cooperation of social classes in old Scotland? Scott's texts
should not be used as conjurers' hats.

There is far too much heavy academic diction, which reminds one at times
of white dwarf stars, whose material is so densely packed that a teaspoonful if
brought to earth would weigh several tons (see e.g. L. M. Findlay or Jina Politi).

Many articles employ a special vocabulary, drawn from various speculative or quasi-scientific disciplines, all related to psychology and philosophy, and all industrious cobweb-spinners. The common reader dislikes the thickly-crowding sesquipedalians such as narcissistic ego-ideal, ethnocentrism, technologism, psychomachia, paratext, etc., etc., and wonders if they are really necessary; he sickens at the frequent use of words like ambivalent. These critics seem to regard Scott’s novels as just a convenient source of illustrations for modern theories, and one wonders whether inferior novels would not do just as well. Criticism should illumine; but to return from these articles to Scott’s works is to grope one’s way out of the gloom of Tom Sawyer’s cave to bright daylight by a rushing mighty river.

To all this our critics may answer and say: “You do not understand. Our thought is intrinsically difficult; we are probing the hidden recesses of human thought, individual and collective; we need these special words. It is not as if we were mining for coal. Men like Kant and Hegel did not set out to furnish you with a bright little volume to read in the train. Molière, Swift, and Lesage derided the medicine and science of their day and were proved wrong—you too will be proved wrong about us.”

Time will tell: an apology may one day be due to the unrecognized Kants and Hegels among our Forty-niners. But notice that Tony Inglis makes points about the influence of Scott’s personal and private experience on Heart of Midlothian which are so good that they can stand alone without any trappings. Indeed, the point about the Laird of Black-at-the-Bane is perhaps the best point in the entire book, and shows a nice talent for detective work; like Oscar Wilde, “I wish I had said that.”—Penelope Fielding’s is a readable though psychological essay.—Perhaps translation of the peccant papers into plain English might show which are deeply thought but badly expressed, and which are vox et praeterea nihil.

It is regrettable when specialists retire into an exclusive coterie, talking the language of initiates and quoting each other (scratching each other’s backs, as we say in Scotland). We should justify our existence by offering something to the public: the motto should be: “Every scholar his own popularizer.” G. K. Chesterton’s book on Dickens has seldom been out of print, we are told, since its first publication in 1906; we are as devoted to Scott as he was to Dickens, and should do our poor best to emulate him. For that matter, Scott himself was adept at making even annotations interesting: we have the model under our hands.

JAMES ANDERSON

Edinburgh

The eighteenth century was one of the great periods of Gaelic poetry. It was also the period of the decline of the professional poet and the rise of the vernacular poet. Some of the greatest names in Gaelic poetry belong to this century—Alexander Macdonald, Duncan Ban Macintyre, Rob Donn, William Ross, Dugald Buchanan.

As one would expect there are some Jacobite poems in this anthology, from the soaring welcome of Alexander Macdonald to the somber lament of John Roy Stewart and a song called “Mo run geal og”/“My fair young love” addressed to Prince Charles (where the latter is romanticized). More immediate perhaps is the phrase “white bodies” in John Roy Stewart’s poem about Culloden, and also the lines

uncoffined, unshrouded,  
lacking burial even in holes.

I suppose though that what impresses one most in the anthology is the lovely nature poetry, particularly the fresh vital verse of Alexander Macdonald, and Duncan Ban’s loving description of the deer and the corries. Macdonald emerges from this anthology as perhaps the most brilliant of all the poets, in his verve and freshness of detail and his metrical skill and brio. Thus in his “Song of Summer” he writes of the

Lithe brisk fresh-water salmon  
lively, leaping the stones;  
bunched, white-bellied, scaly,  
fin-tail-flashing . . . . .

and of May as the

month of speckled eggs, dewy,  
fine month for garlic and rose . .

and, of birds,

Each psalmist, fine-speckled and fresh,  
mounts his steep, fragrant pulpit of leaves

though curiously enough this verse occurs in his “Song of Winter.”

Duncan Ban Macintyre who often seeks to emulate Macdonald doesn’t quite have this freshness except when he writes about the deer whom he loved excessively. The magnificent “Ben Doran” is a treasure house of loving detail:
The hind with the taper—
head sniffing so keenly,
with sensitive nostril
exploring the breezes;
short-tailed and long-shanked
on mountainous summit
she stays in her fastness
lest gun-fire deceive her . . .

In "Song of the Misty Corrie" he has

The yellow doe roves in the thicket
peeling the base of the saplings bare.
the morose buck with the curving hoof
busily scraping a courtly bed
while the brindled fawn, so smoothly sided,
with twitching nostrils and wildest head
lies cosily, sleeping in a lonely hollow,
a rounded bunch under rushes' tips

This is pure observation, of the highest quality, with none of Wordsworth's philosophical musings. This is Gaelic poetry at its best, absolutely clear-sighted, and no hint of a Celtic twilight.

There are one or two love poems and songs from William Ross's ornate "Feasgar Luain"/"Monday Evening" and his "Oran Eile"/"Another Song" (which has the inevitability of great poetry) to the wonderful anonymous "Thig Tri Nithean gun Iarraidh"/"Three things come without seeking" which begins:

Three things come without seeking
fear, jealousy and love.

In contrast to these poems are the elegies of Rob Donn, one about a generous patron and another about three misers. Rob Donn is as sharp-eyed about human beings as Macdonald and Macintyre are about nature. He was influenced in his witty brevity by Alexander Pope. In a poem connected with the '45 Rebellion he is angry at the Disclothing Act of 1747 and though the Clan Mackay (to which he belonged) fought on the Hanoverian side he calls for the return of Prince Charles. Such was the rage of the Highlanders as they "cast their skins."

Finally there is the imaginative spiritual intensity of the evangelical Dugald Buchanan as shown in an extract from his "Day of Judgment":

The elements all melt with heat
as fire melts wax with its hot breath;
the hills and moors are all aflame
and all the oceans boil and seethe.
All you who scraped with ploughs of gold,  
greed-driven, prone to vice and blood,  
now you can slake your desperate thirst  
and drink your fill from out the flood.

This selection, with translations, by Professor Derick Thomson—who has done so much for Gaelic literature both as scholar and poet—shows the brilliance and variety of eighteenth-century Gaelic poetry. Not perhaps till the twentieth century—when Gaelic poetry has profoundly changed—will we find such comprehensive brilliance again.

IAIN CRIGHTON SMITH  
Taynuilt, Argyll


Rubik’s analysis of Oliphant’s work seems to be the victim of its own form. It contains some intriguing snippets of information, hints at a radical theoretical analysis of Oliphant’s oeuvre, and suggests close readings of Oliphant’s texts which seem about to expose hitherto unrevealed subtexts. But the promises thus made are never quite realized. One is left with a sense of unfulfilled possibility, a lack of substance in spite of the authoritative presentation of this (literally) weighty hardback volume. The problem is displayed clearly on the contents page, which sets up a kind of critical straitjacket, imposing divisions reminiscent of old-fashioned school textbooks: under “Formal considerations” we have “narrative technique,” “style” and “plot,” while “The Role of the Individual in Society” is parcelled into subsections such as “Women,” “Men,” “Marriage,” “Parents and Children.” There is no room here for deconstruction of social or textual boundaries, for questioning gender roles, or, indeed, for traditional analysis of a multi-faceted character. The structure seems to be based on the regulations for a university thesis, but the subdivisions chosen are restricting rather than enabling to modern scholarship, and too neglectful of recent critical theory.

A further frustration, consequent upon the constructions of the formal structure of the text, is the diffuse discussion of the books themselves. Clearly Oliphant’s work has been read with attention, but one has a sense of relevant quotations being picked out for inclusion under the correct headings, and during
this treatment the text as entity is mislaid. To separate Style from Narrative Technique in quite this manner, or even Women from Men, or Religion from Death, seems a little like attempting to define a word by careful study of the different letters. The result is that, impressive though this study may be in its gleaning of examples and correlations from Oliphant's prolific works, it leaves an impression of confinement, of painstakingly mapping out a well-known and now exhausted territory, while remaining meekly within long established boundaries. The conclusion reflects this caution. Rubik’s last word is that Oliphant, in spite of her conservatism, is “an original voice,” but the foregoing chapters have not produced enough evidence to genuinely support such an assertion, nor to define its meaning in relation to a literary tradition. This seems particularly disappointing in the expanding field of literary criticism of both Scottish and women’s writing.

The section “Oliphant and her Critics” follows the convention of a survey of literature, but lacks the resolution of a convincing alternative thesis. For example, the strictures leveled at Oliphant by her contemporary nineteenth-century critics, and their praise of “edifying and wholesome stories” (p. 8) follow a now familiar model of criticism of women writers, in terms of their femininity or otherwise, that perhaps reached its apotheosis with the Brontës, but which continued to flourish into the following century. Criticism of Oliphant was certainly contradictory (it seems a bit hard to be labeled “dull and insipid” and yet at the same time “unsuitable”), and sometimes surprising. It is predictable that she should not have found favor with Wilde, but James’s condemnation is more startling, since, in spite of the insistent presence of a moralizing narrator in much of her work, Oliphant does at times silence that authoritative voice and allow the inner world of the character to stand revealed by language and image alone. Perhaps nowhere does she do this more sensitively than in the justly often-reprinted story “The Library Window.” The subtext of growing sexual awareness on the part of the girl narrator, developed through the construction of a man who is both writer and potential lover, and who reflects the girl’s own confinement as well as her desire, would seem to show that Oliphant’s place between the Brontës and James is not merely a chronological coincidence. However, this aspect of intertextuality is never mentioned, Rubik being content merely to note through various examples that Oliphant’s relationship to the contemporary canon is problematic. Moreover, Rubik points out the dichotomy between Oliphant’s subversive subtexts and her stated opinions without really considering why the fictions should be so much more radical than the social persona of their author. Oliphant’s stated views against women’s suffrage, for example, must have embarrassed every reader who has ever regretted Lucilla Marchbanks’ marriage to Mr. Ashburton. There seems to be an opening here for consideration of the peculiar power of irony, perhaps always the strongest weapon of literary subversion, in nineteenth-century women’s fiction. But here again, the analysis stops short.
This gap in the analysis of fictional narrative seriously inhibits the chapter entitled “Formal Considerations.” Rubik refers to Wayne Booth, but not to any more recent discussion of narrative. Booth himself makes clear and useful distinctions which could have been pressed into service here. Is it, for example, really a problem that the narrator in several of the novels appears to be Margaret Oliphant referring to details of her past life? If character is a textual construct in both autobiography and fiction, and the status of all narrative is textual, then can we not take these personal references on the part of the narrator simply as an intrinsic part of the text? (In which case, as the narrator is usually overtly “she,” why does Rubik assign a male pronoun to the narrative voice?) In itself, this particular dilemma might seem insignificant, but it leads to a continuing concern throughout the text with working out whom the author/narrator “identifies with,” a concern that leads, among other things, to a rather one-dimensional analysis of the effects of ironic self-revelation (pp. 32-40).

In the following sections the unresolved relationships between text and life is a recurring problem. At the beginning of the second chapter, it is presented as a generally acknowledged truism that “Oliphant painted an authentic picture of everyday life in her age” (p. 89). The reader is then led through Oliphant’s depiction of each social class, of men and women characters, and of marriage. This separation of literary techniques, previously discussed under the headings mentioned in chapter one, and depiction of “everyday life,” begs such questions as, for example, the significance of marriage in terms of plot rather than of life. Rubik asserts that Oliphant’s representation of marriage is not typical of the nineteenth-century novel, but is this not in part because she rejects the convention of happy marriage as closure to a fictional narrative, rather than because she rejects marriage as a social institution? Similarly, the social world of her novels is, as Rubik points out, on the whole that of various carefully-differentiated strata of the middle classes, but again, one could argue that this owes as much to the contemporary novel genre as to personal experience. The two may indeed coincide, but the boundaries in point of view are surely textually as well as personally constructed.

Rubik sets out to examine Oliphant’s originality, which would seem to demand an examination of her oeuvre in the context of an established literary tradition. Some of Oliphant’s most intriguing remarks in her Autobiography concern her own awareness of being heir to a Scottish tradition. In speaking of Scott, she asserts an affinity which she ascribes to

the nationality, perhaps, the national brotherhood that makes me feel as if it were a bigger me that was speaking sometimes (Autobiography, p. 57).

Rubik does not examine Oliphant’s Scottishness as a central issue, but some of her examples are revealing; for example in her section on “The Lower Classes” she points out that serious discussion between villagers occurs mainly in the Scottish novels, and in her section on “Women” she cites Galt’s Leddy Grippy
and Scott's Jeanie Deans as earlier examples of strong women characters, but, she adds, "they are lower-class characters." In this instance above all one regrets the imprisoning structure of this book. Here we have Rubik throwing out tantalizing hints of a correlation between a Scottish tradition, which has already produced strong women characters who transgress both social roles and the literary conventions of the nineteenth-century novel, and a developing tradition of women's writing which reinstates Oliphant where she knew she belonged and longed to be acknowledged, alongside the most acclaimed English woman writer of her day, George Eliot. If Rubik could have avoided the structural confinement she imposed upon her thesis, how much she could have done with the evidence that she has amassed, in order to prove that Oliphant was indeed "an original voice" (p. 308).

MARGARET ELPHINSTONE
Strathclyde University


Muriel Spark is one of the leading novelists writing today whose literary art is immersed in satire and irony. Born in Edinburgh in 1918, she converted to Roman Catholicism in 1954 and dates her career as a novelist to the same year and her style to the influence of Proust, Newman and Max Beerbohm.

Joseph Hynes has done the literary community a great service in collecting these essays which deal with the major portion of Muriel Spark's copious work. He has produced not just a random collection of essays on Spark's art and vision, but a carefully planned study organized into three sections: autobiographical essays and interviews, six essays by "the loyal opposition" and detractors, and nineteen "mainstream" essays that recognize Spark as a provocative major contemporary novelist. Critics and readers of Spark's works ranging from her first novel, *The Comforters* (1957) to her most recent, *Symposium* (1990) who have appreciated her concentrated, sparse and understated style will welcome this collection.

Beginning with four autobiographical essays and interviews, the editor allows the author to comment on her personal life and her professional aims and purposes, and to connect these topics.

The first essay, "Edinburgh-born" (1962), expresses Spark's nomadic experience. She speaks of her continuous sense of her native place and awareness that it is precisely Edinburgh's "Caledonian" quality that constitutes an obstacle
to her living there. The most significant point about this piece is Spark's focusing on what she terms "the nevertheless principle" as one that is characteristic of her life and work. A number of critics apply this phrase to their subsequent readings of her works. What Spark means by the phrase is that any position taken or point made has another side.

The "nevertheless principle" underlies Spark's imaginative scope as well as her efforts to express paradox. She is clearly a "both/and" writer, rather than an "either/or" author.

The second essay, "My Conversion" (1961), familiar to many students of Spark's work, is foundational to understanding Spark's religious assumptions. She says, "I'm sure my conversion gave me something to work on as a satirist. The Catholic belief is a norm from which one can depart. . . . It's something to measure from."

Hynes' selection of the next two essays is clearly based on the "both/and" premise. That Spark consistently works with this theory is evident in her response to Frank Kermode's questions in his familiar "House of Fiction" interview (1963). A frequently quoted premise of Spark is: "I don't pretend that what I'm writing is more than an imaginative extension of the truth—something inventive . . . what I write is not true—it is a pack of lies." Another point she emphasizes in this interview is that she is not "Mrs. Tolstoy." By this she means she does not write the "traditional realistic novel." Hynes quite agrees with her and says that the better the critic's awareness of this basic critical principle, the better the chance of the evaluation's being worthwhile, an observation which is borne out in part 2.

The final selection in the first part is Spark's Blashfield Foundation Address, "The Desegregation of Art" (1971), and it is central to understanding what Spark is striving to achieve. Here she resists writing books that arouse feelings of sympathy and indignation for the poor and downtrodden. She advocates a desegregated literature, one that will immerse us in facts and prevent our sentimental self-indulgence. With this as her goal, she recommends what she practices—satire and irony.

Part 2 of the volume gathers together those critics who (a) clearly dislike Spark's writings, (b) like her within limits they define and prescribe, or (c) think her pleasant enough, diverting and not to be taken seriously.

Several critics, Frederick Karl, Richard Mayne, and Warner Berthoff, who clearly prefer realism in narrative fictions, specify what they find positive and negative about The Mandelbaum Gate. While they belie an understanding of Spark's vision of reality which embraces more than realism, they applaud her when she comes closest to satisfying their demands for realistic illusion, to being "Mrs. Tolstoy."

Spark's working with paradoxes such as the concrete and abstract, the spiritual and the material and her applying the "nevertheless principle" finds objection in one way or another among the critics of this section. Patrick Parrinder's essay (1983) stands out for the detailed objections he voices. Like the
other commentators in this section, he thinks of realism as the true mode of the serious novel. According to him, realism is essential to what he means by aesthetic value; that is to say, realism for him avoids lesser genres, such as gothicism, allegory, and fairy tales; instead the best fiction is liberal, humanistic, "democratic and materialist," and socially progressive.

The essays in part 3 tend to evaluate Spark's novels on their own terms. Where the material in part 2 ignores Spark's autobiographic insights and articulations of her literary aesthetic, the items in the third section develop these seminal insights and prove to be the most valuable in the whole collection.

Hynes states in his introduction that he has selected examples of the best criticism available. For the most part he has chosen to present it according to the order of publication of Spark's works. By arranging the criticism irrespective of its own dates, he charts almost exactly the appearance of Spark's novels to date. In this way he assists avid Spark readers not only to gain an appreciation of Spark's program but also of the wide range of critical talent tracing her development.

The important point is that the authorities in part 3 tend, to a greater or lesser degree, to analyze and evaluate what the fiction presents, rather than to impose prior aims and preferences. The authors do not always agree with one another or with the editor. What is significant is that they take seriously the task of trying to evaluate Spark's unusual achievement according to its own terms. The items range from a panoramic survey of the Spark canon through 1986 "Poet and Dreamer" by Alan Bold, to the concluding review of Symposium, "Seeing Things from the End" by Lorna Sage.

Hynes is as fair-minded and objective in his own criticism of Spark as he is in selecting representative evaluations of Spark that complement each other. For example, he balances what he calls Bernard Harrison's misreading of The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie and The Mandelbaum Gate in Harrison's comparison of Spark to Austen with David Lodge's detailed and persuasive Sartrean reading of The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie.

Many of these "mainstream" critics attend to the material and spiritual issues Spark emphasizes in her novels. Outstanding are the essays by Velma Bourgeois Richmond on Robinson and The Only Problem, Ruth Whittaker on Memento Mori and Territorial Rights, John Updike on The Takeover and Spark's preeminent advocate, Frank Kermode on The Girls of Slender Means and The Mandelbaum Gate. Hynes has included these last two adroit and empathetic reviews because Kermode presents a general treatment of Spark's work and indirectly addresses criticism of that work. For instance, Kermode sees that Spark's "remoteness" is in line with what she spoke about in calling for a satiric, parodic distance in literary art. Taking on those reviews who resist her religious perspective, Kermode states:

She is an unremittingly Catholic novelist committed to immutable truths... and uncommonly interested in the shapes assumed by these truths as per-
ceived in the tumult of random events and felt upon insensitive fallen flesh. The question for the reader is not at all whether he accepts the truths, but whether the patterns are made good and recognized. Reading them, like writing them, is a work of the imagination, fallen or not.

Hynes wisely advises readers interested in serious Spark criticism to start with Kermode's numerous reviews. As the book suggests, much of Spark's appeal arises from her understated voice and lucid writing which often touch on questions of incongruity and paradox. By his judicious and objective selections, Hynes has indeed succeeded by bringing together a broad range of opinions of Muriel Spark's artistic vision, religious assumptions and stylistic principles. This collection is sure to expand the horizons not only of readers who appreciate Spark's work but also of scholars who explore different approaches to contemporary writers as well.

JOAN LEONARD
Edgewood College


In The Matter of Scotland R. James Goldstein argues with great resourcefulness that by the time Robert Bruce became king of Scots in 1306, Scottish historical writers had laid the groundwork for his claim to the throne by producing literature that showed how well established and recognized that claim was. These writers built to varying degrees on historical works that defended Scotland's independence from England. Goldstein traces the "war of historiography" (p. 7) and the development of "Brucean ideology" (p. 38) in and through such documents as the 1290 Treaty of Birgam-Northampton, the 1301 Instructiones and Processus of Baldred Bisset, the 1321 (?) Bamburgh narrative, the 1309-10 "Letter of the Clergy," the 1320 Declaration of Arbroath, John of Fordun's Chronica Gentis Scotorum (begun in the 1360s), Walter Bower's fifteenth-century embellishments of Fordun, and, climactically, John Barbour's Bruce (ca. 1376) and Blind Harry's Wallace (late 1470s).

Goldstein also undertakes to demonstrate that the "freedom" proclaimed and fought for in Barbour's Bruce connoted not democracy, "no 'absolute' sense of freedom" (p. 100), but rather the freedom of Scottish nobles from English domination. (One hundred years later Hary's freedom is different: "an individual moral quality" [p. 259]).
Scholarly opinion will differ on Goldstein’s talents as a historian. He disarms some criticism by admitting one likely overemphasis: “Obviously, the concept of exploitation carries much of the weight of my argument—perhaps more than it should, given our limited understanding of the changing economic conditions of Scotland during this period” (p. 53). In this day of (rightly) reading history as a kind of fiction, historians and literary scholars, encouraged by theory derived from such thinkers as Saussure, Althusser, Foucault, Lacan, and in this case particularly Jameson, easily cross into what was traditionally the others’ territory. While literary students of the Bruce have usually wanted to know some history, many readers (including this one) who have been attracted by “Ah, freedom is a noble thing,” and by the single-mindedness of Barbour’s Bruce, will need time to absorb and follow the application of such concepts as “the economic or material basis of that superstructure [of a society]” (Marx), “political unconscious” and “ideologeme” (Jameson), and “semiotic rectangle” (Greimas by way of Jameson). Readers who keep up even in part with this theoretical workout will have their reward, perhaps especially when they see how, applying Bloom’s “anxiety of influence” to the two poems (pp. 273-82), Goldstein brilliantly pulls together many hints in the Wallace and in earlier critics that Hary wrote in order to supplant Barbour and to have Wallace supplant Bruce as the hero of the struggle for Scottish independence.

In fact, a great strength of Goldstein’s book (like that of post-structuralism in general) is his ability to zero in on the odd bits, the things about the works that seem particularly incongruous or unsettling. Among such elements in the Bruce are Barbour’s “conflation [that] is almost certainly intentional” of Bruce and his grandfather (p. 335, n. 11) and the way “Barbour effectively silences Balliol himself” (p. 154); and in the Wallace, the climactic but unlikely-seeming confrontation between Wallace and Bruce just before the battle of Falkirk (pp. 245-7), and the religious overtones—“Wallace . . . fashioned as an imago Christi” (p. 267)—of the death of someone notable for his acts of killing.

A sympathetic reader will ask how large might be the audience for a book at once so theoretically-based and so minutely engaged with its literary subjects. But anyone seriously doing medieval Scottish studies must come to terms with the book. Open-minded readers without background in theory will learn some because Goldstein explains as he goes. Readers adept at theory who have an interest in the book’s period or subject will gain respect for the poems’ depth, polish, and truth to their times. Goldstein does take apart the romantic readings beloved by many students of Scottish historical literature, but the book has its share of passion, of the blood that the Wallace fired in Robert Burns and many another. In calling his book The Matter of Scotland, Goldstein confirms traditional readers’ sense that early Scottish literature coheres as a body of (more and less) historical narrative as rich and evocative as the matter of Britain, France, or Rome (p. 143). Goldstein combines theory with documentary evidence and with readings both close and comprehensive; the approach makes “Scotland’s two national epics . . . [which] have never received the attention
they deserve" (p. 6) all the more inviting to read, or reread, or reconsider. New readers and long-term students alike will be affirmed in their choice of subject. Everybody wins. (And apparently the neglect of the poems is lifting in more than one quarter, thanks in part to Mel Gibson and Braveheart.) The conclusion addresses subtly and persuasively the question of how Scottish writers used English models.

Any reader will bring away from Goldstein’s book a renewed and height­ened sense of the power of words, be they from the early 1300s or from 1993.

GRACE G. WILSON
Elizabeth City State University


Henry James was prophetic when he predicted that posterity would be as interested in the Figure of his friend, Louis Stevenson, as in his Work. Although Stevenson’s stories, essays and poems are widely read, his personality has engendered countless reminiscences and lives since his widow approved and oversaw the first biography, Balfour’s 1901 Life, which justifiably has been accused of contributing to the Figure’s sentimental-heroic mystique. Subsequent Stevensonian biography was on some occasions equally adoring and on others intent on destroying the mystique. Some demythologizers were driven by disesteem of his writing to uncover feet of clay in the man (Swinnerton’s 1914 study is an example). Others were fired by a more personal desire to set the record straight. W. E. Henley’s bitter review of Balfour’s Life complained that it created “an angel clean from heaven,” a “faultless, or very nearly faultless, monster,” and it explained why—his personality had become “a marketable thing.” However, even Henley’s diatribe dismissed Stevenson’s work. “His books are none of mine,” he wrote, condemning his friend’s writing for its dogmatic moralizing and superficiality.

Stevenson had to wait until J. C. Furnas’s Voyage to Windward (1952) for a judicious, well-researched, comprehensive, and stylish biography. With David Daiches’ 1947 study of the fiction, it stimulated re-evaluation of Stevenson at a time when his writing had a marginal critical reputation. Voyage to Windward is the standard by which subsequent biographies should be judged because it
carefully links the Figure and the Work and avoids both sentimental myth-making and costive iconoclasm.

Later life-studies like Pope-Hennessey’s (1974) and Calder’s (1980) failed to effect substantial adjustments to the Figure constructed by Furnas, although each (especially the latter) advanced fresh interpretations of obscure or controversial episodes in Stevenson’s now well-documented existence. More important, neither led directly to fresh critical perspectives on his writing.

Now the centenary of Stevenson’s death has brought two more biographies off the conveyor belt and we must ask: Do we need them? Do they help the Work speak to us afresh or are they contemporary efforts to cash in on his marketable personality?

Ian Bell treats Stevenson “in the most unscholarly way” (p. 278). He has no notes identifying sources for his references and the brief bibliography lists only printed sources, mainly books. The author adds little to the salient “facts” of his subject’s life or the three “circumstances” he identifies as being decisive to our understanding of it: “illness, Scotland, and travel” (p. xiv). He eschews the techniques of literary criticism because, as he says, “[T]he human factor mattered more than textual analysis” (p. 278). It is unfortunate that a biographer who claims that the life and work “refuse to be separated” (p. 278) should confine himself to broad, conventional evaluations of his subject’s writing. As a result, this book is full of undeveloped suggestions about the three themes and the fiction, essays, and travel books. For instance, here is Bell’s main discussion of *Kidnapped*, a novel composed in illness, set in Scotland, and constructed as a journey:

> Again . . . Louis was creating a fable just as he created the fable of *Jekyll*. It is one person’s story—struggle, if you like—telling of how he maintained his footing on shifting moral ground. It is also superb adventure, paced and plotted, carried along by the spirit of the alter ego, Alan Breck. Few of Stevenson’s books are better. And if, yet again, he deals obliquely with evil, his ethical reasoning was sound. The *Master of Ballantrae* is more direct, and its narrative drive suffers as a result. *Life* moved forward but not to a moral plan. The pity is that R. L. S. accepted Colvin’s suggestion that the novel should end in Edinburgh with the rest of the tale left for a sequel; had he carried on, he might have achieved the large-scale novel of which many thought him incapable. *Kidnapped* is not defective on that account, but an opportunity was missed. Louis rarely had the health or the will for a big book—though he dreamed of one often enough—and *Kidnapped* was probably his best chance (p. 181).

This passage fairly illustrates the frustrations facing Bell’s reader. What is the novel a fable of? Is it a fable in exactly the same way as *Jekyll*? In what respect can even a fabular adventure yarn be said to demonstrate sound ethical reasoning? What is the purpose of the comparison with *Master*, surely one of the least “direct” of Stevenson’s fictions? How does it happen that Stevenson lacked the health or will for “a big book” when, as the author insists elsewhere, he deter-
minedly wrote through and out of sickness almost all his life and demonstrated that he possessed an iron will where writing was concerned?

Bell’s telegraphic style compounds his unwillingness to scrutinize Stevenson’s art, and the result is incoherence, which is a shame since he touches on so many potentially interesting lines of inquiry. Sometimes this offhand treatment of texts has fatal consequences, as when he observes that Stevenson “could boast with justification of his output” in this May, 1893, letter to S. R. Crockett:

Be it known to this fluent generation that I, R. L. S., in the forty-third of my age and the twentieth of my professional life, wrote twenty-four pages in twenty-one days, working from six to eleven, and again in the afternoon from two to four or so, without fail or interruption. Such are the gifts the gods have endowed us withal: such was the facility of this prolific writer (p. 256).

Irony can catch out the best of us at times. But, to imagine that Stevenson was boasting of a page a day (to miss even what the voice is telling us) is a disastrous misreading. Furthermore, this misreading obscures the truly interesting links between his Joycean rate of production and the dense poetry of Weir of Hermiston (his main project at the time). Stevenson could never have written his substantial oeuvre at that rate, and it would be valuable to examine carefully his composing habits. Unfortunately, Bell’s scattered insights do not amount to a solid description of this life in writing.

With these limitations, Bell’s biography is nonetheless a passionate essay on a man the author loves and, while love may be blind, in this case the biographer’s sympathy leads to interpretation of the life that could only come from such rapport. For example, he sees that Stevenson journeyed from adventure to memory, from a position facing forward to a place from which to view the irrecoverable past. He well understands the connections between Stevenson’s peregrinations and his imagination. He is wonderfully perceptive on the last metamorphosis in the Pacific, showing in an entirely convincing way how Stevenson’s self-reinventions were his way of keeping a whole world under his coat, like the lanterns carried by him and his cronies when he was a child. “The past had a reality only in memory; for the present Louis was again a vagabond, a deliberate exile, a man of no country but that of his own imagination” (p. 217). One does not have to accept Bell’s conclusion (“It [his recreation of himself] was his way of reaching maturity”) to find plenty of food for thought in the suggestion that Stevenson continually sought deracination because it damaged actuality and released his imagination.

Bell skirts one of the most tedious aspects of much contemporary biography. He discusses but avoids being entangled in the supposed controversial aspects of Stevenson’s life: Was there an early love, seduced and abandoned? Who was to blame in the famous quarrel with Henley? Was Fanny “really” a psychotic ogre?
Alas, Frank McLynn does care about these matters. In particular, his "life" aims to revise earlier estimates of the damage done to Louis by Fanny and her brood. McLynn's Fanny is monstrous. She is opportunistic, possessive, vengeful, spendthrift, greedy, conniving, deluded about her own talents, jealous of her husband's abilities and reputation. Furthermore, he argues, her image as faithful protector of the invalid author is false. On McLynn's charge sheet, Fanny's psychotic episodes do not mitigate her flaws. She and her devil-spawn indirectly killed Stevenson:

Death came to RLS from an unexpected direction: not from tuberculosis but from a stroke, brought on by stress and overwork, which in turn was caused by the demands of his extravagant family (p. 506).

McLynn's demolition of Fanny goes far beyond the criticisms of any previous biographer and, while much of it seems justified by the facts, his animosity leads him to see a "plot" or manipulative "campaign" in every move she makes. He thus deploys a battery of inferences to support his monster thesis when more reliable evidence is lacking. All this hostility is marshaled to demythologize the sentimental legend of their love, as well as to support his claim that Stevenson's wife and her family were the death of him. He also implies that Stevenson's literary work suffered from her malign influence. She pushed him, he claims, to write too much, to cling too hard to popularity, to take on time-consuming and inferior collaborations with her and Lloyd.

Perhaps Fanny was the monster he describes. Like any biographer, McLynn is free—indeed, obliged—to speculate, to infer, to judge. However, he is also duty-bound to try to see the world through the eyes of such an important subsidiary character, if only to concede the tenuous nature of such judgments, and he fails to do so.

In this and in other matters, McLynn's well-researched and documented life revises the picture of earlier ones, but not much and not in ways that will really matter to those more interested in literature than in literary gossip. His discussion of the Work remains within the limits of received critical opinion, except for the tantalizing suggestion that Melville more radically influenced the late fiction than has been recognized hitherto.

Are these, then, biographies we could have done without? Yes and no. Readers unfamiliar with Furnas or Calder could read each with interest. They might be better advised, though, to save their pennies to purchase the Yale Letters. More important, one has to question whether or not Stevenson needs any more personal attention, because one fears, with Henry James, that his individual glamour still overshadows his mysterious and quite remarkably influential Work.

ALEXANDER B. CLUNAS

Baltimore

In this slim volume a topic never before investigated is discussed with great care and methodological circumspection. The documentary basis is provided by 13 travel accounts, 11 on Scotland and 4 on Switzerland. The Scottish preponderance irritates the reader only at the beginning, i.e., until he discovers that it is intentional and that Prof. Hans Utz, a noted Swiss expert in Scottish history and literature, wants to do more than present a comparative essay on the history of mentalities. The two most important sources used are the travel accounts of Louis-Albert Necker de Saussure (1786-1861) and Emilie von Berlepsch (1755-1830). Both authors deal with Scotland, but both are also familiar with Switzerland. Necker belonged to a prominent Geneva family. Among his ancestors were Jacques Necker, the minister of finance of Louis XVI of France on the brink of the Revolution, and Horace-Bénédict de Saussure, the famous geologist and author of *Voyage dans les Alpes* (1779-1796). While studying science at the University of Edinburgh, young Louis-Albert Necker set out in 1807 to discover the Scottish Highlands and the Islands. His account amounted to the size of three volumes. It underwent many revisions and was not published until 1821: *Voyage en Ecosse et aux Hébrides.* Emilie von Berlepsch was a German noblewoman of literary interests and talents, a disciple of Herder and an admirer of the Ossianic poems. She had traveled in Scotland for twelve months in 1799-1800. Her four-volume account *Caledonia* was published in 1802-1804. Although not of Swiss descent herself, Emilie von Berlepsch knew Switzerland quite well: She had stayed there in 1785-6, from 1793 through 1795 and then once more from 1804 through 1817. According to her own testimony, she had undertaken her trip to Scotland in order to avoid being in Switzerland during the French occupation. The travel accounts of Necker and Von Berlepsch are the “pillars” of the main arguments presented by Prof. Utz. He draws on the other accounts from time to time in order to support certain observations or to fill gaps left open by his two leading witnesses.

The book is divided into two main parts. Part I discusses the image of Scotland and the Scots at the turn of the 18th century as it emerges from most of the travel accounts. In part II the comparison between the two nations is carried through. Here again the travel accounts provide interesting suggestions and insights, but much space is allotted to the author’s own analytical considerations.

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In the first chapter of part I the comparative approach is anticipated when the term "brother mountaineer" is discussed. This term, as Necker noted, had been the greeting formula current among Scots and Swiss officers in foreign mercenary services during the "ancien régime," and it was still used at the time of his visit to Scotland. He himself had been greeted and welcomed as a "brother mountaineer" by a retired military officer on the Isle of Skye. It implied that in both countries mountain life had shaped the mentality of the inhabitants, and that the mountains (although less high in Scotland than in Switzerland) were equally important elements of national identity with both peoples. If Necker had been made to feel at home by this implication, Emilie von Berlepsch in her description of the Highlands obviously remembered what she had seen in Switzerland and anticipated the "invention" of the ideal mountain-dweller as a replica of the "noble savage" living in an idyllic Utopia. Other and equally cliché-like elements of the romantic image of Scotland are to be found in Von Berlepsch's construction of the relationship between Highland countryside and early Scottish (i.e., Gaelic) literature. The same applies to both her and Necker's observations concerning the origins and unbroken history of Highland civilization at a time when the traditional clan system had already been broken up for more than sixty years, and in both witnesses' remarks upon Highland hospitality. More interesting is the fact that in certain descriptions of the Scottish countryside (e.g., Fingal's Cave) the scientist and the romantic writer come remarkably close to congruent expressions of astonishment and admiration. The same is true of their ambivalence vis-à-vis the cultural backwardness of the Highlanders. On other points they disagree, e.g., on Highland music. While Von Berlepsch simply abhors the "noisy squeaking" of the bagpipes, Necker has some interesting things to say about the pentatonic structure of the bagpipe melodies and about their reassuring and invigorating effects on fishermen, sailors, and soldiers in dangerous situations. Necker also appears very perceptive in his observations on the social history of Scotland after the defeat of Culloden, of the migration of many Highlanders into the Lowlands, and of the latter region's entry into the industrial age. To him, Scotland's situation around 1800 is characterized by two dualisms: the one between the poor and economically underdeveloped Highlands and the more prosperous Lowlands, and the other between the whole of Scotland and England.

This is, however, not the whole contemporary image of late 18th and early 19th century Scotland which Prof. Utz has been able to reproduce. From some of his "minor" sources he draws a number of highly suggestive contemporary observations not only on the socio-economic but also on some cultural aspects of life in Scotland during this period of transition (schools, universities). Of particular interest is an account of the French traveler Amadée Pichet who in 1822 described Sir Walter Scott as the "inventor" of "the typical Scot," i.e., the Lowlander in Highland garb representing the distinctive virtues and traditions of his entire country without ever questioning the wisdom of the Union of 1707 (Voyage historique et littéraire en Angleterre et en Ecosse, 1825). The enor-
mous international success of the Waverley Novels throughout Europe and North America is a well-known historical fact. If Utz mentions it here, it is because he can do so on the basis of hitherto practically unknown documentary material. He also shows that ten years after Scott's death, it was Queen Victoria herself who further elaborated the "invented" image of the Scots and their country. She had Balmoral Castle built, patronized the Braemar Royal Highland Games and in 1868 published the *Leaves from the Journal of our Life in the Highlands*.

Part II begins with a chapter on "Calvinist Mentality." Here Utz deals with the historical and cultural phenomenon which lends itself particularly well to a comparison between Scotland and the Protestant parts of Switzerland. Other similarities are discussed in the chapters on "The Big Brother" (ambivalent attitude of Scotland vis-à-vis England and German-speaking Switzerland vis-à-vis Germany), on the popular historical dichotomy "peaceful shepherds—brave warriors" (with a side-glance at William Wallace and William Tell as mythical national heroes), on the beginnings of tourism, and on economic, industrial, and technological modernization. In all these respects the similarities are pointed out, but Utz is very careful not to exaggerate them. His caution is highly justified, particularly in view of the undeniable fact that an underlying political comparison between Scotland and Switzerland is impossible. Three areas remain where comparisons make sense and yield interesting insights to the student who looks for elements of national identity in both countries which have maintained at least a part of their importance until the present day: mountains, early history, and religious tradition.

The book which Hans Utz has laid before us makes fascinating reading. It cannot be easily classified. It is a treatise on intellectual history and on the history of mentalities. At the same time it offers a comparative survey of the history of two small European nations which have some traditions in common but differ widely in other respects. That the topic has never been systematically discussed before does not surprise us. It is not an "obvious" topic at first sight, but a very rewarding one when studied with care. Prof. Utz leads his readers to many interesting insights, and they will certainly be grateful for his guidance. Among other things they will learn that a fruitful usage of travel accounts as historical sources requires great care and caution as well as a very strict methodological discipline. Quite naturally, the book addresses itself to a predominantly English-speaking readership. An English translation would therefore be highly justified.

HANS R. GUGGISBERG  
*University of Basel*

This is the fourth volume in the Stirling/South Carolina Research Edition of the Collected Works of James Hogg. There are five stories and each occurs during a particular battle or campaign of Montrose. This is a fairly complicated period and is made more complicated by the fact that Montrose changed sides. Thus he is seen as pro-Covenanter but mostly as Royalist. At times he is said to show clemency, at other times to be ruthless. Shown, however, as remorseless after the Battle of Philiphaugh is Sir David Leslie, who, after promising their lives to a few hundred Royalists till their trial, holds a brief meeting with his divines who make him kill the prisoners on the spot. That it is a Covenanter who reports this seems to show the truth of the incident.

While these are not brilliantly minted Hogg stories they have much that is characteristic of him. For instance, in such confused wars much can be made of the traitor theme. Who is on Montrose's side and who is against him? In “Sir Simon Brodie,” Montrose is disguised as a groom and a Covenanter. In “An Edinburgh Baillie,” there are beautiful twin sisters who cannot be told apart. The hero, if he may be so called, saves the Catholic Marquis of Huntly though he himself is a Covenanter. It happens also that in the last story “Wat Pringle o’ the Yair,” a Covenanter saves a Royalist lady and child, after her husband and father have been captured. In this story, too, there is much confusion with Wat Pringle, the Covenanter, killing a man who might have been an enemy or a friend of the woman. This kind of doubling is typical, of course, of Hogg’s work, and there is no area more complicated and duplicitous perhaps than a civil war. This ironic doubling is one that Hogg himself is very well aware of as he says at the end of “An Edinburgh Baillie”:

> But during a long life I learned to view our state trials of Scotland as a mere farce; for what was a man’s greatest glory and honour this year was very like to bring him to the block the next. What could be a surer test of this than to see the good Marquis of Argyle’s grey head set upon the same pole on which his rival’s the Marquis of Montrose had so lately stood.

And a little later, and indeed the last sentence in the story:

> His body (that is to say, that of the Baillie, a Covenanter) was carried to Elgin, the original burial place of his fathers, and by a singular casualty his head laid precisely at the Marquis of Huntly’s feet.
This is an irony of which Hogg is very conscious and indeed the latter one was manipulated by himself.

This first story in the book, "An Edinburgh Baillie," shows a hitherto conscientious Covenanter falling in love with one of the Marquis of Huntly's beautiful daughters and handing over to her letters which would have condemned her Catholic father. He is an interestingly slightly pompous character who tells his own story of devotion and betrayal though at the end of the story he is prosperous enough. Another of Hogg's themes is shown here, that of the person who is fated to dominate another. And this theme is also continued in the second story, "Colonel Peter Aston," where one Nicol Grant, humiliated by Aston among his own people, seeks a revenge which by apparently phantasmal occurrences he is continually deprived of. Here there are disguises leading in one instance to Grant killing his own daughter. There is romance also, and sadness, and the manic determination towards murder of a man whose honor has been wounded. The third story, "Julia M, Kenzie," is quite slight and depends upon the childless wife of a chief being apparently killed for the good of the clan. However she rises from the dead (not in any way supernaturally), and one of the reasons she has not appeared earlier is that she partly suspects her own husband of being involved in her murder. We always have these doublings in Hogg.

"Sir Simon Brodie" is the most comic of the stories. At one point he is in the embraces of a mermaid or a seal. At another time corpses appear to speak.

The last story is set in the Borders at the time of the Battle of Philiphaugh. This battle and that of Inverlochy are two battles closely described in the stories. They were both vicious engagements and they sustain the statement at the end of "Sir Simon Brodie":

These were dreadful days for Scotland nothing seeming to delight so much as the rending up of every feeling of humanity.

The stories are certainly entertaining and their history is described by the editor Gillian Hughes who has also provided notes, a glossary, an introduction, and guidance on the historical period. These books of Hogg have been wonderfully presented and edited. Hogg's own idiosyncratic style has been left untouched. His knowledge of Scots is wide and rich, though I must say that his transcription of the Highlander's English does at times irritate; of course he is not the only writer to be guilty of that.

IAIN CRIGHTON SMITH
Taynuilt, Argyll
Brief Notices


Scott lovers and/or scholars will be gladdened by the availability of this expertly collated, fully annotated variorum edition of one of the Scott novels most consistently respected by critics. Besides the complete text of the 1818 edition plus Scott's introductions and notes, Tony Inglis of the University of Sussex provides over two hundred fifty pages comprising introduction, exhaustive bibliography, chapter-by-chapter editor's and textual notes, and glossary, enough to satisfy and edify experienced scholar and beginner alike. Inglis' labor on this edition must have taken years and could have been inspired only by genuine love of the subject. In the light of such an accomplishment it would be quibbling to complain of an occasional tautology, multiple-source note, or unsupported critical assertion.

Inglis' introduction surveys the ups and downs of Scott's critical reputation, fortunately concluding with the current ups; it sympathetically seeks to reconcile some seemingly incongruous narrative modes in the novel. The notes explain Scott's many literary and historical allusions in a way sure to increase admiration for the learning of both novelist and editor. The painstaking collation of the textual notes gives a clear account of Inglis' choice of readings.

Scott admirers disheartened by his long neglect should be glad that a publisher sees a demand for such a work, and its appearance should impress many of the unconverted. Although publishers cannot be blamed for not trying to
create a demand when none exists, one cannot help wishing that a scholarly edition like this might in time be complemented by a "popular" one, aiming at ready accessibility rather than textual authenticity. With such alternative editions available, Scott might in time approach the continued esteem accorded a novelist of comparable breadth, humanity, and social relevance—Dickens.

LIONEL LACKEY
Charleston, SC


This book is the brain-child of Roderick Macdonald and is the first of the Burns-Gaelic Trust Publications. The author of the original Gaelic poems in the book and, in 1978 Bard of An Comunn Gaidhealach, Macdonald has translated the whole of Burns’s poetry into Gaelic. He is therefore engaged in building bridges between Scots and Gaelic, an activity of importance. In this book there are English versions of the Gaelic originals as well as versions in Scots by two different translators who share the poems between them.

The Gaelic poems are about topics such as nationalism, religion, modern wars such as the one in Bosnia. The author, who is himself a minister, has a gift for analogies and resemblances and compassion too for the victims of our sometimes terrifyingly pitiless twentieth century. Sometimes however the poems are too didactic. Nevertheless there is much wisdom here.

The Scots language of course can deal quite comfortably with the Gaelic originals. At one time we thought of Gaelic, English and Scots as being divisive rigid alternatives. Now there is a movement to think of these languages as evidence of riches rather than division and when one considers the range of vocabulary in this book in the three languages one sees much sense in this view. This small book of sixty pages shows a wealth of vocabulary which is most heartening. It is this treasury of language that made MacDiarmid a great poet (he even did translations from Alexander Macdonald and Duncan Ban Macintyre). Modern poets and novelists are learning this and adding variations such as the Glasgow patois. A huge galaxy of words shines over Scotland. This book is well worthwhile as showing a section of it.

IAIN CRICHTON SMITH
Taynuilt, Argyll
Translation is a difficult enough art when dealing with a “mainstream” text, but if it is written in, or is being translated into, a dialect these difficulties are compounded. The problem is nothing new to Scots; Gavin Douglas had already tackled it in the early sixteenth century when he translated the Aeneid, and so did Allan Ramsay and other eighteenth-century poet-translators. Translating from Scots has its problems, too, as we see in the efforts (not always felicitous) to render Burns into another tongue.

This has not daunted Christian Civardi. William McIlvanney's Docherty was first published in 1975, following two earlier novels and a collection of poetry. It quickly established the author as a major voice in Scottish fiction. Although the break with “kailyard” fiction had come in 1901 in George Douglas Brown's House with the Green Shutters, that novel was set in a village, whereas in Docherty McIlvanney portrays the industrial west of Scotland, with a significantly different vocabulary to that of rural areas. But can a translator, or should he, transform a regional novel into a regional novel in another language?

It is evident that Civardi did not wish to do so. Some examples, chosen at random, make the point. "'Ah'll luk roon the morra,' he said" (1st edn., p. 95) becomes standard French "'Je repasserai demain', dit-il" (p. 100). Not only does McIlvanney reproduce the accent here, but he uses a typically Scottish (or Irish) expression “the morra” for “tomorrow.”

As far as dialect is concerned, one of the most interesting passages in Docherty occurs when the young son Conn gets into a fight at school, skinning his nose. When asked how this happened, he replies, "'Ah fell an' bumped ma heid in the sheuch’"; asked to repeat, the boy uses the word “sheuch” again whereupon the teacher lands him a heavy blow to the ear and says, “That, Docherty, is impertinence. You will translate, please, into the mother-tongue” (p. 109). Later Conn reflects on the “irrelevance” of school and he writes down various words as he used them, beside which he entered their English equivalent. The first word on the list was “sheuch”; its equivalent, “gutter.” This situation rings completely true. I witnessed a similar event in 1950 in Alsace, when the French government was heavy-handedly trying to force the population to speak French. Two youngsters who were speaking their dialect during recess were sternly admonished by the principal that only French was acceptable.

This chapter must have given the translator pause. He renders Conn's conversation: "'J'suis tombé et j’me suis cogné la tête dans le koul'you ... " (p. 117). Like McIlvanney, Civardi keeps the reader uninformed until Conn establishes his list. A footnote tells the reader that in the original the dialect words are in Scots or Lallans and that in the French edition the dialect of Picardy has
been substituted. In my opinion this is an excellent solution to a crucial passage in the novel.

McIlvanney is not through with Conn and English, though; the boy now wants to, “write things that he couldn’t find any English for” (p. 113), but he somehow intuitively recognizes the gulf which separates the two forms of speech and abandons the list.

Every language has words to which it does special things, and the Scots “wee” is one of these. It can have quite contrary meanings according to the context of its use, even the inflection it is given in speech can impart a subtle difference. Not surprisingly the word is not as polymorphic in French, but Civardi has done the best that one could expect in his renderings.

Docherty appears in the series Motifs Ecossais published by the University of Grenoble Press. The aim of the series is to present modern Scottish fiction in contemporary translations to a large segment of the French public. Readers of McIlvanney’s novel will recognize that there is an important vein of regional literature which deserves a wide audience.

GRR
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