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## Hogg, Byron, Scott, and John Murray of Albemarle Street

Douglas S. Mack  
*University of Stirling, Emeritus*

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Douglas S. Mack

Hogg, Byron, Scott, and  
John Murray of Albemarle Street

For a' that, and a' that,  
Its comin yet for a' that,  
That Man to Man the world o'er,  
Shall brothers be for a' that.—

Robert Burns

Towards the end of January 1813 the young Edinburgh publisher George Goldie brought out a new book-length poem, *The Queen's Wake*. Somewhat unpromisingly, the book was by a little-known and impecunious former shepherd called James Hogg, whose recent attempts to launch a career, first as a farmer and later as a journalist, had ended in failure. Unexpectedly, the poem was very well received by reviewers and by the reading public, and by the autumn of 1814 both fame and fortune appeared to be within the grasp of the author of *The Queen's Wake*. In October 1814, however, things began to turn very sour for Hogg. This essay examines what went wrong, and why.

In the months that followed the publication of *The Queen's Wake*, Hogg set in motion various ambitious projects. For example, in a letter of 23 March 1813 to his friend Mrs. Izett he writes: "As I take delight in nothing but literature I intend publishing two volumes of Scottish rural tales sometime this year."<sup>1</sup> Hogg also mentioned this project in a letter to Walter Scott of 3 April

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<sup>1</sup>*The Collected Letters of James Hogg*, Vol. 1 (1800-1819), ed. Gillian Hughes, The Stirling / South Carolina Research Edition of the Collected Works of James Hogg (Edinburgh, 2004), I, 134. Henceforth *Letters*. All citations will be to this edition unless otherwise noted.

1813, and he went on to offer the proposed collection to the leading Edinburgh publisher, Archibald Constable, in a letter of 20 May 1813:<sup>2</sup>

I have for many years been collecting the rural and traditionary tales of Scotland and I have of late been writing them over again and new-modelling them, and have the vanity to suppose they will form a most interesting work.

The recent success of *The Queen's Wake* notwithstanding, Hogg's attempt to interest Constable in the new project was unsuccessful. In 1813, a collection of short stories and novellas was not in Constable's usual line of business: he did not become a significant publisher of prose fiction until the epoch-making appearance of Scott's *Waverley* in the summer of 1814. Hogg did not abandon his project, however, and his "rural and traditionary tales" eventually developed into two collections, *The Brownie of Bodsbeck and Other Tales* (two volumes, 1818), and *Winter Evening Tales* (two volumes, 1820). These prose collections, which contain some of Hogg's liveliest writing, tell stories about Scottish history and Scottish life from a distinctly non-elite perspective. Indeed, according to Ian Duncan, *Winter Evening Tales* is "the outstanding example of a 'national' genre pioneered by Hogg, the miscellaneous collection of regional popular narratives." Ian Duncan also argues that *Winter Evening Tales* "poses a vibrant demotic alternative to the culturally and commercially dominant form of the historical novel established in 1814 by Walter Scott."<sup>3</sup>

Although the "rural and traditionary tales" project was to take some years to come to fruition, the author of *The Queen's Wake* had various other irons in the fire in 1813. Hogg was strongly interested in the theatre, and during 1813 he explored the possibility of getting his play *The Hunting of Badlewe* produced in London. This project did not come to fruition, but for a time Hogg pursued it vigorously, for example through contacts with Bernard Barton and Capell Lofft, two Englishmen active in promoting the interests of peasant poets. Laudatory verses by Barton were included by Goldie in the second edition of *The Queen's Wake* (June 1813), while the *Monthly Magazine* for May 1813 contains a letter to the Editor (p. 501) in which Lofft gives particularly warm praise to Hogg's poem. On 14 May 1813 Hogg wrote to Barton as follows:

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<sup>2</sup>See *Letters*, I, 136-9 and I, 145-6. In 1807, Constable (prompted by Walter Scott and in partnership with John Murray of London) had published two books by Hogg: *The Mountain Bard* (poems in imitation of the old oral ballads), and *The Shepherd's Guide*. These books had been modestly successful, and in 1810 Constable had published Hogg's next book, *The Forest Minstrel*, a collection of songs. This book, however, did not meet with success.

<sup>3</sup>*Winter Evening Tales*, ed. Ian Duncan (Edinburgh, 2002), p. xi.

I should like to know More of Mr. Lofft that redoubted champion of humble merit and if his taste in poetry is as superlative as the goodness and benevolence of his heart. This desire is abundantly selfish for I am going to entrust secret to you and him, with which only two persons alive are yet acquainted. Since the publication of the *Queen's Wake* I have been busily employed in writing a tragedy and have lately finished it. If I may place any reliance on my own feelings and judgement it will astonish the world ten times more than the *Wake* has done (*Letters*, I, 140).

At an earlier stage of his career Capell Lofft had been involved in the publication of the shoemaker-poet Robert Bloomfield's poem *The Farmer's Boy* (1800). However, Hogg's enthusiasm for Lofft's activities as a "redoubted champion of humble merit" was not universally shared, as is clear from an essay contributed by Walter Scott to the *Edinburgh Annual Register* for 1808 (which was published in 1810). This essay is entitled "Of the Living Poets of Great Britain," and it comments on "the poets who daily spring up among the lees of the people." Scott deplores the fact that there exists "a class of subaltern literati" (Capell Lofft is an example) who seduce

honest ploughmen from their teams, mechanics from their shopboards, and milk maids from their pails, to enlist them in the precarious service of Apollo. We wish we could consider this folly as disinterested in proportion to its absurdity; but such patrons make a stalkinghorse of the *protégé*, tagging the poetry of the *paysan parvenu* with their own more worthless *dicta* and commentaries, assuming the airs of a Mæcenas at a cheap rate, and, under pretence of doing justice to obscure merit, intruding upon the public their own contemptible personages in the character of its master of ceremonies. It was thus that Mr. Capel [*sic*] Lofft contrived to ride forward into public notice on the shoulders of poor BLOOMFIELD.

Scott continues:

The success of Burns had the effect of exciting general emulation among all of his class in Scotland who were able to tag a rhyme. The quantity of Scottish verses with which we were inundated was absolutely overwhelming. Poets began to chirp in every corner like grasshoppers in a sunshine day. The steep rocks poured down poetical goatherds, and the bowels of the earth vomited forth rhyming colliers; but of all the herd we can only distinguish James Hogg, the Selkirkshire shepherd, as having at all merited the public attention; and there cleaves to his poetry a vulgarity of conception and expression which we greatly question his ever being able to overcome. In other respects his talents, though less noticed, are at least equal to those of Mr. Bloomfield.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>See Kenneth Curry, *Sir Walter Scott's Edinburgh Annual Register* (Knoxville, TN, 1977), pp. 94-6.

Another of Hogg's projects in the aftermath of the success of *The Queen's Wake* was *Mador of the Moor*, a book-length poem which, according to its author, "was begun, and in a very short time completed" during a summer visit to the Highlands, apparently in 1813.<sup>5</sup> As James Barcus has commented, the name "Mador" suggests "made o'er" or "made over," and *Mador of the Moor* is in effect a makeover of *The Lady of the Lake* (1810), the greatest popular success among Scott's long narrative poems.<sup>6</sup> Hogg's poem, like Scott's tells how a deer-hunt in the Highlands leads a disguised King of Scots into a love-adventure with a young woman. Scott's *Lady of the Lake* is a young Lowland aristocrat living in exile in the Highlands, and her relationship with the disguised king remains chaste. In contrast, Hogg's *Ila Moore* is a Highland girl of low social standing who is made pregnant by the disguised king of her poem. However, *Ila's* inherent resourcefulness and strength of character suggest that a peasant girl pregnant out of wedlock can be a person more worthy of respect than *Mador's* sometimes absurd aristocrats: in Hogg's poem even the king cuts a comic figure at some points. Like Hogg's "rural and traditionary tales" project, *Mador* shows that the author of *The Queen's Wake* was very willing to offer new and challengingly non-elite, demotic narrative perspectives to the predominantly middle-class readers of the 1810s.

The publishers and readers of the 1810s were not always receptive to Hogg's demotic narratives, however—and Hogg was unsuccessful when he offered *Mador* to Constable in February 1814.<sup>7</sup> As a leading Whig publisher of the Regency period, Constable perhaps did not wish to publish a poem that pokes fun at the absurdities and sexual transgression of royalty; the Prince Regent, a long-term ally of the Whigs, might all too readily have been seen as a target for such a poem. Furthermore, when *Mador* was eventually published by the up-and-coming Tory publisher William Blackwood in April 1816, reviewers and readers were unenthusiastic. It may be that the middle-class poetry-reading public of the later 1810s, still reacting to the French Revolution and the recently-ended Napoleonic Wars, was not quite ready for a poem that elevates a peasant girl of questionable morals to the status of heroine. However, as James Barcus argues in the recent Stirling / South Carolina edition of the poem, *Mador* can now be seen as a flowing and attractively readable text

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<sup>5</sup>James Hogg, "Memoir of the Author's Life" in *Altrive Tales*, ed. Gillian Hughes (Edinburgh, 2003), p. 35. Henceforth "Memoir." In the "Memoir" Hogg writes that *Mador* was begun in the summer of 1814, but his letters suggest that 1813 was in fact the year: see the note by Gillian Hughes on p. 234 of *Altrive Tales*.

<sup>6</sup>See the Introduction to *Mador of the Moor*, ed. James E. Barcus (Edinburgh, 2005). Henceforth *Mador*.

<sup>7</sup>See Hogg's letter to Archibald Constable of 1 Feb. 1814, *Letters*, I, 173-4.

that eloquently challenges the deeply-ingrained class and gender prejudices of Hogg's society.

In his "Memoir" Hogg records that, "immediately on finishing" *Mador of the Moor*, he "conceived a plan for writing a volume of romantic poems, to be entitled 'Midsummer Night Dreams'" ("Memoir," p. 35). *Pilgrims of the Sun*, a long narrative poem in four parts, was one of the items written for this projected collection, but was in the event published as a separate work. In *Pilgrims*, a young woman is taken on a tour of heavenly worlds by an angelic guide. That is to say, this poem can be seen as an attempt to build on the success of *The Queen's Wake* by offering what is in effect an extended version of the *Wake's* much-admired "Kilmeny," a ballad-style poem in which the heroine is taken to a mysterious land, part fairyland and part heaven. The first and final parts of *Pilgrims* are in the folk idiom of "Kilmeny." However, in Part Two the Scottish farm worker James Hogg ambitiously seeks to emulate the manner and the content of Miltonic epic. Likewise, in Part Three he seeks to adopt the harp of "Imperial England":

Come thou old bass—I loved thy lordly swell,  
With Dryden's twang, and Pope's malicious knell.<sup>8</sup>

On 25 July 1814 Hogg wrote to Constable to offer *Pilgrims of the Sun* to that publisher, adding: "As I want it put to press in a few days before I leave town I request your acceptance or non-acceptance of this by letter with your first convenience" (*Letters*, I, 187-8). Hogg tells us in his Memoir that Constable responded by proposing "Mr. Miller" (of Manners and Miller) as a more suitable publisher for the poem, and a bargain with Miller was duly agreed. When Miller sent the manuscript "among his blue-stockings for their verdict," however, the verdict was decidedly unfavorable, and publication by Manners and Miller did not proceed ("Memoir," pp. 37-8). It may be that Miller's "blue-stockings" felt that, in Parts Two and Three of *Pilgrims*, Hogg was getting above himself. According to the class prejudices of the time, this shepherd from Ettrick might legitimately aspire to write rural ballads and songs in a traditional style; indeed, he might even string such pieces together through a connecting narrative about a poetic contest, as in *The Queen's Wake*; but it may be that alarm bells began to ring when this former farm laborer took it into his head to try to emulate Milton and Pope. Discussing the early reception of *Mador of the Moor*, James Barcus comments that several reviewers "believe that Hogg ought to stick to the ballad and not attempt more sophisticated forms of poetry" (*Mador*, p. xvi). At all events, *Pilgrims of the Sun* was rejected by Manners and Miller at some point in the late summer or early autumn of 1814.

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<sup>8</sup>James Hogg, *Pilgrims of the Sun* (Edinburgh, 1815 [Dec. 1814]), p. 62.

However, as we shall see, the poem was published in December 1814 by William Blackwood.<sup>9</sup>

In the spring of 1814 Hogg formulated still another important project, when he began to plan his *Poetical Repository*, a new periodical publication which he would edit, and which would be devoted to poetry. He envisaged that the *Repository* would be published twice a year, and that it would be a "neat and elegant" publication, containing new short poems by various well-known poets, as well as analysis of recent books of poetry.<sup>10</sup> The *Repository* seemed to have good prospects of success. Thanks to *The Queen's Wake*, Hogg was now on friendly terms with Byron and Wordsworth. Indeed, following his visit to Yarrow in Hogg's company in the summer of 1814, Wordsworth sent Hogg "Yarrow Visited" for the projected *Repository*.<sup>11</sup> Additionally, Hogg had a long-established friendship with Walter Scott, a friendship that began in 1802, when Hogg gave Scott substantial assistance with regard to the collection of traditional oral material for the third volume of Scott's *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*. In short, it seemed likely that Byron, Wordsworth, and Scott would all become contributors to the proposed *Repository*, and it also seemed likely that these famous names would ensure the project's success. Furthermore, as we shall see, there seemed to be very prospect that the *Repository* would appear under the prestigious imprint of John Murray of Albemarle Street, London.

Nevertheless, Hogg also faced problems in 1814. On 14 July in that year, the third edition of *The Queen's Wake* had been published by George Goldie in an Edinburgh that was still rejoicing in the recent fall of Paris, in Napoleon's exile to Elba, and in the apparent ending of the Napoleonic Wars. The young publisher was in serious financial difficulties, however, and in a letter of 30 July 1814) to his fellow poet Lord Byron, Hogg complains that Goldie never "lifts his bills when they become due" (*Letters*, I, 192). The reference here is to the system of promissory bills, widely in use at that time as a means of generating credit. Under this system, the drawer (in this case Goldie) gave the acceptor (Hogg) a written promise (a "promissory bill") to pay a stated sum on a stated date. Banks were prepared to pay ready money (but less than the full sum stated in the bill) to the acceptor, in exchange for the bill. At the due date,

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<sup>9</sup>The book has 1815 on its title-page, but is announced as "this day published" in the *Edinburgh Evening Courant* for 15 December 1814. I am indebted to Gillian Hughes for this information.

<sup>10</sup>"Memoir," p. 39. Hogg gives fuller details of his plan in a letter of 17 August 1814 to John Murray—see *Letters*, I, 198-9.

<sup>11</sup>See Wordsworth's letter to R. P. Gillies of 12 November 1814, in R. P. Gillies, *Memoirs of a Literary Veteran*, 3 vol. (London, 1851), II, 148-49.

the bank then claimed the promised sum in full from the drawer, thus in effect reclaiming (with interest) a loan of ready cash made on the security of the promissory note. Here Hogg is telling Byron that Goldie has not been keeping his part of the bargain by repaying the banks when the promissory bills have become due: in effect, Goldie's post-dated checks to Hogg for the third edition of *The Queen's Wake* have bounced, and this has caused Hogg embarrassment.

In spite of his deep financial difficulties, Goldie struggled on for a few weeks more before being declared bankrupt in early September. Hogg wrote to Byron about this on 13 September 1814:

Our united curse has truly fallen upon Goldie my poor unhappy Bookseller—he broke last week in my debt £200. a little fortune to me but I fear it is mostly gone—I have got sundry such rubs but I will overcome it (*Letters*, I, 201).

Sales appear to have gone very well when the third edition of *The Queen's Wake* was published in July 1814, but this benign process was abruptly halted by Goldie's bankruptcy, and in a letter to Byron of 14 October 1814 Hogg bemoans the fact that "the third edition of the work on which I chiefly depended is locked up till such time as the bankrupt's affairs permit it to be brought to the hammer" (*Letters*, I, 205). Clearly, Hogg had to try to get the books released for sale as soon as possible, before the current tide of interest in his poem ebbed away. Accordingly, on 28 October 1814 he wrote as follows to William Blackwood, who had been appointed as one of Goldie's trustees, with a view to formalizing an agreement:

I request that one half of the copies be instantly given up to me for circulation in which case I will give up all claims upon the estate for that edition and grant security to the trustees to the full amount of one half of the paper and printing (*Letters*, I, 217-8).

In the "Memoir of the Author's Life" Hogg writes that in the event the bankrupt Goldie's trustees

consigned over to me the whole of the remaining copies, 490 in number, charging me only with expenses of printing, &c. These, to my agreeable astonishment, amounted only to two shillings and tenpence halfpenny per volume. The work sold at twelve shillings, so that a good reversion appeared to be mine. Mr. Blackwood sold the copies for me on commission, and ultimately paid me more than double of what I was to have received from Goldie ("Memoir," p. 32).

Discussions about *The Queen's Wake* following Goldie's bankruptcy were the occasion for Hogg's first business contact with Blackwood ("Memoir," pp. 31-2). It was a contact that was to lead to a long, mutually advantageous, but often difficult working relationship between the two men. Among other things,

it led to a particularly memorable meeting in October 1814 between Blackwood, Murray, and Hogg.

In 1814, involvement with Blackwood also meant involvement with Murray: at this period Blackwood sold Murray's books in Edinburgh, and Murray sold Blackwood's books in London. This business partnership was not to be long-lasting, and it ended acrimoniously in 1819. However, it was still fully functioning in October 1814. In that month news was circulating in the small gossipy world of literary Edinburgh that the November 1814 number of the hugely influential *Edinburgh Review* was to include a strongly favorable review by Francis Jeffrey of *The Queen's Wake*. In October 1814 Blackwood and Murray were about to take over publication of Hogg's poem (already a proven success) in the aftermath of Goldie's bankruptcy, and in all the circumstances it was natural for them to wish to take steps that would enable them to make the most of Hogg's potential. This seemed a particularly promising line to take. Murray had become the pre-eminent figure in the book trade of Regency London largely because he was the publisher of the brilliant, enticingly scandalous, and impressively aristocratic Lord Byron; and in the months immediately before October 1814 Byron had been encouraging Murray to encourage Hogg.

A friendly and relaxed correspondence had developed between Byron and Hogg during the summer of 1814. Unfortunately, most of Byron's letters to Hogg have not survived. Hogg explains the circumstances in his Memoir:

I may here mention, by way of advertising, that I have lost all Lord Byron's letters to me, on which I put a very high value; and which I know to have been stolen from me by some one or other of my tourist visitors, for I was so proud of these letters, that I would always be showing them to every body. It was exceedingly unkind, particularly as they never can be of use to any other person, for they have been so often and so eagerly read by many of my friends, that any single sentence out of any one of them could easily be detected. I had five letters of his of two sheets each, and one of three. They were indeed queer *harumscarum* letters, about women, and poetry, mountains, and authors, and blue-stockings; and what he sat down to write about was generally put in the postscript ("Memoir," p. 39).

Something of the flavor of these letters can be sensed by way of Hogg's gossipy letter to Byron of 30 July [1814], part of which has already been quoted. Among other things, it tells Byron about the activities of a Mr. Scott, and also about an anonymous novel called *Waverley* which had been published about three weeks earlier. Scott, Hogg says,

sailed from Lieth yesterday on a tour thro' the Orkney Shetland and western Islands in company with his friend W<sup>m</sup>. Erskine and a Mr. Duff. It blows a terrible gale for the season to day and I am sure he is not quite at his ease to say the best of it. He denies *Waverly* which it behoves him to do for a while at least; indeed I do not think he will ever acknowledge it; but with regard to the author there is not and cannot be

a doubt remaining—the internal evidence is of itself sufficient—it may be practical enough to imitate either your lordship or him for a few verses but that the same turn of thought characters and expression in a word that the whole structure of mind should so exactly coincide in two distinct individuals is not in nature.... However I like Waverly exceedingly and never was more diverted than by some pictures there of Scottish manners and I am much pleased to hear you commend it.

As we have seen, this letter goes on to express Hogg's frustration about payments due to him for the third edition of *The Queen's Wake*, which had been published a couple of weeks earlier, on 14 July. Hogg then proceeds to hint that he would very much welcome an opportunity to join Byron as one of the poets published by John Murray:

I have a poem of 2000 lines *The Pilgrims Of The Sun* which I want to publish instantly in one volume price 7/6. I have an abominable shabby Book seller here who never keeps his word with me nor even lifts his bills when they become due they come back on me and distress me more than I had never seen them. G—d d—m him and them both I wish you could procure me some feasible conditions with yours I would give him the publication of the *Repository* too and likewise the *fourth edition* of the *Wake* which will be required as soon as the next Edin. Review appears.<sup>12</sup>

Thus prompted, Byron wrote to Murray on 3 August 1814:

I have a most amusing epistle from the Ettrick Bard Hogg—in which speaking of his bookseller—whom he denominates the “shabbiest” of the *trade*—for not “lifting his bills” he adds in so many words “G—d d—n him and them both” this is a pretty prelude to asking *you* to adopt him (the said Hogg) but this he wishes—and if you please you & I will talk it over.

Byron adds a postscript about Hogg and the projected *Poetical Repository*: “Seriously—I think Mr. Hogg would suit you very well—and surely he is a man of great powers and deserving of encouragement—I must knock out a tale for him.”<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, in a letter of 7 September 1814 Byron encouraged Murray to become the publisher of Hogg's proposed *Repository*: “such a publication would answer his purpose & yours too with tolerable management—you should however have a good number to start with—I mean good in quality—in these days there be little fear of not coming up to the mark in quantity” (Byron, IV, 167).

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<sup>12</sup>Letters, I, 192. John Murray Archive, Box A315.

<sup>13</sup>Byron's *Letters and Journals*, ed. by Leslie A. Marchand, 12 vols. (London, 1973-82), IV, 150-51. Henceforth Byron.

As well as being recommended by Byron, Hogg also enjoyed the kudos of being a protégé of Scott's—and this was the context in which Murray, during a business trip to Edinburgh in October 1814, spent an evening with Hogg, Blackwood, and others.<sup>14</sup> It seems to have been a jovial occasion, during which Hogg entertained the company by reading aloud part of *Pilgrims of the Sun*.<sup>15</sup> The evening seems to have been arranged by Blackwood,<sup>16</sup> and, alongside the fun, Blackwood and Murray had serious business to transact with the Author of *The Queen's Wake*, that rising star in the world of poetry.

All in all, at this time Murray seemed to have every reason to see Hogg as a thoroughly desirable addition to his stable of authors, and after their evening together Hogg wrote to Byron on 18 October 1814:

I have had a very pleasant crack with Mr. Murray and we have sorted very well I hope we shall long do so; he made me a present of a proof copy of your picture and seems indeed very much attached to you (*Letters*, I, 209-10).

Further details of the pleasant evening with Blackwood and Murray are to be found in a letter Hogg wrote on 26 October 1814 to his friend and literary confidante Mrs. Eliza Izett:

*The Pilgrims of the Sun* is getting on as well as can be expected from dilatory printers. I have the first sheet of the third canto lying in proof before me at this moment—It will be out by the middle of next month I think at farthest I have transferred the right of the work from the Edin booksellers to John Murray London who happened to be in Edin. last week and somewhat to my astonishment offered me £500. for my poem which is only 1800 lines and which I wrote in about three weeks I however declined accepting of it from the consideration that the copy-right of all my other works being in my own hand the selling so small a thing out of the middle of them was a blank which would prevent me selling them altogether—Some of my friends blame me and others approve but I did it for the best in future chusing rather as the safest way for us both to take 80£ for the present edition and a right to as many copies at prime cost as I could dispose of—I have likewise agreed with

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<sup>14</sup>This event had not taken place when Hogg wrote to Byron on 14 October 1814, but it had taken place when he wrote again to Byron on 18 October—see *Letters*, I, 207, 209.

<sup>15</sup>See the note on “crack with Mr. Murray” in *Letters*, I, 210, in which Gillian Hughes refers to Blackwood's letter to Murray of 11 December 1814.

<sup>16</sup>See “Memoir,” p. 38.

Murray about the publication of a Miscellaneous work on which he calculates being able to pay me a good yearly sum but this must depend upon the sale of the work.<sup>17</sup>

It is possible to share Hogg's astonishment at Murray's offer of the (at that time) substantial sum of £500 for *Pilgrims*, and it is also possible to be astonished that Hogg declined Murray's offer. Nevertheless, both the offer and the refusal seem to have been based on rational calculation. The copyright issue is the key. From Murray's point of view, paying over the odds to secure the copyright of *Pilgrims* would place him in an extremely strong position to negotiate favorable terms for potentially lucrative editions of that rising star, the Author of *The Queen's Wake*. In taking this line, Murray would naturally be encouraged by the fact that Byron (no less) had advised him that Hogg would be a good bet. The £500 bait, then, might well bring substantial returns. Equally, from Hogg's point of view, acceptance of the £500 might be giving away too much, too quickly, and too cheaply: better, perhaps, to back his belief in his own potential and look to the long term. But alas for fond hopes: even while he was enjoying the apparent triumph of his evening with Murray things were about to go disastrously wrong for Hogg, as his credibility with Murray depended to a significant degree on the endorsement of Byron and Scott, and that endorsement was about to be withdrawn.

The chain of events that led to the loss of Byron's support can be traced back to the letter of 13 September 1814, in which Hogg tells Byron about the serious financial consequences of Goldie's bankruptcy, as mentioned above. Byron's reply does not survive, but to judge from Hogg's response, Byron seems to have made a joking suggestion that Hogg should marry a rich West Indian heiress in order to retrieve his finances after his loss with Goldie. Rich West Indian heiresses were a feature of the London social scene during the 1810s, a period when large-scale wealth was being generated for plantation owners by slave labor on the sugar plantations of the British West Indies. It will be remembered that one such mixed-race West Indian heiress, Miss Swartz, appears in Thackeray's *Vanity Fair*, that wide-ranging examination of

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<sup>17</sup>*Letters*, I, 211-12. Hogg is possibly being disingenuous here about his "dilatatory printers," who in fact may have been making rapid progress with a priority job that was perhaps put in their hands little more than a week previously, after Hogg's meeting with Murray. If so, Hogg was probably being disingenuous out of embarrassment over the fact that Manners and Miller had declined to proceed with the publication of *Pilgrims*: in "Memoir of the Author's Life" (see *Altrive Tales*, ed. Hughes, p. 38) he writes that this turn of events "vexed me exceedingly, as I had mentioned the transaction to all my friends, and how much I was pleased at the connexion." The mention, in this letter of 26 October, of a meeting "last week" fits in with the calculation that Hogg's meeting with Murray and Blackwood took place after 14 and before 18 October, and suggests that 17 October was the precise date. This is because 26 October fell on a Wednesday in 1814, and 17 October was the Monday of the previous week.

metropolitan English society around the time of the triumph of British Imperial power at Waterloo in 1815. In this celebrated novel various characters (including the crass *nouveau riche* merchant Mr. Osborne) experience much avaricious excitement when they contemplate the possible financial benefits of marriage to Miss Swartz.

In the autumn of 1814 Byron seems to have been willing to marry with money in mind, and he put his willingness into practice on 2 January 1815. His bride was Anne Isabella (Anabella) Millbank, a rich (albeit not a West Indian) heiress. According to Drummond Bone, for Byron money “was a constant and not to be underestimated source of harassment. It remained so until the final sale of Newstead after he had left England. There is no doubt that one of Byron’s motives in marrying was financial.”<sup>18</sup> Byron’s marriage to his heiress foundered in scandal in 1816, and as a result he left Britain for the last time in that year, eventually dying in Greece in 1824.

Perhaps an awareness of his own need to marry a rich wife may have prompted Byron to fire off a jocular suggestion that Hogg should look to the wealth of the West Indies in selecting a bride.

During the autumn of 1814 rumors began to circulate in the press that Byron was to marry, and Hogg seems to have responded in kind to the suggestion about the West Indian heiress when he wrote to Byron on 14 October:

My good Lord

I never was diverted by any correspondence so much as yours (leaving the honour out of the question) which I think is chiefly owing to the frankness and unaffectedness so apparent throughout the whole...I am really ashamed and blame myself much for having drawn so much of your attention and occupied so much of your precious time of late, therefore I lay my commands upon you not to answer this letter which I only send in acknowledgement of your last so kind and benevolent one which I found on my arrival here on the 8<sup>th</sup>...

Concerning myself and prospects I have no good account to give your lordship at present—In truth it seems with me one of fortune’s most capricious moments—Every penny of the little foundation that I had laid on which to rear a tiny independence is by the failure of the d— bookseller you know vanished—the third edition of the work on which I chiefly depended is locked up till such time as the bankrupt’s affairs permit it to be brought to the hammer

...

When you said to me once that your poetical days were drawing to a close I had not the slightest idea that there was a *fair Millbank* in the question—I need not dun you for poetry now; faith you’ll be milled well enough for a time—but I hope by the time you have tried the avocation of miller for a month or two that you will then begin jilting with the muse again—believe the time of vigour health and anticipation is

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<sup>18</sup>Drummond Bone, *Byron* (Tavistock, 2000), p. 17.

a precious time for the for the [*sic*] children of fancy and of song and ought not to be neglected and here I cannot help adverting to an old Scottish proverb, though I scarcely know how to apply it "There's muckle water rins while the miller sleeps"—By the by I hope yours brings a good multure with her, rich and certain, then she will in truth be a Mill and a Bank both.—I would not be ill to perswade to try the *grinding* too as a last and desperate resource in these hard and evil times I wish you would advise me of your day of *entry* if it is not already past and by heaven if my *fair West Indian* have as good a grist as she promises I'll play you for the first poet for the profits of our next new productions the one against the other.

...

It is one of my greatest faults my lord that I always speak and write too precisely as I feel but your own frankness to me encourages me to throw of [*sic*] all reserve when writing to you which I hope you will excuse—Murray is probably by this time in Edin. if so you shall hear from me in a few days till then I remain your lordship's

most affectionate and faithful Shepherd

James Hogg (*Letters*, I, 204-07).

This letter does not seem to have been well received. Perhaps its sexual puns outraged Byron's primly chaste sense of propriety; perhaps Byron was outraged because that was no way for a shepherd to address a Lord in Regency Britain; or perhaps Hogg's teasing about marrying for money touched a raw nerve. Some of these explanations may seem more convincing than others, but at all events a chill descended, as can be seen from Hogg's letter to Murray of 18 January 1815:

Dear Sir

I wrote to you a good while ago but I have heard nothing from you since... I am extremely astonished at the late neglect of Lord Byron I am afraid I have offended him... I should be almost mad to hear that he was offended at me though not for my own sake—I know I am a blundering fellow and constantly running out of one mistake into another but mine are always errors of judgement never of the heart (*Letters*, I, 230-2).

A distinct cooling of enthusiasm about Hogg can be discerned in Byron's letter to the editor of the *Poetical Register* on 7 February 1815: "Mr. Hogg certainly requested me to contribute to his miscellany and to this I intended to accede—but many circumstances have since concurred to interrupt the composition of any piece which would have suited his purpose" (Byron, IV, 268). After Hogg's letter of 14 October 1814 Byron ceased to encourage Murray to encourage Hogg; and from this point onwards Murray's enthusiasm for Hogg evaporated. The triumph of Hogg's evening with Murray was to be short-lived.

In his "Memoir," after discussing the "queer *harumscarum letters*" he had received from Byron, Hogg remarks:

They were all, however, extremely kind, save one, which was rather a satirical, bitter letter. I had been quizzing him about his approaching marriage, and assuring him that he was going to get himself into a confounded scrape. I wished she might prove both a good *mill* and a *bank* to him; but I much doubted they would not be such as he was calculating on. I think he felt that I was using too much freedom with him.

The last letter that I received from him was shortly after the birth of his daughter Ada. In it he breathed the most tender affection both for the mother and child. Good Heaven! how I was astounded by the news that soon followed that!—Peace be to his manes! He was a great man; and I do not think that one on earth appreciated his gigantic genius so highly as I did. He sent me previous to that period all his poems as they were printed (“Memoir,” pp. 39-40).

Clearly, Byron’s “satirical, bitter letter” was written in response to Hogg’s letter of 14 October. It appears that Byron wrote his next and last letter to Hogg on 1 March 1816, shortly before his final departure from Britain. This letter (courteous but somewhat perfunctory) is a response to a letter from Hogg of 26 February [1816] in which Hogg attempts to re-open a correspondence with Byron.<sup>19</sup> Hogg had just received copies, sent by Murray, of Byron’s recently-published poems, *The Siege of Corinth* and *Parisina*.

Immediately after his meeting with Hogg in Edinburgh in October of 1814, Murray visited Walter Scott’s country mansion, Abbotsford. During this visit Scott received an engraved portrait of Byron from the great London publisher, just as Hogg had done in Edinburgh.<sup>20</sup> Nevertheless, Murray probably did not hear Hogg’s praises sung quite as enthusiastically at Abbotsford as he had expected, because Hogg, at this crucial juncture, had quarreled with Scott. The circumstances are explained in Hogg’s momentous letter to Byron of 14 October 1814:

But I have the far worst thing of all to relate, and which in my own eyes crowns my misfortunes, and upon the whole renders my situation so whimsical that I cannot help laughing at it, for nothing of that nature makes me cry. *I have differed with Scott* actually and seriously I fear, for I hear he has informed some of his friends of it—I have often heard poets in general blamed for want of common sense, yet I know that Scott has a great deal of it but I fear he has had to do with one who had little or none at all

I have never mentioned this to any living soul nor would I if I had not heard last night that Scott had mentioned it in a company and that it was like to become publicly known therefore I must tell you all how it fell out though I cannot explain it. At our last meeting it was most cordially agreed that he was not to appear in the

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<sup>19</sup>See Byron, V, 37-8 and *Letters*, I, 265-8.

<sup>20</sup>Samuel Smiles, *A Publisher and his Friends: Memoir and Correspondence of the Late John Murray*, 2 vols. (London, 1891), I, 257.

first N<sup>o</sup> of the Repository but to exert himself for the second. "The first said he is secured if Lord Byron sends a piece of any length with those which you already have I shall take in hand to get you £500. for the number the difficulty will be in keeping it up therefore depend on it I shall do my best to support the Second N<sup>o</sup>.—" All this was very well till of late we had a correspondence about a drama that I was attempting—he sent a sheet of criticisms in his own shrewd sensible manner and most friendly But in the last page he broke off and attacked me about some jealousies and comparisons between him and me so cavalierly that I was driven completely out of myself myself [*sic*] and without asking any explanation (for I knew no more than the man in the moon what he adverted to) I took the pen and wrote a letter<sup>21</sup> of the most bitter and severe reproaches I have quite forgot what in my wrath I said but I believe I went so far as to say every thing which I knew to be the reverse of truth, and which you in part well know—yea to state that I had never been obliged to him (it was a great lie) and never would be obliged to him for any thing; and I fear I expressed the utmost contempt for both himself and his poetry!

This is all true, and yet I cannot believe that I am a madman either—The truth is that I must have erred in something so as to have deserved the reflections he cast upon me but I was so conscious of never having in all my life said one word or thought one thought prejudicial to Scott that I was hurt extremely. I suppose some unfortunate lines near the end of the *Queen's Wake*<sup>22</sup> which haply he did not know I had altered in the latter editions gave rise to it—or perhaps some odious comparisons which my abominable bookseller had picked up out of some shabby reviews and published in the papers and in which I had no more hand than you had.<sup>23</sup>—Thus one of the best props of the Repository is irrevocably lost if the other should likewise prove a bruised reed why every herring must hang by its own head.<sup>24</sup>

In his "Memoir," Hogg indicates that Scott in fact refused to make any contribution whatsoever to the projected *Repository*. If that was indeed the case, it is clear that Hogg is being less than fully frank in this letter to Byron. In short,

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<sup>21</sup>This letter by Hogg, like the letter from Scott to which it replies, does not appear to have survived. However, Hogg discussed the lost letter from Scott, and his own reply to it, in his letter to Scott of [28] February 1815, see *Letters*, I, 240-41.

<sup>22</sup>For a discussion of these lines, see James Hogg, *The Queen's Wake*, ed. Douglas Mack, (Edinburgh, 2004), pp. lvii-lix.

<sup>23</sup>Commenting on this passage, Gillian Hughes points to an advertisement for *The Queen's Wake* in the *Edinburgh Evening Courant* for 4 July 1814. This advertisement quotes a passage from the *Theatrical Inquisitor* that prefers Hogg's poetry to Scott's. See *Letters*, I, 208.

<sup>24</sup>*Letters*, I, 204-9. In the mid-1810s Hogg seems to have "adopted a resolution of writing a drama every year as long as I lived, hoping to make myself perfect by degrees, as a man does in his calling, by serving an apprenticeship," ("Memoir," p. 42).

Hogg may be glossing over the absolute nature of Scott's refusal, as he attempts to keep Byron on board. The relevant passage in the "Memoir" reads as follows:

Mr. Walter Scott absolutely refused to furnish me with even one verse, which I took exceedingly ill, as it frustrated my whole plan. What occasioned it I do not know, as I accounted myself certain of his support from the beginning, and had never asked any thing of him in all my life that he refused. It was in vain that I represented that I had done as much for him [i.e., with regard to the third volume of *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*], and would do ten times more if he required it. He remained firm in his denial, which I thought very hard; so I left him in high dudgeon, sent him a very abusive letter, and would not speak to him again for many a day. I could not even endure to see him at a distance, I felt so degraded by the refusal; and I was, at that time, more disgusted with all mankind than I had ever been before, or have ever been since ("Memoir," p. 40).

In this passage from the "Memoir" the strength of Hogg's feeling is palpable, and the language he uses is extraordinarily strong: "I could not even endure to see him at a distance, I felt so degraded by the refusal." Perhaps this strength of feeling derives from a sense that Scott's refusal to contribute to the *Repository* reflected a deeper refusal to accept Hogg as an equal, as a fellow poet. Ian Duncan has offered an incisive assessment of Scott's view of the Scott/Hogg relationship:

In *Ivanhoe* (1820) Scott may have been paying a compliment to Hogg, *de haut en bas*, in the person of Gurth the swineherd, the hoggish shepherd of his English romance of chivalry. Gurth's valour and loyalty to *Ivanhoe* earn him his manumission from serfdom; internal bonds of fealty replace the external shackles of the slave's collar. Thus Scott rehearses, elegantly enough, the roles of patron and 'faithful shepherd' with which he and Hogg had commenced their relationship—and even allows for Hogg's limited progress in a literary career of his own, in Scott's shadow.<sup>25</sup>

In Scott's refusal to contribute to the *Poetical Repository* Hogg perhaps glimpsed the glass ceiling beyond which his contemporaries would not allow the former shepherd to rise. At all events, this refusal came in the early autumn of 1814, and Hogg's estrangement from Scott lasted into 1815. This was a difficult period for Hogg: "I was, at that time, more disgusted with all mankind than I had ever been before, or have ever been since." It appears from the "Memoir" that Hogg, towards the end of 1814, became involved in sustained heavy drinking through the daily meetings of an Edinburgh society called "The Right and Wrong Club," which regularly "dined at five, and separated at two in

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<sup>25</sup>Ian Duncan, "Hogg's Body," *Studies in Hogg and his World*, 9 (1998), 4.

the morning." Hogg adds "I drank myself into an inflammatory fever," and continues: "This brings me to an anecdote which I must relate, though with little credit to myself; one that I never call to mind without its exciting feelings of respect, admiration, and gratitude" ("Memoir," pp. 47-8). The anecdote in question records that Scott, in spite of their quarrel, secretly ensured that Hogg received the best medical attention during his illness, regardless of cost. Hogg eventually discovered what had been happening. He writes as follows in the "Memoir" about his reaction to Scott's provision of medical care, and with regard to their quarrel over Scott's refusal to contribute to the *Poetical Repository*:

I went straight home, and wrote an apology to Sir Walter, which was heartily received, and he invited me to breakfast next morning, adding, that he was longing much to see me. The same day, as we were walking round St. Andrew's Square, I endeavoured to make the cause of our difference the subject of conversation, but he eluded it. I tried it again some days afterwards, sitting in his study, but he again parried it with equal dexterity; so that I have been left to conjecture what could be his motive in refusing so peremptorily the trifle that I had asked of him. I know him too well to have the least suspicion that there could be any selfish or unfriendly feeling in the determination that he adopted, and I can account for it in no other way, than by supposing that he thought it mean in me to attempt either to acquire gain, or a name, by the efforts of other men; and that it was much more honourable, to use a proverb of his own, "that every herring should hang by its own head."<sup>26</sup>

In recalling Scott's magnanimous provision of much-needed medical assistance, Hogg is clearly right to express his feelings of "respect, admiration, and gratitude." Nevertheless, Scott's help (however generous) was given *de haut en bas*, to repeat Ian Duncan's apt phrase. The friendship between Scott and Hogg could resume, but it was now clear that it could only proceed on the basis of a relationship between patron (Scott/Ivanhoe) and client (Hogg/Gurth).

In discussing the origins of the French Revolution in his *Life of Napoleon Buonaparte*, Scott writes as follows of the patron / client relationship:

In La Vendée alone, the nobles had united their interest and their fortune with those of the peasants who cultivated their estates, and there alone were they found in their proper and honourable character of proprietors residing on their own domains, and discharging the duties which are inalienably attached to the owner of landed property. And—mark-worthy circumstance!—in La Vendée alone was any stand made in behalf of the ancient proprietors, constitution, or religion of France; for there alone the nobles and the cultivators of the soil held towards each other their natural

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<sup>26</sup>"Memoir," pp. 48-9. Hogg's letter of apology to Scott was written on 28 February 1815—see *Letters*, I, 240-1.

and proper relations of patron and client, faithful dependents, and generous and affectionate superiors.<sup>27</sup>

In his landed estate at Abbotsford, Scott undoubtedly wished to be a generous and affectionate superior to his faithful dependents. This was, no doubt, in its way, an admirable ambition—it was certainly preferable to the activities of many Scottish landowners of the nineteenth century, during the Highland Clearances. Nevertheless, Hogg had clearly hoped for something more than a relationship of patron and client; he had hoped for a friendship of equals, a friendship of brother poets. But Burns's aspiration that "Man to Man the world o'er, / Shall brothers be for a' that" simply could not apply in the context of the class-dominated culture of early-nineteenth-century Britain. The author of *The Queen's Wake* and *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* was a common shepherd, a mere farm laborer; and he was never going to be accepted as an equal by the gentlemanly author of *The Lady of the Lake* and *Waverley*.

It had not been Hogg's ambition to play Gurth to Scott's *Ivanhoe*. Instead, it had been his ambition to be the successor of Robert Burns as spokesman and bard of the people of Scotland—of "the common people," or "the lower orders," as the elite of the Regency period would have put it. This explains the assertively demotic nature of some of the projects on which Hogg was working in 1813 and 1814. However, during the 1810s (the decade of Peterloo, as well as of Waterloo) the British elite was not particularly well disposed towards receiving enlightenment and instruction from an assertively demotic voice. There had been more than enough of that already, from the Jacobins, and from Napoleon.

We have seen that Walter Scott, early in the first decade of the nineteenth century, was collecting traditional ballads for the forthcoming third volume of his *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*. This young lawyer of literary tastes received valuable assistance from James Hogg, a young shepherd from Ettrick who had ambitions to be a poet. Operating on an *Ivanhoe* / Gurth pattern of patronage, Scott in due course arranged for Archibald Constable to publish Hogg's *The Mountain Bard* in 1807. "Gilmanscleuch," one of the poems in the collection, describes a feud between the Scotts of Harden (Walter Scott's ancestors) and the Scotts of Gilmanscleuch. The feud is resolved when the Scotts of Harden give succor to an impoverished Scott of Gilmanscleuch, in return for a pledge of feudal loyalty to Harden—a pledge involving loyalty not only to Scott of Harden, but also an ultimate pledge of loyalty to Scott of Buccleuch, chief of the clan Scott. In the 1807 edition of *The Mountain Bard*, the poem ends as follows:

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<sup>27</sup>Walter Scott, *The Life of Napoleon Buonaparte*, 9 vols. (Edinburgh & London, 1827), I, 30-1.

“A Scott shou’d ay support a Scott,  
When sinking to decaye,  
Till over a’ the southlan’ hills  
We stretch our ample sway.”<sup>28</sup>

The Hoggs of Fauldshope (James Hogg’s ancestors), had traditionally been vassals of the Scotts of Harden. No doubt encouraged by Walter Scott, James Hogg in 1805 sought a personal entry into the patterns of feudal loyalty and patronage traced in “Gilmanscleuch,” by presenting a manuscript copy of the poem to Lady Dalkeith, the wife of the heir of the Duke of Buccleuch. However, Hogg altered the final stanza of “Gilmanscleuch” when preparing a new edition of *The Mountain Bard* for publication in 1821. The revised stanza reads as follows:

“A Scott muste aye support ane Scott,  
When as he synketh low;  
But he that proudlye lifts his heide  
Muste learne his place to knowe.”<sup>29</sup>

In making this bitter and defiant change, Hogg may have been thinking of the events of the autumn of 1814, when (he tells us) he felt “more disgusted with all mankind than I had ever been before, or have ever been since.” Looking back to his experiences of that year, this former farm laborer perhaps felt (no doubt bitterly and defiantly) that in the autumn of 1814 he had been seen by the elite to be in danger of getting above himself—and that the wings of the Author of *The Queen’s Wake* had duly been clipped by the elite. And perhaps Hogg was right to see matters in that light—except that this particular member of the lower orders did nevertheless go on to defy his clipped wings by writing (among many other remarkable things) that masterpiece of world literature, *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824).

*University of Stirling*  
*Emeritus*

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<sup>28</sup>James Hogg, *The Mountain Bard* (Edinburgh & London, 1807), p. 49.

<sup>29</sup>James Hogg, *The Mountain Bard* (Edinburgh, London & Glasgow, 1821), p. 63.