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THE SOBIESKI STUARTS AND THE ROYAL LADY'S MAGAZINE: SOME NEWLY-ATTRIBUTED TALES

Craig Buchanan

The Sobieski Stuart brothers (John and Charles Allen, 1795-1872 and 1799-1880 respectively) are best known today for their flamboyant and wholly unsubstantiated claims to have been the legitimate grandsons of Bonnie Prince Charlie, and for the leading roles they played in the resurgence of tartan and highland dress in the wake of George VI's historic visit to Scotland in 1822. They have attracted sporadic academic attention in the years since their deaths, most of which (including copious *Notes and Queries* entries, and a recently updated entry in the *Dictionary of National Biography*) focused on these two most notable aspects of their colourful careers.¹ They were, however, acknowledged authors, responsible for the production of three volumes of poetry between them, a co-authored novel, and a number of musical scores. Neither had, hitherto at least, been considered a great contributor to the periodicals of their time however, which presents us with something of a conundrum, when one considers that an obituary written shortly after the elder brother's death lauded him as a prolific writer who had produced an "enormous quantity" of periodical articles, albeit within the more popular, and therefore less high-brow publications of the day.²

¹ For the most recent biography of the brothers, see K.D. Reynolds, "Stuart, John Sobieski Stolberg (1795?-1872) and Charles Edward (1799?-1880)," *ODNB* (2004): <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/26723>. More detailed but dated examples include: Henry Jenner, "The Sobieski Stuarts," *Genealogical Magazine*, 1 (1897), 21-30; Francis H. Groome, "Stuart, John Sobieski Stolberg," *DNB*, 55 (1898): 104-7; <https://doi.org/10.1093/odnb/9780192683120.013.26723>; Hugh Beveridge, *The Sobieski Stuarts* (Inverness: Caruthers & Sons, 1909); Archibald Craig, *The Sobieski Stuarts* (Edinburgh: Pillans & Wilson, 1922). More recent are Steven Robb, "The Sobieski Stuart Brothers," *Royal Stuart Review* (2003), 3-8, and Anthony Camp, "New Light on the Sobieski Stuarts," *Genealogists' Magazine*, 31.8 (2014), 531-36.

² "Notes from the Metropolis," *Cheltenham Mercury*, February 24, 1872, 1.

The Wellesley Index to Victorian Periodicals is not silent upon the brothers' periodical contributions, but it does not go far towards substantiating the claim that they were major contributors to the field. Indeed, it cites just two papers, one attributed to each of the brothers, and both published in *The Cornhill Magazine* in 1865 and 1867.³ Since these two pieces went to press at a time when the brothers were coming to the end of their voluntary European exile, and when a shortage of funds was drawing them back towards London and the genteel poverty of their final years, it has always been assumed that the two—a monograph on the sword-smith Andrea Ferrera by John, signed “Σ” (sigma, the Greek s), and an anonymous piece on Germanic heraldry by Charles—were penned for simple financial gain, and, as such, were the exception to their norm.⁴ New research, made possible in part by the digitisation of a range of nineteenth century periodical collections, suggests otherwise however, and promises to more than justify the claims of the anonymous obituarist of 1872.

The established publications of the Sobieski Stuarts

The brothers published under a variety of names, from at least 1822, when John went into print with *The Bridal of Caölchairn, and other poems*, as John Hay Allen.⁵ There is strong circumstantial evidence to suggest that he may have been working on another metric romance, *Isabel of the Isles, or the Cave of Nah Vearnag*, as early as August of 1819, on that occasion writing as J. C. H. Owen.⁶ Nonetheless, *The Bridal of Caölchairn*, and the publication some months prior to it of individual pieces from the collection, set to music and sold as musical scores, mark the earliest extant works by either brother identified to date.⁷

Tradition has it that the pair then enjoyed a life of ease in the Highlands of Scotland, supported by various members of the aristocracy, producing nothing more until they resurfaced, some twenty years later, when John (then calling himself John Sobieski Stuart) published his lavish 1842 volume on medieval Scottish dress, *Vestiarium Scoticum*. This was followed by a joint, lavishly illustrated publication, *The Costume of the*

³ Walter Houghton, *et al.*, eds, *The Wellesley Index to Victorian Periodicals* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989), V:745.

⁴ Σ, “Andrea Ferara,” *Cornhill Magazine*, 12 (July 1865): 189-94; “The Eagle of the German Empire,” *Cornhill Magazine*, 15 (March 1867): 612-19.

⁵ John Hay Allan, *The Bridal of Caölchairn* (London: Hickman, 1822).

⁶ “Works Preparing for Publication,” *Scots Magazine* (August 1, 1819): 78.

⁷ For the brothers' early musical publications, see Craig Buchanan, “The Sobieski Stuart Compositions,” *Notes & Queries*, 61.4 (November 2014): 531-36.

Clans, co-authored under the names John Sobieski and Charles Edward Stuart, in 1843.⁸

Building upon the considerable success of these volumes, the pair are recognised as having jointly penned a novel, *Tales of the Century* in 1847, followed by another collaborative collection, a two-volume collection of poetry entitled *Lays of the Deer Forest*, in 1848. They then left Scotland and Britain behind in favour of continental Europe, and a self-imposed exile which was to last the better part of another twenty years, with only Charles' *Poems* of 1869, and a posthumous contribution to Angus Macdonald's 1885 *Family Memoir of the Macdonalds of Keppoch* serving to maintain their credentials as authors.⁹

Those notable gaps, however—the first between 1822 and 1842, and the second between 1848 and 1869—are not as easily dismissed as tradition would have us believe, and closer examination of their established work will furnish first clues, and then substantive new pieces of prose, the vast majority of which sit comfortably under the heading of periodical fiction.

Lays of the Deer Forest

Lays of the Deer Forest was arguably the brothers' most ambitious, and most popular work. Comprised of an initial volume of poems, the majority by John, and approximately a third by Charles, the real strength of the collection lay in an accompanying second volume of historical and field-hunting notes. First published by Blackwood and Sons in 1847, the *Lays* received what was, for the brothers, high praise from both the *Sporting Review* and the *Spectator*, with the latter declaring that "the second volume would form an agreeable series of papers, at once instructive to the sportsman and attractive to the general reader."¹⁰ Nor does this instructiveness appear to have diminished with time, given that the deer stalking fraternity oversaw an illustrated, limited, and moderately expensive reprint of both volumes as recently as 1985.

⁸ John Sobieski Stuart & Charles Edward Stuart, *Vestiarium Scoticum* (Edinburgh: William Tait, 1842); John Sobieski Stuart & Charles Edward Stuart, *The Costume of the Clans* (Edinburgh: John Menzies, 1844).

⁹ John Sobieski Stuart & Charles Edward Stuart, *Tales of the Century* (Edinburgh: James Marshall, 1847); John Sobieski Stuart & Charles Edward Stuart, *Lays of the Deer Forest* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood & Sons, 1848); Charles Edward Stuart, *Poems* (London: Thomas Bosworth, 1869); Angus Macdonald, *A Family Memoir of the Macdonalds of Keppoch, written from 1800 to 1820, with some notes by C. E. Stuart, Comte d'Albanie*, ed. C. R. Markum (London: Whiting, 1885).

¹⁰ "Lays of the Deer Forest," *Spectator*, 17 (June 3, 1848).

Our present interest in the *Lays* relates entirely to the first volume of poetry, however, and to three poems in particular—"The Incantation" and "The Drink of Might" by John, and "O'Conner's Lament" by Charles—each of which bears a small-print subhead beneath its title: "*From the 'Stuart Tales.'*"¹¹

No collection by that title was ever published, at least as a cohesive volume, but the digitisation of a large number of nineteenth century periodicals has allowed online searches to be run against some of the more distinctive lines in each of those three poems, with surprising results. Two of the three were in fact included as part of longer prose compositions, published in the *Royal Lady's Magazine, and Archives of the Court of St James* in the early 1830s, and signed quasi-anonymously with a "Σ," mirroring the later *Cornhill* piece by John referenced in the *Wellesley*.

"The Incantation" appeared in a two-part story, "The Appeal to God," published in the March and April 1832 numbers of the *Royal Lady's Magazine*. "The Drink of Might" then followed as an embellishment to another prose tale, "The Fair Maid of Moray," published in the June number that same year.¹² The third poem, "O'Conner's Lament," also signed with a "Σ," then appeared as part of a tale entitled "O'Conner" in *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine* in August, 1833.¹³

That would prove to be the exception to what would fast appear to have been a publishing rule for the brothers in the first half of the 1830s. For, armed with the knowledge that John (or perhaps John and Charles in collaboration) had published under the pseudonym "Σ" in the *Royal Lady's Magazine*, it soon becomes apparent that they did so on multiple occasions, and on a diverse range of historical topics far broader than had previously been imagined.

The Royal Lady's Magazine

To date, the *Royal Lady's Magazine* has arguably been a neglected title, overlooked in favour of longer-running and more substantial rivals such as the *Lady's Magazine* (1770-1847), the *Lady's Monthly Museum* (1789-1832), and *Blackwood's Lady's Magazine and Gazette* (1832-60). The magazine was one of a number published and edited by George Glenny, a horticulturalist determined to combine his own love of plants and flowers with a stream of largely inoffensive prose fiction contributions, many of

¹¹ Stuart, *Lays of the Deer Forest*, 199, 229 and 233.

¹² Σ, "The Appeal to God, by the Author of The Pole," *Royal Lady's Magazine*, 3 (March & April 1832): 144-51, 167-76; Σ, "The Fair Maid of Moray," *RLM*, 3 (June 1832): 263-81. Footnotes below use the abbreviation *RLM*.

¹³ Σ, "O'Conner," *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine*, 3 (August 1833): 615-31.

them anonymous.¹⁴ As David Groves, one of the few academics to touch upon the magazine in any detail, has pointed out, these were “genteel poems and tales,” and those contributors who were named were almost invariably “highly respectable authors like Jane Porter, Mary Russell Mitford, Miss Pardoe, Thomas Haynes Bayly, Barry Cornwall, Mrs Hemans, and others of less note.”¹⁵

Whether of less note or not, to that list we must now add, by weight of volume alone, the Sobieski Stuart brothers. A search for prose contributions signed with a “Σ” will reveal (and intertextual comparisons will confirm) no fewer than nineteen complete tales, published between September 1831 and May 1834. Many of these were published in multiple instalments, making the pair one of the mainstays of the magazine across almost the entirety of its print run, from its inception in mid-1832 through to its terminal merger with the *Horticultural Journal* in 1835.

The first identifiable contribution, a story entitled “The Pole,” set in and around the Warsaw Uprising of November 1830, went to press anonymously in the September 1831 number of the magazine.¹⁶ A subsequent piece, “The Appeal to God,” published in March of the following year, was signed “Σ.” This was one of the three identifying pieces linked to poems in the *Lays of the Deer Forest*, and was subtitled “by the author of The Pole,” allowing the definitive attribution of that earlier work, complete with its Highland hero of the type so prevalent across the brothers’ fiction.

“Tales of the Cavaliers”

Following on from “The Pole,” there are two early versions of tales which would later go on to form parts of the brothers’ tripartite novel, *The Tales of the Century* (1847). In these earlier iterations, each is subtitled as one of a number of “Tales of the Cavaliers,” with the first, “The Child and the Picture,” appearing in the October 1831 number of the *Royal Lady’s Magazine*, and the second, “The Red Eagle,” split between the November and December numbers of that same year.¹⁷ These early drafts of what

¹⁴ H.M. Chichester, “Glenny, George (1793-1874),” *DNB* (1889), 21: 436: <https://doi.org/10.1093/odnb/9780192683120.013.10818>; and cf. Anne Pimlott Baker, in *ODNB* (2004, revd. 2011): <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/10818>.

¹⁵ David Groves, “James Hogg, London, and the *Royal Lady’s Magazine*,” *The Library*, ser. 6, 10.4 (December 1988): 339-46.

¹⁶ “The Pole,” *RLM*, 2 (September 1831): 136-43.

¹⁷ Σ, “The Child and Picture—Tales of the Cavaliers, No. I,” *RLM*, 2 (October 1831): 206-81; Σ, “The Red Eagle—Tales of the Cavaliers, No. II,” *RLM*, 2 (November & December 1831): 265-76, 378-87.

would become the brothers' signature publication, when combined with "The Grey Woman of Wolfsden," published in the January 1832 number of the same magazine, provide a fascinating window into the editing processes over the fifteen years between the first and second iterations of this story, which outlines their claims of royal descent.¹⁸ The Gaelic in the earlier periodical versions is less polished, the geography less settled, and the various characters less integrated than would be the case in the 1840s, when the pair were confidently portraying themselves as native speakers, sons of the hills, and gentlemen of influence. As such, a detailed comparison of the two sets of texts, from 1831/2 and 1847 respectively, can for the first time offer significant insights into the brothers' development as authors, as social figures, and as actors settling into what would become their respective life-long roles.

Each of these early versions of their most recognised tales are signed with what we must now consider to be their trademark "Σ", which might cause the reader to wonder, given that the *Tales of the Century* was published under both their names, whether they had interchangeable called upon that designation, or whether John was, in fact, the principal author of both tales, with Charles supplying the copious historical and explanatory notes which accompanied the later tale into its novel format. Whichever might prove the case, the re-discovery of these earlier version of the stories which would eventually make up the *Tales of the Century* should not be minimized, not least from the perspective of their authors' linguistic abilities.

The brothers' biographers regularly refer to their fluency in Gaelic. Frances Hindes Groom, writing in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, notes that they learnt the language at a young age, at the knee of Donald Macpherson, a Gaelic poet based in London, while Hugh Beveridge goes on to attribute to them a level of near-native competence, claiming that John "had, in common with his brother, become so proficient in his knowledge of Gaelic that he could not only speak it fluently, but could also read, write, and compose verse and prose in it."¹⁹

This claim was almost universally accepted and can be found in contemporary press coverage of the brothers. For example, in 1836, in a piece that received wide circulation, it was claimed that the pair spoke "the

¹⁸ Σ, "The Gray Woman of Wolfsden—Tales of the Cavaliers, No. III," *RLM*, 3 (January 1832): 16-31.

¹⁹ Beveridge, *The Sobieski Stuarts*, 22-23.

Italian, French, English, Gaelic, and Irish languages.”²⁰ As recently as 1975, Nancy Ridley described them as having been “good linguists.”²¹

The evidence offered by the editorial process between the ‘Tales of the Cavaliers’ and the *Tales of the Century* would seem, if not to dispute those assumptions, then at least to cast them in a very different light. There is very little Gaelic in the original first tale, though slightly more in the revised version, with Dr Beaton throwing in occasional references to “Tearlach Rìgh nan Gael,” “Sassanach” and “Dubh-gall,” alongside snippets of Gaelic poetry, as he recounts his travels.²² What little Gaelic was in the original is not exempt from editorial amendment though. For example, in “The Child and the Picture,” the Doctor tells MacDonnell that he knew his grandfather “when he was a bit *Prutchach*.”²³ There being no other Gaelic word applicable, this can only have been a case of John attempting to write the word “proitseach” (a boy, a stripling) phonetically.²⁴ Accordingly, in the revised version published in 1847, the same line is rendered as “when he was a bit *Proitseach*.”²⁵

Being set principally in the Highlands, the second tale has considerably more Gaelic in it, and considerably more amendments as a result. For example, what was given as “*Gluin-dubh*” in the 1832 version, is rendered as “*Gloin dubh*” in 1847.²⁶ The first is more suggestive of something jointed (“glùineach”), or possessed of a knee (“glùn”), rather than the intended “dark drinking glass,” which would more correctly be ‘gloine dubh’ (trans. dark glass), since “gloin” without an “e” means “squint-eyed.”²⁷ Similarly, “*Hanoveraich*” is set aside in favour of “*Hanobheraich*,” Edinburgh goes from being “Balle-dun-Aiden” to “Baile-Dun-éden,” and the term for a foster-brother goes from “coalta” to “co-dhalta,” all of which changes suggest a reliance upon phonetic spelling in the original, and authors who might have been conversant enough with the language to speak it, but not necessarily well enough versed to publish in it with any semblance of authority.²⁸

²⁰ “Royal Charlie Back Again,” *Perthshire Courier*, 5 May 1836, 2; ‘Royal Charley Back Again,’ *The Morning Advertiser*, 6 May 1836, 2; ‘Royal Charley Back Again,’ *The Morning Post*, 7 May 1836, 7, etc.

²¹ Nancy Ridley, *A Northumbrian at Large* (London: Robert Hale, 1975), 130.

²² Stuart, *Tales of the Century*, 17-18.

²³ Σ, “The Child and the Picture—Tales of the Cavaliers, No. I,” 209.

²⁴ See “proitseach,” in Malcolm MacLennan, *A Pronouncing and Etymological Dictionary of the Gaelic Language* (Edinburgh: John Grant, 1979), 261 (257).

²⁵ Stuart, *Tales of the Century*, 11.

²⁶ Σ, “The Red Eagle – Tales of the Cavaliers, No. II,” 265; Stuart, *Tales of the Century*, 75.

²⁷ See respectively “glùineach,” “glùn,” “gloine,” and “gloin,” in MacLennan, 185.

²⁸ Σ, “The Red Eagle,” 268, 269, and 271; Stuart, *Tales*, 88, 90 – 91, and 100.

The other single, most discernible shift which can be traced more effectively than ever through a comparison between the earlier 1830s texts and those of 1847 is in regard to the brothers' views on religion. Beveridge gives what is perhaps the kindest summary of that position when he suggests that, because there was no Catholic church within easy reach of the family's home at Milton Brodie in the early 1830s, the brothers instead chose to worship alongside the local Presbyterian community, while maintaining their Catholic faith in private.²⁹ The reality, as presented by these two comparable texts, is very different though. In them, we can clearly see a progression from Episcopalian worship in the 1832 stories, to Roman Catholicism some fifteen years later.

For example, while the reader is still introduced to the priest in the Palazzo towards the end of the first tale, the original footnote highlighting the role of the "reformed high church"—i.e. the episcopal or Anglican church—is missing in the later version.³⁰ When Elspeth recounts the clearing of the glen, the kirk of the original becomes a chapel, and the minister a priest;³¹ and when Glendulochan first encounters Glengarve, it is with a Gaelic missal, rather than a bible, in his hand.³² In keeping, it is no longer an episcopal clergyman who buries the old chief, but rather a priest whose English liturgy is replaced by Latin.³³ And again, it is a priest rather than a minister who pleads with the fishermen to save the stranded woman in the final portion of the second tale.³⁴

So, for the first time, we are able to trace what was arguably a shift in the brothers' own religious observances in the 1830s and 40s, through the medium of their published fiction, and in keeping with their own uniquely skewed, but developing understanding of the position of the exiled Stuarts some one hundred years earlier.

Medieval Scottish Tales

Interspersed with the "Tales of the Cavaliers" we find another stand-alone piece in the *Royal Lady's Magazine*, "Blanche Mantle," a light, prose precursor to a much more substantial poem, "The Templar's Tomb," with which the brothers would open their *Lays of the Deer Forest* collection in 1847. This prose pre-telling appears in the December 1831 number of the magazine, and for all that it is signed with an "S" rather than a "Σ," there

²⁹ Beveridge, *The Sobieski Stuarts*, 25-26.

³⁰ "The Child and the Picture," 214; Stuart, *Tales of the Century*, 44.

³¹ "The Red Eagle," 269; Stuart, *Tales of the Century*, 91.

³² "Red Eagle," 379; Stuart, *Tales of the Century*, 126.

³³ "Red Eagle," 282-3; Stuart, *Tales of the Century*, 143-4.

³⁴ "Red Eagle," 385; Stuart, *Tales of the Century*, 153.

can be no doubt from content or from context that it is, in fact, another of the brothers' pieces.³⁵ It is followed in March and then April of 1832 by a two-part tale set in fourteenth century Scotland, entitled "The Appeal to God." It is this tale to which the magazine's editors attached the subtitle "By the Author of The Pole," allowing the earlier authorship identification. Unlike its named predecessor, but like each of the other tales thus far, "The Appeal to God" is signed with the now-recognisable "Σ."

A

further medieval romance then appears in the form of "The Fair Maid of Moray," which featured in the June 1832 number of the *Royal Lady's Magazine*, set in and around the brothers' favoured haunt of Tarnaway Forest, geographical and historic descriptions of which bear heavily, not only upon this particular tale, but upon various subsequent poems by the pair.³⁶

As well as adding a depth and range to the history which sits at the core of the brothers' acknowledged works, these medieval tales also allow us, for the first time, to state beyond doubt that their penchant for fictionalised history, and for ignoring historical fact in favour of what they would later choose to classify as the "romance of history," was by no means limited to the Stuart ancestry which they would go on to cloak themselves in.

Like the tales alongside which they were published, these medieval stand-alone pieces (which would almost certainly have formed part of a larger 'Stuart Tales' collection had the publication of the *Tales of the Century* met with more critical acclaim) tell us a good deal about the brothers' loose association with historical fact. But far from being a fault associated solely with their own purported family history, as might previously have been thought, clear traces of it run through these tales as well, with facts changed for no better reason than to enliven the flow of the narrative. For example, the vague historical setting of 'The Appeal to God,' which takes place at some unspecified point during reign of King David II, is complicated by the fact that there are no historical records of a

³⁵ S, "Blanche Mantle," *RLM*, 2 (December 1831): 361-72.

³⁶ While none of the tales found in the *Royal Lady's Magazine* are annotated in the detail one might have expected of the authors of *Tales of the Century*, it is clear that the brothers drew upon a range of historical sources in the course of their research. Some of these are obscure - for example, a "*Baron Bailie's Book of Gordonstown*" is cited in one of the lengthier notes to 'The Appeal to God'; others date back to early Scots poets and chroniclers - Blind Harry and Andrew Wyntoun both meriting mentions, while contemporary sources known to the pair are also in evidence - the flooding scenes in 'Blanche Mantle' for example are attributed, at least in part, to descriptions provided by their good friend, Sir Thomas Dick Lauder in his *Account of the Great Floods of August 1829 in the Province of Moray*.

William Douglas of Eaglestour who fits the details given in the tale, nor of an Earl of Moray who does likewise—there *was* an Earl who married an Isobel Stewart, who might well be the Isobel Stewart of the tale, in which case she was the daughter of Sir John Stewart of Bonkyll, but that was Thomas, the first Earl, not John—no John held the title until the third earl, a generation later, and *he* was married to Euphemia de Ross.³⁷ Taken in combination with the fact that the earlier Earl Thomas was dead long before King David attained his majority, as depicted in the course of the story, one has as good a single example as can be highlighted of the way in which, when it suited them, the brothers treated history as something both fluid and flexible. Much the same accusation can be levelled against “The Fair Maid of Moray,” though that tale proves to have a worth all its own, in that it is effectively a prose re-telling of a later poem, and so, as was the case with the “Tales of the Cavaliers” and the *Tales of the Century*, it opens a whole new window onto the brothers as editors, and revisionists not only of history but of their own prior creations.

“Tales of the Scottish Border”

The knowledge that John at least, if not Charles, used the moniker “Σ” allows us to work through successive numbers of the *Royal Lady’s Magazine*, and to identify two further sets of hitherto unacknowledged or forgotten tales, the first of these being the “Tales of the Scottish Border,” published in two distinct tranches between February 1832 and June 1834.

“The Black Book of Dulcicordis” appeared in the February 1832 number of the magazine, and was subtitled “Tales of the Scottish Border, No. I.”³⁸ Unique amongst the tales, in so far as it enjoyed a contemporary setting, “The Black Book” acts as an introduction to those which would follow in the series, as an antiquarian father and son stumble upon a forgotten manuscript in the ruins of Sweetheart Abbey in Galloway. From this imagined manuscript then stem the tales which comprise “The Black Douglas,” which appeared in the *Royal Lady’s Magazine* in May of 1832, “The White Monk of Berwick,” which featured in the March 1834 number, “The Brown Dwarf,” published in April of that same year, and “The Treason of Redrood,” which was split between the subsequent May and June numbers and featured as the lead story in the latter.³⁹ The lengthy

³⁷ See “Randolph, Earl of Moray,” in John Burke, *A General and Heraldic Dictionary* (London: Colburn, 1846), 772; also, Sir James Paul, *The Scots Peerage* (Edinburgh: 1909), I: 13.

³⁸ Σ, “The Black Book of Dulcicordis—Tales of the Scottish Border, No. I,” *RLM*, 3 (February 1832): 70-80.

³⁹ Σ, “The Black Douglas—Tales of the Scottish Border, No. II,” *RLM*, 3 (May 1832): 225-34; Σ, “The White Monk of Berwick—Tales of the Scottish Border, No.

break of almost two years between the second and third parts of this particular series might lend weight to the suggestion that they should be treated as two separate entities, and indeed so long had passed between these second and third tales that the magazine reverted to subtitled “The White Monk of Berwick” as “Tales of the Scottish Border, No. I,” as if to disregard the earlier publications. However, since all five tales form a single coherent story arc, which culminates in the fictional elopement and marriage of a Douglas knight with Isabelle, daughter of the alleged thirteen century warlock Sir William de Soulis, it makes sense from a practical perspective to dismiss both the internal numbering evidence (which may simply have its origins in the short memory of the average periodical reader), and the chronological break, and to conclude, simply enough, that the brothers’ attention and interests went off in different directions for a period, before returning to their chosen homeland and its history.

Like the medieval tales which preceded them, the “Tales of the Scottish Border” are replete with examples of the brothers playing fast and loose with historical fact, from the invented characters of Sir Guillaume and Jacques de Fermos in “The Black Douglas,” to the fictional Ravenscraig character at the heart of the later story arc which links “The White Monk of Berwick,” “The Brown Dwarf” and “The Treason of Redrood.”

Perhaps more important though, these tales greatly expand upon an aspect of the brothers’ work which has been acknowledged, but for which only limited evidence has been available to date, namely their proclivity for, and adept use of, the Scots vernacular. William Donaldson, in his *Jacobite Song*, praised the pair as having displayed a “considerable panache (in) all three of Scotland’s literary languages,” but his evidence for their grasp of colloquial Scots was, of necessity, limited principally to Elspeth’s conversations with young Glendulochan in the course of *Tales of the Century*.⁴⁰ Yet with the attribution of the “Tales of the Scottish Border,” the modern scholar of languages immediately has access to the comic, linguistic sparring between the knight and his host at the beginning of “The White Monk of Berwick,” to the banquet scene in “The Brown Dwarf,” and to Black Watt’s lengthy dialog with the Edinburgh merchant in “The Treason of Redrood,” each in a distinct variety of broad Scots speech, showing how accurate Donaldson’s initial assessment of the brothers’ skills was.

I,” *RLM*, n.s. 2 (March 1834): 49-61; Σ, “The Brown Dwarf—Tales of the Scottish Border, No. II,” *RL*, n.s. 2 (April 1834): 95-106; Σ, “The Treason of Redrood,” *RLM*, n.s. 2 (May & June 1834): 139-46, 187-94.

⁴⁰ William Donaldson, *The Jacobite Song: Political Myth and National Identity* (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1988), 110.

These border tales further accentuate the pair's clear preference for "the romance of history," and do so in a way which suggests that had they published their stories in a different order, starting either with the "Stuart Tales" which they referenced in their *Lays of the Deer Forest*, or with the "Tales of the Scottish Border," then it is entirely possible that their self-indulgent Jacobite fantasy might have been accepted as nothing more than that: one in a line of romantic re-workings of Scottish history, written as an entertainment, rather than as veiled claim to legitimate descent on the part of its larger-than-life authors.

Of course, that alone might have meant that those authors would not have attracted the fame which proved to be their lot, having chosen to focus instead upon the *Tales of the Century* as their signature publication. Nor have they necessarily been acknowledged to date as having the breadth of interests - geographical, political, and familial - that these earlier, forgotten publications now allow us to consider in detail.

"Tales and Legends of the Alhambra"

Just how diverse and distant those interests were has never been more evident than in the second, original series of tales which we are now able to employ the appended "Σ" to identify. Intermingled with the various instalments of the "Tales of the Scottish Border" in the *Royal Lady's Magazine* were a series of far more exotic tales, set amongst the Moors of Spain.

To be fair, the brothers had touched upon Spanish themes in some of their earlier works. There was, for example, a reference in "The Bridal of Caölchairn," the initial poem in the collection of the same name, to a knight who had gone "from Rome to Arragon" to fight "against the Moors."⁴¹ And there was also the more tangential link to Sir James Douglas, hero of "The Black Douglas," who went on to carry Robert the Bruce's heart on crusade through the same country. These new tales are a unique departure, however, in that they are set wholly outwith the British Isles, and are built entirely around a cast of Spanish and North African characters.

Of the six stories which make up this Spanish collection, the first two are subtitled "Legends of the Alhambra," while the remaining four are described as "Tales" of the same. While the brothers clearly favoured "Tales" for each of their other collections, given that Washington Irving's more famous sketches are often referred to in abbreviated form as *Tales of the Alhambra*, it seems both logical and legitimate, given their own early

⁴¹ Allan, *Bridal of Caölchairn*, 16.

naming habits, to avoid any potential confusion by referring to the brothers' slightly later works as "Legends of the Alhambra" throughout.

The first of these legends, "The Vigil of St. Alphonso," appeared in the March 1833 number of the *Royal Lady's Magazine*, and is a tale of love and betrayal, centred upon Don Alphonso, Count St. Julian, his bride-to-be, Zarefa de Guzman, and their overlord, the Duke of Rosenza, whose betrayal leads to the kidnapping of the latter, and the exile of the former.⁴² As a stand-alone piece, the tale is perhaps less than satisfactory, in that it leaves any number of loose ends in place at its conclusion. These are neatly wrapped up in the April number, however, when a second tale, "The Black Rover," appeared, set some twenty years later. This tale follows Don Alphonso's faithful manservant, Montesino, as he seeks out his old master, now a pirate preying on the Duke's coastal trade, and Zarefa, whose grief drove her to take her own life, and whose ghost still haunts a remote local tower.⁴³ "The Vigil of St Alphonso" and "The Black Rover" are effectively, therefore, two parts of a single, coherent tale. The remaining four pieces however, centre around a second set of characters, and are set some years later, forming a second, distinct story arc.

"The Iron Cross" appeared in the September and October 1833 numbers of the magazine, and introduced Don Julian, Count de Luna, a knight in the train of Don Alphonso of Aragorn, who falls in love with his master's betrothed, Algasania, daughter of a later Guzman, Duke of Medina, and a half-Moorish princess in her own right.⁴⁴ This was followed by "The Abcecerages" in November 1833, "The Fountain of Dragons" in December of that year, and "The Castle of Seven Dungeons" in February of 1834.⁴⁵ Between them, these tell the story of the young lovers, as they are variously captured, separated, and reunited over a span of years, two continents, and two cultures.

This otherwise unacknowledged fascination which the brothers would appear to have had with Spain is not in fact unprecedented; rather, it serves to draw attention to other aspects of their lives, outside of literature, and to put those into a new, and sharper context. For example, it has long been known that John travelled on the continent in the months immediately

⁴² Σ, "The Vigil of St. Alphonso—Legends of the Alhambra, No. I," *RLM*, 5 (May 1833): 180-90.

⁴³ Σ, "The Black Rover—Legends of the Alhambra, No. II," *RLM*, 5 (June 1833): 225-37.

⁴⁴ Σ, "The Iron Cross—Tales of the Alhambra, No. III," *RLM*, n.s. 1 (September & October 1833): 118-22, 139-48.

⁴⁵ Σ, "The Abcecerages—Tales of the Alhambra, No. IV," *RLM*, n.s. 1 (November 1833): 185-91; Σ, "The Fountain of Dragons—Tales of the Alhambra, No. V," *RLM*, n.s. 1 (December 1833): 239-50; Σ, "The Castle of the Seven Dungeons," *RLM*, n.s. 2 (February 1834): 1-11.

following the publication of his *Bridal of Caölchairn*. It is known that he made it at least as far as Paris, and that a letter from Lord Erskine to Thomas Allen, John's father, dated May 1823, offered an introductory note for one of the brothers—unspecified, but presumably John—to the Duke of San Lorenzo, then the Spanish Ambassador to the court of Louis XVIII.⁴⁶ It is therefore not difficult to conceive that John, who researched his first collection of poetry by spending at least a year in Argyllshire, might also have researched a later series of Spanish tales, either by travelling to Spain himself, or by associating himself with the Spanish court in France. Nor is it difficult to conceive the influence which these tales, published in 1833 and 1834, might have had on the young Carl Edouard, Charles's son and John's nephew, who would have been in his early teens when they were sent to press. They might well account, at least in part, for the life-long fascination he had with Spain, which saw him serve as Secretary for the Legitimist League in London in the 1870s, his acceptance of a commission in the Carlist army which would lead to his capture off the coast of Spain in 1873, and his subsequent, very public arrest on charges of gunrunning.⁴⁷ These Spanish incidents in the early and late lives of the brothers' have long been known, but it is only now that these newly recovered Spanish tales provide at least one hitherto missing link between them, and place them firmly, for the first time, within the context of the pair's literary output.

The other thing which the "Legends" allow us to do is to tie in what would otherwise have remained disparate, single threads across the brothers work. The subterranean quest, notable in the closing chapters of *Tales of the Century*, now has companion pieces in the labyrinth of secret passages beneath the eponymous "Fountain of Dragons," and the bottomless pits in "The Castle of the Seven Dungeons." The concept of travel incognito, which played so obvious a role in stand-alone pieces such as "The Fair Maid of Moray" and "The Pole" is mirrored here in "The Black Rover" and "The Abencerages," and the gothic fixation upon haunts and phantoms, first hinted at in "The Appeal to God," are magnified and

⁴⁶ For the letter from Lord Erskine, see C. L. Berry, "The Myth of the Sobieski Stuarts: A Postscript," *Notes & Queries* (May 25, 1940), 368; the Duke of San Lorenzo's residency in Paris at that time is evidenced by the legal case brought against him before the Paris Tribunal in January of that year, for which see "The Paris Tribunal," *Annual Register and Chronicle*, 65 (January 1823), 13.

⁴⁷ For a contemporaneous account of Colonel Stuart's adventures and subsequent arrest by the Spanish authorities in the 1870s, see "The Case of the Deerhound," *Spectator* (August 23, 1873), 5-6.

enhanced in the marshes and shallow rivers of southern Spain, with their corpse-candles, ghosts and spectres.

In other words, for the first time, we have a broad enough corpus of work by the brothers to begin to identify threads which run through, and underpin the majority of their writing, from their early poetry through to their later prose. Of these threads, the concept of history based (ironically) upon the re-discovered and the previously hidden is central, as are the themes of disguise, return and re-invention. Add to those the subterranean and the liminal, and the brothers go from being minor footnotes in Stuart family histories, to potential contenders for serious literary consideration and comparison.

The end of *The Royal Lady's Magazine*

By 1834, the brothers, under their pseudonymous “Σ”, had become some of the leading contributors to the *Royal Lady's Magazine*. Their “Castle of the Seven Dungeons” had been the lead story in the February number of that year, and the two parts of “The Treason of Redrood” would similarly grace the opening pages of the May and June numbers. However, by then, George Glenny, the title's owner and editor, was facing financial difficulties, and he would soon be forced to sell the magazine entirely. The June 1834 number announced that the “magazine having passed into new hands will be published with entirely new features.”⁴⁸ It seems that the brothers were amongst those being given fair warning by the new owners, for no further tales or features appear above their distinctive “Σ” signature after that date, through we can make two further connections.

In October 1831, just a month after the publication of the earliest extant piece we have by the pair, “The Pole,” in the *Royal Lady's Magazine*, another tale, “The White Lady: a Tale of the Highlands,” appeared in the more prestigious *Fraser's Magazine for Town and Country*.⁴⁹ Replete with Gaelic dialogue, an Argyllshire setting, and a fascination with eloping brides and spiteful suitors, it has all the hallmarks of, and is almost certainly the work of, John, for all that it was signed with an “I” (presumably for Iain, the Gaelic rendition of John, by which he was generally known in the Highlands), rather than the usual “Σ.” This particular story was later republished in the *Olio; or Museum of Entertainment* in 1832, and then republished again, like a number of other pieces by the brothers (including “Blanche Mantle,” “The Child and Picture,” and “The Gray Woman of Wolfden”), in an American journal, the

⁴⁸ “To Correspondents,” *RLM*, n.s. 3 (June 1834), unnumbered page.

⁴⁹ I, “The White Lady: A Tale of the Highlands,” *Fraser's Magazine for Town and Country*, 4 (October 1831), 293-301.

Atheneum, published in Boston, Massachusetts, though such American reprintings would most probably be unauthorized with no financial benefit to the brothers.⁵⁰

Then of course, there is the third of those original references to “The Stuart Tales,” found within the pages of the *Lays of the Deer Forest*. Rather than linking to a poem by John, this is attached to one penned by Charles, “O’Conner’s Lament,” set in Ireland. And, while we do not find it within the pages of the *Royal Lady’s Magazine*, a search further afield finds an earlier version of the same lyric embedded within a tale entitled “O’Connor,” published in the August 1833 number of *Tait’s Edinburgh Magazine*.⁵¹ Whether the “Σ” signature indicates that the story was John’s, and merely built around a verse by Charles, or whether, conversely, the Irish setting, and the darker tone of the piece suggest that Charles occasionally shared his elder brother’s moniker, remains open to debate. That “O’Conner” is yet another, otherwise forgotten piece of periodical fiction by the pair, is indisputable however, and proves that neither brother was inclined to limit himself to just a single publication, however lucrative and accepting it might have been over a span of years.

Conclusion

Because “The Tales of the Cavalier” are so obviously forerunners to the more widely known *Tales of the Century*, the other “Σ” signed pieces in the *Royal Lady’s Magazine* are clearly also the work of the Sobieski Stuarts. That acknowledgement more than quadruples their known literary output, while leaving open the very real possibility that more articles and stories remain, as yet unattributed to the pair.

This essay opened with a conundrum, an attempt to balance a contemporaneous claim that John Sobieski Stuart at least, if not his brother Charles, had been a prolific contributor to the periodicals of his day, with the fact that existing scholarship, as witnessed by the entries in the *Wellesley Index*, only admitted to one such article for each of them. That John’s sole entry was signed with a “Σ” was the first clue that led to a considerable number of other articles and tales which can now, with varying degrees of certainty, be attributed to the brothers. But might there be still more? The discovery of pieces in the likes of *Fraser’s Magazine*, *Tait’s Edinburgh Magazine*, and further afield in the pages of the *Olio* and the *Atheneum*, would hint strongly at that possibility.

⁵⁰ “The White Lady: A Tale of the Highlands,” *The Olio; or, Museum of Entertainment*, 8, nos 12 and 13 (October 8 and 15, 1831): 177-81, 201-04; and in *The Atheneum, or Spirit of English Literature and Fashion*, 4th ser., 2 (March 1832): 201-10.

⁵¹ Σ, “O’Conner,” 615-31.

And the eventual re-working and re-publication of the “Tales of the Cavaliers,” edited and updated to form the brothers’ *Tales of the Century*, taken in conjunction with the hints to be found in the *Lays of the Deer Forest* that a *Stuart Tales* volume was in preparation, lend considerable weight to the suggestion that at least some of the other pieces from the *Royal Lady’s Magazine* might have been destined to be brought together, perhaps in revised and annotated forms, to create future collections, doubtless with the brothers’ names attached, had it not been for the public backlash which followed the review of *Tales of the Century* in the *Quarterly Review* in 1848.⁵² From that point on, anonymity rather than recognition would prove more financially rewarding, and as a result their older, unattributed periodical contributions would languish, to all intents and purposes forgotten.

It is no small irony that it should be a line from an anonymous obituary, itself published in a periodical of the day, which first hinted that there might be more, equally anonymous contributions from the pair extant within the periodical corpus. And while a definitive list of their publications may yet be some way off, the acknowledgement that John at least, and Charles by association, was prolific in that field, allows us to begin to reassess the literary output of the brothers, and to gain a better understanding of two unique and colourful characters who made a more significant contribution to the periodical literature of their day than was ever previously imagined.

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⁵² [George Skene], “The Heirs of the Stuarts,” *Quarterly Review*, 81 (1847): 68-85.