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**'NATURE'S MAKING': JAMES HOGG AND THE  
AUTODIDACTIC TRADITION IN SCOTTISH POETRY**

By

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Volume One

A thesis submitted to the University of Glasgow  
in fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy  
August 1997

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University of Glasgow  
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# **'Nature's Making': James Hogg and the Autodidactic Tradition in Scottish Poetry**

## **Summary**

This thesis explores the autodidactic tradition in Scottish poetry during the nineteenth century. From the late eighteenth century onwards self-taught Scottish poets offered a vigorous alternative to the literary mainstream. Autodidacts explored both oral and literary styles and genres, utilising a wide frame of reference to express their unique experiences and ideas. Diversity of poetic voice characterises autodidactic poets, including Robert Burns, Janet Little, Allan Cunningham, Alexander Anderson and James Young Geddes. However, Scottish autodidacts shared poetic concerns and techniques, and were highly influenced by their compeers. It is suggested that James Hogg, 'the Ettrick Shepherd' is the central and most significant figure in forming a Scottish autodidactic identity.

There are three major sections to the thesis. Part One looks at the origins of the 'peasant poet' image in the national context, exploring prototypes such as Ramsay's The Gentle Shepherd (1725), Macpherson's Ossian and Burns as 'Heaven-taught ploughman'. The middle

section concentrates on Hogg, illustrating the precise ways in which he explored and, at times, resented his peasant poet typecasting. Works considered include Scottish Pastorals (1801), The Mountain Bard (1807 and 1821), The Queen's Wake (1813), The Poetic Mirror (1816), The Royal Jubilee (1822), Queen Hynde (1825), Pilgrims of the Sun (1815 and 1822) and A Queer Book (1832). Part Three discusses Scottish autodidacticism as it developed after Hogg, discerning subgroups within the peasant poet category. 'Educated autodidacts', for instance, were often considered to be self taught, as they came from socially lowly backgrounds, despite their university education. Examples include John Leyden and William Tennant. Women autodidactic poets, and the particular problems they faced, are discussed in detail; reference is made to poets including Isobel Pagan, Janet Hamilton, Jessie Russell and Ellen Johnston. Poets from outside Scotland who were influenced by Scottish autodidacts are also mentioned, particularly John Clare.

Critical reactions are explored in depth, in an attempt to demonstrate how autodidacts interacted with critics and patrons. Henry Mackenzie's seminal essay, in The Lounger (1786) on Burns as 'Heaven-taught ploughman' is mentioned and Burns' ambivalent relationships with his patrons, especially Mrs Dunlop of Dunlop, are discussed. Hogg's case, as 'the Ettrick Shepherd' of Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, is treated at length. Such



treatments incorporated real biographical elements (financial hardship and hard won learning) as well as pastoral invention, after Ramsay. They offered a double-edged model to contemporary, and later, critics. On the one hand, being considered a 'peasant poet' bestowed a certain amount of curiosity value. This, however, was a limiting phenomenon. The autodidact was encouraged only as far as he or she followed establishment rules: ballads, lyric, patriotic and pious poetry were considered acceptable; innovation was treated less tolerantly. David Masson's lecture on College-Education and Self Education (1854) typifies the grudging attention given to the autodidact. During the course of the nineteenth century a national hierarchy of autodidacts, starting with Burns and headed by Hogg, was established, featured in Henry Shanks's The Peasant Poets of Scotland (1881).

In conclusion, it is asserted that the autodidactic tradition had an enduring effect on Scottish literature, lasting well into the present century. It could provide a healthy alternative to the insipid verse favoured by self-styled polite writers from John Wilson to the Whistlebinkie school. Autodidacts produced some of the most experimental, innovative and exciting poetry of the period. The argument questions critical preconceptions (also currently being challenged by Tom Leonard, William Donaldson and Bill Findlay) that the nineteenth century, after the death of Scott, was a literary dark age for

Scotland. The autodidactic tradition, exemplified by James Hogg, 'the Ettrick Shepherd', is probably the single most important strand in nineteenth century Scottish poetry.

**'Nature's Making': James Hogg and the Autodidactic  
Tradition in Scottish Poetry**

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### Acknowledgements

Many people helped me during the writing of this thesis, freely sharing their extensive knowledge of Scottish poetry. I would particularly like to thank Professor Douglas Gifford for his invaluable insights, pertinent comments and constant encouragement. Professor Rod Lyall, the late Professor David Buchan, Mr Ronald Stevenson, Ms Jo Miller, Mrs Isabelle Shaw, Mr Walter Elliot, Mr Walter Barrie and the late Mr James Mitchell all helped in substantial ways. Ms Aileen Riddell, Dr Meg Mumford, Dr Tom McKean and Ms Lise Saugeres all offered comments on the typescript. Acknowledgements are due, too, to the invariably helpful staff at Glasgow University Library, the Mitchell Library, the National Library of Scotland, the Scottish Record Office, Edinburgh University Library, Edinburgh Public Library, Selkirkshire County Archives, Dundee Libraries and the Alyth Museum. I should like to thank the Farquhar Gillanders Trust, Fife Educational Trust and the Richard Stapley Trust for their financial support during the research for this thesis. Most of all, I am grateful to my parents, Mr Alan and Mrs Alice Bold, and to my husband, Mr David Nicol, for their unfailing support throughout the writing of this thesis.

## Introduction

'Poets...of all Mankind, feel most forcibly the powers of BEAUTY as, if they are Poets of Nature's making, their feelings must be finer, and their taste more delicate, than the rest of the World.'

(Robert Burns, letter of 1785 to Mrs Margaret Kennedy, The Letters of Robert Burns, ed G. Ross Roy, (Oxford, 1985), vol 1, 20.)

This thesis considers the Scottish autodidactic tradition in poetry, which reached its peak in the nineteenth century with James Hogg as 'the Ettrick Shepherd'. An 'autodidact' is defined here as a writer whose literary knowledge is obtained primarily by his or her own initiative, rather than through formal education; the term was used in this sense at least from the eighteenth century. Giambattista Vico (1688-1744), the Neapolitan philosopher, describes himself as an autodidascolo (autodidact) in his Autobiography (1725-31). Vico attributes two main qualities to the autodidact: first, the acquisition of learning by the self, in

informal ways; second, the possession of a distinctively independent manner of thought. Edward Said, in Beginnings (1975), eloquently comments on the aptness of Vico's choice of the word autodidact:

in calling himself an autodidact Vico is insisting with philological astuteness on the self teaching itself with the authority--which is its property--of its humanity; and this human property resides completely in an exercise of will, or conation.... What Vico is trying to describe is the mind in its double aspect of active conation (or will) and reflective intellect, the mind both acting and observing itself acting. One can best describe this, I think, as a voluntary mental action simultaneously reflected upon.<sup>1</sup>

Said's interpretation of Vico has equal relevance to the Scottish autodidactic tradition: poets like Hogg and his peers, as is shown below, bear traces of both 'active conation' and 'reflective intellect' in their acquisition and exhibition of learning. In this thesis, 'autodidact', 'self taught poet' and 'peasant poet' are used almost synonymously although the second term is used, in the main, to emphasise the process of becoming an autodidact. 'Peasant poet', the name most commonly applied to autodidacts during the nineteenth century, will be seen to be the most value-laden of the three terms.



Here, I aim to demonstrate the precise ways in which being, and being labelled as, a peasant poet affected working class writers in Scotland. On the one hand, being considered to be a rustic 'genius' gained the autodidact a limited form of critical attention. Peasant poets, for this reason, were often willing collaborators in their typecasting or rôle-playing. However, to achieve critical recognition, the simple peasant poet was expected to perform in certain ways which significantly affected his or her image, choice of poetic genres and chosen styles. Preconceptions about the autodidact's limitations and areas of interest (predominantly in traditional, oral-style poetry) discouraged the composition, or appreciation, of more experimental work by peasant poets.

There are international precedents for Scottish autodidactic poets. In North America, for instance, early autodidacts include Phillis Wheatley (1753?-84), a 'Negro Servant to Mr. John Wheatley, of Boston, in New England'. Wheatley's Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral (1773) was the first volume of poetry in English by an African although a black slave from Granada, Juan Latino, had published three volumes of Latin verse between 1573 and 1576. There is no evidence, however, to suggest that these writers directly influenced the Scottish autodidactic tradition in poetry.<sup>2</sup>

European philosophers, particularly Jean-Jacques Rousseau, played an important part in establishing



expectations of the autodidact in Scotland. By privileging man's natural state over civilization, Rousseau's thought allowed for the peculiar validity of autodidactic experience. Moreover, Rousseau's notion of the natural man as particularly open to feeling made it possible to see the autodidact as predisposed towards the sentimental, with a particular affinity for poetry. Rousseau, through his influence on Henry Mackenzie, James Macpherson and Burns, thereby helped to shape both the Scottish autodidactic tradition in poetry and the (often symbiotic) critical responses it elicited.<sup>3</sup>

David Hume was among the first to suggest a Scottish--specifically Highland--affinity with the primitive and, in the process, to prepare the way for the appreciation of Scottish autodidacts. Hume wrote to Wilkes in 1754, regretting that Wilkes had not visited the Highlands:

You woud [sic] there [in the Highlands] have seen human Nature in the golden Age, or rather, indeed, in the Silver: For the Highlanders have degenerated somewhat from the primitive Simplicity of Mankind.

The Highlands and Islands produced several major autodidacts, including the poet and soldier Donnchadh Bàn Mac an t-Saoir (Duncan Ban Macintyre) (1724-1812) and the poet and tailor of Islay, Uilleam MacDhùn-Léibe (William Livingstone, 1807-70).<sup>4</sup> Their work, however, was not well

known by Lowland Scottish autodidactic poets. For reasons of space, this thesis discusses only the Scottish autodidactic tradition as it was expressed in Scots and English poetry (an appendix explores the parallel work of English autodidact John Clare).

To illustrate the lasting impact of autodidacticism on Scottish literature, I have followed the image of the peasant poet from its eighteenth century beginnings through its development and growth in the nineteenth century, to its last gasps in the twentieth. Part One considers the precedents for Hogg as Ettrick Shepherd: Ramsay's The Gentle Shepherd (1725), the Ossianic noble savage and, in particular, Burns as 'Heaven-taught ploughman'. In this context, it is important to distinguish between those who were genuinely self taught (like Hogg) and those who were not self taught but identified with their literary creations (like Macpherson with his reimagined Ossian).

Major cultural preconceptions informed the notion of the autodidact. As Scotland, from the late eighteenth century onwards, underwent a period of social and linguistic polarisation (creating what Allan Cunningham called a caste of 'rustic gentleman'), the stage was set for a literary 'peasant' underclass to develop. The burgeoning in local publishing houses, from the Ballantynes in Kelso to the Gardiners in Paisley, provided new outlets for subscription publication to untried poets

and, similarly, the growth in newspaper publication after the repeal of the Stamp Act in 1855 made room for a new wave of peasant poetry. Confident in traditional patterns of expressive culture, the autodidact did have a real advantage among the (often highly derivative) literary climate of nineteenth century Scotland.

Part Two is a detailed consideration of the life and work of 'the Ettrick Shepherd'. James Hogg played a crucial role in constructing the notion of the autodidact in Scottish literature. While Burns was, perhaps, the first poet to be perceived specifically as an autodidact, it is impossible to see Burns solely in this context. Burns, as recent criticism has shown, broke codes. His elusive responses to contemporary issues, whether religious, social or political, deny the impulse to make Burns the first fully developed Scottish autodidact. Hogg, in comparison, was far more willing to comply with autodidactic typecasting, as the 'Noctes Ambrosianae' Ettrick Shepherd.

At times it may seem that an over-extensive account and treatment is given to Hogg's poems, particularly the long poems like 'The Pilgrims of the Sun' (1815) and Queen Hynde (1825). I claim this is appropriate in two ways. Firstly, although Hogg has now been recognised as a major Scottish writer of international stature (largely thanks to the work of enthusiasts like Douglas Mack, Douglas Gifford and David Groves) his work, particularly the



poetry, is still not generally known. Hogg's poetry has been cursorily treated, often, as autodidactic wanderings and this is the very phenomenon I am aiming to dispel. Secondly, as I hope to have shown, Hogg's work constantly illuminates how the autodidact should not be transcribed by criticism, as he continually transcends the boundaries of the peasant poet image.

After Hogg, the autodidactic model persisted and developed in significant ways. The decline of vernacular Scots as an acceptable language in polite society, for one, is reflected in the increasingly Anglicised work of autodidactic poets. Until recently, most of the nineteenth century (after the deaths of Scott and Hogg) was seen as Scotland's poetic dark age, lasting through to the twentieth century renaissance. This viewpoint is now being seriously questioned, as previously underrated writers gain the prominence they deserve. Edwin Morgan, William Donaldson and Tom Leonard are among those who have shown that supposedly 'minor' nineteenth century poets might be considered to be of national significance.

Part Three, 'In the Valhalla', explores the 'peasant poet' model as it developed among Hogg's contemporaries and creative descendants. Writers considered, who followed the autodidactic model after Hogg, include contemporary 'uneducated poets', to borrow Robert Southey's term, like Allan Cunningham and Robert Tannahill. 'Educated autodidacts'--those who were



university educated but still treated as peasant poets-- are also discussed: John Leyden and William Tennant receive particular attention. Showing that the autodidactic model affected both genders, with particular side-effects on women writers, women autodidacts or 'Danaus' Daughters' receive special treatment here, from Janet Little to Janet Hamilton, Jessie Russell and Elizabeth Hartley. This section ends by exploring the work of end-of-century autodidacts like David Gray, Alexander Anderson, David Wingate and James Young Geddes. All these writers, from working class backgrounds, whether male or female, university educated or wholly self taught, urban or rural, were significantly affected by autodidactic stereotyping.

Incidentally, a long standing love, yet suspicion, of education can be identified in relation to Scottish literature. Hogg's own The Three Perils of Man (1822) compounds awe for Michael Scott's magic 'book' with fear of its red letters. Geniuses are isolated, in their special school, in A Window in Thrums (1889). University education, held in overestimation by John Gurlay senior, in The House with the Green Shutters (1901), destroys his son. It can soften a man's brains into those of a daftie, as in Sunset Song (1932). Dominies, from Jean Brodie to Mr Alfred M.A (1972), are often seen as severely limited characters, as is the teacher-protagonist in Kelman's A Disaffection (1989). Burns writes of teachers as

alcoholics and sadists, and Hogg condemned the Advocates Library scholars with their tight hold on knowledge. And yet, as will be seen, the peasant poets considered here were all avid readers: self education was all the more valued for being hard won. David Vincent in Bread, Knowledge and Freedom (1981), is perceptive in identifying a 'cultural schizophrenia' as characteristic of working class writers. For Scottish writers this meant divided loyalties, at times, between oral and literary-based cultures.

The autodidact has been largely neglected in the history of Scottish poetry, glossed over as an intriguing phenomenon of little literary worth. It is hoped that this thesis will help to redress the balance, identifying a group of distinguished writers who deserve reevaluation and who represent a much wider body of previously neglected work. It will be shown, in addition, that far from being an insignificant era for poetry in Scotland, the nineteenth century was crucial in the development of a national literary identity. Drawing creative strength from a nationally expressive oral culture, an autodidact like Hogg was well placed to maintain his independence of thought, avoiding the sometimes repellant and debilitating politeness of self-styled 'educated' poets, from Wilson to the Whistlebinkie school. Nineteenth century autodidacts nurtured the creative vigour which manifested itself in Scottish poetry in the twentieth century. The present

work attempts to draw attention to a group of Scottish writers marked out superficially by their economic and social origins but distinguished, above all, by their diversity of poetic voices.



## Notes

1. Giambattista Vico was the son of a semi-literate bookseller and attended a Jesuit school. Although he was educated in the law school of the University of Naples, he acquired the bulk of his knowledge independently, using the library of the Rocca family from Vatolla near Salerno (in this respect Vico's experience parallels that of the 'Educated Autodidacts' considered here in Chapter Ten). Vico was Professor of Rhetoric at Naples University (1699-1741) and Royal Historiographer to Don Carlos of Bourbon (Charles III of Spain) from 1735. See Edward Said, Beginnings. Intention and Methods, 1975, (London, 1997), especially pp.358-59.
2. On Phillis Wheatley and Juan Latino, see Donna Landry, The Muses of Resistance, (Cambridge, 1990), Chapter 6.
3. On Rousseau's influence on Scottish writers, see Kenneth Simpson, The Protean Scot. The Crisis of Identity in Eighteenth Century Scottish Literature, (Aberdeen, 1988), especially pp.145-46 regarding Henry Mackenzie.
4. Letter of David Hume to John Wilkes, 8 October 1754, quoted Simpson, p.10. Born in Kilcarrow, MacDhun-Léibe taught himself Latin, Greek, Hebrew, French and Welsh, and wrote nationalistic poetry, celebrating the heroism of the Gaels in a way which shows his debt to Ossianic verse. See the entries on Bàn Mac an t-Saoir and MacDhun-Léibhe in Derick S. Thomson, ed, The Companion to Gaelic Scotland, (Glasgow, 1994).



Part One: Inmates of the Hamlet

' "Poor as a Poet," is one of those true and trite remarks which have become proverbial; and that Burns both lived and died poor, only proves how completely he was a true son of Parnassus. There would seem to be some natural affinity between poverty and poetry, the cause of which, other than I have suggested, I do not know; and so must leave it to philosophers, and men of that stamp, to determine.'

(Henry Shanks, The Peasant Poets of Scotland. And Musings Under the Beeches, (Bathgate, 1881), p.19.)

## Chapter One: The Autodidact

'The master workman, who is also a poet, singing as he labors, lord not only of his hands but of the lyre as well--this figure has about him a perennial fascination.... The poet is born, not made by the schools; the darling of the Muse may be the rude son of toil. Accidents of course may keep him silent, for birth and fortune affect the minstrel as truly as the warrior, and many a cotter's boy must have squandered his genius while ploughing his father's acres; many a Highland Girl must have poured out her voice to the unresponsive hills.... But must it always be so? Might not some one fetch us up the pearl which the dark unfathomed caves of ocean bear?'

(Chauncey Brewster Tinker, Nature's Simple Plan,  
(Princeton and London, 1922), pp.90-91.)

From the eighteenth century onwards a distinct group of 'peasant poets' was perceived, dwelling within Scotland. Peasant poets were viewed as a curiosity because they had come from a humble background with no, or minimal, formal education. It was supposed that divine 'genius' informed their work. Autodidactic writers hoped to attract aristocratic patrons or, in the nineteenth century, a full subscription list. Critics portrayed a sustained tradition of peasant poetry, beginning with Allan Ramsay and James 'Ossian' Macpherson, peaking in Robert Burns, and permeating through later generations via James Hogg. A 'cottage industry' developed, with 'weaver poets' in Galloway, 'shepherd poets' in the Borders, and 'artisan poets' in industrial areas.

Peasant poets helped to define their own mythology. Increasingly they emphasised their heavy labour and bleakness of life. Real biographical elements were reconstructed into conventional problems. From Hogg's 'Memoir' to Janet Hamilton on 'Self-Education' to John Younger's Autobiography (1881) a standard tale was told: early deprivation, minimal formal education, juvenile struggles and eventual triumphing over the creative odds. Financial failure was inevitable because of devotion to the Muses. According to the myth, the peasant poet exhibited an early attraction towards the opposite sex. Whereas the odd peccadillo, after Burns, was tolerated from the men, basically peasant poets were expected to be

family stalwarts in the tradition of 'The Cotter's Saturday Night'. Along with an emphasis on domesticity, stress was given to periods of ill health. It was a tragic paradox that frequent cases of early death (as with John Leyden and David Gray) ensured a certain amount of critical attention. This fostered the 'lad o' pairts' myth, thereafter popularised in late nineteenth century popular fiction by Ian MacLaren (John Watson), James Barrie and S.R. Crockett. There is substantial truth in repeated accounts stressing that 'peasant poets' had obstacles to face. However their literary lives share essential features with kailyard 'parables', as Gillian Shepherd defines them, of 'domesticity, rusticity, humour, humility, modesty, decency, piety, and poverty'.<sup>1</sup>

Such imaginative biographical reworkings were directly related to critical attitudes towards autodidacts. In the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, education was viewed in a rigidly hierarchical way. David Masson, in his 1854 lecture 'College-Education and Self-Education', expresses this viewpoint fully:

Society often distinguishes between self-educated men and men who are college-bred--that is, who have not only been taught to read and write in plain schools, but have had the benefit, for a certain period of their more advanced youth, of that higher pedagogic apparatus, which directs and systematizes



reading, and, to some extent, supersedes its use, by imparting its results in an oral form.<sup>2</sup>

This tortuous reasoning is followed by an idiosyncratic portrait of Shakespeare as a grammar school boy and autodidact.

Five Schools of Education are distinguished by Masson. There is the 'School of the Family' where, amongst 'the humblest lineage of the land' (recalling the 'Cottar's Saturday Night'), children are raised on fireside tales. Next is the School of 'Native Local Circumstance', balanced against the 'School of Travel' which counteracts 'prejudice'. Fourth is the 'School of Books' where, 'that great step in Education takes place--the translation of the concrete into the abstract'. The final 'School of Friendship' (with equals, inferiors and superiors), 'takes a man out of his own personality, and doubles, triples, or quintuples his natural powers of insight, by compelling him to look at nature and life through the eyes of others, each of whom is, for the time being, another self'. Paradoxically, 'Common sense' Hutchesonian philosophy had profound effects on peasant poet ideology.<sup>3</sup>

Responses to autodidacticism were, moreover, determined by deep-rooted prejudices. Contrary to the Common sense notion that standards of taste are accessible



self-taught were viewed as ipso facto inferior. In Masson's opinion:

self-educated men--of course, I except the higher and more illustrious instances--do not, as a body, exhibit the same tenacity and perseverance in pushing knowledge to its farthest limits as academic men of equal power. Their disposition, in most instances, is to be content with what I will call proximate knowledge.... if, occasionally, we do see a self-taught geologist, or a self-taught botanist, or a self-taught mathematician--then, not unfrequently, there is an egotistic exultation over the labour gone through, and an exaggerated estimation of the particular science overtaken in its relations to the whole field of knowledge.<sup>4</sup>

Half-baked learning and egotism were often associated with the self taught. Autodidacticism was inextricably linked with social status and peasant poets were praised primarily on account of their unexpected transition from ignorance to relative learning. In 1926 Robert Graves took an even more extreme position: 'The working classes do not read poems: they read little except the Sunday newspapers'. They could not, therefore, be expected to create. All that could be hoped for intellectually was a charming expression of moral (and political) conservatism, not truly great works.<sup>5</sup>

Henry Shanks, 'The Blind Poet of the Deans' (that is, the blind poet of the valleys), praised autodidactic poets in The Peasant Poets of Scotland (1881), arguing that:

the truest test of the moral force and mental activity of a people is the number of peasant and artisan poets which it has produced. I say peasant and artisan in preference to great poets, because the latter will generally be found to be drawn from the upper and educated classes, and consequently do not afford so complete a proof of the permeations of poetic thought and feeling among the great body of the people--just as a sample drawn from, or near, the bottom of a tank, would more correctly represent the quality of the water contained in it than one drawn from the top only.<sup>6</sup>

Shanks (who considered himself to be a genuine peasant poet) stratified ranks of autodidacts. At the top was an exclusive group, headed by Burns and Hogg: 'two Peasant Poets, the greatest that the world has yet seen, respectively representing the two principal divisions of rural labour...the agricultural and pastoral'. They proved the Scottish peasantry's morality and--atypically for a critic of peasant poetry--intellect. The canon included Adam Skirving, the Haddingtonshire farmer who wrote 'Johnnie Cope', William Dudgeon, the Berwickshire farmer who wrote 'The Maid that tends the Goats', and Blind Hary. Shanks, incidentally, considered himself to

be a genuine peasant poet. Allan Ramsay as a wigmaker, Tannahill and Thom as weavers, and Allan Cunningham as a stonemason were merely 'Poets of the Poor'.<sup>7</sup>

Nevertheless, Allan Ramsay (1684-1758) was considered to be the first true popular poet of Scotland. In this context, Ramsay was presented as a poet raised in straitened circumstances following the death of his father and his mother's remarriage to a small landowner. Ramsay's early career as a wig-maker seemed to qualify him well as an autodidact. His work and life were hugely significant in forming a peasant poet stereotype.

Important aspects of Ramsay's creativity were long neglected due to his being considered as an autodidact, particularly his experimentation in diverse rôles. There is the couthy Edinburgh citizen of 'Lucky Wood' and the savage persona of 'Lucky Spence', the reprobate dying Bawd. In 'Wealth, or the Woody: A Poem on the South-Sea. Wrote June 1720' Ramsay poses as an acute Scottish merchant and, perhaps, as the first truly British poet. Then again he is the patriot poet of 'The Vision', following Blind Hary in native models which would inspire Fergusson and Burns. It is useful to consider Hugh MacDiarmid's notion, in writing about Fergusson, of 'Grosstadpoesie': the strong, urban poetry also associated with Smith and Davidson. 'The astonishing power of direct statement' which MacDiarmid perceived in Fergusson could also be applied to Ramsay. His autobiographical



description, in 'An Epistle to Mr James Arbuckle of Belfast, A.M' (1719) is revealing, presenting a self-professed comic poet in Augustan couplets:

Imprimis then, for Tallness I  
Am five Foot and four Inches high:  
A Black-a-vic'd snod dapper Fallow,  
Nor lean, nor overlaid wi' Tallow.  
With Phiz of a Morocco Cut,  
Resembling a late Man of Wit,  
Auld-gabbet Spec, wha was sae Cunning  
To be a Dummie ten Years running....  
Proud to be thought a comick Poet,  
And let a Judge of Numbers know it,  
I court Occasion thus to show it. (11.69-93)<sup>8</sup>

However Ramsay's strongest role in the peasant poet context was not that of the Scottish Augustan, but as the natural and rural songster in The Gentle Shepherd. It helped establish an image of pastoral Scotland which fed directly into shaping perceptions of rural song and songsters. Three manuscript versions of The Gentle Shepherd date from 1724, reworking the pastorals 'Patie and Roger' (1720) and 'Jenny and Meggy' (1723). The whole was performed in 1729 at Haddington Grammar School although, it has been suggested, it had been performed there earlier.<sup>9</sup> Ramsay's prologue and, in the printed version, a dedicatory poem, 'To the Countess of Eglintoun'

by William Hamilton of Gilbertfield (1665-1751), sets up a framework of Scottish pastoral:

In ancient Garb the home-bred Muse appears,  
The Garb our Muses wore in former Years;  
As in a Glass reflected, here behold  
How smiling Goodness look'd in Days of old.  
Nor blush to read where Beauty's Praise is  
shown,  
Or vertuous Love, the Likeness of thy own....  
Let this, O EGLINTOUN! delight thee most,  
T'enjoy the Innocence the World has lost.  
(11.135-44)

The plot is relatively uncomplex: Patie and Roger, rural swains, love, respectively, Peggy and Jenny and overcome minor wooing problems. Sir William Worthy, the laird, exiled for supporting Montrose, returns at the Restoration, incognito, and it transpires Patie is Worthy's son. As the Gentle Shepherd, it seems, loves a woman of lesser rank, his affair now seems doomed. However, it is revealed that Peggy, who was nursed by Mause (previously considered to be the local witch), is actually Worthy's niece. The lovers are united and all ends happily with, as Worthy observes, 'Each in his Station, as I'd wish or crave' and a lyric from Peggy.

Patie is a prototype of the national, peasant poet:  
skilled in the arts of love; a neo-classical singing  
shepherd, using adulterated Scots. In all but the

earliest versions (of which more later) Patie opens the play proper with Sang I, to 'The wauking o' the fauld'; a Scots-English lyric: 'My Peggy is a young thing, / Just enter'd in her teens' and he 'nae very auld'. Patie is satisfied with his lot, unlike the richer Roger:

Pat. Sax good fat Lambs I sald them ilka Clute  
At the West-port, and bought a winsome Flute,  
Of Plum-tree made, with Iv'ry Virles round,  
A dainty Whistle with a pleasant Sound;  
I'll be mair canty wi't, and ne'er cry Dool,  
Than you with all your Cash, ye dowie Fool.

(I i 11.55-60)

Peggy, as a gentle Shepherdess, is a typically Scottish beauty in 'kiltit' Coats with 'straight bare legs', 'ruddy' cheeks and 'clear' eyes. Patie is a successful and thoughtful lover, offering advice, from his own experience, to his fellows:

Dear Roger, when your Jo puts on her Gloom,  
Do ye sae too, and never fash your Thumb.  
Seem to forsake her, soon she'll change her  
Mood;  
Gae woo anither, and she'll gang clean wood.

(I i 11.102-42)

It transpires that Patie has a great deal of book learning, an aspect which would contribute to the notion



of the educated rustic (Hogg later embroidered the theme with the notion of the shepherd peasant Poet of the Psalms, King David). As a fictional autodidact, intriguingly, Patie's learning attracts some local suspicion (this will be noticed in the case of real autodidacts, below). In Act III Scene IV, for instance, the incognito Sir William Worthy is told about his son's self-education:

Sym. Whene'er he drives our Sheep to Edinburgh  
 Port,  
 He buys some Books of History, Sangs or Sport:  
 Nor does he want of them a Rowth at will,  
 And carries ay a Poutchfu' to the Hill.  
 About ane Shakspear, and a famous Ben,  
 He aften speaks, and ca's them best of Men.  
 How sweetly Hawthrenden and Stirling sing,  
 And ane ca'd Cowley, loyal to his King,  
 He kens fu' well, and gars their Verses ring.  
 I sometimes thought he made o'er great a Frase,  
 About fine Poems, Histories and Plays.  
 When I reprov'd him anes,--a Book he brings,  
 With this, quoth he, on Braes I crack with  
 Kings.

S. Will. He answer'd well; and much ye glad my  
 Ear,  
 When such Accounts I of my Shepherd hear.  
 Reading such Books can raise a Peasant's Mind  
 Above a Lord's that is not thus inclin'd.

(III iv 11.69-85)

By Act IV, furthermore, Patie has started to speak near-standard English, a process of gentrification which is paralleled by Peggy's behaviour. Yet even when he is aware of his noble birth, Patie's democratic philosophical statements show him seeing virtues in poverty:

What was my morning thought, at night's the  
same.

The poor and rich but differ in the name.  
Content's the greatest bliss we can procure  
Frae 'boon the life: without it, kings are poor.  
(IV ii ll.67-70)

Ramsay offers no simplistic rustic idyll. Patie is well aware rank must wed with rank, even while rejecting 'Reason, Rules and Laws' for love. Similarly Peggy, in Act I, Scene II, shows she is worldly wise. Tongue-in-cheek, she advocates love on the grounds that an 'auld' maiden is treated with contempt, like a 'dawted wean, that tarrows at its meat', laughed at or left to 'scart anither's leavings'. There is ambivalence towards rustic customs and beliefs too, such as the witchcraft attributed to Mause. Worthy mocks the gullible rustics by disguising himself as a spae-man in the second scene of Act III, predicting his own return and his son's elevation. In Act V Worthy attacks Bauldy's opinion that Mause had raised a ghost to torment him: 'What silly Notions crowd the clouded Mind, / That is thro' want of Education blind' (V

i 11.56-57). It is imperative, therefore, that Patie, now Patrick, should abandon this muddled environment:

I must in haste my Patrick soon remove,  
 To Courts and Camps that may his Soul improve.  
 Like the rough Diamond, as it leaves the Mine,  
     Only in little Breakings shew its Light,  
 Till artfu' Polishing has made it shine:  
 Thus Education makes the Genius bright.

(III iv 11.122-28)

The image of Patie as unpolished rural songster proved enduring. It drew on Enlightenment associations of certain types of poetry with primitive societies: verses in Scots were particularly liable to this charge. With reference to The Gentle Shepherd, Adam Smith is reported as saying, 'It is the duty of a poet to write like a gentleman. I dislike that homely style which some think fit to call the language of nature and simplicity and so forth'. While Hugh Blair, Professor of Rhetoric and Belles Lettres at Edinburgh University, expressed his admiration of The Gentle Shepherd, he deplored its language:

It is written in the old rustic dialect of Scotland, which, in a short time, will probably be entirely obsolete, and not intelligible; and it is a further disadvantage, that it is so entirely formed on the rural manners of



Scotland, that none but a native of that country can thoroughly understand, or relish it.<sup>10</sup>

The anonymous pamphlet Allan Ramsay Metamorphosed to a Hather-Bloter Poet went even further, mocking the poet, in a supposed pastoral dialogue between Aegon and Melibiae, for his 'vulgar' leanings: 'His Birth not only, but his home bred Rhyme, / Wholly depending on a borrowed Theam,' (11.77-78).<sup>11</sup>

Dismissals of the Scots language are essential in comprehending attitudes to peasant poets. Despite Ramsay's defence of Scots in Poems (1721), and his rehabilitation of the language for polite tastes in The Evergreen (1724) and The Tea-Table Miscellany (1724-37), Scots was long associated with an inferior, vernacular culture. Ramsay expressed his contempt for such grudging responses in 'To the Critick', assertively choosing Scots as the medium for doing so:

I want a Reader wha deals fair,  
And not ae real Fault will spare;  
Yet with good Humour will allow  
Me praise, when e'er 'tis justly due;  
Blest be sic Readers,--but the rest  
That are with Spleen and Spite opprest;  
May Bards arise to gar them dwine,  
To Death with Lays the maist divine,  
For sma's the Skaith they'll get by mine.

(11.17-25).<sup>12</sup>

Paradoxically, Ramsay actively contributed to the enduring notion of Patie as rural songster. The Gentle Shepherd, between editions, became increasingly genteel. Encouraged to add songs in 1728, Ramsay expanded the piece into a ballad opera with new songs, especially, in the first and third acts. The 5th edition of the Tea Table Miscellany (1729) included a range of songs for insertion, which are printed in situ in the play in the London edition of Poems by Allan Ramsay in 2 volumes (1731), along with 'General Rules' and a Glossary to the play. Ramsay is playing to the gallery here. Twenty one songs now appear in toto, and the insertion points are intriguing. Some songs lend a sentimental effect. During her dialogue with Peggy, cited above, Jenny originally concedes that she should love Roger. Acknowledging Peggy's expertise in love, Jenny states:

I've done,--dear Lassie, I maun yield,  
 Your better sense has fairly won the Field,  
 With the Assistance of a little Fae  
 Lyes darn'd within my Breast this mony a Day.

(I ii 11.202-05)

In the new version Sang VI is added here, set to 'Nancy's to the Greenwood Gone'. In its complete form it runs thus:

I yield, dear lassie, ye hae won;  
 And there is nae denying,  
 That sure as light flows frae the sun,  
 Frae love proceeds complying.  
 For a' that we can do or say,  
 'Gainst love, nae thinker heeds us,  
 They ken our bosoms lodge the fae  
 That by the heart-strings leads us.

Other additions emphasise statements within the body of the text, particularly with respect to its autodidactic message. For instance there is a concise song following Worthy's statement about improving his son from a 'rough diamond' in the fourth scene of Act III. The new Sang XV, set to 'Wat ye wha I met yestreen', expands the theme of refinement:

Now from rusticity and love,  
 Whose flames but over lowly burn,  
 My gentle shepherd must be drove--  
 His soul must take another turn:  
 As the rough diamond from the mine,  
 In breakings only shows the light,  
 Till polishing has made it shine;--  
 Thus learning makes the genius bright.

(11.1-7)

This song is not in the 1734, 1745 or 1777 editions, although it appears in 1752 and 1763.

Some songs may be intended as satirical, written from



the viewpoint of the supposed social underclasses. The inclusion of a traditional song in the first scene of Act IV 'Jockey said to Jenny', in which a woman is seemingly persuaded to marriage by the thought of gear, gains humour from its context. An unwanted wooer, Bauldy, sings this. More threateningly, there is Symon's brief Sang VIII in the first scene of Act II, to 'Mucking o' Geordie's Byre':

The laird wha in riches and honour  
           Wad thrive, should be kindly and free,  
 Nor rack his poor tenants wha labour  
           To rise aboon poverty:  
 Else, like the pack-horse that's unfother'd  
           And burden'd, will tumble down faint;  
 Thus virtue by hardship is smother'd,  
           And rackers aft tine their rent. (11.1-8)

Most additions, however, are pretty trimmings such as the new dialogue, Sang X, between the 'dear laddie' Patie and his 'dear Peggy' in the fourth scene of Act II.

Subsequent editions involved minor changes, in line with polite tastes. The 6th edition, with the songs, for instance, was printed by Ruddimans for the author in 1734. It alters the dedicatory poem slightly. References to patrons, Stair and Erskine, become less specific as 'The Statesman's Wisdom' and 'Fair-one's charms' are acknowledged. This edition cuts out a section in Act I Scene II, presumably thought crude, where Peggy professes

her desire to 'with Pleasure mount my Bridal-bed' (1.74). Another suggestive element is the black letter script given to Sir William's supposedly dignified prophecy in Act III, only present in this edition. Perhaps it is intended to look ironically archaic; or maybe the device is intended to reinforce Sir William's quaint Englishness. This edition has no glossary, no doubt as it was intended for an Edinburgh audience.

Other notable editions include the 8th, of 1745, published in Glasgow by Robert Foulis, which retains the changes which the 6th made to the dedicatory poem, and the songs, and the cut of the morally dubious section, although there is no glossary. Its format is followed in the 9th edition (1747) from the same publisher, with a glossary. The London edition of 1752, from A. Millar, lacks the dedicatory poem, but the songs and glossary are there. John Robertson's 1758 Glasgow edition is 'Adorned with Cuts, The Overtures to the Songs, and a Complete Glossary' as well as an introductory quotation from Virgil:

Tale tuum carmen nobis, divine poetea,  
Quale sopor fessis in gramine, quale per aestum  
Dulcis aquae saliente fitim restinguere rivo.

The line referring to 'thy poet humbly' was restored, as was 'In Stair's wisdom, or in Erskine's charm' and the

poem 'Patie and Rodger'. There is a Glossary, and melodramatic illustrations.

After Ramsay's death in 1758 the play continued to be widely performed and published, in forms which emphasised its autodidactic associations. The 1763 edition from A. Millar adds a verse on the frontispiece, making specific the Spenser allusion in the title:

The Gentle Shepherd sate beside a Spring,  
All in the Shadow of a bushy Brier,  
That Colin hight, which well cou'd pipe and  
sing,  
For he of TITYRUS his Songs did lere.

The songs are included, as is the dedication without the Hamilton verse, while Peggy's apparently bawdy speech is excised.

The logical end of this rustication, in paradoxically gentrified form, of The Gentle Shepherd was the publication of English 'translations'. There is the London edition of Allan Ramsay, The Gentle Shepherd, A Dramatic Poem. In Five Acts. Done into English by Cornelius Vanderstop (1777). This boasts of using Spenserian quatrains to enhance the poem: 'Long has the Gentle Shepherd won our Praise'. No songs are included. W. Ward's A Translation of the Scots Pastoral Comedy, The Gentle Shepherd, in English, from Allan Ramsay's Drama (1785) includes the dedication and preface. Ward reveals



himself as a 'native of England', resident in the Lowlands and fond of the theatre. Despite his familiarity with local 'dialect', even he came across 'passages as I could by no means comprehend'. His disappointment is clear from these comments on the performance:

The piece was represented at the Theatre Royal, where I flew with impatience, that I might find out more of its beauties there, but how much was I disappointed--worse and worse!--If I was lost in the maze of Scotch expression, I was totally lost in the representation. The actors, who were all or most of them English, did not understand the language so well as myself, spoke a kind of jargon that they did not understand themselves, far less make it intelligible to any one else, though in the language of their own country most excellent performers. It happened soon after this the pastoral was announced for performance again, by some young people of the city; I flew with equal anxiety to see their performance; if one was bad, the other worse; no doubt they spoke the language in its ancient purity, but the want of a proper knowledge of the stage, and the regularity that is to be observed, to make a piece pleasing to the eye, as well as the ear, was totally lost: the want of emphasis, pauses, and points, passed over unobserved, so that neither the one or the other gave me the least satisfaction.<sup>13</sup>

Ward's translation is bland in contrast with Ramsay's Scots. From Patie's first speech, following Song I, the loss of resonance is apparent:

This beauteous morning, Roger, cheers my blood,  
 All nature smiling in a jovial mood....  
 What ails thee, Roger, why do you thus grieve?  
 Tell me the cause, and I'll your pains relieve.  
 (I i 11.1-2, 7-8)

Margaret Turner's The Gentle Shepherd, A Scottish Pastoral [sic] (London, 1790) is unusual in offering a simultaneous translation, as well as notes. Her work is dedicated to the Prince of Wales and she blushes at her 'temerity' in translation, quoting Blair's deprecating thoughts on rustic dialect. At least the songs are largely untampered with; Turner highlights, rather than intrudes, Anglified aspects of the piece. Her opening song in the first verse has only two changes: 'auld' becomes 'old' and wawking becomes 'watching'.<sup>14</sup>

Visually, as well as lyrically, The Gentle Shepherd provided a lasting image for later poets, and a model for their self presentation. The frontispiece to the 1734 edition lends a neo-classical flavour to the whole. There is a horse, perhaps Pegasus, and a female figure, perhaps Ramsay's favourite Thalia, the Muse of comedy and of bucolic poetry (mentioned in 'Wealth, or the Woody' and 'The Prospect of Plenty'). In David Wilkie's painting,

stereotypically Scottish elements are more prominent. A rosy cheeked 'Gentle Shepherd' sits with stock and horn, pewter jug and walking sticks, watched by two ladies and his collie. Alexander Cunningham's engraving, after David Allen's illustrations, made a lasting impression on Burns:

do you know Allen?--He must be a man of very great genius.--Why is he not more known? Has he no Patrons; or do "Poverty's cold wind & crushing rain beat keen & heavy" on him?.... What, my dear Cunningham, is there in riches, that they narrow & encallous the heart so?

Burns considered 'M<sup>r</sup> Allen & M<sup>r</sup> Burns to be the only genuine & real Painters of Scottish costume'.<sup>15</sup>

More important to the formation of the peasant poet myth is Ramsay's adeptness at remaking himself to demand. See for instance, his posturing in personae for the 'Epistles to William Somerville' (with whom he shared a patron, James Lord Somerville). The first Epistle is familiar and relaxed; the second, responding to Somerville's praise of 'jocund Songs, and rural Strains' is in Scots-English, and the Augustan style. This relaxed and almost mocking exploitation of the authorial persona, superficially disarming and naive but in reality as sophisticated as the Augustan usages of Fielding and Smollett, demonstrates the necessity of rethinking the notion of the natural songster. This is reminiscent of



the similar, apparently disingenuous case of Burns' 'Epistles'. Thus the supposedly untutored poet exploits both autodidactic models and the more sophisticated tradition of the Augustans, simultaneously. Moreover, The Gentle Shepherd seems to have been read as semi-autobiographical and the writer did not wholly discourage this interpretation.

In the creation of a poetic myth Ramsay's erudition was, conveniently, forgotten. His lowly origins in Leadhills were frequently stressed. In The Lives of the Scottish Poets (1804), David Irving offered a double-edged compliment: 'of all the aspiring characters who among our countrymen have emerged from the lowest stations in life, few will be found to have attracted a larger portion of attention than the author of the Gentle Shepherd'. He continues: 'in a writer of his defective education much will be pardoned by the humane reader'. Ramsay's determination to transcend his origins attracted special attention:

The genius of Ramsay was original; and the powers of his untutored mind were the gift of nature freely exercising itself within the sphere of its own observation. Born in a wild country, and accustomed to the society of its rustic inhabitants, the poet's talents found their first exercise in observing the varied aspects of mountains, rivers, and valleys;... it is natural to imagine that the education, which

he certainly received, opened to him such sources of instruction as English literature could furnish.... A consciousness of his own talents induced Ramsay to aspire beyond the situation of a mere mechanic.... As a bookseller, he had access to a more respectable class of society. We may discern, in the general tenor of his compositions, a respectful demeanor towards the great and the rich, which, though it never descends to adulation or servility, and generally seeks for an apology in some better endowments than mere birth or fortune, is yet a sensible mark that these circumstances had a strong influence on his mind.<sup>16</sup>

Ramsay's parish school education was minimised, and he was remade into a genteel peasant poet, stressing his self-confessed descent from the Earls of Dalhousie. William Tennant portrayed Ramsay (perhaps ironically) as an Ossianic ingenu; his chosen profession as near noble:

surrounded by wild and mountainous scenery, and amid an artless and secluded people, whose manners and language were of pastoral simplicity, his childhood received those pastoral and Arcadian impressions, which were too lively to be effaced by future habits.... his step-father, little consulting the inclination of young Allan...bound this nursling of the Muses apprentice to a wig-maker. Lowly as this profession is, it has been vindicated by one of Ramsay's biographers into comparative

dignity, by separating it from the kindred business of barber, with which it is vulgarly, and too frequently, confounded.... his calling of "scull-thacker," as he himself ludicrously terms it, was too dignified to be let down into an equality with the men of the razor.

Thus from the beginning his business was with the heads of men.

Robert Chambers stated, in Lives of Illustrious and Distinguished Scotsmen (1835), that Ramsay's ancestors were 'even dignified'. In Traditions of Edinburgh (1824), Chambers called The Gentle Shepherd: 'the best pastoral poem in the range of British literature--if even that be not too narrow a word'.<sup>17</sup>

According to an 1851 'Life of the Author', prefacing The Gentle Shepherd:

The author of the following Pastoral proves the truth of the adage, "poeta nascitur non fit," for, though well born, he was reared under rather destitute circumstances, and, at an early age, forced to maintain himself by a humble profession. Still, the poetic fire which lay slumbering in his breast could not be extinguished; and he, like some of Scotland's other bards, gave forth, in his own peculiar dialect, those graphic pictures of Scottish scenery and manners, as they existed in the beginning of the eighteenth century, which still cheer and solace the heart of the peasant and



the artisan, and have become equally acceptable to those of higher rank and superior taste.

David Masson drew attention to the poet's 'humble parentage', and the fact that a wig-maker 'was no mean tradesman in those old times'. Ramsay, then, was imagined, like his Gentle Shepherd, as a pastoral aristocrat manqué.<sup>18</sup>

The typecasting continued. Shanks considered Ramsay, in a similar way, to be the first national 'Poet of the Poor'. George Douglas, as late as 1911, commented on how Ramsay's childhood on his stepfather's farm, 'was to prove of the utmost service to him, by furnishing him with that close knowledge of sheep-farming life which he afterwards turned to such good account in his pastoral play The Gentle Shepherd': descent from 'the powerful family of Ramsay of Dalhousie', Douglas continues, probably helped Ramsay's rise. Moreover, 'it is mainly by The Gentle Shepherd that Ramsay is now remembered...a happy vein quite distinct from his two faulty methods of careless improvisation and servile copying of a not-well chosen model. Within its limits, The Gentle Shepherd is a work of art--if not very high art'.<sup>19</sup>

Traces of this deprecating judgement are present in the comments of Kinghorn and Law, in their 1974 selected Poems of Ramsay and Fergusson:

the best Ramsay is the comic Ramsay of the elegies, epistles, tales and old-style songs.... Ramsay plainly enjoys the sound of his voice and these poems seem part of an older oral tradition.... This becomes very clear when his flowing, careless, sometimes slap-dash style is considered alongside that of Fergusson, careful, controlled, planned, the work of a 'makar' comparable with Robert Henryson and William Dunbar.

In comparison, Ramsay's enthusiasm for language was untutored, a fundamental difference well illustrated by setting any of his Horace versions against Fergusson's single example of the same. The younger poet had an academic training in Latin, whereas Ramsay had to depend on translations and advice; had he comprehended the subtleties of his model more fully his confidence might have evaporated. Yet in these imitations and in 'The Gentle Shepherd' he preceded Thomson and the two Wartons in giving a clear impulse to eighteenth-century nature poetry.... he has a place in the early history of the romantic revival.

Even David Daiches tended to oversimplify, in The Paradox of Scottish Culture (1964), in stating 'Ramsay was a facile topical versifier with his eye on Pope and Gay and Matthew Prior', and 'a mixed and confused character'. Such statements cast a long shadow over the poet of The Gentle Shepherd, slowing down the process which is now, finally, showing Ramsay was more than merely a parochial,

self taught poet.<sup>20</sup>

In considering the formation of preconceptions about autodidacts, account should be taken of the Englishing of Scottish poetry, as described by Robert Crawford in Devolving English Literature (1992). This had marked and specific effects on the writings of autodidacts; critical expectations worked to direct the self-taught, for instance, towards treatments of the pathetic. Works like Robert Lowth's Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews (1753) portrayed 'primitive' poetry as emotionally vigorous: by extension, so was the peasant poet's. Other styles were seen as inappropriate. Nearly seventy years later The Scots Magazine remarked:

Tragic and impassioned sentiments are nearly the same in all ranks, and often the more powerful, in proportion as they are more simply expressed. But humour is a more factitious quality; it requires a certain polish and refinement which unlettered bards can scarcely have had an opportunity of acquiring.<sup>21</sup>

H. Gustav Klaus points out that early English peasant writers 'respected the given pre-eminence of the epic and dramatic forms'. In Scotland the success of pieces like The Epigoniad (1757) of William Wilkie (1721-72) ('The Scottish Homer') exerted similar pressures. Establishment aesthetics emphasised the neo-classical over the



indigenous. Frances Hutcheson's An Enquiry into the Original of Our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue (1725), Adam Smith's Theory of Moral Sentiments (1759) and Henry Home, Lord Kames' Elements of Criticism (1762) all helped to establish what they argued were absolute standards of taste but were, in fact, elitist codes (and, despite their apparently inclusive morality, condemned Scots as a language). Scots was often seen as debased. Thomas Sheridan, in A Course of Lectures in Elocution (1762), focuses on London court speech: 'All other dialects, are sure marks, either of a provincial, rustic, pedantic, or mechanic education: and therefore have some degree of disgrace annexed to them'. In respect of its attitudes to local language and dialects, Enlightenment ideologies had almost entirely negative attitudes towards autodidacts, and not just in Scotland. The English Chartist Thomas Cooper claimed that contact with Hugh Blair destroyed his poetic impulses:

Blair's "Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres" was another book that I analysed very closely and laboriously, being determined on acquiring a thorough judgement of style and literary excellence. All this practice seemed to destroy the desire of composing poetry of my own.

Cooper's experience encapsulates that of the peasant poet in Scotland, considered by the Literati only on their own terms. The late eighteenth century notion of a golden age of 'untutored genius'--'Nature's Simple Plan'--further completed the process of sanitising peasant tradition. Blair, moreover, directly affected the development of autodidactic theory through his support of James Macpherson's recreation of the Gaelic bard Ossian and, later, his promotion of Burns as an autodidact.<sup>22</sup>

The Ossianic cult typifies the process of making autodidactic models acceptable in polite circles. According to Gaelic tradition--The Book of the Dean of Lismore for instance--Ossian was a 7th century Bard; an elderly broken man, mourning the great days of the warrior Fianna, Scotland's lost guardians. Like the classical blind bards Thamyris and Tiresias, he had prophetic powers. For Macpherson, as for Blair, the Celts formed an ideal society where bards were agents of cultural integration. Macpherson's language--elegant English with the exotic twist of Gaelic translation--satisfied demands for a pure, wild expression of national identity and Ossian, in this respect, proved a potent model for peasant poets. Macpherson, as impoverished nobility, seemed well suited to act as Ossian's translator. Born at Invertromie on Spey, Macpherson was related through both his father and mother to Macpherson of Cluny (dispossessed after Culloden, Cluny spent nine years in hiding; his escapades

feature in Kidnapped (1866)).

Fiona Stafford's The Sublime Savage (1988) makes a convincing case for Macpherson's psychological identification with Ossian and the national losses he commemorates. Educated at Aberdeen University, Macpherson became familiar with the work of Thomas Reid and James Beattie. The 'noble savage' Ossian, whose character was influenced by Hutcheson's notion that a person is born good, is a prelapsarian hero. Concepts relating to the vitality of early societies, as expressed in William Duncan's translation of Caesar's Commentaries (1753) and Blackwell's Enquiry into the Life and Writings of Homer (1735), led Macpherson further towards seeking a social and poetic prototype.

The retrospective Fragments of Ancient Poetry (1760), was produced with the support of the Edinburgh literati, particularly Blair. Situated within nature, almost as a natural feature, the inspired bard Ossian was an attractive prototype autodidact:

By the side of a rock on the hill, beneath the  
aged trees, old Oscian [sic] sat on the moss,  
the last of the race of Fingal. Sightless are  
his aged eyes; his beard is waving in the wind.  
Dull through the leafless trees he heard the  
voice of the earth. Sorrow revived in his soul:  
he began and lamented the dead. (Fragments,  
VIII)



Scotland's supposedly rediscovered epic, Fingal (1761) develops the semi-classical, melancholic bard of the Fragments into the member of a bardic community; 'Many a voice and many a harp in tuneful notes arose' (Fingal III). The reprinted Fingal of 1862 represented the bard as misty-eyed and bearded, dressed in flowing robes, amidst a craggy Scottish landscape.<sup>23</sup> The notion of the inspired national poet was developed in Temora (1763) in an even more romantic way. The 'Dissertation' preceding Temora stresses that these were the reliable memories of the ethnically pure: 'If tradition could be depended upon, it is only among a people, free of intermixture with foreigners.... Such are the inhabitants of the mountains of Scotland'. Macpherson produced an eighteenth century version of Ossian which was appealing to the nineteenth century peasant poet: the mountain man, last of a great race in a changing world (Part Two of this thesis discusses Ossianic atmospherics and characters in Hogg's Queen Hynde; it is likely, too, that Macpherson's Ossian inspired Hogg to style himself 'The Mountain Bard').

Reactions to Ossian helped to shape the treatment of later autodidactic Scottish poets, by creating a critical vocabulary for peasant poets. In A Critical Dissertation on the Poems of Ossian, The Son of Fingal (1763), Blair identified Ossian as expressing 'feelings of our fellow-creatures in the most artless ages' in a way which was valuable for 'persons of taste'. Although 'irregular

and unpolished', it was composed during a 'wild and free' age which encouraged 'the high exertions of fancy and passion'. Blair found Ossian to be equivalent to the learned Homeric rhapsode, and as representative of a Celtic 'college'. He anticipated the eighteenth century man of feeling, 'endowed by nature with an exquisite sensibility of heart, prone to that tender melancholy which is so often an attendant on great genius'. However, Blair thought Ossianic epic was based in 'that face of nature, which he saw before his eyes' of a 'northern mountainous region'; his work was the product of 'nature, not of art'. Henry Mackenzie, who convened the Highland Society of Scotland's inquiry into the authenticity of the Ossianic material, believed that, 'such poetry did exist...in great abundance...of a most impressive and striking sort, in a high degree eloquent, tender, and sublime', even if Macpherson had tampered with the text to add 'what he conceived to be dignity and delicacy'.<sup>24</sup>

For later critics, Macpherson merged with his Ossianic image as tamed savage: at once primitive and cultured, as a latter day Gentle Shepherd from the increasingly fashionable Highlands. For instance Bailey Saunders, in The Life and Letters of James Macpherson (1894), begins by noting Macpherson was related to his clan chief and from an 'ancient' family. It is then observed that 'Macpherson's parents, however, were not able to hold their heads very high' and 'Macpherson was

born and brought up, "a barefit laddie"'. The astute Macpherson, nevertheless, given his economic success, could afford the luxury of 'noble savage' associations without feeling the prohibitive effects of poverty his compatriots often suffered.<sup>25</sup>

Some scholars of course, including David Hume, suspected Macpherson of invention and unscholarly behaviour. Ossian was parodied in the anonymous 1762 Gisbal, An Hyperborean Tale (a style of treatment which, perhaps, provided a precedent for Hogg). In contrast, James Boswell and Lord Kames were both great admirers. Thomas Gray, whose 'The Bard' contributed to the poetic myth of the muse-touched poet, wrote in 1763:

Imagination dwelt many hundred years ago in all her pomp on the cold and barren mountains of Scotland. The truth (I believe) is that, without respect of climates, she reigns in all nascent societies of men, where the necessities of life force everyone to think and act much for himself.<sup>26</sup>

An enthusiasm for the sanitised primitive carried on into the collecting projects of Cromek and Scott (discussed below), and later peasant poets drew aspects of Ossian into their personae. There are many points of contact, for instance, between Macpherson and Burns, including their associations with Henry Mackenzie, Hugh



Blair and John Home (1722-1808), the writer of The Douglas (1757) (Norval, Douglas' tragically fated son, was reared like 'The Gentle Shepherd' among rustics). Burns pursued Ossianic myth during his 'Tour of the Highlands', visiting 'Ossian's Grave', near Crieff, and Ossian country, in Badenoch. While Macpherson, however, enjoyed financial encouragement in collecting traditional 'fragments' for the literati, Burns was largely self-supported. As David Daiches observed, in Robert Burns (1950):

The Literati accepted Macpherson's Ossian partly because of Scottish patriotism and partly because the view Macpherson presented of a noble and primitive people coincided with their philosophy's a priori conceptions.... Similarly, Burns was hailed by Henry Mackenzie in 1787 [sic] as the "Heaven-taught ploughman" and as an illustration of contemporary theories concerning the natural man. The Literati were more suspicious of the results of an education from heaven in practice, however, than they were in theory.<sup>27</sup>

Michael Bruce (1746-67), a weaver's son, might have been Scotland's first great peasant poet. The 'poet of Lochleven', despite completing studies at Edinburgh University, working as a schoolmaster and beginning training in divinity, was perceived as a self-taught rustic. His work conformed to notions of the primitive,

offering an enticing blend of heartfelt Biblical Paraphrases, passionate pastorals like 'Lochleven', sensitive Elegies and Ossianic material. Thomas Robertson commented in 1791 that Bruce's poems are 'chaste, classical, and often exhibit the highest beauties of poetry'. However, surviving work like 'Elegy to Spring' and 'Ode to the Cuckoo' are sometimes near doggerel. Nor did the trainee Secession minister have the charisma which allowed the myth to gell so well in Burns. Moreover, the scantness of Bruce's corpus, and controversy about its treatment by John Logan, hampered the poet's inclusion in the national canon.<sup>28</sup>

Primitive prototypes from abroad complemented indigenous ideas regarding peasant poets. Thomas Reid's Inquiry into the Human Mind (1764) asserted that, 'The education of Nature is more perfect in savages, who have no other tutor', although 'Nature could never in itself produce a Rousseau'. This Common Sense view of the noble savage is crucial to the formation of the peasant poet stereotype. Chauncey Brewster Tinker, in Nature's Simple Plan (1922), provides multiple examples. There was the 1772 visit of five Esquimaux to London, shepherded by Captain Cartwright, the Labrador explorer. Attuiock, a priest; his youngest wife and almost four year old daughter; his younger brother and wife Caubvick were dressed in skins with an Esquimau dog and eagle, and their visitors at Cartwright's house included Boswell.

Boswell took a keen interest in social prototypes, as An Account of Corsica (1768) demonstrates. Tragically, returning home in 1773, the party contracted smallpox and only Caubvick survived. Cartwright was later amazed to find her reintegrated into her society. Excitement was aroused too by the 1774 visit to London of the South Sea savage Omai, escorted by Captain Furneaux after Cook's second voyage to the Pacific. Omai was presented to George III in South Seas dress, and stayed with Lord and Lady Sandwich at Hinchinbroke. As Tinker says, Omai, paradoxically, preferred aristocrats to the lower classes with whom he was associated. Although he wanted to learn to read and write, Omai was allowed no formal instruction. He taught himself English, creating a vocabulary in which bull was 'man cow', snow 'white rain' and ice 'snow water'. Fanny Burney's father persuaded Omai to sing for his family. She was not impressed by the earthy story, nor Omai's performance:

Nothing can be more curious or less pleasing than his singing voice; he seems to have none, and tune or air hardly seem to be aimed at; so queer, wild and strange a rumbling of sounds never did I before hear; and very contentedly can I go to the grave, if I never do again. His song is the only thing that is savage belonging to him.



As Tinker comments: 'had he somehow or other happened to recall Ossian to her mind--she would have been transported with delight. But there was no hint of the heroic in what he sang--no note of primitive passion'. Joshua Reynolds represented Omai in a robe and turban with bare feet; a noble savage incarnate (in fact Omai wore a brown coat and white breeches in England). There are parallels in attitudes to the 'Gentle Shepherd' and the gentle islander. Omai was admired by Boswell for his inherent gentility (his treatment provided a precedent for the 1822 visit of Laplanders to Edinburgh mentioned in Chapter Six).<sup>29</sup>

Mlle. Le Blanc, the 'Champagne savage girl' (supposedly an escaped Esquimaux slave) was significant from a Scottish perspective. An account of her life in the wilderness by M. De La Condamine was translated as An Account of a Savage Girl (1768), prefaced by James Burnett, Lord Monboddo. Monboddo saw Mlle. Le Blanc as proof of his theory, expressed in Of the Origin and Progress of Language (1773-92), that people progress from the animal to the savage, and forward to the civilised. Monboddo is a key figure in stressing elements of the Enlightenment, empirical, 'noble savage' which filtered into the notion of peasant poetry. 'Farmer Burnet', as Boswell called Monboddo, perhaps offered such ideas directly, through his patronage of the first great Scottish autodidact: Robert Burns.<sup>30</sup>

## Notes

1. See Hogg's 'Memoir' prefacing The Mountain Bard, (Edinburgh and London, 1807), revised, in line with 'peasant poet' conventions in 1821 and further expanded for Altrive Tales, 2 vols, (London, 1832) as 'Memoir of the Author', vol I, pp.i-xciii and 'Reminiscences of Former Days', vol I, pp.xciv-cli; The Autobiography of John Younger, Shoemaker, St. Boswell's, (Kelso, 1881); Janet Hamilton, Poems, Sketches and Essays, (Glasgow, 1885). See Gillian Shepherd, 'The Kailyard', The History of Scottish Literature, (Aberdeen, 1988), vol 3, ed Douglas Gifford, pp.311-12.
2. David Masson, College-Education and Self-Education, (London, nd), p.15. Edinburgh educated Masson (1822-1907) was then Professor 'of the English Language and Literature' at University College, London. From 1865 he was Professor of Rhetoric and English Literature at Edinburgh University and, from 1893, Her Majesty's Historiographer for Scotland.
3. Masson, pp.6-13.
4. Masson, p.19.
5. Robert Graves, rpt The Common Asphodel, (London, 1949), p.57.
6. Henry Shanks, The Peasant Poets of Scotland and Musings Under the Beeches, (Bathgate, 1881) p.113.
7. Shanks, pp.115-16.
8. The Works of Allan Ramsay, vols I and II ed B. Martin and J.W. Oliver, Scottish Text Society (Edinburgh and London, 1945-46); vols III-VI ed A.M. Kinghorn and A. Law, (Edinburgh and London, 1955-74). See in particular vol I, pp.18-21, 22-6, 152-57; vol III, pp.81-95, vol I, pp. 212-17. Hugh MacDiarmid, 'Robert Fergusson: Direct Poetry and the Scottish Genius', Robert Fergusson 1750-1774. Essays by



- Various Hands to Commemorate the Bicentenary of his birth, ed Sydney Goodsir Smith, (Edinburgh, 1952), p.51-74.
9. See 'The Early Drafts of the Gentle Shepherd', Ramsay Works, vol IV, pp.135-92.
  10. Smith qtd David Craig, Scottish Literature and the Scottish People, (London, 1961), p.61; Hugh Blair, Lectures, 1783, rpt (London, 1824), XXXIX, pp.506-07.
  11. Allan Ramsay Metamorphosed to a Hather-Bloter Poet is rpt in the section of 'Poems about Ramsay' in Ramsay, Works, vol IV, pp.294-327.
  12. Ramsay, Works, vol II, pp.1-2.
  13. W. Ward's A Translation of the Scots Pastoral Comedy, The Gentle Shepherd, in English, from Allan Ramsay's Drama, (London and Edinburgh, 1785), pp.viii-ix.
  14. See Margaret Turner, The Gentle Shepherd. A Scottish Pastoral, (London, 1790).
  15. 'The Gentle Shepherd' by David Wilkie (1785-1845) is in Aberdeen City Art Gallery (ABDAG 3541). Allan Ramsay's instrument, classified as a wood and ivory chanter, is in The Burrell Collection, Glasgow (50/233). See Ramsay Works, vol I, pp.158-66. The Letters of Robert Burns, ed G. Ross Roy, 2 vols, (Oxford, 1985), vol ii, 620, 648. Hereafter, references to Burns' letters are to this edition, given within the text in parentheses.
  16. David Irving, 1810 ed, pp.309, 327, qtd vol I, p.291. The Works of Allan Ramsay. With Life of the Author by George Chalmers; An Essay on his Genius and Writings by Lord Woodhouselee; And An Appendix relative to his Life and Posthumous Reputation, (Edinburgh and London, 1848); Woodhouselee in Chalmers, pp.47-48.
  17. The Poems of Allan Ramsay. To Which is Prefixed the Life of the Author by William Tennant, (Edinburgh and London, 1819), pp.iv-v. Robert Chambers, Lives of



- Illustrious and Distinguished Scotsmen, (Glasgow, 1835), vol IV, p.127.
18. Robert Chambers, Traditions of Edinburgh, (Edinburgh and London, 1824), p.19. Allan Ramsay, The Gentle Shepherd, 'Life of the Author', anon, (1851), rpt (London, 1899), p.iii; David Masson, Edinburgh Sketches & Memories, (London, 1892), pp.88-89.
  19. George Douglas, Scottish Poetry, (Glasgow, 1911), pp.126-27, 144-45.
  20. Alexander Manson Kinghorn and Alexander Law, Poems by Allan Ramsay and Robert Fergusson, (Edinburgh, 1974), p.xiii; David Daiches, The Paradox of Scottish Culture, (Oxford, 1964), pp.24-27. Ramsay is re-evaluated in Carol McGuirk, 'Augustan Influences on Allan Ramsay', Studies in Scottish Literature, 16 (1981), pp.97-109 and Kenneth Simpson, The Protean Scot, (Aberdeen, 1988).
  21. See 'The Forest Minstrel', review, The Scots Magazine, 72 (1810), pp.604-08.
  22. H. Gustav Klaus, The Literature of Labour, (Brighton, 1985), p.19. Burns was alert to the paradoxes in Common sense philosophy, as he indicates in 'Letter to J[ames] T[ennant], Gl[e]nc[one]r where those 'in the depth of science mir'd' appeal to 'What wives an' wabsters see an' feel' (l.16); see The Poems and Songs of Robert Burns, ed James Kinsley, 3 vols, (Oxford, 1985), no.90. 'Sheridan and Cooper qtd Robert Crawford, Devolving English Literature, (Oxford, 1992), pp.23, 43; See David Daiches, Literature and Gentility in Scotland, (Edinburgh, 1982), Emma Letley, From Galt to Douglas Brown, (Edinburgh, 1988). Chauncey Brewster Tinker, Nature's Simple Plan, (Princeton and London, 1922), pp.vi, 5. See Ronald L. Meek, Social science and the ignoble savage, (Cambridge, 1976) on Scottish contributions to the myth of the noble savage.

23. See Fiona J. Stafford, The Sublime Savage, (Edinburgh, 1988), p.138 and Stafford's introduction to James Macpherson, The Poems of Ossian and related works ed Howard Gaskill (Edinburgh, 1996), pp.v-xxvi. All references here are to James Macpherson's Ossian, facsimile ed, 3 vols, (Heidelberg, 1940). See too D.S. Thomson, The Gaelic Sources of Macpherson's 'Ossian', (Edinburgh, 1952) and Andrew Hook, '"Ossian Macpherson as Image Maker"', The Scottish Review, 36 (Nov, 1984), pp.39-44. Tinker, p.71. See S.A. Grave, The Scottish Philosophy of Common Sense, (Oxford, 1960).
24. See Hugh Blair, A Critical Dissertation on the Poems of Ossian, The Son of Fingal, (London, 1763), especially pp.1-2, 14-17, 53-54, 68. Report of the Committee of the Highland Society of Scotland, Appointed to inquire into the nature and authenticity of the poems of Ossian, ed Henry Mackenzie, (Edinburgh, 1805), pp.151-52.
25. Bailey Saunders, The Life and Letters of James Macpherson, (London and New York, 1894), pp.29-32.
26. Stafford, pp.163-76; qtd Tinker, p.66.
27. David Daiches, Robert Burns, (Edinburgh, 1950), p.29.
28. See Life and Complete Works of Michael Bruce, ed John Guthrie Barnett, (London, 1926).
29. Tinker, Chapter 1, pp.80-81; Burney qtd Tinker, p.82. Tinker, p.83, see reproductions in Tinker.
30. See William Knight, Lord Monboddo and Some of his Contemporaries, (London, 1900).

## Chapter Two: Heaven-Taught Ploughman

'I must return to my rustic station, and, in my wonted way, woo my rustic Muse at the Ploughtail.'

(Robert Burns, letter of 1787 to the Earl of Buchan, The Letters of Robert Burns, ed G. Ross Roy, (Oxford, 1985), vol I, 82.)



The notion of 'peasant poetry' gained definite impetus with Henry Mackenzie's appreciation of Robert Burns (1759-96), in The Lounger of 1786, as 'Heaven-taught ploughman'. Drawing attention to the writer's 'humble and unlettered station', Mackenzie argued that Burns should be patronised: 'to call forth genius from the obscurity in which it had pined indignant, and place it where it may profit or delight the world; these are exertions which give to wealth an enviable superiority'. This picture neglected important aspects of Burns, particularly his considerable store of learning. Burns' father, William Burness, ensured his son was educated from the age of six, employing John Murdoch as teacher. Despite the failure of his father's farm at Mount Oliphant, from 1776 Burns attended a school at Kirkoswald, under Hugh Rodger. In addition, Burns and his brothers were exposed to a variety of educational experiences. Even when posturing as Nature's bard, Burns gave away his erudition. In a revealing letter of 1783, to his former teacher Murdoch, Burns expresses a desire to '"Study men, their manners, and their ways"'. Despite the implication that his own learning was by observation, Burns is quoting from a literary source: Pope's January and May (l.157). Burns continues the statement by offering a list of his 'glorious models' which combines polite and peasant resonances, from the work of Mackenzie to Macpherson:

My favorite authors are of the sentim<sup>l</sup> kind, such as Shenstone, particularly his Elegies, Thomson, Man of feeling, a book I prize next to the Bible, Man of the World, Sterne, especially his Sentimental journey, Mcpherson's Ossian, &c. (Letters, i, 13)<sup>1</sup>

Burns' frame of reference is wide-ranging, negating the notion that autodidactic learning was limited. The well known letter of August 1787 to John Moore enumerates oral influences including Burns' mother's maid with her 'tales and songs concerning devils, ghosts, fairies...enchanted towers, dragons and other trumpery', as well as Mason's English collection, the life of Wallace which instilled a 'Scottish prejudice' and Ayrshire drama. Pope, Shakespeare, Jethro Tull, Locke, Hervey and Allan Ramsay are all specifically mentioned and Burns' partiality for Fergusson, in addition, is well known (Letters, i, 125).

Mackenzie's poetic assumptions, and preferences, were typical of the aesthetics applied to criticising the self-taught. Burns' 'divinity of genius' was liberally accorded to peasant poets thereafter. Mackenzie disliked Burns' poems in 'provincial dialect' (read 'even in Scotland' with difficulty), preferring 'almost English' pieces like 'The Vision' and 'To a Mountain Daisy'. An alarming effect among critics was, as Low comments, 'to sacrifice truth, and therefore also Burns' long-term interest as a poet, for instant acclaim'.<sup>2</sup> A lack of

poetic confidence can be seen, for example, when Burns is in his Sylvander mode.

Mackenzie's treatment of Burns was sustained by critics in Scotland and beyond. It was often regretted, for instance, that Burns' poems were in Scots and dealt with Scottish situations. Following Mackenzie, the Monthly Review of 1786 commented that, when compared to 'polished versifiers', Burns' work was inferior:

The objects that have obtained the attention of the Author are humble; for he himself, born in a low station, and following a laborious employment, has had no opportunity of observing scenes in the higher walks of life, yet his verses are sometimes struck off with a delicacy, and artless simplicity, that charms like the bewitching though irregular touches of a Shakespear.<sup>3</sup>

Burns, of course, actively collaborated in the creation of his myth, offering a precedent to later autodidacts. Despite his wide-ranging education, Burns proudly termed himself 'A Professor of the Belles Lettres de la Nature': an occupation 'not always to be found among the systematic Fathers and Brothers of scientific criticism' (Letters i, 66). The writer's most astute acquaintances were aware, however, that Burns' autodidactic characteristics were the products, at least



partly, of posturing. In a 1799 letter to James Currie, Robert Anderson wrote:

It was, I know, a part of the machinery, as he called it, of his poetical character to pass for an illiterate ploughman who wrote from pure inspiration. When I pointed out some evident traces of poetical imitation in his verses privately, he readily acknowledged his obligations, and even admitted the advantages he enjoyed in poetical composition from the copia verborum, the command of phraseology, which the knowledge and use of the English and Scottish dialects afforded him; but in company he did not suffer his pretensions to pure inspiration to be challenged, and it was seldom done where it might be supposed to affect the success of the subscription for his Poems.<sup>4</sup>

Certainly economic and even more complex motivations affected Burns' self presentation as a bard of 'Nature's making'. His letters exhibit a characteristic peasant poet blend: a resistance to debasing himself below patrons, combined with a desire to please. Preparing to depart for Jamaica in 1786, Burns complained to Mrs Stewart of Stair:

I am quite aware, Madam, what task the world would assign me in this letter.--The obscure Bard, when any of the Great condescend to take notice of him, should heap the altar with the

incense of flattery.--Their high Ancestry, their own great & godlike qualities & actions, should be recounted with the most exaggerated description. (Letters, i, 47)

Pointing out his own 'disqualifying pride of heart', Burns gallantly recalls Mrs Stewart's 'benevolence of temper', as opposed to the often haughty behaviour of 'exalted stations' to their 'Inferiours...measuring [sic] out with every look the height of their elevation' (Letters, i, 47). Perhaps the poet hoped that posturing as a peasant poet of integrity, combined with flattery, would establish his right to patronage. These were desperate times.

Autodidacts were required, frequently, to avow their personal integrity. In May 1787, recognising Glencairn's 'benevolence' with the required blend of worth and humility, Burns affirmed:

to YOU, Your good family I owe in a great measure all that at present I am and have.--My gratitude is not selfish design, that I disdain; it is not dodging after the heels of Greatness...it is a feeling of the same kind with my devotion. (Letters, i, 103)

After his patron's death in 1795, Burns assured John, the new Earl of Glencairn, that his 'professions of respect' were not of the usual 'suspicious' type expected 'from a Poet, to a LORD'. As proof of his own pure motives, Burns

offered, 'my bypast conduct, & my feelings at this moment' (Letters, ii, 546). More openly, to John Gillespie, excise officer, Burns regretted the difficulty he now faced in becoming an Excise Supervisor through 'the death of the Earl of Glencairn; the Patron from whom all my fame and good fortune took its rise'. Wryly, Burns added, 'Among the many wise adages which have been treasured up by our Scottish Ancestors, this is one of the best-- "Better be the head o' the Commonality, as the tail o' the Gentry"' (Letters, ii, 437).

Autodidacts entered into complex negotiations to establish relationships with their supposed social superiors. Burns demonstrated considerable skill in befriending and being befriended by the Literati and their acolytes. For instance, the detailed correspondence with Mrs Dunlop of Dunlop shows that the autodidact had to tread a fine line, with behaviour neither too subservient nor too friendly (Mrs Dunlop will be met again in Chapter Eleven as mother of Janet Little's patron).<sup>5</sup> Mrs Dunlop seems to have suspected Burns' motives and he is often defensive towards her:

You are afraid I shall grow intoxicated with my prosperity as a poet. Alas! Madam, I know myself and the world too well.... in a most enlightened, informed age and nation, when poetry is and has been the study of men of the first natural genius, aided with all the powers



of polite learning, polite books, and polite company--to be dragged forth to the full glare of learned and polite observation, with all my imperfections of awkward rusticity and crude unpolished ideas on my head--I assure you, Madam, I do not dissemble when I tell you I tremble for the consequences. The novelty of a poet in my obscure situation, without any of those advantages which are reckoned necessary for that character, at least at this time of day, has raised a partial tide of public notice, which has borne me to a height where I am absolutely feelingly certain my abilities are inadequate to support me; and too surely do I see that time when the same tide will leave me, and recede, perhaps, as far below the mark of truth. (Letters, i, 78)

Burns' letter, with its blend of independence and melancholic passivity, seems to have convinced Mrs Dunlop (at least temporarily) of the poet's integrity.

Maintaining the support of a patron meant the peasant poet had to exert constant care not to offend. Responding to Mrs Dunlop in March 1788, Burns denied mercenary aims in requesting her name for his child:

my motive is gratitude not selfishness.--Though I may [very (deleted)] die a very Poor Man, yet I hope my Children shall ever boast the character of their Father...as an incentive to noble actions, he will call his Children after the name of his illustrious friends and

benefactors.--I intend, Madam, as first at my heart, to begin with your honored name.  
(Letters i, 324)

(Hogg too, it should be remembered, named his daughter Harriet after the Duchess of Buccleuch.)

The difficult predicament of the peasant poet was succinctly expressed by Burns, while writing to Mrs Dunlop in 1789. It is tempting to speculate that Burns is expressing his true opinions here but, given his facility in rôle-play, perhaps this is autodidactic posturing to please the patron:

God help a poor man! for if he take a pecuniary favor from a friend with that acquiescence which is natural to poverty at finding so accomodating a thing, the poor devil is in the greatest danger of falling into an abjectness of soul equally incompatible with the independance of Man and the dignity of Friendship; on the other hand, should he bristle up his feelings [like (deleted)] in irritated Manhood, he runs every chance of degrading his [heart (deleted)] magnaminty into an exceptious pride, as different from true spirit as the vinegar acid of sour twopenny is from the racy smack of genuine October. (Letters i, 371)

In a similar vein, Burns wrote self-effacingly to Dr Moore, whose acquaintance Mrs Dunlop had pressed on the

poet, in February 1787, 'For my part, my first ambition was, and still my strongest wish is, to please my Compeers, the rustic Inmates of the Hamlet, while ever-changing language and manners will allow me to be relished and understood'. Despite this assertion of autodidactic loyalties, though, Burns still demonstrates his range of knowledge, 'in a language where Pope and Churchill have raised the laugh, and Shenstone and Gray drawn the tear; where Thomson and Beattie have painted the landskip, and Littleton and Collins described the heart' (Letters, i, 80). Moore, of course, proved a useful intermediary, introducing the Kilmarnock edition to Archibald, eleventh Earl of Eglinton.

Seen in this light, Burns' apparent respect for his intellectual peers may be part of his peasant poet persona. To Dugald Stewart, for instance, in May 1788, he sends a few 'bagatelles', adding that:

next to my little fame, and the having it in my power to make life more comfortable to those whom nature has made dear to me, I shall ever regard your countenance, your patronage, your friendly good offices, as the most valued consequence of my late success in life.  
(Letters, i, 239)

Writing to the composer of 'Tullochgorum', the Reverend John Skinner, in 1787, Burns was rather dismissive of



those who were not poets. According to Burns, Skinner had offered 'the best poetical compliment I ever received':

I have often wished, and will certainly endeavour, to form a kind of common acquaintance among all the genuine sons of Caledonian song. The world, busy in low prosaic pursuits, may overlook most of us;--but "reverence thyself." The world is not our peers,--so we challenge the jury. We can lash that world.  
(Letters, i, 147)

Despite his assertions of independence, though, Burns faced real obstacles to creativity from his poverty and manner of employment. His resentment of the peasant poet's position is frequently expressed. In a characteristically pious letter to his father, William Burns, in 1781, citing Revelations, the poet wrote, 'I foresee that very probably Poverty & Obscurity await me & I am...daily preparing to meet & welcome them' (Letters, i, 4). Less passively, writing to John Arnot in April 1786, Burns fumed, 'A damned star has always kept my zenith, & shed its baleful influence' (Letters, i, 29). To Robert Aitken, the Ayrshire lawyer and Burns' patron, in 1786, Burns bid, 'farewell hope of a second edition 'till I grow richer! an epoch, which, I think, will arrive at the payment of the British national debt' (Letters, i, 53).

Often, Burns used his autodidactic grievances in an attempt to encourage patronage; in this sense, the potential benefits of self-presentation as a Natural bard are apparent. To Mrs Dunlop on 21 April 1789 Burns wrote: 'If you knew my present hurry of building, planning, planting, ploughing, sowing, &c. &c. you would give me great credit for this sheet-full--If I live in leisure to fill it'. These observations are then used to underline Burns' magnanimity. Introducing the recurrent autodidactic theme of solidarity with the unfortunate, Burns writes that:

a parcel of Poems, now in the current of subscription, have given me, & daily give me, a world of trouble in revising them.--They are hopeless trash; but the Authoress is a poor young creature whose forefathers have seen better days; for which consideration I submit to the horrid drudgery. (Letters, i, 330)

Sadly, the writer's probable hopes for financial rewards were not always fulfilled.

Burns experienced genuine anxiety regarding his autodidactic status as a semi-professional poet. Deploring his treatment of Jean Armour, their marriage then annulled, in 1786, Burns termed himself a 'worthless, rhyming reprobate' (Letters, i, 21); 'a rhyming, mason-making, raking, aimless fellow' to James Smith in 1787

(Letters, i, 117); to Agnes McLehose in January 1788, he was 'a poor hairum-scairum Poet, whom Fortune has kept for her particular use to wreak her temper on' (Letters, i, 186). However, he was proud to refer to himself and Mrs McLehose as, 'a Poet and Poetess of Nature's making, two of Nature's noblest productions!' (Letters, i, 181). The 'nature' mode was a suitable peasant poet position for amorous letters.<sup>6</sup> So too to Miss Margaret Kennedy in 1785 Burns had asserted, 'Poets, Madam, of all Mankind, feel most forcibly the powers of BEAUTY; as, if they are Poets of Nature's making, their feelings must be finer, and their taste more delicate than most of the World' (Letters, i, 20). It is heart-rending, then, to find the mature poet referring to himself as 'a simple ploughman' when sending 'Delia, an Ode' (Poems, 624) to the Editor of the Morning Star or 'a simple plough-boy' sending the same poem on the same date, May 18th 1789, to The Belfast News (Letters, i, 343, 343A).

Burns was an avid bibliophile throughout his life. In writing to Sir John Sinclair of Ulbster in 1791, regarding Riddell of Glenriddel's tenants' circulating library, the poet skilfully highlighted the dignity of the autodidactic reader:

To store the minds of the lower classes with useful knowledge, is certainly of very great consequence, both to them as individuals, and to society at large. Giving them a turn for



reading and reflection, is giving them a source of innocent and laudable amusement; and besides, raises them to a more dignified degree in the scale of rationality. (Letters, ii, 469).

Despite such noble aspirations, Burns' ambitious reading was limited by finances. Ordering works as diverse as Don Quixote, Roderick Random and Boston's Fourfold State from Peter Hill on 17th January, 1791: 'Take these three guineas & place them overgainst that damned account of yours, which has gagged my mouth these five or six months'. He wrote with even greater feeling:

Poverty! Thou half-sister of Death, thou cousin-german of Hell, where shall I find force of execration equal to thy demerits!.... By thee, the Man of Sentiment whose heart glows with Independance & melts with sensibility, idly pines under the neglect or writhes in bitterness of soul under the contumely, of arrogant, unfeeling Wealth.--By thee the Man of Genius whose ill-starred ambition plants him at the tables of the Fashionable & Polite, must see in suffering silence his remark neglected & his person despised, while shallow Greatness in his idiot attempts at wit shall meet with countenance & applause. (Letters, ii, 430)

Burns resented being typecast as an autodidact, prefiguring the feelings of later peasant poets. At times he overstepped the bounds of stereotypical

class behaviour and was forced into abject apology, as in the letter 'from the regions of Hell' to Mrs Robert Riddell. Damned for 'the impropriety of my conduct yesternight under your roof', when intoxicated, Burns offers his 'humblest contrition':

O, all ye powers of decency and decorum!  
 whisper to them that my errors, though great,  
 were involuntary--that an intoxicated man is the  
 vilest of beasts--that it was not in my nature  
 to be brutal to any one--that to be rude to a  
 woman, when in my sense, was impossible with me.  
 (Letters, ii, 608)

One is irresistibly reminded of Lockhart's account of Hogg's impropriety when 'hauf-seas-over' in addressing Scott as 'Wattie' and Mrs Scott as 'Charlotte' although Burns, perhaps, offended more blatantly.<sup>7</sup>

There is often extreme anxiety, countering the pride he expresses elsewhere in his social origins, in Burns' correspondence, as in the well known letter to George Thomson of 1796:

After all my boasted independence, curt  
 necessity compels me to implore you for five  
 pounds.--A cruel scoundrel of a Haberdasher to  
 whom I owe an account, taking it into his head  
 that I am dying, has commenced a process & will  
 infallibly put me into jail--So, for God's sake,

send me that sum, & that by return of post.  
(Letters, ii, 706)<sup>8</sup>

Such a mixture of desperate poverty and some prickliness would prove highly characteristic of contemporary, and later, peasant poets.

Burns' work displays a potent mixture of posturing as an autodidact and criticism of the peasant poet image. 'The Cotter's Saturday Night' (Poems, 72), most spectacularly, would become an anthem for later peasant poets and their critics. Here, the positive aspects of being a bard of 'Nature's making' are eloquently proclaimed:

My lov'd, my honor'd, much respected friend,  
No mercenary Bard his homage pays;  
With honest pride, I scorn each selfish end,  
My dearest meed, a friend's esteem and  
praise:  
To you I sing, in simple Scottish lays,  
The lowly train in life's sequester'd scene;  
The native feelings strong, the guileless ways,  
What A\*\*\*\* in a Cottage would have been;  
Ah! tho' his worth unknown, far happier there I  
ween. (verse 1)

The 'toil-worn COTTER', a pious father surrounded by bairns, including a beauteous daughter, supping on 'Porritch', made a sanitised model for peasant



representations of their world. Such a stereotype could give rise, however, to great poetry amongst which genuine representations of rural life are to be found. Equally, the uncertainties and contradictions of the poem--the possibility of 'the ruin'd Maid' (verse 11); the 'Pageant' of religion outside the cottage (verse 17)--offered alternative models to autodidacts (these were explored, for instance, in the longer poems of James Hogg).

Certainly Burns excelled in scenes of rural life from 'Halloween' (Poems, 73) and 'Tam o' Shanter' (Poems, 321). He is at his best, too, in the lyric mode, 'A red red Rose' (Poems, 453) and the comic 'Duncan Gray' (Poems, 394). These were the styles peasant poets were encouraged to emulate. Yet there are hints that the poet of 'Scots Wha Hae' (Poems, 425), 'The Tree of Liberty' (Poems, 625) and 'For a' that and a' that' (Poems, 482) may have paralleled his belief 'The rank is but the guinea's stamp' with his predicament as peasant poet. In 'The Twa Dogs' (Poems, 71) Burns exploits the idea that the lowly canine is more astute than its master. The first, Ceasar, is from an elevated background:

His locked, letter'd, braw brass-collar,  
 Show'd him the gentleman an scholar  
 But tho' he was o' high degree,  
 The fient a pride na pride had he,  
 But wad hae spent an hour caressan,  
 Ev'n wi' a Tinkler-gipsey's messan. (ll.13-18)

The second, Luath, is a 'ploughman's collie' with a master, like the writer, 'A rhyming, ranting, raving billie' (1.24), named after Cuchillin's dog in Fingal. Caesar's master lives off 'racked rents', with flunkies, coach and horses at his disposal and a silk purse 'As lang's my tail' (verse 8). The hard-working cotters-- 'maistly wonderfu' contented' (1.84)--lead a drastically different life:

But then, to see how ye're negleket,  
How hugg'd, an' cuff'd, an' disrespeket!  
L--d man, our gentry care as litte  
For delvers, ditchers, an' sic cattle;  
They gang as saucy by poor folk,  
As I wad by a stinkan brock. (verse 12)

Just as the maltreated dog's predicament reflects that of the poor, so too it parallels the peasant poet's precarious state. The dependant is highly vulnerable, according to Luath:

There's monie a creditable stock  
O decent, honest, fawsont folk,  
Are riven out baith root an' branch,  
Some rascals pridefu' greed to quench,  
Wha thinks to knit himself the faster  
In favor wi' some gentle Master. (11.141-47)

As Caesar says: 'For human bodies are sic fools, / For a' their Colleges an' Schools' (ll.195-96). The twa dogs, in conclusion, 'Rejoic'd they were na men but dogs' (l.236).

Perhaps 'A Fragment--On Glenriddel's Fox breaking his chain' (Poems, 527) is allegorical, representative of Burns' position too. The theme is 'Liberty'; the situation a fox, 'caught among his native rocks, / And to a dirty kennel chain'd' (ll.15-16) and how he gained freedom. Glenriddel, a Whig, chained this Northern fox (the Burnesses, of course, originated from the North of Scotland) and the fox canvassed for 'The Rights of Men, the Powers of Women' (l.29), recalling both Paine, with whom Burns was well acquainted, and Burns' 'The Rights of Women' (Poems, 390). Gradually the fox amassed knowledge of politics and 'Nature's Magna charta' (l.46):

Thus wily Reynard by degrees,  
In kennel listening at his ease,  
Suck'd in a mighty store of knowledge.  
As much as some folks at a college. (ll.57-60)

He won his freedom. Then there is the succinct poem 'On a dog of Lord Eglintoun' (Poems, 622), significantly a patron of Burns:

I NEVER barked when out of season,  
I never bit without a reason;  
I ne'er insulted weaker brother,



Nor wronged by force or fraud another.  
 We brutes are placed a rank below;  
 Happy for man could he say so.

'On the death of Echo, a Lap-Dog' (Poems, 416) further suggests this peasant poet could turn and snap the patron's hand. It is in this light that an anecdote from Joseph Train's notes of 1829-30 should be read. Burns, feted in Edinburgh, was encouraged to join a certain company: 'he, at last, observed, "On one condition I shall come [sic] It is that you secure the Learned Pig also to be of the Party.'"--The Learned Pig was exhibiting in Edinburgh at that time'.<sup>9</sup> (Coincidentally, Hogg would later be depicted as the 'boar' and 'bore' of Ettrick).

After his death, the myth created jointly by critics and Burns gained more fuel. Currie's early biography established many of the stereotypical elements, including a profile of 'The Character and Condition of the Scottish Peasantry'. Although Currie's intentions, evidently, were benevolent, he produced a somewhat distorted picture of the natural bard Burns and his fellow peasants:

the peasantry of Scotland...possess a degree of intelligence not generally found among the same class of men in the other countries of Europe. In the very humblest condition of the Scottish peasants, every one can read, and most persons are more or less, skilled in writing and arithmetic; and, under the disguise of their

uncouth appearance, and of their peculiar manner and dialect, a stranger will discover that they possess a curiosity, and have obtained a degree of information, corresponding to these acquirements.<sup>10</sup>

Currie thought the Scottish peasant was industrious and morally upstanding, committed to family and religion. He asserted that the Scottish Muse was attracted to love, with 'a perfect knowledge of the human heart' and 'a spirit of affection, and sometimes of delicate and romantic tenderness...which the more polished strains of antiquity have seldom possessed'. The identification of the oral and, by extension, peasant tradition with a lyric tendency would become a commonplace of 'peasant poet' theory. Burns is presented as a sensitive family man: 'the sensibility of our bard's temper, and the force of his imagination' made him particularly alert 'to the impressions of beauty'. Currie's palatable presentation of the myth, for the worthy cause of Burns' widow and children, would have a crucial formative effect on the peasant poet model. The overall portrait, developing Gilbert Burns' biographical letter, is of a stereotypical Scottish peasant: religious father; tradition bearer mother (and maid); part fact, part 'Cotter's Saturday Night'.<sup>11</sup>

Dugald Stewart, in a letter quoted by Currie, provides insights into Burns' conduct in company, both

corroborating and denying Currie's composite picture. Stewart implies that the poet found it difficult to maintain the deferential behaviour expected from autodidacts. Stewart first met Burns in Ayrshire in 1786, when the Kilmarnock edition was in the press:

His manners were then, as they continued ever afterwards, simple, manly, and independent; strongly expressive of conscious genius and worth; but without any thing that indicated forwardness, arrogance, or vanity. He took his share in conversation, but not more than belonged to him; and listened with apparent attention and deference on subjects where his want of education deprived him of the means of information. If there had been a little more of gentleness and accomodation in his temper, he would, I think, have been still more interesting; but he had been accustomed to give law in the circle of his ordinary acquaintance; and his dread of any thing approaching to meanness or servility, rendered his manner somewhat decided and hard.

Surprisingly, though, Stewart also observes that Burns 'avoided more successfully than most Scotchmen, the peculiarities of Scottish phraseology'. These remarks demonstrate that the unservile Burns was, far from being an uninformed rustic, well equipped to converse in the English styles of apparently polite society.<sup>12</sup>

Despite such evidence Currie presents Burns as a



near-archetypal, passive peasant poet. The writer's literary abilities, and character, are viewed as the product of his social station. Burns' companions in Edinburgh and Nithsdale 'seduced him from his rustic labours'. He was spoiled for farming when he joined the Excise. Yet Burns' 'birth' had crucial effects on his 'form and manners' as well as his creative work:

The incidents which form the subjects of his poems...are incidents in the life of a peasant who takes no pains to disguise the lowliness of his condition.... The same rudeness and inattention appears in the formation of his rhymes, which are frequently incorrect, while the measure in which many of the poems are written has little of the pomp or harmony of modern versification, and is indeed to an English ear, strange and uncouth. The greater part of his earlier poems are written in the dialect of his country, which is obscure, if not unintelligible to Englishmen...though it still adheres more or less to the speech of almost every Scotchman, all the polite and the ambitious are now endeavouring to banish [it] from their tongues as well as their writings. The use of it in composition naturally therefore calls up ideas of vulgarity.... the poet...delights to express himself with a simplicity that approaches to nakedness, and with an unmeasured energy that often alarms delicacy, and sometimes offends taste.... the first impression is perhaps repulsive: there is an air of coarseness about him.... As the

reader however becomes better acquainted with the poet.... He perceives in his poems, even on the lowest subjects, expressions of sentiment, and delineations of manners, which are highly interesting.<sup>13</sup>

Despite the perceptive point made latterly, the predominant position furthered the myth of Burns as an artless peasant poet. Currie ends by wondering how far Burns might have come in approaching giants like Ariosto, Shakespeare and Voltaire, 'by proper culture, with lengthened years, and under happier auspices'; a striking combination of refutation and affirmation of peasant poet theory. It confirmed the process begun by Mackenzie.<sup>14</sup>

Swiftly two elements in the myth appeared, offering (not necessarily contradictory) possibilities for the later critical treatment of autodidacts. First there was the representation of Burns as poet of nature. This moved, fully-formed, from Mackenzie and Currie into R.H. Cromek's Reliques of Robert Burns (1808), which appreciated 'the wild-flowers of his muse' unabashedly. James Montgomery, writing anonymously in the Eclectic Review of 1809, likened Burns to a 'poetical Franklin', who 'caught his lightnings from the cloud...he communicated them...with electrical swiftness and effect'. Montgomery added even more patronising comments about the supposedly special qualities of autodidacts:

It was probably fortunate for Burns, that by a partial education his mind was only cleared of the forests, and drained of the morasses, that in a state of unbroken nature intercept the sun...higher cultivation would unquestionably have called forth richer and fairer harvests, but it would have so softened away the wild and magnificent diversity.<sup>15</sup>

Then there was the emphasis on 'Ranting, roving Robin', drawing the 'dissipated' strand which featured in Currie into a view which offended the morally upstanding 'Unco Guid'. Jeffrey, in his hostile review of Cromek's Reliques in The Edinburgh Review of 1809, focused on Burns' dissipation: 'it is a vile prostitution of language to talk of that man's generosity or goodness of heart, who sits raving about friendship and philanthropy in a tavern, while his wife's heart is breaking'. The only excuse was in 'the original lowness of his situation'. Burns exhibited 'vulgarity' mixed 'with too fierce a note of defiance' which showed 'rather the pride of a sturdy peasant, than the calm and natural elevation of a generous mind'. Jeffrey adopted a similar position regarding other peasant poets, like Hogg. Scott, in The Quarterly Review of 1809 combined both positions:

His character was not simply that of a peasant, exalted into notice by uncommon literary attainment, but bore a stamp which must have



distinguished him in the highest as in the lowest station of life.... [as] the child of impulse and feeling. Of the steady principle which cleaves to that which is good, he was unfortunately DIVESTED by the violence of those passions which finally wrecked him.

The point is qualified. Burns' soul was 'plebeian', he lacked 'chivalry' through 'the lowness of his birth'.<sup>16</sup>

Alexander Peterkin's Review of the Life of Robert Burns (1815) was an early attempt to redress misrepresentations of Burns as a mere autodidact. His measured response, however, was atypical of peasant poet criticism. Although he wrote, 'We do not dream of asserting that Robert Burns was immaculate and perfect', Peterkin dismisses Currie's allegation that Burns kept 'low company' as 'pedantry...which induces persons of circumscribed habits to regard all beyond the little circle of their own movement...as low'. Peterkin dislikes 'assumptions and errors in reference to "the Scottish rustic"', particularly the characterisation of Burns as 'a poetic prodigy, on a level with Stephen Duck, and Thomas Dermody; men, the glimmering of whose genius are extinct'. Burns was an exemplar for the poor: 'Born and educated a Scottish peasant, he affords a striking example of what the spirit of man, even in the most unfavourable circumstances can achieve'. Peterkin rages at the epithet 'plebian poet' applied to Burns: 'Nor can we ever reckon

that condition of life ignoble, which could nurture, in our "land of brown heath," the high soul, the manly, sublime, and truly British spirit of Robert Burns'.<sup>17</sup>

Peterkin invokes first-hand accounts of Burns' behaviour, and treatment, which contradict his typecasting as a peasant poet. There are, for instance, letters from Gilbert Burns, George Thomson, and David Gray suggesting the poet's character was rather more complex than criticism usually suggests (Gray was not only a friend to Burns but also Hogg's brother-in-law; perhaps Gray offered a version of the poetic persona, and its grievances, first-hand to the Ettrick Shepherd):

The fate of this great man has been singularly hard; during the greater part of his life, he was doomed to struggle with adverse fortune.... It seemed even to have been the object of a jealous and illiberal policy to accelerate his ruin.... their portraits...resemble the works of the caricature painter, in which every beauty is concealed, and every deformity overcharged, rather than the correct likeness of the honest artist.<sup>18</sup>

John Gibson Lockhart's The Life of Robert Burns (1828) presents Burns as a romanticised peasant poet through a reading, dedicated to Burns' supposed acolytes, James Hogg and Allan Cunningham. The rural poet was detrimentally effected, according to Lockhart, by

experiences in Edinburgh, his period in the Excise, and self-awareness as a poet: 'It is amusing to observe how soon even really Bucolic bards learn the tricks of their trade'. Lockhart regrets poems of 'sarcasm', like 'The Holy Fair'. However, he regards Burns as an unsurpassed example to his peasant compatriots and admires 'The Cotter's Saturday Night' for rising above 'miseries of toils and penury' with an 'artless beauty and solemnity of feelings and thoughts that ennoble the life of the Scottish peasant'. The Tory sympathies of the critic suffuse his position on Burns as autodidact:

he ever announced himself as a peasant, the representative of his class...whosoever sympathized with the verse of Burns, had his soul opened for the moment to the whole family of man.... If, in spite of Burns, and all his successors, the boundary lines of society are observed with increasing strictness among us...let us lament over symptoms of a disease in the body politic, which, if it goes on, must find sooner or later a fatal ending: but let us not undervalue the antidote which has all along been checking this strong poison. Who can doubt, that at this moments thousands of "the first-born of Egypt" look upon the smoke of a cottager's chimney with feelings which would never have been developed within their being, had there been no Burns?<sup>19</sup>



Allan Cunningham, as a peasant poet himself, was sensitive to the patronising elements in Jeffrey's account. In The Works of Robert Burns (1834), Cunningham decries Jeffrey's suggestion of coarseness along with the Edinburgh reviewer's implied dismissal of Burns as a peasant poet:

If sharp epigrams, familiar gallantry, love of independence, and a leaning to the tumid be, as that critic assures us, true symptoms of a vulgar birth, then Swift was a scavenger, Rochester a coalheaver, Pope a carman, and Thomson a boor. He might as well see lowness of origin in the James Stuart who wrote "Christ's Kirk on the green," as in the Robert Burns who wrote "Tam O' Shanter." The nature which Burns infused into all he wrote deals with internal emotions: feeling is no more vulgar in a ploughman than in a prince.

In all this I see the reluctance of an accomplished scholar to admit the merits of a rustic poet who not only claimed, but took, the best station on the Caledonian Parnassus.<sup>20</sup>

Cunningham's account of Burns, paradoxically, is indebted to the 'Heaven-taught ploughman' image, illustrating both the dangers and the appeal of autodidactic typecasting:

Burns is our chief national Poet; he owes nothing of the structure of his verse or the materials of his poetry to other lands--he is

the offspring of the soil; he is as natural to Scotland, as the heath is to her hills, and all his brightness, like our nocturnal aurora, is of the north.... Burns read Young, Thomson, Shenstone, and Shakespeare; yet there is nothing of Young, Thomson, Shenstone or Shakespeare about him; nor is there much of the old ballad. His light is of nature, like sunshine, and not reflected.<sup>21</sup>

Aspects of Cunningham's own poetic posturing, as the 'Nithsdale Mason', are drawn from the National Bard's position as an autodidact (discussed in Chapter Nine).

Given the supposed affinity between peasant poets, James Hogg's posthumously published Memoir of Burns, in vol V of The Works of Robert Burns (1836), co-edited with William Motherwell, seemed an obvious project. Hogg did visit Jean Armour for first-hand research, however his main sources were Lockhart and Cunningham. The Memoir is of interest less for its insights into Burns' experiences than for the light it shed on Hogg's ideas of the peasant poet. Biographical details which were, by now, almost standard had profound influences on Hogg's self-presentation and image as 'the Ettrick Shepherd'.

Hogg adopts a highly moralistic attitude towards Burns' critics, arguing they had no right to criticise the poet's failings, 'he who of all men is the most exposed to erratic wanderings, but without whose strong passions and ardent feelings, he could never have been the splendid

meteor of our imagination'. The peasantry of Scotland, for Hogg as for Currie, enjoyed a high moral character and pervasive religiosity which was ideally suited to poetic expression. Hogg refutes the idea that Burns had no musical ear as ridiculous but adopts many aspects of the developing myth. Burns, for instance, was unfitted for farm work: 'He who mingles mental and corporeal labour, or the pursuits of diligence and dissipation, can scarcely be supposed to do equal justice to both. The occupation which is least engaging will be the most neglected.'<sup>22</sup> Perhaps Hogg talks from experience. However, the public expected such statements by the 1830s.

Some critics, like D.M. Moir (Delta), made extremely insensitive comments about the origins of the autodidact Burns:

In Burns, poverty, from the fascination and heartiness of his pictures, is made to look almost like a piece of good fortune...associated with kindly simplicity, with proud patriotism, with devoted affection, with uncompromising independence. Pastoral and patriarchal integrity and uprightness are weighed in the balance with the precarious entrancements of luxury, and refinement; and life, in its lowliness, is invested with a peculiar charm, which might be ill exchanged for the polish of rank.<sup>23</sup>



Remarks like Moir's are typical of the patronising tone of criticism applied to peasant poets: at once, apparently, complimentary and condescending.

By the late nineteenth century Burns' life was often imbued with a Christ-like quality. Henry Shanks presents Burns born 'In a humble clay biggin' without 'public rejoicing'. The reader must make allowances for 'temptations, and that burden of genius' in considering the writer's morality. Predominantly, Burns was 'an upright and honourable man' in business, a good son, father and husband. For Shanks, the peasant poet's intellect evolved almost by degrees: 'the lad doubtless unknown to himself, contrived to extract from the scanty materials at his command the exact kind and degree of nutriment requisite to its proper expansion'. There were now established elements of Burns' biography as a bard of Nature's Making: the religious teachings of Burns' father and education from Murdoch; 'ballad lore', the reading of the life of Wallace and 'the infection of love'. Burns was 'one of the most extraordinary beings that ever lived'. His birth, 'Ushered into existence by that cauld "blast o' Janwar's wind,"' was 'prophetic of the hardships which he was afterwards fated to undergo; lowly born, poor, and but half-educated as he was' yet worthy of his 'world-wide reputation'.<sup>24</sup>

To Shanks (echoing Currie and Jeffrey) Burns' autodidacticism was a blessing in disguise. Burns was

'the greatest natural genius which Scotland has yet produced'. Burns, given 'classical culture and learned leisure', might have been a lesser poet, gaining 'style, structure, and polish' but losing 'manly vigour'. Shanks, like Mackenzie, preferred politer pieces: for 'expurgating their vulgarity' in traditional songs, Burns performed a great service. Shanks' message is quasi-religious. Burns' 'Mission' was as 'Nature's great high priest':

Scotland shall ever hold her proud head high  
among the nations, so long as her sons and  
daughters remember his teaching...and with their  
hearts attuned to praise evince their love to  
God, to man, and to the world, in singing by  
turns the psalms of David and the songs of  
Burns.<sup>25</sup>

The image of Burns as the greatest bard of Nature's Making, sanctified and sublime, was sustained and reinforced through iconography. Burns as cult peasant poet is often represented in engravings in direct contact with the Muse. The Nasmyth portrait was adapted and sentimentalised in statues in major Scottish cities, especially erected during the nineteenth century. His myth is reinforced by works such as the Dundee statue (a physical feature of the local landscape disparagingly mentioned by the Dundee and Alyth poet James Young Geddes). In Aberdeen the Burns statue, by H. Bainsmith



(1891) in Union Terrace, holds a 'mountain daisy' in his left hand, a large bonnet in his right, and stands simpering, his hair side-parted as in Naismith. The image drew on the iconography of noble savages like Omiah (discussed in Chapter One). It was attractive at home and abroad. Walt Whitman, influential on later nineteenth century poets in Scotland, adopted aspects of this persona.<sup>26</sup>

Burns' presentation as a great autodidact prevailed. When Catherine Carswell's Life of Robert Burns (1930) appeared, she was sent death threats for dissenting from the mythology. The Burns Federation long maintained a protective hold on the poet's image. Modern critics, though, are alert to the typecasting. Mary Ellen Brown's Burns and Tradition (1984), focuses on Burns' transitional role between literate and oral traditions, privileging neither. Kenneth Simpson profiles Burns' consummate capacity for role-play. Robert Crawford, though, is misleading when he asserts, 'Burns was acceptable and fascinating to the Literati of Edinburgh because he never sought to be one of them', accepting at face-value the sort of assertion Burns made in 1786 to Sir John Whitefoord, 'learning never elevated my ideas above the peasant's shed' (Letters, i, 61). In fact, as I have shown, Burns felt great ambivalence towards the role he was largely forced to adopt. The Common sense tradition allowed for the possibility of shared aspects of human



consciousness. However the peasant poet was lucky if, through personal strength of character and patronage, she or he was considered worthy of critical attention. Ultimately the autodidact was perceived as sociological phenomena, and marginalised. 'Burns as a "ploughman poet" has been fatal' to Scottish literature according to Hugh MacDiarmid, who dismissed the peasant school's work as 'crambo-clink'.<sup>27</sup>

Nevertheless, 'Burns' Bachelors', as his peer group might be called, embraced the idea of autodidacticism whole-heartedly. They drew pride and creative strength from the notion of being, like Burns, peasant poets and bards of Nature's making. 'Daintie' David Sillar, for instance, stressed his autodidactic status in his 'Epistle to the Critics': 'I gat my learnin' at the flail, / An' some I catch'd at the plough-tail'. James Cririe (1752-1835) was an early example of the 'Educated Autodidact' (discussed in Chapter Ten). A distinguished linguist and teacher, Cririe focused on his herding boyhood in 'One of the Shepherds of Galloway to Robert Burns, author of Scottish Poems': 'He's ane that aft has sought a bield / Wi' plaid and dog amang the heather' (ll.31-34). From 1801 Cririe was minister of Dalton, Dumfriesshire, publishing his Scottish scenery poems in 1803. Burns ranked 'Address to Loch Lomond' alongside The Seasons.<sup>28</sup>

Burns was, however, not particularly encouraging to others bards of Nature's Making who tried to jump on his

bandwagon, belying his claim to please his peasant 'compeers'. He ignored, for instance, two pedestrian 'Epistles' from the tailor Thomas Walker (the first noted 'Winsome' Willie Simpson was a mutual friend; the second stressed their shared interest in 'the female sex'). In an unlikely twist, Simpson composed 'Epistle to the Tailor' in Burns' character. Apparently Walker 'religiously preserved it till the day of his death, without ever discovering the hoax'. Informed of this by Simpson, 'Burns gave him a thump on the shoulder and said, "Od, Willie, ye hae thrashed the tailor far better than I could hae dune."' <sup>29</sup> The anecdote questions how far the 'champion of the working classes' genuinely supported fellow autodidacts, despite the Epistles to Sillar, J. Lapraik and Simpson, written before his rise to fame. The ploughman poet was particularly dismissive of women autodidacts (this is discussed in Chapter Eleven).

Where Burns' image, as heaven-taught ploughman, cannot be solely linked to autodidactic models, James Hogg's, as 'the Ettrick Shepherd', offers the archetypal model for the Scottish peasant poet. Comparing 'Burns and the Ettrick Shepherd' in Blackwood's (1819), Wilson commented: 'Scotland has better reason to be proud of her peasant poets than any country in the world'.

Stereotypically, Hogg was, 'strongest in description of nature--in the imitation of the ancient ballad--and in that wild poetry which deals with imaginary beings.... He



ought...not to attempt any long poem in which a variety of characters are to be displayed acting on the theatre of the world'. Educationally disadvantaged beyond Burns, according to Shanks, Hogg was, 'the only known eminent Shepherd-poet since the days of the sweet singer of Israel', a comparison Hogg made himself. Hogg's persona as 'The Ettrick Shepherd' both drew together notions of peasant poets, and acted as a transmission model for other poets of Nature's Making. Part Two is a detailed study of 'The Ettrick Shepherd', and his sometimes ambivalent adoption of the title of Scotland's peasant poet:

For my own part, I know that I have always been looked on, by the learned part of the community, as an intruder in the paths of literature, and every opprobrium has been thrown on me from every quarter. The truth is that I am so. The walks of learning are occupied by a powerful aristocracy, who deem that province their own peculiar right, else, what would avail all their dear bought collegiate honours and degrees. No wonder that they should view an intruder, from the humble and despised ranks of the community, with a jealous and indignant eye, and impede his progress by every means in their power.<sup>30</sup>

While resenting being typecast as an autodidact, Hogg fully exploited the image, offering a working model of the peasant poet to his social peer group and later autodidacts. It was with 'The Ettrick Shepherd' that the



Scottish autodidactic tradition, which began with Ossian and developed with Burns, reached its fullest development and attained its highest achievements.

## Notes

1. Henry Mackenzie, review of the Kilmarnock Burns, The Lounger, 97 (December 9th 1786), rpt Robert Burns, The Critical Heritage, ed Donald A. Low, (London, 1974), pp.67-8, 70-71. See too Carol McGuirk, Robert Burns and the Sentimental Era, (Athens, Georgia, 1985); McGuirk highlights the sophisticated aspects of Burns' work. All references to Burns' Letters, within the text in parentheses, are to The Letters of Robert Burns, ed G. Ross Roy, 2 vols, (Oxford, 1985).
2. Mackenzie qtd Low, pp.68, 70; Low, pp.16-17. Robert Burns, 'The Vision'; 'To a Mountain Daisy', The Poems and Songs of Robert Burns, ed James Kinsley, 3 vols, (Oxford, 1968), nos.62, 92. All references to Burns' poems hereafter are in the text within parentheses.
3. James Anderson, unsigned review in Monthly Review, lxxxv, (December 1786), rpt Low, pp.71-2.
4. Robert Anderson, qtd Low, pp.8-9, edited the Edinburgh Magazine and The Works of the British Poets, 14 vols, (London and Edinburgh, 1795-1807).
5. On this ambivalent relationship see Robert Burns and Mrs. Dunlop, ed William Wallace, (London, 1898). Mrs Dunlop was an irritating critic. In 1786 she found line 2 of 'The Cottar's Saturday Night', originally 'That stream'd thro' great, unhappy Wallace heart' (Mrs Dunlop traced her descent from Wallace), 'unsuited to the patriot Hero or the patriot Bard.... I confess myself hurt', qtd Wallace, p.4.
6. See Raymond Lamont Brown, Clarinda, (Dewsbury, Yorkshire, 1968).
7. J.G. Lockhart, The Life of Sir Walter Scott, Bart, 1837-38, rpt, 5 vols, (Edinburgh, 1900), I, pp.357-58.
8. Burns contributed 114 songs to George Thomson, A

- Select Collection of Original Scottish Airs, 6 vols, (1793-1841). Arrangers included Haydn and Beethoven. See J. Cuthbert Hadden, George Thomson, The Friend of Burns, (London, 1898).
9. Robert H. Fitzhugh ed, Robert Burns. His Associates and Contemporaries, ed DeLancey Ferguson, (Chapel Hill, North Carolina, 1943), pp.43, 59.
  10. James Currie, The Works of Robert Burns.... To which are prefixed, Some Observations on the Character and Condition of the Scottish Peasantry, 1800, rpt, 4 vols, (Montrose, 1816), vol I, p.3.
  11. Currie, pp.13, 101.
  12. Currie, pp.110-12, 119.
  13. Currie, pp.159-60, 214-15.
  14. Currie, p.268.
  15. R.H. Cromek, Reliques of Robert Burns, 4th ed, (London, 1817), p.iv; [James Montgomery], Eclectic Review, v (May 1809), pp.393-410, qtd Low, pp.211-12.
  16. Anon, The Edinburgh Review, 13 (Jan 1809), qtd Alexander Peterkin, A Review of the Life of Robert Burns, and of various criticisms on his character and writings, (Edinburgh, 1815), pp.xxiv-xxxv; rpt Low, pp.178-96; Anon, qtd Peterkin, pp.xxxv, xxxvii; Walter Scott rpt Low, pp.196-209.
  17. Peterkin, pp.xvi, li, lvii, xxxi, x, lxviii-lxix.
  18. David Gray, qtd Peterkin, p.lxxxiii.
  19. John Gibson Lockhart, The Life of Robert Burns, (1828), rpt, ed William Scott Douglas with an essay on Robert Burns by Walter Raleigh, 2 vols, (Liverpool, 1914), vol I, pp.92, 106; Lockhart, vol II, pp.202-03.
  20. The Works of Robert Burns; with his Life, by Allan Cunningham, 8 vols, (London, 1834), vol I, pp.367-78.
  21. Cunningham, pp.365-66.
  22. The Works of Robert Burns, ed the Ettrick Shepherd [James Hogg] and William Motherwell, 5 vols,



- (Glasgow, 1834-36), vol V, pp.1, 11, 44, 63.
23. D.M. Moir, (Delta), The Poetical Works of the Past Half-Century, 3rd ed, (Edinburgh, 1856), p.43.
  24. Henry Shanks, The Peasant Poets of Scotland and Musings under the Beeches, (Bathgate, 1881), pp.4-14, 16-17, 21.
  25. Shanks, pp.29, 31, 19, 41.
  26. See the images reproduced in Carol McGuirk, 'Burns and Nostalgia', Burns Now, ed Kenneth Simpson, (Edinburgh, 1994), Chapter 3.
  27. Thomas Crawford, 'Introduction', Catherine Carswell, The Life of Robert Burns, rpt (Edinburgh, 1990), pp.194-95, See Kenneth Simpson, The Protean Scot, (Aberdeen, 1988); Kenneth Simpson, 'Robert Burns, "Heaven-taught ploughman?"', Burns Now, Chapter 4. Role-playing is almost a prerequisite for poetry as T.S. Eliot shows in The Three Voices of Poetry, (London, 1953). Robert Crawford, Devolving English Literature, (Oxford, 1992), p.96. Hugh MacDiarmid, Scottish Eccentrics, 1936, (New York, 1972), p.64; see The Scotsman (25th Nov 1959), qtd The Letters of Hugh MacDiarmid, ed Alan Bold, (London, 1984), p.800. Qtd [James Paterson], The Contemporaries of Burns, (Edinburgh, 1840), p.38.
  28. David Sillar, qtd John D. Ross, Robert Burns and his Rhyming Friends, (Stirling, 1928), pp.62-65; Burns' comments about Cririe are in a 1788 letter to Peter Hill (Letters, i, 276).
  29. Qtd David Hogg, Life of Allan Cunningham, with Selections from his Works and Correspondence, (Dumfries, Edinburgh and London, 1875), pp.347-48. There is an earlier version in Paterson, pp.70-71. See too Robert Burns, Poems, 51, 57, 58, 59, 67).
  30. John Wilson, 'Burns and the Ettrick Shepherd', Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine 4 (1819), p.521, 529;

Shanks, pp.86, 94; James Hogg, The Mountain Bard, 3rd ed, (Edinburgh and London, 1821), p.lxviii.

Part Two: Mountain Bard and Forest Minstrel

'Auld Rabbie's Bar is gane  
But Honest Allan's there  
And the ghaist o' the Electric Shepherd  
(As they cry him)  
Still hauds up his boozie snoot for nourishment:  
Puir Ferguson's forgot, eheu! Eheu!'

(Sydney Goodsir Smith, Kynd Kittock's Land,  
(Edinburgh, 1965), pp.13-14.)



### Chapter Three: The Ettrick Shepherd

'By contemplating a person's features minutely, modelling my own after the same manner as nearly as possible, and putting my body into the same posture which seems most familiar to them, I can ascertain the compass of their minds and thoughts, to a few items, either on the one side or the other,--not precisely what they are thinking of at the time, but the way they would think about any thing. This study has been the source of much pleasure to me, and it has likewise led me into many blunders.'

(James Hogg, 'The Spy's Account of Himself', The Spy, (Sat 1 Sept 1810), p.3.)

James Hogg (1770-1835), 'The Ettrick Shepherd', was well qualified for the role of national peasant poet. His rustic background was exemplary. Born in Ettrick, the second of four sons to Margaret Laidlaw and Robert Hogg, Hogg was hired out, at the age of seven, as a full-time cow herd. He spent the next ten years ascending the working ladder to the rank of shepherd. Hogg's active employment meant that his formal education was sharply curtailed; the writer claimed to have spent only six months at school. D.M. Moir's reaction to the Ettrick Shepherd, as a bard of Nature's Making, is typical of nineteenth century critics:

the intellectual history of James Hogg is certainly one of the most curious that our age has presented; and when we consider what an unlettered peasant was able to achieve by the mere enthusiasm of his genius, we are entitled to marvel certainly--not that his writings should be full of blemishes, but that his mind ever had power to burst through the Cimmerian gloom in which his early years seemed so hopelessly enveloped.

This superficial judgement neglects diverse avenues of informal learning which were open to Hogg. Most importantly, coming from a family of multi-talented tradition bearers, Hogg was exposed to oral forms of

creativity from an early age. The writer's grandfather, Will o' Phaup, was a skilled singer and tale-teller, and much of Will's extensive repertoire was transmitted to his daughter, Margaret Laidlaw, and to Hogg's uncle, William Laidlaw. Hogg's paternal relatives also included accomplished singers: his cousins Thomas and Frank Hogg both provided songs for nineteenth century collectors. Hogg, then, was able to draw on diverse aspects of traditional culture in his work, from stylistic elements to local legends, customs and beliefs. Hogg, as autodidact, was educated in a variety of oral sources which, like Burns, he skilfully adapted to literary ends.<sup>1</sup>

As an autodidact, Hogg enjoyed particular advantages in collecting and composing songs. With respect to traditional music, he was especially privileged. From the age of fourteen, Hogg performed on the fiddle, presumably drawing on traditional techniques such as scordatura, where the strings are retuned to the performer's taste. This did not always appeal to formally trained listeners. Anecdotal evidence about Hogg's early performances resembles a description of the Ettrick fiddler John Jamieson, by Alexander Campbell (the editor of Albyn's Anthology (1816), as 'a vile catgut scraper'. However, Hogg's profound knowledge of folk music proved a deep source for creative writing. His thorough acquaintance with oral formulae enabled him to write convincing, and appealing, ballad and lyric style songs, and to compile



his seminal The Jacobite Relics of Scotland (1819-21).<sup>2</sup>

Far from being unacquainted with literary traditions, though, the Ettrick Shepherd was familiar with a variety of texts through the libraries of his employers the Laidlaws, first at Willenslee and from 1790 at Blackhouse. Through these, he had access to major Scottish works, including Hamilton of Gilbertfield's version of Blind Hary's The Wallace (1722) and Allan Ramsay's The Gentle Shepherd (1725). Ramsay offered a pastoral persona which was as attractive to Hogg as it had been for Macpherson and Burns. Patie and Rodger were rustic role-models for Hogg's self-presentation; the more abrasive, genuine peasant Rodger may have held special appeal. Ramsay's work also introduced Hogg to styles of lyric poetry which he was already well equipped to emulate.

In his autobiographical writing, Hogg stresses his early identification with Scottish, and especially autodidactic, precedents. Although Hogg claimed to find Scots poetry difficult to understand, his reading of the work of Ramsay perhaps reinforced a natural prejudice (for a Scots speaker raised in the Borders) in favour of Scots language and culture. Even more influential, Hogg suggests, was his first encounter with Burns' work, which his 1832 'Memoir' places in 1797. A 'half daft man, named John Scott' recited 'Tam o' Shanter' to Hogg, leading him to a moment of--albeit tongue-in-cheek--self discovery and a career resolution: 'I resolved to be a poet, and to

follow in the steps of Burns'. Making his autodidactic lineage explicit, by 1832 Hogg was even claiming to share Burns's birthday of 25th January.<sup>3</sup>

Hogg's autodidactic background meant that he was not restrained by any one oral or literary style; he constantly sought new literary models. Hogg explored, for instance, the romantic traditions highlighted by David Groves in James Hogg: The Growth of a Writer (1988). However, Hogg's treatments are more ironic than Groves suggests. The Spectator provided a model for Hogg's satirical journal of 1810-11, The Spy, as well as the country gentleman persona he would adopt to such great effect in his later prose--from the 'Shepherd's Calendar' sequence to the editor of The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner (1824). Moreover, the poet engaged in a number of creative exercises. These included poetry competitions (in which he allows that his brother William excelled) and the forming of a local literary society with other shepherds. His earliest works, earning Hogg the local nickname of 'Jamie the Poeter', seem to have been largely in traditional, oral styles. He claims that his first original composition was 'An Address to the Duke of Buccleuch, in beha'f o' mysel', an' ither poor fo'k'. Patriotic verse on the local and national levels was to be an important component in Hogg's mature poetry from The Queen's Wake (1813) to The Border Garland (1819) and The Royal Jubilee (1822). Parodic and



experimental writing, as well as the imitation of oral and literary prototypes, intrigued Hogg. Mature productions, from The Poetic Mirror (1816) to A Queer Book (1832) demonstrate that a bard of Nature's making was capable of just as much sophistication as the apparently learned.<sup>4</sup>

Hogg was well aware of the potential advantages, and dangers, of adopting an autodidactic persona. The 'Memoirs' seek to foster and develop the character of the Ettrick Shepherd, but Hogg's interpretation is ambiguous. Hogg conforms, for instance, to contemporary images of the peasant poet's struggle to fame: physical difficulties with writing; persevering with poetry written on stitched sheets of paper with an inkhorn fastened to his waistcoat. From the earliest pages of the 'Memoir' he draws attention to his 'singular', inspired, manner of composing poetry:

Let the piece be of what length it will, I compose and correct it wholly in my mind, or on a slate, ere ever I put pen to paper; and then I write it down as fast as the A, B, C. When once it is written, it remains in that state; it being, as you very well know, with the utmost difficulty that I can be brought to alter one syllable, which I think is partly owing to the above practice.

Far from making extempore presentations, though, the poet made substantial editorial changes in his work, at least between editions (as seen in the following chapters).



Hogg claimed to be an inspired autodidact like Burns, acknowledging his debt to traditional culture but he sometimes depreciated oral styles of composition and transmission, in his desire to integrate with polite society. Here, for instance, is an uncharacteristically self-effacing reference to Hogg's early oral influences

Being little conversant in books, and far less in men and manners, the local circumstances on which some of my pieces are founded, may not be unentertaining to you. It was from a conversation that I had with an old woman, from Lochaber, of the name of Cameron, on which I founded the story of Glengyle, a ballad; and likewise the ground-plot of The Happy Swains, a pastoral, in four parts. This, which I suppose you have never seen, is a dramatic piece of great blunders: part of the latter were owing to my old woman, on whose word I depended, and who must have been as ignorant of the leading incidents of the year 1746 as I was.<sup>5</sup>

The statement suggests Hogg's acute awareness of the fact that autodidacts were thought to be unreliable cultural sources.

Hogg's relationship with Walter Scott played a crucial role in his adoption of the Ettrick Shepherd image. Hogg's literary career reached a turning point when, through the Laidlaws, the Hogg family became involved in Scott's project of collecting ballad texts for

The Minstrelsy. As Elaine Petrie states: 'The real stimulus to Hogg's creative awareness was his involvement in Scott's Minstrelsy'. Scott first visited Hogg in 1802; the friendship which developed between the two writers was to have major repercussions on Hogg's subsequent career. Scott assumed the role of Hogg's quasi-patron, attempting to intercede with the Duke and Duchess of Buccleuch to persuade them to financially support Hogg, as well as taking the Shepherd's part in Hogg's request for a Royal Literary Society pension. However, as epistolary evidence suggests, Scott was equally influential in Hogg's continued adherence to the 'Ettrick Shepherd' persona.<sup>6</sup>

The first decade of the nineteenth century was the key period in Hogg's consolidation of the Ettrick Shepherd as national autodidact. Following in Burns' footsteps, at Scott's suggestion, Hogg wrote a series of letters during trips to the Highlands between 1802 and 1804, which were first published in The Scots Magazine.<sup>7</sup> Hogg's 'Tours' demonstrate his need to legitimise his position as an authority on Scottish traditions (as well as the Lowland ethnocentrism later in the Relics). Hogg took a great liking to the Highlands; in 1804 he prepared to take over a sheep farm in Harris. The plan backfired because of legal difficulties, and Hogg lost hard-won capital. It may be, though, that the Northern foray alerted Hogg to the creative possibilities of adding broadly Celtic connotations to his peasant poet persona. Certainly there



is a shift in orientation from the Ramsayan title of Scottish Pastorals (1801) to the Ossianic implications of The Mountain Bard (1807) and The Forest Minstrel (1810).

The period of hardship which followed his problems in Harris perhaps pushed Hogg into highlighting his autodidactic worthiness. Facing severe financial problems, Hogg spent the rest of the summer in England and, instead of returning to Ettrick, hired himself as a shepherd to Mr Harkness of Mitchell-Slack in Nithsdale. It was there that Hogg met Allan Cunningham in 1806, and their formative meeting has passed into literary legend. As Hogg tended his ewes on Queensberry hill, Cunningham, then a bashful youth accompanied by his brother James, and himself a poet of Nature's making, approached the Shepherd. Hogg attests (ever ready to allude to his sexual exploits) that he feared the strangers 'were come to look after me with an accusation regarding some of the lasses'. The men spent an idyllic day together in Hogg's bothy, sharing Hogg's sweetmilk and James Cunningham's brandy. Thus began a longstanding personal and literary friendship. Perhaps the younger poet's sincere admiration encouraged Hogg in his contribution to the Scottish autodidactic tradition. In their correspondence, the two poets show a warm and lasting affection, perhaps related to Cunningham's position as one of the few contemporaries of Hogg who knew what it was to be thought a 'sumph' because of his peasant ancestry (Cunningham as peasant



poet is discussed in Chapter Nine).<sup>8</sup>

According to the well-established principles of peasant poet behaviour (discussed in Chapter One), real elements of Hogg's personality were progressively adapted into his literary persona. In the process, his real worth was obscured by a plethora of perceived and dubious attributes. As 'The Ettrick Shepherd' Hogg was depicted in an often offensive way: as coarse but poetic and as unrefined genius personified. Lockhart's highly condescending description, in Peter's Letters to His Kinsfolk (1819), offered a prototype for this image, presenting the public with a wild, almost Ossianic bard:

His face and hands are still as brown as if he lived eternally sub dio. His very hair has a coarse stringiness about it, which proves beyond dispute its utter ignorance of all arts of the friseur; and hangs in playful whips and cords about his ears, in a style of the most perfect innocence imaginable. His mouth, which, when he smiles, nearly cuts the totality of his face in twain, is an object that would make the Chevalier Ruspini die with indignation; for his teeth have been allowed to grow where they listed, and as they listed, presenting more resemblance, in arrangement, (and colour too,) to a body of crouching sharp-shooters, than to any more regular species of array. The effect of a forehead, towering with a true poetic grandeur above such features as these, and of an eye that illuminated their surface with the genuine

lightnings of genius...these are the things which I cannot so easily transfer to my paper. Upon the whole, his appearance reminded me of some of Wordsworth's descriptions of his pedlar.

Such a description, paradoxically, sets up the very image which Lockhart, in the 1831 Quarterly Review, claimed to despise of Hogg as 'boozing buffoon'.<sup>9</sup>

The Shepherd persona, despite its gross inaccuracies, had some positive side-effects. Gillian Hughes rightly notes that Hogg was allowed 'a particular authority in speaking of country matters, folklore and the supernatural, and the views and habits of the Scottish peasantry'. The image allowed Hogg to pursue traditional matters in his 'Shepherd's Calendar' sequence, mentioned above. The titles of Hogg's poetic collections, especially The Mountain Bard (1807) and The Forest Minstrel (1810), offer readers the vicarious pleasure of experiencing true rustic genius. Such exploitation, as the 'Ettrick Shepherd', allowed Hogg limited financial gain. But just as Hogg was not to be taken seriously as a writer of innovatory novels--witness the poor contemporary reception of his masterpiece, the Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner (1824)--so did his more experimental poetry fall on stone-deaf ears. For instance one of his finest works, the satirical 'Russiadde' (1822)

passed virtually unnoticed by contemporary critics. As Carlyle perceptively noted:

Is the charm of this poor man to be found herein, that he is a real product of nature, and able to speak naturally, which not one in a thousand is? An unconscious talent, though of the smallest, emphatically naïve.... The man is a very curious specimen. Alas, he is a man; yet how few will so much as treat him like a specimen, and not like a mere wooden Punch or Judy.<sup>10</sup>

In the formation of Hogg's contemporary image as 'product of nature' and autodidactic 'specimen', the most potent force was his treatment in Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, in which the Shepherd was exposed to a bewildering mixture of savage attack and superficial praise. In the magazine of August 1821, with respect to The Mountain Bard, his poetic talents were savagely assaulted; in the December 1821 number 'Maginn' (Morgan O'Doherty) ridiculed Hogg's supposed alcoholic tendencies. But on the other hand, in the February 1819 issue Hogg was favourably compared with Burns, as 'the poet laureate of the Court of Faery', although it was made clear that Hogg was the lesser poet of the two. Most importantly Hogg was a major figure in the 'Noctes Ambrosianae', a series of sketches which ran in Maga between 1822 and 1835, largely the work of 'Christopher North' (John Wilson).<sup>11</sup>



Adapting existing autodidactic models, from the 'Gentle Shepherd' to the Ossianic bard and Burns as Heaven taught ploughman, the Noctes Shepherd was a credible caricature. The characterisation thereby did incalculable damage to Hogg's reputation, personal and poetic. Moreover, it did Hogg an immense financial disservice: being saddled with this ungenteel persona probably cost Hogg the Royal Literary Society pension he desperately needed. 'The Shepherd' is consistently classed with Cunningham and Burns in a triumvirate of 'Scottish peasant poets', sometimes compared with their English autodidactic counterparts, Clare and Duck (discussed in Chapter Nine). An untaught genius, Hogg as caricature is irrational, lacking in erudition, and with a severely limited knowledge of the English language. He is prone to malapropisms and misunderstandings: 'monosyllable', for instance, he guesses to mean, 'a word o' three syllables' (I, p.254). His ignorance extends to semi-moronic responses like 'Wha'?', 'Eh?' and 'Na', and his linguistic range is limited. As a self-professed 'man o' genius', a 'Wild Huntsman' of the Forest (IV, p.24), the Shepherd is full of romantic enthusiasms and the inspired outbursts of a 'natural' man:

I hae little or nae knowledge at my finger-ends,  
or my tongue-tip either--it lies a' in my brain  
and in my heart. When, at times, the ideas come  
flashing out, my een are filled wi' fire--and

when the emotions come flowin up, wi'  
 water...like bees obeyin their instincks, that  
 lead them, without chart or compass, to every  
 nook in the wilderness where blows a family o'  
 heather-bells. (III, pp.240-41)

The description recalls Lockhart's supposedly favourable portrayal. The Ettrick Shepherd is 'excessive superstitious' (I, p.200) and devoted to his family, especially 'wee Jamie'. A Tory through and through, the Shepherd is unswervingly devoted to the Borders, and to Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine--a misleading representation considering Hogg's ambiguous political allegiances, as seen in 'The Profligate Princes' (1817) with its attack on the medieval Scottish nobility.<sup>12</sup> Equally he was frequently estranged from Maga.

The 'Noctes', like Southey's The Lives and Works of the Uneducated Poets (1831), assume that peasant poets should know their place and keep to it. Just as Burns was seen as natural at the plough but ill-suited to the parlour, so the Shepherd is too coarse and socially inept to fit in with the Maga set. Hogg is presented as bucktoothed and hirsute, with an 'offensive' laugh (I, p.242). His hands are dirty: when the Shepherd examines a book, North warns 'take care, James, that you don't soil it' (I, p.297). His manners 'may do in Ettrick--or the Forest--where the breed of wild boars is not wholly extirpated' but not in polite society (II, p.96).

More offensively still, Hogg's awareness of his own abilities is frequently attacked, in a patronising manner which highlights his autodidactic status. Wilson's two-faced treatment of Hogg is exemplified in a passage where the Shepherd reads 'The Great Muckle Village of Balmaquhapple':

North. (to Tickler, aside) Bad--Hogg's!

Shepherd. What's that you twi are speaking about? Speak up.

North. These fine lines must be preserved,

James. Pray, are they allegorical? (I, p.150)

Hogg was well aware of being pilloried. In 1825 he summed up his feelings for Wilson in a letter to Blackwood: 'I have a strange indefinable sensation with regard to him, made up of a mixture of terror, admiration and jealousy, just such a sentiment as one deil might be supposed to have of another'. Given the similarity of expression, perhaps Hogg alludes to this relationship in 'The Brownie of The Black Haggs', when Lady Sprot of Wheelhope regards the creature Merodach 'with such a look as one fiend would cast on another, in whose everlasting destruction he rejoiced'.<sup>13</sup> The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner (1824) develops this image still further, exploring the notion of destructive dependency.

The 'Noctes', being widely read, did real damage to Hogg's reputation. William Tennant (himself perceived as



an autodidact as discussed in Chapter Ten) sympathetically wrote to Hogg: 'I see you in Blackwood, fighting and reaping a harvest of beautiful black eyes from the fists of Professor John Wilson'. In 1821, John Aitken of Dunblane also drew attention to, 'the unceasing cruelty of these damned magazine gentry' towards Hogg. Although Hogg rebelled against the stereotype, he also conformed to it, exploiting his status as an authority on rural affairs in his poetry, as in his 'traditional tales' of the Scottish peasantry. As Hugh MacDiarmid suggests, perhaps empathically, 'He rejoiced in the process and assisted it, seeing it did him no harm, and fed the great legend of the Ettrick Shepherd as a public character'.<sup>14</sup>

On a lighter note, it can be argued that an awareness of his peasant poet image within literary circles sometimes prompted Hogg to act out self-parodies, which his audiences were largely too dense to appreciate at their subtler levels. There are several anecdotes in Lockhart's Life of Sir Walter Scott (1836) where the 'rude peasant' Hogg acts the clown, as for instance when he tries to jump onto his 'wall-eyed' pony after taking a stirrup-cup at the Abbotsford Hunt, breaking his nose in the process. The defamatory story, which has passed into literary folklore, of Hogg putting his feet up on Scott's sofa, and addressing Scott's wife as 'Charlotte' is usually interpreted as evidence of Hogg's lack of social graces.<sup>15</sup> Previous writers have missed an important

point: even if the story is true it is possible that the aspect of Hogg's personality which it really illustrates is his irrepressible sense of humour. Hogg may have been enjoying a quiet laugh, at the expense of his self-styled social superiors, as he acted the part of rural bumpkin. Considering the treatment outlined above, he had every right to do so. Moreover, in playing out his ambivalent role as 'Ettrick Shepherd' perhaps Hogg was pursuing the only realistic path to partial social acceptance.

Although Hogg can be caught in the act of creative role-playing, he thoroughly enjoyed parodying his image as the Ettrick Shepherd. He portrays his Muse in The Spy (1810-11) thus:

At her first entrance she was dressed in a mantle, somewhat resembling the dress of the first lady [Scott's Muse], but finding this incumbered her, she threw it off, and appeared in the dress of a native shepherdess, which suited her a great deal better. In this garb she accompanied the music with her voice, which indeed was melodious: and observing that this by degrees drew the attention of the crowd, she sung a great many of her native airs, which she performed with spirit and considerable facility; at one time falling into the true simple pathos, at another melting into the tender love ditty, and again bursting into a merry and comic strain.

Hogg, as his Spy persona suggests, was capable of great creative malleability, just as his greatest creation Gilmartin explores 'the chameleon art of shape-changing'. Wryly, though, he has his Muse, in the scene just quoted, ignored; the critics 'thinking it rather beneath them to seem interested in a girl so low bred'. On a heartfelt note, the Spy comments that Scottish critics are far more cutting than the English (an opinion endorsed by Byron in his well-known attack on 'Scotch Reviewers'):

their eulogiums seem rather to have been extorted from them, or at least granted out of compliance with the opinions of their Southern brethren: as they have always given them with a sort of reluctance, and accompanied by some reflections on the bad taste of the times.<sup>16</sup>

Plasticity of expression, as will be seen below, was a major feature both of Hogg's creative work and in the development of the Scottish autodidactic tradition. However, neither the full range of Hogg's voice, nor that of his rustic compeers, was fully appreciated because of the stereotypes applied to bards of Nature's Making.

By the later nineteenth century, though, an increasingly romantic alternative to the 'Noctes' Hogg was being offered. The 'buffoon' element was being forgotten, and patriotic, Ossianic elements exaggerated. Professor Veitch, for instance, considered Hogg as a 'self-taught'



original, 'filling a place in Scottish poetry which is unique' with 'exquisite sweetness, melody, and truthfulness to nature in many of his lyrics and descriptions'. Hogg had now entered into the second phase of his literary image; what David Groves terms 'Hogg as Something'. Hogg's daughter, Mrs Garden, was instrumental in this change, refuting the 'Noctes' stereotype:

Whatever be the merits of the picture of the Shepherd therein delineated--and no one will deny its power and genius--it is true, all the same, that this Shepherd was not the Shepherd of Ettrick, or the man JAMES HOGG.... Nor are the habitual bombast and boasting with which the Shepherd of the 'Noctes' is endowed to be regarded as serious characteristics.<sup>17</sup>

Citing family recollections, and her father's correspondence, Garden presents finer creative qualities in the poet than his contemporaries allowed. The bard of 'Nature's Making' was now, therefore, occasionally given more balanced attention than hitherto.

To Robert Thomson, Hogg's editor and biographer, the Shepherd was an autodidactic original, 'the only poetical shepherd of note which as yet Scotland or England had produced.... It was not by, but in spite of, his profession, that he became a great poet'. For Border writers in particular, Hogg's stature as local patriot has

been emphasised. Thomas Craig-Brown, the historian of Selkirkshire, combines the basic peasant-poet elements derived from Hogg's 'Memoir', with selected 'Noctes' attributes, to present the poet as a likeable, intelligent romantic. Certain motifs from Hogg's life were rapidly becoming obligatory in Hogg's literary image: for example, his solo 'lad o' pairts' rise to fame, and the magic spell his poetry cast over Yarrow and Ettrick. Speaking as a local enthusiast, Craig-Brown saw Hogg as a 'True son and hereditary freeman of the Forest' who 'worshipped its every burn and "hope" and tottering "keep"'.<sup>18</sup>

Many literary anecdotes emphasised Hogg's autodidactic attributes. Craig-Brown, for instance, recounted the legendary meeting of Hogg and the Scottish painter, David Wilkie. Hogg, initially unaware of the identity of his young visitor, is supposed to have remarked: 'Mr. Wilkie, I cannot tell you how proud I am to see you in my house--and how glad I am to see you so young a man'. The later critic James Hogg (the friend of Southey), writing of De Quincey, retold this anecdote, with a variation in the setting and in Hogg's remark:

When Wilkie showed Hogg some of his pictures, the latter looked over them one by one, and when it was apparent that he was expected to say something, he looked first at the works and then at the painter several times, as though comparing them together, and then said, 'It's

weel you're so young a man.' The expression bore two constructions. Wilkie took it as a compliment, and bowed.<sup>19</sup>

The printed anecdotes, influenced by Hogg's literary status as a second-rate Burns, often involved other literary characters, especially Scott. For instance, Sir Adam Fergusson, a friend of Scott's, used to tell the following dinner table tale, recalling the fiddling anecdote referred to at the beginning of this chapter:

During one of my visits there [Abbotsford].... among other guests was Hogg, the Ettrick Shepherd. I heard a horrible noise in an adjoining room, and, after listening some moments to it, became alarmed, and said to my host: 'What is that noise?' 'Oh!' said he, 'It's Hogg--just Hogg composing his verses.'<sup>20</sup>

This tale clearly reveals the 'peasant poet' notion: Hogg is a coarse, natural songster, retiring to compose when the inspiration descends on him.

Another persistent aspect of the image, related to ideas about Burns, is that Hogg was a poor farmer. It is often suggested that Hogg spent the time when should have been working in carousing. Donald Carswell, for instance, records how John Morrison, a surveyor, visited Hogg at Scott's instigation. It was clipping time, but far from being hard at work, 'Hogg and his assistants were sitting



round a keg of whisky, drinking it raw, out of teacups'.<sup>21</sup>

The 'Noctes' Hogg was being drastically re-evaluated, though, by the time of George Douglas' biography in the 'Famous Scots' series: 'it certainly behoves us to remember that, as a general rule, it is not only misleading, but unjust to the real Shepherd, to confound him with his counterfeit presentment of the 'Nights at Ambrose's'. This, perhaps, could have been a major stage of critical development but the thought is not really developed. Douglas' Hogg is primarily the autodidactic poet, even if presented more sympathetically than by Wilson and his friends. Probably the most important early work in reassessing Hogg was Edith Batho's The Ettrick Shepherd (1927). Batho was the first to present Hogg as an original writer of real significance, but even she falls in this trap of considering Hogg as one of a category of 'peasant poets', failing to appreciate that writers cannot be classed by their social origins alone. Even more insidiously, given her general stance of rational and genuine appreciation, Batho presents the 'Noctes' Shepherd as representing a somewhat finer image than the real Hogg, 'more consistently poetical and witty in his conversation.... even his literary and moral judgements, have the accent of Hogg, with a smaller proportion of valueless matter'.<sup>22</sup>

In 1927 T.E. Welby produced the first unexpurgated, sympathetic edition of the Confessions since the original

edition. This was vitally important in allowing Hogg's work to be fully appreciated. Only in 1947, though, when André Gide wrote the preface to a new edition of Hogg's Confessions, did Hogg begin to be seriously revalued.

Here, for the first time, a foreign writer was giving Hogg the credit he deserved and, as so often in Scotland, an outsider's opinion gave the writer a far higher status than credit from home could possibly have done. Gide, at long last, treated Hogg as a major writer of international stature rather than, primarily, as a peasant genius. Moreover, alert to the pressures the autodidact faced, Gide offered a new interpretation of the Confessions:

No doubt it was necessary that this book should try or feign to be edifying.... Otherwise it would not have been tolerated. But I doubt whether Hogg's personal point of view is that of true religion or whether it is not rather that of reason and common sense and a natural Tom Jones-like expansiveness.<sup>23</sup>

Gide's argument, suggesting that Hogg concealed his true intentions because of repressive contemporary markets, tends to corroborate the present writer's belief that Hogg played up to the role of a morally aware rustic ingenu.

John Carey's Oxford edition of the Confessions in 1969 continued the process of re-evaluating Hogg as a writer of stature rather than an outstanding autodidact.



Respectful editions by modern editors like Douglas Mack, Douglas Gifford and David Groves are replacing the heavily bowdlerised Victorian texts. The new Stirling /South Carolina Research Edition of the Collected Works of James Hogg is making the writer's work much more widely available. To use Groves' classification again, Hogg has attained the status of 'Everything'. There are inherent dangers in the process, the 'cult, consensus and context' identified by David McKie as the 'three perils of the Hogg Society'.<sup>24</sup> If attendance at the Hogg Society Conferences can be taken as an indication of the burgeoning interest in Hogg as a writer (as, of course, with other Scottish writers and notably Scott) it is a hopeful sign that recent speakers and participants have come from Canada, America, France, the Netherlands, and Italy, as well as Scotland. However, the increasingly academic character of the Society--seen in its journal, Studies in Hogg and His World,--may give some cause for concern. There is a move away from the original character of the movement, which tried to include local people, and a recasting of Hogg's literary image as a peasant of genius.

Hogg's image in Ettrick tradition, though, has a different quality from that of his position within literary culture. It cannot be isolated from the literary image, but there are subtle differences. In the nineteenth century there were those who remembered the Shepherd as a familiar figure in Ettrick. In his



lifetime, he seems to have been well liked locally, seen more as a romantic 'character' than the literary buffoon; a likeable and even charming man. Today, he is seen as a lesser Burns, 'every bit as famous' according to Tibbie Shaw, descended from Tibbie Shiel's (Hogg's favourite publican) last maidservant. Added to this is the local conviction that Hogg was religiously devout, and a basically good man, even if occasionally 'coorse'.<sup>25</sup>

In the Ettrick tradition, like Burns, Hogg appreciated a good drink, and the charms of an attractive woman. Documentary evidence is sometimes cited to back up this image: the Mitchells of Henderland, descended from Tibbie Shiel, possess a letter in which Hogg claims to have often faced the cutty stool. It may well be that Hogg exaggerated his own promiscuity in an attempt to appear like Burns. The letters he wrote to women before his marriage suggest gallantry without sexual innuendo and, after his marriage, there is no evidence to suggest infidelity. But Hogg as a great lover, modelled on Burns, has proved a persistent image. James Barrie, who lives in Hogg's last home at Eldinhope, notes: 'We get a lot of people claiming to be descendants. All over, New Zealand, Australia, Canada, the States...some of them probably will be, but no all of them can be'.<sup>26</sup>

The Shepherd, within Ettrick, is perceived as more of a rounded figure, with literary learning as well as rustic characteristics, than the autodidactic image of Hogg

generally allows. Unlike Burns, the familiar 'Rabbie' of oral tradition, Hogg is always referred to respectfully, as 'James Hogg' or 'Hogg'. The sheep-farming community, painfully aware of the potential problems in shepherding, allow for the possibility that Hogg's poverty was related to circumstance rather than the negligence which the literary tradition suggests. The people of Ettrick are well informed about Hogg's activities, better so than many critics. Judging by the fact that there was a copy of the 1794 edition of The Scots Magazine preserved by the late James Mitchell's grandfather, the authorship of the 'Mistakes of a Night' was known in Ettrick long before it was in common literary knowledge. Walter Barrie is well aware of the literary traditions, and agrees with the notion that while Hogg was plagued with innumerable visitors, he was always a gentleman: 'hospitable, I think. Pleased to see folk at ony time'.<sup>27</sup>

The Ettrick orthodoxy draws heavily on the writer's own 'Memoir' (perhaps from its oral rendition). Of the literary anecdotes, as would be expected, many have undergone variation in oral transmission. For instance, Lockhart's story about the Abbotsford Hunt where Hogg broke his nose (quoted above) features several additional details in the version told by Alex Cameron, who was raised in Selkirk and Ettrick. Cameron turns an insulting story into a lively portrayal of a raucous Shepherd. Hogg now has a homing horse, used to carrying the inebriate



Shepherd home, and the story has a humorous coda: 'When he got in, he didnae know where he was, quite drunk I suppose, and he says, 'put me to bed, and don't waken me till the next Abbotsford Hunt!' Cameron recalls, too, what is probably the residue of nineteenth century gossip about Hogg's relationship with his patroness, the Duchess of Buccleuch, 'People would read into that relationship things. I don't think there was any. These ladies had these relationships. They were patrons for the poets'.<sup>28</sup>

Attributing an action to Hogg adds a wealth of rich associations, making the tale inherently more interesting, demonstrating the high level of local enthusiasm and friendly respect for Hogg. It places the Shepherd firmly in his Ettrick setting, allowing the local people to identify with the poet as peasant. Another group of anecdotes focusses on Tibbie Shiel's perceptions of Hogg. Some are documented in the literary tradition, for instance Tibbie's oft quoted remark 'Aye, Hogg was a gey sensible man, for all the nonsense he wrat'. Others survive only orally: Mrs Shaw has a story about Tibbie's specially designed settle-bed: when Hogg was paralytically drunk she opened a gate at the back and tipped the poet into a box bed behind (the gate can be seen in an early twentieth century photograph in Mrs Shaw's possession). Mrs Shaw's grandfather told several unrecorded humorous tales about Hogg. One time, for example, Hogg went out onto the hills in haar so dense that he filled his pipe



with fog. The tale could be applied to anyone, as a weather anecdote, but it is significant that local anecdotes have accrued around Hogg.<sup>29</sup>

Hogg's traditional image, as a key figure in local and national literature, beyond his autodidactic status, is epitomised in material culture, as well as narratives. There are many local relics of Hogg: his curling stone, formerly in Tibbie Shaw's possession and now in Aikwood Tower, recalls his sporting prowess. His plaid, in the Bowhill museum, stands witness to his working relationship with the Forest. Hogg's watch, in the possession of the Mitchells, was given to their ancestress Tibbie Shiel, and testifies to the attention she gave the poet during his last illness. Records of Hogg's interactions with Borders' agricultural societies, such as the manuscript 'Crookwelcome Book' and 'Selkirkshire Agricultural Society Books', as well as Hogg's letter to Tibbie Shiel, are treasured heirlooms. They foster local pride through material links with James Hogg. This sense of a shared heritage, backed by oral and literary tradition, means that Hogg is held in very high estimation in modern Ettrick. This sense has increased as Hogg, in the last two decades, has undergone literary rehabilitation.

Ironically, while the work of those who considered themselves more learned than Hogg, such as Wilson, is largely forgotten, Hogg's work is still remembered. It is recited orally: in traditional preformance contexts,

Borders schools, and at social events like the concerts which took place between the wars in Selkirkshire. The late James Mitchell of Henderland and Mrs Isabelle Shaw, who were brought up in Ettrick Forest in the first half of the twentieth century, both performed 'The Skylark' publicly. Hogg's songs are still performed throughout Scotland. The McCalmans' record of Hogg's songs in the traditional idiom, The Ettrick Shepherd (1980) has contributed to, as well as being a product of, the revived interest in Hogg's work. The selection includes a Jacobite item, 'Macleans Welcome', as well as the comic 'The Witch of Fife', and tragic love song 'The Moon was a-Waning'. New settings of Hogg's songs have been made by artists from Helen J. Lockhart to Ronald Stevenson (discussed below). Stevenson sees Hogg as a Scottish composer of very high calibre, with 'a grasp of rhythms (notably the 'Scots snap'), wide-leaping intervals (derived from cross-string violin playing) and archaic modes--all characteristic of Scots folksong'.<sup>30</sup>

Formal performances have helped to sustain interest in Hogg's work. During the 1987 and 1989 Borders Festivals, Leonard Friedman played Hogg's violin, now the property of Edinburgh University, and recently restored by Gordon Stevenson. As part of the Ettrick Ballad Opera Project, Judy Steel's 1995 libretto for Muckle Mou'd Meg utilised Hogg's version of the tale. A one man show 'The Shepherd Justified', based on Hogg's letters and 'Memoir',



was written by Frederic Mohr and performed by Donald Douglas at Bowhill in 1985 and in Edinburgh at the Traverse Theatre. Hogg's semi-autobiographical and self-promotional story, 'The Love Adventures of Mr George Cochrane', was adapted for performance by the Rowan Tree Comany in Dumfries and in Moffat in 1993. Hogg's life and work were given special prominence during the October 1988 Borders Festival, co ordinated by Judy Steel as 'the Ettrick Shepherd's Festival', with biographical, poetic and musical celebrations, as well as dramatic performances of Hogg's 'The Witches of Traquair', 'Katie Cheyne' and 'Kilmeny'. There have been two stage adaptations of The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner. The first, by Stuart Paterson, was a touring production by Glasgow's TAG theatre company, performed in Strathclyde secondary schools as well as venues in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Stirling, Edinburgh, Kelso and Selkirk. The second, by Jack Render, appeared in Edinburgh's Lyceum Theatre in 1984. The effect of continuing performances is felt at all levels: local, literary, and the popular 'cult'.<sup>31</sup>

Much of Hogg's lasting appeal is based on his character as an autodidact; much of the paraphernalia, and many of the customs which have been associated with this (admittedly intermittent) cult are modelled on that of Burns' cult. One of the most obvious elements in this cult is the 'Hogg Supper' modelled on the calendar customs surrounding Burns. One of the earliest versions was the



Burns Supper held in Edinburgh on 23rd February 1819. The speeches paralleled the two 'peasant poets' and Wilson's toast to 'Rabbie' depicted Hogg, the guest of honour, as 'the only worthy successor of his genius.... both identifying themselves in all things with the spirit of their station'.<sup>32</sup> The comparison of Hogg to Burns, reinforced by the custom of a celebratory dinner, would give rise to a number of parallel occasions in the future.

The 1832 visit of Hogg to London perpetuated the notion of Hogg as Burns' successor (an attribute which certainly must have pleased the Shepherd, given his avowed intention in his 'Memoir' to better Burns). Hogg was appreciated in the London literary circles, more so than in the deprecatory climate of Scotland. The image he achieved was produced by a mixture of the 'Noctes' viewpoint, and the realisation that Hogg in person transcended his stereotype. S.C. Hall, the writer and magazine editor, recalled the visit fifty years later, remembering Hogg as 'rustic without being coarse'. During Hogg's visit a public dinner was held for over two hundred eminent people. The occasion, to make the comparison with Burns explicit, was held on the 25th of January. Two of Burns' sons were present, and Hogg brewed punch in Burns's punch bowl. It was a memorable event, not least for the toast-master's belief that 'Shepherd' was Hogg's name rather than a soubriquet.<sup>33</sup>

The identification of Hogg with Burns took concrete

shape as Burnsian dinners became a natural way, in the popular imagination, to celebrate Hogg. In August 1834, at the Tontine Hotel in Peebles, the Burns / Hogg celebration developed one step further. A prestigious public dinner was held exclusively in Hogg's honour. Hogg, whose health was in decline, made an eloquent speech, comparing himself to Burns and stressing his claim to share Hogg's birthday. Furthermore, given that Hogg was Burns's natural successor, he voiced his desire to have had a son born on the 25th January, who would undoubtedly be the best poet of the three.<sup>34</sup>

The social grammar of autodidacticism became as well developed as its literary conventions. The habit, drawn from the Burns customs, of celebrating Hogg's genius with a meal was continued on the 100th anniversary of Hogg's birth with a public dinner at Yarrow, on December 8th 1871. And, more recently, it was revived by the Mitchells when they organised a Supper in Tibbie Shiel's to celebrate the 150th anniversary of Hogg's death in 1985. The occasion was an attempt to celebrate Hogg's genius with speeches and song. Local variations included replacing the traditional Burns Supper menu of haggis, neeps and chappit tatties with an Ettrick variation: mutton, greens, and clootie dumpling. While the Mitchells had hoped that this might become a regular event, in view of the amount of work it took to organise (artists who performed at the event contributed their services gratis),



they have not repeated the experience publicly. But a glass is still raised in Hogg's memory in Yarrow, especially on Burns Night. Again Hogg is personally toasted, on occasion, with whisky and food. Past Conference dinners of the James Hogg Society should be mentioned in this context. Although, of course, such affairs are standard practice, the Society has taken care to make them something more significant: dedicated to Hogg. The food is accompanied by performances of Hogg's songs, and the dinners are held in resonant settings, for Hogg fans, such as the Gordon Arms, accompanied by celebratory speeches. At the 1989 Conference, the Secretary of the Burns Federation made a lunchtime toast at Bowhill, to standard Burnsian fare, including a dedication 'To a Haggis' in The Shepherd's name.

The iconography of Hogg reinforces the literary and oral nuances of the poet as peasant. As some of his portraits have been frequently reproduced, they have reinforced the Ettrick Shepherd stereotype. Hogg in art is a highly stylised figure. He is invariably dressed in the clothes of his profession; and the artists contemporary with Hogg followed current romantic practices in depicting the writer with the high forehead of genius, and the faraway look of someone who has been touched by the Muse. Of his several portraits, probably the most flattering to Hogg is the A. Croquis portrait; D. MacIise's drawing based on this has been reproduced



several times. Hogg is represented by Croquis as a tall man, full-length, with his hand on his hip. He looks about fifty years old, and has the mane of hair and high, poetic forehead with which Lockhart and Wilson credited him. Hogg wears a shepherd's plaid, but underneath this he has an elegant suit and cravate. He carries a Shepherd's staff and hat, and is given a determined but friendly expression. This relatively assertive portrait of Hogg is the one which is favoured in Ettrick. It was featured on the cover of the popular edition of A Selection of Poems by James Hogg The Ettrick Shepherd produced by James Dunlop of the Glen Cafe in 1985.

The autodidactic image of Hogg is, equally, sustained by the portrait Sir John Watson Gordon composed for Blackwood. In this painting, the inevitable crook and plaid are featured, as is the mane of hair and the towering forehead. The hair is somewhat wilder than in the Croquis portrait, and Hogg's expression more docile. The face is plumper, and the suit more countrified: what one might expect for the publisher of the 'Noctes'. This portrait, again, has been reproduced several times: in the collected edition of the Noctes Ambrosianae (1863), for example. The William Nicholson portrait, now in the National Portrait Gallery of Scotland, is probably the best-known image of Hogg, and the most stereotyped. The portrait is half-length, and Hogg, as usual, is dressed in the plaid, with a serviceable country suit beneath it. He

has a romantic expression on his face, with downturned eyebrows, wistful eyes and a suspiciously shiny nose. His forehead is a poetic tower, his hair a shaggy mane, his lips are rosy, and he has a firm chin and sideburns. This has been used as the frontispiece for several works on Hogg, including Nelson Smith's James Hogg (1980).

Nicholson's portrait shows strong parallels with the best-known paintings of Burns, particularly the Naismith portrait. Hogg's hairstyle, for instance, draws on Burns' side-parted look, albeit more unruly. His long face, and mournful brows resemble Burns. Artistic representations of Scott, as a fellow Borderer, also influenced visual realisations of Hogg. The Wilkie portrait of Scott with his little dog offered a precedent for the romantic portrait, now in Selkirk Town Hall, of Hogg, with a collie dog at his heels. The latter is probably the picture Hogg sat for in Edinburgh in February 1815, when he requested from Laidlaw, in mock despair, that his own dog Lion should be brought as soon as possible, or the Shepherd would have to model with a butcher's dog.<sup>35</sup>

The literary 'Ettrick Shepherd', then, is reinforced by his portrayal in the visual arts. Hogg himself exploited the artistic possibilities of his peasant poet image by having a seal designed featuring a romantic, and somewhat Ossianic, harp. Recently Hogg's visual image has been given a popular treatment. The Hogg society has produced tea towels, on sale at the Glen Cafe at the head



of St Mary's Loch, as well as through the Society. This Hoggarabilia features the Society logo: a wild-haired Shepherd, complete with plaid.

In Ettrick Forest there are a number of monuments to the Shepherd which, perhaps, stress the Borders identity of the writer as at least equal to his autodidactic status. Hogg's gravestone in Ettrick Churchyard is relatively simple, with the distinctive harp in a panel at the top of the square-cut stone engraved with his dates, place of birth and death; Hogg's wife, Margaret Phillips, is also commemorated, although she is buried in Warriston Cemetery, Edinburgh. Nearby, showing Hogg's identification with his traditional background, is the stone he erected to his grandfather, 'William Laidlaw. The Far famed WILL o' PHAUP. Who for his feats of frolic, agility & strength Had no equal in his day'. A more elaborate monument to Hogg was presented to the public on 28 June 1860, and overlooks St Mary's Loch. At the inauguration ceremony, two of Hogg's children were present, and Sherriff Bell gave the address. Alex Currie of Darnick was the sculptor, and the stone was provided by the Duke of Buccleuch, from his White Quarry at Thirlestane. An estimated two thousand attended the dedication of the statue, engraved with the verse 'he taught the wandering winds to sing'. The Rev James Russell led the prayers, and Tibbie Shiel stated that it was a 'clay cauld likeness'.<sup>36</sup> This statue, in the heart



of Yarrow, still attracts a number of summer visitors, functioning almost as a shrine for the great poet.

The most substantial Memorial to the Shepherd, though, erected on 28th July 1898, at Ettrickhall, grandly highlights the writer's position as an outstanding, autodidact. This replaced a stone set in the wall, marked 'J.H.' to indicate the site of Hogg's birth. At a time when Hogg was fading from living memory, perhaps the new, twenty foot obelisk seemed appropriate to commemorate a local figure of national distinction. The monument is in red Corsehill freestone, featuring a bronze medallion of the poet by Mr. Hubert Paton, made in red Corsehill freestone. Mr R. Stenhouse of Hawick ornamented it and Mr. Hector, an architect, prepared the design, incorporating the inscription, 'Erected on the site of the cottage in which James Hogg the Ettrick Shepherd was born 1770. Died 1835. The Edinburgh Border Counties Association'. In the dedication, performed by Lord Napier and Ettrick, reference was made to Hogg's unique educational status, in comparison with Burns, who had culture, and Ramsay, who came from a family of gentle folk. R. Borland, the local antiquarian, followed Napier's lead by stressing the influence of local legend and landscape on Hogg the writer. Unfortunately, the monument was subsequently vandalised but, showing continued respect for the Shepherd's memory, the Berwickshire naturalists club in 1883 contributed to erect

an iron railing to protect it. As interest grew around the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of Hogg, a subscription list was taken to improve the monument, and the memorials have been restored several times since.<sup>37</sup>

Hogg has remained a well-known and much-loved figure in Ettrick Forest, consistently referred to as an autodidact of distinction in local celebrations such as the Blanket Preaching at St. Mary's Churchyard in Yarrow, commemorating open air conventicles. One hundred and fifty years after Hogg's birth, the Preaching held on 28th July 1935 focussed on 'the homely, plaided form of James Hogg.... a Natural Poet, despite his too facile pen, his excess of production, his inability to exercise self-criticism'. The qualified praise shows the resilience of the image of Hogg as Ettrick Shepherd.<sup>38</sup>

As a Borders and Scottish autodidact, Hogg's image has been further enriched by the local and national media. The Kelso Chronicle 'Poet's Album' series of 1931 portrayed the Shepherd as 'the bard of the fairies', and 'the Wordsworth of Scotland', with a fixed birthdate (based on Hogg's baptismal date): December 9 1770. His profession and six months of schooling, as usual, were dwelt on; the inevitable comparison with Burns made, and a romantic (locally patriotic) conclusion drawn: 'Dunbar, Ferguson, Scott and Ramsay can give no points to the Ettrick Shepherd'. Around the time of the one hundred and



fiftieth anniversary of Hogg's birth, in 1935, there was a flurry of interest in the press. The Scotsman observed:

there was something in Hogg, amidst much dross, that was the genuine gold. You see it in that stirring song 'Cam' Ye by Athol' that we still sing, or in the winning 'Come owre the Stream, Charlie, and Dine wi' Maclean'.... He was not one of the first masters of song, whose taste never errs. But he could bring it off now and then: even surprisingly enough when you come to think of it, in the English. You'll know Kilmeny, 'the pearl of them all'.

Hogg was 'no Shelley', the piece continued, but his world was 'the Ballad World'.<sup>39</sup> This romantic depiction of Hogg was typical of the media, both in the thirties and today. Hogg is, in the late twentieth century, fairly regularly featured on television and radio, largely as the result of the modern revival. The Ettrick Shepherd, for instance, has featured on BBC Scotland in programmes from 'Weir's Way' to 'McGregor's Gathering', on Border TV and radio and even Radio Bristol. These shows have helped to enhance a sense of local pride in the Ettrick Shepherd's achievements. Such a cluster of events, though, focusing on Hogg, promotes his image as a major, and prolific, writer. Hogg, then, is finally transcending his image as The Ettrick Shepherd. He is beginning to be appreciated as a great writer deserving of celebration.



As the Ettrick Shepherd, Scotland's leading peasant poet, Hogg published work which reveals a complex mixture of a desire to please the reading public by conforming to autodidactic typecasting, and a counter wish to experiment with styles and themes. In return for accepting the codes of autodidacticism, Hogg received a near pre-determined reputation. The self taught poet operated within a system of constricting rules, facing condescending directives but also, at times, successfully striking a bargain with polite literature. In the following five chapters I will discuss the major types of poetry Hogg explored: lyric, ballad, national and religious verse, narrative poetry and a looser group of parodic and experimental poetry. By considering Hogg's work in this way, I hope to show the ways in which the Ettrick Shepherd persona both stimulated, and limited, Hogg's poetic voice. His local, and national, affiliations seem to have made Hogg particularly appealing to later peasant poets. The genres he explored offered prototypes for later exponents of the autodidactic tradition in Scottish poetry.

## Notes

1. D.M. Moir, Sketches of the Poetical Literature of the Past Half-Century, (Edinburgh and London, 1856), p.102. Much information about Hogg's life is from 'Memoir of the Author's Life', first published in The Mountain Bard; consisting of Ballads and Songs, founded on Facts and Legendary Tales, (Edinburgh and London, 1807), revised by Hogg with 'Reminiscences' in the expanded edition (Edinburgh and London, 1821) and further expanded for Altrive Tales, (London, 1832) with additional 'Reminiscences of Former Days. My First Interview with Allan Cunningham', The Edinburgh Literary Journal 1 (1828-29), pp.374-75 and 'Reminiscences of Former Days. My First Interview with Sir Walter Scott, The Edinburgh Literary Journal, 2 (1829), pp.51-52. As Silvia Mergenthal demonstrates, in James Hogg: Selbstbild und Bild (Frankfurt am Main, 1989), the revisions show Hogg's gradual formation of the Ettrick Shepherd persona.
2. See Alexander Campbell, 'Fragments of Two Journals, 1802 and 1816', EUL MSS La. II. 378, especially f.1; Z, 'Further Particulars in the Life of the Ettrick Shepherd', The Scots Magazine, 67 (1805), pp.501-03 and this anecdote, reworked, in the 1807 'Memoir', pp.vi-vii. See James Hogg, The Jacobite Relics of Scotland; being the Songs, Airs and Legends, of the Adherents to the House of Stuart, 2 vols, (Edinburgh and London, 1819-21).
3. Hogg's comments about Burns do not appear in his 1807 or 1821 'Memoir' but in the 1832 version, p.11ff.
4. See David Groves, James Hogg: The Growth of a Writer, (Edinburgh, 1988). Hogg, 1807 'Memoir', p.xiff.
5. Hogg, 1807 'Memoir', pp.xiii-iv; p.xii. The latter passage's suggestion that oral history is inaccurate



- is uncharacteristic of Hogg who, usually, has oral accounts as superior to written; see Tales of the Wars of Montrose, (London, 1835), pp.19-20, 24-25.
6. E.E. Petrie, James Hogg: A Study in the Transition from folk tradition to literature, Unpublished Ph.D thesis, University of Stirling, 1980, p.91. The Letters of Sir Walter Scott. 1787-1807, ed H.J.C. Grierson, 1932-37, rpt, (New York, 1971) illustrate Scott's attempts to interest prominent people in Hogg's work from Anna Seward (I, p.351) to Robert Surtees (I, p.356) and Richard Heber (XII, p.285). However, the frequent references in The Journal of Sir Walter Scott, ed W.E.K. Anderson, (Oxford, 1972) to the 'boar' of Ettrick and his 'swinish' productions suggest another side to the relationship.
  7. See James Hogg, Highland Tours. The Ettrick Shepherd's Travels in the Scottish Highlands and Western Isles in 1802, 1803 and 1804, ed William F. Laughlan, (Hawick, Rox., 1981).
  8. James Hogg, 'Reminiscences of Allan Cunningham', The Mountain Bard, (1821), pp.cix-cxii; James Hogg, 'Autograph Poems, Letters &c., James Hogg', NLS MS 2245.
  9. J.G. Lockhart, Peter's Letters to His Kinsfolk, 1819, rpt ed William Ruddick, (Edinburgh, 1977), pp.44-45; See too Lockhart's treatment of Hogg in 'Art II. Attempts in Verse. By John Jones, an Old Servant. With Some Account of the Writer Written by Himself, and an Introductory Essay on the Lives and Works of Our Uneducated Poets. By Robert Southey', review, The Quarterly Review, 44, (1831), pp.81-82.
  10. Gillian Hughes, James Hogg's Fiction and the Periodicals, Unpub Ph.D thesis, University of Edinburgh, 1981, pp.143-44. Thomas Carlyle, The Notebooks of Thomas Carlyle from 23d March 1822 to 16 May 1832, ed Charles Elliot Norton, 1898, rpt



- (Marmaroneck, New York, 1972), p.251.
11. See Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, passim. The 'Noctes Ambrosianae' sketches are collected in John Wilson, ed, Noctes Ambrosianae, 4 vols, (Edinburgh, 1863); see vol I, p.254. All subsequent references to the 'Noctes' are to this edition and given in the text, within parentheses.
  12. James Hogg, 'The Profligate Princes', Dramatic Tales, (London and Edinburgh, 1817), vol I, pp.1-187.
  13. 'Blackwoods Papers', NLS MS 4014, f.287; James Hogg, 'Brownie of the Black Hags', Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, 24, (1818), pp.489-96.
  14. See 'Autograph Poems, Letters, &c. James Hogg', NLS MS 2245, ff.150; 64; Hugh MacDiarmid, Scottish Eccentrics, 1936, rpt, (New York, 1972), p.93. Incidentally, as early as 1813, in 'Constable Letter Books', NLS MS 7200, f.203, Hogg wrote to Constable, in connexion with his proposed collection of 'traditionary tales': 'as I think the Ettrick Shepherd is rather become a hackneyed name and imagine that having gained a character as a bard is perhaps no commendation to a writer of prose tales I am determined to publish them under a fictitious title--J.H. Craig of Douglas'. The proposal was dropped; 'Ettrick Shepherd' was too commercially viable for 'traditionary' matters to be rejected.
  15. J.G. Lockhart, Memoirs of the Life of Sir Walter Scott, 1836, rpt 5 vols, (Boston, 1901), III, p.481 and I, pp.379-80.
  16. James Hogg, 'Mr Shuffleton's Allegorical Survey of the Scottish Poets of the Present Day', The Spy, (Sept 8 1810), No II, pp.12-14.
  17. John Veitch, qtd James Russell, Reminiscences of Yarrow, 1841, rpt, (Selkirk, 1894), pp.195-96; Mrs. [Mary Gray] Garden, Memorials of James Hogg, The Ettrick Shepherd, (Paisley, 1885), pp.v-vi.

18. Robert Thomson, 'Life of the Author', James Hogg, The Works of the Ettrick Shepherd, new ed, 2 vols, (London, 1865), p.ix.; Thomas Craig-Brown, A History of Selkirkshire or Chronicles of the Ettrick Forest, 2 vols, (Edinburgh, 1886), I, p.337.
19. Craig-Brown I, p.345; James Hogg, De Quincey and his Friends, (London, 1895), p.85.
20. 'Anecdotes of Sir Walter', The Border Magazine, (1897), p.99.
21. David Hill, 'A Lamb and a Pair of Shoes', Transactions of the Hawick Archaeological Society, (1971), pp.3-12.
22. George Douglas, James Hogg, Famous Scot Series, (Edinburgh, 1899), p.31; Edith Batho, The Ettrick Shepherd, 1927, rpt (New York, 1969), pp.101-2.28.
23. James Hogg, The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner, ed T.E. Welby, (London, 1927); André Gide, 'Introduction' to James Hogg, The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner, 1947, trans Dorothy Bussy, rpt (London, 1969), p.xii.
24. James Hogg, The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner, ed John Carey, (Oxford, 1969); David McKie, 'Popular Memory and the Justification of War: Post-Falklands Thoughts on The Three Perils of Woman', Papers given at the First Conference of the James Hogg Society, Stirling 1983, ed Gillian Hughes, pp.1-5.
25. Alex Cameron, Cassette Tape T90-6, personal collection of Valentina Bold.
26. 'Letter to Tibbie Shiel'; Walter Barrie, Cassette Tape T89-3, personal collection of Valentina Bold.
27. See R.P. Gillies, Memoirs of a Literary Veteran, 3 vols, (London, 1851).
28. Alex Cameron, Cassette Tapes T90-6 and T90-7, personal collection of Valentina Bold.
29. Field Notes, Valentina Bold, 1990.



30. The McCalmans, The Ettrick Shepherd, (Greenwich Village, 1980), GVR 209; David Groves, 'Stepping Back to an Early Age,' Studies in Scottish Literature, 21 (1986); Helen J. Lockhart, One Woman's Music, (privately printed, 1990), p.14; G. W. Lockhart, The Lives and Poetry of Robert Louis Stevenson and Hogg, 'The Ettrick Shepherd', (privately recorded, nd); Ronald Stevenson, A Year over Young, (Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire, 1987); Ronald Stevenson, Personal Communication with Valentina Bold, 1990.
31. 'The Love Adventures of Mr George Cochrane' was adapted by Kenneth Johnston and performed by the Rowan Tree Comany, directed by Judy Steel, in Dumfries and in Moffat during July 1993. For further information on the TAG production, including press cuttings, see Glasgow University's Theatre Archive, STA E.b. Box 3/6.
32. Lockhart 1977, pp.39-40.
33. Hall, qtd Garden, pp.204-05. Hogg's claim to have shared Burns's birthday on 25th January has frequently been refuted. However it is worth noting that he was not alone in claiming to share natal details with Burns. In a letter to Robert Chambers in 1838, George Thomson claimed to have been born, like Burns, in 1759, although the Dunfermline register of births shows Thomson was born in 1757. See Garden, pp.2-4; J. Cuthbert Hadden, George Thomson, The Friend of Burns, (London, 1908), p.1.
34. See 'Small Purchases', NLS MS 5319.
35. See Michael Robson, Tibbie Shiel, (Newcastleton, Rox., 1986).
36. See Craig-Brown, I, p.349.
37. See James Hogg The Ettrick Shepherd. Memorial Volume. Being the Speeches delivered on the occasion of the Unveiling of the Memorial, erected to



commemorate the Birthplace of JAMES HOGG, the Ettrick Shepherd, at Ettrickhall, on 28th June 1898, (Selkirk, nd).

38. R.S.K., The Blanket Preaching, (Galashiels, nd), pp.58-59.
39. See the considerations of Hogg, respectively, in 'The Poet's Album', The Kelso Chronicle, (Dec 4 1831) and The Scotsman, (Nov 21 1935).

#### Chapter Four: Lyrics

'James Hogg, or the Ettrick Shepherd, as he loves to call himself, is acknowledged on all hands to be the living and visible head of the national school of song; his genius seems the natural offspring of the pastoral hills and dales of the Border; and his speculations, whether in verse or prose, comes to us in the way that gold comes from the mine, unwinnowed and unrefined, for he is without higher education than what enables him to write his wayward fancies, and read them when he has done.'

(Allan Cunningham, 'Hogg', The Athenaeum, 313, (Oct 26 1833), p.720.)

The Ettrick Shepherd enjoyed presenting himself as a divinely inspired and romantic 'natural songster':

I never knew either man or woman who has been so uniformly happy as I have been; which has been partly owing to a good constitution, and partly from the conviction that a heavenly gift, conferring the powers of immortal song, was inherent in my soul.

Lyric songs, equated with material of 'the passions', were seen as quintessentially Scottish by Hogg's contemporaries: 'Love...in its various situations of hope, success, disappointment, and despair, is finely expressed in the melody of the old Scottish songs'. This chapter focuses on Hogg's songs of love, in all its facets. Ballad-style songs, longer poems and Jacobite songs, often dealing with similar themes are, for convenience, dealt with in subsequent chapters.<sup>1</sup>

As an autodidact, in his lyric songs Hogg juxtaposed elements drawn from oral and literary traditions. He made full use of the productive tension thereby generated. Literary influences included the songs of The Gentle Shepherd, already cited as a conceptual influence on peasant poetry. Borders-born James Thomson, equally, influenced Hogg's notions of suitably pastoral settings for his songs. Moreover, in Selkirkshire Burns' songs



were regularly performed, although the provenance was unknown. Hector McNeil (1746-1818), author of 'My Boy Tammie' and 'Come under my plaidie', was popular too. Hogg was familiar, too, with a wide range of traditional Borders lyrics from blow-by-blow accounts of courtship like 'Where will bonny Annie ly', to economic enticements to marriage in 'Ewe Buchts, Marion' and forthright misogyny in 'My auld wife she bangs me'. Such diverse influences meant that an autodidact, like Hogg, was at ease in a variety of styles; the same point can be made regarding his musical as well as textual compositions.<sup>2</sup>

Moreover, even in his earliest work, Hogg constantly extended the boundaries set by his oral and literary models. His first publication, 'The Mistakes of a Night' was in the Scots Magazine of 1794 (despite the Memoir's implication of his near-illiteracy then). 'The Mistakes of a Night' is a raucous lyric, in the hard-headed, cautionary tale style of traditional songs like 'Maids When you're Young'. However the story is given a highly personal slant.<sup>3</sup> It opens in 'come all ye' mode:

TAK my advice, ye airy lads,  
           That gang to see the lasses,  
 Keep weel your mind, for troth, the jads  
           Tell ilka thing that passes.  
 Anither thing I wad advise,  
           To gang on moonlit weather:  
 A friend o' mine, he was sae wise,

He kiss't his lass's mither  
 Ae Friday Night. (11.1-9)

Geordie, the hero, courts a widow's daughter from Yarrow, unfortunately mistaking the mother for the lass and making the former pregnant. The theme of a lover going over the muir to his mistress is traditional as, for instance, in 'The Last Time I came o'er the muir'. 'O'er the Muir' moves at a rollicking pace, with fast scene changes from riding, to sex, to pregnancy, to marriage, to riding home 'o'er the muir'. These swift spatial and temporal shifts are as typical of ballad as they are, according to David Groves, 'characteristic of Hogg's writing'. 'The Mistakes of a Night', furthermore, incorporates familiar Borders' rhymes: 'Yarrow' and 'marrow' for instance.

Judging from the appearance of the line, Hogg intended 'The Mistakes of a Night' to be set to the traditional air 'O'er the Muir to Maggie'. The tune appears as a Jacobite song in the Scots Musical Museum with words by Allan Ramsay. Ramsay's narrator ventures 'o'er the muir' to win Maggy's love and 'plot my nation's glory'. Hogg does not overtly develop the Jacobite connotations, although it is probable his original audience were alert to these implications. Moralising about young men duped by older women, though, is one of Hogg's favourite topics, used again in 'The Bush aboon Traquair'. The Ettrick Shepherd goes beyond his poetic

precedents, then, to make a personal observation on the (perhaps allegorical) dangers of illicit love.<sup>4</sup>

Hogg purposefully introduced himself as a lyric poet in his first volume, Scottish Pastorals (1801); the title shows the writer's intention to posture as a nationally representative rustic. Fostering his image as a heaven-taught bard, Hogg would later claim that the decision to publish his Pastorals was impulsive. The printing of this work, according to the myth, was due to inspiration rather than ponderous, polite intent:

Having attended the Edinburgh market on Monday, with a number of sheep for sale; and being unable to sell them, I put them all in a park until the market on Wednesday. Not knowing how to pass the interim, it came to me that I could write a poem or two from my memory, and have them printed. The thought had no sooner struck me, than I put it into practice; when I was obliged to select, not the best, but those that I remembered best. I wrote as many as I could during my short stay, and gave them to a man to print at my expence; and having sold off my sheep on Wednesday morning, I returned into the Forest, and saw no more of my poems until I received word that there were one thousand copies of them thrown off.

Against this assertion, as Douglas Mack notes, William Laidlaw and his friend Clarkson saw the manuscript



beforehand. It is possible, however, that Hogg's claim, while fortuitous for a peasant poet, is grounded in fact. Traditional performers often remember long songs and it is likely that Hogg, almost illiterate until his teens, had a well-developed memory. In any case, the poems were not particularly successful: 'all of them were sad stuff, although I judged them to be exceedingly good'.<sup>5</sup>

The poet experienced a continual tension between his oral and literary affiliations; his best work explores both and his poorest, overall, is that weighted towards the polite. Hogg is at his most formal, and laboured, in this early collection. Even so, Hogg shows particular technical adeptness at reproducing literary formulae; this was the product of his background in oral literature. The writer's experience of the oral formulae of ballads, melodies and traditional lyrics fostered an ability to compose, formulaically, in a variety of oral and literary styles. As Douglas Gifford comments, Hogg possessed an 'uncanny ability to "hear" the unique and characteristic phrases and images of other writers'.<sup>6</sup>

'Willie an' Keatie, A Pastoral', for instance, is a dialogue which romantically reworks the love themes of The Gentle Shepherd. In a Ramsayan setting, a 'lovely bloomin' shepherd' is tormented by his sweetheart but ultimately rewarded for 'Constancy an' perserverance'. Paradoxically, Hogg is at his most insipid here, as he strives to replicate the freshness of The Gentle Shepherd:

Don't you see yon lofty mountain,  
 Where the wanton lambies play,  
 Round and round the crystal fountain,  
 Springin' frae the sunny brae. (11.1-4)

Hogg furthers his claim to be a lyric poet from experience, like Burns: 'My acquaintances hereabouts imagine, that the pastoral of Willie an' Keatie... was founded on an amour of mine own. I cannot say that their surmises are entirely groundless'. With the (perhaps false) modesty expected from the autodidact, Hogg asserts the piece 'had the honour of being copied into some periodical publications of the time, as "no unfavourable specimen of the work"'.<sup>7</sup>

Simpson's assertion, that the only 'Song' worthy of the name is No. I, set to the Borders air 'Tushilaw's Lines', is at least partially true. This item has an understated but spirited quality (musically as well as verbally) which is far superior to 'Willie and Keatie'. While it is beyond the scope of this thesis to enter into a detailed discussion of Hogg's music, it is essential to consider the air as well as the words. Hogg's ease, as an autodidact, at matching text with music, is the product of his familiarity with oral conventions. In this respect, he possessed a distinct advantage over some of his supposedly more advantaged contemporaries:

'Twas up yon wild and lonely glen', Beset wi' mony  
lofty mountain, Far frae the busy haunts o'  
men, Ae day that I gaed out a huntin';  
It was a happy day to me, A day that fixt  
my roving fancy; For herdin' lambs on  
yonder ley, There first I saw my lovely Nancy.

(11.1-8)8

Hogg's settings are evidently intended to facilitate performance. The 3/4 time of this haunting air is perfectly suited to the lilting flow of the words, suggesting the performance possibility of a restrained, slow-moving style. Specific phrases emphasise the overall message: the two note division of 'lone-ly' with the initial musical lift from the previous bar's g to the d, work to highlight the seclusion of the song's setting. The tune, ostensibly, is more plaintive than the words and this helps to emphasise ambiguous elements in the text. For instance, Nancy is, on one level, a typical



shepherdess, a 'hamely shepherd's daughter' courted by her social superior. In the second verse, though, she is described in 'coatie green' with 'glitt'ring een'. The f natural on the 'green' and extended e on the 'een' help to emphasise an almost otherworldly quality to Nancy's beauty; her beauty, like that of the Fairy Queen or Hogg's own Kilmeny (discussed below) transcend her rustic origins. Despite the literary pastoral framework, the content is predominantly drawn from oral precedents. 'Charlie is my Darling' is echoed in the opening lines; a reference in verse three to 'the muir amang the heather' recalls 'O'er the Muir to Maggie'.

An autodidactic concern with interactions between social ranks might be discerned here. The dialogue between 'rich squire's heir' and country lass, though, is typical of folksongs such as 'The Collier Laddie', where a lord offers his land and wealth in a vain attempt to win the hand of the girl who 'follows her collier laddie'. Hogg's protagonist, like the lord in that song, has travelled extensively, 'But the bonni'st lass that who e'er I saw, / I've met wi' here amang the heather' (ll.31-2). The message is emphatically pastoral: 'masquerades an' balls' are nothing compared to rustic love, 'Wi' her I'll live at hame contentit' (ll.57, 61). Typically of Hogg's songs, there is little attempt at poetic characterisation, nor simulation of romantic troubles. Rather, the Shepherd and lass fulfil narrative functions.

They function as the 'dramatis personae' Vladimir Propp identified as characteristic of folk tales, interacting through their absences, interdictions, reconnaissances, trickeries and so on to create a dynamic whole. Hogg is at his best here, exploring traditional idioms with grace and skill.<sup>9</sup>

Hogg's ease at handling music, which may be attributed to his autodidactic background, is equally evident in Song No. II, 'O Shepherd the weather is misty and changing'. This was subsequently attributed to Burns. Given its phraseology (at times overly polite) it is possible that this is one of Hogg's early attempts at reworking an oral text. It is a measure of Hogg's success in producing credible oral-style lyrics that this song has been recorded throughout the nineteenth and twentieth century in oral circulation, in diverse areas of Scotland from the North-East to Peeblesshire. In the early part of the twentieth century the song was well-known in Aberdeenshire, for instance, as 'Jeannie o' Planteenie'. It was sung to variations of two melodies: 'Bishop Burnet's Descent into Hell' and 'The Lass of Glenshee' (better known as 'The road and the miles to Dundee'). These airs lend themselves well to a fast-moving performance, emphasising the pace of the 'brisk' gentleman, as well as enhancing the humorous words:<sup>10</sup>

Shepherd the weather is misty and changing,  
Will ye shew me over the hills to Traquair?  
I will, gentle stranger, but where are you  
ranging?

So brisk a young gentleman walking is rare.  
I came to the Forest to see the fine lasses  
And sing wi' the shepherds on ilka green hill;  
And now I am leaving this modern Parnassus,  
Of ilka thing in it I have got my fill.

(11.1-8)

The stranger recalls courting many local girls, especially beautiful Jeannie from Tyma--the shepherd's sweetheart. When the shepherd swears to kill the cuckold-maker and woman, the stranger reveals herself as Jeannie, playing a prank in disguise in revenge for the shepherd's neglect. The lovers are reunited, the shepherd vowing to live with Jeannie on the banks of Tyma; 'the langer I ken her I'll love her the mair' (1.72).

Elements from oral and literary traditions, typically for writers within the autodidactic tradition, are mixed here. The motif of a disguised lover testing a sweetheart's fidelity is traditional, often associated with 'broken ring' songs in which a lover reveals his identity through a love token given years before. There are precedents for women cross-dressing in men's work clothes, often the 'blue jacket and white trousers' of a sailor, to follow a lover to sea. Hogg incorporates elements from literary tradition too, such as references



to 'Parnassus'. In the context of the rhythmic melody, though, the 'assus' rhyming with 'lasses' does not sound as affected as it looks in print. As Simpson notes, the language is, as often in Hogg's lyrics, 'conventional eighteenth-century Scots-English, with a sprinkle of Scotticisms'. A subtle mix of oral and artsong elements, then, creates a blend which is, in total, very palatable, emphasising Hogg's image as a peasant poet in the tradition of the Ramsayan shepherd songster.<sup>11</sup>

The Mountain Bard (1807) attracted considerable critical attention to Hogg as a bard of Nature's Making. By adopting a consciously Ossianic title for this collection, Hogg was declaring himself to be the creative descendant of an archetypal Scottish peasant Bard. The contents of The Mountain Bard echo Macpherson's stylistic and thematic concerns. To contemporary critics, Hogg appeared as an archetypal autodidact who had overcome tremendous odds to write; the very blemishes in his work were evidence of his untutored, universal appeal:

Here we have indeed a poet:- a poet of nature's own creation, and worthy to rank amongst the most distinguished of the Caledonian Bards..... readers of every class will derive unmingled pleasure from a perusal of the poems. Here and there a faulty rhyme, or a grammatical error may occur but groveling must be the taste, that, in the midst of such variety of beauty, can lend them a moment's attention.... We are here

gratified by another proof of persevering genius surmounting the most formidable obstacles: neither poverty, nor toil, nor oppression, nor cold, nor hunger, nor fatigue, could damp the native ardour of his mind.

The Monthly Review, condescendingly, noticed a distinct improvement in Hogg's English: 'his diction is visibly more correct, and less at variance with the rules of good taste and propriety.... he does not seek a refuge, as it were, in the obscurities of his native dialect'. While the observation is, perhaps, misguided, the critic has discerned Hogg's intention to make his writing more polite, just as Macpherson had tidied up Gaelic traditions. Comments like the Review's, moreover, would have just as profound effects on Hogg's later work as Mackenzie's anglocentric remarks did on Burns. Hogg, like other autodidacts, was formally encouraged to compose stilted pieces in English idioms and his pieces in Scots were seen as primarily coarse. Fifty years later, D.M. Moir patronisingly excused the flaws in the collection as natural, given Hogg's 'imaginative mind yet mystified by the twilight of his situation'.<sup>12</sup>

Such comments typecast the Shepherd as a peasant poet: little refinement could be expected, and praise was only due on account of the writer's unexpected sociological transition from ignorance to relative learning. They ignore the refinements and subtleties of



Hogg's poetry, especially in Scots, based on the assumption that true poetry is the preserve of the formally educated and should be composed in their language, standard literary English. The songs are finer than such cultural imperialism suggests, especially if the narrow literary aesthetics of the nineteenth century are transcended. Several stand eloquent testimony to Hogg's ability to create traditional-style songs; many have survived in oral tradition into the twentieth century.

Suggesting a wilder persona than the tamed shepherd of Scottish Pastorals, as a self-proclaimed 'Mountain Bard', Hogg includes many melancholic items. 'Farewell to Ettrick', for instance, exemplifies the mournful tone of Macpherson's Ossianic poetry and Burns's poetic farewells to Scotland. There is a strong element of parody, though, in The Mountain Bard. A poem like 'Sandy Tod' can be read either as sentimental or satirical, depending on the reader's preference. There is a provocative association, too, of the traditional song, 'Bonny Dundee' with lost love, abandonment and death--the latter being one of Hogg's most popular themes, as witnessed in stories like 'The Wool Gatherer' and the Three Perils of Woman. (Similar points can be made in relation to Hogg's ballad style pieces in The Mountain Bard, and these are developed in Chapter Five). As 'S' commented, in The Scots Magazine of 1807, 'in the tender and pathetic...he is, in our opinion, more likely to excel than in the light and



humorous'.<sup>13</sup> Wistful pieces like this were, increasingly expected from peasant poets. Hogg, however, was a free enough agent not to follow such guidelines precisely.

Hogg, increasingly, was involved in extending the boundaries of his peasant poet performances. His next major collection, The Forest Minstrel (1810), presented Hogg as the leading light of a group of (largely autodidactic) poets. Pieces are included by Hogg's contemporaries along with his own work. In general the other contributors seem purposely selected to make the Shepherd's songs look better. Thomas Mouncey Cunningham of London, for instance, introduced as 'another self-taught genius, bred a common mechanic among the mountains of Nithsdale', produces some truly dreadful items, such as the doggerel 'Avon Banks'. An honourable exception is the light-handed and popular 'Lucy's Flittin'', unattributed here, by William Laidlaw (the last verse by Hogg). The collection opens with a statement of Hogg's intention to offer a fresh collection of Scottish lyrics as a palliative for the jaded contemporary palate:

All our late collections of Scottish Songs are only selected from divers others, that have been published and republished.... The consequence is, that a singer has little chance of pleasing the social circle by any means than singing better than others.... When any of Burns's best songs are asked, the answer most commonly is, That is quite threadbare now.... a young lady

cannot, without hesitating reluctance, sit down to her piano, and sing what every ballad-hawker in the street is singing at times.

Hogg's hostility towards recycling popular songs seems to spring from the autodidact's wish to experiment, by combining traditional and modern idioms. Like Ramsay and Burns before him, and stressing his own role as a bard of Nature's Making, Hogg advocated a return to traditional values and, 'the natural melody and exhilarating strains of our own national music, which, of all others, will ever continue to fill a Scotsman's breast with the most pleasing sensations'. His interest does not lie in the fashionable material 'in conformity to a false taste imposed on him by a set of pretended connoisseurs'; the 'English songs' and 'Italian tirlie-whirlies' of current fashion. Despite his nationalistic stance, though, the peasant poet stresses his polite credentials: this collection contains only songs which are 'new, original, and do not contain one verse that will hurt the most scrupulous delicacy'. This desire to provide for the ladies' afterdinner needs will be met again in The Jacobite Relics but, for Hogg, is intended more to sweeten polite society than to set up proscriptive rules.<sup>14</sup>

Despite his claim to be following distinctively national precedents, a significant number of these 'Forest Minstrel' productions are polite and sentimental,

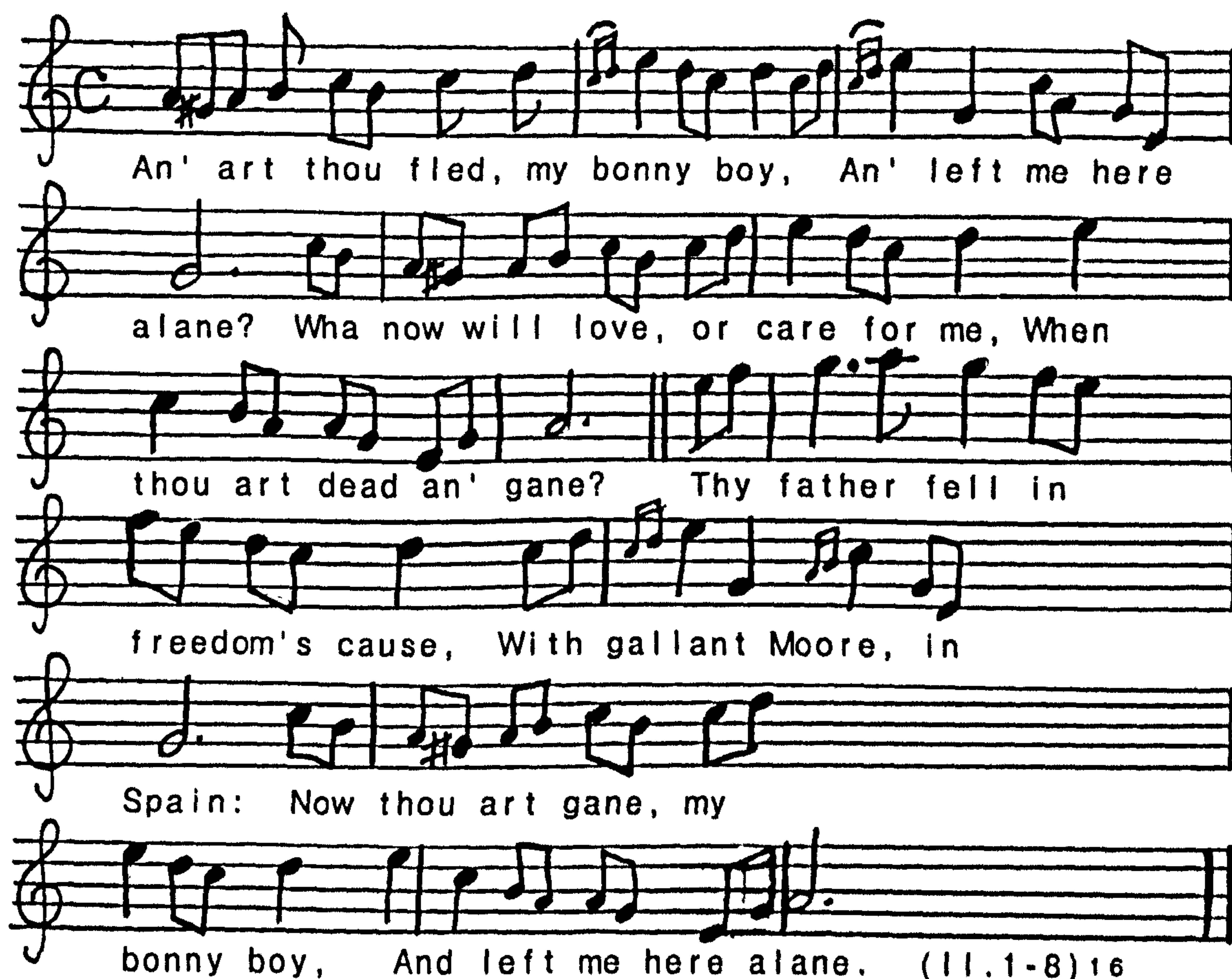


presenting a sanitised version of the peasant poet tradition, reminiscent of Macpherson's Ossianic reworkings. Oral traditional aspects, however, prevent Hogg's own contributions from being merely superficial. There are explicitly Burnsian efforts like 'The Flower' (pp.7-8), recalling the national bard's 'Mountain Daisy' and using the commonplace image of a flower to represent a woman crushed by 'frost, on cold misfortune's wing' (l.25). 'Mary at her Lover's Grave' (pp.11-12), which first appeared in The Scots Magazine (1806), deals with the lover waiting where she strayed with her sweetheart, in the tradition of 'Rare Willie's Drowned in Yarrow' (Ch 215). However there is a modern touch in the realisation of Mary, with her aspiration towards 'friendship' after death rather than sustained sexual love (ll.11-12).

The Forest Minstrel opens with a sizeable section of suitably rustic 'Pathetic Songs' (Class First), typified by Hogg's 'The Soldier's Widow' (pp.3-4), set to 'Gilderoy'. It opens fairly innocuously, with the rhythmic repetitiveness usually associated with traditional song. Hogg consciously echoes the words of 'Gilderoy' itself ('Gilderoy was a bonny boy' who came to a tragic end). The plaintive air emphasises the mood of loss as Hogg draws again on his profound knowledge of traditional song (a distinct and genuine advantage enjoyed by many considered to be autodidacts, from Ramsay onwards). Using the air adeptly, Hogg underlines his



mournful words: 'alane' for instance falls naturally on the drawn-out g of the fourth bar; 'care' on the lingering a of the eighth; its liquid quality enhanced by the open a-string which the traditional fiddler might choose to play:



An' art thou fled, my bonny boy, An' left me here  
 alane? Wha now will love, or care for me, When  
 thou art dead an' gane? Thy father fell in  
 freedom's cause, With gallant Moore, in  
 Spain: Now thou art gane, my  
 bonny boy, And left me here alane. (11.1-8)16

Formulaic phrases associated with ballads reappear in verse three, where 'Thy breast is cauld as clay', and with the repeated reference to the 'bonny boy'. However, despite its 'peasant poet' framework the piece suffers, by association, from the affected literary style later to be

identified with 'Whistlebinkie' and the Victorian parlour ballad: 'I hop'd, when thou wert grown a man, / To trace his looks in thine' (ll.9-10). The fallen flower and leaf can be renewed, Hogg suggests, but the grave is eternal.

'The Moon was a-Waning' (pp.9-10) has a stark beauty born of condensed pathos and a chilling ballad atmosphere, understating the tragedy of a lover lost in the snow. The Shepherd involves the reader in a conspiracy: we are aware of her lover's predicament when the woman is not. There are no romantic ecstasies; Hogg had learnt the lesson from ballads that sorrow implied is particularly affecting:

Soft was the bed  
                   She had made for her lover;  
 White were the sheets,  
                   And embroidered the cover.  
 But his sheets are more white,  
                   And his canopy grander,  
                   And sounder he sleeps  
                   Where the hill foxes wander. (ll.9-16)

Probably Hogg was influenced by a similar passage about a man lost in a snow-storm in 'Winter' of The Seasons:

In vain for him the officious wife prepares  
 The fire fair-blazing, and vestement warm,  
 In vain his little children, peeping out  
 Into the mingling storm, demand their sire,  
 With tears of artless innocence. Alas!  
 Nor wife, nor children, more shall behold,

Nor friends, nor sacred home. On every nerve,  
 The deadly Winter seizes; shuts up sense;  
 And, o'er his inmost vitals, creeping cold,  
 Lays him along the snows a stiffened corpse--  
 Stretched out, and bleaching in the northern  
 blast. (ll.314-21)

Hogg's pared down language, and self-sufficient phrases, go beyond the original to invest his tale with a distinctively sombre dignity. An anonymous Athenaeum reviewer was particularly impressed with 'The Moon was a-Waning', commenting that, 'In all the wide compass of song, there is nothing more softly affecting, or more poetically sad'. High praise indeed, and typical of the regard with which Hogg's 'pathetic' poetry was held.<sup>16</sup>

As Groves remarks, 'Whether comic or sentimental, Hogg's songs in The Forest Minstrel tell us that love is a dangerous, chaotic experience which undermines human freedom, dignity, and reason'. It is a valid comment although Hogg is not so deliberate in his analysis of love as Groves's 'tell' suggests. The Shepherd's philosophy is closer to the resigned attitude of the traditional context: love can be hell but lovers attract no sympathy for whining. This attitude is also expressed in The Gentle Shepherd, where Patie advises the love-lorn Roger, 'Yonder's a craig--sin' ye hae tint a' houp, / Gae till't your wa's, and tak the lover's loup (Act I, scene 1).<sup>17</sup>

'Birniebrouse' (pp.139-41), for instance, an



'economic courtship song', is deeply ambiguous. This is still alive in oral tradition, and was recorded by Isobel Sutherland in the 1960s and Jean Redpath in 1977. It is set to 'Braes of Tullimett'.<sup>18</sup> This, once more, shows Hogg's adeptness in using an air to emphasise his words:



"Will ye gang wi' me, lassie,  
 To the braes o' Birniebouzle?  
 Baith the yird an' sea, lassie,  
 Will I rob to fend ye. I'll  
 hunt the otter an' the brock, The  
 hart, the hare, an' heather-cock, An'  
 pu' the limpet aff the rock, To  
 fatten an' to mend ye. (ll.1-8)

The lively melody underlies the playful words, as a woman is enticed to the 'braes' (equivalent to the 'muir') with promises of gear. There is a flirtatious quality to the air, reminiscent of a strathspey tune, with its flourish on 'lassie' and rhythmic fragmentation of the word 'Birnie-bou-zle'. A pacy performance, such as Redpath's, draws on such elements to realise the narrator as a youthful, self-conscious lover. The knowing innocence and playful tone show that the rural buffoon of Blackwood's is present. However Hogg is sophisticated too, almost parodying a traditional style by displaying his skill in emulating oral idioms. An unappealing seducer could, equally, be imagined, wooing a rural innocent using violent images of hunting, pulling and, suggestively, 'fattening' her.

Several of the songs make specific reference to the Borders, suggesting Hogg as a Minstrel, primarily, of his own Ettrick Forest. 'Bonnie Mary' (pp.47-50) in Class Second, Love Songs, is introduced by a verse which sets the scene in Yarrow. A Ramsayan Shepherd sings of his lover Mary, 'sae mild and sweet'. Although there are many elements from artsong here--Mary's couch is watched over by 'sweet guardian spirits' and, in an imaginative amalgam of formal conventions and Scots phraseology, 'Phoebus keeks out o'er the muir'--Hogg includes many more lines in the oral idiom.<sup>19</sup> Far from being a poet in the romantic tradition, Hogg blends elements from traditional lyric,

here as elsewhere, with his own unique perspective. As in Burns' 'My Love is like a Red Red Rose'--itself modelled on folksong--the narrator ends with extravagant vows of his devotion:

The sun may lose his light and heat,  
The planets in their rounds miscarry;  
But my fond heart shall cease to beat,  
When I forget my bonnie Mary. (ll.61-64)

Showing the good humour which was expected of the autodidact, Class Third, Humorous Songs, features traditional-style comic lyrics. These are tempered by Hogg's personal vision. The peasant poet, in the romantic sense, is not much in evidence in this section, and Hogg is (perhaps consequently) thoroughly at ease. In 'Doctor Monroe' (pp.111-13) a jilted lover is cured of his sorrow with a lecture on the woes of wedlock. 'Love's Like a Dizziness' (pp.114-16)--'it winna let a poor body / Gang about his business'--is purposely bathetic (the air, 'Paddy's Wedding' lends a humorously leaden emphasis to 'love'). On a similar note 'My Peggy an' I', although incongruously classed as a 'Pathetic Song', is a light-hearted piece set to the tune 'Paddy Whack'. If not quite misogynist, it takes a rather cavalier attitude towards wives:



I hae a wee wifie, an' I'm her man,  
     My Peggy an' I, my Peggy an' I;  
 We waggle through life as weel as we can,  
     An' wha's sae happy as Peggy an' I?  
 We hae a wee lassie will keep up our line  
     My Peggy an' I, my Peggy an' I;  
 I'm sure she is hers, an' I think she is mine,  
     An' wha's sae happy as Peggy an' I?  
                                     (11.1-8)

This exuberant item bears traces of the witless Shepherd persona, although the reference to 'our line' may be a deftly administered snub to social sycophants. The last two lines of the verse show the irrepressible 'animal spirits' Hogg was so often accused of, and a standard hope that 'nae wicked fellow' will 'decoy' their 'darling'. Verse three ends with a resigned reflection on the nature of married life: 'Through life we will love, and through life we will pray... / Then sidie for sidie, we'll sleep i' the day' and the incremental refrain adds to the traditional-style qualities of the piece. Hogg is not putting on peasant-poet airs here, but enjoying exploring traditional idioms.

In A Border Garland (1819) Hogg again transcends his autodidactic typecasting. This contains several of the writer's best lyric pieces, about natural and supernatural love. Hogg uses several of his own melodies, indicating his unusual ability to explore traditional conventions, and innovate, in music as well as in words (even Burns, as

far as is known, did not regularly make his own tunes).

'The Women fo'k' explores a similar theme to 'Green grow the rashes o': the time the writer has spent with women. However, Hogg starts from a rather different position than Burns does: 'O sairly may I rue the day / I fancy'd first the womenkind' (ll.1-2). Set to Hogg's cheerful melody, which is reminiscent of 'The wooin o't', the second song offers ample opportunity for a fiddler to impress with double stops straddling open strings.<sup>20</sup>

Hogg's 'I'll no wake wi' Annie' (pp.2-3) once more indicates his 'peasant' abilities to explore, and match, both words and music. The words, despite their polite phraseology in Scots-English, have wholly bawdy undertones. 'I'll no wake wi' Annie' is based on the Scottish convention of night-courting. Thematically, it pays tribute to the traditional song 'Where wad bonie Annie ly'; this expresses a young girl's fears about 'wauking' with a man in marriage. Hogg's version, in contrast, starts as a dialogue between a mother and son. The air lends emphasis to the initially petulant and later flirtatious words. In the minor mode, the tune provides suitably humorous and ponderous effects. The rhythmic pattern, mode and range all recall the air of the 'Raggle Taggle Gypsies' (this is especially the case in the fourth line):



O Mother tell the laird o't, Or sairly it will  
 grieve me O, That I'm to wake the ewes the night, An'  
 Annie's to gang wi' me O I'll wake the ewes my  
 night about, but ne'er wi' ane sae saucy O nor  
 sit my lane the lee lang night wi' sic a scornfu'  
 lassie O. I'll no wake I'll no wake I'll no wake wi'  
 Annie O Nor sit my lane o'er night wi' ane sae  
 thraward an' uncannie O. (ll.1-12)

The repeated emphasis on 'no wake' in the chorus eloquently pairs Hogg's musical and verbal stresses. His Annie is the teasing minx of oral tradition, a favoured figure for Hogg (see *Queen Hynde*, for instance, discussed in Chapter Seven). She tortures as if she 'trapan's' the man. The term is drawn from the custom of boring a



sheep's skull with a saw and piercing a cist to let out water in the brain (the condition known as hydrocephalus). It is particularly appropriate given that this condition, locally known as 'the sturdy', has symptoms which might be associated with love-sickness:

a sheep affected by it becomes stupid; its eyes stare, and fix upon some different object from that which it is in fear of. It soon ceases from all intercourse with the rest of the flock, and is seen frequently turning round, or traversing a circle.<sup>21</sup>

Here, though, the lover triumphs as the mother convinces her son to pursue his courting more forcefully; her advice ensures he overcomes the attractions of a richer lover--the laird--and 'wakes wi' Annie'. Although, on one level, the song follows the oral formula of having a woman prefer the lover of lowly social standing to the rich but the notion of the (almost procuress) mother with her love advice--'woman only woman kens'--invests the whole with a slightly distasteful quality, at least for the twentieth century reader.

Other items worth noting in the Border Garland include 'The Mer-maid's song' (pp.8-9), a reworking of traditional mourning ballads like 'The Unquiet Grave' (Ch 78). Hogg's fellow-Borderer John Leyden also treated the theme of an love-lorn mermaid.<sup>22</sup> The poignant air, again,

is Hogg's own; its sweet, slow melody enhances the plaintive words. Hogg's ability to confidently explore oral, as well as literary, styles constantly indicates the real advantages of being an autodidactic poet. The mermaid sings to her dead lover in (echoing 'The Moon was a-Waning') his 'low and lonely' bed (verse 2). She knows he will not come back to her, but in his sleep, 'Hope lingers' (verse 3). This mournful song was of the type best-liked by the critics, as has been demonstrated, but the emphasis is on supernatural love rather than the sentimental. Hogg is in the realms of understated lyric love, the more potent because of this. He follows in the tradition of 'The Border Widow's Lament' rather than romantic poetry.

The four volumes of The Poetical Works of James Hogg (1822) cover Hogg's lyric and ballad-style pieces comprehensively. However, in illustrating the autodidactic image he strove to present, the 1831 Songs selection provides more insights. It includes items from previous collections, as well as pieces drawn from anthologies and periodicals. The tone is overwhelmingly lyric and pastoral, with a large number of lugubrious items as well as humorous pieces. Examples of the former include, 'The Broom sae Green', 'my greatest favourite at present'. This was first published in Hogg's Select and Rare Scottish Melodies (1829) for the London publisher Goulding and D'Almaine. According to the writer, 'a woman

waits in her trysting place, her heart broken by the song of a 'leifu' [compassionate] robin who sings, 'Your laddie will no come near ye!'. There are lyrics in what is superficially a fine English style. Perhaps this is, on occasion, ironic. Hogg's good humour enlivens even the more affected pieces:

My Emma, my darling, from winter's domain,  
 Let us fly to the glee of the city again,  
 Where a day never wakes but some joy it renews,  
 And a night never falls but that joy it pursues;  
 Where the dance is so light, and the hall is so  
   bright,  
 And life whirls onward one round of delight.  
 Would we feel that we love and have spirits  
   refined,  
 We must mix with the world, and enjoy humankind.  
   (11.1-9)

Rather than being a 'Romantic quest or journey' as Groves suggests, this is Hogg's attempt at urban pastoral: a Ramsayan foray into the charms of the city.<sup>23</sup>

There are lyric interludes from Hogg's prose, such as the popular 'When the Kye Comes Hame' (pp.51-55), originally published as 'The Sweetest Thing The Best Thing' in Chapter XXI of The Three Perils of Man (1822), and reprinted in Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine (1823). It is set to 'Shame fa' the gear and the blathrie o't'. Critics loved 'The Kye': Moir singled this out as one of



the best of the poet's corpus, commenting on the 'pathos, and pastoral delicacy and wildness'. Pursuing the song through its various contexts suggests that Hogg was consciously recasting it as an autodidactic production.<sup>24</sup>

It is an almost classic example of a traditional-style lyric when the text appears in isolation. However, the initial context is parodic, as Hogg sends up the character of 'the poet' Colley Carol:

The poet was sitting on a bench, with Charlie on the one hand, and Delany on the other; and, fixing his eyes on the ceiling, and clasping his hands, which he heaved up at every turn of the tune, he went on thus:

# THE SWEETEST THING THE BEST THING

## A SONG

### VERSE FIRST

Come tell me a' you shepherds  
That love the tarry woo',  
And tell me a' you jolly boys  
That whistle at the plow,  
What is the greatest bliss  
That the tongue of man can name,  
'Tis "To woo a bonny lassie  
When the kye come hame."  
When the kye come hame,  
When the kye come hame,  
'Tween the gloaming and the mirk,  
When the kye come hame.

The 'come all ye' tone, from the context, is satirical. Moreover, when the content is considered in detail the message is particularly humorous: what shepherd, in his right mind, would love the 'tarry woo' (even the feared Brownie of Bodsbeck is welcome to such a messy task).<sup>25</sup>

In the Blackwood's and Songs version, intriguingly, the content and verse order as well as the context is changed, making the whole seem more politely rustic. For instance, the opening lines now read:

Come all ye jolly shepherds  
                   That whistle through the glen,  
 I'll tell ye of a secret  
                   That courtiers dinna ken. (ll.1-4)

Hogg comments on his editing in a footnote, illuminating the way he intended songs as, primarily, for performance:

I composed the following song I neither know how nor when; for when the "Three Perils of Man" came first to my hand, and I saw this song put in the mouth of a drunken poet, and mangled in the singing, I had no recollection of it whatever. I had written it off hand along with the prose, and quite forgot it. But I liked it, altered it, and it has been my favourite pastoral for singing ever since.<sup>26</sup>

The writer's admission of polishing for 'pastoral' ends mimics his remaking as a gentrified peasant poet.

Despite its comic opening, the song progresses in standard lyric fashion; in the original Verse Second 'the burgonet...crown...couch of velvet' are all inferior to 'the spreading birch / In the dell without the name' where the sensible man will lie with his 'bonny bonny lassie, / When the kye come hame'. The Songs version omits the clumsy 'burgonet' substituting a formal-sounding 'coronet'. 'Crown' becomes an elevated 'canopy of state'.

The third verse deals with one of Hogg's favourite themes: the untroubled bird of 'The Lark'. The theme recalls Thomson's descriptions of birdsong in 'Spring': 'Tis love creates their melody, and all / This waste of music is the voice of love' (ll.614-15). Here it is a blackbird, functioning like the 'bird of the wilderness, blithesome and cumberless' of 'The Lark'. Verse Fourth of the original becomes verse six of the Songs. It verges on the maudlin, with the 'little wee bit heart' of the bird paralleling the rising 'little wee bit star' of the east.

Hogg, in the editing, is consciously emphasising his status as, above all, a peasant poet. In the Blackwood's and Songs version, the fourth verse is new, and couthy:

When the blewart [cornflower] bears a pearl,  
 And the daisy turns a pea,  
 And the bonny lucken gowan [daisy]  
 Has fauldit up her ee,



Then the laverock frae the blue lift  
 Doops down, an' thinks nae shame  
 To woo his bonny lassie  
 When the kye comes hame.  
 When the kye comes hame, &c.

The first four lines of the fifth verse in the original and Blackwood's describe the experience of love in polite Scots-English:

Then the eye shines sae bright  
 The hale soul to beguile  
 There's love in every whisper  
 And joy in every smile

These are omitted in the Songs but the next four, which present a cheery peasant persona, remain:

'O wha wad chuse a crown  
 Wi' its perils and its fame  
 And miss a bonny lassie  
 When the kye come hame'

These reappear as the second four lines of the last verse of the Songs.

The homely imagery is typical of pastoral, of course, but appropriate for a 'real' peasant poet. Hilariously, the poet of Perils of Man has problems remembering his own composition after the fifth verse; in all he manages to

recollect seven of the supposed sixteen verses: '"Since I came to the top of this cursed tower, the wind has blown it out of my head." 'Verse the Fifteenth' (fifth in the Songs) gives a cameo of a Hogg-like lover, 'yonder pawky shepherd / That lingers on the hill', his 'heart is in a flame' for his lassie. Given images like these, critics could enjoy the consanguinity of autodidactic artist and rustic environment with genuine voyeuristic enjoyment.

The last verse in all versions broadly reiterates the main theme: no wealth is equal to the love of a bonny lassie, 'When the kye comes hame'. However the last version is more artsong than the first two:

Away wi' fame and fortune,  
                     What comfort can they gie  
 And a' the arts that prey  
                     On man's life and libertye (11.58-61)

becomes:

Then since all nature joins  
                     In this love without alloy,  
 O wha wad prove a traitor  
                     To Nature's dearest joy? (11.58-61)

In the Songs version, the language is subtly changed. The English 'come' is changed to the Scots 'comes':

In the title and chorus of this favourite pastoral song, I choose rather to violate a rule in grammar, than a Scottish phrase so common, that when it is altered into the proper way, every shepherd and shepherd's sweetheart account it nonsense. I was once singing it at a wedding with great glee the latter way, ("when the kye come hame,") when a tailor, scratching his head, said, "it was a terrible affectit way that!" I stood corrected, and have never sung it so again.<sup>27</sup>

That Hogg should respond positively to the tailor's implicit request affords a fascinating clue to his modus operandi. On occasion, as here, the demands of the Ettrick public outweighed the expectations of the literary critics for Hogg. Realising the inherent logic and 'rightness' of observing Scots grammar in a Scots song he 'stood corrected'. Later peasant poets would not prove so receptive to the demands of their peers and oral traditions. This instance stands almost alone as an illustration of an autodidact's Scots oral loyalties explicitly winning over English literary aesthetics.

A different motive for change can be seen in verse 2 where 'birch' becomes the Scots 'birk' and 'dell' is changed to 'glen'. These are more recognisably 'Scotch' sounding for Scottish and English ears. Here, Hogg is streamlining the song in line with current tastes for the 'Scotch' songs popularised by Thomas D'Urfey and Allan



Ramsay in the eighteenth century. Hogg, then, reworked his material considerably between editions, complying with oral as well as literary demands, his tongue firmly in his cheek, in his effort to be all things to everyone.<sup>28</sup>

The headnotes emphasise the 'inspired' composition favoured by bards of Nature's Making, and sometimes suggest a debt to social superiors. For instance, regarding 'O Jeanie, There's Naething to Fear Ye' (discussed above as 'Naething to fear ye') Hogg comments:

Happening to spend an evening...with Patrick Maxwell Esq., he played the old air, "Over the Border," so well, that I could get neither rest or sleep till I had composed the following verses for it that I could croon to myself. The late Mrs Gray went over and corrected them the next day. It has been far the most popular love-song I ever wrote.<sup>29</sup>

The selection and reworking of items, broadly, met critical expectations of peasant poetry. For instance, The Athenaeum of January 1831 gushed, in a manner which recalls the 'Spy's' description of Hogg's Muse:

They are chiefly distinguished for images of pastoral beauty, domestic tenderness, and pure and genuine affection: nor are they without passages of great humour and elevation of thought. They have no affinity whatever to those polished and pretty verses which pass for

songs in the polite world, but resemble the spontaneous lyrics of the pastoral muse of old Scotland.... the simple muse of the north.... walks in gladness among her favourite hills and dales, and wherever her foot touches, or her dark eyes look upon, there flowers spring up, and there she leaves them growing--not choked, but sheltered by the sweet herbs, which the unwise of the world call weeds. As this muse was Mr. Hogg's instructress, his songs seem an echo of her own...distinguished by that kind of natural ease, unsolicited happiness, and simplicity of thought and expression which scholars distinguish by the name of the Doric.

Unsurprisingly, given its stance, the piece complains of Hogg's occasional 'rudeness', countering this with a superficially generous observation: 'Whoever imagines... the language of shepherds--not the imaginary shepherds of pastoral verse--is necessarily unimpassioned and inelegant, will find enough in the lyrics of James Hogg, to induce him to think better of humble-born bards'.<sup>30</sup>

Despite the critical implication that peasant poets were, at best, to be tolerated, Hogg's lyrics fared well musically. They survived, as has been seen, in oral tradition and, equally, have been arranged by composers including Beethoven and Haydn. One of the finest modern settings is Ronald Stevenson's haunting version of A Year Ower Young (1989), interpreting the text as a universal statement of forlorn love. The song was originally



published in Alexander Campbell's Albyn's Anthology (1816-18). Hogg claimed, 'the first half only is mine--the latter very old...I got both verses and tune from a Maniac'. Stevenson points out that the 'female maniac Billy', mentioned in Campbell's Tour is probably the 'Billy' of 'A Boy's Song' and, possibly, the source for the traditional text which inspired Hogg's composition:

*mf*

Voice

O why comes ma luvè nae langer tae woo me? Why

Violin

*quasi forte* *sim.* *sempre sul G*

come nae mair by the licht o the mune?--

*sul G*

Sair is ma hert that lad sud undo me;

Sair is ma hert that I love sae soon. 33



Stevenson's arrangement, to a tempo which he specifies as 'Rather slow and plaintive', is highly successful in marrying the words to the air. The words 'luve', 'licht' and 'mune', for instance, emphasising the poignant qualities of the text, are cleverly highlighted with a rise in the melody. The underlying fiddle part provides a quick-moving counterpoint to the clear-cut vocal part. The phrase 'that lad sud un-do me' is a clever quotation of the 'never meet again' phrase in the traditional song 'Loch Lomond'. The youthful hopes of the girl are dashed in the second verse both verbally and melodically, as her lover refuses her as 'a yeir ower young'. Scottish musical norms are explored, perhaps ironically, with a pattern of curtailed notes on the 'A' and 'lack' of the girl's woeful 'a-lack', replicating the convention of the Scotch snap. The intimacy of the final verse, where the girl advises other maidens 'Touch not the nettle, lest that it burn you' is convincingly paralleled by Stevenson; he uses a higher start here, compared to the other verses, ultimately fading away into her touching avowal of the 'lad wi the yallow hair' on a prolonged g, emphasising the profoundly melancholic qualities of the song. Here, at least, Hogg has received a courteous treatment as a national poet, not simply a Shepherd, of distinction.

Hogg's lyrics, as has been demonstrated, skilfully utilise a wide range of oral and literary modes. His adeptness at recreating, and mingling, diverse lyric

styles is largely due to his formulaic background in oral tradition. Hogg is often more successful in the oral modes than when striving to conform to peasant poet demands for melancholic, pastorally oriented lyrics. Further to his success, Hogg's songs have achieved sustained popularity in art and folksong circles. It is a double-edged triumph. Hogg has been persistently cast in the limiting mould of natural lyricist and balladeer; the more sentimental the better. George Saintsbury was among the earliest to recognise the Confessions worth (although he was uncertain that Hogg, not Lockhart, was the real author) but helped perpetuate the trend with the observation, 'if Hogg had been a verse-writer alone he would, except for "Kilmeny" and his songs, hardly be worth remembering'.<sup>32</sup> The comment is symptomatic of a sustained refusal to appreciate Hogg's work in other modes. The following chapter considers the impact of peasant poet stereotyping on Hogg's compositions in the ballad style.



## Notes

1. See James Hogg, 'Reminiscences of Former Days', Altrive Tales, 2 vols, (London, 1832), vol 1, p.xcviii; Joseph Ritson, Scottish Songs, 1794, rpt (New York, 1975), vol I, p.v.
2. On Hogg and Borders song traditions see James Hogg, 'A Journey Through the Highlands of Scotland' in The Scots Magazine 64 (1802), pp.813-18, 956-63 and 65 (1803), pp.89-95, 251-54, 312-14, 382-86, rpt Highland Tours, ed William F. Laughlan (Hawick, Rox, 1981). See too the Thomas Wilkie MSS, 'Old Scots Songs &c. Collected mostly in Roxburghshire, Berwickshire and Selkirkshire by Thomas Wilkie. AD 1815', NLS MSS 122 and 123, especially MS 122, ff.2, 146-47, 58; much of this is rpt, T. Wilkie, 'Old Rites, Ceremonies, and Customs of the Inhabitants of the Southern Counties of Scotland', History of the Berwickshire Naturalist' Club, 1 (1916), pp.5-146. John Younger, the St Boswell's poet, testifies to The Seasons' local popularity, particularly among the self-educated, in The Autobiography of John Younger, Shoemaker St. Boswells, (Kelso, 1881).
3. [James Hogg], 'The Mistakes of a Night', The Scots Magazine, 56 (1794), p.264. Much of Hogg's early work was published in periodicals and the character of these items was strongly influenced by their context, as Gillian Hughes demonstrates in her PhD thesis, James Hogg's Fiction and the Periodicals, Unpub, University of Edinburgh, 1981.
4. See William Thomson, Orpheus Caledonius, 1733, rpt as 2 vols in 1 (Hatboro, Pennsylvania, 1962), vol I, p.10. James Hogg, 'The Bush aboon Traquair', NLS MS 1869, first pts, Tales and Sketches, ed D.O. Hill, 6 vols, (Edinburgh, 1837), vol II, pp.275-338. The tune was first associated with Ramsay's Tea-Table



Miscellany, 5 vols, (Edinburgh, 1724-37) and arranged for flute in The British Miscellany, or the Harmonious Grove, (London, 1733), with variations including that in James Oswald's Curious Collection of Scots Tunes (London, 1742). In his edition of James Hogg, Selected Poems and Songs, (Edinburgh, 1986), p.209, David Groves draws attention to a version in Maclean's Collection of Favourite Scots Tunes with Variations for the Violin, (1772). The air is arranged for fiddle in manuscript collections including 'James Ballantine. His Musick Book. A Collection of Tunes for the Violin', (1770) in the Selkirkshire Regional Archives.

5. See James Hogg, 'Memoir of the Life of James Hogg', The Mountain Bard, (Edinburgh, 1807), p.xxi. Douglas Mack, ed, Memoirs of the Author's Life and Familiar Anecdotes of Sir Walter Scott, (Edinburgh and London, 1972), p.17n.
6. Douglas Gifford, James Hogg, (Edinburgh, 1976), p.33.
7. James Hogg, 1807 'Memoir', pp.xviii, xx.
8. Louis Simpson, James Hogg, A Critical Study, (Edinburgh and London, 1962), p.74. James Hogg, 'Song I', Scottish Pastorals. Poems, Songs, &c. Mostly Written in the Dialect of the South, 1801, ed Elaine Petrie, (Stirling, 1988), pp.33-34; the melody, and Petrie's comments, appear in pp.51-53.
9. See Vladimir Propp, Morphology of the Folk Tale, trans Laurence Scott and ed Louis A. Wagner, 2nd ed, (Austin, Texas, 1968), chapter 3.
10. Hogg, 'Song II', Scottish Pastorals, pp.35-37; see, too, Petrie's discussion of the words and air, pp.53-55. This song was published as 'The Constant Shepherd' in Seventeen Songs by Robert Burns, (Glasgow, 1809). Lady Priestly states in The Story of a Lifetime (1908), qtd Alan Lang Strout, The Life and Letters of James Hogg, the Ettrick Shepherd, Vol

I [of I] (Lubbock, Texas, 1946), p.159, that the simpleton David Gallatly (Jock Gray), a native of Peeblesshire, 'had evidently a great love for James Hogg, the Ettrick Shepherd, whom he sang into notice. One of these songs was the well-known lyric, 'Love is like a dizziness', and the other was 'Oh Shepherd the weather is misty and changing', p.159; see too the Greig-Duncan Folksong Collection, ed Patrick Shuldham-Shaw, Emily B. Lyle et al., 8 vols (Edinburgh, 1981-96), vol I, p.540.

11. Simpson, p.74.
12. 'S', 'The Mountain Bard', review, The Scots Magazine, 69 (1807), p.286; 'The Mountain Bard', Review Art. XI, The Monthly Review N.S., 95 (1821), p.429, D.M. Moir (delta), Sketches of the Poetical Literature of the Past Half-Century, (Edinburgh and London, 1856), p.104.
13. James Hogg, 'Farewell to Ettrick', The Mountain Bard, (London and Edinburgh, 1807), pp.164-69, first appeared as 'Jamie's Farewell to Ettrick', The Scots Magazine, 66 (1804), pp.190-91. 'Sandy Todd', The Mountain Bard (1807), pp.153-63, first appeared as 'Sandy Todd, A Scottish Pastoral', Edinburgh Magazine, 19 (1802), pp.52-53; see 'The Bonnets o Bonny Dundee', The Mountain Bard, (1807), p.534; this first appeared in The Scots Magazine, 66 (1804), pp.190-91 and reappeared in The Forest Minstrel; A Selection of Songs, Adapted to the most favourite Scottish Airs, (Edinburgh and London, 1810), p.18. 'The Wool Gatherer', first published as 'The Country Laird. A Tale by John Miller' in The Spy, 24 (1811), rev and rpt as 'The Woolgatherer' in The Brownie of Bodsbeck and other Tales, 2 vols, (Edinburgh and London, 1818), vol II, pp.187-228. James Hogg, Three Perils of Woman, (London, 1823). 'S', p.286.
14. James Hogg, The Forest Minstrel, (Edinburgh and



London, 1810), pp.vii-ix. References to Hogg songs in this collection are given, hereafter, within the text in parentheses.

15. See 'Gilderoy', to the air used here, in Thomson, II, pp.106-08.
16. 'The Moon was a-Waning' is recorded by The McCalmans, The Ettrick Shepherd, (Greenwich Village, 1980), GVR 209. 'The Songs of James Hogg, The Ettrick Shepherd', review, The Athenaeum, (Jan 1831), p.6.
17. David Groves, James Hogg. The Growth of a Writer, (Edinburgh, 1988, p.18.
18. Hogg's air for 'Birniebouzle' appears in Groves, 1986, p.10. I am grateful to David Buchan for drawing my attention to the Sutherland recording. Symptomatic of a shift in cultural values, Redpath's version emphasises the kirk over the courtship; the promise becomes marriage rather than a rendezvous, see Jean Redpath, Song of the Seals, (Scottish, 1977), SRCM 160. 'Birniebouzle' appears in The Scottish Folksinger, ed Norman Buchan and Peter Hall, 2nd ed, (Glasgow and London, 1986), pp.87-88.
19. The 'Phoebus' phrase may reflect chapbook precedents. It recalls the line 'When Phoebus starts frae Thetis' lap' of 'Bessy Bell and Mary Gray' in 'Curious Tracts, Scotland', a collection of chapbooks and broadsheets in the British Museum (1078, m.24) ctd David Buchan, The Ballad and the Folk, (London, 1972), p.217.
20. James Hogg, 'The Women fo'k', A Border Garland, (Edinburgh, 1819), pp.6-7 (including both the words and the air). References to Hogg's songs in this collection are given, hereafter, within the text in parentheses.
21. James Hogg, The Shepherd's Guide, (London, 1807), pp.54ff.
22. John Leyden, 'The Mermaid', K. Macleay, Description



- of the Spar Cave, (Edinburgh, 1811), rpt, The Poetical Remains of the late John Leyden, (London and Edinburgh, 1819), pp.245-62 and Poems and Ballads by John Leyden, (Kelso, 1858), pp.245-62.
23. See James Hogg, The Poetical Works of James Hogg, 4 vols, (Edinburgh and London, 1822). James Hogg, 'The Broom saw Green', Songs, by the Ettrick Shepherd, (Edinburgh and London, 1831), pp.9-10; 'My Emma, My Darling', Hogg, Songs, pp.85-86; hereafter, references to this volume are given within the text, in parentheses. Groves, 1988, p.8.
  24. Moir, p.106.
  25. James Hogg, The Brownie of Bodsbeck, 2 vols, (Edinburgh and London, 1818), Chapter XIII.
  26. Songs, p.55.
  27. Songs, p.51.
  28. 'Scotch song' was the product of collections like Thomas D'Urfey's Wit and Mirth; or Pills to Purge Melancholy, (London, 1698-1720), mixing genuinely Scottish items like 'The Lea Rig' with spurious pieces in which rustic lovers met in pastoral settings, speaking words which sounded 'Scotch' to refined English ears. Allan Ramsay's Tea-Table Miscellany, (Edinburgh, 1724-37) introduced Scotch songs to Scots.
  29. Songs, p.33.
  30. 'Songs, by the Ettrick Shepherd', review, The Athenaeum, (Jan 1831), pp.6-7.
  31. Ronald Stevenson, A Year Ower Young, for medium voice & violin, (Aylesbury, Bucks., 1989).
  32. The Collected Essays and Paper of George Saintsbury, 1875-1920, Vol 1 (London and Toronto, 1923) pp.26, 31, 42.

### Chapter Five: Ballads

'The reader must not expect to find, in the Border ballads, refined sentiment, and far less, elegant expression; although the style of such composition has, in modern hands, been found highly susceptible of both. But passages might be pointed out in which the rude minstrel has melted into natural pathos, or risen into rude energy. Even where these graces are totally wanting, the interest of the stories themselves, and the curious picture of manners, which they frequently present, authorize them to claim some respect from the public.'

(Walter Scott, The Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border, 1802-03, ed T.F. Henderson, 4 vols, (Edinburgh, 1902), vol I, pp.160-61.)

As an autodidact with a profound knowledge of oral traditions, Hogg had a deep respect for ballads. He asserted that, 'if a person could once succeed in the genuine ballad style, his muse was adequate for any other'. Ballad certainly played a dynamic role in the growth of Scottish literary identity; nineteenth-century collectors and poets sought to recreate Scotland's 'natural genius' through its balladry. Hogg's trans-social background made him ideally placed to explore ballad conventions, from oral to chapbook to high cultural styles. Hogg made full use of ballad themes, features and structures in his work. He was as sensitive to the function of ballad airs as to their words, suggesting that the monodic, modal tunes were perceived, primarily, as textual vehicles which might 'serve a great many songs'.<sup>1</sup>

Hogg's involvement, as a peasant source, with Scott's The Minstrelsy of the Scottish Borders (1802-03), significantly affected his attitude towards traditional texts. The Minstrelsy established a literary canon for Scottish balladry, identifying the Borders as Scotland's ballad centre (a 'fallacy' David Buchan would later dismiss in favouring the North east). Hogg was complicit in this decision. William Laidlaw heard of The Minstrelsy project through Scott's correspondent Mercer and encouraged the Ettrick Shepherd to make transcriptions from his family repertoire. Some were included in volume



three: 'Old Maitland', 'The Battle of Otterburn' (Ch 161), 'Clerk Saunders' (Ch 69), 'The Dowie Houms o' Yarrow' (Ch 214), 'The Duel of Wharton and Stuart', 'Erlinton' (Ch 8), 'The Gay Goshawk' (Ch 96), 'A Fragment on Cockburn's Death' (Ch 106), 'Lord William' (Ch 254) and the 'Lament of The Queens Marie' (Ch 173). Hogg may also have provided 'Young Benjie' (Ch 86) and 'The Battle of Philiphaugh' (Ch 202), as well as manuscript texts for 'Laminton' or 'Lochinvar' (Scott's 'Katherine Janfarie'), 'Lamkin' (Ch 93), 'Lord Barnaby' (Ch 81), an untitled 'Johnny Scott' (Ch 99), 'Tushilaw's Lines', 'Jamie Telfer' (Ch 90), 'Johnny Armstrong's Last Goodnight' (Ch 169) and 'The Tale of Tomlin' (Ch 39).<sup>2</sup>

'Old Maitland', in particular, illustrates the profound effects of the Hogg / Scott collaboration on the young autodidactic poet. A female servant at Blackhouse communicated part of this, learnt from Hogg's grandfather, to Laidlaw. At Laidlaw's request, Hogg took down a version from the renditions of his mother and his uncle, which they had received from their father Will o' Phaup, who had heard the song from from Andrew Muir, a servant to Rev. Boston of Ettrick. After receiving it Scott, Laidlaw and John Leyden visited Hogg's family in 1802 (Leyden, as a Borders autodidact, is discussed in Chapter Ten). Laidlaw notes the collectors' excitement: 'Scott read with great fluency con amore.... Leyden was like a roused lion'. Margaret Laidlaw's comments are proverbial: 'there

was never ane o' my songs prentit till ye prentit them yoursell, an' ye hae spoilt them a'thegither. They war made for singing, an' no for reading; and they're nouthar right spelled nor right setten down'. Despite initial doubts, Scott soon trusted the text's oral provenance from 'the reign of Edward 2d or 3rd'. Generally Scott suspected texts from 'peasants' less than those from the 'educated', as seen in his respective reactions to Hogg's and Peter Buchan's songs for instance. It is tempting to speculate that this reflects contemporary attitudes towards autodidacts as (primarily) ingenuous savages, incapable of deliberate deceit.<sup>3</sup>

Considerable deference to Scott as patron, typical of the early stages of autodidactic careers, is evident in the Shepherd's response. Hogg explained his collecting methodology to Laidlaw in 1801: 'I could get as much from these traditions as to make good songs myself. But without Mr. Scott's permission this would be an imposition'. The statement is possibly true. Raised with a thorough knowledge of the form, Hogg proved his ability to emulate a variety of styles in The Queen's Wake (1813) and The Poetic Mirror (1816). Yet, as shown below, Hogg's 'ballads' were rarely unadulterated, convincing imitations. More pertinently, forging 'Auld Maitland' would have required elaborate scheming. As Batho points out, Hogg would have needed help from his uncle, mother and the servant who informed Laidlaw of this ballad.<sup>4</sup>



Scott and Leyden's initial aspersions may have encouraged the innocent Hogg to test his 'peasant' credibility on the antiquarians in his later work, such as The Jacobite Relics (1819-21). However it is unlikely that Hogg wholly forged 'Old Maitland'; perhaps he touched it up, but this was standard contemporary practice. As Andrew Lang wrote to Thomas Craig-Brown, the Selkirkshire antiquarian, on Nov 9th 1902: 'I don't think it ['Old Maitland'] was a hoax of Hogg's for he would have bragged of it sooner or later, moreover his mother probably neither could nor would get up a long poem by heart to cheat Sir Walter'. The first point is powerful, as indicated by Hogg's pride in fooling the Literati into thinking his own 'Donald MacGillavry' was traditional (see below, Chapter Six). Furthermore, as Lang states in Sir Walter Scott and the Border Minstrelsy (1910), Old Maitland's story was only available in inaccessible 'crabbed manuscripts', and 'the style is not that of Hogg when he attempts the ballad' (a valid comment, as shown below). Child, though, was unconvinced, excluding 'Old Maitland' from his seminal collection. The lack of corroborative material does argue against authenticity. Writing in June 1802 to Scott, however, Hogg denies forgery, attributing incongruities to oral transmission and variation, processes he had considered carefully.<sup>5</sup>

As an autodidactic respondent, Hogg learnt a great deal from Scott's standards of presentation. In



accordance with current taste, the songs published in The Minstrelsy were well polished. Scott has been accused of tampering with texts but at least he paid lipservice to responsible editorial policy. Scott wrote in 1801 to Dr Currie, Burns' biographer, 'I have made it an insatiable rule to attempt no improvements on the genuine Ballads'; later he regretted his textual alterations. Most changes in Hogg's texts are single words within ballad idioms: alterations a singer might make. More intrusively, to please literary sensibilities, what are perceived as superfluous verses are cut. Earthy items like Hogg's 'Lord Barnaby' (Ch 81) and untitled 'Johnny Scot' (Ch 99) do not appear in The Minstrelsy. Following current practice, Scott fused Hogg's texts with others into composite ballads. Hogg was initially ambivalent in his response to Scott's treatment, offering 'corrections' in 1806:

If you are again to republish the Minstrelsy you are the best judge of which of my ballads are best printed to take with the english people any of them are at your disposal but surely the song which you proposed publishing before and neglected would form no bad supplement to the Minstrelsy. I wish I had had a thorough perusal of it previous to publication as I know there are some small mistakes in the notes which should be rectified but which have all escaped my memory--. In the lament of the border widow the Lady's seat is in the dow linn not glen. In

Philiphaugh Lesly's detachment did not cross the Ettrick and go up the South Side when they must have gone through or by Selkirk but up the Lingley burn and round the north side of the hill overlooking the camp and came in behind the Hareheadwood where they waited until their brethren began the short skirmish and flight--I am delighted with the additional verse relating to Harden's appearance at court and though I hate particularity in a ballad after the parties are fairly introduced yet as Hardens may well be looked on now a days as somewhat particular I think we may be allowed a little particularity in describing it. I have therefore thought of adding the two following verses to compleat the idea of a great and terrible chief--After "with all the haw aboon" say

His doublet was of glittering goud  
 And it became him well  
 Where'er he turn'd his buirdly breast,  
 Respect and honour fell.  
 His hose were brac'd with chains of ern,  
 And round with tassels hung  
 At ilka trump of Harden's heel  
 The royal archer sung.

His twa hand sword  
 From all our nobles of the north  
 The chief with wonder ey'd  
 But Harden's form and Harden's look,  
 Were hard to be denied.'<sup>6</sup>

Hogg, then, would conform to the demands of 'high culture' to achieve recognition; but he endeavoured to retain creative control. Although he sometimes sought guidance from Scott, the Ettrick Shepherd was far from being the passive peasant the autodidactic stereotype suggests.

It seems likely, however, that Hogg, showing his pliability as an autodidact, developed a sensitivity to the type of texts which pleased the Literati. Later, it seems, he regretted that certain texts, which the Hogg family valued, had not been preserved by genteel collectors. This can be inferred from a letter of 1834 to Charles Kilpatrick Sharpe, in which Hogg expresses surprise that Sharpe did not have 'The Laidley Worm of Banborough Hill' in his collection:

My mother sung it and said it had never been printed but I have quite forgot it save a sentence here and there. It is very like your story. I remember one horrid verse

For seven miles East an' seven miles west  
 An' seven miles north and south  
 There was neither grass nor corn could grow  
 Wi the vermin frae her mouth....

Mention is also made in the ballad of the enormous quantity of sweet milk which the worm drank but is now I suppose among the things that were.<sup>7</sup>



The statement confirms, too, that the family knew literary texts, probably in chapbooks as well as literary collections, which were influences on Hogg's 'ballads'.

On observing the poor quality of Scott's Minstrelsy imitations Hogg claims, with deliberate ingenuousness, to have been inspired to write himself. After the event (emphasising his autodidactic credentials) Hogg 'set about imitating the ancient ballads myself--[and] selected a number of traditionary stories, and put them in metre by chanting them to certain old tunes'. Noting that, 'I was more successful than in any thing I had hitherto tried' Hogg adds comments which mirror those generally applied to autodidacts: 'they were still but rude pieces of composition'.<sup>8</sup>

The results of Hogg's earliest experiments as an autodidact, presumably, include Scottish Pastorals (1801). This, as seen in the previous chapter, contains mainly lyrics, but includes one ballad-style item: 'The Death of Sir Neil Stuart, and Donald M<sup>c</sup>Vane, Esq. An Auld Tale made new again'. This is set to 'Johnny Fa'. The air, as Petrie points out, was associated with 'The Gipsy Laddie' (Ch 200) and later used by Hogg in the second volume of The Jacobite Relics to set Song 99, William Glen's 'Wae's Me for Prince Charlie'. It is a busily lilting tune, well suited to the tragic tale:

On yon fair isle, beyond Argyle,  
     Where flocks and herds are plenty,  
 Liv'd a rich heir, whose sister fair  
     Was flow'r of all that county.

A knight, Sir Neil had woo'd her land,  
     Expecting soon to marry;  
 When a Highland laird his suit preferr'd,  
     Young, handsome, brisk, and airy.  
(verses 1-2)<sup>9</sup>

Ann's brother, Donald McVane, challenges Sir Neil to a duel for seducing Ann; Donald is killed. Similarly, Glengyle fights and kills Sir Neil, following the 'doubling' pattern which is characteristic of ballad. Ann rejects Glengyle, donning 'dowie black' for a (conventional) period of seven years.

Hogg shows his autodidactic advantages in possessing an intimate knowledge of his chosen genre, and enjoys both following and subverting its distinguishing features. Supported by the traditional air, ballad conventions inform the piece: 'base Sir Neil'; 'bold McVane'; rapid scene shifts. Hogg's source, a Highland woman called Campbell, may have known a chapbook version; the piece exhibits chapbook's sentimental tendencies. When Sir Neil is enraged by McVane:

A furious pass he darted,  
 That pierc'd the brain of bold McVane,

Who with a groan departed. (11.49-51)

Sir Neil reacts thus, as he falls to Glengyle:

Then down he fell, and cri'd "I'm slain;  
 "Adieu to all things earthly:  
 "Adieu, Glengyle, the day's they ain;  
 "But thou hast gain'd it basely."  
 (11.101-4)

The plaintive tune partly remedies the bathos, but Hogg may be consciously using bathos to mock the inherent flaws of the chapbook tradition. The comic quality of this section may be an early example of Hogg parodying transitional ballad styles, a technique he would explore more fully in works like The Queen's Wake (1813). Hogg's autodidactic background meant that he was particularly skilled in experimenting with orally-based styles.

Hogg enters into an even more playful dialogue with ballad conventions in The Mountain Bard (1807). As a consciously Ossianic autodidact here, Hogg fully exploits the retrospective mood of his collection:

Fain would I hear our mountains ring  
 With blasts which former minstrels blew;  
 Drive slumber hence on viewless wing,  
 And tales of other times renew.



The first section here, 'Ballads, in imitation of the antients [sic]', recalls the atmosphere of The Minstrelsy's 'Imitations of the Ancient Ballads'. Hogg follows Scott's arrangement fairly closely, with individual introductions and notes to his texts. Several of his ballads are apparently 'straight' imitations. 'The Laird of Lairistan, or the Three Champions of Liddisdale', for instance, is reminiscent of 'Johnnie Scott' (Ch 99).<sup>10</sup> 'Thirlestane. A Fragment' (pp.123-27), like 'Lord Randal' (Ch 12), features a young lord fatally poisoned, here by his stepmother. Hogg adds a humorous twist in his father's revenge: squandering the inheritance on a wake lasting a year and a day. Many of Hogg's pieces take elements from oral ballads and mingle these with a literary frame of reference. For example, 'Lord Derwent. A Fragment' (pp.128-36) opens, with a nod to Scott, like 'Jock o' Hazeldean': 'O Why look ye so pale, my lord? / And why look ye so wan?' (ll.1-2). This recounts the cruel action of the Douglas--a character familiar from 'The Douglas Tragedy' ('Earl Brand', Ch 7)--in his murder of his wife's lover, Liddesdale. She, too, is killed for disloyalty by her brother John, just as brothers kill their sister in 'The Cruel Brother' (Ch 11) and 'Mill o' Tifty's Annie' (Ch 233).

Hogg, perhaps developing his formative experiences with The Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border (in which making composite texts was standard procedure), often



(11.1, 57); the lady 'wyting this, an' blamin' that' (11.27, 75). These mingle with naturalistic touches like the lady's embarrassment on approaching her knight without stockings or shoes; Hogg, a supposedly disgenuous autodidact, is demonstrating his skill at blending ballad realism with psychological observation.

As well as thoughtfully exploring ballad as a genre, Hogg was seduced by the critical incentives of posturing as a sanitised bard of Nature's Making. Following The Minstrelsy and the tradition of chapbooks, the Ettrick Shepherd introduces romantic statements: 'Ae press o his bonny mou', / Will weel atone for a' the past' (11.106-07). Where the 'Twa Corbies' lady plots her lover's death, here she is a victim. There is romantic imagery: 'The sun had drunk frae Keilder fells, / His beverage o' the morning dew' (11.29-30). As Gifford comments, words like 'beverage' strike a jarring note; Hogg sought to create a romantic image and the effect is incongruous. In this instance, the impulse to posture as an unthreatening peasant works to Hogg's disadvantage.<sup>12</sup>

Hogg satisfied the English market by making Graham 'flower of a' the British isle', not of the traditional 'fair Scotland'. The 1807 version, in some areas, is more Anglicised than that of 1805: 'sterns' (1.13) become 'stars'; 'couldna' (1.24) 'could not'. As the lady runs to her love in 1805, '...frae her braw, an' lovely locks, / The sweat ran down like drops o' rain' (11.99-100); in



1807, 'Till frae her brow, and lovely locks, / The dew-drops fell like drops o' rain'. The knight originally found, with 'A rotten sod across his wame' (1.112), is now 'Red-rusted in his armour bright'. Changing the emphasis makes the ballad less 'coarse' for Hogg's more genteel readers, over-sensitive as they were to the blunders made by 'peasant poets'.

In reworking 'Sir David Graeme' for the 1821 edition of The Mountain Bard, Hogg's practices indicate that autodidacts felt free to amend their work, in a manner similar to oral variation. There are major changes here. Hogg introduces a favourite motif, rooted in traditional belief, for the lady's mental state:

There's a sleep as deep as the sleep outright,--  
'Tis without a feeling or a name;

'Tis a dull an' a dreamless lethargye,  
For the spirit strays owre vale an' hill,  
An' the bosom is left a vacancy,  
An' when it comes back it is darker still.

(11.147-52)<sup>13</sup>

The possibility of a body living without a soul was a contemporary Scottish belief: mesmerism, improper burial and excessive grief were thought capable of producing such a result. On a symbolic level, perhaps the image of dissociation was particularly attractive to autodidacts like Hogg, living at a period when oral tradition was in

transition. The style here is not traditional. As elsewhere, Hogg's ability in synthesising romantic elements with traditional cultural motifs is striking; he produces a powerful and evocative image as the psychological ideas clash with the non psychological nature of oral tradition.

Additional elements are introduced such as editorial judgements on women in love: 'The ee her heart's love will betray' (l.123). Furthermore, the ending is new. The earlier versions drew on revenant ballads like 'The Unquiet Grave' (Ch 78) and 'The Wife of Usher's Well' (Ch 79). As the lady sees Graham approach her: 'His mouth was black, an sair he strove / T'impart to her some dreadfu' tale' (ll.139-40) but, in this later version, there is no physical realisation of the ghost:

Fain wad I tell what there befel  
 But 'tis unmeet for mortal ear;  
 The dismal deeds on yonder fell  
 Wad shock a human heart to hear.  
 (verse 37)

As Hogg notes, the ambiguity 'artfully consigned it over to the fancy of every reader to paint it in what way he chose'. Such an interactive concept of the relationship between the writer and the reader, perhaps, reflects Hogg's autodidactic experiences of traditional culture. Oral traditions allow for great flexibility of response,

depending on dynamic relationships between the performer and the audience to determine textual continuities and variations.<sup>14</sup>

In 1821 the last three verses of the earlier versions were completely replaced. There is no ghost and the lady is changed from a capable woman like the 'Border Widow' into a swooning, sentimental heroine. This gives a chapbook feel to the piece, though the new verses do use oral idioms: the lady's brothers, for instance, are murderers, reflecting the tale of the 'Dowie Dens of Yarrow' (Ch 214). The altered version is diluted in terms of plot potency and structure. 'Sir David Graham' lacked the tight formulaic unity of traditional ballad but had a looser arrangement of grouped verses where the lady was prominent (e.g. verses 16-18, 23-26) balanced against sections where the 'helper' (the dove in verses 1-2, 11-12; the hound in verses 19-22) was prominent, ending with the knight being featured (in verses 33-36) and a final coda (verse 37). Altering the end destroys this patterning, and is symptomatic of the contemporary shift from oral to literary style. 'Sir David Graham', then, is restyled to suit literary audiences, epitomising Hogg's often conciliatory approach to song-writing. What began as an eerie variation on ballad becomes a looser, poorer, poem. Hogg would have done better to maintain 'peasant' oral criteria here at the expense of trying to satisfy the demands of his supposed social superiors. It is at times



like this that the complex, and not always positive, effects of autodidactic stereotyping can be seen.

Hogg sometimes complied with the guidelines offered to himself as an autodidact, including comments like The Scots Magazine's 'A too circumstantial description of disagreeable objects...often fails of raising the passion meant to be inspired'. Epistolary evidence suggests Hogg actively seeking Scott's guidance on occasion. In a letter of 1806, Hogg accepts Scott's advice regarding The Mountain Bard, posing as inspired 'peasant poet'. However he makes clear his own notions on presentation:

Dear sir,

I received yours brimfull of Criticisms, articles which I mortally abhor and have been taking them under consideration. I must apprise you how much I hate alterations in any of my poetical pieces and that before I had the chain of my ideas and story broken by them I would rather consent to the exclusion of the piece altogether. You are by this time sensible that it never will be from correctness and equality that I am to depend on for my poetic character but only from scattered expressive tints and from some little interest which the heart feels in them and it is only from a conviction that if one man in Britain have a proper discernment in that species of poetry it is you that I am induced to listen at all to them. I think Sir David Graham may pass as it is on the plan which you recommended as hearing the beginning of it and the very way I intended. The verse you

quarrel with in the pedlar is easily altered  
thus,

"I wish he had staid he so earnestly pray'd  
And he hecht a braw pearling in present to gie."

.... I think now that you were right in blotting out my early poetry from the preface which however I only meant to appear as an instance of the progress of genious [sic]. You are at liberty to make what alterations in the quote [?] you please. Give Ballantyne orders to stick by the ill...I positively will not have them printed without apostrophes as yours and Leyden's are. I think there should be only four stanzas in the page though I do not like a very large type. If you have not published the proposals note that the book must be of a large size as there are yet a number of ballads I mean to insert.<sup>15</sup>

The second section of this letter is particularly revealing: rebelling against Scott's treatment, Hogg offers detailed guidelines on the presentation of his work. This blend of wanting help and resenting it typifies Hogg's ambivalent response to being treated as inspired, ingenu, 'peasant poet'.

His personal experiences of eviction, bankruptcy, and critical contempt made the young Ettrick Shepherd keenly aware of lordly scorn. There are, perhaps, traces of these feelings in another ballad-style composition in The



Mountain Bard: 'Gilmanscleuch', 'Founded upon an ancient family tradition' (pp.34-49). This is a question-answer style 'ballad', framed by the story of Peggy, who gave her New Year's goud to an elderly beggar descended from the Scotts of Gilmanscleuch. The tale proper is his account of a confrontation between Gilmanscleuch's brother, 'stout and trew' and young Jock of Harden (who is courting Gilmanscleuch's sister, 'luvly Jean'). In a pastoral setting, 'When June had decked the braes in green' (verse 22), a shepherd (rather than the page boy of ballad), reveals Jock is hunting on Gilmanscleuch territory. Adam pursues Jock to 'Yarrow's banks' and, according to ballad convention, 'lang they foucht, and sair they foucht' (1.172) until Adam pierces Jock's heart and cleaves his head in two. As he dies Jock reveals he was to marry Jean that night, a tragic misunderstanding typical of ballad. The motivation is intriguing. Not only does Adam fight for Jean, but also because Jock's hunt had scared Adam's 'feebil ewes'. Hogg develops the ethos of riding ballads like 'Jock o the Side' (Ch 187), going beyond the ballad's defence of honour to condemn aristocratic contempt for commoners: 'Nae haughtye Scott, of Harden's kin, / Sal proodlye scool on me' (11.153-54).

Suggesting an autodidactic desire, at times, to subvert conventions, Hogg modifies ballad and chivalric norms in 'Gilmanscleuch'. Harden's revenge is not by might but by law: the Gilmanscleuch Scotts are outlawed.



Fighting in 'forreign [sic] fields', Adam fell; Jean bore a son and died broken-hearted. The second Jean gives Gilmanscleuch her gold and, approving her generosity, her father promises to return Gilmanscleuch's old lands minus rent and services. The Scots Magazine thought that this would 'steal a tear from every reader of sensibility'. The reviewer did not notice that the ending was humorous, given that Scott's ancestors included Wat of Harden and Hogg's included Harden's aptly named champion, 'The Wild Boar':

A Scott shou'd ay support a Scott,  
                     When sinking to decaye,  
 Till over a' the southlan' hills  
                     We stretch our ample way. (verse 71)

Hogg, albeit wryly, seems to be alluding to the lack of financial support he had experienced, even though he was of Border lineage, as a peasant poet.<sup>16</sup>

Extending his desire to experiment, beyond critical expectations of the autodidact, Hogg's supernatural 'ballads' in The Mountain Bard are often nearer to Gothic mannerisms than ballad understatement. For instance, 'The Pedlar' (pp.15-34), which had appeared as an 'Imitation of the Ancients' in The Scots Magazine (1804), opens:

'Twas late, late, late on a Saturday night,  
                     The moon was set, an' the wind was lown;  
 The lazy mist crept towards the height,

An' the dim, livid flame glimmered laigh on  
the downe. (11.1-4)

The lady of Thirlestane (wife of Sir Robert Scott, last knight there) dreams the pedlar, John Waters, is murdered. Her maid Grizzy fears to investigate, having heard the 'death bell' (a 'tinkling in the ears, which our peasantry in the country regard as a secret intelligence of some friend's decease').<sup>17</sup> On Saturday the laird encounters the pedlar in an ominous nocturnal setting: the moon shines through the pedlar's bloody body and the laird believes, 'The devil a' woundit, an' bleedin to death, / In shape o' a pedlar upo the mill-green' (11.63-4).

Hogg makes full use of his autodidactic advantages here, drawing on his profound knowledge of oral source materials. Traditionally the dead return for a purpose. When the minister (the well known Rev. Thomas Boston, writer of Human Nature in Its Four-Fold State (1720) and a major influence on The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner (1824) inquires as to Waters' reasons, it is revealed the pedlar lies murdered under the mill-wheel, condemned to wander until, 'Some crimes an' villanies I can reveal' (1.111). Furthermore, drawing on the folkloric association of ghosts and treasure, Waters buried three hundred pounds, stolen from his niece, on Balderstone hill. The money is recovered, the body discovered and justice restored with the murderer (the

millar Rob Riddle) hanged at Jedburgh. A moral is drawn-- something which does not occur in oral ballads, but does in legend:

The thief may escape the lash an' the rape,  
                   The liar an' swearer their leather may  
   save,  
 The wrecker of unity pass with impunity,  
                   But when gat the murd'rer in peace to the  
   grave? (verse 45)

The Scots Magazine disliked the 'serio-comic humour'; 'the anapestic structure of the verses being unsuitable for the relation of such grave matters'. In tone, this is versified legend, not ballad, with shocking details rather than understatement. There are the traditional verification details of legend: Waters' foot-bone streams with blood at the murderer's approach. Characteristics features of traditional narratives including song and oral prose, or 'sage' as Axel Olrik calls them collectively, often cross over between genres; this factor underwrites Hogg's experiments in merging ballad and legend.<sup>18</sup>

Hogg explores generic shifts again, with an autodidact's finely-honed sensibilities, in 'Mess John' (pp.68-95). This early example of Hogg's interest in clerical corruption, pursued in The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner (1824), versifies legend to explain 'Binram's Corse' where a satanic priest is



buried. Hogg allowed the heroine to survive at Scott's suggestion and complied with demands to remove a verse of 'indelicacy'. He considered Scott's critique with care:

The saving of the lass of Craiglyburn would improve the story in one respect and hurt it in other two. In the former case it would exemplify the pleasing idea of an over-ruling providence protecting beauty and innocence--and by other it would spoil the story as it is at present told and the death of the priest would be too severe a recompense.... I am half mad because I cannot have a conversation with you about things.<sup>19</sup>

Scott's suggestions, at times, irritated Hogg. However, Hogg's comments suggest that the Hogg / Scott relationship was on a more equal footing, at least, than that between the Ettrick Shepherd and his colleagues at Blackwood's.

Indicating the real prejudices autodidacts faced, The Oxford Review of November 1807 patronisingly noted 'irrational notions, and extravagant legends that even now prevail among the lower orders of people in Scotland', demanding a glossary for the 'English reader'. The attack on Hogg's language became critical commonplace. By 1833, when Allan Cunningham summarised Hogg's achievements in The Athenaeum, as 'Chief of the Peasant school.... which more than approaches that of the polished and learned', it was wholly acceptable to berate the 'homeliness of

language, which ought to be tolerated in the minstrel but not endured in modern song'.<sup>20</sup>

Hogg did, of course, respond to encouragements to refine his autodidactic voice. There is some validity to Groves' judgement of Hogg's next major work, The Forest Minstrel (1810): 'Hogg's contributions to this volume cater to polite taste'. Hogg's contemporaries, however, disagreed; presumably an autodidact could never be polite enough for the Literati. The Scots Magazine commented, in a critique which is at once perceptive and condescending:

The hills and sheep-walks of the south have given birth to a race of untutored bards, whose works display very considerable beauties, mixed with faults, to which all human compositions, and particularly those of untaught genius, are liable.... The principal fault in Mr Hogg's poetry, is a want of harmony between the different parts of it. His original situation has given him a rude, simple, and somewhat hard style; subsequent circumstances have inspired him with a taste for rich and artificial ornament; and he has, lastly, we know not how, acquired an extreme fondness for a certain species of moral and abstract language. All these, with the exception, perhaps, of the last, are exceedingly good, provided they are either kept separate, or intimately blended together. But in our author they mingle without coalescing.... Tragic and impassioned sentiments are nearly the same in all ranks, and often the more powerful, in proportion as they

are more simply expressed. But humour is a more factitious quality; it requires a certain polish and refinement which unlettered bards can scarcely have had an opportunity of acquiring.

The reviewer is right to draw attention to Hogg's 'original situation' and the detrimental effects, at times, of his 'subsequent circumstances'. However the analysis is, overall, rather patronising in its failure to appreciate the strengths of Hogg's combination of 'hard' and humorous styles.<sup>21</sup>

In his role as 'Forest Minstrel', highlighting the notion of the Ossianic 'Mountain Bard', Hogg creates an autodidact prototype, of national significance, invested with a particularly Borders flavour. This is exemplified by his inclusion of items, which had already been printed, like 'Auld Ettrick John'. Originally a 'Scottish Ballad' in The Scots Magazine of 1804, and reprinted in The Mountain Bard (1807), here this is classed as a 'Humorous Song', blending aspects of ballad with elements from earthy lyrics like Burns' 'What can a young lassie do wi' an auld man'.<sup>22</sup> A widower courts 'the lassie o' the brae' and much of humour arises from John's self-image. Although he feels, 'his shadow look'd na ill' (l.11), he is liker 'The Wee Wee Man' (Ch 38):

His coat was threed-about wi' green,  
The mouds [moths] had wrought it muckle  
harm;



The pouches were an ell atween,  
 The cuff was faldit up the arm.  
 He wore a bonnet on his head,  
 The bung upon his shoulders lay,  
 An' by the neb ye wad hae red  
 That Johnie view'd the milky way.  
 (verse 3)

This anti-hero's assets include joints 'firm like brass' and, more persuasively, '...twa gude kye amang the knowes / A hunder pund i' honest hands, / An' sax-an'-thretty doddit yowes' (verse 4). Nelly, appropriately no stylised ballad heroine, is described in homely metaphors: 'Her brow was white like Cheviot woo; / Her cheeks were bright as heather-bells' (ll.45-46). John offers Nell's mother the chance of a 'braw divine' for grandson; Nelly complies because John is available; most lads are gone as 'sodgers' or 'kiss an' toy' without offering marriage. Even more persuasively, with John's gear, she can 'busk me braw an' conquer a'' (verses 6-7). As is traditional, the outcome is less happy. Nelly's fretting, 'reaved him sair o' flesh an' blood, / An' peace o' mind--the warst ava' (verse 9). No lad will court Nelly as married woman.

Hogg's use of ballad elements was both conscious and sophisticated at this stage of his career, contrary to his image as head 'peasant poet'. 'Auld Ettrick John' draws a marked moral, standard in lyrics of old men marrying young women. Old men should remember John's fate; young women

Nell's 'lanesome nights' (verses 9-10). 'Auld Ettrick John' substitutes ballad family conflicts with lyric's husband-versus-wife, showing how Hogg's treatment of ballad material changed. In 1805 he saw ballads primarily as stories, blurring the distinction with lyric in classing 'Ettrick John' as 'ballad' in the loose fashion of categorisation of Scott's 'ballad' the 'Border Widow's Lament'. Dropping 'ballad' from the title suggests Hogg was increasingly discerning regarding folkloric genres and increasingly experimental in blending them. Introducing lyric elements to ballad is a process Tom Burns has termed 'lyrication'. In utilising this device Hogg is, of course, conforming to contemporary trends.<sup>23</sup>

Hogg's skill in emulating ballads and his enthusiasm for the genre, related to his familiarity with oral culture, is particularly evident in The Queen's Wake (1813). This consists of songs supposedly performed before Mary Queen of Scots, on her return to Scotland in 1561. Interlinking passages describe a competition which lasts for three successive nights; similar to the courtly context of the Decameron. The setting, albeit romanticised, allows Hogg to replicate the intimacy and excitement of traditional song and tale-telling sessions. Recalling oral seasonal prejudices for tale-telling, and the atmosphere (if not, strictly, the season) of Henryson's Testament of Cresseid, the poem is set in Winter.

Covering himself against the preconceptions he faced as an autodidact, Hogg claimed that he considered The Wake to be, 'a very imperfect and unequal production, and if it were not for three of the ballads, which are rather of a redeeming quality, some of the rest are little better than trash'. Various attempts have been made to perceive overall structure: Groves detects a parabola stretching from winter to 'the promise of spring' and a journey 'towards an implied centre, point of unity, or ground of truth'; Gifford suggests Hogg sought, rather than attained form, within Scottish tradition. If The Wake is approached as presented, however--a song cycle in ballad tradition--thematic, stylistic and structural patterns may be identified.<sup>24</sup>

The writer's autodidactic background allows him the freedom to explore ballad structures in a highly experimental way. The Queen's Wake is, in structure, almost an (immensely) extended ballad: three central sections contain the core poems, and Hogg makes use of ballad devices including repetition of phrases, motifs and episodes. The central figures, too, are drawn from ballad types. Interlinking passages allow Hogg to include descriptions of the bards as well as introductions, asides, and critiques of their offerings. Mirroring critical responses to his work, and showing a keen awareness of his own role as a peasant poet, Hogg's internal commentary ranges from the appreciative to the



reductive. 'Dumlanrig', for instance, is 'soothing' but 'Too long, too varied'; the sublimity of 'Kilmeny' is leavened with the subsequent return to the physical reality of the audience: ladies who yawn, with 'drumly eyes', recalling the responses Hogg suffered to much of his legendary material.<sup>25</sup>

From the outset, the narrator establishes his patriotism, indicating that (like Ramsay and Burns) he prefers indigenous over foreign matter in song. 'Night the First' opens with the Queen's favourite Rizzio. His 'Malcolm of Lorn' (pp.35-45), the only item set outside Scotland, is a sentimental tale of lovers parted and reunited briefly before the hero expires; the court consider this 'vapid, artful, tense' in comparison with Scottish settings and themes in The Wake. 'Young Kennedy' (pp.49-62), the second piece, is more to the court's taste: a Gothic tale of crime and ghostly punishment. It establishes the theme of a trance which becomes increasingly important to The Wake; the heroine Matilda is overcome after seeing her revenant father, 'Her feelings, her voice, and her reason away' (l.144).

Hogg relates the tales of The Wake using diverse orally-derived and literary voices, thereby deriving the utmost advantage from his unique experiences as a learned autodidact. Set against the first two, tragic items, the third is parodic and, counterbalancing its predecessors, a woman now has the upper hand. 'The Witch of Fife' (pp.70-

90) is a self-sufficient housewife, in the tradition of Dunbar's 'Tua Mariit Wemen'. She knows her own mind and does what she pleases. This rollicking tale follows her husband's pursuit of the Witch's night raid to Carlisle, and his passing out drunk. Found by the bishop's men, in a bizarre parody of conventions in the Mass, he is pricked till his blood flows ('But some cryit it was wine') and tied to the stake to be burnt. At the last moment the Witch appears; the two fly off and a moral is drawn:

May ever ilke man in the land of Fyfe,  
                     Read what drinkeris dree;  
 And nevir curse his puir auld wife,  
                     Rychte wicked altho she be. (verse 80)

Gifford comments on the 'ballad toughness of tone' in 'The Witch of Fife', particularly apt in relation to the first version where the old man was burnt at the stake. Scott persuaded Hogg to change the original harsh ending and save the old man, making the poem attractive to literary audiences of the period, but detracting from the integrity of the poem.<sup>26</sup> As has been shown, such literary interference is symptomatic of contemporary attitudes to traditional culture: traditional products were acceptable if shorn of 'offensive' characteristics.

Hogg includes ironic, and subtle, reflections on his own position as an autodidact in The Wake. His romantic 'Glen-Avin' (pp.104-13), like 'Young Kennedy', is set in

the Highland landscape in a manner which is reminiscent of the Lady of the Lake as much as reflecting 'every form that Ossian knew'. Its narrator, 'Young Farquhar' from 'the hills of Spey', recounts a mystical encounter between an 'hoary sage' and the Spirit of the Storm (an image used by Hogg in his prose The Shepherd's Calendar (1829), as well as by Leyden in poetry). This is no pathetic fallacy; Hogg's Storm Spirit is real and tangible. The wizard who challenges him is left as a bodyless soul. Once again Hogg's intricate patterning becomes apparent as he explores interactions between supernatural forces and those who doubt them. The Storm Spirit, in this respect, could be interpreted as the wild peasant Hogg; the seer, ironically reminiscent of Scott as Wizard of the North, representing the sceptical Literati. The Spirit is, ultimately, victorious, his 'passing shrieks' surviving for posterity.

'Old David' (pp.118-38) continues the supernatural elements which are beginning to dominate the Wake, but ambiguously; 'fairies' are revealed as women. Hogg presents himself in the introduction as the bard nursed 'In Nature's bosom' in Ettrick. He has sung to low and high society, including the Braxholm Scotts. The experience of this bard demonstrates the problems encountered by peasant poets, from his unprepossessing entry (even his name 'excited merriment') onwards:



The ladies smiled, the courtiers sneered;  
 For such a simple air and mien  
 Before a court had never been.  
 A clown he was, bred in the wild,  
 And late from native moors exiled,  
 In hopes his mellow mountain strain  
 High favour from the great would gain.  
 Poor wight! he never weened how hard  
 For poverty to earn regard! (Night II)

The bard, like Hogg, is a peasant poet, whose low social status means that he is considered, immediately, as second-rate. Neither his the 'soothing' notes nor the 'zealous word of bard renowned' can convince the audience, 'that worth could be / Inherent in such mean degree' (Night II). However, when the Queen smiles on the bard's 'genuine nature' his merit is duly noted by the court (Hogg's desire for a Royal Literary Society pension may be nascent here). With this fictionalised predecessor the writer, in any case, seems to express his personal feelings as a real autodidactic bard.

'The Spectre's Cradle Song' (pp.145-46) and 'The Fate of Macgregor' (pp.147-53) sustain the slant towards supernaturalism. The latter shows strong thematic similarities to the 'Daemon Lover' (Ch 243). 'Earl Walter' (pp.155-72), recited by the 'Bard of Clyde', is an ostensibly chivalric tale of knightly combat between the eponymic Earl (inspired by love for his royal lady, 'Fair Margaret') and the dastardly Darcie. There are elements

from oral balladry: trebling in the three horn calls summoning the warriors to fight and three blows dealt by Earl Walter to Darcie; formulaic phrases like 'belt and brand', 'The flower of fair Scotland'. However, there are incongruities symptomatic of the transitional period of composition. Oral balladry's conventions are mingled with literary aesthetics. The tearful paternal affection is too sentimental for oral ballad. Margaret's unchivalric offer to find an alternative champion to save Walter's life is too soft-edged. The phraseology, including the 'full suspended breath' of the warriors, may mirror ballad types but is too overtly psychological for oral tradition; the sophisticated Hogg of The Confessions is intruding on the apparently peasant poet.

The final piece of Night II shows Hogg's unusually wide range, as an autodidact, to its fullest advantage. The writer continues to mix ballad with extraneous elements, creating a darkly ambiguous mood which contrasts marvellously with the exuberance of the penultimate piece, 'Earl Walter' (pp.155-72). 'Kilmeny' (pp.176-193) is probably the best-known, and certainly the most highly finished, of the songs in The Wake. Kilmeny herself, like Scott's ballad texts, could almost be considered as a composite creation, embodying quintessential fairy and female characteristics of ballad, and enigmatic as the lady of 'Tam Lin' (Ch 39):

Bonny Kilmeny gaed up the glen,  
 But it wasna to meet Duneira's men,  
 Nor the rosy monk of the isle to see,  
 For Kilmeny was pure as pure could be. (11.1-4)

'Kilmeny', like most of The Wake, is not in ballad measure. By dint of its subject matter--a fantastic journey--this could equally have been discussed in Chapter Seven. However, I have chosen to discuss it as ballad material, firstly, because of its structurally crucial place in The Wake and secondly, because the success of 'Kilmeny' depends on its exploration of the unearthly tones often associated with ballad. The Highland shepherd bard is a sombre and mystical Ossianic figure, Drummond of Ern, whose soul, like Kilmeny's, wanders off into 'visionary worlds to roam'. He is reminiscent of Thomas of Ercildoune and 'Kilmeny' can be seen, on one level, as a reworking of 'Thomas the Rhymer' (Ch 37).<sup>27</sup> Placed roughly half-way through the cycle, the main motifs are already established: supernatural and historical elements, the living body and wandering soul, the impossible beauty of young heroines. All these come to fruition, indicating a complexity of patterning in The Wake far beyond the peasant poet's supposed boundaries.

Hogg follows the visionary tradition of Ramsay, Fergusson and Burns; this tradition continued with Tennant and Pollock and (as discussed in Chapter Twelve) reached a



climax with James Young Geddes' New Jerusalem (1879). Kilmeny journeys through a magical landscape, '...where the cock never crew, / Where the rain never fell, and the wind never blew (ll.4)-41). She is led by an otherworldly male, a 'meke and reverend fere'; her situation seems intentionally opposed to that of the unearthly female leading a man, as the Queen of Elfland does 'Thomas' or Beatrice does Dante in The Inferno. Drawing on Thomas' emblematic prophecy, Kilmeny has a series of visions. Thomas saw the narrow path of righteousness and broad path of wickedness, wading through a red sea of all the blood on earth. Kilmeny sees the 'stream of life' and Scotland's future: the demise of Mary Queen of Scots; the civil wars; the coming of Napoleon.

Hogg's expert knowledge of ballad allows him the freedom to explore ballad precedents in innovative ways. Like Thomas, Kilmeny is seven years in the Otherworld, receiving a gift of clothes; Thomas has a coat of 'even cloth' and velvet shoes, Kilmeny a 'joup o the lilly sheen' and 'bonny snood of the birk sae green'. Henceforth, she exhibits unnatural purity. After visiting Elfland Thomas cannot lie. So too, '...the words that fell from her mouth, / Were words of wonder, and words of truth' (ll.324-25). After a month and a day in middle earth Kilmeny returns, like Thomas, through the greenwood to the Otherworld. There are hints, as in Thomas's legend, that Kilmeny is immortal, the countryfolk thrown

into confusion as 'they kendna whether she was living or dead'. Echoing the theme, the audience includes Huntly (Thomas disappeared, Scott says, from 'Huntlie Bank') and a Lady Gordon who does not appear again at the Wake.

On one level, Kilmeny reworks the unearthly sleep motif considered above. Christian elements are not overtly stressed: Kilmeny's 'land of thought' is 'sinless' but this merges with fairy lore. The creatures kissing Kilmeny may be marking her, as the Queen of Elfland does Thomas, but they are less threatening than traditional fairies. Their keen interest in mortal women recalls the fairies' traditional desire for women to nurse their offspring; fairies too live in a land where the 'cock never crew', and are sometimes interpreted as fallen angels in the folk tradition. The hymns that wake Kilmeny, therefore, are complementary to the Christian elements. Nor does the 'land of vision', the metaphysical realm of Kilmeny's self-discovery, contradict these aspects. In 'Kilmeny', Hogg creates a still epicentre for his constantly shifting cycle.<sup>28</sup>

The unity of The Wake is sustained throughout, largely by the use of oral narrative structures, including interlinked episodes and themes. Night the Third, for instance, opens with the Fourteenth Bard's song set, like 'Kilmeny', in the Borders. 'Mary Scott' (pp.208-53) is based on 'The Gay Goss-Hawk' (Ch 96) which Hogg knows by the more descriptive title of 'The Gray Goss Hawk'.



Mary's father, the intimidating Scott of Tushielaw, opposes her match with a rival reiver, Pringle of Torwoodlee. Recalling Romeo and Juliet, the mother provides a draught which causes Mary, in a deep swoon, to appear dead. The use of the 'Goss Hawk' storyline, too, suggests that Hogg's favourite theme of an apparently dead body, with a wandering soul, was at least partly suggested by ballad. Tushielaw, when his daughter recovers, is reconciled to the marriage and, in a humorous ending, provides his daughter with a dowry of reived cattle.

The final poems of The Wake emphasise the narrator's political orthodoxy and moral vision. The Fifteenth and Sixteenth Bards' songs, 'King Edward's Dream' (pp.256-63) and 'Dumlanrig' (pp.266-93), foresee the glorious Scotland of the future, including Edinburgh, within the Union, and famed for learning and the rise of the 'gallant house' of Douglas. This is followed by a series of linked episodes, set in the early Christian period (a subject of lasting interest to Hogg, discussed in Chapter Seven). Developing Hogg's recurrent motif of apparently religious, wicked men the Seventeenth Bard, Allan Bawn from Mull, speaks about a sea voyage made, due to an ambivalent vision (holy or satanic), by the sinful 'Abbot McKinnon' and his monks (pp.298-313). They travel beyond the terrifying 'sacred dome of the main', populated by supernatural creatures, and pray to the God of the sea for mercy. They hear a 'Mermaid's Song' and are visited by a strange man whose



long silver beard evokes the mermen of traditional culture, as well as the founding monk of Iona. The ship sinks, and so The Wake poems end with a reminder of the transience of life and the penalty for sin.

The judging of the poets, which concludes the cycle, allows Hogg to make implicit statements about Highland and Lowland bards, literary ranking and his own position as an autodidact. Thirty bards had appeared in toto and Hogg, in a characteristic aside, regrets recalling only seventeen. Significantly, the main contenders are Highland and Lowland. Hogg's sympathies lie with the latter. Hogg's Highlanders are devious while his Border heroes are, generally, gallant and gay (Hogg's notions of Scottish regional identity are more fully discussed in Chapter Six). For the first night the Queen and her ladies favour Rizzio, but the final vote is for Gardyn, the bard of 'Young Kennedy'. Hogg ironically comments, 'No merits can the courtier sway, / 'Twas then, it seems, as at this day' (ll.60-61). The second night is taken by the Bard of Ettrick, and the third by 'the nameless stranger' from the Borders. After altercating with the Highlanders, the last mentioned withdraws from the contest for overall winner, asserting Lowland honour is satisfied. The two remaining contestants perform: Gardyn sings a tale of love in Carron, the bard of Ettrick the story of Tam Lin. Gardyn takes Mary's jewelled harp.

Stressing Hogg's local affiliations, a consolation

prize is awarded to the Ettrick bard. While Highland song is presented as marginally more palatable than the earthier (and unearthlier) Lowland tradition, the close contest denies Lowland inferiority. The Ettrick bard is awarded an ancient harp made by a wizard:

"That harp will make the elves of eve  
 Their dwelling in the moon-beam leave,  
 And ope thine eyes by haunted tree  
 Their glittering tiny forms to see.  
 The flitting shades that woo the glen  
 'Twill shape to forms of living men,  
 To forms on earth no more you see,  
 Who once were loved, and aye will be;  
 And holiest converse you may prove  
 Of things below and things above." (11.237-46)

This harp is passed bard to bard: to Bangour though not Ramsay ('His was some lyre from lady's hall, / And not the mountain harp at all', 11.286-87) or Langhorn ('His was the modish lyre of art', 1.293); to Logan and Leyden; gloriously to Walter the Abbot (Scott) who, by a good deal of retuning, coaxes ancient melodies from it. Scott, says Hogg, showed him the lyre only to insult him:

O could the bard I loved so long,  
 Reprove my fond aspiring song!  
 Or could his tongue of candour say,  
 That I should throw my harp away!  
 Just when her notes began with skill,

To sound beneath the southern hill....

'Twas kindness all, I cannot blame,  
For bootless is the minstrel flame;  
But sure a bard might well have known  
Another's feelings by his own!

(11.335-40, 344-47)

Hogg, as has been shown, often took criticism unkindly and he pokes fun at himself here. Walter the Abbot, he continues, took the Caledonian harp into other kingdoms:

'That harp he never more shall see, / Unless 'mong  
Scotland's hills with me' (11.354-55). As The Wake opened with an evocation of an Ossianic-style 'Mountain Lyre', the cycle is completed with a farewell to the harp. In the spring Hogg will seek again the inspirational harp which, as reads his epitaph by St Mary's Loch, 'taught the wandering wings to sing'.

As an indication of Hogg's autodidactic sophistication, The Wake can be seen as a cerebral journey, as the Seventeenth Bard states, 'O'er billow and bay like an image of mind' (1.18). Ballad produces complex patterning here: tragedy and comedy; historical and supernatural; masterminded by shape-changing Hogg in his multiple personalities of seventeen Bards. As in The Poetic Mirror, and his favourite body / severed soul image, the spirit is constantly moving while the body stays the same. Contemporaries are replicated: Gardyn is darkly reminiscent of Byron, with his high rank and



emblematic rose beneath a thistle. In even thinner disguise is (Allan) Cunninghame, the Nithsdale bard of 'Dumlanrig' (recalling the Buccleuch castle at Drumlanrig). The whole is given poignancy and resonance by the realisation that Mary's Wake is transient and a prelude to her eventual imprisonment and execution.

Contemporary critics, in their responses to The Queen's Wake, reflected opinions about autodidacts. The Edinburgh Review, while extolling 'obscure merit' and 'ill starred talents', found The Wake lacked 'substance':

His great merit is copiousness and richness of language, with an occasional exaltation of fancy that brings him now and then to the borders of a very high species of poetry--though, we think, from his frequent lapses, without being conscious of it extraordinary value.

The Monthly Review thought this a 'truly national poem' but, 'so glaring an instance of the violation of every principle and rule of poetry'. 'Kilmeny' was 'especial favourite' of The Edinburgh Review but, in quoting extracts, it simplified the spelling lest it, 'perplex a mere modern reader'. Though admiring 'original genius', they wished Hogg, 'could be persuaded to put a little more thought and matter in it--to make his images a little more select, and his descriptions a good deal less redundant'. Moir concurred, praising the coup-de-main, 'Kilmeny':

it was only in his transient fits of inspiration that the Shepherd thus wrote.... barring a few verbal laxities, [The Queen's Wake] would do honour to any name in our literature, however high. Full of poetry and power and of varied excellence it is, at the same time, wonderfully free from those blemishes of coarseness, and of indifferant taste, which had unfortunately--but not miraculously--disfigured Hogg's former writings.<sup>29</sup>

The Wake, then, was seen as great in passages but, on the whole, uncharacteristically beautiful; a critical response typically accorded to peasant poets.

Similarly, Songs by the Ettrick Shepherd (1831) were: 'the production of an author of acknowledged, but unequal, talent; of a man who can sometimes write admirably, but at others, infinitely below mediocrity'. Several pieces deserve mention here. 'John o' Brackadale' cuts a similar figure to 'Auld Ettrick John', although not in 'ballad' style. 'Liddel Bower' (which, like 'John o' Brackadale', was originally written for Alexander Campbell's Albyn's Anthology (1816-18) is set to an old Border air, and here the rise and fall of melodic phrases complements the ballad dialogue format; the air has a querulous quality, highlighting the poignant tale. The two speakers appear as equally strong willed, with the repeated 'a' on his 'will ye gae' and her 'when I gae'. The accompaniment, which is not quoted below, detracts from the air's ballad



clarity, abusing features like the swift Scotch snap which are better suited to instrumental than vocal music:

"O will you walk the wood, ladye, Or  
will ye walk the lea, Or will ye gae to the  
Liddel bower, an' rest a while wi' me?" "The  
dew lies in the wood, Douglas, The  
wind blows on the lea, An' when I gae to the  
Liddel bower, It shall not be wi' thee." (verse 1)30

Douglas woos with traditional trappings of wealth: hills, flocks, and retainers (verse 2). He reminds the lady of their wooing 'at eventide' (verse 3) but she rejects him for wooing her 'lands o' Nith'. Offering the ballad jibe of 'cruel fause leman', the lady mentions the traditional talking bird of ballad, which sings, '"O wae's me, dame, for thee!'" (1.42).

Later, Jardines and Johnstones seek the murdered lady



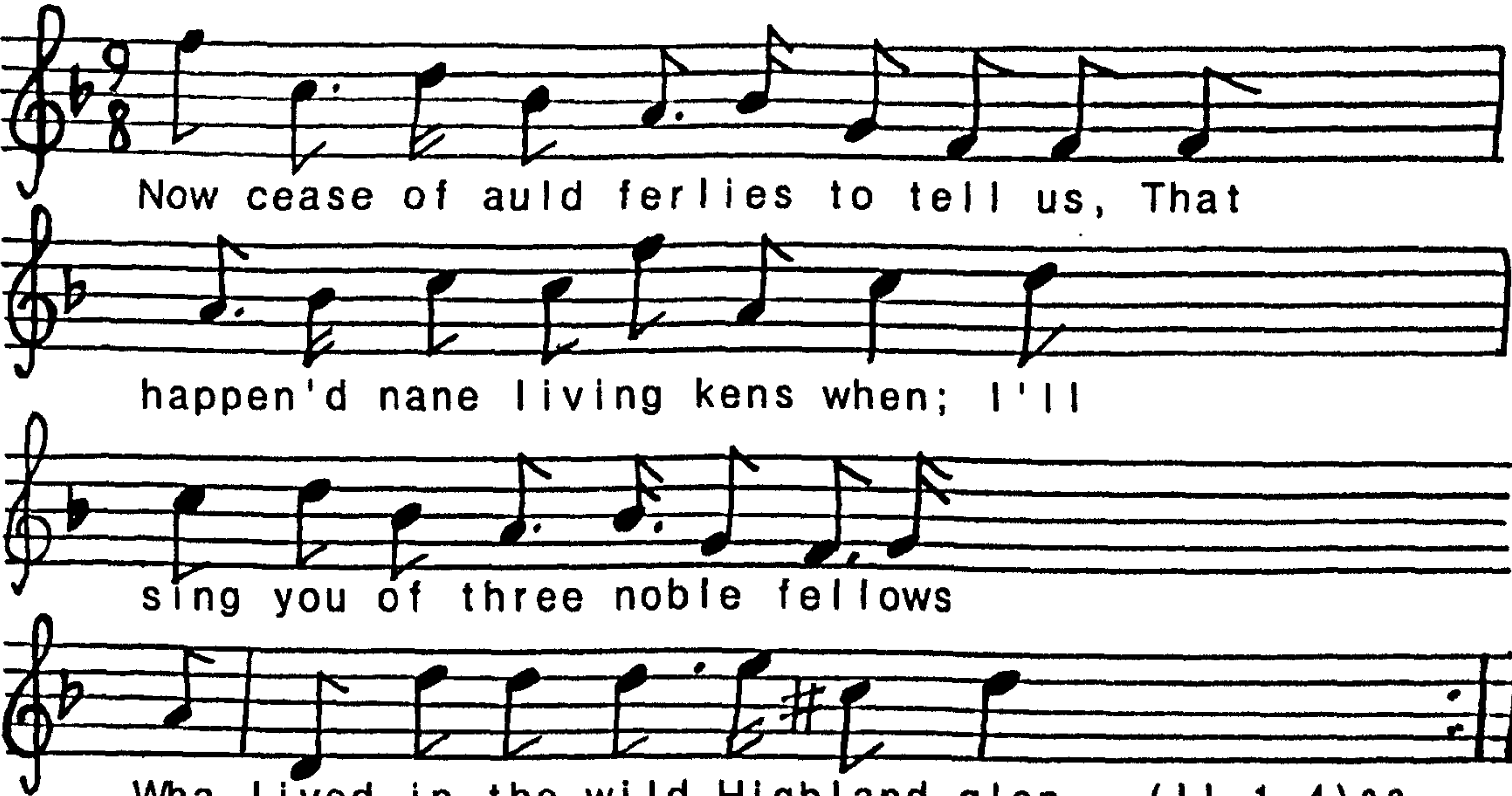
'by Liddel bower' and 'Tarras linn'; the Maxwells look 'lang' for the bride; '...lang may every Douglas rue' such a deed (11.57-58, 63). Hogg incorporates ballad formulae like, 'The deed was done at Liddel bower, / About the break of day' (11.65-56). He comments, 'I have an impression that the ballad was founded on some published legend, but where it is to be found I have quite forgot'.<sup>31</sup> The story recalls 'May Colvin' (Ch 4), although there the 'fause lord' was justly punished.

As well as being a skilled innovator Hogg, as an autodidact, continued to write songs which emulate the essential qualities of oral forms. 'Lock the Door, Lariston' was first published in The Spy of 1811 and, according to Hogg, later appeared in London as his friend Gray's composition. Reclaiming the piece he considers it has, 'no merit whatever, excepting a jingle of names, which Sir Walter's good taste rendered popular, and which in every other person's hand has been ludicrous', adding in a footnote, 'For I defy the British nation / To match me at alliteration. Lit. Jour'.<sup>32</sup> The metre is not ballad, but the rollicking spirit of riding ballads is present:

Lock the door, Lariston, lion of Liddisdale,  
Lock the door, Lariston, Lowther comes on,  
    The Armstrongs are flying,  
    Their widows are crying,  
The Castleton's burning, and Oliver's gone.  
                                    (11.1-4)

Elliot of Lariston welcomes all Borderers to the fray, including Ridley on 'fleet-footed grey', mighty, 'Lindhope and Sorby true', and Sundhope and Milburn, 'Gentle in manner, but lions in fight!' (1.30). Hogg confidently demonstrates his ability to create competent, traditional-style pieces, proclaiming his Borders identity.

The orally credible qualities of Hogg, as an autodidact, perhaps encouraged established composers to set his works. Accompaniments by other composers do not always bring out the traditional style elements in Hogg's work as effectively as his own settings. 'The Three Men of Moriston', for instance, was first published in Select Melodies of Scotland (1822) with Thomson's setting and Haydn's accompaniment. It is reprinted in Songs (pp.47-50). The words blend elements drawn from ballad with the themes of Jacobite song. The melody, though, is incongruously romantic: an over-abundance of sweet, sharp notes detracts from the pathetic words. Haydn seems oblivious to the distinctive nature of Hogg's material, and determined to include what the composer conceived of as national features from double-stops to Scotch snaps. The tune (closely echoed in the piano accompaniment), which also serves 'Wood and married and a' is consequently too lightweight for the subject matter. After an elaborate introduction of five bars, the air proper begins:



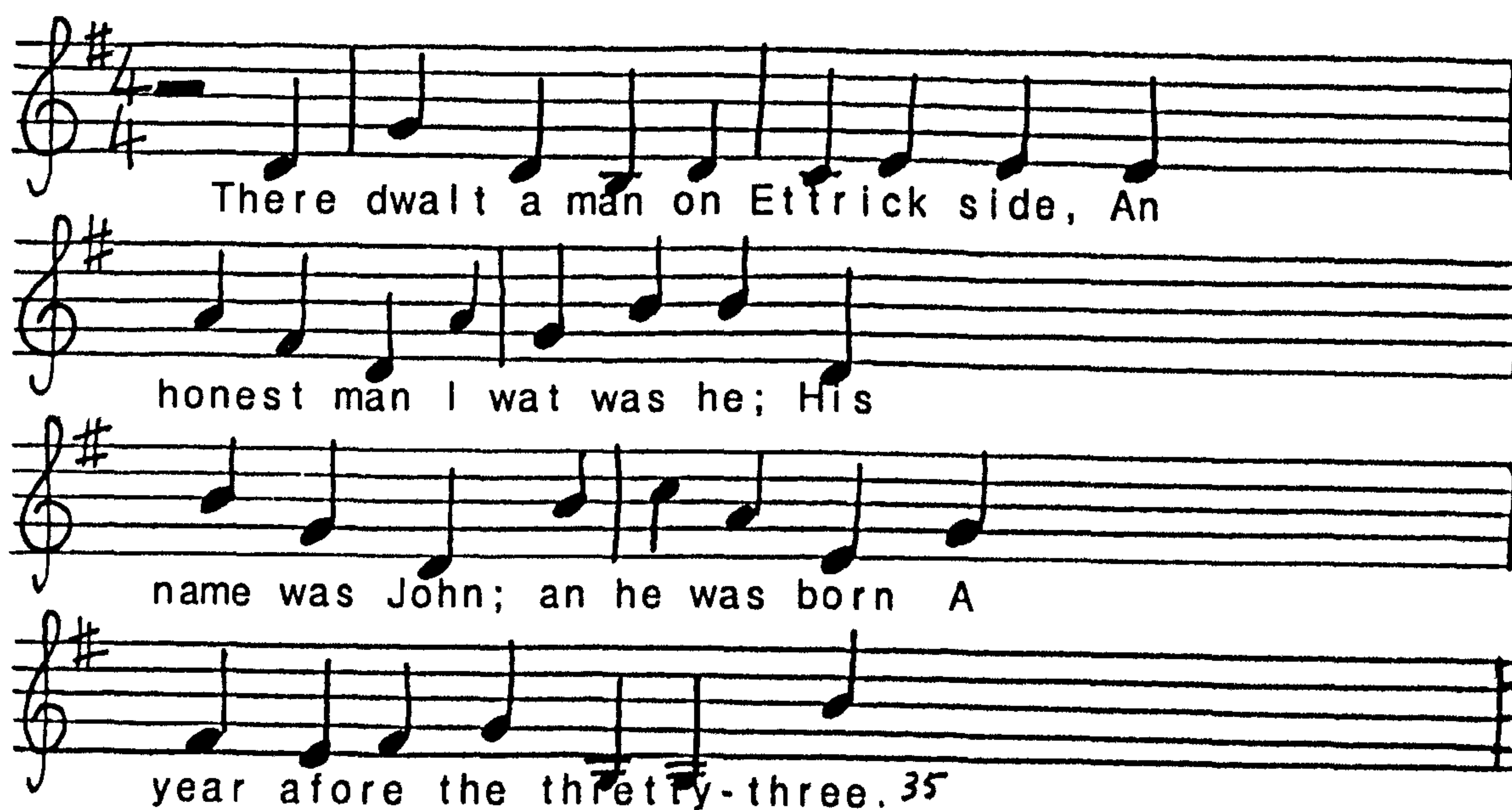
Now cease of auld ferlies to tell us, That  
 happen'd nane living kens when; I'll  
 sing you of three noble fellows  
 Wha lived in the wild Highland glen. (ll.1-4)33

With Culloden lost, 'brave Donald' and his chiefs are broken hearted. The exiled nobles regret their 'rash rising', even blaming the Chevalier, 'For causing the Highlands sic skaith'. As they hide, 'fearfu' o' danger' a ragged but 'stately young stranger' approaches: 'Each kend the brave wreck of Culloden, / But dared not to mention his name' (ll.33-34). Their loyalty is rekindled and they shelter the Prince, despite their poverty. While the term 'ballad' is somewhat inappropriate here, loyalty to one's leader was a quality the clans supposedly shared with the reivers of riding ballads (an affinity explored in Chapter Six). Hogg notes, 'The ballad was once much longer and more particular; but Mr Thomson shortened it to suit a page, and, as usual, I have no original copy'. He



adds that the piece is apparently based on fact, presumably to invest the whole with an air of authority.<sup>34</sup>

Modern 'ballad' tunes are, at times, more sensitive to Hogg's intentions as an autodidact. A thorough, working knowledge of oral conventions is evident in 'Jim Coltman's Pen' by Helen J. Lockhart, setting 'Auld Ettrick John'. Lockhart is highly successful at highlighting the ballad elements in this piece (discussed above) through her setting:



There dwalt a man on Ettrick side, An  
honest man I wat was he; His  
name was John; an he was born A  
year afore the thretty-three.<sup>35</sup>

As can be seen, the light air is well suited to the text, marrying a measured rhythm, generally with a minim per syllable, to the words. The low pitched start (which could lend itself well to the mellow sound of the open d

string of a fiddle) establishes an appropriate framework for the tale of the 'auld man', with a melodic rise which sinks again at the end of each four lines of text, bringing John, metaphorically, down to earth. The air, thereby, is in keeping with the ballad idioms Hogg explores in his work.

As a writer working within the Scottish autodidactic tradition, Hogg used a wide variety of elements drawn from ballad in his poetry. Immensely skilled at reworking material drawn from oral and literary sources, Hogg produced respectful imitations of ballad themes and styles as well as parodies and freer treatments of ballads. Hogg utilised ballad effects in his prose too although, for reasons of space, these are not treated by the present writer.<sup>36</sup> The next chapter considers Hogg as a national and religious poet, further exploring critical reactions to the work of this outstanding autodidact.

## Notes

1. James Hogg, 'Memoir of the Life of James Hogg', The Mountain Bard, (Edinburgh and London, 1807), p.26. Ballad, here, is understood in its traditional sense as a 'folksong that tells a story with stress on the crucial situation, tells it by letting the action unfold itself in event and speech, and tells it objectively', see Gordon Hall Gerould, The Ballad of Tradition, (Oxford, 1932), p.11. The form, as Hogg was well aware, utilises distinctive stylistic and structural features, including double, treble and annular patterning; the oldest ballads are couplets; later quatrains are usually 'common measure' (4.3.4.3) or long measure (4.4.4.4). See M.J. Hodgart The Ballads, (London, 1964); Daniel Shuldiner's 'The Content and Structure of English Ballads and Tales', Western Folklore, (Oct 1975), pp.267-80. James Hogg, qtd Edith Batho, The Ettrick Shepherd, (Cambridge, 1927), p.26.
2. See David Buchan The Ballad and the Folk, (London, 1972). See Hogg's manuscript contributions to Scott's 'Scotch Ballad Materials', NLS MS 877, particularly ff.133, 144-45, 243-46, 250, 256-57.
3. See James Hogg, 'Reminiscences of Former Days', Altrive Tales, 2 vols, (London, 1832), vol I, p.cxi; this passage substantially reprints material from James Hogg, 'Reminiscences of Former Days. My First Interview with Sir Walter Scott', Edinburgh Literary Journal, 2 (1829), pp.51-52. See William Laidlaw, 'Recollections of Sir Walter Scott,' Hawick Archaeological Society Transactions, (1905), p.67. See Scott's reactions to ballad texts in his letter of 1802 to George Ellis, The Letters of Sir Walter Scott, 1932-37, 12 vols, ed H.J.C. Grierson, rpt, (New York, 1971), vol XII, p.231.



4. Hogg, qtd Batho, p.20.
5. See Andrew Lang, 'Letters', Selkirkshire Regional Archives MS SC/S/16/12; Andrew Lang, Sir Walter Scott and the Border Minstrelsy, 1910, rpt, (New York, 1968), p.40. James Hogg in 'Letters to Scott', NLS MS 3874, f.14.
6. On Scott's textual practices see, for instance, Charles Zug, 'Scott's "Jock of Hazeldean": The Recreation of a Traditional Ballad', Journal of American Folklore, 86 (1973), pp.152-60; Scott Letters, vol I, p.120; see Evelyn Kendrick Wells, The Ballad Tree, (New York, 1950); James Hogg in 'Letters to Scott', NLS MS 3875, ff.163-63a.
7. James Hogg letter to Charles Kilpatrick Sharpe in 'Small Collections', NLS MS 1809, f.88.
8. James Hogg, 'Memoir of the Author's Life', Altrive Tales, vol I, p.xxv.
9. James Hogg, 'The Death of Sir Neil Stuart, and Donald McVane, Esq.', Scottish Pastorals, (Edinburgh, 1801), pp.49-55. See Elaine Petrie's comments on the text and air in her edition of Scottish Pastorals, (Stirling, 1988), pp.50-51.
10. 'The Laird of Lairistan', The Mountain Bard, (1807), pp.137-50. Hereafter all references to this volume are given within the text in parentheses.
11. See Hogg's letter to Scott, accompanying 'The Field of Waterloo', NLS MS 582, no.685 A-B; 'Sir David Graham. A Border Ballad', The Scots Magazine, 67 (1805) pp.701-03.
12. Douglas Gifford, James Hogg, (Edinburgh, 1976), p.36.
13. James Hogg, 'Sir David Graeme', The Mountain Bard, (Edinburgh and London, 1821), pp.1-16. The living body lacking a soul motif is treated at great length, for instance, in The Three Perils of Woman, 3 vols, (London, 1823). See Valentina Bold, 'Traditional Narrative Elements in The Three Perils of Woman',

- Studies in Hogg and his World, 3 (1992), pp.42-56.
14. James Hogg, 'Memoir' (1807), p.3.
  15. See S, 'The Mountain Bard', The Scots Magazine, 69 (1807), p.283; NLS MS 3875, f.172.
  16. Wat of Harden's forced marriage to Juden (Gideon) Murray's daughter, 'muckle mou'd' Meg, features in The Mountain Bard (1807) as 'The Fray of Elibank', pp.50-67. Hogg, as mentioned in Chapter Three, had served with the Laidlaws at Elibank. 'The Fray' mixes riding balladry with humorous ballad tradition, an aspect disliked by S, in his review in The Scots Magazine: 'We can enjoy auld Judan's humour, but must regret, that in reconciling young Wattie to his fate, he should be descended so low', p.285.
  17. James Hogg, 'The Pedlar, A Scots Ballad in Imitation of the Ancients', The Scots Magazine, 66 (1804), pp.855-56. Regarding beliefs about tinkling noises and death see Thomas Wilkie, 'Old Scots Songs &c. Collected mostly in Roxburghshire, Berwickshire and Selkirkshire. AD 1815', NLS MSS 122, 123. Hogg, in The Mountain Bard, (Edinburgh and London, 1821), claims to have made a similar sound on a glass-rim one night, for selfish reasons, to dissuade servant girls from walking home by night, pp.25-26.
  18. 'The Mountain Bard', review, The Scots Magazine, (1807), p.285. See Axel Olrik, 'Epic Laws of Folk Narrative', 1909, rpt Alan Dundes, ed, The Study of Folklore, (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1965), pp.129-41.
  19. An alternative local explanation is that Binram's Corse is a warrior's grave, see NLS MS 3875, ff.172-73.
  20. 'The Mountain Bard', review, The Oxford Review, 2 (Nov 1807), p.548; Allan Cunningham, 'Hogg', The Athenaeum, (Oct 26 1833), p.720.
  21. David Groves, James Hogg. The Growth of a Writer, (Edinburgh, 1988), p.17. 'The Forest Minstrel',



- review, The Scots Magazine, 72, (1810), pp.604-08.
22. James Hogg, 'Auld Ettrick John. A Scottish Ballad', Scots Magazine, 66 (1804), p.217, rpt The Mountain Bard, (1807), pp.192-96; The Forest Minstrel; A Selection of Songs, Adapted to the most favourite Scottish Airs, (Edinburgh and London, 1810), pp.119-23, references to the last mentioned volume are given, hereafter, within the text in parentheses. See 'What can a young lassie do wi' an auld man', The Poems and Songs of Robert Burns, ed G. Ross Roy, 3 vols, (Oxford, 1968), no. 347.
  23. Tom Burns, 'A Model for Textual Variation in Folksong', Folklore Forum, 3 (1970), pp.49-56.
  24. Hogg, 'Memoir of the Life of James Hogg', The Mountain Bard, (1821), p.xlcii; Groves, pp.49-50, Gifford, p.42ff.
  25. James Hogg, 'Dumlanrig', 'Kilmeny', The Queen's Wake, 1813, 6th ed, (Edinburgh and London, 1819), pp.267-93, 176-93. All references, hereafter, are to this edition, given within the text in parentheses.
  26. See Gifford's discussion of 'The Witch of Fife', p.43.
  27. The Minstrelsy includes an extended treatment of 'Thomas the Rhymer', possibly influencing Hogg's choice of theme here. See Walter Scott, The Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border, 1802-03, ed T.F. Henderson, 4 vols, (Edinburgh, 1902), vol IV, pp.79-137; Gifford, p.43. On Thomas the Rhymer and his prophecies, see the Miscellanea of the Rymour Club Edinburgh (Edinburgh, 1912-19), drawing on Andro Hart's collection (Edinburgh, 1615), which was reprinted by the Bannatyne Club in 1833.
  28. On beliefs regarding supernatural abductions see Hogg's notes in The Queen's Wake, pp.365-69 and Katharine Briggs, The Anatomy of Puck, (London, 1959).



29. 'The Queen's Wake', review, The Edinburgh Review, 24 (1814-15), p.162; 'The Queen's Wake', The Monthly Review, (Dec 1814), p.435; D.M. Moir (delta), Sketches of the Poetical Literature of the Past Half-Century, (Edinburgh and London, 1856), p.111.
30. 'Songs of the Ettrick Shepherd', Royal Lady's Magazine, 1 (February, 1831), pp.94-98. 'John o' Brackadale' and 'The Liddel Bower', Albyn's Anthology, ed Alexander Campbell, 2 vols, (Edinburgh, 1816-18), vol II, pp.72-73, vol I, pp.38-39 and rpt James Hogg, Songs, (Edinburgh and London, 1831), pp.274-75, 169-73. 'The Liddel Bower' was renamed 'Liddel Bower' in Songs; the air given here is from Albyn's Anthology.
31. Campbell, vol I, p.39.
32. Hogg, Songs, p.169.
33. For the setting to James Hogg, 'The Three Men of Morison', see George Thomson, ed, A Select Collection of original Scottish Airs for the Voice, (London, 1822), vol III, no.30.
34. See Hogg, Songs, pp.47-48.
35. Helen J. Lockhart, One Woman's Music, (privately printed, 1990), p.14.
36. Hogg's Three Perils of Man (1818), for instance, includes cattle raids which resemble riding ballads like 'Jamie Telfer of the Fair Dodhead' (Ch 190), and evokes a Michael Scott similar to the strange magicians profiled above. 'The Profligate Princes' is a Dramatic Tale (1817) of dishonest nobles, seducing and hunting as in balladry. Hogg's parodies of ballad include the 'mermaid' seal's rescue of Sir Simon Brodie in Tales of the Wars of Montrose (1835).

## Chapter Six: Nation and Religion

'When Political combustion ceases to be the object of Princes & Patriots, it then, you know, becomes the lawful prey of Historians & Poets.'

(Robert Burns, letter to George Thomson of March 1791, The Letters of Robert Burns, ed G. Ross Roy, 2 vols, (Oxford, 1985), vol II, 648.)

Hogg's national and religious allegiances formed a complex, and at times confusing, mixture. On one level, the Ettrick Shepherd was perceived to be a conservative patriot and, for this, was forgiven a multitude of peasant failings. The Monthly Review excused the 'rudest barbarism' of The Queen's Wake (1813) because it was 'a truly national poem'. The Athenaeum, similarly, recommended Hogg's Songs to, 'every Scotchman who desires to have his own green hills, and all their kindly tenants, brought back to his fancy'. English critics, though, sometimes criticised Hogg's 'Scottishness' identifying a 'national tone and feeling in his writings, with which we southerners do not wholly sympathize.'<sup>1</sup> Hogg's nationalism, however, was more complicated than such statements suggest: it was composed of a blend of loyalties to the Borders, Scotland and, most tenuously, to Britain. The writer's Presbyterianism added a further moral dimension to this amalgam of affiliations, although Hogg was often highly ambivalent about his ethnic identity and religious beliefs

As an autodidact, Hogg constantly avowed his allegiance to the pastoral Borders. In public, especially outside Ettrick, he played the archetypal Borders Bard, a variation on Macpherson's Highlander Ossian. R.P. Gillies, who knew Hogg intimately between 1813 and 1827, remarked (in a mangled paraphrase of Hogg's own 'Memoir'):



he remained in his demeanour, appearance, and manner of speech, integer purus, the same unalterable Ettrick Shepherd, who but a few years ago, had driven his herd of "nowte" to All Hallow Fair, and borrowed scraps of paper in the shops to write his first pastorals.<sup>2</sup>

The Borders, Hogg asserted, was spiritual home to his work; his most sympathetic critics were local ones. Pieces like the early (non-extant) play 'The Scotch Gentleman' were misunderstood elsewhere, but produced 'convulsions of laughter, besides considerable anxiety' in Ettrick. Paradoxically, while his local sympathies and community affiliations were strong, Hogg's private associations with Ettrick were not wholly happy. On April 18th 1806, depressed due to his failed farming enterprise on Harris, Hogg wrote from Mitchelslack: 'My relations have no idea that writing can ever serve me anything and have always discouraged it as much as possible.'<sup>3</sup> Hogg, then, was ambivalent in declaring his loyalty to his fellow Borderers, at least at the family level.

By the early nineteenth century the rôle of aristocratic patrons was being replaced by that of publishers. However, when Hogg expresses local loyalties he often focuses on archaic patronage traditions. For instance, he appeals directly to patrons in 'Jamie's Farewell to Ettrick', published in The Scots Magazine (1804), written shortly before Hogg left to engage in the

farming enterprise on Harris mentioned above (ll.41-44). Post-Culloden emigration poems like 'The Highlander's Lament' and 'My Native Vale' provided a model. Above all, the 'Farewell' pays homage to Burns' 'Song' celebrating 'the bonie banks of Ayr', a final patronage bid on the eve of anticipated exile in the West Indies. Just as the sensitive ploughman poet abandoned 'the lonely banks of Ayr', so Hogg lugubriously pays tribute to Ettrick's banks, using the diluted Scots which was acceptable to the post-Burns patronage market:

Fareweel, my Ettrick! fare-ye-weel!  
           I own I'm unco laith to leave ye;  
 Nane kens the half o' what I feel,  
           Now half the caise I ha'e to grieve me!  
   (11.1-4)<sup>4</sup>

Homeric allusions enhance the sense of a sorrowful, epic journey. Like a latter-day Odysseus, 'Jamie' leaves by the 'rising morn', renouncing the river banks where he knew joy with the lasses. His only wish had been to make the Borders proud by excelling in 'rustic lay' and celebrating 'Her shepherds' and her maidens' loves' (l.24). Jamie shows touching loyalty to 'my poor parents, frail an' auld' and regrets leaving his 'dear Will' (presumably William Laidlaw). Worse still, deprived of Ettrick's inspiration, 'My muse will sleep an' sing nae mair' (l.76). According to the aphorism Burns

popularised, 'man was made at times to mourn'. Jamie highlights his pastoral qualifications, requesting a headstone in Ettrick inscribed: '"In memory of the shepherd boy, / Who left us for a distant shore"' (ll.101-04). Hogg's self-promotional efforts in the tradition of the heaven-taught ploughman seem to have carried some conviction. The Scots Magazine allowed that this, 'inferior to the farewell song of Burns.... is feelingly expressed'.<sup>5</sup> However, as a bid to launch a lucrative literary career 'Jamie's Farewell to Ettrick' was largely unsuccessful.

His need as a peasant poet for financial support meant that Hogg made demands for patronage, on the local level, throughout his career. 'An Address to the Duke of Buccleuch, in beha'f o' mysel; an' ither poor fo'k', the first piece 'really my own' is, unfortunately, not extant (perhaps retrospectively Hogg wished he had written such a piece). 'Song for the Earl of Dalkeith's birthday' puts 'Highland Harry back again' into the setting of 'Ettrick braes', paying tribute to 'the noble Scott, / Who loves to hear the shepherd's strain' (ll.9-10). 'Buccleuch's Birthday' in The Forest Minstrel (1810) was performed to celebrate the Duke's anniversary in Langholm in 1809. This is a lighthearted drinking song, the opening suggesting 'The Blythsome Bridal', Sir William Scott of Thirlestane's grotesque account of a wedding party opening: 'Come fy, let's a' to the bridal'.<sup>6</sup> In Hogg: 'O



fy, let's a' be merry, boys' (1.1). Hogg's poem pays tribute to the legend of the Buccleuch name being bestowed '"When in the cleuch the buck was ta'en"' (1.15) and the family residence at 'Carterha'. In an awkward allusion to Hogg's British identity, it even parallels Buccleuch with the present king, George III:

The one protects our native land,  
                     And on the sea keeps order;  
 The other guides the farmer's hand,  
                     And rules the Scottish Border.  
   (11.20-24)

Hogg's local loyalties, then, were complex: his identity as a Borderer was not unquestioning but, rather, balanced by the notion that local aristocrats owed him patronage as one of their own. Perhaps in an attempt to align himself with the establishment, moreover, Hogg occasionally linked these aspects of his Borders identity with a somewhat half-hearted sense of himself as a Briton.

Among Hogg's attempts to win support, as the emphatically Ettrick Shepherd, is the near sycophantic, 'Verses Addressed to the Right Honourable Lady Anne Scott of Buccleuch', the dedication to The Brownie of Bodsbeck (1818).<sup>7</sup> Hogg blatantly seeks the lady's favours through immoderate, and self-conscious, flattery:

To HER who loves the board to cheer,  
 And hearth of simple cottager;  
 Who loves the tale of rural hind,  
 And wayward visions of his mind,  
 I dedicate with high delight,  
 The theme of many a winter night. (11.5-10)

With covert humour, and stressing his pastoral sensibility, the poem gushes, 'What other name on Yarrow's vale / Can shepherd choose to grace his tale' (11.11-12). Perhaps Hogg is being ironic: dedicating the poem to Lady Anne, daughter of the Duke of Buccleuch, was certainly to choose a name which would win favour. Developing the Muse-like Kilmeny figure of which Hogg was so fond, the dedication presents Anne as a latter-day Flower of Yarrow; a civilising influence on the peasantry: 'Even the rude boy of rustic form' (1.16) is inspired to 'softer tread' by this Maid. As such, she is fit to enjoy the writer's 'mystic lore sublime' and 'fairy tales in ancient time'.

Hogg's peasant poet persona, in the tradition of 'the Gentle Shepherd' (discussed in Chapter One) is evident. In addition, to assure a marketable stance, and to anticipate objections relating to immorality or having stepped above his station, Hogg places The Brownie of Bodsbeck in a firmly Christian context. This, of course, also reflects Hogg's genuine interest in the Covenanting history of the Borders:

And had thou lived where I was bred,  
 Amid the scenes where martyrs bled,  
 Their sufferings all to thee endeared  
 By those most honoured and revered;  
 And, where the wild dark streamlet waves,  
 Hadst wept above their lonely graves,  
 Thou wouldst have felt, I know it true,  
 As I have done, and aye must do.  
 And for the same exalted cause,  
 For mankind's rights, and nature's laws,  
 The cause of liberty divine,  
 Thy fathers bled as well as mine. (verse 7)

There are ambiguities here. The defiant tone of the 'I have done, and aye must do', and the reference to religious freedom, 'liberty divine', asserts the writer's Covenanting heritage, placing this above his loyalty towards his apparent social superiors. The association of place, 'where I was bred' and assertiveness here make up for the airy tribute, showing Hogg's consciousness of his own, class identity as well as his loyalties to Ettrick. Hogg does not seem to be wholly comfortable in paralleling the experiences of the Hoggs' and the Scotts' ancestors.

The defiance of that gloomy passage, though, is counterbalanced by a lightweight appeal. The book is offered to Anne as the 'Maid' who loved Ettrick and Yarrow traditions, implicitly a suitable patron for the peasant poet who commemorates them:



Think if thou wert, some evening still,  
 Within thy wood of green Bowhill,  
 Thy native wood, the forest's pride,--  
 Lover or sister by thy side;  
 In converse sweet the hour to improve,  
 Of things below and things above,  
 Of an existence scare begun,  
 And note the stars rise one by one:--  
 Just then, the moon and day-light blending,  
 To see the fairy bands descending,  
 Wheeling and shivering as they came,  
 Like glimmering shreds of human frame;  
 Or sailing 'mid the golden air,  
 In skiffs of yielding gossamer.

Oh I would wander forth alone  
 Where human eye had never shone,  
 A way o'er continents and isles,  
 A thousand and a thousand miles,  
 For one such eve to sit with thee,  
 Their strains to hear and forms to see!

(11.121-40)

The jubilant Scots rhyme on 'alone' and 'shone' lends a joyous quality to the plea. Objections to coarseness are anticipated; 'lover' balanced against 'sister', the innocence of their converse stressed, following contemporary notions of polite poetic discourse. The reference to 'Gossamer' brings back the genteel tone which began the piece, contrasting with the hard-edged evocation of Hogg's Covenanting forefathers.

The 'Address' suggests autodidactic unease at the

need to compromise between demands from, and attentions to, the Lady. Hogg appears to subvert ideas of peasant responsibilities to their patrons. In opposition to what is asked from the patronised, a set of expectations from patrons is defined; an agenda for the Scotts' aid. On the other hand, only a small boon is requested by this humble 'minstrel' from his Lady: to hear again the 'strains' of Anne's 'woodland harp', which lent 'wild cadence' to a recent, romantically wild, storm. Anne's music recalled:

The patriarchal days of yore,  
The mountain music heard no more,  
With all the scene before his eyes,  
A family's and a nation's ties--  
Bonds which the heavens alone can rend,  
With chief, with father, and with friend.

(11.204-15)

Such conventional praise, while inherent in the patronage game, perhaps demeaned Hogg as a writer. Gifford, however, admires the 'Address' as a 'blend of personal loss of country innocence...an apologia for his love of mystic lore, covenanting traditions (for the Buccleuchs were Episcopalian), and an evocation of ancient, spirit-filled Ettrick'.<sup>8</sup> Hogg does achieve a certain nobility of vision in propounding the notion that peasant poets deserve patrons. This ideal is integrated with Hogg's notion of collective responsibility; the theme of

community duties, and community loyalties, is further developed in The Brownie itself. On one level at least, the dedication conveys Hogg's distinctive combination of local, religious and self interests. On another, it is a fitting introduction to the novel that follows, establishing the supernatural, and allegiance, themes which will be followed within The Brownie of Bodsbeck.

To convey his complex local and national allegiances (both modern and historical), Hogg often draws parallels between the past and the present. Contemporary politics are reflected, from a peasant poet perspective, in 'To the Ancient Banner of the House of Buccleuch', Hogg's poem in The Ettricke [sic] Garland. Being two excellent new songs on the lifting of the banner of the house of Buccleuch at the great foot-ball march on Carterhaugh. Dec. 4th 1815 (1815). The 'Ancient Banner' appeared as a pamphlet, containing Hogg's piece along with 'The Lifting of the Banner', by Scott.<sup>9</sup> Over two hundred players, and two thousand spectators, participated in Selkirk's game with Yarrow. It commemorated and revived ancient Forest gatherings; Scott's contribution, like Hogg's, nostalgically refers to ancient conflicts translated into sport. Scott's is a blustering tribute to the banner which has 'blazed over Ettricke eight ages and more'. The chorus makes a bold, and a military, vow:



In sport we'll attend her,  
       In battle defend her,  
 With heart and with hand, like our fathers  
                           before. (11.3-5)

In contrast, Hogg's piece is contemplative in its focus. Like Scott's The Lay of the Last Minstrel (1805), it exhibits attention to lineage. But where The Lay extols the ancestors of the Scotts of Buccleuch, Hogg's post-Waterloo piece is concerned with the 'sons' of the Forest; those who physically defended the banner in the past, and enjoy the pastoral lifestyle of the present:

And hast thou here, like hermit grey,  
       Thy mystic characters unroll'd,  
 O'er peaceful revellers to play,  
       Thou emblem of the days of old!  
 Or com'st thou with the veteran's smile,  
       Who deems his day of conquest fled,  
 Yet loves to view the bloodless toil  
       Of sons whose sires he often led?  
                           (verse 1)

Romantic musings are blended with driving common measure in praise of the banner and the 'faithful clansmen' who followed it; the reivers' ethics are faithfully evoked in support of a shared Borders and heritage, translated into a context which is, with particular resonance for an audience of 1815, decidedly 'peaceful'.

While skilfully evoking the lifestyle described in the riding ballads, and Borders legends, Hogg is careful to express his preference for the current age. Here he is more complex in his vision than when posturing as the archaic peasant Bard. The Borders are viewed, in their present-day setting, as a haven of peace, implicitly referring to the recent, long Napoleonic wars:

I love thee for the olden day,  
                   The iron age of hardihood;  
 The rather that thou led'st the way  
                   To peace and joy, through paths of blood;  
 For were it not the deeds of weir,  
                   When thou went foremost in the fray,  
 We had not been assembled here,  
                   Rejoicing in a father's sway. (verse 4)

The call for unity, and for paternalism from the Scotts of Buccleuch, combines Hogg's local loyalties and patronage interests in a poignant, heady mixture. The narrator speaks as the Borders incarnate in proclaiming, 'I almost weep to see thee here, / And deem thee raised in mockery' (ll.15-16) emphasising the dignity of his heritage. In closing, Hogg weaves past and present into a plea for the future: 'May thy grey pennon never wave / O'er sterner field than Carterhaugh! (ll.40-41). Hogg's affection for the Borders, and those who uphold the banner, is obvious. The date of 1815, moreover, alerts the reader to the fact

that Hogg is expressing a call for peaceful engagements, rather than martial activities. Here, the notion of Scotland as a living part of modern Britannia is explicit: Hogg strengthens his own status both as the pastoral Ettrick Shepherd, and postures (even if not wholly convincingly) as a worthy Briton.

Hogg is careful, perhaps in a quest for wider patronage but equally for artistic reasons, to give his Borders affiliations Scottish, and sometimes British, appeal. As a peasant poet, he frequently expresses pride in the agrarian lifestyle of the Borders: 'The Author's Address to his auld dog Hector' typifies this aspect of his work. 'The Souters o' Selkirk', in Select and Rare Scottish Melodies (1829), treats local civic loyalties. This covers a theme reworked more famously by the Ettrick Shepherd's namesake and contemporary (often confused with Hogg), the Hawick James Hogg in his 'Souters of Selkirk'.<sup>10</sup> Where the Hawick writer treats mainly the local context, the Ettrick poet explores Borders allegiances within a wider frame. Allegiances to the souters, as 'sons of an auld pedigree' who are known for their 'leal loyaltie', combine with 'British' loyalties; axioms on the need for hierarchical government reinforce respect for royalty and the status quo, and express fashionable anti-Revolutionary reactions:



Let them brag o' their factious republics,  
     Of brawling an' plebeian birth;  
 The land that has got a good sovereign,  
     Has got the best blessing on earth.  
 Then up wi' our auld-fashion'd structure,  
     An' Willie the tap o' the tree!  
 An' up wi' the souters o' Selkirk!  
     The sons o' auld heroes for me!  
                                     (verse 2)

Mixing 'Willie' and 'Selkirk' is typical of Hogg's blend of British, Scottish and local identities, without apparent incongruity but, perhaps, some covert discomfort. Selkirk is fitted within the context of the 'lads of the forest' (the Borders) and Ettrick within the British kingdom of 'Willie', creating a complicated and uncomfortable set of interlinked allegiances. The loyalty to the 'souters' is rather more warm and convincing than that expressed towards 'Willie the tap o' the tree'.

A similarly complex mixture features in the songs by Hogg which proclaim, primarily, his Scottish identity. Hogg's national songs (which Louis Simpson found uninteresting) illuminate his creative identity as an Ettrick Shepherd with Scottish appeal, and a particular interest in the Jacobites. Hogg's nationalism often focused on Highlanders: Jacobite ladies in Three Perils of Women (1823); the Ossianic seer of 'A Tale of an Old Highlander' (1832). Hogg believed Southern and Northern rural Scots should 'communicate to each other every new

idea', fostering mutual understanding, based on a shared heritage. As with the eighth Earl of Argyll, or Burns in his 1788 letter in support of the 'Revolution' and the Stuarts, Hogg used his distinctive brand of nationalism to reconcile his Covenanting and Stuart interests. 'The Stuarts of Appin', for instance, typifies the eclectic qualities of Hogg's autodidactic patriotism. The Highlands, here, is perceived in a way which is analagous to Hogg's vision of the Borders, replete with 'peasant' and legendary associations. Appin, in the past, was the land 'where the strains of grey Ossian were framed', associated with Selma and Fingal and, latterly 'The noble Clan Stuart'.<sup>11</sup> Jacobitism was, of course, no longer a political force in Scotland by Hogg's period; it had gained romantic overtones with Burns which accelerated after the failed populist French revolution. Furthermore, as William Donaldson shrewdly suggests, 'The Stuarts' indirectly comments on the cultural repression of the Clearances, as well as the treatment of the Jacobites.<sup>12</sup>

Hogg's empathy with the Jacobites seems to have been linked to his keen awareness of cultural repression and deprivation in the Highlands, as is evident in his seminal Jacobite Relics of Scotland (1819-21); in this context, too, his discomfort with proclamations of Britishness is most apparent. Although the Highland Society had intended to represent the Hanoverians, there are few Whig songs; Hogg attributed the disproportion to real Scottish



sympathies. Paradoxically, Hogg seems to see no problem in privileging pieces attacking the party of his favoured Covenanters, originators of 'Whiggam', showing once more the complexity of his national and religious identity. The Relics was commissioned by Colonel David Stewart of Garth, of the Highland Society of London (founded in 1784). Hogg was already familiar with Jacobite song in the Selkirkshire tradition, (from the sentimental 'It was a' for our Rightfu' King' to the rollicking 'Kenmuir's on and awa', Willie'). Highland melodies were sometimes used in Selkirkshire, including 'Mairi Bhán' for the 'Outlaw Murray'. Hogg's Highland Tours of 1802, 1803 and 1804, furthermore, had fostered an awareness of the Highland predicament, perhaps related to his own erstwhile treatment as a latter day noble savage.<sup>13</sup>

The Relics is outstandingly comprehensive, showing Hogg's autodidactic ability to interplay aspects of oral and literary culture. The material is arranged in chronological order. Volume I mainly consists of songs from before Sherriffmuir (1715), many about specific battles or venomously attacking the Whig 'parcel of rogues'. II relates to the 1745 Uprising and its aftermath. Reflecting the nostalgia which permeated Jacobite tradition, the second volume contains many wistful songs narrated by exiles; many are from a woman's viewpoint and romantically extol 'bonnie hieland laddies'.

Hogg's experience as an autodidactic informant, for



Scott's The Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border (1802-03), is reflected in his enthusiastic collecting of Jacobite material. Some items were from oral tradition and others from manuscripts collected by Scott, Younger of Dalguire and John Moir among others. Additional items were found in works like Johnson's Scots Musical Museum (1787-1803) and Cromek's Remains of Nithsdale and Galloway Song (1810). Hogg arranged his text after Ritson's Scottish Songs (1794) and, as Donaldson mentions, plagiarised Ritson's annotations. The Relics, like The Minstrelsy, utilised composite texts. Hogg, however, had a distinct advantage over Scott as a collector: his autodidactic familiarity with oral traditions, verbal and musical. Demonstrating remarkable skill in linking words and tunes, Hogg included 'skeletons' of airs. In this he drew on his skills on the violin (like Burns before him) and was aided by William Stenhouse (the Edinburgh accountant who would edit the music in later editions of Johnson's Musical Museum). Partly pandering to the polite public, these airs were designed to be harmonised for the drawing room piano by 'any composer or professional player'.<sup>14</sup>

Introducing his collection, Hogg explored the language critics usually applied to autodidactic verse. Appealing to Ossianic interests, as well as the post-Scott enthusiasm for the Highlands, Hogg distinguished Jacobite song from ballads and lyrics as: 'the unmarked effusions of a bold and primitive race'. The Jacobites, in this

context, become latter-day noble savages (implying Hogg's fitness, as the Ettrick Shepherd, to remember their Cause). Most of The Relics are traditional but Hogg could ascribe 'anon' to add interest to his own, modern, material, exploiting his status as an autodidact authority on oral tradition. This is clear from his letter, in another context, to George Thomson, dated 14th February 1822. There, Hogg simultaneously avows his autodidactic ignorance, and implies his musical and verbal versatility:

I am plagued and disgusted with the measures you bind me to, which are neither hexameter, iambic, nor any measure that was ever heard of. Why in the world should you measure a modern song by the rude strains of a former age which no poetical ear can ever read, however they may suit for singing? In "Woo'd and married an' a'," the lines in every verse vary from six to nine syllables. Surely it is an easy matter to adapt the airs to words of a regular rhythm. Little as I know of music I always do this, and find them answer much better, as in "Donald Macdonald".... I cannot suffer my name to stand with verses of so [vexatious] irregularity and bad rhythm. If you therefore adopt the songs, please publish them simply as Jacobite songs, leaving the world to find out whether they are old or new. This has a far better effect than saying "A Jacobite song by such and such an author." The very idea that perhaps they may be of a former day and written by some sennachie of the clan gives them double interest.<sup>15</sup>



This offers insights too, into Hogg's resentment of editorial restraints. Hogg demonstrates his own well-thought out principles of composition and balance of melodic and verbal rhythms, aspects which served him well in creating songs according to traditional idioms. Posing as an annoyed peasant poet, and the voice of his culture, is a conscious and meaningful choice.

Hogg's supposedly autodidactic unreliability is a recurrent critical concern (as discussed in Chapter Five). Bearing his aptitude for imitation in mind, a number of items in The Jacobite Relics have been attributed to Hogg. It could be claimed that these, probably reworkings of traditional material, testify to Hogg's ability, as a peasant poet, to compose variations on items from oral tradition. Donaldson suggests, for instance, that 'This is no my ain house' (I, XXXVII) is Hogg's. The Shepherd himself points out this is a song of exile that Ramsay adapted, 'greatly to the worse'. In Ramsay's version, a lass leaves for her 'ain house' where she will 'let my man command ay'. Hogg claims to have revitalised this 'insipid and commonplace trash', with the traditional 'allegory...of Scotland losing its rightful owner':

Say, was it foul, or was it fair,  
To come a hunder mile and mair,  
For to ding out my daddy's heir,

And dash him wi' the whiggin o't?

O this is no my ain house, &'c.<sup>16</sup>



Hogg's version does improve on Ramsay's bathos, using more traditional language, including words Hogg did not use habitually like 'Daddy'.

Given Hogg's adeptness at recreating Jacobite songs, and his subsequent impact on forming the Jacobite song tradition, it is difficult to distinguish pieces composed by Hogg and pieces he collected from oral tradition. Oral stylistics inform 'Came ye ower frae France' (I, LIII), attributed to Hogg by Donaldson: 'goosie' and 'bum' for instance, are words frequently found within the Jacobite tradition which Hogg does not generally use (he has 'bum', though, in 'The Farce; Or a Grand Tragi-Comedy Between Heaven and Earth'). 'Came ye ower frae France' is a racy evocation of an exile returning; guttural Scots rhymes are underwritten by a persistent tune in the minor mode:

Came ye o'er frae France?  
 Came ye down by Lunnon?  
 Saw ye Geordie Whelps,  
 And his bonny woman?  
 Were ye at the place  
 Ca'd the Kittle Housie?  
 Saw ye Geordie's grace  
 Riding on a goosie?<sup>17</sup>

A reference to Montgomery's lady, and a 'Highland quorum' later in the piece recalls John Skinner's 'Tullochgorum'. I think this is probably Hogg's, especially as the

'historical notes' overauthenticate the piece. Perhaps Hogg thought he was 'improving' the traditional, as Scott did in respect to the ballads discussed above.

Donaldson finds 'The Piper o' Dundee' (II, XIX) suspect. This is highly rhythmic and, if it is Hogg's, shows a mastery of oral tradition unequalled in his ballad or lyric styles. Incongruities in language and romantic interpolations, which usually characterise Hogg's imitations, are not present:

The piper came to our town,  
To our town, to our town,  
The piper came to our town,  
And he play'd bonnilie,  
He play'd a spring, the laird to please,  
A spring brent new frae 'yont the seas;  
And then he ga'e his bags a wheeze,  
And play'd anither key. (verse 1)

•

The chorus, 'wasna he a roguay, / A roguay, A roguay?' highlights an affinity with the traditional 'Merry may the keel row (the ship my laddie's in)' which is I, XXIX. The piper, it is claimed, may be Carnegie of Phinaven. Whether Hogg's or not, this entered oral tradition, and has frequently been arranged.<sup>18</sup>

Batho finds 'I hae nae kith' and 'Willie the Wag' (I, XXIII, XXI), 'doubtful'.<sup>19</sup> She primarily suspects allegorical pieces, perhaps reflecting her notions of

Hogg's autodidactic limitations. In 'Willie the Wag', the narrator's 'wee bit mailin', 'good gray mare' and 'black gowny' are 'waggit' away by Willie, and 'Scotland maun cower and cringe / To a fause and a foreign loon' (ll.19-20). Parts, especially verse 1, may be original, incorporating traditional formulaic phrases like 'good gray mare'. 'Black gowny' suggests, or may be meant to suggest, clerical origins. 'Waly' (verse 3) is rare in Hogg's poetic vocabulary but common in ballad. As already mentioned, it is difficult to distinguish Hogg and tradition given his familiarity with oral, specifically Jacobite, formulae. But lack of corroboration does not establish his authorship. Thomson, who said 'Hey then, up go we' was Hogg's, was unaware this appeared in Quarles' Shepherd's Oracle (1646).<sup>20</sup> It extends the peasant poet position to automatically doubt Hogg; some of his 'compositions' may rework non-extant traditional items.

Hogg's skill in traditional styles, reflecting his autodidactic experience, bears fruit in his translations. These are imaginative, but plausible, reconstructions of oral originals. Although not a fluent Gaelic speaker, Hogg had Highland correspondents like Peter Buchan make prose versions in English, which he then versified. Hogg's reworkings, like 'The Highlander's Farewell' (II, XCI), are dominated by his own poetic voice. Desolate sentiments in Scots are interwoven with a mournful melody:



O WHERE shall I gae seek my bread? Or  
 where shall I gae wander? O where shall I gae  
 hide my head? For here I'll bide nae langer.  
 The seas may row, the winds may blow, And  
 swathe me round in danger; My native land I  
 must forego, And roam a lonely stranger. (verse 1)

Hogg's skilful use of an understated melody, here, shows his autodidactic advantage of familiarity with traditional airs. The plaintive, undulating melody highlights the wandering theme of the piece. In this first verse, for instance, the air's low start, rising middle section and final fall seem to echo the despair the exile feels, the stormy weather he faces and his falling spirits. The emphatic, lingering 'where', and the rhyming of 'danger' and 'stranger', too, appear well suited to the predicament of Charlie and his followers.

However, Hogg can be more intrusive, as literary demands interfere with his oral skills. See, for instance, his amendments of 'Charlie is My Darling', a 'Highland Laddie' song of extreme loyalty to the Stuarts. The type might be called, after II, LXXXVII, a 'Bonny Charlie' song. Hogg includes the 'original' (II, L) and his own (II, XLIX). Charlie is robust and dashing in L; strolling through 'our town', he spies a girl at her window and is invited inside: 'For brawly weel he kend the way / To please a Highland lass (ll.28-29) The tradition of Highlander as free, and dangerous, sexual profligate is epitomised as the female narrator makes a warning similar to that given Fair Janet in 'Tam Lin' (Ch 39):

It's up yon heathery mountain,  
 And down yon scraggy glen.  
 We daurna go a-milking,  
 For Charlie and his men. (ll.33-36)

Hogg's version is romanticised. Now the women serenade, rather than warn against, Charlie and his men, and he does not venture near, let alone inside, their homes. Hogg adds a patriotic, sentimental verse: 'Our Highland hearts are true and leal, / And glow without a stain' (ll.33-4). The new ending shows Hogg's familiarity with modern tastes, as well as traditional precedents, as he sanitises the song for polite audiences.

So too, in his best known 'forgery', 'Donald Macgillavry' (I, LX), Hogg makes the Jacobite song more attractive than disturbing:

Donald's gane up the hill hard and hungry;  
Donald comes down the hill wild and angry;  
Donald will clear the gouk's nest cleverly.  
Here's to the king and Donald Macgillavry.

(11.1-4)

A strong Aeolian air underlines the words and pace is maintained with one minim per syllable. Incremental repetition creates an emphatic battlecry: 'Come like a weaver.... elwand sae cleverly'; 'Come like a tailor... / thimble them cleverly'; 'come like the devil..., / skelp them and scaud them'. Pittock argues Donald is an anti-Union figure making an 'association of Whiggery and Presbyterianism with material greed', as in Confessions.<sup>21</sup> Perhaps, but 'Donald Macgillavry' appealed to Whigs too.

Given that Hogg was perceived to be the Ettrick Shepherd, a peasant poet with a narrowly Borders background, it is not surprising that his credentials as a collector of nationally significant material came into question. Jeffrey's polemical reactions to The Relics, for instance, contain more than a hint of personal hostility to Hogg as an autodidact who had risen above his intellectual station. While the Edinburgh Review admired 'Donald MacGillavry's 'sly characteristic Scotch



humour...we doubt if any of our English readers will relish it'. Jeffrey identified 'absurd principles' in The Relics such as 'speculative Jacobitism': fostering the Cause without any of the risks genuine Jacobites faced. Patronisingly, the editor's 'coarse and gross taste' was condemned. Hogg was offended, refuting such charges vigorously. Previously he had respected the Edinburgh reviewer's 'understanding (gumption is the word that would have come spontaneously...but then you would say it is so vulgar)' but the review changed his mind. Unusually, Hogg moves beyond indirect sarcasm towards critics into forcefully expressed anger, to refute Jeffrey's charge of Jacobitism:

To your limited perception it may indeed appear a very extraordinary and unintelligible affair, that a man born and bred in the bosom of the people--a shepherd on the hills of Ettrick, should avow himself to have been, from his earliest days, a scorner of those low flatteries with which you are accustomed to court the applause of the vulgar--a believer in the honour of the aristocracy, and a lover of the monarchy of his native land.... I and all my kindred have always loved and honoured the protestant succession; and if you will look into my Brownie of Bodsbeck you will perhaps see enough to satisfy you, that I am neither a papist, nor an approver of persecutions either civil or religious.<sup>22</sup>

The statement, it seems, claims Hogg's right as a peasant poet to proclaim himself a national patriot.

Hogg's enthusiasm for Jacobite song seems to have been based on his sympathy for suffering, fellow Scots rather than on political grounds. During the Highland Tours, he declared himself to be, 'a bit of a Jacobite in my heart'. Responding to Jeffrey, Hogg states that even George III excused principled Jacobites. His response gains significance as he lashes out against the peasant-poet stereotype, using the critics' own weapons: accusations of 'coarseness'. There are strong parallels between Hogg's statements here and Burns' resentment, expressed in epistolary form, of his treatment as a heaven-taught ploughman (discussed in Chapter Two):

The value of a man's principles is best estimated by his life. Now, I have never flattered any man--asked a favour of any man--lived upon any man's money--or been the slave of any man.... I have been a hard-working man all my life, for many long years on the green hill-side, and for not a few in a brown study.... I see you blame me for you call "my coarseness." I do not pretend to over-refinement; but are not you a great blackguard for writing the following sentence: "This is all that Frederick meant; and we rather marvel that the partialities of his august spouse, for a nobleman of known Jacobite tendencies, were not rather cited as evidence that the late king took his Jacobitism by descent." Oh man, but you are a coarse tyke to

have written such a sentence! The clumsiness of the expression of it is only beat by the baseness of its meaning.... conceived in the heart of one of the Illegitimate School, and which, if other proof were wanting, shews [sic] that you are, if not in birth certainly in breeding, a bastard Scotsman.<sup>23</sup>

This is signed vituperatively, 'yours, with disgust'. The way in which he dismisses Jeffrey, using the terminology usually applied to peasant poets--'clumsiness', 'baseness'--indicates Hogg's acute, and ironic, awareness of autodidactic stereotyping. The next passage, an addendum, is often cited as part of the response:

between ourselves, 'Donald MacGillavry', which he [Jeffrey] has selected as the best specimen of the true old Jacobite song, 'and as remarkable above its fellows for "sly, characteristic Scotch humour"', is no other than a trifle of my own, which I put in to fill up a page.

This is addressed to 'C.N.' (Christopher North). A later mention of Gabriel's confirms this is part of the Noctes. Jeffrey did not call the piece, 'true old Jacobite song'; the accusation is pure spite. The snideness of this, compared to Hogg's forthright attack, suggests another hand. Strout suspects Lockhart interfered here, but equally it could be Wilson's work; its puerile character



recalls Christopher North.<sup>24</sup>

Hogg, especially given the relish he expressed for Jacobite song, must have enjoyed outwitting the patronising Whigs who dismissed him as an autodidact, and opposed his (sometimes double-dealing) patrons at Blackwood's. 'Donald MacGillavry' was baited with straight-faced notes as a 'capital old song'. Perhaps Hogg was competing with Allan Cunningham's success with Scottish songs to fool Cromek (discussed in Chapter Nine), or Scott's failed attempt to humiliate The Edinburgh Review with 'The Bridal of Thien'. Batho thought Hogg had bad examples like Allan Ramsay; David Johnson called Hogg a 'charlatan'. However, Hogg contributed to reworking the Highlander's image from ruffian to heroic soldier; his thematic and formal criteria permeated the subsequent Jacobite canon in print and oral tradition. He dubbed The Relics a masterpiece, with the arrogance critics found unbecoming: 'no man in Scotland or England could have produced [them] but myself'.<sup>25</sup>

Other reactions to Hogg, as an autodidactic collector of songs, were mixed. The Scots Magazine reviewer sniped at political opponents: 'We do not know whether the Radicals sing. We suppose not, as they do not drink;-- fellows who are fond of long prosing harangues from Hunt and such like can have no music in their souls'. Privately, Jacobites like Moir were delighted, despite the 'Hanoverian trash'. Scott classed The Jacobite Relics as

'a curious book' to Robert Surtees on 21st December 1819. The Highland Society, to Hogg's disgust, refused his completion fee. Stewart complained to Thomson on 9 September 1821, 'no communication was made to enable them to say what ballads and songs they wished to have for their money'.<sup>26</sup> By including robust items, Hogg as peasant editor had not been compliant.

As part of his stance as an autodidact, after Burns, Hogg consciously presented himself as a national spokesman. In this context, for Hogg, Jacobite song went beyond party feelings to epitomise a golden age when Scotland had sought freedom. Highland Ossianic associations, and musical dexterity, invested The Relics project with special interest for Hogg as the Ettrick Shepherd, creative descendant of the fictionalised Highland bard. The thematic concerns of the collection, furthermore, pandered to Hogg and the public's taste for lost causes and suffering. Donaldson thinks Hogg particularly enjoyed, 'the pageant of Highland society, with its pugnacious mores, evocative eponymy and impending dissolution.'<sup>27</sup> The emotiveness of these songs allowed the writer to put Lowland suspicions aside and identify, as a Scotsman, with the Jacobites of the past, without overly compromising his (potentially profitable) self-presentation as a poet of British significance.

Working against the type of accusation, cited at the beginning of this chapter, that Scottish autodidacts were



overly 'national', Hogg composed a number of songs overtly expressing his British identity. However, he was uneasy in taking such a position. 'Scotia's Glens', for instance, in The Mountain Bard (1807) and set to 'Lord Ballanden's delight', superficially proclaims loyalties to the British empire which were appropriate given the current war with France (it was composed in 1800). However, Hogg's Britishness conflicts, here, with his loyalties as a Scotsman. On another level, 'Scotia's Glens' is as Scottish as 'Scots Wha Hae'. The citation of 'Scotia' recalls 'Scotia's grandeur' in 'The Cottar's Saturday night'. Martial Scotland stands triumphant and unconquered for Hogg and will, he suggests, uphold the monarch when Irish harp and English rose are overcome.<sup>28</sup> Scotia and Britain, then, are in an uncomfortable alliance for Hogg; faced with a choice, he prefers to put his nation first.

'Donald MacDonald' is apparently more sincere at expressing Hogg's Scottish identity within Britain. It was tremendously successful, although not initially recognised as Hogg's. Composed as Scotland perceived the threat of Napoleonic invasion, it defies Bonaparte through MacDonald's 'knees and elbows', 'sword and buckler'. MacDonald combines a plenitude of Highland stereotypes from bravery and pluck to dogged stupidity. Set to the rousing 'Woo'd an' married an' a'', the song combines the spirit of late Jacobite song with support for the



Hanoverians. National pride is latent among British overtones, emphasised through the Scottish landscape:

Wad Bonaparte land at Fort-William....  
 Wi' rocks o' the Nevis an' Gairry,  
 We'll rattle him off frae our shore  
 Or lull him asleep in a cairny,  
 An' sing him 'Lochaber no more!'

(ll.37, 41-44).

Hogg had this privately engraved, performing it to friends at the Crown tavern in Edinburgh. It rapidly passed into oral circulation; when a General MacDonald was stationed at Edinburgh Castle, according to Hogg, 'Donald MacDonald' was performed several times every meal period, 'Perhaps the most popular song ever written'. As Groves states, it 'tries to reunite a divided Scotland, and to reconcile Scotland to England, by presenting former disputes in a humorous light'. Certainly the spirited creation of Donald is a departure from Hogg's Ossianic Highlanders elsewhere (see, for instance, his Queen Hynde of 1825).<sup>29</sup>

Hogg does seem to have been faced with a real dilemma, in attempting to reconcile his (perhaps inherently incompatible) allegiances as a Borders, Scottish and nominally British poet. This could lead him into composing somewhat unsettling pieces. British allegiances, for instance, using Scottish idioms, are expressed in 'A Highland Song of Triumph for King

William's Birthday'. This, incongruously, has the Gael praise the line of those who oppressed them. William is acknowledged as the new 'stem' of a previously hated line: Stuart stem and Tudor rose unite, to the benefit of all. The unlikely tribute, intended to flatter King and government, was probably designed to further Hogg's hopes for a Royal Literary Society pension.<sup>30</sup> Its confusing blend of Scottish and British rhetoric, however, makes the modern reader highly uncomfortable.

Hogg's relationship with the British establishment was not always as straightforward as his peasant poet posturing might suggest. He indirectly attacked the status quo in Scottish Pastorals (1801). 'Dusty, or Watie an' Geordie's Review of Politics' is a debate recalling Burns' 'Twa Dogs' (and, perhaps, his canine allegory for the autodidact, mentioned in Chapter Two). Geordie, a Cameronian to Watie's moderate, could not afford to pay the tax for keeping his dog, so hanged it. Despite a last minute change of heart--'Deil tak the King, an' burn his crown, / Quoth I, an' ran to cut him down;' (ll.271-72)--the dog 'sprawl'd to death'. So too 'The British Tar' in The Forest Minstrel, set to the appropriate air 'Pull Away', balances enthusiasm for Britishness against an alternative querulous voice:

I'm a jolly British tar,  
 Who have borne her thunders far,  
 Yet I'm here without a scar,  
     Pull away, noble boys!...

"The devil you are, Jack! You have come better off, let me tell you, than some of your messmates then; for, d'ye see, I have one ugly star astern, one on my weather-bow, and three in my timbers, dem'med."<sup>31</sup>

Although, then, Hogg is sometimes sycophantic in his Britishness, he is more often uneasy.

The role of British poet sits uncomfortably for Hogg alongside that of the autodidactic, Scottish patriot. Ambiguities abound as Hogg flaunts his Britishness in pieces like 'The Battle of the Boyne', in The Royal Lady's Magazine of 1831. This 'alludes to the death of George Walker, rector of Donnochmore, the hero who defended Londonderry...against the whole regular and well appointed army of King James' and fell at the Battle of the Boyne.'<sup>32</sup> Despite his title, Hogg seems more interested in the religious implications than in the political ones. Like the Covenanting martyrs discussed below, Walker dies for his faith, defying the 'cold-hearted bigot'. Hogg states that he is drawing on a pamphlet printed in Dublin in 1700, which presents the dying man's religious doubts. While he 'doubted sore' in his lifetime, now his thoughts are devoted to prayer, hoping that the 'sacred head' of



William and 'his good consort' will be protected by 'the grace of Heaven'. Hogg, apparently, sees no difficulty in poetically extolling the partisans of King Billy as he had those of the Stuarts in The Jacobite Relics. It seems as if he could divorce his personal beliefs and his creative impulses as the occasion demanded (such flexibility characterises later women autodidacts, like Ellen Johnston or Jessie Russell, considered in Chapter Eleven).

In songs expressing his notions of religious doctrine and moralities, Hogg is rather more consistent, although religion was not seen as a Shepherd's 'natural' province. A Series of Lay Sermons on Good Principles and Good Breeding' (1834) was received in The Athenaeum thus:

We smiled when we first read the announcement of this work. There was no reason, it is true, why Mr. Hogg should not write as good sermons as any regular college-bred man--but sermons do not sell--and, therefore, we felt assured that the Shepherd meant to leap the hurdles, and give us, after his own rambling nature, what the old worthies used to call 'Experiences.'<sup>33</sup>

They were surprised to find 'good sense' in material so unsuited to someone who was not a 'college-man' but a peasant poet. While moral rectitude, then, was expected from the autodidact, religious refinements were thought to be beyond the peasant poet's capabilities.

Hogg's religious poetry is deeply conservative, making full use of the oral styles encountered during his autodidactic upbringing, and reflecting his distinctively Borders' prejudices on behalf of the Covenanters. Many of Hogg's religious poems are modelled on ballad styles, including 'A Lay of the Martyrs' which opens like 'Lord Randal' (Ch 12), 'O where have you been, bonny Marley Reid?'. 'A Cameronian Ballad' is ballad-style dialogue, with a moralistic twist:

'O what is become of your leel, good man,  
     That now you are a' your lane?  
 If he has joined with the rebel gang,  
     You will never see him again.'  
 'O say nae the rebel gang, ladye,  
     It's a term nae heart can thole,  
 For they that rebel against their God,  
     It is justice to control. (verse 1)<sup>34</sup>

Instead of love between man and woman here, there is love here for the family of the Covenant. The lady opposes Janet like a ballad parent; she sees 'fools' in Covenanters; Janet says 'fools' will be exposed on Judgement Day. None of the Covenanters would exchange their 'holiest joy and pride' for the ilk of the 'highest dame'; the 'persecuting crew'. Unlike the conventional oral ballad, there is a happy ending here: the lady reveals she saved Janet's man. The piece verges on

melodrama but the stress on common humanity, the angle of love between lady and servant (despite differences of opinion) makes this a morality tale for Hogg's 'betters'. Hogg perceived an integral relationship of identities religious and national, going beyond self-interest into human commonwealth. The national Covenant exemplified a key element in Hogg's thoughts as an autodidact with a distinctively Borders and Scottish identity: the ideal of mutual obligations within his nation.<sup>35</sup>

Hogg was also attracted by Eastern religious models, such as those used by Byron in Hebrew Melodies (1815), emulating these in A Selection of German Hebrew Melodies (1815), including accompaniments by W.E. Heather. The medium of Hebrew songs offered a form of refuge for Hogg: the material allowed him to express his religious interests without any threat, in an archaic context. Hogg implicitly paralleled the plight of the persecuted Israelites and that of the persecuted Scottish Covenanters. Hebrew songs satisfied, too, Hogg's interest in the exotic (later expressed, for instance, in the 'Arabian Song' in Select and Rare Scottish Melodies of 1829) and his fondness, related to his Borders rural upbringing, for the psalms. In his Hebrew Melodies, moreover, Hogg could be sensual, in Old Testament style, without incurring blame, in the same way as sensuality was acceptable in the sermons of Rev Gibbon in Lewis Grassie Gibbon's Sunset Song (1932).<sup>36</sup>



Hogg was particularly inspired by the 'Song of Songs', in which a Shulamite maiden resists King Solomon's advances, in favour of her shepherd lover. Pure affection is extolled above mercenary love, as in the Scottish lyrics. The pastoral setting held particular appeal; just as Psalm 23 'the Lord is my Shepherd' suggests the plight of the Chosen, so Hogg could explore his notion of a Scottish flock and its destiny. In 'The Rose of Sharon' (pp.15-23), for instance, Hogg draws explicitly on the 'Song of Songs' as the fairness of 'my love' is described:

A bed of frankincense her cheek,  
 And wreath of myrtle is her hand;  
 Her eye the bright gem they seek  
 By the rivers and streams of the land:  
 Her smile from the morning she wins;  
 Her teeth are the lambs of the hill;  
 Her breasts two roes that are twins,  
 And feed in the valleys at will. (verse 3)

Similarly, in the King James version of the Song of Solomon, Chapter 4: 2, Thy teeth are like a flock of sheep that are even shorn, which came up from the washing; whereof every one bear twins and none is barren among them'. Hogg draws the beloved as 'cedar' too, from the Song of Songs, Chapter 5. Where there are three speakers in the Song of Solomon; here there is dialogue intended, probably, to represent communion within the church.

Heather's setting exploits the potential for a two-voice piece, with parts like 'daughter of Juden' sung alone for emphasis, while most of the song is in unison. The song is intended to be performed 'Con spirito' and the style, no doubt, would highlight the strong words.

Oral narrative elements in 'Hebrew melodies' (the repetition of descriptions, dialogue and dramatic elements) probably attracted Hogg to the form, along with their familiar Old Testament associations. For instance, 'Depart ye, Depart ye!' (pp.40-45, reworked as 'Jacob and Laban' in Hogg's Poetical Works of 1822) is a dialogue, even if not strictly in ballad metre.<sup>37</sup> Like True Thomas, the 'first speaker' served his Lady for seven years. Love is allegorical; people are fickle towards the church. The lovers argue, recalling the love-sparring of The Gentle Shepherd: '1st voice. Women are fickle, and so are you! / 2nd voice. Men are ungrateful--so are you!' (ll.5-6). The conclusion is appropriate for a peasant poet: Nature will resolve the lovers problems: 'Sweet the bird shall sing on the tree, / And sweet the sun rise' (ll.29-30).

Exotic and national elements are reconciled, in a typically autodidactic, eclectic blend, in 'Must I leave her' (pp.10-14, reprinted as 'Jewish Captives Parting' in Poetical Works). This evokes the sorrow of the divided Jewish captives, after 'Ae Fond Kiss'.<sup>38</sup> Hogg draws, too, on Highland exile songs. The measured piano accompaniment enhances the sorrowful tones: 'Must I leave thee broken-



hearted,... / Early met, and early parted' (11.1, 3). An allegorical note is emphasised in the last verse, 'Our cup of misery wets the brim-- / 'Tis slavery or the grave' (11.27-28). The tearful analogy (perhaps ironically) stresses Hogg's personal identification, as a Scot and peasant poet, with the sufferings of the Chosen People (usually represented, in his work, by the Covenanters).

The intertwining of national and religious identities with the notion of an Elect Scottish people (perhaps specifically the peasantry), was an integral part of Hogg's posturing as Scotland's national autodidact. 'The Captive's Song' (pp.1-9), seen in this light, may have relevance to the Scottish situation, past or present. Although he longs for the groves of Lebanon (an allegiance to place recalling 'Jamie's Farewell'), the Captive is defiant, calling on Jehovah to bring 'vengeance' on the heathen. 'David's house' must be protected and the captives freed. Given Hogg's notion of the Psalmist as a predecessor of Scottish pastoral poets (himself included) the reference to David suggests a form of covert protest. The 'captives', in this context, could be Covenanters or, it is tempting to speculate, autodidacts.

The Royal Jubilee, A Scottish Mask (1822) is Hogg's most sophisticated attempt to integrate his complex set of religious, regional, Scottish and British affiliations. On one level, as a play composed for George IV's 1822 visit to Edinburgh, The Royal Jubilee could be viewed as a



patronage request from a self-consciously autodidactic poet, writ large. Given the complicated nature of the writer's allegiances, though, the play sometimes has an uneasiness of tone, especially in its apparent proclamations of Britishness. Perhaps because of its multiple (and often conflicting) aims, it has often been seen as the nadir of Hogg's poetic achievement. Contemporaries, at best, thought it absurd:

He is evidently slightly insane through the whole poem...it would have been most monstrous and unnatural for a pastoral poet from Ettrick Forest to have kept his wits when writing a Scottish Masque, on the spot, to celebrate his King's Visit to the metropolis.<sup>39</sup>

If, however, The Royal Jubilee is considered as a combined expression of Hogg's autodidactic reactions to the royal tour (and of his ambivalent attitudes towards the Borders, Scotland, Britain, and his religious heritage) it does have a certain consistency. The Royal Jubilee, in this respect, is one of the most revealing of Hogg's works, reflecting the ambivalent qualities of his local, national and religious affiliations. Hogg's attitudes towards Britain, in particular, are shown to be highly ambiguous.

The dramatis personae consists of a wide range of Scottish types, reflecting Hogg's notions of his nation. The leading role is Queen of the Fairies 'with attendant

elves', more Midsummer Night's Dream than Will o' Phaup's vision. There is a Genius of the Ocean 'with Sea-Nymphs', a Genius of the Gael, 'with Highland Spirits', a Genius of the West, 'with Spirits of Covenanters', Genius of Holyrood and a Highland policeman, Archy Campbell. The play is set (like some of the most horrific scenes of The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner) in 'A romantic dell on Arthur's Seat'. It opens with the sound of clarions and a ridiculous speech from the Palace Genius: 'Why all this commotion / On land and on ocean?' (11.1-4).<sup>40</sup> His sleep, since 'the days of the Martyr, Charles the Good', has been disturbed.

The autodidact's adeptness with oral forms, and skill at matching music with words, can be observed in the songs of The Royal Jubilee. The Scottish fairies use a variety of national idioms. They are adept, for instance, in the conventions of Jacobite songs. There is, perhaps, an ironic hint at an archaicism in their outlook but, equally, the Jacobite fairies are given a dignified voice. The Fairies respond, for instance, to the Palace Genius with a song set to 'When the king comes o'er the Water', highlighting the dilemma Hogg faced regarding Britain. On the one hand, he felt the need to express overt Britishness, on the other he held a longlasting affection for the Jacobites. An ethereal quality pervades the tune here, with its c and f sharps, lending disturbing charm to a mediocre text (that is if it is read off the page):



HAIL to the land of the pine and the oak, The  
land of the loyal heart in danger! Blest be her  
halls and her lordly walls, Again to enclose their  
royal stranger! Hail to the guest she loves the  
best, Whose fathers' blood her  
freedom bought her! The fairies' lay shall  
hail the day That Albion's king came  
o'er the water. (pp.7-9)

Hogg matches verbal rhymes to musical phrases with high and low Ds, respectively, on 'halls' and 'walls'. This air had already been used in The Jacobite Relics and Hogg made some minor alterations for The Jubilee. The later version is somewhat more declamatory. The earlier version was mainly in G minor (although starting in F major), but



the tune here transposes down into E minor and D major, moves into F major, back into E minor and ends with the lower tonality. These changes make the song, especially at the end, slightly uncomfortable for a singer but, perhaps, they are more suitable to a dramatically satisfying performance. Hogg shows his dexterity in complementing texts with music throughout The Royal Jubilee. Elsewhere, for instance, he uses 'Birk of Cowdenknowes', with its nautical flavour, to enhance the sea nymphs' Song II; Scottish fairies use 'Broom of Cowdenknowes' to enhance their echoing call 'Lora, Lora' in Song III. Treated as a musical, not a play, The Jubilee comes into its own; in tone anticipating Gilbert and Sullivan's Iolanthe (1911).

The light comic veneer, though, covers deepseated tensions. Hogg is trying to please George (in 1821 he was seeking a Royal Literary Society Pension) but realises the king's shortcomings. It should be remembered that Hogg (like his fellow autodidact Allan Cunningham), had the good taste not to attend George's Coronation.<sup>41</sup> British royalty is heavily criticised, albeit with humour. The fairy aristocrats feel George's race 'banished' them to Lapland and Missouri (pp.16-17), paralleling implicitly the exiled Jacobites. However, the Fairy Queen is more pragmatic. She convinces her followers to accept the king who allows them, 'our haunts once more'; gifts are bestowed on him: dreams of glory; a kiss; visions of

beauty, glee, a hollin wreath, welcome and love. Hogg's double-edged attitudes towards Britain are evident here: he faces the problem of proclaiming his loyalty to the reigning British monarch but satisfying his equally strong, complex affiliations as a Lowland poet sympathetic towards Highlanders.

Amidst this hilarity, a blind 'ghost of Ossian', Genius of the Gael, seeks reconciliation with the Queen (Genius of the Border) and argues that she should cease from being hostile towards the 'tartaned King'. Unlike Macpherson's proto-autodidact, Hogg's modern ghost accepts the present and looks forward to the future:

That day is past, as well is should;  
And one is come, I knew it would!  
On which our names shall higher soar  
Than e'er rose nations's fame before.  
Our King is come, and claims our race,  
In garb and lineament of face. (p.23)

There is irony given the anticipated reality of corpulent George in his kilt, and pathos in the fairies' loyalist response, set to 'Killiecrankie' (the 1689 battle in which Williamites were routed). Song VI, set to 'Magregor na Ruara', calls Stuart and Tudor to unite, but Border elves mock this new Scottish order: 'spirits are all gone as mad as the people'. Deep-seated rifts are expressed in a debate over who will have precedence in meeting the King,

reflecting real-life tensions surrounding George's visit. Hogg's reactions perhaps indicate that he found proclaiming Britishness, for Scots, ridiculous. The Queen claims first place for 'my broad bonnets of the Border'; The Gael's Genius, Donald More, threatens Gillinour with 'terrible Dundee'; Gillinour's 'Ghosts of Ancient Covenanters' will 'make Drumclog of Arthur's seat' (p.33):

These are the shades of men who rose  
For Scotland's right, and dared oppose  
Tyrannic sway with sword and pen,  
'Gainst all the wrath of wicked men. (p.36)

Archy Campbell mediates the now physical conflict, in the contemporary, parodic style of Highland speech used by Lowland writers: 'tere shall none of you be either first or last, for you shall just form a round robin about our mhaster and our King, and pe a creat, and a strong, and a mighty pulwark' (p.39). Placated, all sing 'true Scottish' 'Song the Last', set to 'Go to the Kye wi me'. This advocates going 'round about a' thegither', in a final show of unity, praising the visitor to the North who was 'weel wordy blessings'. In closing George is hailed, perhaps ironically, as a ruler who can 'wield a whole nation'. Campbell dismisses the parties 'in the king's name' (p.41), and exits, singing 'Hersel be Heeland shentleman' in a reassertion of Gaeldom. The spirits go



off in different directions, suggesting a fragmented Scottish identity (and perhaps the jostling of the literati for precedence), not the satisfaction in Britishness which the play superficially proclaims. Hogg, overall, is highly uncomfortable with his British-biased resolution. The Hanoverian Royal Jubilee balances the Stuart Queen's Wake in politics, but the hostility to the Hanoverians, expressed jocularly, seems based in fact. Despite the professed aims of The Jubilee, there is considerable unease in Hogg's mingling of Borders, religious, national and British allegiances here.

Satisfying the Literati's codes did pose particular challenges for the autodidact; it was difficult to produce a palatable blend of national and religious beliefs. However, Hogg's complex blend of allegiances (often in flux), created ambiguous, intellectually stimulating work. Through his special interests, particularly the Jacobites and the Covenanters, Hogg fruitfully explored particular aspects, national and religious, of his identity as a poet. The case of The Royal Jubilee, in particular, illuminates the difficulties Hogg faced in advocating a British identity while maintaining regional and national loyalties (a situation faced, of course, by other Scottish poets, notably Scott). In his longer, experimental poems, discussed in the next chapter, Hogg came closest to producing an integrated literary identity, as Scotland's national peasant poet.

## Notes

1. 'The Queen's Wake', review, The Monthly Review, (1814), p.435; 'The Songs of James Hogg, the Ettrick Shepherd', review, The Athenaeum, (Jan 1831), p.7; 'James Hogg, The Ettrick Shepherd', The Athenaeum, (1835), p.912.
2. R.P. Gillies, Memoirs of a Literary Veteran, 3 vols, (London, 1851), vol II, p.243. Gillies garbles Hogg's recollections of tying a corked container of ink, and paper stitched together for writing, described in James Hogg, 'Memoir of the Life of James Hogg', The Mountain Bard, 3rd ed, (Edinburgh and London, 1821), p.xix.
3. James Hogg, 'Memoir of the Life of James Hogg', The Mountain Bard, (Edinburgh and London, 1807), p.xii; 'Letters to Walter Scott', NLS MS 3875, f.163.
4. James Hogg, 'Jamie's Farewell to Ettrick', The Scots Magazine, 66 (1804), p.377, rpt as 'Farewell to Ettrick', The Mountain Bard, (1807), pp.164-69 and The Mountain Bard, (1821), pp.334-40. Robert Burns, 'Song', The Poems and Songs of Robert Burns, ed J. Kinsley, 3 vols, (Oxford, 1968), Song 122. See, too, the notes to 'The Bonie Banks of Ayr', vol III, pp.1208-09. See The Letters of Robert Burns, ed G. Ross Roy, 2 vols, (Oxford, 1985), No.125 and R.H. Cromek, Reliques of Robert Burns, 4th ed, (London, 1817), p.279. Hogg translated the 'Highlanders Farewell', The Jacobite Relics of Scotland, 2 vols, (Edinburgh and London, 1819-21), vol II, pp.185-6, rpt, The Scottish Minstrel, ed R.A. Smith, 6 vols, (Edinburgh, 1824), vol V, p.88.
5. 'The Mountain Bard', review, The Scots Magazine, 69 (1807), p.286.
6. James Hogg, 'Memoir of the Life of James Hogg', The Mountain Bard, (1807), p.xi; James Hogg, 'Song for



- the Earl of Dalkeith's Birthday', The Scots Magazine, 66 (1804), pp.533-34, rpt as 'Hap an' rowe the Feetie o't', The Forest Minstrel, (Edinburgh and London, 1810), pp.185-87.
7. James Hogg, 'Verses Addressed to the Right Hon. Lady Anne Scott of Buccleuch', The Brownie of Bodsbeck, 2 vols, (Edinburgh and London, 1818), vol I, pp.1-xi; rpt Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, 4 (1818), pp.74-76 and James Hogg, Poetical Works, 4 vols, (Edinburgh and London, 1822), vol II, pp.325-39. Anne's mother was Duchess Harriet, in whose memory Hogg gained Altrive in 1815 and after whom he named his youngest daughter. Perhaps deferring to pressure, as described in Hogg, 'Memoir' (1821), pp.lxxviii-lxix, Hogg renamed his hero Balfour 'Brown'; Scott, in Old Mortality, (Edinburgh, 1816), presented Balfour as reprehensible.
  8. Douglas Gifford, James Hogg, (Edinburgh, 1976), p.52.
  9. James Hogg and Walter Scott, The Ettricke Garland; being Two Excellent New Songs on The Lifting of the Banner of the House of Buccleuch, at the great football match on Carterhaugh, Dec. 4, 1815, (Edinburgh, 1815); Hogg's piece is dated 5th December in James Hogg, Songs, by The Ettrick Shepherd, (Edinburgh and London, 1831); see Douglas Mack's introduction to his rpt, The Ettrick Garland, (Greenock, 1971). Scott suggested involving Hogg on 21st Dec 1815 to the Duke of Buccleuch, see The Letters of Sir Walter Scott, ed W.E.K. Anderson, 12 vols, (New York, 1971), vol IV, pp.127-28. Scott summed up peasant aesthetics in a letter of 12 Nov 1815: 'neither words nor music should be too fine for the honest herds', Scott, Letters, vol IV, p.126.
  10. James Hogg, 'The Author's Address to his auld dog Hector', The Mountain Bard, (1807), pp.183-89, rpt, The Mountain Bard, (1821), pp.341-49 first appeared



- as 'A Shepherd's Address to his auld Dog Hector', The Scots Magazine, 67 (1805), pp.943-44. James Hogg 'The Souters of Selkirk', Select and Rare Scottish Melodies, (London, 1829), pp.23-25. On the other James Hogg see Robert Murray, Hawick Songs and Song Writers, (Hawick, 1897).
11. Louis Simpson, James Hogg, A Critical Study, (Edinburgh and London, 1962), pp.76-77; James Hogg, 'Tale of an Old Highlander', The Metropolitan, 3 (1832), pp.113-20. James Hogg, 'Suggestions on the utility of forming some new lines of road in Scotland', The Scots Magazine, 68 (1806), pp.179-82. James Hogg, 'Letters on Poetry, by the Ettrick Shepherd II', The Scots Magazine, 68 (1806), p.17; James Hogg, 'Stuarts of Appin', Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, 24 (Oct 1828), pp.535-36, rpt Songs (1831), pp.59-62. See Burns, 'A Briton', The Edinburgh Evening Courant, November 1788, Letters, 11, 283.
  12. William Donaldson, The Jacobite Song, (Aberdeen, 1988), pp.105-07.
  13. On Selkirkshire's Jacobite traditions see 'Collection of Ballads [R. Pitcairn]', NLS MS 2914 and Thomas Wilkie, 'Old Scots Songs &c. Collected mostly in Roxburghshire, Berwickshire and Selkirkshire by Thomas Wilkie. AD 1815', NLS MSS 122, 123; Alexander Campbell, 'Fragments of Two Journals, 1802 and 1803', EUL MS La. II. 378. See James Hogg, Highland Tours. The Ettrick Shepherd's Travels in the Scottish Highlands and Western Isles in 1802, 1803 and 1804, ed William F. Laughlan, (Hawick, Roxs, 1981).
  14. Hogg's sources and techniques are described in 'Small Collections', NLS MS 3925 and Jacobite Relics, passim.
  15. Qtd J. Cuthbert Hadden, George Thomson. The Friend of Burns. His Life and Correspondence, (London, 1898), p.182; Hogg's 'Jacobite song' 'The three men

- of Moriston' was published as Hogg's in Select Melodies of Scotland, ed George Thomson, Vol III (Edinburgh, 1822), no.30.
16. See Donaldson, p.100-07. See The Works of Allan Ramsay, vol III, ed A.M. Kinghorn and A. Law, (Edinburgh and London, 1955), pp.43-44.
  17. James Hogg, 'The Farce' appeared in a series in the Edinburgh Magazine, running between Nov 1821 and to April 1822 (Jan-June 1822, pp.49-50), as collected by a London gentleman and Cumberland schoolmaster; Hogg later acknowledged the second set ('Red Clan-Ranald's Man' and 'The Two Men of Colston') as his own. See Edith Batho, The Ettrick Shepherd, 1927, rpt (New York, 1969), p.41.
  18. See the arrangements of 'The Piper of Dundee' in T.S. Gleadhill, Songs of Scotland, (Glasgow, 1876), pp.46-47, Cyril Winn, The S.A.B. Book, (London, nd), pp.40-41 and Alan Reid, Prince Charlie and the '45, (Paisley, 1886), p.10.
  19. Batho, pp.38-43.
  20. Batho, p.39.
  21. Murray Pittock, 'James Hogg and the Jacobite cause', Studies in Hogg and his World, 2 (1991), p.21.
  22. 'Art. VII. The Jacobite Relics of Scotland, being the Songs, Airs, and legends, of the Adherents to the House of Stuart', review, The Edinburgh Review, (1829), pp.148-49; see 'Letter from James Hogg to his Reviewer', Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, 8 (1820), pp.68-70.
  23. Hogg, Highland Tours, Monday 6th June, p.74. Hogg, 'Letter', pp.70-71.
  24. Strout, p.197; Batho argues this item is 'Hogg's in essence', p.39.
  25. Donaldson, pp.108-09; Batho, p.14; David Johnson, Music and Society in Lowland Scotland in the Eighteenth Century, (London, 1972), p.146.



26. 'Jacobite Relics', review, The Scots Magazine, 34 (1820), pp.33-34; 'Autograph Poems, Letters &c., James Hogg', NLS MS 2245, f.52; Scott Letters vol VI. 1819-21, p.69; editors include Allan Cunningham, Songs of Scotland (1825) and R.A. Smith, The Scottish Minstrel (1824-5). See NLS MS 2254 ff.62-63; Stewart's letter to Thomson 9 Sept 1821, qtd Hadden, pp.182-83.
27. Donaldson, p.106.
28. James Hogg, 'Scotia's Glens', The Scots Magazine, 65 (1803), p.725; rpt, The Mountain Bard, (1807), pp.177-78, The Forest Minstrel, (Edinburgh and London, 1810), pp.119-23 and Songs, 1831, p.6.
29. The Patriot Lay of Donald MacDonald (Edinburgh, 1801). See James Hogg, 'Memoir of the Author's Life', Altrive Tales, (London, 1832), vol I, pp.xxi-xxii, and David Groves, James Hogg. The Growth of a Writer, (Edinburgh, 1988), p.7.
30. James Hogg, 'A Highland Song of Triumph for King William's Birthday', Edinburgh Literary Journal, (1830), p.385.
31. James Hogg, 'Dusty; or, Watie an' Geordie's Review of Politics; An Eclogue', Scottish Pastorals, (Edinburgh, 1801), pp.9-24. James Hogg, 'The British Tars', The Forest Minstrel, pp.217-20.
32. James Hogg, 'The Battle of the Boyne', The Royal Lady's Magazine, 2 (1831), pp.322-24.
33. 'A Series of Lay Sermons on Good Principles and Good Breeding', review, The Athenaeum, (Apr 1834), p.306. See too Silvia Mergenthal, 'James Hogg's Lay Sermons and the Essay Tradition', Studies in Hogg and his World, 2 (1991), pp.64-71.
34. James Hogg, 'A Cameronian Ballad', The Amulet, (1831), pp.173-80. 'A Cameronian Ballad', 'A Lay of the Martyrs', The Amulet (1830), pp.145-54, rpt James Hogg, A Queer Book (Edinburgh, 1832), pp.281-89.



35. The Covenanters had an imaginative hold on Scottish writers from Scott in Old Mortality, (Edinburgh, 1816), to Galt in Ringan Gilhaize, (Edinburgh, 1823)--like Hogg's work, founded on oral tradition sympathetic to Covenanters--and Hogg in the Brownie of Bodsbeck, (Edinburgh and London, 1818) and Tales of the Wars of Montrose, (London, 1835). The last adopts a mature historical attitude, admitting Covenanters committed some atrocities. Later works, like Robert Pollock's Tales of the Covenanters, (Edinburgh, 1836), Robert Louis Stevenson's The Pentland Rising, (Edinburgh, 1866) and John Buchan's John Burnet of Barns, (London, 1898) are equally concerned with 'The Killing Times' and the Covenanters fascinated Scottish artists, from George Harvey (1806-76) in 'The Covenanter's Preaching' and 'Drumclog' (Glasgow Museums, 485 and 3099) to Will Maclean who features Alexander Peden's preaching mask (National Museums of Scotland) in 'The Minister and the Prophet' (1990), in the artist's collection.
36. For arrangements of Byron's songs see I. Nathan, Fugitive Pieces & Reminiscences of Lord Byron; containing an entire new Edition of the Hebrew Melodies, with the addition of several never before published; the whole illustrated with critical, historical, theatrical, political and theological remarks, notes, anecdotes, interesting conversations, and observations, made by that illustrious poet; together with his Lordship's autograph; also some original poetry, letters and recollections of Lady Caroline Lamb, (London, 1829). Nathan was helped in his arrangements by the singer Braham, who performed Hogg's pieces. See Ronald Stevenson, 'Byron as Lyricist: The Poet Among the Musicians', Byron, Wrath and Rhyme, ed Alan Bold, (London and Totowa, NJ, 1983), pp.78-93. James Hogg, A Selection of German

Hebrew Melodies, (London, 1815); all references to songs from this edition are given within the text, in parentheses. In his 'Memoir' (1821), p.lxxvi, Hogg recalls being approached about Hebrew Melodies by a 'celebrated composer' and promised a guinea per stanza. He was never paid. Hogg's Hebrew Melodies rpt as 'Sacred Melodies', Poetical Works (1822) vol IV and Songs (1831). James Hogg, 'The Arabian Song', Select and Rare Scottish Melodies, (London, 1829), pp.30-32.

37. James Hogg, 'Jacob and Laban', Poetical Works (1822), vol IV, pp.209-11.
38. James Hogg, 'Jewish Captive's Parting Song', The Poetical Works of James Hogg, 4 vols, (Edinburgh and London, 1822), vol IV, pp.203-05.
39. September 1822, 'Hogg's Royal Jubilee, &c.', Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, p.349. There is no indication The Royal Jubilee was ever performed although Robert Peel wrote to Scott thanking Hogg, on the King's behalf, for submitting the piece, qtd Strout, p.147. See too The Royal Jubilee, facsimile ed, Studies in Hogg and his World, 5 (1994) annotated by Valentina Bold, pp.102-51 and Valentina Bold, 'The Royal Jubilee: James Hogg and the House of Hanover', Studies in Hogg and his World, 5 (1994), pp.1-19.
40. As well as overtones of Midsummer Night's Dream, There is a hint of the chaotic Twelfth Night, too, in the cavorting action; Shakespeare's fantasy was, incidentally, performed in Edinburgh in 1816, with Mrs Henry Siddons as Viola. See Scott, Letters, vol IV (1815-17), p.162. The Edinburgh Evening Courant, (Jan 11 1816) notes Mrs Siddons' appearance in Twelfth Night; the play is favourably reviewed in The Courant (Jan 4 1816). Page references, hereafter, to The Royal Jubilee are given within the text in parentheses.

41. Scott, Letters, vol VI (1819-21), pp.488-49, Scott tried to draw Hogg to the attention of Mr Villers and was still canvassing on Hogg's behalf in 1827, see Scott, Letters, Vol X (1826-28), p.208.



## Chapter Seven:

### Fantastic Journeys and Royal Adventures

'Be mine to sing of visions that have been,  
And cherish hope of visions yet to be;  
Of mountains clothed in everlasting green,  
Of silver torrent and of shadowy tree,  
Far in the ocean of eternity.  
Be mine that faith that spurns the bourn of time;  
The soul whose eye can future glories see;  
The converse here with things of purer clime,  
And hope above the stars that soars on  
wing sublime.' (verse 3)

(James Hogg, 'Superstition', The Pilgrims of the Sun,  
(London and Edinburgh, 1815), pp.129-48.)

Hogg's unusual ability to assimilate information as an autodidact is evident in his longer poems, particularly The Pilgrims of the Sun (1815) and Queen Hynde (1825). Building on the success of The Queen's Wake (1813) to create fantastic journeys and royal adventures, Hogg's narrative poetry develops the Ettrick Shepherd persona into its fully fledged form. In the process, Hogg provides a highly influential, and well considered, model for later autodidacts.

While Hogg claims Byron as his inspiration in The Pilgrims of the Sun (1815), this narrative poem draws on an eclectic range of sources. There is, though, evidence of Hogg's admiration of Byron, not for his 'crabbed state-creed' nor 'noble lineage' but for his 'bold and native energy; / ...Ranging through Nature on erratic wing' (ll.4, 6). Following James Park's advice, the first edition consisted solely of 'The Pilgrims of the Sun' and 'Superstition'. However, Hogg recognised a 'wild unearthliness...that rendered it ['The Pilgrims of the Sun'] unfit to appear by itself'. In the 1822 Poetical Works as well as Hogg's subsequent collections, 'The Pilgrims' is one of a series of fantasies accompanied by items including the fairy drama, 'The Haunted Glen' and 'The Field of Waterloo, and Death-Bed Prayer of a Soldier'. In this context, 'The Pilgrims', 'Connel of Dee' and 'Superstition' form three parts of an extended

narrative. Respectively, they are the exposition of the theme of otherworldly journeys, its parody and evaluation. They are a set of supernatural 'Midsummer Night Dreams' and Connel's entrancement, especially, recalls A Midsummer Night's Dream. The dreams, though, are not primarily Shakespearian but are framed as: 'visions of one in a trance, or the wanderings of her disembodied spirit, adapting Hogg's recurrent motif of the bodyless soul'.<sup>1</sup>

Showing Hogg's autodidactic capabilities to absorb ideas, The Pilgrims of the Sun is similar in outlook to Blake's 'Jerusalem'. Perhaps Allan Cunningham introduced Hogg to the then obscure Blake's work; the engraver poet features in Cunningham's Lives of the Most Eminent British Painters, Sculptors and Architects (1829-33).

Astronomical themes, medieval and modern, are adeptly incorporated in 'The Pilgrims'. Interplanetary travel was a well worn eighteenth century topic, from Haydn's comic, moral opera, with Goldoni's libretto, Il Mondo de la Luna (1777) to Blake's essay 'An Island in the Moon' (MS 1794?). Otherworldly journeys were gaining new impetus, though, as a creative force after Cary's complete blank verse translation of Dante's Commedia as The Vision (1814 with parts appearing in 1805 and 1806). Scott, Coleridge and Byron all noted Cary's translation and Hogg was quick to introduce current concerns to his work. The Pilgrims of the Sun is a key work in understanding Hogg's worldview and literary practices. There, Hogg anticipates the



creative approaches of later learned peasant poets, such as Alexander Anderson and James Young Geddes.<sup>2</sup>

In 'The Pilgrims of the Sun', encouraged by the reception of The Queen's Wake, Hogg revisits traditional-style themes. 'Pilgrims' relates the cosmic adventures of Mary Lee from 'Yarrowdale' (Anglicizing Yarrow with the Norse 'dale'), specifically the archaic placename 'Carelha'', 'now vulgarly called Carterhaugh'. Given that this is the site of 'Tam Lin' (Ch 39), readers expect a supernatural tale. Mary, like Kilmeny, is innocent, but even more bizarrely so. Mary is as loved by animals as Francis of Assisi; dogs spontaneously lick her hands. 'Books of deep divinity' attract her, although she 'feared the half that the bedesmen said / Was neither true nor plain' (I 11.39-40). While not approaching Robert Wringhim's future religious perversions, Mary's overzealousness is presented ambiguously. Given her predisposition she 'grew weary of this world' and 'Heaven in pity' made her 'free'. Contemplative excess disagreed with Hogg's Protestant vision (in The Three Perils of Woman (1823), similarly, Gatty Bell experiences a three year trance from praying too hard).

At times, Hogg is close to parodying himself; Mary's adventure is less wholesome than Kilmeny's. It begins on the third night of 'the waning moon' when fairies ride to Carelha and Bowhill (home of the Scotts of Buccleuch). A 'wight' in a white robe, with an angel's demeanour,

commands Mary to shed her 'earthly weeds'. They embark on a journey which, at times, approaches sexual enlightenment, anticipating the imagery of A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle (1926):

She only felt a shivering throb,  
                   a pang defined that may not be;  
 And up she rose, a naked form,  
                   More lightsome, pure and fair than he.  
   (I verse 20)<sup>3</sup>

Mary is 'Like one that wades in waters deep' (I 1.87), hinting at perils to come and the watery motif sustained in 'Connel of Dee'. As in classical, and oral, underworld journeys Mary is forbidden to look behind. She violates this interdiction with no immediate result, seeing her body 'on the greenwood's lap'. Swift as a 'meteor'--a nineteenth century commonplace--or 'arrow' (apt for a 'Border bowman' and used by Dante) the pair fly to an exotic east of 'saffron cloud' and idiosyncratic rhyme: 'nigh' / 'obscurity' for instance. The verse pattern temporarily alters: verse 31 has six, not four, lines. This rhythmic break prolongs the pilgrims' crossing of the 'winding watery way'; they watch as the evening star (Venus, visited later) sets (I 1.130). A finely realised landscape lies ahead, once again demonstrating Hogg's skill at describing natural, and supernatural, phenomena.

As an autodidact, Hogg was particularly open minded

about sources of information. Astronomy fascinated Hogg from his first competitive poem onwards; in the 1822 The Pilgrims of the Sun there are valedictory 'Verses to the Comet of 1811' (pp.239-44).<sup>4</sup> 'The Pilgrims of the Sun' blends imaginative and physical approaches to the cosmos (including Newtonian laws in action). With the formal elaboration of a makar, Hogg describes an awe-inspiring sunset and Night (Diana) arising:

But the yellow leme spread up the lift,  
 And the stars grew dim before her ee,  
 And up arose the Queen of Night  
 In all her solemn majesty.

(I verse 36)

At daybreak the youth makes a 'holy vow' which 'proved that the half the bedesmen said / Was neither true nor ever could be' (I ll.197-98), as Mary suspected. Mary's knowledge is as hard won as any peasant poet's as, progressively, religious truths are revealed. Seeing the exalted 'Eternal's throne of light', Mary fears the possibility of sun worship and that her guide may be 'heathen'; he merely smiles.

Once again we see Hogg's unusual skills at absorbing and using new information as an autodidact. In Hogg's eclectic stellar system there is a trace of Ptolemy as stars and moon move west from the pilgrims; in Book III the pilgrims see globes circling the Sun. This aspect



follows medieval concepts of celestial spheres which bear Sun, Moon and planets round the earth. On the other hand the travellers' passage is near gravitational. Hogg describes solar circles with physical as well as visionary existence, reflecting contemporary notions of plural worlds by analogy. This is explained in the first edition of the Edinburgh Encyclopaedia Britannica (1771), a work almost certainly in the Blackhouse library:

the Almighty...does nothing in vain.... From what we know of our own system, it may be reasonably concluded, that all the rest are with equal wisdom contrived, situated, and provided with accomodations for rational inhabitants.... there is a general analogy running through, and connecting all the parts into one great and universal system.

Such theories were common. Even William Herschel (1738-1822), the innovatory astronomer, thought the sun was inhabited with a protective dust cloud to minimise heat. Comets, too, were supposed to be inhabited. Mary and Cela are several times compared to comets (interchangeably meteors), like the 'heavenly meteors' of transcended lovers' souls in Paradise VIII. Brittanica identifies moral implications in astronomy:

some are of the opinion that they [comets] are so many hells for tormenting the damned with

perpetual vicissitudes of heat and cold. But when we consider, on the other hand, the infinite power and goodness of the Deity.... it seems highly probable, that such numerous and large masses of durable matter as comets are, however unlike they be to our earth, are not destitute of beings capable of contemplating with wonder, and acknowledging with gratitude, the wisdom, symmetry and beauty of the creation; which is more plainly to be observed in their extensive tour through the heavens.<sup>5</sup>

The pilgrims' universe contains many plural worlds. Some reflect earthly social structures but Hogg implies that heavenly rank is determined by worth not status. The 'first green world' the pilgrims pass contains rich, poor, young and old, 'of mortal mould'. The next has 'superior' inhabitants 'in bloom of youth' wearing 'radiant robes'. They represent, respectively, worlds of the living and the immortal dead reborn. Mary wants to stay in the second but cannot; one day she will return to 'love and truth' near the sun (reminding readers of Kilmeny). With Hogg's favoured 'never...never' pattern Mary will see 'what maid hath never seen, / And do what maid hath never done' (I 1.288) on solar mountains. This image is from Revelations 21, 10, where an angel escorts St John: 'he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God'.

Hogg is acutely aware that his status as an autodidact has creative implications, leading to perceived limitations. The narrator says, 'I will bear my hill-harp hence, / And hang it on its ancient tree' (I 11.297-98); its 'wild warblings' are unsuitable. However Hogg implies that, in certain personae, a 'Shepherd's hand' is suited to holy themes. His subject deserves the 'holy harp of Judah's land' and 'songs of Israel's King', combining the religious fervour and simplicity of 'Kedar hills' and 'Bethlehem's plain by night' (I verse 78). There is an implied link between King David, peasant King and autodidact of the Psalms, and Hogg as the Ettrick Shepherd. The narrator, therefore, keeps his 'mountain lyre' with its 'wandering melody' at hand for future use. Such willingness to experiment with poetic roles marks Hogg as an outstanding autodidact. Previous, and future, peasant poets experimented with personae (notably women from Janet Little to Janet Hamilton) but Hogg's range of identities was unmatched.

Hogg's assertion of his peasant poet identity, on occasion, demonstrates justifiable pride in his autodidactic background. This, perhaps, enabled him to overcome the negative elements of autodidactic stereotyping. Part Second opens with an apologia, followed by a display of virtuoso description as the narrator takes up his new instrument:



Harp of Jerusalem! how shall my hand  
 Awake thy Hallelujahs!--How begin  
 The song that tells of light ineffable,  
 And of the dwellers there, the fountain pure,  
 And source of all--Where bright Archangels  
                                 dwell,

And where, in unapproached pavilion, framed  
 Of twelve deep veils, and every veil composed  
 Of thousand thousand lustres, sits enthroned  
 The God of Nature!--O thou harp of Salem,  
 Where shall my strain begin!

Soft shall it be,  
 And simple as its own primeval airs;  
 And, Minstrel, when on angel wing thou soar'st,  
 Then will the harp of David rise with thee.

(II verse 1)

Once again Hogg presents David, as he had in A Selection of German Hebrew Melodies (1815), as a gentle shepherd hero; the prototypical peasant Bard. He thereby establishes the pastoral David as a valid literary ancestor. The inspirational effects of such assertive statements on later peasant poets is hard to measure but, no doubt, significant.

Anticipating allegations of autodidactic heresy, Hogg places his Pilgrims within an emphatically Christian environment. Along with her celestial guide Cela, Mary passes through exotic 'groves of amarynth' where the 'motioned universe' wheels, 'In fair confusion', sustained by 'that mighty everlasting One':

They saw all nature--All there was they saw....  
 Worlds beyond worlds, with intermundant voids,  
 That closed and opened as those worlds rolled on  
 ..... Each of these,  
 From one particular point of the sun's orb,  
 Seemed pendent by some ray or viewless cord,  
 On which it twirled and swung with endless  
 motion.

(II 11.52, 55-60)

God is 'enthroned, / In light' in an orb amidst this  
 Newtonian schema, by His presence showing that Mary's  
 fears of sun worship were misplaced.

Nevertheless, there are hints of an idiosyncratic  
 Presbyterianism, related to Hogg's autodidactic, open  
 mind. Earth is an insignificant 'cloudy spot',  
 subordinate to the sun (which is chained to heaven by a  
 'viewless golden cord'). Mary wonders: 'has a living God  
 / Bled in each one of all these peopled worlds!' (II  
 11.153-4); a question which anticipates MacDiarmid's  
 nightmare vision of the crucifixion of endless Christs in  
 'The Innumerable Christ'. Cela refuses to answer: all is  
 'decreed'. Throughout, Hogg evades absolute theological  
 pronouncements and his tolerant, thoughtful Christianity  
 mingles with notions of progress and biological  
 determinism. New forms of life move on: 'After a thousand  
 years' progression, they / Stepped on the confines of that  
 land of life' (II 11.199-200). This is close to Catholic  
 Purgatory; it seems that his Borders heritage facilitated

Hogg's knowledge of Catholic beliefs. While the narrator notes only an 'angel's harp' is fitting for his subject, typically, he continues. Cela and Mary stay in outer heaven; the centre hosts saints 'of all creeds, / Features, and hues!' (II 11.224-25). The conglomerate nature of heaven is contrary to Mary's previous religious lessons; she realises the error of believing that only a 'single sect' could feel 'the Almighty's love'. This is the type of evidence which leads Gifford to note, convincingly, Hogg's 'religious tolerance and (very shallow and mild) tendency to free-thinking'.<sup>6</sup>

In presenting his religious visions, Hogg shows an affinity with geometric patterns, reflecting his familiarity with repetitive oral structures (The Three Perils of Woman (1822), too, is structured by progressing circles). Demonstrating his skill in creating a complex visionary system, contrary to preconceptions regarding autodidacts, Hogg constantly sets up revelations behind revelations and layers of meaning. He suggests there are mysteries behind the multiple circles he has described. In the last circle round heaven's palaces are those who never saw 'mortal life'. Beyond, is 'progression' to 'perfection'; the 'human soul' advances likewise. Heaven's tribes assemble in a huge valley: 'A tall gazon, or level pyramid' (II 1.264) surrounded by palaces and seraphs' thrones; all look in. The pyramid refashions nineteenth century class hierarchies; extending the



dedication to Byron, this one acknowledges merit not rank.<sup>7</sup> Vibrant colours dominate: gold columns, lamps bright as the sun, reinterpreting Revelations 21, 18-23, here precious stones garnish God's city; light is superfluous because of God's glory.

With autodidactic eclecticism, intermingling medieval and modern outlooks, Hogg presents his God as a chivalric hero with a splendid retinue: Archangels, 'half-shrouded in incessant light' surround His pavilion: 'Himself unseen, in tenfold splendours veiled, / The least unspeakable, so passing bright' (II 11.289-90). The light surrounding God, shading angels as a 'shroud' on life, recalls the cumulative radiance of God in Dante's Paradise as well as the brightness of Revelations. An invisible barrier, the 'pale', prevents the living from proceeding. Earthly and Heavenly practices are, perhaps, paralleled as 'Myriads...of purer frame' like 'flying stars' report on 'distant worlds' to seraphim. These informers on the wicked are similar to Protestant Elders, with their account-taking of parishioners.

While Hogg's descriptions are often delightfully light, typical of the peasant poet bearing the 'harp of Judah', they are tempered by ominous notes. Mary's personal revelation is terrifying. She trembles at the hosts' music, in the vicinity of God's abode and, like Dante in Paradise XXXI, the 'virgin pilgrim' passes into a temporary trance, lying in her guide's arms by a stream.

Back at heaven's borders the theology is open-ended.

'Holy converse' with saints leaves the pilgrims filled with 'awe'. Only God understands the 'chain / Which bound them to the sun' (II ll.402-03) but their new wisdom allows the pilgrims to circumvent the 'circular' path and pass direct across 'storied vales of heaven'; the last phrase, with its echoes of tenements, invests the celestial city (perhaps ironically) with an atmosphere close to Edinburgh's. Music accompanies the travellers, 'Swift as the wild-bee's note' (II ll.388); natural and divine are in harmony. As the pair lean on the sun's halo, with pure, sensual enjoyment, 'from contiguous worlds they were beheld / And wondered at as beams of living light' (II ll.398-99).

There are implications for those who belittle autodidacts as Hogg pursues the theme of fallen worlds. The pilgrims view an 'erratic wandering globe' passing, a 'meteor world' severed from 'the golden cord...That hung it to the heaven' (II ll.430-31); the association of comets (used synonymously with meteors at this period) with sin, mentioned above, is pertinent. Cela predicts the earth is destined eventually to be abandoned, 'cut off from God's fair universe'. The narrator adds 'To a tale like this / What converse could succeed?' (II ll.473-75). So 'like two swans' (an image recycled in Hogg's 'Russiadde') the pilgrims sink. Part Third continues the notion of a fall, appraising poetic degeneracy. 'Imperial



England' with its harp of 'lordly swell', associated with Dryden and Pope, is now neglected by 'peer...pastor, and by bard' as well as 'By every grub that harps for venal ore, / And crabbe that grovels on the sandy shore' (III 11.13-14). Hogg's contempt for George Crabbe (1754-1832) may be literary, but there is a trace of envy of this more successful self-taught poet. Crabbe's patron, the Duke of Rutland, provided a series of country rectories for his protégé; ironically the writer, like Hogg, was to seek royal favours during George IV's 1822 visit to Scotland. Perhaps, as Burns felt for Little, Hogg thought there was only room for one top-rank peasant poet in Britain.<sup>8</sup> Given these connotations, the dedication's reference to 'crabbed state-creed' gains resonance. 'Grub' Street, presumably, includes critics in England and Scotland.

As a (supposedly ingénu) peasant poet Hogg was obliged to treat love in the pilgrims' vision. His interpretation, however, is earthier than might be expected, drawing on his extensive knowledge and personal interpretation of celestial theories. The pilgrims see 'globes' circling the Sun. There are lands of 'love and goodness' including 'the Evening and the Morning Star' which is the place where lovers live after death. This is Venus: paradoxically, morning star when West of the Sun, rising before it; evening star when East, rising after sunset (reinvoked in the 'Russiadde'). Venus is presented naturalistically with groves, water and linnets, long days



and nights. Brittanica explains Venus' days and nights are twenty four and a third of ours; the sun rises twenty two and a half degrees North East to prevent too great heat.<sup>9</sup> So too, Hogg's 'broadened sun' shines on a land of 'love's delights'. Mary knows, 'woes and pains that women prove, / Have each their poignance and their source from love' (III ll.56-57), a position developed in The Three Perils of Woman. Unexpectedly, on Venus women achieve beauty, and immortality, by resigning their virginity and bearing children. This is wryly pertinent; Hogg's long courtship ended in 1820 with marriage to Margaret Phillips. Kilmeny, two years earlier, was a perpetual virgin, unfit for the world after her vision. Mary's lessons allow her salvation through motherhood. To God, the 'foibles' of woman are excused because of her 'pains' and 'heart dependant'. Cela predicts when missionary Mary reveals this, she will not be believed.

There is a nationalistic, near-pacifist slant to Mary's vision. Next to Venus, in its correct place, is a 'crimson' planet, presumably Mars. According to the 1771 Encyclopaedia Brittanica: 'He is of a fiery red colour...accompanied by a very gross atmosphere' with a year of 667 and three quarter days.<sup>10</sup> In Hogg's poem, 'Mighty warriors' and their mates live here; the spirit 'must be taught in darkness and in pain' for long periods before achieving enlightenment, drawing on the long days and nights of Mars. Fitting its lethal associations Mars

wears a 'vermilion shroud' and echoes with 'dying war'. Many of its warriors are accompanied by 'Silesians', here referring to the inspirational spirits of dead soldiers. The associations with Silesia are not developed, but poignantly resonant for contemporary readers. Breslau, from January 1813, was the centre of Prussian resistance against Napoleon.

This journey, like Kilmeny's, reveals the future as well as Hogg's political concerns (discussed in Chapter Six). Mary and Cela traverse 'polar storms' through the Martian night to 'Albyn's coast', where a fiery wall clears to reveal burnt out hamlets and skeletons. Thousands of warriors seek 'vengeance' there, against 'A fiend, that in Tartarian gulf was tossed' (III 1.249) who came to Albyn. This 'scourge of God' is, perhaps, Napoleon, defeated in 1815 but a future menace for the pilgrims. They watch acts of war: 'first performed by warrior spirits here; / So linked are souls by one eternal chain' (III 11.262-63), destinies 'like a vast machine'. This extends contemporary notions of heavenly order, as expressed in Laplace's Mécanique Céleste (1799-1822), into allegory.<sup>11</sup> Must desolation spread, the narrator ponders, until nations realise: 'To be unaminimous is to be great' (III 1.300). Although Hogg was a Borders volunteer, too much should not be extrapolated; tenants were expected to fight for Buccleuch. Cela expresses real hostility to the 'fuming vanity' of warmonger rulers. The soldier is a



'fool', rarely a 'patriot', motivated by 'vanity or interest' as a 'licensed murderer'.

Hogg's autodidactic versatility enhances his summary of the pilgrims' further wanderings. There are delightful cameos: a 'watery world' where a sailor drives a bark 'like lightning o'er the main'; 'the land where bards delighted stray, / And beauteous maids that love the melting lay' (II ll.347-48). In the latter, the pilgrims climb a 'mighty hill' without winning higher: analogous to the aesthete's fate. Hogg lists pet hates in a section anticipating the 'Disagreeables' of Fraser's Magazine (1831).<sup>12</sup> Lawyers inhabit 'The dreariest and worst!' globe and other 'bedesman discontent' include those who plague the autodidact: 'snarling critics bent with aspect sour, / T'applaud the great, and circumvent the poor' (III ll.365-66). A land 'effeminate' hosts socialites: 'flippant belles, and beaux magnificent'. In 'prisons in the deep' the wicked in despair are justly given 'proportioned woe'. Mary's pilgrimage, then, offers universal lessons. As the pilgrims fly up, Mary agrees with Cela: God is in all nature. Forgetting her doubts, she realises life is merely an 'infant stage' of a pilgrimage towards the 'eternal fount'. This becomes doubly clear on the return to Earth, where ordered heaven is contrasted with worldly chaos. The image of growth is particularly appropriate for Hogg as autodidact, given his constant explorations of creative conventions.



Emphasising Hogg's status as, primarily, the Ettrick Shepherd, the finale returns to the Borders. As the sun sets the pilgrims, 'Like flitting stars', arrive at Philiphaugh near Selkirk, site of the Covenanting victory of 1645. Just as the heavens responded to divine music, 'At their approach the woods and lawns grew still!' (III 1.423). The two complete a circular route up to Bowhill and down to Ettrick water, reaching Carelha' where Mary's mother mourns. Cela escorts Mary to her family graveyard, Lindeen, advising her they will meet again. Lindeen is a darkly Gothic setting (reworked for the 1835 Tales of the Wars of Montrose). At a grave there an aged monk tends a corpse. Seeing the pilgrims he flees; Mary is alone in the grave, 'her robes of heaven are fled, / And round her fall the garments of the dead!' (III 11.485-86).

Changing his persona with an ease which distinguishes Hogg from other autodidacts (including Burns), the narrator claims his 'ancient harp' for an 'uncourtly strain'. The 'harp' references by this time are so pervasive they are parodic echoes of the Lay of the Last Minstrel. Part Fourth sustains the atmosphere of oral legend. 'The gates had been shut, and the mass had been sung' (IV 1.15) and Mary is missing (parodying 'Jock o' Hazeldean'). Maidens are terrified as the 'third night of the moon in the wane' (when Mary disappeared and spirits roam) approaches. Men search Ettrick and Yarrow. Her distraught mother seeks Mary's 'secret' bower, where she

had overheard her daughter's 'orisons'. Finding Mary lying as if in 'deep devotion' the women's 'eldritch wail' is heard by hinds in Yarrow (several miles and hills away). Mary's body is taken to Carelha'. The scenario has traces of 'The Gay Goshawk' (Ch 96) where the lady takes a 'sleepy draught' to feign death until her lover arrives to elope with her. Later, on a 'silken couch' (a symbol of luxury used, too, in 'Connel of Dee') Mary's mother keeps vigil. Neither 'leech's art' nor 'bedesman's prayer' affect the body. Following custom, 'Between her breasts they dropped the lead, / And the cord in vain begirt her head' (IV ll.80-81). At the lykewake maidens see 'movement soft' on the body but still Mary is thought to be dead. Showing his fascination with souls separated from comatose bodies, Hogg anticipates the uncanny coma which is a key element in Three Perils of Woman (1823).

Reinforcing the Catholic atmosphere around Mary, Mass is said and a requiem sung. She is buried. Seeking, 'Riches that would a saint entice' (IV l.104), the Lindeen monk reopens her grave by night. Hogg's low opinion of monks (see 'Mess John') is emphasised by his contemptuous rhyme. The 'holy man' prepares to remove Mary's rings and fingers, cutting into bone at the moment her 'long exiled' soul returns. The wound provides a semi-rational explanation for the apparent corpse's reanimation (although Mary withstood hot lead); just as in Ettrick a dead woman once, reputedly, reanimated when her coffin



bearers tripped over a tree root.<sup>13</sup> Only with the monk's flight does the reader realise this is flashback; effectively anticipating its technical use in Confessions. Mary, crying for Cela, recognises Lindeen, not realising 'while travelling.... / her body was left on the earth below' (IV 11.150-53); the violated taboo of Part First followed through. On the chilled ground, with blood gushing from her hand, Mary is in 'grievous plight'.

Hogg shows his ease with oral tradition, typically sustaining the flavour of legend as, late on the Sabbath, a 'gentle rap' is heard at the door of Carelha', making hairs stand 'upright'. The Lady recalls her daughter as she hears a light tread but knows it cannot be Mary: 'O death is a dull and dreamless sleep!' (IV 1.180), recalling the 'dull and vacant lethargy' of 'Sir David Graeme' (discussed in Chapter Five). A mundane command to the porter to open the door changes the atmosphere to mock-Gothic. Crossing himself, Carelha's porter unbolts the door 'with grating din'. Seeing shrouded Mary he faints, setting off a comic domino-effect as matron, friar and yeoman fall. Mary stands bleeding. Foul play may be suspected as traditionally the dead reveal their murderers by bleeding in their presence. Touching Mary, however, the mother realises she lives. Hogg has created, in effect, a reverse ballad situation. Usually parent separates maiden and lover, here parent was separated from child, and now is reunited.<sup>14</sup>



The tale of Mary's journey is vouched with the authority of an oral storyteller, and autodidactic eclecticism: 'I pledge no word that all is true, / ... But well 'tis vouched, by age and worth' (IV 11.258, 260). All believed this until contrary 'dangerous' allegations from 'mass-men'; priesthood is equated with 'ignorance'. The bard avows a personal interest like a storyteller chiding an inattentive audience. The tale is 'dear to him' as Mary's 'blood yet runs in Minstrel veins'. Furthering the writer's mechanistic vision of the universe Mary now has a heightened awareness of God in nature. This is not romantic glorification but appreciation of the numinous in the everyday: flowers, birds and 'wandering spirits' are integrated in the poet's Newtonian worldview.

Hogg exalts self taught archetypes in presenting Mary's new, idealised suitor, Hugo of Norroway. He is a gentle 'Harper out of the east' (IV 1.330) who is the image of Cela. Hugo (the name purposely similar to Hogg, and satirising Scott's Hugo de Gifford), is Hogg's ideological ancestor, blending aspects of Thomas the Rhymer and the harpist Ossian into the prototype Borders peasant poet. Like Mador's husband, mentioned below, he embarks on a pastoral life with Mary and, like Cela, 'loved not the field of foray'. Hugo unites Hogg's ideals--the holy gentle shepherd and poet of the 'mountain lyre'--into a perfect Ettrick Shepherd:

He was the foremost the land to free  
 Of the hart, and the hind, and the forest tree;  
 The first who attuned the pastoral reed  
 On the mountains of Ettrick, and braes of Tweed;  
 The first who did to the land impart  
 The shepherd's rich and peaceful art,  
 To bathe the fleece, to cherish the dam,  
 To milk the ewe, and to wean the lamb;  
 And all the joys ever since so rife  
 In the shepherd's simple, romantic life.  
 More bliss, more joy, from him had birth,  
 Than all the conquerors of the earth.

(IV verse 44)

After Mary's death, in old age, she is buried again at  
 Lindeen, with five sons and her grandchildren to mourn  
 her, like the matrons in the celestial land of lovers.  
 Her stone is remembered by Ettrick hinds. Hugo disappears  
 without trace. Like Thomas the Rhymer, a supernatural  
 fate is rumoured. Some think they see him disappear  
 through the air into the east. Others think he is buried  
 in the greenwood, under a 'fairy rose'.

The link between Cela, archetypal peasant poet, and  
 Hogg is explicit as the narrator re-enters the present. A  
 'holy strain' like Hugo's was heard lately. On summer  
 evenings an angelic form was observed at Bowhill by  
 twilight, as if Mary was alive. This 'genius of the wild'  
 is Harriet, Duchess of Buccleuch, a blessing to 'the  
 poor'. Now she is gone, ending the poem with 'real  
 instead of fancied woes'. The finish is abrupt; tacked on

to commemorate the Duchess whom Hogg viewed with genuine fondness, especially retrospectively: Altrive was granted to Hogg, in the deceased Duchess's memory, in 1815. The notion of 'woes' offers a clever link to 'Connel of Dee'; 'Connel' counters 'The Pilgrims' upward aerial theme through, as Groves points out, a tale of descent.<sup>15</sup>

'Connel of Dee' reworks the tradition of humorous ballads, such as 'The Friar in the Well' (Ch 276) and 'Our Goodman' (Ch 274), as well as reversing songs, like 'The New Mown Hay', where a rich lord seduces a country maiden.<sup>16</sup> Connel, like Mary, wants to leave this world, but for less pious reasons: 'he thought that his Maker to him was unkind'. Like Tennant's 'Anster Fair' (1812) 'Connel' parodies romantic extremes, including their expression in The Pilgrims of the Sun. Like Tennant, who mocks his own spiritual flights, Hogg seems to be addressing his own situation as an autodidact: Connel, on one level at least, resembles the oafish lout of the 'Noctes Ambrosianae'. Rather than a beautiful girl at one with nature by day, here is a disgruntled youth by night:

Connel went out by a blink of the moon  
 To his little bower in the deane;  
 He thought they had gi'en him his supper owre  
 soon,  
 And that still it was lang until e'en.  
 (11.1-4)



Greedy Connel resembles Jock in the 'Laird of Peatstacknowe's Tale' (The Three Perils of Man, XVIII). It is tempting to speculate that, in a comical manner, Connel's yearnings for food and a satisfying marriage satirise autodidactic yearnings for financial rewards and an equal relationship with fellow writers. Sadly such desires, like Connel's, were seldom fulfilled.

Mirroring the autodidact's ambiguous position, there are intricacies in the use of the name Connel. Connall was supreme Lord of Dalriada, succeeded in 574 by his cousin Aidan, a hind initially, after whom Queen Hynde's husband is named (discussed below). Ironically, Hogg's Connel is socially lowly. The name is used several times, too, in Macpherson's Ossianic cycle. Appropriately for the hero's watery adventures, there are dangerous whirlpools at Connall on the southern shore of Loch Etive, near Oban and the Connall is a treacherous river in the north west of Scotland. Hogg refers to the river Connall in his 1804 Highland Tours, in relation to Glencoe, tempering solemn references to the massacre and impressive scenery with a comic coda:

it is certainly a scene of the most horrid grandeur.... Such an accumulation of the awful and sublime can hardly be conceived. It is also supposed by some who are versed in the Gaelic etymology, that this was the birth-place of the poet Ossian; and that the river is the Cona so

much celebrated in these songs of ancient times.... I have no doubts respecting the existence of the bard; but whether his heroes had any, save in his brain, may turn out a point that will admit of discussion.<sup>17</sup>

Such a resonant group of associations seems to have held particular appeal for Hogg, as an eclectic autodidact. Archaicisms (idiosyncratically spelt, as is Hogg's wont) link Hogg's fiction with the remote past, perhaps the era of Ossian. Connel, who bears 'the bloom of fayir yudith', craves 'a wife with a mailen and store'. The outline of his wish is fulfilled but Hogg shows that prayers do not always produce the anticipated result.

Connel experiences a supernatural encounter which is much earthier than Kilmeny's or Mary's. On a June night, the sleeping man meets a soft eyed woman and, 'quaking with love', kisses her cheek. As the fairy queen wanted Thomas the Rhymer, so this woman wants the (mockingly) 'dear beautiful swain' Connel: 'I have castles, and lands, and flocks of my ain, / But want ane my gillour to share' (ll.75-76). She seeks a man, 'like you, gentle, amorous and fair', declaring her love in eloquent Scots English:

"I often hae heard, that like you there was  
nane,

And I aince got a glisk of thy face;  
Now far have I ridden, and far have I gane,

In hopes thou wilt nurice the grace,  
To make me thy ain. (11.81-85)

She shifts back to English to enumerate her gear:

'castles' and 'lands' aplenty. Her seductive language fosters a male fantasy which will go horribly wrong, perhaps in this respect resembling a Muse's fickle relationship with the autodidact. On another level, she is a parody of the enticing 'Belle Dame Sans Merci'.

Romantic love is soundly ridiculed by Hogg, in the guise of a worldly wise narrator. The lady refuses to lie with Connel until are they married, despite his desparation (Connel faints when he touches her neck). Stepping above the text, the narrator advises patience. Connel's passion will fade: 'Thy spirits once broke on electeric wheel / Cool reason her empire shall gain' (11.115-16). 'Electeric' fits the rhythmic pattern and has an absurd sound fitting Connel's torments. As predicted, the pleasures of a lovely wife, a 'goud-fringed silk' bed and 'viands, and heart-cheering wine' wane and 'He felt in his bosom a fathomless void / A yearning again to be free' (11.135-36). His previous 'diet of milk' was preferable to his wines. Connel's soulless body offers an opposition to Mary Lee's bodyless soul. His visionary excesses counter the pastoral simplicity of the perfect union of Mary Lee and Hugo.

Connel experiences a form of the social hell facing





boasts of sleeping with her 'paramour'. She responds to Connel's outrage with amusement: her behaviour is 'the fashion'; there are others, 'If he wearied of lying his lane' (l.230). If the Muse allegory is pursued, this implies the seductions of unsuitable creative outlets. The Lady is unimpressed by Connel's fury; 'His hair stood like heath on the mountain that grows' (l.233); a charge levelled (in art and print) against Hogg. Like a role-reversed Bluebeard, she has already had 'irksome' husbands; Connel sees a chained man having his neck severed (with sheepish connotations) by 'dread shears'.

Hogg uses national and classical associations to highlight his anti-hero's fate; the description of Connel's flight suggests, once again, Hogg's well-developed ability, as an autodidact, to absorb and re-use diverse information. Connel, in one respect, is a pedestrian Tam o' Shanter with pursuers of 'devilish speed' on horseback. Praying for death if he should 'grumble at Providence more', Connel attempts to cross the Dee. Diving 'like a scared otter' he plunges down; fish and eels nibble on the drowning Connell. Hogg's choice of this image echoes its use in The Iliad (XXI ll.203-04). There, eels and fish gnaw at fat round the kidneys of the drowned Achelolios. The eel is an appropriate symbol for the fleshly lusts which led to Connel's predicament as, 'They guddled his loins, and they bored thro' his side, / They warped all his bowels about on the tide' (ll.447-48).



With structural sophistication, Hogg draws parallels between this and the previous poem. In contrast to Mary's experience (her short vision covering a long absence), Connel's long experience compresses time. Like Mary's, his mother fears for Connel; his sisters think him courting, little dreaming Connel lay, 'On a couch that was loathful to see! / 'Twas mud!' (ll.454-55). This section parodies the wintry 'The Moon was A-Waning' (discussed in Chapter Four) on 'a midsummer night'. Next day, as Mary's family had, Connel's sisters seek him in his forest bower. Their wistful search is shattered when, on waking, Connel flees from his sisters, believing his wife has caught up. They think him mad. Connel, despite his elation at not having been consumed by eels, is convinced he was married. Although the returned travellers, Connel and Mary, share similar reactions (like Mary, Connel delights in divinity in nature), their responses are different. Mary's vision encouraged marriage but Connel enjoys a bachelor life.

The last part of this trilogy, 'Superstition', features a peasant poet narrator who sets the first two pieces in context. As conclusion, it offers a definitive statement on the supernatural's worth. This anticipates Hogg's essay 'On the Changes in the Habits of the Peasantry of Scotland' which argues that the loss of traditional customs and beliefs led to declining moral standards. The 'visionary bard' (with echoes of Ossian) of 'Superstition' is wholly in favour of supernatural



beliefs. By night the shepherd's 'simple breast' breathes deeply, aware of (Ossianic sounding) mountain spirits around him from 'warrior wight' to 'nameless bard'. Hogg, living about St Mary's Loch, saw in the past how 'the mystic flame' informed all. Now the 'spectres' of 'high poesy' are no more, 'every vice effeminate' afflicts these places and the spirits are gone (Hogg's grandfather was the last to see fairies in Ettrick) 'save the ghost'. However the 'evil eye' still overcomes cattle, 'cantrips' [witches spells] are practised, as are 'rhymes of incantation', cutting above the breath and witches' nightriding (the last two practices were noted in Selkirkshire during the nineteenth century).<sup>19</sup> Negative aspects of the supernatural are excused: 'If every creed has its attendant ills, / How slight were thine!--a train of airy dreams!' (ll.134-35).

It is difficult to tell whether the writer is wholly serious; the autodidact Hogg was capable of adopting a variety of roles, from that of the naive follower of traditional beliefs to that of the astute cultural critic. Hogg consciously adopts a morally dangerous position, similar to that of the ambiguous editor of The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner. Denying the power of the supernatural, except on the mind, allows a case to be made for its retention. Collusion with the devil is almost overlooked; the 'gleesome demon' was produced by the 'feeble senses' of 'beldames'.

Superstition revealed 'deeds of darkness'; it made a 'corse to bleed' and expose its murderer, and invested nature with the 'sublime'. When superstition went, so did faith that sustained shepherds through 'midnight storm' to rescue their flocks. With reason, 'Providence's sway' is lost. Formerly, kings sought out witches: 'I wish for these old times, and Stuarts back again' (ll.186, 189). The political aside is intriguing; this may predate Jacobite Relics and shows how Hogg grouped past 'good things' together: the supernatural, community loyalties, and the Stuarts.<sup>20</sup>

This is at once solemn and bawdy, contradicting the idea of the unsophisticated peasant poet, as Hogg highlights earthier dangers. When the 'Great Queen' had greatest power over 'mountain maids' (at Hallowe'en or St Valentine's): 'Ours was the omen--theirs was to obey: / Firm their belief, or most demurely feigned!', forcing compliance with the demand for an embrace which 'Providence' decrees (ll.203-04). Now 'days of vision' are gone perhaps 'My Muse' should visit lonely places in Norway where the 'sea maid' and 'spectre pale' live (Norway, to Hogg, seems to have been one age behind Scotland). The poem closes with a direct homage to the Supernatural, 'Great ruler of the soul'.

Hogg, whose chameleon qualities are directly related to his autodidactic open-mindedness, adopts diverse cultural positions in The Pilgrims of the Sun. The book,



on one level, explores a visionary experience in a way analagous to the romantic. As Jerome McGann states: 'in a Romantic poem like The Prelude, totalization is established through a visionary experience generated in the so-called spots of time, extraordinary moments of grace which cannot be consciously determined or prepared for'.<sup>21</sup> Hogg, though, uses romantic elements to create fragmentation, not wholeness, chaos not 'totalization', and in the process develops exciting patterns, such as the early use of flashback in 'The Pilgrims of the Sun', or the moral ambiguity of 'Superstition'.

Critical reactions were mixed. Shrewdly, The Augustan Review (1815) alerted readers to the wealth of allusions, particularly admiring blank verse sections:

The author is said, at one time or another, to have been a shepherd; and, as such, to possess little learning. Granted that he is not classical; but neither is he unlearned--if to have read and understood, as it is obvious Mr. Hogg has done, most of the best books in our own language can raise a man above the imputation of being destitute of language.

For once, then, Hogg's breadth of knowledge is allowed. However, the compliment is almost immediately withdrawn: Hogg's language was, though, 'obscure...the broadest Scotch dialect'. Most of the poem, too, was perceived as



a second hand version of Scott. Canto II, though, was 'in several passages even sublime' unmatched in its type.<sup>22</sup>

The Scots Magazine thought The Pilgrims was, 'of a bolder character than any of its predecessors'. Noting thematic links with 'Kilmeny', the critic enjoyed the 'mystic, poetic union' of Mary and the Minstrel. The appreciation is undercut, though, by patronising tones:

the delineation of supernatural beings may be considered as even a peculiar talent of Mr Hogg; but rather those founded upon the mythology of his own country, than sought for in such lofty regions as the present. In his future publications, therefore, we would rather meet him, we confess, in his old accustomed haunts.<sup>23</sup>

I would argue, against these conclusions, that Hogg's finest poetry is written outwith his 'accustomed haunts'. In his 'Memoir' Hogg asserted, 'I never met with any person, who really had read it, that did not like the piece', although later critics have been dismissive. Batho reviews its textual history (Murray's hostility, persuasion to publish by Byron), as 'an endeavour to expand Kilmeny'. With some justification she adds Pilgrims is a 'sampler intended to display his skill in various kinds of verse'. Gifford initially found Pilgrims indicative of the fact that:

success in a poem or song or parody for Hogg meant that he would ever after repeat the style and content in the vain hope of recapturing the glory of the original. "Kilmeny" is his precedent here.... the intellectual effort that is expended in this, his most deliberately thoughtful poem, shows once and for all that Hogg is no thinker. It also shows him, right in the middle of his poetic career, still playing about in other poets' styles, using in turn the manner of Scott, Pope and Milton.

Hogg did enjoy recycling motifs and storylines, in the same way oral tradition regurgitates favoured themes. To call Hogg 'no thinker', though, is unfair, given the wealth of astronomical, traditional, and mystical details. More recently Gifford acknowledged some validity to Nelson Smith's assessment of the 'ambitious' Pilgrims. David Groves thinks the poem an analogy of travel through the literary realms of Milton, Dryden and Pope. Furthermore, Groves argues, the grave-robber represents an 'obtuse critic'.<sup>24</sup> The present writer considers Pilgrims to be an amalgam of recurrent Hogg themes--the bodyless soul, death of traditions--which transcends the value of its parts.

Hogg's next long narrative, Mador of the Moor, was appreciated almost solely for its autodidactic resonances. Hogg postures blatantly as a peasant poet: a self-declared 'nursling of the wild, the Mountain Bard' and 'Nature's simple bard'. Set in the fourteenth century, Mador



combines chivalric and supernatural elements in the tale of a strong-willed rustic, Ila Moore. Ila, wooed by the itinerant minstrel Mador, bears his child; he disappears before the birth. The 'maid of low degree', helped by the Abbot of Dunfermline, discovers Mador is the King of Scotland. They are married and Mador acknowledges his son. The British Ladies Magazine noted Hogg's 'divine fire' in Mador as 'another of the honourable instances furnished by Scotland of the noble fruits that may sometimes result from subordinate education' even if the whole was a 'second-hand "Lady of the Lake"'. The British Critic admired the 'dignified simplicity...which Burns himself scarce attained' from one 'but a "shepherd boy,"' (then aged almost 50), even forgiving 'occasional vulgarities'. Moreover, The British Critic noted similarities with classical literature, while denying the possibility of a Shepherd being familiar with such material: 'One would really have thought that the Ettrick shepherd had translated Simonides; but there is no plagiarism here, it is the voice of nature'. The Scots Magazine admired a 'bold and original vein of thought' and 'Scottish feelings' but patronisingly observed that Hogg had been led astray by the success of The Queen's Wake, moving beyond 'the limits of his powers' in 'a style which appears to him higher'. Later critics, like Thomson, found the whole morally distasteful. Gifford considers it to be 'in the worst Hogg vein, that in which he repeats



the snigger of Ramsay'. More recently, the heroine has won favour as a strong woman questioning gender stereotypes and this judgement has some force, even though it neglects folktale precedents for the strong Mador, like Rashiecoat, the Scottish Cinderella (AT 510).<sup>25</sup>

Mador of the Moor functioned for Hogg as a rehearsal piece of royal adventure, preparing for Queen Hynde (1825).<sup>26</sup> Putting paid to the notion of autodidactic simplicity, Queen Hynde's complex plot is very well managed. Six interlinked books open with an account of the death of King Eugene (not named till III) of Caledon and his daughter Hynde's prophetic dream: a chief gored by a black bull. Hynde consults St Columba, on Iona, for an interpretation; the dream is fulfilled in Book Second when Eric of Norway, with black bull standard, invades Caledon. A contest is arranged: the victors will fight seven days later for Hynde. In Book Third Eric courts Hynde; his nephew, Prince Haco, falls in love with her handmaid Wene whom he believes is the Queen. Columba has a vision: the former king of Albyn, Hynde's uncle Conran, instructs the saint to retrieve his son Eiden. On Conran's death, Columba had escorted Eiden to his grandfather Colmar, king of Erin. In Ireland, Colmar refuses to allow Eiden to compete. Returning to Scotland, Columba's ship is saved in a storm by a mysterious youth, McHouston. In Book Fourth Donald Gorm of Skye breaks truce with the Norwegians to be turned back by Haco's men. Secretly in

love with 'Hynde' Haco convinces his men not to dishonour the Scots by revealing the attack.

Hogg skilfully sustains his intricate storyline. Meanwhile Gorm has slaughtered his captive, a priest of Odin. The combat opens: Eric faces Mar, Allan Bane Osnagar and Haco Donald Gorm. Haco kills Gorm (debilitated by seeing the priest's ghost). In Book Fifth Wene persuades Hynde to let her visit Eric disguised as the Queen. Wene is revealed; Eric offers her, along with her attendants, as sacrifices but the women are rescued by mysterious clansmen. Eric attacks the Scots and diverse contests are held. One man is outstanding: a Scottish 'burly peasant' Eric believes to be the god Lok. In Book Sixth three champions from each side fight for Hynde. Eric is killed and Hynde makes McHouston King. The nobility will not acknowledge McHouston, due to his lowly birth, but Colmar appears to reveal McHouston is Eiden, Prince of Albyn. Irish join Scots to drive the Norse back to the citadel (where the pagan Norse rape the city's women and indulge in sacrifice) and, answering Columba's prayer, the city is apocalyptically destroyed. An afterword reveals that Haco rescued Wene: they rule Scandinavia while Hynde and Eiden rule Caledon. The poem closes in harmony: the 'ancient league was framed' of 'wisdom, peace and justice'.

Hogg, at least partly, is posing as a modern version of Ossian; Macpherson's notion of an ethnically pure,



unconquered Scotland of the past, as expressed in Temora (1763), is highly influential. Hogg, too, is following the state-uniting poems and fictions of Scott, presenting his own, unified Scotland. Queen Hynde is set in a golden age when the blood of Albyn's ruler was unadulterated by 'plodding Pict' or 'sullen Saxon', and Hogg engages with his recurrent theme of the Scottish peoples united, like the Achanian tribes of the Iliad, in one cause (so too, Jacobite Relics and The Royal Jubilee called for unity). The beleaguered Ireland of Fingal becomes Hynde's threatened Scotland and 'Beregon', Hynde's residence, is Ossian's Selma. Hynde reverses the plot of Fingal. There, Ireland is invaded by Swaran, King of Lochlyn (Denmark) and Cuchullin, the Irish military leader, is assisted in expelling the Danes by Scotland's king Fingal and his fleet. Here, Scotland is saved by Irish intervention. The hero of Queen Hynde, moreover, mirrors that of Macpherson's early piece, The Highlander (based on Buchanan's 1582 Rerum Scoticarum Historiae) which features Danish leaders: Haco and Helvicus.<sup>27</sup>

Oral structural devices, including repeated motifs, support the complicated plot. 'The morning rose in ruddy hue', as in the Odyssey; diverse images and similes focus on nature, the sea and meteors. There is the epic grandeur of bright colours, heroic men and beautiful women. There are long lists of antagonists, recalling the Catalogues in Iliad II, and extended, epic-style epithets



such as the following description of Lorn's horsemen:

Over the beach, into the deep,  
 They rush'd like flock of weetless sheep,  
 That headlong plunge, with flurried mind,  
 While dogs and shepherds whoop behind;  
 Or like the cumbrous herd that goes,  
 Of panting, thirsting buffaloes,  
 From deep Missouri's wave to drink;  
 Fast press they to the stayless brink,  
 Pushing the foremost from the shore,  
 Till thousands rise to sink no more,  
 So plunged out yeomen over head.

(II verse 53)

Oral-type stylistics include rapid scene changes, repetitions, balances and parallels. Eric, for example, disapproves of young Haco entering the lists in Book Fourth, balancing Colmar's forbidding Eiden combat in Book Third. Hogg replicates the excitement of oral tale-telling with copious (characteristic) dashes. Elaine Petrie has convincingly shown, too, that one of the main sources of Queen Hynde is the folktale 'The Black Bull of Norroway' (AT 425A).<sup>28</sup>

Queen Hynde also utilises history from literary sources although Hogg, as he does with oral sources, makes events rather than chronologies important. Personalities and events are taken out of historical context, mixed together, and used as creative sources. The name Eiden, for example, recalls Aidan, cousin of Connall the lord of

Dalriada who died in 574. Aidan assumed sovereignty and Columba gave him a Christian inauguration in Iona. At the convention of Drumceatt in the following year British Dalriada gained independence from Ireland. Queen Hynde is set in the time of Columbus (6th century) as well as that of Scandinavian invasions (the late 8th century on). Hogg cites some historical sources, primarily Mallet's Northern Antiquities (1770) on Norse ritual. Norse mythology, of course, captured the interest of poets like Longfellow with his 'Saga of King Olaf' (1863), as well as later autodidacts such as James Young Geddes.<sup>29</sup>

Hogg enjoys portraying three religions at a time of transition: the new, Christianity, against the old worship of the Sun (the Irish) and Odin (the Scandinavians). The third is ridiculous and foul, the first and second accorded almost equal respect. Colmar, Erin's king, sees Christianity as the product of 'renegades' and his faith in the sun, though anachronistic, is respected. Hogg's Iona blends factual and fictional elements and it is possible Hogg learnt of Iona's traditions during his Highland tour. He visited Mull, and took great interest in its local traditions, such as 'the bloody bay, where one of the large vessels of the Spanish armada was ruined', as well as its agricultural and scenery.<sup>30</sup> It is possible Hogg paid a pilgrimage to Iona, although there is no concrete evidence. Hogg was, in any case, unfamiliar with Celtic monastic traditions. Rather than featuring



the huts and pastoral lifestyle (which might have suited his temperament) Hogg's abbey is like great medieval foundations he knew from the Borders. The rocky landing does not reflect the white beaches of Iona, but the rocks of Mull extrapolated with a touch of Marmion's trip to Lindisfarne. Perhaps Hogg was recalling a view of the abbey of Iona, from the sea, during his Highland tours.

The ambiguities of the early Christian saints delighted Hogg. Columba is presented in Queen Hynde as enigmatic and powerful, associated with magic (like Michael Scott or Roger Bacon in Hogg's The Three Perils of Man) as well as his Christian original. His high status as founder of the Church in Scotland, though, is implicit and Columba is comfortable in the Irish court, as one might expect from the son of Fedhlimidh of Gartan in Donegal. Hogg draws on Adamnan's Life of Saint Columba, which stresses that the Saint was frequently consulted by kings as to the outcome of battles. Hogg accords equal authority, it seems, to persistent oral traditions about Columba. Traditionally (not alluded to in Adamnan) it was believed Columba had been banished from Scotia (Ireland) following his part in provoking the Battle of Cooldrevny, in 561, by making an unauthorised copy of the Vulgate Gospels and refusing to surrender it. Despite his forces' victory, Columba was exiled from Ireland in perpetuity (or decided to leave) and, therefore, came to Iona. Hogg incorporates this aspect of the legend into his plot.



Columba was famed for prophecy, from great events like the Battle of the Miathi to trivial examples like the falling of a book into a water vessel. He could cure the sick, turn water into wine, and even raise the dead. He did not forgive his enemies, predicting the death of those who opposed him and here Columba terrifies Eric with his 'dread anathema'. Columba's irascible comrade, Oran, is also based on tradition. Oran is said to have blasphemed in the moment of his grotesque death, buried alive to ensure the permanence of the chapel built on Iona.<sup>31</sup>

The Scandinavian religious are equally firm-willed, facing death with integrity and strong curses. The Priest of Odin is impressive, with a 'grisly beard' akin to 'Centaur's shaggy mane', scornful of the 'new' religion. Traditionally, in Gaelic culture, the curse or even satire of a bard can cause physical injury but, enraged by the priest's curse, Donald cleaves Odin's priest in two. Similarly Cuchullin is supposed to have 'given' his spear, which a satirist demanded, in a way which would prevent the satirist's curse: by impaling the poet and nine men behind him. The pagan rituals and sacrifices, as Hogg describes them, are truly horrific, especially the burning sacrifices at the end of Hynde, drawing on Mallet's descriptions. Eric's sacrifice of Wene's twelve 'stainless virgins' for Valhalla is horrific. The detailed ritual preparations are not taken from Mallet, but the concept of Valhalla that follows is, with 'warrior

ghosts' drinking from 'skull-cups' in Odin's halls (V verse 61).<sup>32</sup> The image of Valhalla, equally, captured the imagination of later autodidacts, like James Young Geddes.

Visionary passages in Queen Hynde show Hogg, as an autodidact, absorbing the Romantic fascination with altered states of consciousness (subtly different from Hogg's own motif of the bodyless soul). Columba's vision of 'elemental flame' includes fleshly elements: a loved one's face. There is great beauty and richness of sound in this passage: the 'Phantom form of lambent flame' with its 'deep and hollow moan' combines sorrow and ire in equal amounts (III verses 52-53). It is like a visitation from the Underworld, refusing information of the afterlife. The dramatic weather here represents spiritual chaos, emphasising Hogg's fascination with transitional states:

Twas like that interval of gloom  
 'Twixt death and everlasting doom,  
 When the lorn spirit, reft away  
 From its frail tenement of clay,  
 Is forced through wastes of night to roam,  
 In search of an eternal home. (III verse 60)

McHouston's 'giant form' seems a 'demon of the storm' in a passage reminiscent of the 'brocken spectre' effect in the previous year's The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner. When asked if he is angel or man, McHouston deflates the high tone: the Ossianically noble



'savage laugh'd'; he is 'A homeless vagrant'.

Hogg draws on classical traditions in Queen Hynde, mediated through Pope and Chapman. The Iliad is referred to throughout and, utilising the Homeric style, there is vast scope for experimental, literary posturing; Hogg uses classical sources to make pastoral points. Book I, for instance, presents the Shepherd in extended epic metaphor:

Say, may the meteor of the wild,  
Nature's unstaïd, erratic child,  
That glimmers o'er the forest fen,  
Or twinkles in the darksome glen,  
Can that be bound? Can that be rein'd?  
By cold ungenial rules restrain'd?  
No!--leave it o'er its ample home,  
The boundless wilderness, to roam!  
To gleam, to tremble, and to die,  
'Tis Nature's error, so am I! (I verse 105)

In the following verse, as 'Nature's own rude untutor'd child' the poet begs forgiveness: 'Short my advantage, small my lore'; he is 'Nature's own rude untutor'd child'.

There are, equally, passages showing Hogg's autodidactic pique, as he writes against his critics, as well as the prudish patrons who are hostile to peasant poets. Maids like Wene admitted Haco to their presence, but nowadays 'Dunedin's daughter' would 'shrink from poet's gloveless hand' and shun 'the sun-burnt palm'. A recurrent theme in the interludes is what is suitable to



poets and poetry. The narrator, for instance, resembles the bard of The Queen's Wake, 'crown'd by virgin's hand' and national 'laureate'. A list of his hates includes those who read from the end of a book to the beginning and those who trust 'some stale review'. Hogg attacks the indelicate who undervalue 'A peasant's soul' and mock McIion's 'gait, the garb, the rustic speech' (by extension, Hogg's). Demonstrating Hogg's ambivalence towards patronage, the narrator warns that he may be forced to 'sever' his relations with 'patrons'.

The name of Hynde allows Hogg to indulge in word-play, developing the connotations of hind as gentle deer and hind as lowly farm servant. Hynde, despite her wealth, possesses the simplicity of nature Hogg associates with gentle virgins from Kilmeny to Mary Lee; she is prepared to sacrifice herself to the people's will. A woman ruler, her father indicates, is well suited to serve her nation. By implication the disadvantaged, whether by gender or status, are often worthy of respect. A queen rules 'by men of wisdom' while a king is swayed 'by mistresses and fools' (I verses 8-9). Given George IV's notorious philandering, Hogg seems to be making an implicit, political point.

Hogg sustain his discussion of the nature of royalty and supposedly high status by comparing Wene and Hynde. Hynde is brave but distant; she needs an alter ego to provide balance and save Scotland. Just as The Three

Perils of Woman balances Gatty Bell against Cherry Elliot, so Hynde has a mischievous counterpart in 'Wicked Wene': Wene is fair and 'slight', Hynde is dark and 'majestic'; Wene schemes where Hynde is honest. Wene, with her scarf thrown back on her arm in the gesture Hogg attributed to royalty (Margaret in The Three Perils of Man, for instance) relishes impersonating her Queen. Given the composition dates (1817 to 1825) the following passage may be covert comment on the royal visit of 1822:

O titled rank, long be it thine  
 From common gaze remote to shine!  
 And long be nursed thy speech refined  
 From scrutiny of vulgar mind!  
 That thing, in robes of state attired,  
 The closer seen, the less admired,  
 Kept at a distance, still may draw  
 The homage of respect and awe:  
 Therefore most humbly do I sue,  
 In name of rank, and reverence due,  
 Subordination, manners prim,  
 And all that keeps a land in trim,  
 To keep thy sphere, whate'er it be,  
 From scare of wounded scrutiny.  
 This thing did Wene, for honour's sake,  
 Upholding rank she chanced to take;  
 And Wene knew more, as you'll espy,  
 Of men and things, than you or I.

(III verse 20)

Given Hogg's position as an autodidact, it is tempting to speculate that such comments express genuine dissatisfaction with rank determined by social position, rather than deserved through natural worth.

There are (almost wishful) suggestions that the heroic society of Hynde's lifetime, unlike that of the nineteenth century, favoured proto-autodidacts. Warriors, ministers and bards have mutual responsibilities over 'counsel and field' (the Homeric agora and battlefield). Hogg, however, does not portray his golden age Scotland without a touch of humour. The lords of Scotland are portrayed with ambivalence: brave leaders who are not always ready to fight. Old Diarmid, a Nestor of council, is treated with 'respect', but his suggestion of a truce is not respected. Donald Gorm's scheming suggests, too, that there is treachery in the Highlands. Hynde's bard, Ila Glas, is at times treated with downright discourtesy. En route to Iona Ila Glas is portrayed as 'old' and the singer of 'tiresome, stale' lays (I verse 102).

The poem suggests that, ultimately, natural worth should gain its due. While nobility of birth facilitates Eiden's recognition, his bravery and morality are the product of his upbringing; moral nurture winning out over social advantages. The 'weetless warrior' Eiden is the typical lowly man (like Arthur Penhaligon, the Gentle Shepherd) of high rank. Initially the aristocracy treat 'low rank' Eidan with contempt but the people, and Queen,



are more perspicacious. Hynde recognises the 'humbly born' man as 'prince and hero at the heart'. While lords are contemptuous of 'a peasant's son' Eiden's 'energy of frame and soul' has never been seen in an 'upstart denizen' of 'vassal blood'. Colmar's revelation of Eiden's royal blood is a huge relief, allowing the prejudiced nobles, 'mad with joy', to follow him.

Eric, in contrast, represents a rough, aristocratic ethos as expressed in classical tradition (in The Iliad Alexandros, like Eric, offers to settle the conflict by single combat) as well as ballad. The Norwegian forces are mocked at times but, equally, presented as epic heroes; they are terrified of their priests, an attribute drawn from Mallet. Hogg aims at epic grandeur, with unequal odds and noble combat, drawing parallels with the Iliad; those slain were as 'illustrious' as those killed, 'on Ilium's classic plain'. However, Hogg is aware of less chivalric elements. When Eric splits Mar's helm, Hogg utilises a vivid, grisly image comparing the act to shearing (IV verse 86).

War is, on balance, a 'waste of mortal life', reflecting the position already expressed in Pilgrims of the Sun (as well as in prose works like the 1835 Tales of the Wars of Montrose). Hogg is ill at ease in describing combat, and happier in his war-related sporting contest. As in the Iliadic funeral games for Patroclus, so Eric agrees to a day's truce to honour the dead in his capacity

as Coulan Brande's chief mourner. Paradoxically, given the hero's treatment, the narrator adds that in those days there was no 'preference' for 'lineage or degree'. Lowly Scots dominate the games, with a 'peasant proud' pitching the winning iron mace (recalling the iron pitched in The Iliad). In the wrestling, Eric uses a twisting trick (similar to that employed by Odysseus against Aias in The Iliad and by Hogg's semi-autobiographical George Cochrane).<sup>33</sup> Eric's adversary, however, stands firm, knocking down Eric's 'head with sacred honour crowned'. The motif of an unrecognised aristocrat triumphing in wrestling is, of course, familiar from The Odyssey. The final conflicts, in Book VI, show a finely tuned awareness of the sacrifices involved in conquest. Columba's terrible prayer for vengeance results in an apocalyptic close where mountains heave and the earth cries out as a sea of flame closes over the sinners. The denouement, Hogg's adieu to Scotia, is tame in comparison.

Contemporary reactions to Queen Hynde (as often towards Hogg's work) took little account of its subtleties. They reflect, instead, preconceptions about autodidacts. Moreover, in the English journals, anti-Scottish feeling informed some reactions. The Westminster Review, for instance, proclaimed:

This Poem, as it is called on the title-page, seemd to have been inspired by insolence and



whisky-punch...as an experiment intended to ascertain how far the English public will allow itself to be insulted, and as an attempt to introduce into our language certain peculiarities of pronunciation, which have hitherto been confined to the polite gentlemen, who digest their lucubrations in the obscure pot-houses of the modern Athens.

The Philomatic Journal, on the other hand, thought Queen Hynde was, 'wildly beautiful and very original' dismissing the Westminster's article as 'hoggish'; 'he is a lark, but fortune called him Hogg in jest'. Following autodidactic stereotypes, the Philomatic admired Hogg as an 'untutored child of song, whose only monitor is nature', justifying the expectations of a 'distinguished patron', Scott, and, 'a man of great genius and eminent ability on his own account...mighty in his own native energy and power'. The Lady's Magazine (1825), while acknowledging 'considerable talent' thought Hogg's work was 'destitute of elegance and his attempts to reach sublimity have sometimes a ludicrous air'. The underlying assumption is that Hogg, as a peasant poet, lacked the ability to be serious, or the intelligence to be consciously ironic. Over a century later, Gifford was much more charitable, discerning in Queen Hynde the, 'real sign of a poetic talent that could, with genuine discussion and advice, have matured into real comic producing genius, a balance of the epic and humorous



which would have been the poetic equivalent of The Three Perils of Man'.<sup>34</sup>

In his fantastic journeys and royal adventures Hogg supersedes his peasant poet stereotype. Taken together, The Pilgrims of the Sun and Queen Hynde demonstrate a sophisticated blend of literary references, from the Bible to Byron, hagiography to historical texts, with oral traditions. Hogg's creative ability to translate hard won knowledge into provocative, stimulating poems is outstanding. His breadth of reading, combined with a profound knowledge of oral traditions, endowed the autodidact Hogg with an unusual ability to absorb information, as well as the skill to present it in a unique way. Chapter Eight continues to explore the blend of literary and orally-derived information in Hogg's work, by discussing his virtuoso parodies. It is suggested, furthermore, that Hogg's imaginative range had truly inspirational effects on the work of later peasant poets.

## Notes

1. James Hogg, The Pilgrims of the Sun; A Poem, (Edinburgh and London, 1815). 'The Haunted Glen' first appeared in James Hogg, Dramatic Tales, (Edinburgh and London, 1817), vol II, pp.189-271 and 'Connel of Dee' in James Hogg, Winter Evening Tales, 2 vols, (Edinburgh and London, 1820), vol II, pp.204-22. The Poetical Works of James Hogg, 4 vols, (Edinburgh and London, 1822) includes 'The Pilgrims of the Sun', vol II, pp.1-127; 'The Haunted Glen', vol II, pp.179-228; 'The Field of Waterloo', vol II, pp.281-323; 'Connel of Dee', vol II, pp.115-49; 'Superstition', vol II, pp.151-66. References in this chapter, given in the text within parentheses, are to The Poetical Works. In 'Memoir of the Life of James Hogg', The Mountain Bard, 3rd ed, (Edinburgh and London, 1821), Hogg refers to the intervention by James Park of Greenock as the actions of, 'a gentleman...on whose good taste I had great reliance', p.li. With respect to the Shakespearian input, Hogg's library included The Works of Shakespear, (Edinburgh, 1761), believed to be Scott's gift: see Gordon Willis, 'Hogg's Personal Library: Holdings in Stirling University Library', Studies in Hogg and his World, 3 (1992), pp.87-88.
2. Haydn's Il Mondo de la Luna, first performed in 1777, is the story of a man's moral reform after he believes he has been transported to the moon; although the whole piece was not well known in Scotland in the early nineteenth century, it is at least possible that Hogg might have heard parts of the opera performed in Edinburgh. See William Blake, Writings, 2 vols, ed G.E. Bentley, (Oxford, 1978), vol I, pp.416-614. See too Deborah Dorfman, Blake in the Nineteenth Century, (New Haven, 1969); Paget



- Toynbee, Britain's Tribute to Dante in Literature and Art: A Chronological Record of 540 Years, (London, 1921).
3. See Hugh MacDiarmid, A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle (1926), rpt The Complete Poems of Hugh MacDiarmid, vol I, ed Michael Grieve and W.R. Aitken, (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1978), especially pp.98-103. White robes feature, too, in Dante's vision, and John Bunyan, The Pilgrim's Progress, (1678).
  4. See Hogg's account of his 1796 competition against his brother William and Alexander Laidlaw (another shepherd), on the theme of 'the stars'; James Hogg's piece was called 'Reflections on a View of the Nocturnal Heavens', 'Memoir' (1821), pp.xxi-xxii.
  5. On celestial globes see Dorothy L. Sayers ed., The Divine Comedy, 3 vols, (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1949, 1955, vol III with Barbara Reynolds, 1962), vol I Hell, p.294. Encyclopaedia Britannica, or a Dictionary of Arts and Sciences, compiled upon a new plan, 3 vols, 1st ed, (Edinburgh, 1771), p.434. See Allan Ferguson, ed, Natural Philosophy through the 18th century, 1948 Supplement, The Philosophical Magazine, rpt (London, 1972), particularly Herbert Dingle, 'Physics in the Eighteenth Century', p.29. Encyclopaedia Britannica, p.445.
  6. Hugh MacDiarmid, 'The Innumerable Christ', Sangshaw (1925), rpt The Complete Poems of Hugh MacDiarmid, vol I, p.32. On Hogg and Catholicism see Douglas S. Mack, 'Hogg and the Blessed Virgin Mary', Studies in Hogg and his World, 3 (1992), pp.68-75. Douglas Gifford, James Hogg, (Edinburgh, 1976), p.62.
  7. See Axel Olrik's discussion of oral structural conventions, 'Epic Laws of Folk Narrative', The Study of Folklore, ed Alan Dundes, (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1965), pp.129-141. Chambers Twentieth Century Dictionary, new ed, (Edinburgh, 1972) defines gazoon



as: 'a sod in fortification, used erroneously by Hogg for a compact body of men'.

8. See George Crabbe, An Anthology, ed F.L. Lucas, (Cambridge, 1930). It might be imagined Crabbe's condemnation of religious impropriety and humour would have appealed to Hogg but perhaps Crabbe's Anglican 'High Church' slant repelled him.
9. Encyclopaedia Britannica, pp.436-40.
10. Encyclopaedia Britannica, p.441.
11. On Laplace, the French polymath, see Robert Fox, 'Scientific Enterprise and the Patronage of Research in France, 1800-70', The Patronage of Science in the Nineteenth Century, ed G. L'E Turner, (Leyden, 1976), pp.9-51.
12. James Hogg, 'Disagreeables', Fraser's Magazine for Town and Country, 3 (1831), pp.567-69 includes hates from creditors to bluestockings.
13. James Hogg, 'Mess John', The Mountain Bard, (Edinburgh and London, 1807), pp.137-50. See Hogg's notes to 'The Pilgrims of the Sun' regarding the reanimation of the dead.
14. See Deborah Kodish, 'Fair Young Ladies and Bonnie Irish Boys: Patterns in Vernacular Poetics', Journal of American Folklore, 6 (1983), pp.131-50.
15. David Groves, James Hogg. The Growth of a Writer, (Edinburgh, 1988), p.63.
16. The convention of a rich man attempting to seduce a poor girl is widespread in oral tradition; other examples include 'The Knight and Shepherd's Daughter' (Ch 110). Rich women are, of course, sometimes seduced by poor men, as in 'The Gypsy Laddie' (Ch 200); here, it is suggested, some form of 'glamourie' is employed to enforce the unlikely pairing.
17. James Hogg, Highland Tours: The Ettrick Shepherd's Travels in the Scottish Highlands and Western Isles in 1802, 1803 and 1804 with an Introduction by Sir

- Walter Scott, ed William F. Laughlan, (Hawick, Roxs, 1981), p.154.
18. James Hogg, 'The Profligate Princes', Dramatic Tales, 2 vols, (Edinburgh and London, 1817), vol II, pp.1-187.
  19. James Hogg, 'On The Changes in the Habits of the Peasantry of Scotland', The Quarterly Journal of Agriculture, 3 (1831-32), pp.256-63. On Hogg's grandfather, see James Hogg, 'Odd Characters', The Shepherd's Calendar, 2 vols, (Edinburgh, 1829), vol II, pp.205-39. On supernatural beliefs in Selkirkshire see Thomas Wilkie, 'Old Scots Songs &c. Collected mostly in Roxburghshire, Berwickshire and Selkirkshire by Thomas Wilkie. AD 1815', NLS MSS 122 and 123. Much of this is rpt, T. Wilkie, 'Old Rites, Ceremonies, and Customs of the Inhabitants of the Southern Counties of Scotland', History of the Berwickshire Naturalists' Club, 1 (1916), pp.5-146.
  20. The Stuarts, of course, repressed witchcraft. See James VI's Daemonologie, in form of a Dialogue, Divided into Three Books, (Edinburgh, 1597).
  21. Jerome J. McCann, Social Values and Poetic Acts, (Cambridge, Mass, 1988), p.52.
  22. 'The Pilgrims of the Sun', review, The Augustan Review, (1 May 1815), pp.30-31.
  23. 'The Pilgrims of the Sun', review, The Scots Magazine, 16 (1814), pp.930, 932.
  24. James Hogg, 'Memoir' (1821), p.lix; Edith Batho, The Ettrick Shepherd, 1927, rpt (New York, 1969), pp.75-76, 144-46. Douglas Gifford, James Hogg, (Edinburgh, 1976), p.62; Douglas Gifford, 'Nelson Smith, James Hogg', review, Scottish Literary Journal, supplement no.17 (Winter 1982), pp.84-89. Nelson Smith, James Hogg (Boston, 1980), p.133. David Groves, James Hogg. The Growth of a Writer, (Edinburgh, 1988), pp.59-60.



25. 'Mador of the Moor', review, The British Ladies Magazine, 4 (October 1816), pp.251-55. Art. VII.  
'Mador of the Moor', review, The British Critic, 7 (1817), pp.97-100. 'Mador of the Moor', review, The Scots Magazine, 78 (1816), pp.448-52. James Hogg, The Works of the Ettrick Shepherd, 2 vols, ed Robert Thomson, new ed, (London, 1865), vol I, pp.104-05. Gifford, James Hogg, p.6. See James E. Barcus, 'When beauty gives command, all mankind must obey!': Gender Roles in Hogg's Mador of the Moor', Studies in Hogg and his World, 6 (1995), pp.33-49.
26. James Hogg, Queen Hynde. A Poem, in Six Books, (London and Edinburgh, 1825). All references hereafter are to this edition, given within the text in parentheses.
27. James Macpherson, The Highlander, (Edinburgh, 1758).
28. Elaine E. Petrie, 'Queen Hynde and the Black Bull of Norroway, Papers Given at the Second James Hogg Society Conference, (Edinburgh, 1985), ed Gillian Hughes, pp.128-43.
29. See Adamnan, Life of Saint Columba, Founder of Hy (Iona), ed William Reeves (1856), facsimile rpt of 1874 ed (Llanerch, Dyfed, 1988), p.24. On oral traditions see Peter Macnab, Highways and Byways in Mull and Iona, 1986, rev ed (Barr, Ayrshire, 1993) and John G. Dunbar and Ian Fisher, Iona, HMSO 1983, 3rd ed (Edinburgh, 1993). Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, 'The Musician's Tale: The Saga of King Olaf', The Works of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, 14 vols, rpt (New York, 1966), vol IV, pp.54-130.
30. James Hogg, Highland Tours, p.135.
31. See Adamnan, VII, XVIII, XXIII, and Macnab.
32. See Alex McBain in Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness, Vol XVII (1890-91) pp.227-29; see M. Mallet, Northern Antiquities; or, An Historical Account of the Manners, Customs, Religion and Laws.



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33. James Hogg, 'Love Adventures of Mr George Cochrane' in The Spy, (15 Dec 1810), as 'Misery of an Old Bachelor--Happiness of the Married State--Two Stories of Love and Courtship' and, expanded, Winter Evening Tales, 2 vols, (Edinburgh, 1820), vol 1, pp.217-303.
34. 'Queen Hynde', review, The Westminster Review, 3 (April 1825), p.531; 'Queen Hynde', review, The Philomathic Journal, 3 (1825), pp.161-67; 'Queen Hynde', review, The Lady's Magazine, 6 (Feb 1825), p.97. Gifford (1976), p.221.