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Ph.D. Thesis.

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April 1999.

ACCENTS OF TRADITION AND THE LANGUAGE OF ROMANCE:

**A Study in the Relationship of Popular Oral Tradition and
Literary Culture in Scotland: 1700-1825.**



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ABSTRACT

As this study is concerned with the noetic process of a pre-literate, oral tradition in eighteenth century Scotland, we are obliged to address that mental economy through residual artifacts which survive in translation as products of a print driven, literary culture. As such, those artifacts have already been engaged to a literary process and, if they are to be subjected here to a further breach of cultural integrity, it is a minimum requirement that we attempt to respect the intellectual and psychological priorities which energise the traditional word.

The central aims of the study are; to establish useful parameters of literary understanding for these residues, to assess the manner of translation through which the original materials were subjected to a literary process and to elucidate the nature of the literary product that they became, as well as that of the literary creativity which they inspired.

With this in mind, our attention is directed initially toward the way in which a traditional text generates meaning for a contemporary, literary audience. The application of oral theory to Scottish traditional poetry and song, in chapter one, aims to propose a literary model of a particular tradition at a critical stage in its development. This model seeks to recognise both the conceptual underpinning of that process and the accumulative feedback that occurs when literary styles and politics infuse and regenerate within the process of transmission and translation to become embedded in

the 'oral' artifacts of a culture in transition.

In chapter two we look, in the editorial conflict between creative and conservative mediators, to identify the aesthetic circumstances of that tradition in a transitional culture so as to elucidate the nature of those artifacts as literary products. As a measure of how these competing forces pressurise traditional sources, we engage with the dynamic of cultural negotiation surrounding the authentication of traditional 'texts'. This focusses our attention on the status of the traditional aesthetic within the existing literary critique and the implications that aesthetic conflict held for original, imaginative writing. As this argument coalesces around questions of cultural authority, we examine the strategic aims of an existing literary establishment with a view to assessing their management of tradition through an essentially neoclassical literary process. Our intention here is to highlight the implications for a fluid tradition in the adoption of a moral stance toward fidelity to sources that demanded a definitive text.

Gauging the popular response to the demand for textual authenticity, we seek, in chapter three, to identify strands of creativity which depend both on traditional modes of expression and on the author's ability to negotiate successfully with the ethical stance of a literary elite. This strategic interaction is viewed as the catalyst for a subliminal, ungoverned creativity which, by forging the illusion of authenticity, provided the opportunity for myth-making on a national scale. The collusion of an anxious literary authority, seeking to confirm its own identity in this evolutionary process, is highlighted in the Ossianic

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dream where creative deception is personified in the virtual bard who recreates an authorised version of the traditional process from within the text.

A crisis in identifying an authentic native voice, resulting from the exposure of this officially sanctioned forgery, is viewed as a further development of the transitional struggle between a traditionally rooted, popular culture engaged in the search for an inclusive communal voice, and an established literary culture which was anxious to secure cultural authority through an exclusive sense of literary identity. In chapter four we examine this cultural equation as it presents itself in the poetry and songs of Burns and his attempts to synthesise an inclusive identity from the communal fragments of a shared past. Our intention here is to uncover the traditional aesthetic which lies behind the literary surface through which Burns sought to engage with the forces of literary authority. The result of that negotiation is Burns's remodelling of the traditional aesthetic in order to address a literary sense of self-awareness. This could only be realised for the popular culture as a whole if he was able to psychologise the process of tradition itself. Here we contend that Burns proposed a vital role for the traditional aesthetic which carried an implicit notion of cultural democracy and posed a direct threat to established literary authority. Having invested so much in the Ossianic construct of traditional texts as the individual products of the bard, in the role of community historian, and in the notion of themselves as rightful inheritors of that cultural mantle, addressing that threat was a paramount consideration.

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In chapter five, our analysis of Walter Scott's theoretical history of customs and manners, with which he contextualised the ballad texts in his *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*, examines the way in which he actualised Macpherson's virtual bard in the image of himself, as educated reader and social historian. This opens the way for an examination of Scott's creative management of text and analysis through which we seek to explain his development of an 'ethical' creativity which both addressed the cultural anxieties of established literary authority and undermined the legitimacy of a popular, ungoverned creativity. Our intention here is to identify Scott's self-conscious artistry, as it is imposed on the communal narrative, through which he sought to contextualise tradition and traditionally based creativity within an officially sanctioned language of romance.

In our final chapter we examine the solidification of that theoretical construct through Scott's personal and literary relationship to his contemporary, James Hogg. Hogg's dependency on literary patronage provides a basis for understanding Scott's editorial manipulation of Hogg's traditionally rooted creativity through a complicit equation of cultural duplicity which centred initially on Hogg's ability to construct 'traditional' ballads to Scott's brief. The far reaching consequences of that initial dependency are underlined in the discrete manner of Scott's editing Hogg out of social and literary contention after he had utilised Hogg's native cultural legitimacy to assist in securing his own romantic projection of himself as a modern bard. In endorsing Scott's reconstruction of the bard as educated

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reader and social historian, Hogg, as a legitimate heir to the popular native voice, effectively ceded the cultural authority to the literary establishment represented by Scott.

In Hogg's belated attempt to redress this capitulation, by reasserting the artistic possibilities of a synthetic imagination which engaged the underlying conceptual premises of tradition to a vibrant romantic sensibility, we find echoes of a genuine, native romantic voice. That voice, however, was overwhelmed by the confident drone of an authority which has secured a mandate to authorise tradition, a mandate to which Hogg, himself, was the principal signatory.

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INTRODUCTION

When cultures distinguished by the technology that drives them collide, they move, according to Marshal McLuhan, "...through each other as do galaxies of stars each maintaining their own basic integrity. But also bearing marks of the encounter ever after." ¹

The present study is directed toward the impact of print driven literacy on a native oral tradition and the consequences of that collision for an emerging literary culture. It is not by chance that the basic materials of this study are songs and ballads. The cultural information that they contain ensures their survival in the popular imagination because it acts as a guarantee of psychological stability during the transition to a literate economy of thought. Even as they are removed from their performative context, in the reduction of song to the printed text, these 'relics' remain as powerful cultural products and as vital components in shaping literary consciousness in eighteenth century Scotland.

The transitional nature of these texts and the dynamic hybridisation of oral and literary process that this study seeks to address demands a commensurate methodology. A critical study cannot, therefore, rest on a literary perspective alone, but demands an understanding of the kind of information contained by the traditional text, as well as the nature of the

¹ Marshall McLuhan, in Walter Ong, *Rhetoric Romance and Technology* ,(London, 1971), p.25.

tradition which flows through the performance of the ballad. Any literary study of Scottish songs and ballads must first apply itself to the way in which cultural information is processed in a traditional context. It is only by demonstrating the general workings of an oral process, as it applies to the Scottish tradition, that we can begin to develop a method for the study of those texts that does not, automatically, assume a literary prejudice. Only when we have established the aesthetic premises which underlie those traditional materials are we in a position to operate a comparative methodology which looks to competing aesthetic priorities in the transitional culture.

To this end, the initial focus of study lies with the oral-formulaic theory set out by Milman Parry in *The Making of Homeric Verse* and modified by his student Albert B. Lord in his study of a living Yugoslavian epic tradition, *The Singer of Tales*. The subsequent application of those ideas to Scottish ballads by David Buchan in *The Ballad and the Folk* and the critical response to that application, in Flemming G.

Anderson's *Commonplace and Creativity*, creates an opportunity to scrutinise oral-formulaic theory as a basis for the study of traditionally rooted songs and poetry. Walter J. Ong's *Orality and Literacy* provides, throughout, an overview of the general conditions that apply to oral traditions and, critical to this study, an appreciation of the dynamic of change in the transition from oral to literary culture. The intention here is to highlight the implications, along with the limitations, of

oral-formulaic theory applied to traditional song and ballad texts.

Having outlined some useful parameters of oral theory, the study will then seek to demonstrate how those ballads and songs, rooted in an oral process, became benchmarks of cultural authenticity during a transitional phase where literary modes of expression and construction were pressurising and modifying the traditional mindset. This, in turn, raises a consideration of the way in which oral residues enter the literary culture and an examination of the literary attitude toward traditional sources and materials, which focuses attention on the process of editorial mediation which lies at the heart of that relationship. The motivation of collectors and the extent to which their's is a preservative or creative drive presents us with two distinctive strands of mediation which, although not mutually exclusive, appear to bear the weight of psychological tension in a transitional culture.

Through the essentially neoclassical premises which dominate the established literary culture during the transition to mass literacy, the preservative current in song collecting tends to channel itself along antiquarian and conservative notions of fidelity to sources, while the creative urge emerges from a more organic engagement with the underlying art of tradition. In their own distinctive ways, both tendencies raise questions concerning the mediator's respect for the traditional aesthetic that underwrites song and ballad texts. Dave Harker's *Fakesong* offers a perspective on early Scottish collectors,

like Watson and Ramsay, which allows us not only to address the question above but also to examine common literary assumptions which some contemporary critics apply to the study of traditional materials.

This opens the way to a discussion of how the antiquarian procedures of an established literary culture affected the ability of creative collectors to utilise and develop those materials as part of a popular native literature. It also provides an opportunity to question how that creativity impinged on fidelity and to what extent these different approaches demonstrated a genuine respect for the traditional aesthetic.

The common literary ground for this discussion is found in the pastoral form where John Gay provides us with an uncompromising neoclassical perspective. In the same moment, however, he demonstrates the strains on a literary culture that is condemned by its own ethical absolutes to talk about the present through classical models which have to be bent out of shape in order to accommodate contemporary cultural realities. Gay's urbane, literary perspective throws up a critical paradox when, in the interest of realism, he attacks the veneration of tradition. In the process, he pushes neo-classical form beyond its limits. The subsequent overflow of imagination, which triggers an ironically charged meltdown of form, creates an imaginative space within the pastoral through which actual, contemporary rural characters can be realised.

Ramsay's exploitation of these new realities of distorted

form allowed him to address the psychological anxieties of the emerging popular audience as it comes to embrace literary ideas about itself. Through Ramsay, a nascent romantic sensibility, seeking to inform a popular literary identity, engages the noetic materials of a native tradition to the psychological dynamism of a progressive literary imagination.

We find, however, that Ramsay's fluidity in handling traditional materials, as part of his own literary programme, left him vulnerable to charges of editorial unreliability. This was confirmed by the literary establishment's adoption of David Herd's 'non-ideological,' conservative approach to the collection of songs and ballads. Through Herd, contemporary criticism identified the key to cultural authority in fidelity to sources.

Placing fidelity at the heart of this strategy, makes it possible to demonstrate how the implementation of antiquarian criteria provided critical elites with ammunition for an attack on an ungoverned, popular, literary imagination. This, in turn, laid the ground for an authorised literary attitude toward tradition, which sought to displace a communally governed, fluid aesthetic with a mordant functionality which demanded fixed, definitive texts. Songs and ballads could then be characterised as 'dead' historical units and be fully integrated with the authorised analytical prospectus of the Scottish Enlightenment.

We find that this literary prospectus was also deeply rooted in a moral sensibility that derived from the

neoclassical literary aesthetic. If tradition was, in this way, to provide material for an 'authorised' re-construction of the new literary identity, it became essential that the critical underpinning carried moral force. This arrived from an unlikely source in, the controversial English critic, Joseph Ritson, a militant vegetarian with a taste for the blood of Bishop Percy, a creative editor of traditional texts.

Bertrand H. Bronson's study, *Joseph Ritson: Scholar at Arms*, provides a useful guide to the development of Ritson's ethical, editorial programme. The essentials of Ritson's position, editorial 'integrity' and 'candour', are central to the management of literary process and imagination in the transformation from neoclassical preoccupation with form to the self-expressive projection of romanticism. The adoption of Ritson's criteria of authenticity, based on ethical notions of fidelity to sources, crowded out alternative views which recognised the inherently fluid nature of traditional creativity, and this paved the way for an authorised romantic imagination to emerge from an analytical engagement with the fixed text.

We can also show, however, that this authoritarian approach had, to some degree, been anticipated and that the forces of popular creativity had already begun to disguise themselves within the emerging critique. A discussion of the ballad 'imitation' *Hardyknute*, as it evolved from Lady Wardlaw's original, through Ramsay's interpolations and Pinkerton's 'discovery' of an additional second part, reveals an

alternative development in literary process. This 'ballad' was, from the outset, concerned with addressing a popular literary audience, but it disguised a modern creative consciousness designed to circumvent the ethical parameters of literary authority. In the operation of that consciousness we become aware of a deception through which the categorical imperatives of the literary prospectus are discretely and creatively attached to the act of forgery in order to create the illusion of authenticity.

If we follow the line of demarcation between these cultural competitors we see that it runs directly between the traditionally rooted aesthetic judgment of an ungoverned, popular sense of creativity and a notion of ethical propriety disposed toward the managed development of romantic imagination. This evolutionary crack is no sooner identified than it is filled with the myths of *Ossian*, Macpherson's Gaelic bard and beacon of self-identification for the Scottish literati.

Macpherson's forgeries, projected from the outset through his own misleading claims for their authenticity and sprinkled with the theoretical stardust of his cultural interlocutor Hugh Blair, were creative deceptions of the highest order. Fiona J. Stafford's *The Sublime Savage* and Ian Haywood's *The Making of History* assist us in tracing a distinctive shift in the evolution of deceptive creativity from the discrete synthesis of history, romance and traditional narrative in the early versions of *Hardyknute* to a full-blown re-creation of an

imaginary oral culture cast in the fusion of a manufactured 'traditional' poetry, which negotiated ethical parameters through a dedicated authenticating commentary. Here we find evidence which marks 'authorised' creative deception not simply as the product of Macpherson's obsession with literary process and the act of making, but of a shared fascination with the development of a psychologically workable national identity; a mercurial vision that rose up through the atmospheric reek of self-delusion which emanated from the literary forge of the Scottish Enlightenment.

Through an exploration of this compact of self-delusion and wilful deception we are able to illustrate how Blair's 'authorisation' stamped Macpherson's passport to roam the imaginative no-man's land that separated oral tradition from historical fact. This paves the way for a discussion of how the original kernel of deception, identified in the relationship between Blair's commentary and Macpherson's creative fragments, contained the basic code of an evolutionary literary process. This cultural software allowed the poet to operate a programme of wishful thinking directly toward the 'finding' of a national epic poetry in the 'works' of *Ossian* - a virtual bard. The emergence of the virtual bard alerts us to an innovation in deceptive creativity through which the relationship between fragments of the past and the translation of those fragments is organised for a literary audience. The virtual bard becomes a vehicle which allowed Macpherson to re-create a 'traditional' process from the inside.

The exposure of Macpherson's forgeries, while it did not alter fundamentally the cultural programme of those who had sponsored them, raised further anxieties around the questions of authenticity and identity. In mapping Pinkerton's retreat, under pressure from Ritson, from an unsanctioned creativity based on a synthesis of Ramsay and Wardlaw's deceptive strategies and Macpherson's duplicitous antiquarian norms, we are able to highlight a crisis in identifying an authentic, native voice. This arose from the need in the transitional culture to evolve a mature literary identity from a communally rooted aesthetic, which demanded the distillation of an inclusive popular voice - a process hampered by the official adoption of Ritson's criteria of 'authenticity. Parallel to this ran the attempt to solidify an exclusive identity for a literary elite which was, or appeared to be, independent of the discredited Ossianic forgeries upon which it was originally constructed.

Kenneth Simpson's treatment of Robert Burns as a literary artist in *The Protean Scot* allows us to examine the implications of an inclusive artist's search for identity through the legitimate expression of a traditional aesthetic in an exclusive literary culture.

Simpson argues that Burns's literary role-playing, characterised by his adoption of poetic personae, points to a perceived failure to establish a mature literary identity. This study, however, seeks to explain that role-playing as a sublimation of traditional process where literary surface

disguises the operation of a traditional aesthetic geared to the creative re-empowerment of the communal voice in a literary culture. Self-dramatisation, in this view, acts as an accessory to Burn's poetic manifesto - "Nature's fire", which ignites in the tension of competing literary and traditional aesthetics. His retreat to the comfort of personae is presented as a traditional artist's psychological cushion against an inability to identify himself fully as a literary artist on the limited terms on offer from the cultural establishment. In order to realise his own sense of identity and satisfy his own aesthetic criteria, we argue, he had to psychologise tradition itself.

An examination of his poem *The Vision* demonstrates his use of figurative process to enlarge the cultural community and shows the reductive voice operating discretely to make an abstract literary form connect with the direct experience of community. It is in his failure to identify himself as an individual voice that we recognise Burn's conception of the authentic voice in the communal voice. Only when that voice is given full narrative control do we find evidence of role-playing operating in a proper strategic context.

In *Tam O' Shanter* we identify the transformation of role playing through a narrative voice which oscillates between communal and personal responses. The expansion and attenuation of this narrative complex is utilised by Burns to work the tension between competing literary and traditional abstractions, fixed in the relationship between natural and supernatural events. These tensions are exorcised through the

narrative voice which is worked into commonality in a re-creation of traditional process from inside the poem. Burns holds a mirror up to the traditional mindset and reveals a powerful, sometimes overpowering, dynamic - but he is careful to treat it as an integrated psychological system with its own abstracted sets of meaning and its own solutions to the problems those create. In sublimating that role-playing through the narrator we see Burns, the traditional artist, set himself aside in order to empower the traditional aesthetic in a literary world by psychologising its processes.

At the heart of this strategy lies Burn's relationship, both as composer and editor, to popular song, through which he was able to stake his claim to be an authentic native voice. In tracing his negotiations with the antiquarian and nationalist imperatives of the established literary culture we are able to confirm that, perhaps paradoxically, it was the vocal anonymity of tradition which sheltered him from their cultural anxieties.

Mary Ellen Brown's account in *Burns and Tradition* of his meeting with the Edinburgh engraver James Johnson in 1787 assists us in demonstrating how his subsequent involvement in *The Scots Musical Museum* gave him the opportunity to formalise his instinctive grasp of Scottish song while allowing him to develop an editorial technique that was conducive to his own creativity. Burns's obsessional need to unite music with completed texts illustrates the creative urgency that he experienced in the presence of the partial text and we are

able to demonstrate how he perceived these echoes of the past as fragments of common identity. Setting aside his role-playing, he filtered those fragments through his own transitional sensibility into new configurations of sound and sense which re-addressed the communal voice in an age of encroaching, literary self-awareness.

A discussion of his song texts shows Burns applying a literary voice to a traditional architectonic which he holds together by incorporating formulaic abstracts from tradition that address the traditional mindset, but are yet robust and flexible enough to to accommodate the burden of literary consciousness. Ultimately, we find him utilising the underlying dynamic of tradition to reduce a romantic literary complex to an essence which resides in a re-modelled traditional aesthetic, where the governing role of audience is sublimated to a discrete though predictable rapport. In doing so he expands the psychic vocabulary of the popular imagination to accommodate a new, artful, literary consciousness.

Vocal anonymity, through which Burns pursued his ambition to be the anonymous bard of Scotland, proves to be the common denominator for a merger of the creative literary sensibility and the traditional critical complex. What emerges is a further evolutionary turn of the transitional sensibility that proposed a vital role for the traditional aesthetic in the literary process.

That proposal, however, also carried a threat to a cultural

authority which was already reeling from the exposure of Macpherson as a forger. The delusional mythologies of the Ossianic compact were now vulnerable to exposure, but as they held the key to identity for a neoclassical rooted, literary elite, some new model of tradition had to be found which was capable of sustaining their authority. By this means, the textual products of a communal tradition could be reprocessed as the individual products of the community historian - the bard.

There was no room for discrete vocal anonymity in this conception of the bard and the model proposed by Walter Scott in his *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Borders* spoke in the confident tones of cultural authority as embodied in the author, himself.

Ostensibly another collection of ballad texts, *The Minstrelsy* applied a theoretical history of customs and manners to the ballad text, which actualised Macpherson's virtual bard in the subliminal identity of Scott. We demonstrate here, how this archetype of modern literary authority drew its identity from an analytical construct of the fixed traditional text. As a modern 'bard' Scott assumed control of the traditional text through a dynamic literary process of interpolation, imitation and imagination aimed directly at realising Macpherson's synthetic oral process as the essence of legitimate criticism.

By presenting oral tradition in the context of cultural decay, Scott successfully, in his own terms, transferred

authority over ballad texts from the communally arbitrated aesthetic of tradition to the individual judgment of the moral philosopher and the social historian. The need to re-construct the products of oral consciousness from a catalogue of incremental decay was absolutely vital to Scott's own sense of identity because it licensed him, in the role of educated reader, to intervene and redeem those texts as the true literary heir of the bard.

The difficulty which Scott faced in securing this identity is traced in the vacuum between authenticity and creativity. While he acknowledges a debt to Percy, a creative editor, in his editorial role, he is careful to underwrite his own credibility as collector and editor with manuscript sources. For Scott, tradition had to be fixed in the amber of authenticity to make it comprehensible to a literary culture that was still anxious about the foundations of its own historical myth making. The ethics of collecting demanded fidelity to sources but the creative impulse which drove Scott's literary strategy demanded interpolation in order to accommodate traditional fragments as comprehensible units of that historical programme.

Scott's distillation of ethical creativity, reduced from a comparative survey of collectors and infused with the essence of 'legitimate' forgery, is identified through his definition of the role of the skilful critic who, for Scott, turned out to be both creative and an approved citizen of the literary culture. In synthesising an ethical programme for the modern

bard, Scott displaced the communal voice as the aesthetic arbiter of traditionally rooted works by investing cultural authority in the skilful critic and paving the way for an officially sanctioned creative strategy that attributed literary value to ballad imitations so long as their authorship was acknowledged and critically sanctioned. Editorial interpolation was the key to imitation which unlocked the romantic vision contained in the dream of the virtual bard. Behind all this interwoven literary process, lurks the psychological actualisation of the virtual bard - the mirror image of Scott in full minstrel regalia - a suit of clothes borrowed from the ballad figure, Thomas of Ercildoune.

Nancy Moore Goslee's *Scott the Rhymer* shows from a literary perspective how Scott's appropriation of the role of mediaeval minstrel, with assumed powers of prophecy, allowed him to approach tradition through a protagonist who was able to comment critically on his own art. This enabled Scott to re-assume, imaginatively, the mediaeval minstrel's role through the romantic, historical and imitative categories of *The Minstrelsy*. From a traditional perspective, however, we are able to observe the incremental literary dynamic of editorial interpolation, literary imitation and romantic imagination as an engagement of Scott's own self-conscious artistry, imposed on the narrative, through which Scott assumes control of the traditional process on behalf of the literary establishment. Having actualised that bard in his own imagination, Scott invites his 'educated' reader to collude in that imaginative

process so as to raise literary questions about the nature of 'the Rhymer' and his art. The predetermined answers are projected, through this chimera, back into the modern ballad, speaking confidently in a language of romance.

If Burns had effectively worked a re-made traditional aesthetic into a genuine cultural competitor to the managed literary aesthetic of the neoclassical establishment, Scott, in *The Minstrelsy*, can be seen to undermine that sensibility through an authorised actualisation of Macpherson's virtual Bard.

The final dis-empowerment of that transitional sensibility is realised in the relationship between Scott and the Borders poet, James Hogg. Rooted in the demand for authentic ballad texts, this alliance was coloured by personal and class relationships which focussed directly on Hogg's artistic development.

Prior to his introduction to Scott, Hogg was able to demonstrate a modern synthetic sensibility, which drew on the vernacular literature of Ramsay and Burns, and a romantic sense of vision drawn from an expanded neoclassical form, underwritten by the rhythms and cadences of oral tradition. Hogg leaned on this background to construct a bricolage of tradition, myth, religion and romance that he played against the empirical absolutes of the literary community.

Douglas Gifford, in *James Hogg*, cites superstition as Hogg's essential imaginative resource and even at this early stage in Hogg's development we are able to observe that

engaging with his literary process as part of an authenticating matrix of communal identity which did not take contemporary literary assumptions for granted.

As he falls increasingly under the influence of Scott we become aware of the consequences of Hogg's dependency on Scott's patronage. Andrew Lang's *Sir Walter Scott and the Border Minstrelsy* provides a focus for an examination of the implications of supply and demand as it affects the cultural economy in ballad texts. With Hogg anxious to satisfy the demand for 'authentic' texts, in order to secure Scott's support for his own literary endeavours, we are forced to recognise elements of creativity in both the texts supplied by Hogg and in Scott's editorial apparatus. This reduces to a personalised equation of the Ossianic compact of wishful thinking and creativity modelled on that which arose between Blair and Macpherson.

The deceptive complicity of two cultural entrepreneurs, however, is less significant when compared to the implications of Hogg's tacit admission in *The Mountain Bard* that Scott, as educated reader and skilful critic, is the legitimate arbiter of traditional authenticity. Scott was placed as an intermediary between the work and the audience by Hogg, who undermined his native cultural legitimacy when he recognised the claim of someone other than the popular audience to act as the authoriser of tradition. In the dedication of *The Mountain Bard*, Hogg confirms the romantic projection of Scott as a modern bard, implied by the latter's own, *Minstrelsy of the*

Scottish Borders, and he further reinforced this mythological construct through a futile attempt to integrate his own personal history with that of Scott.

Inquiring into Scott's response to Hogg's 'advances' we find him editing, discretely, both their personal and literary relationship in order to secure a hierarchical response which strengthens his ability to 'authenticate' tradition on his own terms. This allows him to guide that process toward the identifying rationale of his own literary programme, stake his personal claim to bardship and to secure cultural authority in his role as educated reader and ethical creator.

Hogg's frustration with Scott's discretion surfaces in his own *Familiar Anecdotes of Sir Walter Scott*, published after Scott's death. Here, Hogg attempts to de-construct Scott, the Border minstrel, but he is hacking away at a fiction that he was largely responsible for sustaining, and often succeeds only as far as substantiating Scott's caricature of Hogg as the great Caledonian Boar - an implied model of minstrelsy in decline.

What surfaces through all Hogg's prettified and petty recriminations, however, is the substance of his claim against Scott, his perception of artistic jealousy, rooted in Scott's attempt to edit Hogg out of literary pursuits. Scott, it seems, was willing to carry the fiction that cemented their relationship so far as it helped authenticate his own projection as Border minstrel, and no further.

Hogg's artistic response was to try to reassert his own

authority through traditionally rooted poetry in *The Queen's Wake*. This multi-faceted tour of the Scottish poetic imagination is spectacularly flawed, but raises the spectre of an unauthorised, native literature rooted in tradition and engaged to a burgeoning romantic sensibility. Superstition, Hogg's imaginative unit, supplies the current for this supercharged transitional form, but it is engaged to imagination in a controlled synthesis of traditional and literary values. Here, he constructs a literary work that is consistent with tradition, trades on its conceptual coherence and utilises its underlying dynamic as a catalyst for romantic vision of a high order.

This is accomplished through his disposal of the supernatural as a common denominator for both oral and literary psychologies. He does not raise one set above the other but allows the sense of the poem to coalesce in the tension of their own distinctive abstractions - the traditional paranormal and the supernatural literary vision. This may be as close as we come to recognising the possibilities of a genuine, native romanticism for Scotland and it is the evolving presence and suppression of that voice to which this study is, ultimately, tuned.

CHAPTER I

BALLAD THEORY AND THE TRANSITIONAL CULTURE.

The expression 'oral tradition' applies both to a process and to its products. The products are oral messages based on previous oral messages, at least a generation old. The process is the transmission of such messages by mouth over time until the disappearance of the message. Hence any given oral tradition is but a rendering at one moment, an element in a process of oral development that began with the original communication. The characteristics of each rendering will differ according to its position in the whole process.¹

Fascination with the conceptual dynamic of traditional poetry can be traced to the Homeric scholar, Milman Parry. Parry's work is fundamental to our understanding of oral poetry but it is central to that understanding that we respect those aspects of his work which relate structure to aesthetic.

Parry's concern was to show how, in an oral culture, a genuine bard or minstrel, as distinct from a rhapsode or memoriser, " ... improvises from a poetic store of formulae, themes, and tales."²

Fusing together elements which had hitherto drifted independently in the ebb and flow of Homeric criticism, Parry realised an integrated vision of oral poetry which emphasised the dominance of metre over meaning in the choice of poetic language (word forms and groupings used by a certain people, at a certain time, in a certain place) as well as the formulaic nature of non-literary poetry. He also recognised a capacity to deploy those formulas in an unfixed or creatively improvisational manner.³ The value of Parry's work has been recognised and deployed by critics engaged in studies of oral and traditional cultures outside the field of Homeric studies but any extrapolation of his theories must address his ideas in their full aesthetic compass.

Adam Parry draws our attention to the essentially aesthetic vision of Parry's work which has since been broadly ignored. This is perhaps because Parry himself relied less on this vision after he presented his M.A. thesis in 1927, although he may have assumed that his readers already understood this to be the basis of his work.⁴ The relationship between structure and aesthetic in epic oral poetry was, nonetheless, certain for Parry and was resolved in the utility of formulaic diction, as he explains:

The first impression which this use of ornamental words makes upon the reader is one of utter loveliness. They flow unceasingly through the changing moods of the poetry, unobtrusively blending with it, and yet, by their indifference to the story, giving a permanent, unchanging sense of strength and beauty. They are like a rhythmic motive in the accompaniment of a musical composition, strong and lovely, regularly recurring while the theme may change to a tone of passion or quiet, of discontent, of gladness or grandeur.

Then there may come a disappointment, a suspicion that we are possibly reading into the epic poetry a beauty which is not really there. For it is clear that these words are often used for convenience sake.⁵

These ornamental words are, according to Parry, rhythmic, utilitarian fillers - particular words that had to be available for each of the metrical exigencies that might arise. They are, though, also elements of beauty when considered in the Platonic sense of an impersonal, eternal ideal. This beauty is created through a diction, defined as a material by which thought is expressed, that is, "...the means of submerging the poet's consciousness in that of his race" - a creative process governed by "...style, the form of thought."⁶ If we look at orally conceived ballad texts they are typically rich in the kind of formulaic diction that Parry describes here:

'O is my biggins broken, boy?
Or is my towers won?
Or is my lady lighter yet
Of a dear daughter or son?'

'Your biggin is na broken, sir, 24
Nor is your towers won;
But the fairest lady in a' the lan
For you this day maun burn.'

'O saddle me the black, the black, 25
Or saddle me the brown;
O saddle me the swiftest steed
That ever rade frae a town

Or he was near a mile awa,26
She heard his wild horse sneeze:
'Mend up the fire, my false brother,
It's na come to my knees.'

This extract from Lady Maisry (65A)⁷ shows how the narrative function of the 'saddle' formula, to signify a transitional move from one scene to another, also provides a means by which the audience can draw further information by relating the sense of urgency in the ballad actor's response, which is built up through the incremental dynamic of this formula, to the events described in the preceding formulaic stanza. That stanza is itself a formulaic response to a 'question' formula and the culmination of a formulaic narrative process which contextualise future action and events as they are revealed in the final stanza of this cluster. This same formula used in another ballad, or another ballad version, might carry similar conceptual messages but, differently disposed, it creates new layers of meaning and interpretation for both artist and audience. The conceptual coherence of these formulaic clusters is what Parry means by a formulaic discourse and it is that understanding of the discrete conceptual nature of oral diction that we can usefully apply to ballad texts.⁸

The recognition of an oral diction provides a crucial aesthetic counterweight to the mechanical element in Parry's critical balance.

He identifies, by implication, an oral aesthetic rooted in 'natural selection' and delivered, as it was, in an age of rampant literary individualism it was not welcome.

Parry's suggestion was that, at the fundamental levels of oral poetry, convenience is the determinant in choice. This, according to Adam Parry, along with the emphasis on Homeric poetry as oral, 'is the best known feature of Parry's work on Homer, and the one that has aroused most disagreement, even antagonism, for it has seemed to deny the poetry the possibility of artistic expression.'⁹

This apparent denial of creative individualism led to accusations of Parry's being the "... Darwin of Homeric scholarship" but if the literary critical prejudice, which assumes an individualistic opposition between art and 'convenience' that Parry did not recognise in oral art, is extracted from that remark the Darwinian associations acquire a quite different temper and a new significance.¹⁰

Parry not only recognised individual creativity in oral poetry but also provided a clear explanation of its role as an element of style within a evolutionary Darwinian framework:

Just as the story of the Fall of Troy, ..and the other Greek epic legends were not themselves the original fictions of certain authors, but creations of a whole people, passed through one generation to another and gladly given to anyone who wished to tell them, so the style in which they were to be told was not a matter of individual creation, but a popular tradition, evolved by centuries of poets and audiences, which the composer of heroic verse might follow without thought of plagiarism, indeed, without knowledge that such a thing existed. This does not mean that personal talent had no effect on style, nothing to do with the choice and use of the medium whereby an author undertook to express his ideas. Aristotle points out Homer's superiority to other writers of early epic verse in the organisation of his material. It does mean, though, that there were certain established limits of form to which the play of genius must confine itself.¹¹

The recognition of creativity contained by form is the foundation of understanding for the modern critic of oral poetry. Individualism in a social context explained, for Parry, the role of creative expression in the evolution of oral poetry. To discuss oral poetry was to consider everything from primary elements of diction to "... the larger subjects of epic psychology, society, even religion."¹² He was aware that traditional poetry is shaped and judged by poet and audience on the basis of an oral, not a literary, aesthetic. That awareness has not always been shared by those who followed in his critical wake and may stem from a myopic concentration on Parry's original definition of what constitutes a *formula* in oral poetry - *"a group of words which is regularly employed under the same metrical conditions to express a given essential idea"* - without adequate regard to the overall context within which the definition is contained.¹³

This definition arose from a comprehensive examination of the traditional poetic language of an oral poetry which proposed that the the non-literate composer uses verse which is made up from formula. The poet chooses from a catalogue of fixed phrases which he has heard. Each of those phrases expresses a given idea in words which fit into a given length of verse. Each formulaic phrase is an extraordinary creation in itself and is made in view of the others to which it is joined. Together, such formulas make up a diction which is the material for a unified technique of verse making. The diction itself is schematized so that small groups of resemblance (words and ideas) fall into groups which have a larger pattern. The poet, habituated to this scheme by a process of learning through

hearing and memory hits, as he composes in an effortless manner, upon the type of formula and the particular formula which he needs to carry on his verse.¹⁴

The oral style to which the poet and the audience are mutually committed by tradition is not simply dependent on repeated groups of words - in such a case there would be no way in which change could be accommodated. This would result in a sense of cultural stasis that is not borne out by orally conceived poetry.¹⁵ Creativity in oral poetry is brought about through analogy which creates new formulaic expressions on existing particular word models and on the sound pattern of existing formulaic expressions. This view of formula allows for flexibility in the ideas of oral poetry which cannot always be inferred from his initial definition but which he considered as important enough to share italicisation in the same paragraph: *"the formulas in any poetry are due, so far as their ideas go, to the theme, their rhythm is fixed by the verse-form, but their art is that of the poets who made them and the the poets who kept them."* ¹⁶

The controlling medium of this flexibility is tradition geared to an aesthetic imperative. This is manifested in a dynamic, sensitive agreement between audience and poet about how tradition accommodates pervading cultural conditions:

The Oral poet expresses only ideas for which he has a fixed means of expression. He is by no means the servant of his diction: he can put his phrases together in an endless number of ways ; but they still set bounds and forbid him the search of a style which would be altogether his own. For the style that he uses is not his at all: it is the creation of a long line of poets or even of an entire people.¹⁷

Parry's observations on the Greek oral epic have a general though limited application to any artistically driven oral

tradition. In an oral culture, where human memory is the only means of storing and retrieving information, any message has to be memorable to ensure its survival. To be memorable, it has to have some current significance which means it must accommodate and reflect social change. In order to fully appreciate the artistic expression of the ballad the audience must be familiar with that message. Familiarity allows the audience freedom to contemplate innovations in the telling of the tale while anticipating, with certainty, the events to come. The audience demands a predictable, not a static, world. This predictability also allows the artist to demonstrate creative originality in conveying the information; a process through which the historical message is re-interpreted for, and by, a contemporary audience, guaranteeing its continued significance.

The message contained in the traditional ballad is a history of the contemporary situation in relation to the message as well as a history of the events that the message describes. That being the case, to what extent is the object of that message historical?

If we look for objective historical 'truths' in the ballad texts we are likely more often than not to be disappointed but we could expect to find the kind of culture bound 'truths' that emphasise group consciousness and cement the worldview of a traditional, oral community. This seems to be particularly relevant to the ballads where there is a high degree of artistry involved in transmission. Contemporary oral historians, like Jan Vansina, have concluded that the more artistic any narrative form is the less likely it is to reflect a reliable succession of events, or an accurate rendering of an actual historical situation.¹⁸

This leaves the problem of how to contextualise the information that ballads contain and in the absence of a living oral tradition it is the ballad text that is our primary resource. By examining a text we can look not only at the information itself but the way in which that information is presented. By studying the structures and language that ballad singers used we can hope to gain some insight into the modes of expression and reception through which tradition imparts meaning to the historical message.

Oral societies verbalise their shared sense of reality in recurrent formulaic clusters like those commonplace phrases that infest and characterise the ballad language. Ballads, in common with other complex forms of oral verse making, utilise a subtle array of organising principles that are recognised by an orally attuned audience.¹⁹ These may be overtly structural forms of narrative and stanzaic organisation or they may appear as discrete messages which contextualise and enhance the value of narrative information to an informed oral audience. This value laden information is amalgamated into the narrative body and helps contextualise action and events for an educated ballad audience.

Ubiquitous, variable, commonplace phrases tend to be characterised in a literary world, which prizes originality, as redundant formulas or cliches. Fused together in an oral narrative they are the essence of tradition. The manner in which they are disposed in relation to one another allows the artist creative freedom and the audience to extract valuable conceptual information which accrues to the narrative through each unique performance.

The character of formulaic diction is likened, by Parry, to Greek sculpture's use of fixed schemes in following a tradition of

design imbued with the 'spirit' of the people. The role of individual genius is "...for the further perfection and purification of the popular ideal".²⁰ So, literary concerns over the simple utility of poetic language are absorbed in a traditional conception of beauty where: " ...the formulaic quality of the diction was not a device for mere convenience, but the highest possible development of the hexameter medium to tell a race's heroic tales."²¹

Viewed in this light, the 'Darwinian' claim of his critics is denied its accusatory feel and becomes rather a means for better understanding Parry's general theories and applying them to those traditional works other than epic poetry with which he was principally concerned.

Parry's Darwinism is explicit and unashamed, but it contains implications for the way in which we view studies which have been carried out under his influence and for those which we undertake here. His overreaching achievement was the recognition of a separate identity for literary and oral poetry but his understanding of the latter respected an intimacy of art and life at fundamental levels and recognised the ultimate authority of the oral audience.²² It is the dis-enfranchisement of that audience and the implications that contained for both traditional and literary culture around which the present study coalesces.

The absence of written sources poses particular problems in recalling knowledge for non-literate societies. There is nothing outside the individual to verify accuracy of recall except another individual - recollection is communication in oral society. The oral culture is sound driven and the dynamic of sound shapes oral thought and expression in distinctive ways. The only method of recalling and

retaining thought in oral societies is to shape it in mnemonic patterns which lend themselves to oral retrieval. Rhythmically balanced; conceptually loaded, phrases and expressions are fused together in an abstract thematic setting which informs and contextualises the narrative and the information it contains. Formulas make up the complex, intellectual organisation systems of the oral world and, as we have noted above, those forms of thought and expression that we find in ballad texts display distinctive formulary characteristics.

Even where the effects of literary encroachment reveal texts to be transitional these characteristics are pockmarks of authenticity which underwrite the origins of the ballad in the oral tradition. So, when we come to interpret information from ballad texts, it is more than useful to be aware of these processes because that allows for a literary interpretation which can, to some extent, draw a distinction between the apparent or literal meaning of the text and its intended meaning for an educated oral audience. David Buchan's study *The Ballad and the Folk* applies Parry's ideas to the Scottish Ballad tradition but relies heavily on Albert B. Lord's interpretation and development of those ideas drawn from the latter's study of the living Yugoslav epic tradition, *The Singer of Tales*.

Following Parry's death, Lord, who was Parry's pupil, applied the latter's theory of formulaic construction to a living epic tradition but made several significant critical shifts which distanced the theory from its aesthetic root. Although Lord accepts Parry's expression of formula as a group of words which is regularly employed under the same metrical conditions to express a given

essential idea, the way in which Lord deals with formula obscures Parry's essentially aesthetic conception of oral poetry by overlaying it with a more structural paradigm of epic poetry where formula and theme operate, essentially, as subordinates to the narrative. Formulas are, according to Lord the product of memory and analogy with remembered phrases. While remembered phrases are important, the ability to invest basic formulaic patterns with analogous phrases is the significant element of oral creativity at this structural level along with utility. Choice of phrases is governed: "...not only by meaning, length and rhythmic content, but also its sounds, and the sound patterns formed by what precedes and follows it." ²³ Formulaic phrases are deployed for their usefulness by an individual singer but they are not sacrosanct. Although this is consistent with Parry's recognition of a fluid formulaic diction in oral works, Lord sidelines the connection between that fluidity of poetic thought and the governing factors of tradition which are central to Parry's theory. Where Parry sublimates utility in the perfection of the artistic ideal, Lord focuses on the development of the singer for whom, he argues, the formulaic technique is designed. Parry's singer is enslaved, in common with his audience, to a shared conception of beauty, Lord creates the impression that the singer is not subject to that special tyranny.²⁴

Buchan openly embraces the implications of Lord's work on oral theory while recognising a basic difference in form which:

...ensures that the verbal, structural and musical patterns through which the oral composer creates his structured story in song will have textual manifestations particular to the individual traditions. It also ensures a difference in the practical process of composition.²⁵

The absence of parallel structural and conceptual thematic constructs to those that Lord recognises in Yugoslavian epic prompts Buchan to emphasise a more nakedly structural orientation in the shorter Scottish Ballads. Despite the loss of those seemingly essential elements of Lord's theory he still views Anglo-Scottish Balladry as subject to a special method of oral composition.

Buchan endorses his own position with Gerould's observation that "...folk without writing know the art of composition in language, and preserve the memory of what they have composed".²⁶ The ballads are " ...the flower of an art formalised and developed whose training has been oral instead of visual."²⁷ He further glosses this gently ambiguous position in noting Motherwell's remarks that the ballads' " ...general structures and ... those commonplaces and curious burdens", ...serve as landmarks , and helps to the memory of the reciter and constitute, "...the bounding line between what is the oral and what is the written poetry of a people."²⁸

These various arguments are marshalled in support of an approach which concentrates on formulas, or commonplaces, as they relate to structures. Despite the differences between epic and ballad poetry which Buchan claims to recognise, it is the structural elements of Lord's oral theory of poetry which are developed by Buchan. For Lord, established formulas, through time, acquire a connotative meaning, supplied symbolically from the peculiar purpose of the oral epic song which was magical and ritual before it was heroic. As the immediacy of their original denotative meaning is lost the tradition feels a sense of meaning in the epithet and thus a special meaning is imparted to the noun and to the formula.

This reference to the tradition is a tacit recognition of the dynamic aesthetic sensibility but even so it is still very much considered in terms of singer and song, while the role of the audience in that tradition is not explicit. The social element of the song as a cultural activity, whether or not its origins are ritual, magical or heroic, is submerged beneath the craft of the singer. Its as if, for Lord, formulas could gather connotative power in a vacuum or in a self-regulated cultural environment populated exclusively by singers. This is to explain the content of oral poetry by describing the spout while ignoring the content of the vessel.

His explanation as to how connotative meaning is accrued derives from structuralist notions on the development of myths in the cultural consciousness. This is in direct contrast to Parry's idea that connotative meaning accrues from the aesthetic contract between performer and audience as it evolves through time. This departure from Parry's 'Darwinian' construct in tandem with the inappropriate application of the complementary structural elements to other traditional contexts, which Parry himself warned against, can be highlighted as fundamental flaws that undermine Lord and Buchan's developments of oral-formulaic theory.

These elements identify the influence of Claude Levi Strauss on Lord, an influence which further distanced him from the aesthetic foundation of Parry's theory, and it is that structuralist sensibility reinforced by a further debt to Vladimir Propp which underpins Buchan's approach to the Scottish ballad:

In the Scottish Northeast, and presumably elsewhere, ballads were once composed in traditional fashion by local singers of tales who had mastered the patterns and systems of their poetic language.²⁹

Buchan follows Lord in accepting the formula as the basic unit of oral composition and Parry's definition of the formula as given above. Formulas in ballad poetry can consist in individual phrases such as 'blood red wine' or line clusters governed by binding rhythms which:

unify the poems and and produce highly patterned artifacts. In addition to their sometimes intricate aural patterns of of assonance and alliteration, oral poems frequently possess quite complex architechtonic patterns. These latter patterns manifest themselves, structurally and conceptually, in all kinds of balances and parallelisms, contrasts and and antithesis , chiasitic and framing devices, and in various kinds of triadic groupings.³⁰

Buchan here, is not only in danger of abusing Parry's oral-formulaic theory by applying it wholesale to a very different tradition (one which is not even epic) but also runs the risk of misapplying the imported structuralist component of his construct. According to Vansina the mechanistic analogy of mind and machine which underlies structuralism makes no link between symbolising and human memory.³¹ The binary code of opposites which propel structuralist procedures rest on associations made by an individual researcher and are valid only for that individual. They are not scientific as they cannot be replicated by others.

Structuralism is by and large an autonomous discourse which of course makes it useful in smuggling partial theories across cultural borders.

The relevant factor here, for Buchan's analysis, is that even if we do allow those procedures to apply to Ballad poetry they are limited insofar as any comparison within the text that purports to

yield meaning does so only in opposition which is strictly binary. There is no room for the triads or higher order sets around which Buchan's architechtonic is built. Any loss of symmetry in this type of analysis results in an absence of meaning. Buchan, like Lord, in trying to stretch a structuralist paradigm over Parry's oral - formulaic theory, must ultimately place his faith in an invisible 'tension of essences' (not unlike Adam Smith's 'hand of God' which accounts for the inexplicable in the marketplace) in order to explain the semantic warp which appears when the gravity of Parry's definition is upset by the black hole of structuralism.

It seems possible to detect here an indecent haste in the course of extrapolation from formulaic to architechtonic structure. The effect of this is to erode the significance of the formula as the basic unit of a grammar of poetic language, a grammar which Buchan uses to underwrite his claim that traditional artists utilise such a system, in favour of a more spatially orientated approach which lends itself easily to the 'nakedly structural' characteristics of ballad poetry.³² This is not to say that Buchan is wrong to recognise these elements of construction but it is questionable to promote them as a development of Lord's poetical grammar and even more so to graft them wholesale onto Parry's theory of formulaic discourse.

Lord makes explicit connections between formula, theme and narrative in his exploration of epic oral poetry which are glossed over here and a further leap of faithlessness occurs when Buchan press-gangs the carefully drawn central tenet of Lord's formulation in order to bolster his own pseudo-structuralist approach:

A conceptual pattern called by Lord 'the tension of essences', whereby certain narrative elements automatically cohere, would suggest that there are other hidden patterning forces, as yet undissected working within oral tradition. Just as the aural patterns reflect the non-literate person's highly developed sense of sound, so these architechtonic patterns reflect how his mode of apprehension is spatial as well as simply linear and sequential.³³

Lord makes his notion of a 'tension of essences' coherent through discussion of a detailed relationship between formula, theme and narrative. Whatever the truth of Buchan's observations on the spatial apprehension of the non-literate person they gain no support through this particular association, especially as Buchan concedes that the conceptual and thematic elements which were a crucial component in Lord's studies of the Yugoslavian epic are not present in Scottish Ballad poetry. What they do imply is that the spatial apprehension of the Ballad creators and their audience was quite different to that of the oral epic tradition and that this is quite possibly the mark of a transitional rather than an exclusively oral culture.

Buchan is promoting a speculative analogy which confuses a structuralist approach with Parry's notion of an evolutionary poetic grammar, as interpreted by Lord. It is this that forms the backbone of Buchan's proposals. These structural patterns acquire, for Buchan, the same fluidity which Parry and Lord ascribed to formulaic diction. So it is, that the ballad makers organise their materials in these basic architechtonic patterns which "... allow the maker considerable scope, since they can be expanded and combined to produce new and more complicated structural units as the narrative demands."³⁴ The spectre of his analogy is here incarnate:

The process is not unlike that by which new verbal formulas are evolved from the old; in fact, one could call the balance , the triad and the frame formulaic structural units.³⁵

Structure, for Buchan, is the oral aesthetic:

When we examine the old ballads in the light of their patterned structuring, we can see very clearly that the ballad aesthetic is something quite individual and distinct. It is not unique because its general features are shared by other genres of oral poetry, but it is crucially different from the aesthetic of written poetry. The principles of aesthetic organisation are different, and, as the tension of essences indicates, the kind of aesthetic response aimed at is different. The traditional maker develops and shapes his sung story by certain rhythms and moulds which evolved in response to the circumspections of oral performance; and an awareness of these rhythms and moulds is essential for an understanding of the hallmark patterning in the oral ballads, the oral mode of ballad composition, and the spatial rather than the linear disposition of the oral sensibility.³⁶

These 'circumspections' are at least an admission of a requirement to satisfy a critical oral audience but there is no satisfactory attempt to explain the aesthetic equation. The 'tension of essences' not only explains these structures, for Buchan, but it also encompasses every element of the oral aesthetic that is not evident from the structure itself. The connotative power of the formulaic unit at its basic level, stressed by Parry as critical to oral creation and at least recognised by Lord as a necessary aesthetic requirement, is here lost almost entirely to the structural imperative. Formulas are only valued as structural components which contribute to the literary sense of aesthetic differentiation. Parry's oral aesthetic which describes a dynamic evolutionary poetry arising from the cultural relationship between individual artists and society over time is reduced to meet the structural 'needs' of the text. As a dynamic and evolutionary form, oral poetry was never designed for the text but for performance. When we attempt to subordinate the connotative power of the

individual formula that informs the oral aesthetic to the structural elements which most readily satisfy a textual analysis we are continuing the process of appropriation and manipulation of traditional material which was initiated in the eighteenth century when a critical alliance between a neoclassically bound, antiquarian culture and the emerging academy imposed a literary aesthetic on traditional 'texts'. While this process will be discussed below, it is essential to raise the question here, as to whether Buchan is attempting to deal with a traditional process or a literary product.

Formulas are not only functional in terms of form and structure but also essential to the aesthetic relationship between the oral performer and the traditional audience. Parry, in his study of the Homeric texts, demonstrates how, so called, 'redundant' phrases in oral tradition are repositories of common sensibility which carry discrete conceptual messages between audience and performer. Their disposition in performance is crucial to the relationship of situation to events in the narrative and this ultimately appears as the defining relationship in any contextualisation of information in the ballad tradition.

The blend of consciousness which enables the artist to present the same information in a unique way each time it is performed to an audience that is simultaneously interpreting the information critically, is the consequence of a mutually comprehensible formulaic discourse which lies at the heart of tradition. Through that formulaic discourse, history is re-established for a traditional culture each time the ballad is performed. The information contained in the oral ballad is a vital history.

Buchan's conclusions are drawn primarily from his work on the

ballad texts of Anna Brown, born in the north east of Scotland in 1747, who is a special case in the study of Scottish balladry. What is particularly special is that her only recorded public performances were designed specifically for the text. It is questionable whether or not her corpus, viewed in conjunction with other artifacts of traditional poetry, provides sufficient evidence of a mature oral compositional technique which is consistent with that proposed by Parry's Homeric studies or Lord's examination of the Yugoslavian epic. Perhaps, it is her history as a special case that elicits scepticism when we examine this question. Had she been typical, rather than extraordinary, in her day, we might more readily view her work as the operation of a working oral tradition. Buchan informs us that her ballads were: "mostly learned before 1759 at a time when the Northeast was still largely non-literate, and the old conditions of life had not yet been disrupted by social upheaval".³⁷

If the cultural conditions in which she operated were as Buchan claims we could surely expect to find contemporary singers and ballads of comparable quality to Mrs. Brown and her work. Yet, she remains exceptional in her time both in terms of a lack of contemporaries and in the literary estimation of her output which was "the touchstone of quality" for Child, whose collection is the standard reference work of Anglo - Scottish Balladry.³⁸

Even if we accept this account of the pervading cultural climate, we are still unable to regard Mrs. Brown as a typical product of that environment. Buchan is aware of this, but even his own recognition that the daughter of Thomas Gordon, who held the Chair of Humanity at King's College in Aberdeen, could not be

regarded as a typical product of a 'folk' environment, does little to support his argument in favour of her as a complete traditional artist.

Mrs. Brown was conventionally literate, not one of Gerould's 'folk without writing' and, given the extensive musical interests of her family in particular those of her maternal grandfather, she was probably musically literate.³⁹ She was also, through her background as professor's daughter and through her marriage to the Reverend. Andrew Brown in 1788, subject to a social politics that related more closely to the encroaching literary, than the receding oral, society.

None of this excludes the possibility that Mrs. Brown was an authentic singer of traditional songs. It does, however, give us reasonable grounds to question Buchan's presentation of her as an authentic exponent of an exclusive compositional mode based on a traditional poetic grammar as conceived by Parry and Lord. The restricted nature of her sources and cultural references to Anne Farquerson, her aunt, Lillias Forbes, her mother, and an unnamed maid servant does not appear to uphold the notion of a traditional artist participating in a culturally vital non-literate society in the way that Lord describes the Yugoslavian tradition.

Buchan draws on the 'ballad world' which is conjured from Mrs. Brown's work in order to " ...illuminate the nature of the ballad audience and the ballad's functions within that audience..."⁴⁰ The audience he describes, however, is defined by its social contrast to the characters of the ballad and by its relative cultural passivity.

While he does provide us with an illuminating exploration of the 'folk' experience of social upheaval in an age of agricultural

and industrial revolution his account is notably unbalanced when he considers the cultural parallels. His response to the charge that the whole of Great Britain had been under the influence of literacy since the late Middle Ages and that this factor must have some significance for the composition and transmission of 'oral' ballads is that only parts of Britain had a literate culture. Once again he cites Lord as evidence that although the presence of writing can have an effect on oral tradition it does not necessarily do so. The co-existence of oral and written tradition in South Yugoslavia is the evidence for this.⁴¹

It is all the more difficult to be convinced here when it is considered that his primary 'oral' source was a literate woman and, taken with those other circumstances peculiar to Mrs. Brown, literacy and its effects on the particular culture which she represents, warrants a much deeper and more specific response than that which Buchan is prepared to commit himself here. Where he does explore the social effects of literacy on the North East community as a whole, after 1750, he claims:

As was inevitable, the attainment of widespread literacy altered substantially the oral culture. First it changed the modes of thought, and consequently slackened people's adherence to traditional belief and custom. Second, it reduced the importance of the oral community's arts and entertainments ...the once significant functions fulfilled by these in a non-literate society were largely usurped by the sophisticated alternatives of literate society. Third, when the verbal artifacts of these arts and entertainments - such as ballads - were carried over to the new culture, literacy ensured that they differed in kind.⁴²

Quite how this applies to the culture as a whole after 1750 yet has so little effect as he claims on the ballads of Mrs. Brown who,

according to Buchan, learned her ballads before 1759, betrays an underlying paradox. Even if we allow for her learning them as a child in a traditional manner it is scarcely conceivable that her own literacy and the subsequent cultural changes to which she was exposed through her adult life should not effect a similar revolution in her personal modes of thought and creativity that he attributes here to the culture at large.

Buchan commonly extrapolates from Lord's observations on that culture and here, as elsewhere, he provides no specific evidence to support the parallel. He concedes in his summation of the 'oral' ballad that Mrs. Brown's texts:

...must inevitably have been affected to some degree by her literacy, but the degree seems to have been insignificant. Her reading provided her with a wider vocabulary than most makers but this was also subsumed within traditional patterns.⁴³

This may seem insignificant to a literary scholar, even one with an understanding of oral - formulaic composition, but given the connotative significance of the poetic grammar as it is recognised by Parry and Lord, perhaps not quite so insignificant to the oral listener.

Buchan himself draws attention to such an instance in her version of "Fause Foodrage", where Scott notes the similarity between Mrs. Brown's: "The boy stared wild like a gray gose - hawk" and Lady Wardlaw's use of: "Norse een like gray gosshawk stared wild" in *Hardyknute*. He admits the literary lineage but claims that she adapted it to the ballad patterns. It is difficult to see how he can make such a claim for Mrs. Brown and not for Lady Wardlaw. *Hardyknute* is saturated with literary language that is "subsumed within traditional patterns", that does not make Wardlaw a

traditional artist. The creation of pseudo-formulas in *Hardyknute* is recognisable not only by the anachronistic vocabulary but also by the loss of connotative power and formulaic coherence which arises directly from the absence of an orally educated audience who can confirm formulaic variations within the tradition. Mrs. Brown's formulaic phrase, although it might seem, as Buchan insists here, more structurally coherent in a traditional sense does not automatically acquire ascendancy over the pseudo-formulaic original. The mechanism by which it does become 'traditional' is through the agency of a critical dynamic between artist and popular audience. An audience which is not assigned any clear critical role by Buchan. What this example does imply is a clear indication of a state of flux between the oral and the popular literary tradition at the time when Mrs. Brown's works were being transcribed. Buchan presents no evidence to suggest that Mrs. Brown's traditional critical milieu was other than restricted to her original sources and immediate family. Traditional composition as Parry illustrates and Lord obliquely recognises is an inclusive social, rather than an exclusive private, art.

Mrs. Brown's annoyance at being identified by Scott as the author of those texts of hers which he used in *The Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* reflects the extent to which she, in line with the social politics of the day, wished her privacy to be considered. Buchan accounts for this by claiming that the 'homogeneous' traditional society which allowed the unmarried Anne Farquarson to learn the traditional ballads and re-creative techniques had broken down by eighteen hundred and been replaced by the social conventions which forbade Anna Brown a public role as a traditional artist. A

traditional artist without a public role is, according to the understanding provided by the work of Parry and Lord , not in any complete sense a traditional artist. Buchan's portrayal of Mrs. Brown does not explain her as a traditional artist although it does allow him to use her as yet another exemplar of the ubiquitous Caledonian antisyzygy .

Buchan claims that:

Mrs. Brown's ability to compose letters by one method and ballads by another must also be seen in terms of of the cultural environment of her time. Her capacity for mentally separating the two processes is a particular manifestation of a general dichotomy so pronounced in eighteenth century Scotland as to be dubbed a 'national schizophrenia'.⁴⁴

Notwithstanding the accommodating nature of the bicameral mind in accounting for any cultural paradox that emerges during this period, the particular circumstances applied to Mrs. Brown are distorted by the introduction of this type of analysis which is literary in its conception and deployment. If we are dealing with a composer who creates orally in accordance with the Parry - Lord formulaic poetic grammar, it is difficult to see where this type of argument is applicable. If, however, we are dealing with an artist who is torn between her traditional impulses and a literary sensibility in a transitional culture then it does become relevant and the transitional nature of her artistic product must be fully recognised. The difficulty here for Buchan lies in his insistence on portraying Mrs. Brown as an exclusively traditional artist while seeking to explain her in literary terms. This type of accumulative analytical conflation which blends a conveniently unstable synthesis of oral theory, structuralism and literary analysis confuses

Buchan's work as a whole.

There is no evidence to support the notion that Mrs. Brown had ever had a public audience for her work until the demand from literary collectors created it. She had learned traditional songs and techniques from people who may have had such a public role but the only real critical audience she ever had was a literary audience and it was to the priorities of that literary audience, as she understood them, that her work is addressed. While she may have been baptised in tradition, she was never confirmed as a traditional artist because she never regarded the traditional audience as her aesthetic arbiters. The recounting or even the re-creation of traditional songs to a close family circle hardly constitutes the "merging of the poet's consciousness in that of his (or her) race".

She was, however, well integrated with the social and sexual politics of the literary world as distinct from the ballad world and on both occasions when her ballads were being transcribed in 1783 and in 1800 she delivered censored versions of ballads with a sexual content about which Buchan admits, "....it is fairly safe to assume deliberate acts of omission on Mrs. Brown's part."⁴⁵

If that is a safe assumption, then we must also assume a critical role for the literary audience of which Mrs. Brown was not only aware but willing to accommodate in her compositional strategy. Regard was not paid, directly or indirectly, to a traditional non-literate audience but to her literate transcribers, a fourteen year old boy in seventeen seventy-three, and a Church of Scotland minister in eighteen hundred. More importantly it was the aesthetic priorities of the audience beyond transcription who were exciting Mrs. Brown's interventions - a wider, literary audience of ballad

collectors and a public increasingly under the glare of their sense of aesthetic propriety which was essentially literary. It was not simply that audience's sense of sexual impropriety which was protected by Mrs. Brown but also their literary sensibility. Buchan recognises inconsistency in the cultural conditions:

We are faced with a paradox: the woman who preserved the finest representatives of the old oral tradition, the tradition of the non-literate rural folk was herself an educated woman, daughter of a professor and wife of a minister. This paradox is, however, apparent rather than real, because it is possible, at a certain point in the tradition, for a person to be both literate and an oral composer. It is only when a person ceases to be re-creative along traditional lines and accepts the literate concept of fixed text that he or she can no longer be classed as oral.⁴⁶

Buchan casts a wide net to support this notion. Lord supplies the evidence for the effects of texts on oral composition while Bronson provides the evidence for Mrs Brown's continuing re-creativity as part of a living tradition.

Comparing Mrs. Brown's two versions of *The Lass of Roch Royal* (Child:76D, 76E) will, Buchan says, support Bronson's claim that: "...what Mrs. Brown was trying for in the version of 1800 was, not to recover her own text of 1783, but to recover, or re-create, the ballad itself, the essential, ideal "Lass of Roch Royal".⁴⁷

This 'ideal' is, for Buchan, underpinned by the notion of an oral -formulaic creation but if we do examine these texts we find evidence of an intrusive literary ambience which undermines the proposition that the work is being re-created in an exclusively oral mode:

(76D) (1783)

'O wha will shoe my fu fair foot? 1
An wha will glove my han?
An wha will lace my middle gimp
Wi the new made London ban?

'Or wha will kemb my yallow hair, 2
Wi the new made silver kemb?
Or wha'll be father to my young bairn,
Till Love Gregor come hame?

Her father shoed her fu fair foot 3
Her mother glovd her han
Her sister lac'd her middle gimp
Wi the new made London ban.

Her brother kembd her yallow hair 4
Wi' the new made silver kemb
But the king o heaven maun father
her bairn
Til, LoveGregor come hame.

(76E) (1800)

'O wha will shoe my fu fair foot? 1
And wha will glove my hand?
And wha will lace my middle jimp,
Wi the new made London band?

'And wha will kaim my yellow hair, 2
Wi the new made silver kaim?
And wha will father my young son,
Till Love Gregor come hame?

'Your father will shoe your fu 3
fairfoot
Your mother will glove your hand;
Your sister will lace your middle
jimp
Wi the new made London band.

[illegible]

Both sets of balancing stanzas conform to Buchan's notion of a formulaic structural unit but the conscious anglicisation of the eighteen hundred version obliges us to consider whether we are dealing with a process of traditional idealisation or literary improvement. Orthography alone might lead us to speculate that the translation itself might have been an 'improved' translation of a traditional performance and this view would be supported not only by the substitution of the vernacular, as in 'son' for 'bairn' in the later text but also by the shift from a preterite to a future tense. The tonal ramifications of this, however, suggest a more trenchant strategic shift by the performer. Comparison of the third lines of stanza four in each these versions reveals the narrative consequences of those substitutions. In the original version (76D) the essential narrative idea is conveyed in an impersonal voice

which is consistent with a traditional oral style. In the more modern version (76E) the narrative idea is expressed by a narrator whose voice is critically affected by the substitution of the standard English 'will' for the vernacular 'maun' which 'improves' the poetic language and maintains the consistency in tense but fundamentally alters and personalises the tone. This is no longer fatalistic, but positive. The strategic aim appears to be an attempt to enhance the 'traditional' grammar in order to infuse the ballad with a literary politesse but the narrative consequences are distorting in a traditional sense. If this is so, it undermines Buchan's notion that this second version is being re-created according to a traditional poetic grammar and suggests either the presence of a literary imagination or that the second text is being recreated from a different model.

In seventeen seventy six, Herd's *Scottish Songs* contained a version of the ballad, "The Bonny Lass of Lochroyan", reprinted by Child as:

(76B)

'O wha will shoe thy bonny feet? 1
Or wha will glove thy hand?
Or wha will lace thy middle jimp,
With lang, lang London whang?

'And wha will came thy bonny head, 2
With a tabean brirben kame?
And wha will be my bairn's father
Till Love Gregory come hame?'

Thy father 'll shoe his bonny feet, 3
Thy mither'll glove his hand;
Thy brither will lace his middle jimp,
With a lang, lang London whang.

(76D)

5

'But I will get a bonny boat 5
And I will sail the sea,
For I maun go to Love Gregor
Since he canno come hame to me

O She has gotten a bonny boat 6
And sailld the sa't sea fame;
She langed to see her ain true- love
Since he could no come hame.

'O row your boat, my mariners, 7
 And bring me to the land,
 For yonder I see my love's castle,
 Close by the sa't sea strand.'

She has taen her young son in her arms, 8
 And to the door she's gone,
 And lang she's knocked and sair she ca'd
 But answer she got none.

Here we do find support for Buchan's contention that a fluid architechtonic allows the maker considerable scope to create new and more complicated structural units as the narrative demands. Enough scope, indeed, to go beyond the demands of traditional narrative. The architechtonic fluidity, as it is here disposed, allows for a shift from the expression and fulfilment of the wish in the original text to what would be regarded in a traditional sense as a quite startling case of positive individualism in the latter. The central actor Annie is individually empowered by the new text in a way that is not consistent with the original characterisation. It is she, not her father, who is responsible for obtaining the means to cross the ocean which separates the two lovers. This may be admirable in terms of the emancipation of the character but it is not consistent with traditional narrative priorities which are more accurately reflected in the earlier text. It also alters the structural balance of stanzas three and six by appropriating the role of the father for Annie in order to accommodate the new intrusive narration which in turn unsettles the character relationship between herself and her father, mother and brother. This disrupts patterning which, according to Buchan, is essential to the architechtonic bonding of the traditional process. The narrative interjection in stanza six,

commenting on the feelings of the narrative actor, is also quite extraordinary in traditional terms. This intrusion is in no sense typical of the traditional narrative voice and the reiteration by that voice in stanza six of the central idea in stanza five, that Gregor cannot come home, as opposed to the earlier text's, will not come home, tampers with the original narrative orientation. This fundamentally affects the perception and deployment of that character as an actor in the ballad.

The architechtonic shift of the boat sequence from a binary to a trinary scheme is structurally consistent with a traditional style but in a traditional sense it is an aberration. The function of this additional stanza is to reinforce the sentimental expression of the narrator in the previous stanza. The first line of stanza seven boasts none of the connotative resonance of a traditional formula, although it is metrically consistent, but rather the ring of a pseudo-formulaic expression tailored to the essentially literary, romanticised aesthetic which the sentimental intrusion implies here. The overall distortion of structure, character and narrative in the more modern text with the intrusive narrator and the 'individualisation' of the central actor carries all the resonance of a literary romance and little of the supercharged abstractions of the oral tradition where the audience is actively sensing the narrative through the filter of accreted subtleties that empower the formulaic diction.

This is emphasised in Mrs. Brown's alternative treatment of the triangular relationship between Annie, her lover and his mother, who represents the threat to that relationship. The entire nature of the threat and consequently of the relationship alters between the two

texts.

(76D)

Long stood she at her true- love's door, 9
And lang tird at the pin;
At length up gat his fa'se mither
Say's wha that would be in?

(76E)

O open the door Love Gregor,' 9
she says
O open and let me in;
For the win blows through my
yellow hair,
And the rain draps o'er my
chin.'

'Awa, awa' ye ill woman, 10
You'r nae come here for good;
You'r but some witch, or vile
warlock,
Or mer-maid of the flood.'

In the earlier text the audience is made aware from the outset of the mother's deception of Annie. The "fa'se mither" is a heavily charged formula which alerts the traditional audience to the immanent deception. The relationship between Mrs. Brown's (76E) version and the Herd version (76B) is reinforced here by the use of a stanza which appears in almost identical form at the same stage of narrative development in both of these but not in the original (76D) text.

(76B)

Now open, open , Love Gregory, 17
Open and let me in!
For the rain rains on my gude cleading,
And the dew stands on my chin.

In the modern (76E) text the deception is not revealed until the exchange between Annie and the mother is over and her lover wakes and recounts his dream, to which the mother responds:

(76D)

'O there was a woman stood at the door, 24
 Wi a bairn until her arms
 But I would na lat her within the bowr
 For fear she'd done you harm.

(76E)

'Gin it be for Annie of 19
 Rough Royal
 That ye make a' this din,
 She stood a' last night at
 this door,
 But I trow she wan no in.

'O wae betide ye, ill woman, 20
 An ill dead may ye die
 That ye wouldno open the door
 to her,
 Nor yet woud waken me'.

In the original (76D) version the deception is still intact but understood by the audience who recognise that the mother has deliberately misled both Annie and her lover despite her certain knowledge of Annie's identity, established by a test of tokens. This realisation is not shared by Gregor in the earlier version where he remains ignorant of the deliberate nature of the deception. In the later version the deception, which is narratively unambiguous, is sprung by the mother, increasing the emotional impact. This is consistent with the Herd text, which also fails to utilise the "fa'se mother" formula. Once again, a common stanza appears at a critical stage of the narrative development of those two versions which does not appear in Mrs. Brown's early text.

(76B)

Awa, awa, ye wicket woman, 22
 And an ill dead may ye die!
 Ye might have ither letten her in,
 Or else have wakened me.

The connotative power of a single traditional formula in (76D) is sacrificed to the shock of dramatic revelation. The mystery is not understood, but revealed. The fact that Mrs. Brown needed to explain suggests that by 1800 she was, perhaps sub-consciously,

unsure of the ability of her audience to appreciate to the connotative reverberations of the "fa'se mither" formula. The surprise element of the alternative strategy suggests a literary sensibility at work in the composition.

According to the Parry view of oral composition, an aesthetic contract between traditional singer and audience is founded on a common understanding of the tale to be told. There is no room for narrative surprises and novel elements are only introduced and accepted by mutual agreement that the tradition is ready to absorb them.⁴⁸ The narrative is fundamentally altered by the demands of the new approach and this culminates in distortion in the final stanzas. Here, the "fa'se mother" formula is made literal in (76E) where the protagonist launches a curse on his mother for deceiving him. He is explicitly aware of the deception. In the (76D) version, however, he is left to mourn the loss of his lover while it is the audience alone who are aware of the root of that tragedy. This awareness arises from an educated understanding of the connotative force and strategic disposition of the formulaic phrase within the narrative.

(76D)

O he has mourned oer Fair Anny 32
Till the sun was gaing down,
Then wi a sigh his heart it brast,
An his soul to heaven has flown.

(76E)

'O wae betide my cruel mother, 26
And ill dead may she die!
For she turnd my true love
frae my door,
When she came sae far to me.

The religious and sentimental expressions in the original are themselves, perhaps, evidence of an intrusive literary sensibility in the early text but it is the narrative alteration that concerns us here. Even in the Herd text Gregor dies. Mrs. Brown has fundamentally altered the narrative outcome of (76E) this apparent

attempt at recreating the ideal oral version. Child's remark that this (76E) text should be regarded as a blending of two independent versions known to Mrs. Brown seems to be correct but whether or not she was aware of both in an exclusively oral context is doubtful. There seems to be enough evidence to support the argument that Mrs. Brown was aware of Herd's text as a printed work and that its influence is apparent here. If so, then she should be regarded as a transitional, as much as a traditional, artist. If this is not the case then her own two versions are different tales and not an attempt at a recreated ideal. Her improvisations, or interpolations, are geared toward a romantic conclusion. She is enhancing the tragedy by condemning the unfortunate lover to life.

Buchan accepts Lord's dictum that 'the tale's the thing' but here the tale is clearly altered between the two texts. These two versions are alive with variation at formulaic, structural, character and narrative levels. We cannot account for these variations exclusively in the terms that Buchan sets out of a traditional poetic language underpinned by a fluid architechtonic. Fluidity of structure here co-relates to narrative distortion rather more closely than to traditional oral process as proposed by Parry and Lord. There is little evidence in a comparison of these texts of a coherent structural fluidity expanding to support a re-creative assault on a traditional ideal. The most striking element of a structural study of these texts is the degree to which traditional, formulaic, character and narrative impulses are distorted between the delivery of the two 'Brown' versions. The study of these versions does not support Bronson's notion of a re-created 'ideal' version but rather the notion of a dynamic and evolutionary process

of variation. The essence of variation here lies with the notional audience and the desire of the singer to address directly the perceived aesthetic priorities of that audience. There are values here, contained in variation, that cannot be fully understood in Buchan's terms. They can, however, be understood in terms of an encroaching literary aesthetic. The two versions of this ballad, while they do exhibit traditional formulaic and architechtonic structures, do not provide convincing evidence of a pristine compositional mode which is exclusively oral in the sense that Parry or Lord understood. These are transitional texts. They do suggest that even in a transitional state the modality of tradition is contained in the aesthetic relationship between singer and audience. Buchan's failure to accommodate that can be traced to Lord's sublimation of Parry's aesthetic and an overreaching promotion of the structural elements of the tradition. This is compounded by Buchan's concentration on extracting convenient structural units from single ballad versions in support of his own analysis. The fact that he rarely examines Mrs. Brown's work comparatively, either with her own versions or with others, means that variation is never properly integrated into his analysis. Concentration on a single version lends itself to structural analysis but a comparative requirement is essential if we are to negotiate with oral composition as a process because it is, unlike a finished literary work, a dynamic form and must be treated as such. The consequence for Buchan's examination of the ballads is that his anxiety to fix the architectonic premises of the ballad produces a mythology of structure which removes traditional art from its social context. While we can accept Buchan's structural studies as a vital

contribution toward recognising certain organisational elements of ballad composition it is not possible to accept that the presence of these structures demonstrate a pristine oral process. Buchan concentrates on structural relationships at the expense of recognising the aesthetic compact between artist and audience which characterises the tradition.

If we are to properly gauge the usefulness of oral-formulaic theory and its limitations as applied to the Scottish ballad tradition we must recognise the aesthetic underpinning of Parry's work borne out by the example above. We should also recognise the true extent of difference in the Scottish tradition. The formulaic diction of an eighteenth century semi, or non, - literate Scot is bound to be quite distinct from that which informed Parry and Lord's chosen traditions and it is at this level that we come to understand particular oral processes and their textual products. Buchan's failure to recognise the full connotative power of the individual formulaic unit and his attempt to incorporate Parry's definition in an unmodified form has provided fuel for those critics, like Flemming Andersen, who claim that oral-formulaic studies are inappropriate to the ballad tradition.

The need to establish the usefulness and limitations of oral-formulaic theory is driven by the recognition that it is the only critical framework available which allows a literary scholar the opportunity to appreciate and address tradition in terms of a distinctive, non-literary, oral aesthetic. Any other literary approach entertains distortion rooted in the procedures and prejudices of the time when literary culture assumed ownership of traditional products, for psychological, political and commercial

purposes - a literary process which concerns this study as a whole.

Flemming Andersen's *Commonplace and Creativity* goes some way to reducing the structural overload which attached to oral theory as it is brought to focus on Scottish traditional works, but does so from an essentially different perspective. While he recognises the importance of formulaic diction to the study of the Scottish ballad tradition he does not, like Lord or Buchan, accept, unquestioningly, Parry's definition of the formula and urges caution over transferring that definition from a Homeric to other traditional contexts.⁴⁹

He does, however, recognise the need for a clear definition of formula when dealing with works that consist largely in such material and uses his critique of Parry's definition both as a foundation for his own theory of formula and to highlight particular aspects of Parry's construct which may not be usefully applied to the Scottish tradition.

In restricting his idea of what constitutes formulaic word groups to expressions made up of at least four words or five syllables (with the exception of noun-epithet phrases which may be shorter) Parry is, according to Andersen, hoping to exclude any chance repetition of words that serve no formulaic function in the text. The rigidity of this limiting element of Parry's definition is "less relevant in a ballad context", for Andersen, and the inclusion of the shorter epithets, he claims, makes Parry's definition, "as it stands inapplicable to ballad formulas".⁵⁰ The inherent rigidity of this part of the definition meets its match in the rigidity of Andersen's interpretation.⁵¹

Parry's allowance that the regular employment of such word

groups contains no arbitrary requirement for an expression to be repeated a certain number of times in order to acquire formula status is, for Andersen, at the heart of Parry's thinking on the individual personality and artistry of oral poets. All formulas have the ability to meet narrative demands and their usefulness can be gauged by the frequency of their appearance. Variation in the formula is governed by metre and the immediate nature of the performance.

Andersen's interpretation seems to arise not so much from the study of Parry's work itself but from the study of Lord's interpretation and application of that work. Andersen, following Lord, underplays the creative potential of utility, recognised by Parry, in favour of the notion of the individual artist's command of formulaic variety.

Lord's 'individualistic' aesthetic priorities are illustrated where he notes that it is this ability to create rather than remember formulas that marks the true art of the singers and their skill in performance. This view is supported by his assessment of the qualitative differences in the same formula as expressed by a mature singer or a young apprentice or between a highly skilled or an unskilled, less imaginative, bard. Yet he argues strongly that the tradition itself imparts connotative meaning to the formula at a fundamental level. If that is so, where do these qualitative discrepancies at the formulaic level originate and how, or by whom, are they recognised? Lord focusses on the individual singer:

If the singer is in the Yugoslav tradition, he obtains a sense of ten syllables followed by a syntactic pause, although he never counts out ten syllables, and, if asked, might not be able to tell how many syllables there are between pauses. In the same way he absorbs into his own experience a feeling for the tendency toward the distribution of accented and unaccented syllables and their very

subtle variations caused by the play of tonic accent, vowel length and melodic line. These "restrictive" elements he comes to know from much listening to the songs about him and from being engrossed in their imaginative world. 52

What he fails to stress here is that this is a world that is shared and mediated by the audience and that it is their critical judgement which validates or modifies those elements.

The role of that audience, for Lord, is vaguely defined and subordinated to the singer's craft:

This audience and this social milieu (kafana or informal gatherings) have had an effect on the length of the songs of his predecessors, and they will have a similar effect on the length of his songs.⁵³

The image he conjures is of a kind of peasant "Gong Show" where artists are credited by the length of time that an audience is prepared to tolerate them. Lord conveys no sense of a critical dynamic or a shared aesthetic sensibility here. The role of tradition is reduced to the level of the general boredom threshold of the audience. This is in marked contrast to Parry's view where tradition has specific aesthetic ideals which are progressively negotiated between audience and artist.⁵⁴ In Parry's view, individual creativity resides securely within a broad social context, for Lord it is concentrated in the individual creative expertise of singers in a hermetic craft culture and denies the audience a critical faculty beyond the rudest sense of discrimination.

For Parry, as we have noted above, individual artistry consists in the ability of the poet to merge his consciousness with that of his race and not, as Andersen's interpretation implies, exclusively from their individual formulaic vocabulary. It is the

contextual deployment not the variety of formulas that informs Parry's aesthetic paradigm.

If the aesthetic element of Parry's work on oral tradition is given it's proper weight, individual creativity is seen as a by-product of cultural evolution; an agreement between individual artists and an educated and critical audience about what new material is allowed to enter the noetic store.⁵⁵

Utility, for Parry, is the essence of beauty and originality which, in his terms, exists in the tension between expression and reception. The audience and the performer share the responsibility for what accrues to the tradition and what is lost from it.⁵⁶ In a literary world these matters have little import because what is lost can be found. In an oral context these decisions must assume a higher cultural priority and, consequently, slightness of variation becomes a value rather than a curse. In oral culture there are no artefacts. If the culture is to survive, it has to evolve or risk moribundity but this is a strictly governed process in a culture where the glamour of novelty is contained by the anxiety which surrounds the conservation of cultural values.⁵⁷

Parry's insistence on the same metrical conditions is assumed, by Andersen, to arise from this evolutionary imperative which prompts spontaneous re-creation in the Homeric verse form through the formulaic materials at the disposal of the singer who inherits them from generations of singers before him. These restrictive conditions are inappropriate to the ballad genre where, according to Andersen, there is little room for 'spontaneous' re-composition.

Having criticised the first three elements of Parry's definition, as it is applied to the ballads, on the grounds of their

restrictive precision he turns on the last, 'the essential idea', for being comparatively vague. The subjective judgement of what is left to constitute a useful formula after those elements which are included only for the sake of style have been sifted out is, for Andersen, problematic in so far as it leaves us at the mercy of the individual scholar's intuition and knowledge of a particular singer's repertoire as to what then constitutes a formula. Andersen's insecurity here seems to be prompted by the narrowness of his own interpretation of Parry. If he were to assume a broader perspective and some confidence in his own critical faculties he might feel relatively safe in such hands but his approach seems to be characterised by an almost perverse determination to discredit the usefulness of oral-formulaic theory as it applies to other traditions.⁵⁸ In failing, like both Lord and Buchan, to give proper weight to the aesthetic background against which the definition stands, Andersen is correcting an imbalance of structural analysis without fully appreciating the consequences of his own procedures. He seizes on Lord's equation of formulaic with ordinary language, recognising the structural leanings of that interpretation which, he claims, is in line with Parry's ideas on the more mechanical aspects of formula formation. Andersen questions the validity of this mechanistic view of oral creativity and, in particular, he notes its failure to account for formulaic flexibility in the ballad genre.

It is worth noting here that while Andersen recognises the aesthetic element of Parry's work he only really addresses those features that deal with structure. This consistent failure to confront the totality of Parry's thought or the attempt to bolster the structural side of his equation is the source of abuse of that

theory and not, as Andersen appears to believe, liberties taken with the definition to accomodate metrical variation in the ballad genre.

This is apparent where he concentrates on what he considers to be the most important aspect of formulaic diction; the performer's ability to combine formulas and generate narrative in such way that the same kind of formula will be summoned to meet the same kind of recurring narrative need. His particular interest lies with the kind of formula which is like one or more which expresses a similar idea in more or less the same words. These formulas and formulaic systems, "constitute a vast reservoir of traditional formulas, evolved over many years of singing, from which the highly skilled singer may instantaneously choose the one formula that suits his given context best."⁵⁹

Andersen recognised that Lord's assertion of such an oral-formulaic theory, which Parry carefully restricted to his own field, as the principal determinant of the traditional nature of the text led to scholars' being given, "a welcome opportunity of demonstrating the external relations of a given text - in terms of composition, performance and transmission - from studies of its internal formulaic structure."⁶⁰

Buchan was one such scholar in the Scottish tradition whose unmodified acceptance of Parry's definition and utilisation of oral-formulaic theory is recognised as being in line with the latter's view that an essential idea is expressed in different ways under the same metrical conditions. These conditions, Andersen maintains, must be specific to the ballad genre in order to make the concept useful. Andersen, who is, as we have observed, uneasy with any

liberties that might be taken with the terms of Parry's definition moves instead to a modified definition as proposed by James Jones. This allows him to distance himself from the concept of formula, as proposed by Parry, and focus his own examination of formulaic diction toward the idea of the 'commonplace' - a critical shift for Andersen, who cites Jones' definition:⁶¹

We may define the commonplace as a stock passage, a kind of formula marked by conventionalized subject matter and phrasing. a group of words- which may vary only slightly - comprising three, four, seven or fourteen stresses (usually seven or fourteen) used to express a given idea in at least two different ballads. ⁶²

This emphasis on stresses rather than syllables is a requirement which must be met in order to accomodate Andersen's wish for a specification of metrical conditions which is particular to the fluidity of the ballad form, as distinct from the tightly constrained metrical conditions of the Homeric works. The practical application of this definition, he concludes, does not throw up a useful conclusion as to exactly what it is about these metrical groupings that could be described as formulaic. He maintains that although some groupings may vary little, in terms of narrative function, individual lines may be varied to accord with different situations yet still express the same essential idea. He cites Jones' example of a fourteen stress 'night visit' formula found in "The Bent Sae Brown":

(71)

He is on to Annie's bower -door ,
And tirl'd at the pin:
'O sleep ye , wake ye, my love Annie,
Ye'll rise, lat me come in'⁶³

5

and his comparison between this and two other examples of seven stress formulas which may be used independently of each other with other seven stress lines to form other fourteen stress commonplaces such as this, from "Fair Margaret and Sweet William" (74B):

*When he came to Lady margaret's bower,
He knocked at the ring,
And who were so ready as her brethren
To rise and let him in.*

-or with the second half of the original example as used in "Clerk Saunders" (69F):

*'O sleep ye, wake ye Lady Margaret,
Or are ye the bower within
'O who is that at my bower door,
Sae weel me name does ken?'*

Although Andersen accepts that these examples "aptly illustrate the verbal flexibility of ballad formulas" Jones, whose interests lie with promoting an oral-formulaic notion of ready made, fixed, seven stress units which may be substituted in order to make up new fourteen stress units which allows for oral composition in performance: "does not succeed in explaining fully the variability of ballad texts in general." ⁶⁴

Ballad formulas, for Andersen, are autonomous units which cover a single narrative idea. While Jones does demonstrate the linguistic variability of formula phrases and a resemblance between various recurrent phrases, he does not prove, to Andersen's satisfaction, that formulas arise from the combination of such lines. This prompts Andersen to move the discussion from this surface level of linguistic structure, indicated by Jones, to what he describes as the essence of formulas and their interrelations - the "deep semantic structure".⁶⁵ It is at this deep structure level

that he proposes to elucidate the nature of the narrative ideas expressed in formulaic phrases.

He embarks on a critical exploration of the Homeric scholar Michael Nagler's theory of traditional creativity. For Nagler, the formula is rather seen as a self-contained phrase reflecting the pre-verbal gestalt in the singer's mind as it is created anew each time the singer wants to find suitable expression for his gestalt. Nagler argues that formulaic qualities are too subtle to be expressed in terms of content and form and assigns the formula to a deep psychological source where it has no surface form or meaning. Andersen, prompted by Chomsky's model of transformational grammar, moves toward a more precise characterization of the formula within a linguistic framework, and leans heavily on the work of linguist, Paul Kiparsky.⁶⁶

Andersen concludes that the formula is an intrinsic element of the poetic language, the smallest narrative unit in ballad phraseology and one of the main structural devices in a ballad text. Ballads are to be treated essentially as narrative songs and therefore the function of formulas is essentially narrative. Ballad formulas are variable phrases which are multiform expressions of a single narrative idea that project overtones which establish relations between the formula unit and its immediate context - what Andersen calls its supra-narrative function.

It is at this supra - narrative level where the the singer may best display his talent in terms of originality. The formula operates on a supra - narratative (associative) level, a structural(form) level and in terms of the basic (deep structure) narrative idea. The textual ballad formula is characterized by; its

recurrence and variability, the size of the formula unit, the significance of the ballad action expressed by it as well as its underlying idea and its associative power. These characterizations prescribe Andersen's own definition of a ballad formula as:

...a recurrent multiform unit expressing a significant narrative idea with a more or less pronounced supra-narrative function.⁶⁷

From someone who subjects the precision of Parry's definition to such close scrutiny, this is a remarkably loose construct and it allows for almost unlimited flexibility in the discussion of formulaic diction. "Multiform units" can be interpreted as almost any commonplace phrase or formulaic grouping which expresses a "significant narrative idea". When added to the varying degrees of specificity which attach to a "more or less pronounced supra narrative function" this definition elevates formulaic diction to a level of free association which defies any systematic form of analysis.

The emphatic vagueness of Andersen's theoretical distillation underlines the futility of trying to hang a definition of this kind on the traditional ballad form which, unlike Parry's Homeric materials, are multi-sourced and subject to a history of interdependence with the developing literary culture.⁶⁸ Andersen has come a long way in order to tell us that ballad formulas do not conform strictly to the metrical rules observed by Parry in Homer. He has, to all intents and purposes, rephrased Parry's definition without reference to the metrical imperative. Parry's definition, as modified by Andersen and relieved of the latter's more esoteric pre-occupations, would simply read: *A formula is a variable group of words regularly employed under contextually variable metrical*

conditions to express a given essential idea.

Andersen does, however, indicate that the essence of supra - narrative overtones consists in variability itself and it is here that he moves the notion of ballad formulas in a significantly different direction. Parry, constricted by the metrical disposition and formulaic consistency of Homeric verse was denied the opportunity to accomodate the variability that he recognised as a characteristic of a living tradition in Yugoslavia, but Andersen, in his work on the ballad tradition, does address this factor and his conclusions go a long way to confirm the prevailing aesthetic conditions which underpinned Parry's work on Homer. In the course of his investigation into the linguistic flexibility and functional variations to be found in the formula, Andersen recognises those formulas that appear in linear form and argues that it is their verbal aspect and not their metrical shape that expresses the significant narrative idea . To illustrate his contention he examines several examples of the 'sewing' formula which is common to the ballad tradition of which is typical

(39D):

Fair Margaret sat in her bonny bower,	2
Sewing her silken seam	

The narrative function (essential idea) here is, according to Andersen, the conventional depiction of a woman of some standing which overlays a supra-narrative expression of longing for a lover. This latter emerges from the tension between the act of sewing which occupies the hands and the freedom of thought which is the corollary of that mechanical activity. This subconscious longing

is borne out by narrative events which occur in its wake such as a sexual encounter. Andersen also argues that the 'same overtones are evoked in other ballads' by formulaic phrases which denote other preoccupations as with:

(74A):

Fair Margaret sat in her bower window, 3
A combing of her hair

These two distinct formulas, he argues, are members of the same formula family, are interchangeable and carry the same narrative function and supra-narrative potential. The evidence for this comes from his comparison of the opening stanzas of two Child ballad versions (41A & 41B) in which, he claims, this interchangeability is exemplified. While it might be possible to regard this 'family' relationship in terms of Parry's notion of creation of new formulas by analogy, it is not possible to accept Andersen's idea, based on his own premises of supra-narrative construction, that they are invested with the same connotative energy as each other. The act of hair combing, particularly when that hair is a significant colour (41B), must surely evoke a more profound and overt sensual connotation than the sewing formula. He, himself, notes the propriety of the latter action in a surface narrative sense. Hair combing, at every level of structural consciousness, would surely be inclined to indicate a more profoundly intimate relationship between overt physical action and emotional turbulence. The point here is to illustrate that formulaic diction does not arise casually or by accident. Andersen's examples are drawn from disparate sources and his failure to recognise the

distinctive supra-narrative potential in these related formulas may be due to his misunderstanding over what Parry considers to represent individual artistic skill. The appropriate deployment of formulaic diction in harmony with "the consciousness of his race" is what counts for Parry. Andersen here assumes that these 'interchangeable' formulas are deployed by artists of equal skill and that they have access to a common formulaic vocabulary. He does not consider that one or the other may have simply been less skilled in the deployment of formulaic diction. In order to assess those qualities these single line formulaic phrases would have to be examined in the context of the subsequent narrative action. If, for example, a traditional audience was led to expect an overtly sexual encounter because of the presence of a combing formula and what arose was a more subtle variation such as the advent of a lover's ghost (which Andersen, elsewhere, relates to the sewing formula) then it might be fair to assume that the performer had, in a traditional sense, launched the wrong associative signal and as a consequence could be regarded as less skilled than the one who properly evoked the connotative supernatural resonance of the ghost through the sewing formula.

When he comes to regard the longer narrative units, which he describes as stanzaic formulas, Andersen cites the narrative condition of separation between principal characters that necessitates the call for a "bonny boy" to act as go between. This formula can take the form of a single stanza request as in "The Rantin Laddie"

(240):

Gin I had but een o my father's merry men 3
 As aft times I've had mony,
 That wad run on to the gates o Aboyne
 Wi a letter to my rantin laddie

- or the deployment of a messenger without a request:

(222A):

And she has gotten a bonny boy 21
 That was baith swift and strang,
 Wi philabeg and bonnet blue,
 Her errand for to gang.

The most common utilisation of this formula, which Andersen quotes from a variety of ballad sources to illustrate the linguistic variation in the formula, is that of request and echoed response:

(66A)

' Where will I get a bonny boy, 10
 Will win gold to his fee,
 And will run into Chiel Wyet's,
 With this letter from me?'

'O here I am, the boy, says one, 11
 Will win gold to my fee
 And carry away any letter
 To Chiel Wyet for thee.'

and a trinary stanzaic pattern which may involve a non - formulaic interpolation by the singer which according to Andersen forestalls the 'acceptance' response:

(99A):

O where will I get a bonny boy, 7
 To rin my errand soon,
 That will run into fair England,
 And haste him back again?'

O up it starts a bonny boy, 8
 Gold Yallow was his hair,
 I wish his mither meickle joy,
 His bonny love meikle mair.

'O here I am a bonny boy, 9
 Will rin your errand soon
 I will gang into fair England,
 And come right soon again.'

At this level of construction, Andersen notes that the formula has almost become an entire ballad scene but he is careful to recognise that these formulas are, "traditional expressions , moulded over many generations, and that their linguistic flexibility is not completely unrestricted."⁶⁹ The governing principle is tradition - the dynamic, evolutionary, aesthetic contract between audience and artist.

Why is it though that some formulas are variable within a comparatively fixed linear form while the variability of others allows them to emerge as structural units of scenic proportions? The answer must surely lie in the nature of formulaic diction itself. Formulaic diction, whether it is, or is not, in the Scottish tradition a special case of improvisational language, is unquestionably, a dynamic and evolutionary form.⁷⁰ Evolution, in an oral culture, does not necessarily mean expansiveness. If we are to consider the trinary stanzaic form above a complete

formulaic unit (even though, as Andersen notes, the middle stanza is not in itself formulaic) we must also find reasons to explain its variation in economy. As we have noted above, in the study of Mrs Brown's performances of "The Lass of Roch Royal", interpolations by the narrator, typified by the central stanza, are strongly indicative, not of a pristine, oral mindset but of a nascent literary sensibility. It may be formulaic, it may be traditional, but it may also be part of a transitional work addressed to a literary audience.

Where Parry's studies produced strong evidence to support the notion the Homeric works are metrically bound, this in itself might only be an indication that the particular oral culture upon which those works were based had reached a degree of associative conciseness that made such close metrical economy possible. That is to say that the formulaic diction, operating on the principle of utility, exercised on the listener and artist together the maximum connotative potential in the tightest possible narrative conditions - the metrical circumstances prescribed by Parry. The relative stability of some linear formulas in the ballad tradition suggest that there are formulas which have been refined to a degree which approaches those circumstances.

If we accept, as we surely must, Andersen's broader conception of formulaic diction, as it applies to the Scottish ballads, we also recognise that the culture to which it must be applied was not only distinctive but transitional. The evolutionary purpose of formulaic diction, as recognised by Parry, is to achieve the maximum connotative potential in the tightest narrative conditions.

This must be a fundamental condition in an exclusively oral culture where mnemonic resources are severely limited. The formulaic looseness and variation in the examples above clearly do not typify an exclusively oral culture but do tell us something about an oral culture in transition. The popular oral tradition in Scotland was, by the beginning of the eighteenth century so intimately involved with the developing popular literary culture that it had no opportunity to evolve the degree of metrical precision exhibited by the Homeric culture which exemplified the oral tradition's ability to express ideas as stable conglomerates of 'sound and sense'. In such transitional circumstances variability, as Andersen's work suggests and the ballads of Anna Brown confirm, was intrinsic to the development of the formulaic diction. This evolutionary traditional dynamic was confronted in eighteenth century Scotland by a trenchantly de-evolutionary slackening of the formulaic diction in order to accommodate the burdens of literary abstraction and the attached cultural agenda of a literary elite.

Scottish oral culture has come to us in transitional texts heavily laden with recognisable aspects of a formulaic diction which, along with other elements pertaining to the oral culture, allow the literary scholar to identify the accents of tradition. These formulas and structures are the vocal expression of the traditional mindset and they speak directly to a distinctive non-literary system of abstract thought that is attuned psychologically to a culture without the mnemonic resources of literature. They are a vital component of survival in non-literary cultures and they deserve to be regarded as such. When tradition came to be regarded as the intellectual property of a literary elite, they were

mediated, as part of a textual analysis, through the commercial, political and psychological concerns of collectors and antiquarians whose priorities lay not with the preservation of a living tradition but with the appropriation of its noetic stock on behalf of an emerging mass literary culture which they were determined to shape.

Because the texts, as they have come to us (and they have come as texts) cannot, like the Homeric works, be considered as part of a fully integrated, pristine oral system, we cannot hope to explain traditional culture in Scotland from formulaic diction alone. What we can hope is that a broad understanding of Parry's concept of formulaic diction taken in its full aesthetic compass may, when applied to the materials at hand, tune our ear to the accents of tradition as they are filtered through the literary programme. If we are able to identify and respect those distinct, non-literary, aesthetic premises and cultural overtones we may, in turn, be able to track, more accurately, the process of oral transformation and the related development of a romantic discourse in a culturally volatile period.

Notes to Chapter 1:

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¹ J. Vansina, *Oral tradition as History*, (London, 1965), p.3.

² Adam Parry, ed., "Introduction ", Milman Parry, *The Making of Homeric Verse*, (Oxford, 1971), p. xvi.

³ Milman Parry, *The Making of Homeric Verse*, (Oxford, 1971), p. 328. The nature of Homeric poetry, for Parry , could: "...only be grasped when one has seen that it is composed in a diction which is oral, and so formulaic, and so traditional. So it is for the language of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* : If we know what an oral diction is we shall have the larger background which the theory of a language made to fit the hexameter calls for. At the same time the Homeric language when thus explained by the diction will in turn give us the history of that diction." The importance of this conclusion for the study of any orally conceived poetry cannot be overstated, however, it is equally important to emphasise that this history is, for Parry, realised in the context of a dynamic social and cultural environment.

⁴ Adam Parry, *Op. Cit.*, P. xxv.

⁵ Milman Parry, *Op.cit.*, p.427.

⁶ *Ibid.* , p. 430.

⁷ Francis James Child, Ed., *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, (Boston, 1892-1898). As this collection is generally regarded as the definitive work on Anglo-Scottish Balladry , all ballad extracts will be quoted in accordance with Child's reference system, unless otherwise stated.

⁸ Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy* (London, 1982), p.25. In his discussion of Parry's notion of essential ideas contained in formulaic phrases, Ong remarks: " Although these latter mark oral poetry in such poetry they occur and recur in clusters...The clusters constitute the organising principles of the formulas, so that the 'essential idea' is not subject to clear, straightforward formulation but is rather a kind of fictional complex held together largely in the unconscious." The importance of these clusters identified in a literary context is that they represent a communal system of abstract thought that competes with the new literary consciousness as it is absorbed into the transitional mindset.

⁹ Adam Parry, *Op.Cit*, P. xxvi.

¹⁰ Wade-Gerry, *The Poet of the Iliad*, (Cambridge, 1952), P. 38.

¹¹ Milman Parry, *Op.Cit.*, p. 421. Parry demonstrates further his support of the notion of creative individualism of the oral poets with the tradition at their disposal through his comment that, "...it required a great poet to turn it into great poetry." This is only realised when, "...the genius of the artist has blended with that of his race so inextricably that the two are hard to distinguish: they can only be realised in the perfection of the result." (p.431)

¹² *Ibid.*, p.422. That the Darwinist approach applies, for Parry, at the fundamental level of oral construction is clear from his comments on traditional diction (p.423): " To think that it would soon disappear from epic poetry would be as foolish as to think that a technique so elaborate; so complex, and so much the very essence of the epic, could have been evolved by one man or even by a single generation." Structure at the primary level is evolutionary and aesthetically governed in oral society by natural selection over time.

¹³*Ibid.* , P.272.

¹⁴ Parry, *Op.Cit.*, pp. 329 -333. Although, for a skilled oral poet, this is described as an "effortless" process it is important to recognise that this skill is finely tuned to an understanding of the abstract and conceptual relationships that sustain the formulaic discourse as it applies to both poet and audience..

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15 *Ibid.* P. 334 . Change in an essentially conservative oral culture is , Parry claims, slow but sure and comes through change in spoken language and the association between peoples with the same language but a different dialect. Different dialects effect change but words and forms are not thought of as words of a certain locality they simply serve to carry the style above the commonplace everyday speech. As the spoken language changes so does traditional poetic diction but there is no requirement to give up existing formulas which provides an archaic element. The poet may also introduce artificial elements by analogy with the real created by the need for a formula unit of a certain length which can only be got by this means. Adaption also gives rise to the artificial whereby part of a word may be changed, part may be archaic. Constraint on the technique of verse making ensures longevity of formula even though the language has become archaic. Events may be new but they are told in the traditional way so that the new becomes possible by fullest use of the old.

16 *Ibid.*, p.272.

17 Milman Parry, *Op.Cit.*, P.270.

18 Jan Vansina, *Op.Cit.*, pp.11-13.

19 Susan Wittig, *Stylistic and Narrative Structures in the middle English Romance* , (Austin, 1978), p.43. Wittig, perhaps, carries this argument one stage too far by claiming that formulaic structure results in an audience's ability to accurately predict the next formulaic phrase. This is unfortunate because it detracts from the essential part of her case that formulaic phrases, in orally conceived poetry and song, are the building blocks of a predictable world. That world is predictable not because the audience forecasts the next formulaic phrase but because it is familiar with all the materials of construction and it knows not what comes next so much as how each succeeding phrase relates to the construction. Just as a layman is familiar enough with building materials to know that glass is, generally, an inappropriate material for a floor, the traditional audience will expect and admire creative disposition of formulas but only as they are appropriate to the overall architecture of the work.

20 Milman Parry , *Op.Cit.*, P.425.

21 *Ibid.*, p. 425.

22 *Ibid.*, P.377. A primary and influential source for Parry's ideas on the distinctive nature of traditional poetry was Marcel Jousse , an anthropologist with a particular interest in psycho-linguistics, whose essay *Le Style oral rythmique et mnemotechnique chez les verbo-moteurs* : "...marks the change of emphasis in Parry's thought from seeing Homer as a *traditional* poet to seeing him above all as an *oral* poet. " Parry appears to have accepted the psychological basis of oral poetic style, as proposed by Jousse, that oral poetry is driven by its relationship to the *natural* physiological rhythms of the human body. Oral style, he considered as "... the form of thought: and thought is shaped by the life of men." A conventional literary perspective was not, in Parry's view enough to gain an understanding of oral epic poetry. Not only does he follow Jousse in accepting oral poetry as more natural, he actually cites the kind of knowledge that is crucial to our understanding of traditional detail which is, in his view not: "... primarily a literary problem. Its proper study is even more anthropological and historical,...".

23 Albert B. Lord, *The Singer of Tales* , (Massachusetts, 1960), p.53.

24 *Ibid.*, p.4.

25 David Buchan, *The Ballad and the Folk* , (London, 1972), p.58.

26 Gordon H. Gerould, *The Ballad of Tradition* , (Oxford, 1932), pp.1,12. In Buchan, *Op.Cit.*, p.59.

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27 *LOC. CIT.*

28 William Motherwell, *Minstrelsy Ancient and Modern*, (Paisley, 1823), pp.xi-xii.

29 Buchan, *Op. Cit.*, p. 61.

30 *Ibid.*, p. 53.

31 Jan Vansina, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 162-165.

32 Buchan, *Op.Cit.*, p. 146. Here, Buchan gives his account of the intrinsic nature of ballad language and the traditional process to which the singer is exposed. This account is to all intents and purposes a paraphrase of Lord's Yugoslavian studies and demonstrates Buchan's dependency on Lord's interpretation of Parry.

33 *Ibid.*, p.53.

34 *Ibid.*, p.104

35 *LOC.CIT.*

36 *Ibid.* , p.144.

37 *Ibid.*, p. 62 .

38 *LOC. CIT.*

39 *Ibid.*, p. 63.

40 *Ibid.*, p.86.

41 *Ibid.*, p.3.

42 *Ibid.*, p. 199.

43 *Ibid.*, p. 173.

44 *Ibid.*, p.68.

45 *Ibid.*, p.115. This self - censorship must hold some implications for the notion of spontaneous re-creation. If it was so in Mrs. Brown's case, at what level of consciousness does censorship take place? Buchan does not address that question. Considering that these 'performances' were to be transcribed for a literate audience the level of intervention must have been attuned to the expectations which Mrs. Brown shared in common with that audience.

45 *Ibid.*, p. 64.

46 Bertrand Bronson, "Mrs. Brown and the Ballad" *California Folklore Quarterly*, IV, (1945).

48 Vansina, *Op. Cit.* , p.35. Vansina's experience of contemporary oral performances suggests that whatever the quality of the performance, "... the tale must be well known to the oral audience.":

"They must already know the tale so that they can enjoy the rendering of various episodes, appreciate the innovations and anticipate the thrills to come."

This is consistent with Lord's well worn dictum that "the tale's the thing" and supports the idea that variations, such as the one perpetrated here by Mrs. Brown, could in no sense have been intended for an exclusively oral audience. The 'innovation' here, at narrative level effectively confounds the sense of anticipation which the connotative ambience of the "fa'se mither" formula evokes.

Notes to Chapter 1:

49 Flemming G. Andersen, *Commonplace and Creativity*, (Odense, 1985), p.5.

50 *LOC.CIT.*

51 *Ibid.*, p.18. Andersen uses examples from the Scottish ballad tradition to illustrate Nagler's argument that slight metrical variation in particular formulas disbars them from belonging to the same formulaic group. The examples given however come from disparate ballad sources and if we accept that Parry's work is based on the text of a single Homeric author, Andersen is engaged in a practice, of which he claims to be critical, in comparing the oranges of Mrs. Brown and the lemons of others. He does, however, recognise that formulaic flexibility might be accommodated by broadening the definition in an appropriate way.

52 Lord, *Op. Cit.*, p.32.

53 *Ibid.*, p.26.

54 Vansina, *Op. Cit.*, p.34. Vansina's study of contemporary oral cultures provides strong evidence of a vibrant critical interdependence operating during performance either of narrative tales or songs where:

"The public is active. It interacts with the teller, and the teller provokes this interaction by asking questions, welcoming exclamations, and turning to a song sung by all at appropriate points of the action. The teller and public are creating the tale together." In this light, the singer, or teller, of tales is more appropriately characterised as a conductor rather than a vessel and the audience as creative co-authors rather than simple arbiters, of tradition.

55 Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, (New York, 1982), pp. 59-60. Ong, whose consideration of traditional cultures covers an extremely broad spectrum in terms of both ideas and examples, follows Parry in claiming that: "originality consists not in the introduction of new materials but in fitting the traditional materials effectively to each individual situation and audience".

56 Flemming G. Andersen, *Op. Cit.*, p.84. It is fair to point out that Andersen, while he does not place himself directly in either the improvisational or memorial school of composition, does recognise that singers:

"...do not conceive of their ballads as 'fixed texts' ...Balladry is clearly a dynamic tradition, within its own well defined boundaries." Further, he endorses Philip Barry's characterization of oral transmission being essentially 'communal re-creation' as: "a fortunate term which comprises both aspects of ballad transmission: dynamics and inertia." The surprising element in Andersen's criticism of Parry is that he does not appear to fully recognise the implications of the aesthetic underpinning of Parry's definition which appears to lend weight to his own conclusions on the nature and function of formulaic diction in the ballad tradition.

57 Walter J. Ong, *Op. Cit.*, p. 70. Ong maintains that the organization of experience in memorable form is generated through the nature of the noetic economy which demands that both characterisation and narrative are memorable. The sense of loss felt by the audience where this is not the case is a defining critical element in the traditional aesthetic. If the audience feels that something valuable is missing or understated then that is the basis of their critical disposition. If, on the other hand that value is recognisable and reinforced in a novel manner (e.g. through analogy) then originality is recognised and (literally) applauded. But the sense of originality is fixed in the contextual utilisation of available, recognisable and memorable materials.

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58 W.J. McCarthy, *The Ballad Matrix*, (Indiana, 1990), P.11. McCarthy notes that Andersen's: "rejection of the term oral-formulaic seems more political than conceptual, since he admits a recreative role for the singer, and describes balladry as an oral art built around the formula, albeit a more restricted kind of formula than Lord posits." The recognition of Lord's influence on Andersen, over Parry, once again suggests that Parry has only really been considered as a secondary source for oral-formulaic theory which may account for Andersen's consistently taking for granted the mechanical basis of Parry's work as emphasised by Lord rather than in its full aesthetic compass as outlined by Adam Parry.

59 Flemming G. Andersen, *Op.Cit.*, p. 7. Here, despite Andersen's recognition of the social dynamic of traditional creativity, we are presented with a Lord influenced notion of the individual singer and his 'highly skilled' craft. It is interesting to contrast this notion with the actual quote that Anderson chooses from Parry to illustrate his point. Parry says: "The Poet, habituated to the scheme, hits without effort, as he composes, upon the type of formula and the particular formula which, at any point in the poem, he needs to carry on his verse and his sentence." (1932 .7) There is no mention here of skill but of habit. This emphasises the 'natural' element in traditional creativity which Lord relates to craft. The skill for Parry coalesces in the relationship between performer and audience as well as in the relationship between performer and 'text'. Andersen also fails to note that if no formula is available to suit a given context, that is to say if new cultural circumstances arise, the performer is free to create such a formula by analogy. This creativity is governed by the audience who sharing, as Parry sees it, the consciousness of the poet can appreciate and criticise the new material. If it is appropriate and consistently meets the narrative requirement to which the new circumstances give rise, it will become a stable and useful formula, to be absorbed and perpetuated by the tradition for so long as it meets those criteria.

60 *Ibid.*, P. 11. This is, of course, a stated object of Parry's oral theory; that the formulaic diction, being traditional, allows to study the poetic language and shows what may be learned from that study. (Parry P. 340)

61 W.J. McCarthy, *op. cit.*, p. 11. McCarthy notes that Andersen's notion of the commonplace has similarities to Lord's ideas on the role of theme: "But, in accounting for the role of commonplaces, he does not account for all that comes between and around them." While, on the face of it, McCarthy seems to be hinting at the loss of a structural element in Andersen's work he is also actually recognising the debt that Andersen owes to Lord in his utilisation of the commonplace as a compositional substitute for Lord's thematic construction.(p.13)

62 Jones, J.H. "Commonplace and Memorization in the Oral Tradition of the English and Scottish Popular Ballads". In *Journal of American Folklore*, 74: 103., (1961)

63 *LOC.CIT.*

64 Flemming G. Andersen, *Op.Cit.*, p. 15.

65 *LOC.CIT.*

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66 *Ibid.*, pp. 17-29. Nagler's thinking, according to Andersen, undermined the formulaic school even although Nagler himself remained essentially an oral-formulaic scholar. The area of disagreement with Parry centred on the concept of 'resemblance'. Nagler agrees with Parry that the correspondence between formulas within a system rests on the complex relationship between "sound and sense" in oral poetry but, according to Andersen, this agreement is breached as a more precise characterization of this similarity is sought. The problem with Parry, for Nagler, lies in the notion of 'the same metrical conditions' and his observation that certain phrases in the Homeric tradition express the same essential idea but conform to different metrical parameters. This, he claims excludes them, in Parry's terms, from being members of the same system of resemblance.

Chomsky's model of transformational grammar is used to define what is understood by 'deep structure' - the level of a sentence that determines its semantic interpretation. Kiparsky's aim, according to Andersen, is to systematically compare patterns in oral poetry with those of ordinary language. This leads him to assert that oral formula does not differ in essence from bound expressions, fossilized or flexible, that are found in ordinary language and to insist that the improvisation of metrical verse is a special utilisation of formulaic language, not its cause. Kiparsky's generative model, derived from the notion that flexibility of formulas occurs in the transformation from deep to surface structure, concludes that formulas which can crystallize on the levels of deep structure (meaning); surface structure (form) and phonological structure (sound), are not invariably indicative of any one manner of transmission but of a specific traditional way of telling a story.

67 *Ibid.*, p. 37.

68 Brian Stock, *The Implications of Literacy*, (New Jersey, 1983), p. 9. Stock argues that "There is in fact no clear point of transition from a nonliterate to a literate society.....The change.....was not so much from oral to written as from an earlier state, predominantly oral, to various combinations of oral and written." Although Stock refers mainly to certain areas of activity, like law, there is little doubt that this was paralleled in a broader cultural context. He also observes that oral was not the equivalent of popular in the early middle ages but did it become so on the introduction of print. The oral culture acquired popular associations only at the time when cultural values were beginning to be associated with literacy (p.19) The relationship between ballads and popular literature is commonly perceived as the latter's being "part of an oral heritage which had become petrified in print". (Victor Neuburg, *Popular Literature*, (Hammondsworth, 1977), p.120) However Stock's remarks suggest a much more dynamic relationship between printed and orally presented matter which is supported by the notion that Mrs. Brown incorporated or synthesised printed versions of ballads into her own oral renditions. (See Above: "The Lass of Rochryan")

69 Flemming G. Andersen, *Op. Cit.*, p.59.

70 W. J. McCarthy, *Op. Cit.*, p. 5. McCarthy astutely notes that there is no obvious obstacle which disbars Parry and Lord's 'substitutionary' models of formula (creation by analogy) from operating as, or in tandem with Andersen's linguistically derived 'generative' deep structure models. In assuming, as he does, that formula formation is " ...sometimes generative, sometimes substitutionary" he is not only adopting a reasonable procedure but also when the disparate sources and transitional nature of the ballads are considered, a sensible one.

CHAPTER II
PRINT AND PREJUDICE.

Mediation is the critical factor in the translation of the noetic materials and values of a non-literate culture into a literate context. The absence of musical accompaniment to the early translations meant that those materials and values entered the literary culture as texts only, which held implications for tradition which was being stripped of oral process by literacy and a literary culture which was trying to accomodate texts that were not in essence literary products. In terms of an oral aesthetic a ballad is re-created when a traditional singer sings a traditional song in a traditional manner to a critical, traditional audience. Performance is is the essence of the ballad. In literary terms that essence is something quite different and in the case of the early translations this was complicated by a transitional mindset recognised in the provision of rough musical guidelines in the early collections (Sung to the tune of) which suggests an audience expected to be capable of re-creating for themselves a version of the more popular ballads to the words on the printed page.

Whatever the results of such a procedure it was not so much a traditional ballad that was being re-created but a popular song being read or performed from the text. There was the possibility that some active oral development could still take place at this stage if the text and tune became such common currency that they re-entered the oral culture as new material but for the most part

the market for these printed miscellanies was a literate audience attuned to literary values. These values were, however, about to become exposed to an historical imperative through which the evolving literary audience came to regard traditional texts as oral poetry. At this point in the transitional process the methods employed in mediation become critical not only because they begin to define the literary view of tradition itself but also because they determine the way in which those materials influence and are utilised by the developing literary culture.

The importance of the publication of *A Collection of Comic and Serious Scots Poems* in 1706 lay not so much in the editor and printer James Watson's choice of materials, which were largely sourced from readily available broadside versions rather than the folk tradition, as in his recognition that there was a literary market for popular verse in Scots.¹ The success of that volume, which led to two more in 1709 and 1711, suggests that this market was vibrant and broadly based.

Dave Harker argues that despite the 'bawdy' and 'obscene' aspects of some of the material that this new market came about as a consequence of the anglicisation of Scots upper-class culture and the Kirk's continued tyranny of social life. Against this background, he claims, "...the songs in Watson's Collection would appeal both to a sense of Scots nationalism in culture, and to a vicarious enjoyment in 'low' life and character, as enjoyed by the English since the restoration."²

The implications of Harker's argument are that this audience was reacting to cultural alienation on the one hand and social repression on the other. They were a different audience, he claims,

from those who had purchased the older Scots works that appeared in the collection in broadsides and chapbooks which were to be found even in worker's cottages and they were "primarily a genteel market of readers."³

This is a fairly confused analysis which seeks to gently stratify this new audience in a way that is convenient to Harker's class based analysis and supports a connection between Watson's publication of the *Collection* and political propaganda in song, which, Harker implies, was a potent force in the period which spanned the heated political debate over the Union.⁴

Harriet Wood provides a more gentle contextualisation of Watson's publication when she claims:

In view of his previous record of Anglophobia it is not unreasonable to see it as a further (though this time a less controversial) expression of his patriotism, and as a reminder to his countrymen of a part of their national heritage which seemed in danger of being forgotten.⁵

It is not unreasonable to make these assumptions but they can be misleading if it is forgotten that the principal concerns of the Watson family over the previous century lay with printing and with the object of obtaining the 'gift' of King's printer when Anderson's monopoly ended in 1712. Even Wood is tempted to over-emphasise the political connection between the coincidence of the publication of the articles of Union in 1705 and Watson's *Collection* the following week. She makes an implicit link between Watson's miscellany and his publication by him in the same year of a pamphlet entitled "Scotland Reduced by Force of Arms and Made a Province of England". She neglects to note, however, that he also

published in that same year Paxton's "Scheme of Union Between England and Scotland with Advantages to both Kingdoms" . Paxton was an anti-federalist who set out an alternative plan for a union based on mutual respect for the individual laws and institutions of each nation combined with a closer trading relationship which he deemed to be in the interest of both nations. It is a remarkable pamphlet in terms of the way it rehearses contemporary scepticism about the relationship between the United Kingdom and Europe, but, critical to our present concerns, it also undermines the notion of Watson as a fervent anti-unionist because, whatever its shape, it is nonetheless a proposal for a Union. The equanimity with which Watson treated competing arguments about the future of Scotland suggest Watson as a union 'sceptic' rather than an out and out nationalist whose intentions were as much concerned with commerce as with the politics of Union.⁶

The real significance of Watson's *Collection* lies in his recognition that there was a viable commercial market for Scots material. This may have been prompted by his own cultural agenda but that was allied to a sound commercial sense and it made possible the success of Allan Ramsay. As Wood makes clear, Ramsay was as likely to have found the text of "Christ's Kirk" on a broadsheet as in the pages of Watson's *Collection*.

The point, as she concedes, is that he did not. This highlights the significance of Watson as a catalyst. Not only did he draw together the materials of a diverse and vibrant Scottish culture, he also unearthed the traditional, metrical and thematic moulds that were to shape Scottish, vernacular poetry in the century that followed.

In his critique of Ramsay's activities, as a collector of traditional materials and his role as cultural mediator between the traditional culture and that of the new literate bourgeoisie, Harker claims that, building on Watson's foundations, Ramsay:

...immersed himself in the "old racy vernacular ditties" which were enjoyed by the capital's "middle and lower classes" in private, as a gesture of defiance against "the repressive tendencies of the Kirk" and the strange tradition of Latin versifying which dominated seventeenth century Scots polite culture.'⁷

In allying himself here with T.F. Henderson, to whom he is indebted for the internal quotes, Harker invokes the spectre of traditional academic conservatism in order to support a Marxist formulation of Ramsay's cultural role. Harker's critical technique involves the systematic examination of song mediators in the light of their bourgeois agenda and the drawing of systematically simplistic conclusions from isolated incidents or alleged personal traits. Both critics, however, share a tendency to interpret their extrapolations in the light of their own political programme. This is discrete in Henderson's case and explicit in Harker's. The result of this shared strategy is caricature which arises from a refusal to consider the songs in the context of Ramsay's own creative work preferring, as they both do, to keep those issues separate. By this means the songs are criticised on the basis of their editorial weaknesses (although frequently there is no immediate reference material with which to substantiate the offence which is taken). Ramsay's own creative work is in turn dismissed on the imposition of similar aesthetic criteria without real consideration of the importance of its interactive relationship to tradition in the case of Henderson, or, completely ignored by

Harker. The common denominator of their ostensibly opposed perspectives is simple snobbery - for Henderson, Ramsay is too vulgar and its inversion, for Harker, he is not vulgar enough.

The terms that provide the basis for concurrence between the two critics above; the material, "racy vernacular ditties", the audience, "middle and lower classes" and their motivation, "a gesture of defiance against" the repressive tendencies of the Kirk" and "the strange tradition of Latin versifying which dominated seventeenth century Scots polite culture" may, however, provide us with a general field of reference within which we can elucidate the importance of Ramsay's work as a creative collector of traditional materials while exposing the critical error in the assumption that both aspects of Ramsay's endeavours can be considered exclusively.

By focussing on the 'racy' element in the vernacular collections, Henderson seeks to undermine Ramsay's stature as a collector but he does this within an academic tradition born of antiquarian procedures which were alien to Ramsay because they were not common critical currency until the second half of the century. These procedures, as we will demonstrate below, were the consequence of a form of literary domination of traditional culture and by and large they continue to inform literary critics of traditional and popular culture. The rights and wrongs of such an approach may be argued elsewhere but the important factor here is that the implied critical categories are not such as would be recognised by Ramsay - that literary tradition had yet to be invented. For Ramsay, the critical imperative was the commercial judgment of a popular audience and it was to the demands of that

judgment that the material was tailored. Ramsay was indeed building on Watson's foundations with his collections of Scottish traditional material but he was doing so in an artistic as well as a commercial sense. It is the general distaste for this latter sensibility and its perceived sully of the former which unites those critics in their blindness to the implications of Ramsay's work. This is less easy to forgive than their overlooking its worth. Behind the prejudice directed at Ramsay's creative approach to traditional materials lies the essential element of any criticism, which must be taken seriously, his respect, or lack of such, for the material that passed through his hands.

There are two distinctive areas where this can be tested, in the translation of older Scots literary material from manuscript and in his adaption of Scottish traditional song culture for a literary audience.

Kinghorn and Law claim that with the publication of *Evergreen* in 1723, "Ramsay's chief aim was to furnish his contemporaries with a readable text".⁸ In confirming his success they point out that with the exception of those mistakes which arose from his ignorance of middle Scots he was a relatively faithful transcriber. Working from various literary sources, including the Bannatyne manuscript, Ramsay delivered a more considered and faithful representation of older Scots poetry than Watson. He was not, however, driven, by the antiquarian impulse so much as the popular demand for a modern text that was actually readable to the contemporary audience identified by the success of the *Choice Collection*. Kinghorn and Law argue that the *Evergreen* was a "preservative work".⁹ While that may, incidentally, hold true there is evidence that preservation was not

the sole concern in Ramsay's mind. This is most clearly illustrated by the deliberate plant of his own composition "The Vision", in a collection that purported to be 'written by the ingenious before 1600' and in this case specifically dated by the introductory remark: ¹⁰ *Compylit in Latin be a most lernit Clerk * in Tyme of our Hairship and Oppression, anno 1300, and translaitit in 1524.*¹¹

On the face of it, this is a less than remarkable attempt by Ramsay to mimic the style and form of mediaeval Scots poetry but, as with many of Ramsay's re-creative works, it is his strategic intention that is noteworthy. Re-creating the dream allegory for its own sake would be an amusing, if essentially pointless, occupation for Ramsay, as a poet. It is the vital connection he makes between the synthetic allegory and a contemporary set of circumstances which revives the spirit of the past through its relevance to a contemporary audience.

Deliberate deception, initialised by the introductory remarks above and confirmed by the signature: 'Ar. Scot', which could be read as Ramsay's initials and national status is an essential element in the process of manipulating a contemporary sensibility so as to engage it with the spirit of the older Scots poetry which Ramsay, for commercial and political reasons, is trying to promote. Ramsay is working these connections at every level throughout the poem, but the essence of this relationship is contained in the sixth verse where Ramsay's narrator conjures, from his dream-vision, the spiritual "Warden" of the Scottish nation with a "Lyon" at his hand:

Quilk held a thistle in his paw,
 And round his collar graift I saw
 This poesie pat and plain,
Nemo me impune lacess----
-----et:----- In Scots, Nane sall oppress
 Me, unpunist with pain;
 Still schakin, I durst naithing say,
 Till he with kynd accent
 Sayd. 'Fere let nocht thy hairt affray,
 I cum to hier thy plaint;
 Thy graining and maining
 Haith laitlie reikd myne eir,
 Debar then affar then
 All eiryness or feir.¹²

Ramsay stratifies the initial deception not only through the use of mediaeval stanza form and an approximated older Scots orthography but also by his conscious drawing of attention to the Latin inscription. If the work was originally in Latin, where was the need for the translator to include translation as part of the poem? The object of the exercise becomes clear when we hear the voice of Scotland's guardian "with kynd accent". This is not to specify the warmth of tone here but to draw attention to the fact that the spirit of Scotland talks Scots. Ramsay obscures his own deceptions but always with a strategic intention.

It is impossible to read this synthetic allegory as a whole without reflecting on the political issues which concerned Ramsay's age and this ability to confront the present through the smoke and mirrors of an actual and a synthetically recreated past is a hall mark of Ramsay's art and influence. His ability to convince himself and his age that it was possible to engage poetically and politically with the spirit of the past is the strategic root of popular Scottish poetry's development in the eighteenth century. This impulse also prompts Ramsay's collecting activities but a

simultaneously mimetic and deceptive creativity is always at the service of a poetic and political agenda which demands understanding of, and respect for, the spirit of the materials from which he is working. He was also, however, a trenchant moderniser and improver.

Ramsay's *Scots Songs*, "Printed for the Author at the Mercury opposite to Niddrie's Wynd", first published in 1718 is his first vernacular songbook consisting mainly of lyrics (composed by the author) designed to be sung to well known tunes. So far as the 'racy' element that is supposed to have been such a strong driving force in the poet's programme is concerned, the closest he comes is in the first half of the second stanza of *The Lass of Peattie's Mill*:

Her arms white, round and smooth
Breasts rising in the dawn
To age it would give youth
To press 'em with his hand¹³

This hardly signifies a preoccupation with bawdiness and this poem is the only one of this collection which made its way into the heavily self-censored *Tea Table Miscellany*. Published in 1723 this collection was far from 'racy' and although it was aimed at a general audience Ramsay did censor the works for precisely the kind of raciness that Harker and Henderson accuse him of so that those sections of society, primarily female, who might be offended by the originals could peruse and perform these versions while leaving their sense of propriety intact. The songs were neither racy nor particularly challenging, either politically or religiously. This collection was made viable by the growing commercial and cultural appetite for Scots material that Watson had recognised, confirmed

by the success of *Scots Songs* , which ran to a second edition in 1719, and by the self-confidence generated by his growing reputation as a 'people's poet' which can be discerned in his opening remarks in the Preface of *The Tea Table Miscellany*:

My being well assured how acceptable new words to known tunes would prove, engaged me to the making verses for above sixty of them in this and the second volume.'

Another thirty, he claims, have been penned by 'ingenious young gentlemen' who were eager to assist in the endeavour:

The rest are such old verses as have been done time out of mind and only wanted to be cleared from the dross of blundering transcribers and printers.¹⁴

It is clear from these remarks that Ramsay viewed himself not as an antiquarian but as a moderniser and it is to that sense of modernity that his remarks above speak. Ramsay was not concerned with the accuracy of folk expression so much as the aesthetics of contemporary popular reception. This sensibility was consistent throughout Ramsay's literary career and is evidenced by some additional remarks contributed to the preface of a later edition:

This fourteenth edition in a few years , and the general demand for the book by persons of all ranks , wherever our language is understood , is a sure evidence of its being acceptable.¹⁵

Ramsay draws our attention here to realities that highlight the inaccuracy of Harker and Henderson's critical context. He was addressing a broadly based, modern market for Scots songs and was making no attempt to consider the antiquarian procedures that he would later be criticised for failing to observe. Ramsay was involved in a re-creative process geared toward a popular audience. Where later antiquarian critics insisted on a fixed and 'accurate'

text, which allowed them to dis-empower traditional culture by historicizing the texts through their connection with older Scots language, Ramsay viewed Scots as a vital and contemporary vehicle that was adaptable and culturally significant. This is less of a distance from the aesthetic priorities of a traditional audience than it is from a post - enlightenment literary critique. Ramsay's re-creation was however, something quite other than traditional. He was re-creating the traditional format as popular song by writing new texts as well as editing older texts, both geared to the aesthetic priorities of a popular literary audience. The accents of tradition here high light Ramsay's identification with the spirit, rather than the letter, of ancient songs and poetry and his recognition of his audience's psychological dependency on the materials of tradition, albeit modernised to suit their contemporary cultural priorities and aspirations. Ramsay's achievement, however, is still undermined by a failure to fully understand the competing aesthetic priorities in a transitional culture:

As with Evergreen, Tea Table Miscellany provided for a need and filled an emotional gap in the make up of the educated Scot in London as well as in Edinburgh . Unfortunately for his reputation among genuine antiquarians like Hailes and Herd, he failed to recognise the long term results of his purging and pruning to suit contemporary tastes. '16

This conclusion reinforces every prejudice that those "genuine antiquarians" ever generated. Ramsay met an emotional need for his culture as a whole, testified by the popularity of the work which ran to twenty four editions through the course of the century. His, so called, failure in adapting the materials of

tradition to a contemporary aesthetic was a genuine attempt to re-invest traditional culture with contemporary relevance for a popular literary culture and the long term results of his "purging and pruning" were visible through the works of Fergusson and Burns and the continuing effort to revitalise Scottish culture through the vernacular. Ramsay was not an antiquarian, he was a popular poet and adaptor who respected the contemporary priorities of literary culture and recognised the potential for change in tradition through an evolution of the popular aesthetic.

When Ramsay decided to expand on the version of *Christ's Kirk on the Green*, attributed by Watson to James V when it appeared as the first poem in his *Choice Collection*, he reproduced the original verse, with the exception of two insignificant differences, word for word.¹⁷ From the outset, this seems to imply that he was, at very least, willing to respect the integrity of his originals, such as it already was. The gap between Ramsay's own first Canto, written in 1715 and published in 1718, as a thirty two page pamphlet by Wm. Adams Junior, "for the author of the 2nd Canto at the Mercury opposite to Niddry's Wynd" suggests that a certain amount of time and care was taken over those additions that he made. It is unlikely that a third canto would have been added later that year if his earlier version had not met with some degree of popular critical approval.

Ramsay lived in a society where personal and social improvement were high on the cultural agenda. It was a society convinced that it had cast off the dark cloak of 'ignorance' which they believed typified preceding ages. It was, however, an emerging society committed to new concepts of linear and progressive modes

of operating but nevertheless dependent on the rhythms and resonance of tradition for its emotional balance.¹⁸ Ramsay's intuitive sense of that dependency, which was later to find expression in the proto-romantic social vision of *The Gentle Shepherd*, was founded upon the relationship which he established with traditional works and both reflects and prompts the responses of the society in which he lived.¹⁹

The first Canto of *Christ's Kirk on the Green* not only meets the material criteria which the critics above insist upon - it revels in doing so, but it is Ramsay's ability to sense that atmosphere and distill from it a spirit which is palatable and intoxicating to his own age that raises him above the inconsequentiality that their dismissive terms imply.

For the purposes of this discussion, however, the actual material here shares equal importance with the attitude taken toward it and it is Ramsay's preface to his own second Canto from which the most revealing insights regarding his attitude toward those traditional materials and his treatment of them can be drawn.

In his preface to the second Canto, Ramsay begins by praising 'the Spirit' of the original author's work and remarking on the technical difficulties of keeping that sense 'complete', given the difficulty of the stanza form, and admires the lack of rhyme for 'Crambo's sake', despite the limitations of vocabulary.²⁰ This assumed limitation typifies the outward arrogance of the progressive society but his ignorance of the performance orientated characteristics which give rise to the episodic and repetitive

elements of the first canto also illustrate that Ramsay viewed the traditional author as a 'kindred' poet operating within the same literary parameters as himself who is lacking simply in an extended (modern) vocabulary and the techniques that arise from that extension. This is linked, by Ramsay, implicitly, to the 'ancient' nature of the text.

One of the most interesting aspects of Ramsay's choice of this poem as a base for his own particular brand of synthetic re-creation is that the original work, itself, shows signs of being a kind of pastiche. Whether or not the poem was written by King James I, its association with his name gives good grounds for assuming a relationship with the court. Whatever the poem may be, it is by no stretch of the imagination courtly but it would be reasonable to assume that such a work may have been designed to show the rural classes at their 'leisure' for the entertainment of court sophisticates. In order to simulate the 'authenticity' of these rustics, the rhythms and language echo the low style and the stanza form itself is rhythmically identical to the popular (ballad) stanza with the exception of the deliberate four stress end line which is cyclical, ironic and monotonous, inviting an audience to share in the inevitable ending "- that day" at the end of each verse - episode. ²¹

Ramsay, clearly, does not appear to recognise the bobwheel stanza as a performative function and he frequently changes the ending in his own verses to avoid monotony and accommodate a descriptive and referential narrative (and, consequently, weakens the cyclical element which is crucially important). He finds a companion in Alan H. MacLaine, who in his study of the *Christis*

Kirk tradition praises Ramsay's adaption on the grounds that:

...he demonstrated that this ancient genre was still adaptable as a vehicle for modern Scots poets, and he reversed the late seventeenth century tendency of the tradition to dwindle into songs of *The Blythsome Bridal* type. 22

While there can be little argument with the initial remark here, the latter makes two assumptions which cannot be guaranteed. The first is that the poem was originally intended to be an exclusively literary work and the second is that the development from verse into song is a retrograde step. It has been noted above that there is a close relationship between the *Christ's Kirk* octave and the ballad stanza. The bobwheel with its implied chorus presents no great difficulties in terms of song and a musical aspect would add weight to the notion of a performance role for an audience. While this cannot be fully established given that we have no direct musical setting for the work, it is at least careless, as MacLaine is, to discount the possibility.²³ Even if we were to assume that we were dealing with an exclusively literary work, viewing the development into song of such a work as a descent into something less substantial assumes academic values which were entirely alien to the times and demonstrates unfamiliarity with the traditional processes. *Christis Kirk on the Green* was popular long before Ramsay revived it. As a popular work in the public domain it was subject to traditional processes which almost certainly affected the texts upon which Ramsay depended. There is no original or definitive text of this work emanating directly from its author. If the popular culture felt that any of its variations required a melody, a less prejudiced critic might regard that as a

complimentary enhancement to the original.

The author of the first Canto utilises his own and his audience's familiarity with certain aspects of popular style and language in order to create an 'authentic' atmosphere:

To dance these Damesels them dight,	12
Thir Lasses light of Laits,	
Their Gloves were of the Raffel right,	
Their Shoon were of the Straits,	
Their Kirtles were of <i>Lincome</i> light,	16
Well prest with mony Plaits,	
They were so nice when men them nict ,	
They squeel'd like ony Gaits	
Fou loud that Day ²⁴	

Here, the central descriptive grouping of three articles - *Gloves* , *Shoon* and *Kirtles* is presented in the style associated with orally conceived works. This trinary grouping is, however, decorative rather than functional in the way that might be expected of an oral composition where references to *Shoon* and *Kirtles* carry discrete conceptual messages to a 'knowing' traditional audience. The inclusion of *Gloves*, which carry no real supra - narrative sense in the traditional sphere, is anachronistic, as is the reference to '*Lincolme* light'.²⁵ It is unlikely that a cloth would be identified in a generic way in oral composition where the colour would be the significant conceptual factor. ²⁶

The author's strategy is underlined by his use, in the stanza which follows that above, of another trinary grouping, which appears to be a loosely structured balancing stanza, this time describing the focus of the mayhem that is about to follow, *Gilly* , the 'lightest' of all the *Damasels* :

As ony Rose her Rude was red
 Her Lire was like the Lilly:
 Fou yellow, yellow was her head...²⁷

Here the appropriation of oral phrasing and traditional structures breaks down entirely which suggests that these 'oral' phrases were pseudo - formulas original to the author rather than added at a later date by traditional processes. No purpose beyond a crude (even ludicrous) description is served by any of these borrowed and muddled phrases and this should be enough to leave us convinced that we are dealing with a literate, mediaeval imitation of an oral style and that Ramsay is actually 'imitating' that imitation.

It is worth noting the shared fate which befalls the author of the above and Lady Wardlaw with *Hardyknute*, in so far as their borrowing of formulaic phrases from orally conceived works diminishes in inverse ratio to the development of narrative priorities that accord with the literary considerations of the day. The 'authenticity' that they seek is highlighted as spurious by the literary context which surrounds it.

Such a perspective would not be available, however, without reference to modern scholarship and it is not intended to reflect any judgmental light on the procedures of either author or Ramsay who, in common with them, operated according to their contemporary aesthetic priorities which were essentially mimetic. The intention is to acknowledge that imitation of oral and traditional forms creates its own dynamic which carries a potential for literary innovation. This dynamic depends on the referential arena within which the work is undertaken and the critical tension drawn

between the act of imitation and the reaction to the material which is being imitated. For Ramsay, the catalyst of innovation is history. He is engaged in a dialectic with tradition which is itself part of a traditional process. Just as the author of the original canto plunders the popular oral tradition and offers up a literate translation of an oral style, Ramsay plunders this translational orality and presents Scottish poetry with a new tradition, but along the way the popular tradition was actively interpreting these events and re - presenting them in a form that was acceptable to the popular audience. It is, regrettably, impossible to judge the exact impact of traditional processes as they affected the original text, but the survival of the poem in the public domain, between its original conception and its reappearance in broadsheet that lead to its discovery by Gibson, Watson and Ramsay, assures us that it was kept alive in a popular form and that means that it was both acceptable to a popular audience and subject to the processes of that tradition.

In the development of *Christ's Kirk on the Green* we have a powerful example of the regenerative feedback which occurs between a literate culture with dynamic, developing aesthetic concepts and a traditional oral culture which seeks to assimilate and codify those developments as they accord with the development of the popular consciousness.

Ramsay developed as a poet at a critical stage in the development of that popular consciousness where orality was under extreme pressure arising from the growth of literacy. This was not as yet a mass literate culture but it was one in which literacy was shaping the popular consciousness. The ossification of a latin

based elite culture meant that there were signs of new and shared forms of communication between the popular oral and literate cultures.²⁸ Classical literacy was, in a creative sense, a moribund form while the new vernacular literature depended on its oral foundation for vitality. Ramsay's role in that process was that of cultural interlocutor, explaining the old society to the new and the new society to the old. He did so in a surprisingly traditional way by absorbing, translating and relating what was acceptable to the new popular consciousness in the same way as those amateur and semi-professional, semi-literate hawkers and minstrels had done in the preceding centuries and like them he was never one to let the truth get in the way of a good tale.

Ramsay is at pains to stress his own awareness of the historical nature of the text itself. In his preface to the first Canto Ramsay resorts to a minor deceit, in claiming that: *"This Edition of the first Canto is taken from an old Manuscript Collection of Scots Poems written 150 Years Ago....."*²⁹

As we have noted above, his first Canto was almost certainly lifted word for word from Watson. This could be taken as evidence of a fraudulent claim for antiquarian credentials and there is no doubt that Ramsay was not above such tactics. There is, however, firmer evidence to indicate that while Ramsay was willing to embrace any plaudits that were forthcoming he was only concerned with them as they arose incidentally from his literary agenda. His real concern here is in focussing the reader's attention on his own performance. He is carrying out an operation on an historical text. It is not a *post mortem* or an attempt to revive the corpse but an invocation of a spirit conjured from the ether of history.

This awareness is magnified in the second paragraph of the preface to the second Canto which begins: *"Ambitious to imitate so great an Original , I put a Stop to the War; called a Congress , and made them sign a Peace, that the World might have their Picture in the more agreeable Hours of rinking, Dancing and Singing."* ³⁰

Imitation may be on his mind, but it is improvement that concerns Ramsay here. The editorial voice which rests quietly in the footnotes and glossary of the first Canto and surfaces in the criticism of the opening paragraph of this preface gives way to the authorial voice of Ramsay - *'I put a Stop to the War'*. Ramsay hijacks the narrative so that *'the World might have their picture'* but this world is Ramsay's audience and the characters are imported across the centuries and re-configured in order to meet contemporary expectations of low-life scenes. Anonymous herdsmen and foresters are individualised and transformed into *'the liquid logic Scholar'* or the *'souple Taylor'* who was *'Falkland bred'* and had witnessed court dancing.³¹

Here, Ramsay runs into similar problems to the original author. Although he has no intention here of consciously imitating an oral style (he is more than conscious of the text) he is, unlike his original, attempting to emulate a traditional literate style which refers to a set of social and aesthetic priorities that are quite foreign to Ramsay but which he, nonetheless, finds compelling enough to try to capture and develop. In common with his predecessor he tries to maintain the style and structure of the original genius but rapidly comes into conflict with the narrative demands of his own aesthetic compulsions - where the original

characters are mediaeval illustrations, Ramsay's characters demand empowerment and the right to celebrate as conscious (or at least semi-conscious) individuals with a contemporary, referential social context and awareness.

The manly Miller, haff and haff,	
Came out to shaw good Will	
Flang by his Mittens and his Staff,	
Cry'd gie me Paty's- Mill ;	60
He lap Bawk-hight, and cry'd, Had aff,	
They rus'd him that had Skill;	
He wad do't better, quoth a Cawf,	
Had he another Gill	64
Of Usquebae 32	

Until this (8th) stanza Ramsay has struggled to keep faith with the original structure but the pressure shows early on in the critical end line. As we have noted above, the consistent ...that Day may be a performative aspect of the poem which Ramsay does not recognise, but interference, even of a limited nature, precludes any participative role for the audience. Even if the difference is as slight as in Stanza 7 (....some day) the role of an audience is cancelled because they have no way of knowing what to join in with, in order to contribute to the work in a meaningful way and without it the episodic cycle and rhythm break down.³³

In the stanza above, however, this gives way altogether. The pressure to refer the narrative outward is too great to be contained. Where he has tinkered with the imported characters up until this point, Ramsay now takes them over. The original deals with the characters in terms of action and event, Ramsay explains them. The Miller is *haff and haff* (half fuddled) but he uses another character to confirm the reason behind his daze - because

he is drunk. The characters interact in a way that is not consistent with the original (where communication is direct and for the most part physical) and which implies a self, and social, awareness that is not present in the first Canto. The Miller staggers through time into a field of anachronism. His request for *Paty's Mill* assumes a familiarity with Ramsay's popular song that had yet to be written at the time in which the piece is set. Ramsay is transforming the characters into contemporary creatures that act and interact in accordance with his own social expectations. What he gains by doing this is a vitality that reflects the expanded contemporary social landscape (as the work develops, in contrast to the original, the entire social spectrum from the labourer to the laird is drawn into the narrative - anticipating the social setting of the Gentle Shepherd). By retaining the essential structures and the semblance of an episodic orientation he is able to compress that vitality into something that appears temporally ordered, in an historical sense, and, by implication, psychologically manageable. The episodic nature of the first Canto typifies a mediaeval conception of time where linear events are subordinate to eternal cycles. By retaining the cyclical element of the stanza form ,insofar as he is able given the demands of his narrative, Ramsay re-invents, for himself and his society, the archetypal images of the traditional world.

The poem is tailored to the expectations and sense of identification of the contemporary audience and no doubt there are commercial aspects to that approach. This does not assume a lack of respect for the original.

Ramsay returns to the 'Sense' of the poetry. He makes an

explicit historical link between his own two Cantos, which are to follow, and the original by drawing attention to the span of time, '300 Years' which has elapsed between their creation. Ramsay is both reinforcing the historical element and announcing a fundamental alteration in its nature. The 150 years which drew the reader's attention to the 'ancient' quality of the source text in the preface to the first Canto is by-passed and the audience is referred directly to the 300 years since the work was written. The patina of antiquity is enhanced by diffuse layers of textual gloss; Ramsay's own text, Watson's text which exists and which Ramsay copied but chose deliberately not to acknowledge, Gibson's text of 1697 or the 150 year old manuscript edition of the first canto from either of which Watson may have copied his version which Ramsay misleadingly claimed as his source although there is no evidence that he ever set eyes upon it or that it ever existed and finally the 300 year old original text which does not exist but is ascribed by Ramsay to, but certainly not written by, James V. The last of these completes the journey from the actual text to the poetic source in an undocumented archaic past. The deliberate mendacity and referential confusion of texts provides an assisted passage through the vortices of the past to a mytho-poetic realm where Ramsay wants to take his readers and where they want to be, albeit in the company of their own familiars.

The temptation when examining this strategy is to think of Ramsay as a crooked antique dealer 'distressing' his own modern work to match a more ancient piece and accumulating prestige and commercial value from the inherent 'quality' of the original. There are two factors to consider here, the first is that the

original itself is a 'fake', perhaps not a particularly good one, and the second is that Ramsay openly announces his own work as superior to the original. He sees the commercial value as lying in his additions and the fact that demand led to a third Canto suggests that he may well have been correct in that assumption.

The end result is a literature of ambient history; antiquity revisited and revitalised in order to re-assert continuity for the new society. Ramsay polishes history in order that he and his society can view layers of the past beneath, and refracted by, a surface that mirrors themselves. Behind their own reflections he allows them a glimpse of a future as yet too brilliant to confront directly cast, as it is, in the dazzle of immanent romanticism.

In this view, nationalism and fear of cultural absorption, consistently overstated reasons for Ramsay's vernacular work, become cloudy and peripheral factors in a past obscured by deliberate self-deception and a future that offers only the 'certainties' of empirical historicism.

Ramsay's immediate concerns are commercial and artistic, driven by the age's need on the one hand to develop from an agrarian to an industrial economy and on the other a gentle, psychological de-concretisation which prepares the emerging urban society for the romantic 'doubling' of consciousness that mass literacy carries in its wake. Ramsay is not, as Harker would have us believe, simply a cultural go-between. It is in the culture itself that the mediation is taking place between potent and deeply ingrained, oral patterns of thought and the new linear, abstract modes of popular literacy.³⁴ In order to feel and to give his audience the appearance that they are controlling the present he

is obliged to mythologise the past in their own image.

This, for Ramsay, is a work of progress contiguous with the spirit of the past. Offering posthumous comfort to the poet (and congratulating himself for his role in the resurrection) Ramsay goes on: *"Let no worthy Poet despair of Immortality; good Sense will always be the same in Spite of the Revolution of Words."*³⁵

The 'Revolution of Words' presses home the progressive notion that Ramsay and his society live in advanced times but it is the universal poetic 'Sense' which drives across space and time and provides the psychological security which must accompany social progress.

Here we have a poet with a distinct programme. He is imitating the form, exploiting the discrete cultural significance of the rhythm and adding layers to the language. A dynamic mimetic strategy is welded to traditional sensibilities, self-consciously and certainly with one eye to a profit, but the other is firmly fixed on a universal poetic sense which he feels to be shared through the culture across time. As a self-proclaimed, active proponent of that sense, he cannot afford to be disrespectful in case that disrespect reflects back upon himself.

Tradition, for Ramsay, was not simply a by-product of an historical analysis but an essential element of his creative impulse. Ramsay absorbed the popular tradition in such a way as to facilitate an easy and natural synthesis between that culture and the neoclassical literary forms to which he was also exposed.

Born in Leadhills in 1684, the only son of John Ramsay who died before he was a year old, Ramsay was raised by his mother, Alice Bower and his step-father, a local landowner.

Ramsay's formative years were spent in a rural community. This is central not only to an understanding of his fondness and feeling for traditional and popular song but also in making a fundamental distinction between Ramsay and the English neoclassicists. Thomas Crawford notes, in relation to the origins of the pastoral form, that "... the nostalgia was based on a real country childhood ..., and the idealisation upon circumstances which the author had actually observed." ³⁶ Crawford does not directly apply this to the study of Ramsay's pastoral works but it does strengthen any claims to authenticity of feeling made on Ramsay's behalf. Where Pope, Gay and their urban contemporaries were mimicking pastoral forms Ramsay had a concrete set of experiences on which to draw even though he had acquired, through the second phase of his life in the city, a veneer of urbanity.³⁷

Armens argues that Gay was working in the pastoral tradition at a time when it had degenerated as a literary form through its adaption for the esoteric tastes of an urban court. He maintains that Gay's pastoral burlesques were informed by the actual experience of the Devonshire countryside which he remembered from his youth. This, he claims, led to Gay, unwittingly perhaps, encouraging a return to a pastoral based on an actual knowledge of and sympathy with inanimate nature and simple rustic people. Even though this claim ought to be treated seriously, it should be noted that Gay's rural experience was that of the son of a successful mercantile family, whose business was centred on a thriving market town, engaged in country leisure pursuits and that his experience of 'ordinary' country folk was always that of an observer. This is in contrast to Ramsay's early experience which was as a member of a

rural community. Gay's 'realism' may have helped validate, for Ramsay, the importance of his own actual experience but his perspective differed fundamentally from Gay's and this is reflected in his work.

He was educated at a local school until he was fifteen years old and there learned to "understand Horace but faintly in the original".³⁸ That Ramsay had access to the classics mainly through English translation was critical to the definition of his role as cultural interlocutor between classical and vernacular traditions.

The central implication of a literary, vernacular education was that Ramsay was later able to absorb the Augustan influence without the brittle classicism and sense of rhetorical convention that forced his Latin educated contemporaries to venerate that moribund culture through mock forms. When Ramsay began to operate in the same territory as his English counterparts, he may not have been able to approach their levels of sophistication but they, in turn, struggle to match the natural vitality of Ramsay's vernacular work which in many respects held more true to the original models than those studied, neoclassical efforts. In accounting for this we can, while recognising that that Ramsay is as self-conscious a writer as many of his contemporaries, note that his sense of irony and perspective has an empathetic quality not to be found in the work of his southern neighbours.³⁹

Carol McGuirk claims that we are encouraged when reading Ramsay and Gay to, "distinguish them from their artless characters".⁴⁰ While this could be taken to be true of Gay, there is ample evidence that it is not so for Ramsay. A fundamentally

different approach can be found even where the characters, subject and landscape are similar :

'Tis She who nightly strowls with saunt'ring Pace
 No stubborn Stays her yielding Shape embrace;
 Beneath the Lamp her tawdry Ribbons glare,
 The new-scour'd Manteau and the slattern Air; 270
 High -draggled Petticoats her Travels show
 And hollow Cheeks with artful Blushes glow;
 With flatt'ring Sounds she soothes the cred'lous Ear,
 My noble Captain ! Charmer ! Love! my Dear! 41

In Book III of *Trivia, or the Art of Walking the Streets of London* , Gay trails through an urban landscape and in this episode provides a polished perspective on prostitution. Irony is heavily directed at the character who, from the narrator's viewpoint, is fooling no one . Her " artful Blushes " are ironically loaded against her rather than her potential clients. Even her language gives her away, reducing gradually to the familiar as she tests her market value. She is not painted to deceive but to expose herself.⁴²

When Ramsay covers the same ground in *Lucky Spence's Last Advice*, the contrast could not be more clear:

My bennison come on good doers, 85
 Who spend their cash on bawds and whores;
 May they ne'er want the wale of cures
 For a sair snout:
 Foul fa' the quacks wha that fire smoors,
 And puts nae out. 43 90

Ramsay's landscape is sketched here in the imaginary transaction between prostitute and customer. Where else would "good doers" find such business but the alleys or the taverns? The topography of the imagination is more potent than the infamous

street names, "Drury Lane" and "Catherine Street", which Gay uses as a backdrop for his character study. Here, the narrator, Lucky Spence, a former prostitute and now brothel keeper, is dispensing advice to her girls from her death bed. Narrator and central character are one and the same here but where the emphasis in Gay is on using the narrator's irony to expose the character, here the character is using her ironic 'blessing' to expose her self as artful and her society as hypocritical.

Gay's perspective on prostitution is the culminating episode of a general criticism of tradespeople from a single perspective and never allows the irony to turn back on the narrator, or the author. Irony is a distancing mechanism which allows him to test societal values from a fixed point and it is governed by a mimetic counterweight ⁴⁴ - the age's obligation to follow Pope's admonition and find in the subject : "Something, whose truth convinced at sight we find, That gives us back the image of our mind." ⁴⁵

It is important to consider the dynamic contradiction that underpinned the mimetic imagination in Gay's work as it relates to the sense of developing individual creativity, where he must be credited as a positive influence on Ramsay. English neoclassicism was susceptible to an ongoing and aesthetically subversive conflict within the conception of imitation. The classical notion of imitation was concerned with an integrative imitation of the ideal and a universal rather than abstract form of personal expression. The implicit subordination of the imagination and the passions to a rational insight into the ideal, reinforced by humanistic classicism, was still inherently critical to the neoclassical

sensibility. Nevertheless, the use of imagination and the passions in aesthetic creation and their importance to the conception of taste was taken for granted, even as it was criticised for seeming to conflict with 'reason'. It is worth noting, however, that the whole concept of 'reason' at this time was moving away from the classical notion of an all encompassing ethical conception of nature.

The neoclassicists viewed 'invention' as the essential creative faculty of the artist and a faculty which '.....in its "imitation" of nature conceives the design and order of its production; and accordingly the imagination was assigned rather to the adornment of this structural outline by figurative or symbolic expression.' 46

Invention was generally regarded as a rational procedure and it was assumed that the:

...exclusive employment of the imagination itself in the "invention" of the fable will only lead to an improbable and indeed false representation of the rational chain of circumstance and meaning which lies behind and constitutes "nature". 47

Gay was no literary radical, but although his attention to the "design and order" of the form was in keeping with the general critical thrust, the pressure of individual creative imagination constricted by form resulted in an emotional overflow which manifested itself in creative irony, a by-product of the distorted genre.⁴⁸ It is through that conflict of form and imagination that Gay succeeds in revitalising the pastoral itself and it is against the distorted plane of irony that those who followed Gay, including Ramsay, were able to reflect.⁴⁹

Ramsay was conspicuously aware of the developing critical importance of irony and through Lucky Spence he is able to enter

into a wider critique of Scottish urban society which looks behind the trade; there is a market, the customer is part of the equation and there are consequences for both parties arising from the nature of the trade. There is a crucial movement here from Gay's irony of dissimulation, in which the character is the exclusive and unself-conscious focus, to an inherent ironical sense where the character recognises and exploits the situational irony in sexual disease, but is also self-reflexive in her awareness that the same ironic situation is an occupational hazard for herself and those who follow her trade. Her sincere curse is directed at the "quacks" whose shoddy cures drive the disease inward while masking the external symptoms, thus making it harder to detect and, consequently, more difficult for prostitutes to protect themselves.⁵⁰

She is more aware than the society that she criticises and the result is that inherent irony engenders a level of earnestness.⁵¹ This is accompanied by a distinctive "naturalness" that we associate with a romantic rather than a neoclassical conception of irony.⁵² In exposing the hypocrisy that exists within the situation Ramsay tests values from the inside in a way that identifies with the character and the criticism. In doing so he was not simply, as some of his critics would have us believe, reflecting a growing recognition of the fallibility of a kirk that had been the driving moral force in Scotland, but also establishing a poetic trend toward criticism of the 'unco guid' that would peak with Burns and remain as a vibrant critical element in Scottish poetry and fiction.

Nowhere is Ramsay's debt to the classicists more glibly accepted than in the pastoral and Gay is commonly cited as his principal creditor. While this may be the case in regard to certain aspects of the form, Ramsay's relationship with character and theme is integrated to an extent that, for Gay, would not have been possible or even, from his perspective, plausible.

Gay's mock pastoral, *The Shepherd's Week*, targets the pastoral 'realism' of those, like Ambrose Phillips, whose efforts were marked by contrived simplicity. In order to expose and ridicule these primitive characterisations, Gay caricatures Phillips's naive rustics into overtly 'real' but equally contrived simpletons who are animated satires of Phillips's originals. According to one view, this allows him to move, "...into a realism that begins to win our respect by displacing value from the mythical and literary to the actual and literal."⁵³

This 'realism', however, depends on sharing a sense of the actual and literal nature of these reduced characters which Gay, himself, may not have felt.⁵⁴ Gay's array of bumpkins are ironic at their own expense. Even if that irony successfully supports his critical agenda, he does not necessarily reflect rural characters any more realistically than Phillips does. It is difficult to deny that even those elements of social realism that are recognisable are so '...at the service of an unbroken irony.'⁵⁵

In "The Dumps", the third pastoral of *The Shepherd's Week*, Gay records the complaints of *Sparabella Bumkinet*, a country maid who has lost her lover to another. Gay associates her song with the rustic flavoured lyrics of the day by having Sparabella appeal to

D'Urfey to '...suffer me, thou bard of wond'rous Meed'.⁵⁶

D'Urfey was a contemporary and popular, hack songwriter. The praise directed to this famous 'bard' ironically reveals the character of Sparabella by defining her parameters of cultural reference. Gay was not perhaps aware of the irony that this attack reflected on his own society which D'Urfey himself highlights when he notes that he was being, "... 'da-da- damned' for a poet, though everybody 'sa-sa-sang' his songs." ⁵⁷ The central ironic device is the refrain:

My plaint , ye lasses, with this Burthen aid
'Tis hard so true a Damsel dies a Maid.⁵⁸

This refrain is introduced when she begins her story proper and is at first appropriate as she runs the spectrum from dejection to invective against her rival in love. This builds to a peak in her final protestation of love for her lost sweetheart, but Gay begins to undermine the credibility of the character by overheating the protestation and we find the poet simultaneously distorting genre and undermining character through language:

Sooner shall Cats disport in Waters clear,
And speckled Mackrels graze the meadows fair,
Sooner shall screech Owls bask in Sunny Day,
And the slow Ass on Trees, like Squirrels, play, 70
Sooner shall Snails on insect Pinions rove,
Than I forget my Shepherd's wonted Love.⁵⁹

These mutants have no place in nature and Gay is reducing to absurdity Phillips's native eclogue, by basing these distortions on familiar species who are unlikely to populate the Arcadian landscape upon which the Rapinesque conception of the pastoral ideal, supported by Gay, depends. Even those which might sneak in,

such as the ass, or the owl, are placed so ludicrously out of context as to underline a loss of connection with the classical form. However he is also, unconsciously, distorting the pastoral itself by allowing imagination to form the basis of invention.⁶⁰ The character is undermined because the language itself is inappropriate to the 'simplicity' which defines the pastoral character.

Having 'set up' Sparabella as unstable with this almost hallucinatory language, Gay tips her into a state of hysteria which undermines her protestations of innocence following her description of a recent sexual encounter with the local Squire - an encounter which may have prompted her erstwhile lover's defection. She continues with her, now undermined, refrain and considers taking her own life in dramatic fashion, only to put it off because she is scared of the sounds and creatures of the night. Any possibility of self-realisation is displaced by self-pity in the final refrain which is changed to:

Ye lasses cease your Burthen, cease to moan,
And, by my case forewarn'd, go mind your own.⁶¹

By injecting this quasi - moral tag Gay is imitating and again undermining the mentality of the popular song and the character whose own lesson may not be learned. The message is driven home by a final half verse which makes it clear that she has no intention of killing herself. Gay would wish us to put that decision down to a clodhopping pragmatism that he presents as the emotional counterpoint to the bucolic neurosis that has gone before and her resignation and inaction presents an ironic mirror to the 'noble'

cartoons of Phillips.

Whatever his agenda, Gay's essentially two dimensional creations are founded on the prejudice and the assumed intellectual superiority of the urbane commentator and reader for whom the Arcadian pastoral form represents an ideal. This superiority is bound up in an affinity with Latin based, classical, as opposed to traditional, culture. A comparison of his treatment of traditional activities and concerns with that of Ramsay illustrates not only the depth of that cultural opposition but also how far Ramsay took what Gay had to offer and, unhindered by the constraints of classical formality, moved the pastoral form into a new and more culturally fertile dimension.

Gay tends, as we have noted above in regard to contemporary popular song, to try and shoot his critical targets with their own gun. When he considers traditional song in the sixth pastoral, tradition is laid in the hands of the drunk, Bowzebeus who is woken from his stupor to perform a mixed bag of traditional and popular material ranging from traditional lore to contemporary news.⁶²

To louder Strains he rais'd his Voice, to tell
 What woeful Wars in Chevy -Chace befell,
 When Piercy drove the Deer with Hound and Horn,
 Wars to be wept by Children yet unborn !
 A With' rington, more Years thy life had crown'd,
 If thou had'st never heard the Horn or Hound!
 Yet shall the Squire, who fought on bloody stumps,
 By future Bards be wail'd in doleful Dumps.⁶³

Where he deals with traditional materials he attacks the material through the character. His drunken yokel is an ironic bard - D'Urfey 's country cousin. In the final line we can get an idea

of the quality of traditional performance from the example of this casual labourer, come guardian of tradition, who sets the mould for future agronomists of melancholy. Gay takes this a stage further by having Bowzebeus lapse into a religious frenzy and 'sing' the one hundredth psalm before collapsing once more into drunken stupor where he is abandoned to sleep it off.

It might be argued that Gay is lamenting the fall of tradition here but it seems more likely that he is attacking its veneration.⁶⁴ Whichever view you choose, tradition, for Gay, is inextricably involved with the vulgar. It is a passing diversion, interesting only for the duration of the performance - the audience deserts when the spectacle is ended and it is the spectacle rather than the content to which they are drawn. Gay is linking tradition with the ephemeral and considers its function only in relation to its entertainment value. While he is, in a sense, right about the close relationship of traditional, popular and even religious songs he does them all an equal disservice by assuming that one automatically degraded the other.⁶⁵

Ramsay also recognises the interaction of popular and traditional materials but he takes the equation much more seriously and, more importantly, begins to integrate the fruit of that relationship with the contemporary ideas in a way that Gay was incapable of even considering.

In his pastoral play *The Gentle Shepherd*, Ramsay uses the traditional song as a focus for communal identification and as a personal and individual expression of love.

Patie.	Jenny sings saft <i>The Broom of Cowden-knows,</i>	
	And Rosie lilts <i>The Milking of the Ewes</i>	70
	There's nane like Nansie, <i>Jenny Nettles</i> sings;	
	At turns in <i>Maggy Lauder</i> , Marion dings:	
	But when my Peggy sings with sweeter skill,	
	<i>The Boat-man</i> or <i>The Lass of Patie's Mill</i> ;	
	It is a thousand times mair sweet to me :	75
	Tho' they sing well, they canna sing like thee. ⁶⁶	

In quoting these traditional and popular songs in Patie's reply to Pegg, Ramsay is recognising the role of song in collective and personal relations. In the preceding verses the relationships of his characters have fused in a re-creation of their personal history which runs like filigree through the background of communal work and leisure activities in a rural community. Here, Patie's relationships to the other singers is defined by his recognition of them in association with songs that he has heard them sing in a communal situation and registered individually by his aesthetic response to their performance. When it comes to Peggy, however, Ramsay closes in on an individual relationship, made specific by association with Patie's name, through a song which they appropriate from the communal culture to identify their relationship. Patie's response to Peggy's song is not only aesthetic but emotional.⁶⁷

What Ramsay is illuminating here is the growth of individualism in an increasingly literate society. Where Gay's rustics are profoundly illiterate and rely on the fragmentary coherence of drunken 'minstrels' to inform their stupidity, Ramsay recognises a growing sophistication in the rural population. His characters are, in many cases, explicitly literate and, in the case of the auto-didact, Patie, culturally developed, though Ramsay

elsewhere hints that the final polish can only be obtained at the finishing school of 'society'. In appropriating from the traditional and the popular culture, Ramsay's characters are staking a claim in the new individualist, literate world while still maintaining a connection with the old, non-literate communal world. Patie and Peggie did not create those songs, they already existed in the culture, as either popular or traditional songs. Nevertheless, so far as they are concerned these are *their* songs because they identify their relationship. In this, Ramsay collects the central theme of his work, the growth and broadening perspective of societal relations as a whole. Gay offers only the narrow and retreating perspective of an endangered elite.

This is nowhere better illustrated than their comparative treatment in these two pastoral works of supernatural elements.

Last Friday's Eve, when as the sun was set,
 I, near yon Stile, three fallow Gypsies met.
 Upon my Hand they cast a poring Look,
 Bid me beware, and thrice their Heads they shook,
 They said that many crosses I must prove,
 Some in worldly Gain, but most in Love.
 Next Morn I miss'd three Hens and our old Cock,
 And off the Hedge two Pinners and a Smock.
 I bore these losses with a Christian Mind
 And no Mishaps could feel, while thou wert kind .
 But since alas! I grew my Colin's Scorn,
 I've known no Pleasure, Night, or Noon, or Morn.
 Help me, ye Gypsies, bring him home again,
 And to a constant Lass give back her Swain.⁶⁸

Here Marian, another of Gay's unconscious comediennes, becomes a self-revealing exemplar of her own culture's bewildered credulity. The fulcrum of idiocy here lies in her "Christian Mind", which cannot associate the loss of her goods and property with the Gypsies pro-active form of prophecy but instead calls on a

kind of fatalistic Christianity to help her bear her losses. When it comes to the return of her vexed lover, Colin Clout, it is once more the Gypsies that she turns to as the 'supernatural' force that may be capable of bringing about his return. This feckless Christianity is the familiar ironic barb to the 'humble but pure' Christian orientation of the pastoral form that Gay was criticising, but, while this ridicules the supernatural, it also ridicules the rural society as a whole. There is no other voice raised against superstition except in the silent cynicism of the Gypsies who trade on gullibility, but their silence makes them unwitting collaborators in Gay's satire rather than actual critics of the society that they rob. Once more the critical perspective is essentially a single fixed point, that of an educated, conformist, Christian establishment which scoffs at the imagined rural vision of the supernatural while remaining faithful to its own. Gay is prepared to employ his agents of irony, the Gypsies, as critical tools without giving them a voice that would allow them to comment, albeit as transient members, on that society.

Ramsay's dealings with the supernatural, as well as being conspicuously better integrated than Gay's, present a more dynamic and evolutionary approach to the theme. His vehicle is Patie's rival for the hand of Peggy, Bauldy, who, knowing he cannot compete, resorts to the supernatural by offering a bribe of "pease and grots" to Mause, an elderly woman reputed to be a witch.

Bauldy: Then , I like Peggy, - Neps is fond of me;-
 Peggy likes Pate, - and Patie's bauld and slee,
 And loes sweet Meg, But Neps I downa see- 55
 Cou'd ye turn Patie's love to Neps, and than
 Peggy's to me, - I'd be the happiest man.

Mause: I'll try my art to gar the bowls row right;
Sae gang your ways, and come again at night;
'Gainst that time I'll some simple things prepare, 60
Worth all your pease and grots; tak ye nae care.⁶⁹

Here, Ramsay allows Bauldy to reveal himself in much the same way as Gay's characters. His attribution of "bauld and slee" characteristics to Patie are clearly designed to reflect back on himself through the ambiguous interpretation of the phrase which may be read as bold and clever, a kind of backhanded compliment to his rival, or, bald and sly, which Ramsay would no doubt wish to be read as ironic self-revelation. This is confirmed by the "pease and grots" offering which highlights his transparent slyness. He wants Mause to work a spell on the cheap which is a comment on the value he places on the supernatural. This implies that the forces of superstition are on the wain even among those who would seek to profit by its force and, in turn, paves the way for Mause's own double talk. Her irony targets those superstitious elements in the rural society that inform Bauldy's ignorance. She will try to "gar the bowls row right", but not in the sense that Bauldy thinks and the end result if she can help it will be worth all his "pease and grots" - that is to say, the outcome will be as slight in his favour as his offering was in hers.

Ramsay's rural society is self-conscious and self-critical. Mause is well aware of her reputation and the basis of ignorance,

represented by Bauldy, upon which that is founded.

This fool imagines, as do mony sic ,
That I'm a wretch in compact with Auld Nick;
Because by education I was taught 80
To speak and act aboon their common thought.⁷⁰

Education is presented as the driving force of social development and the antidote to superstition. Where Gay depends on a static and reduced society in his pastorals, reflected in the fixed conservative notions of his own social background, Ramsay sees vibrant and organic growth through education. His characters criticise themselves and each other and, critically, they learn through experience, as does Bauldy when it is revealed that his encounter with the supernatural was a 'lesson' from Mause and Madge.

Ramsay, of course, has his own agenda and *The Gentle Shepherd* is, on one level, a vision of restoration. What is interesting, however, is how he explores the situation to tease out the possibilities for development both at a social and individual level. Where Gay's neoclassicism allows him to view the pastoral as a political critique, it denies him the supplement of 'vision'. This is what distances Ramsay from his English influences. His relationship with imagination is 'romantic' in the sense that the generic modes which he employs are servants of the visionary discourse, whereas, for Gay, genre is the vision albeit one obscured by the emotional clouds of a repressed imagination swollen with ironic potential. Restoration is the focus for Ramsay, but looking backward goes hand in hand with looking forward to a new and developed vision of society with history fuelling mythology in

a way that anticipates post-Enlightenment, Romantic values.⁷¹

The old order returns having been forced into exile abroad, as with Sir William, or forced to live incognito among the common people, as with Patie, Peggy and Mause. This exposure to the traditional way of life has led to a cultural interchange where the ruling classes have learned from those values and where the common people have responded to the positive values of civil society. Patie and Peggy have, through self development, arrived prepared to accept the good fortune which Sir William's return brings and are examples both to, and of, the community in which they were raised. Sir William has learned that the balance between social convention and individual desires has altered since his exile and the way forward to a new society is open. The currency of cultural interchange is song and in *The Gentle Shepherd* Ramsay deals with that currency in a manner that exhibits both a traditional sensibility and an embryonic, modern romanticism.

Ramsay's instinctive respect for popular materials alloyed to his recognition of their inherent fluidity allows him to infuse redundant literary forms with the accents of tradition. This impulse raises the real possibility of an inclusive romantic literature which draws its substance from a broad contemporary base consisting in both traditional and literary materials. If, however, respect for traditional materials is taken to extremes that robs them of the essential fluidity which allows them to interact freely with the literary culture then those same accents can be distorted to a degree that profoundly affects the evolution of the romantic imagination in Scotland. The central issue that dominates the relationship between tradition and literature after Ramsay is the

question of authenticity - not that of the traditional voice which Ramsay is seeking to modulate for a contemporary literary culture here, but the questions that surface around the notion of the authentic traditional text.

The publication of David Herd's *Ancient and Modern Scottish Songs* in 1769 marks the next significant step in the translation of popular traditional materials for a Scottish literary audience.⁷² Hans Hecht claims that "...Herd's collection, like many others, was suggested by the enormous success of Percy's *Reliques*".⁷³ While this is so, he also draws our attention to the editor's observation in the preface to the first edition of his own collection that throws light on Herd's relationship to Ramsay through an attempt to distance himself from the *Tea Table Miscellany*:

The only collection upon our plan consisting entirely of Scots songs, is the *Orpheus Caledonius*, Published by William Thomson in 1733 but this is confined to a small number, with the music, and now become very scarce; for Allan Ramsay's *Tea -Table Miscellany* cannot be termed *A complete Collection of Scots Songs*; they are, as he himself entitles them, __ *a Choice Collection of Scots and English*.⁷⁴

This backhanded slight of Ramsay's work fails to take full cognizance of the debt which Thomson's own volume owed to the *Tea Table Miscellany* but it also highlights aspects of contextualisation which were not significant for Ramsay. Thomson's work is raised above its own sources because it consists "entirely" of Scottish material and Ramsay's work is relegated because it is not a "complete" collection. Two criteria have become important in the forty-five years that separate these works, that the work should consist of exclusively Scottish material and an expressed

desire to have as much of that material as can be had, almost regardless of quality.⁷⁵ The element of editorial choice has been critically undermined in favour of comprehensiveness.

We are obliged to consider why this should be so. In practically any account of Herd's collecting activities he is described as 'reliable', but what exactly does this mean? In literary terms it has come to mean care in translation at the service of the ideal, or ultimate, textual version and the continuing use of Herd's *Collection* as a source testifies to the degree of his success, *in those terms*. As Hecht points out, however, he was an indifferent editor in the sense that his editorial 'creativity' was limited to the collation of different copies and the fact that careful transcription took precedence over scholarly apparatus is cited by a more modern critic, Harker, as a testament to his reliability.⁷⁶ This reliability is of critical importance as translation becomes a literary issue. There is a tendency to assume that Herd's editorial indifference signifies an absence of ideology but the mild nationalism which, Harker claims, underpinned the work fronts an analytical perspective that fundamentally altered the creative and interactive literary approach to tradition in Scotland, practised by Ramsay.

Every nation, at least every ancient and unmixed nation, hath its peculiar style of musical expression, its peculiar mode of melody; modulated by the joint influence of climate and government, character and situation, as well as by the formation of the organs.⁷⁷

The critical differentiation between Herd's and Ramsay's approach is marked here in the contextualisation of history. For Ramsay, history is a cultural store to which the contemporary poet has creative access, for Herd, it is an analytical measure of

progress underwritten by the consuming ideologies of the Enlightenment. He continues:

...That prediliction so natural for every production of one's own country, together with the force of habit , a certain enthusiasm attendant on music, and perhaps sometimes the principle of association, whereby other agreeable ideas are mingled and always called up to mind together with the musical air, has ever induced people to prefer their own national music to that of all others:... 78

Throughout both of the extracts above, Herd's nationalism is carefully contextualized within a model of Enlightenment values that would fundamentally alter the literary approach to traditional materials. The traditional ballad viewed at this historical remove becomes something quite other than a ballad. It begins the transition between the vital fluidity which Ramsay both recognised and utilised and the mordant functionality which the literary ballad, as an historical unit, displays. Herd was indifferent toward the original materials and reluctant to actively promote the emerging literary prospectus himself, but the assumption of reliability which shadowed that indifference allowed others to take advantage of the 'improvements' that had taken place in the process of collection since the *Tea -Table Miscellany*.

There was one final step which had to be taken before that literary prospectus could really thrive. A vital ballad has an ethereal quality which cannot be transmitted through the written page. This could only be apparent in performance and each performance is unique. Like a photograph it must be fixed before its image can be captured. Ramsay made no attempt to fix that image, he chose instead to try and capture the spirit of the poetry and translate that spirit for an age of improvement. Established literary forces now engaged to the ideology of the Enlightenment,

however, obsessively catalogued, categorised and organised cultural materials in a bid to bolster its own sense of identity. There was no room here for a living tradition identified with the darkness and ignorance of a carefully historicized, primitive past. If traditional materials were to be useful as the building blocks of a modern literary identity, they had to be as uniform and invariable as bricks. The literary prospectus, formed by the cultural amalgamation of a decaying, neoclassical elite and an emerging academy, dependent on empirical values, demanded the fixed text.

Herd's propensity to leave his texts pretty much as he found them accrued additional value through the fact that was also one of the first 'horse's mouth' translators and this practise fed into his 'reliable' reputation. His editorial indifference also made a him useful model for those who were blessed with the driving literary ambition that he, famously, lacked.⁷⁹

In the highly coloured annals of song collecting, there is perhaps no more controversial figure than that of Joseph Ritson. During the third quarter of the eighteenth century the opinions of this singular Englishman were to have a far reaching effect not only on Scottish song collecting but also, as a direct result of his editorial critique, on the shape of the Romantic movement as it developed in Scotland in the later eighteenth, and early nineteenth century. The essentials of that critique are nowhere better expressed than in his own remarks, that:

To correct the errors of an illiterate transcriber, to supply irremediable defects, and to make sense of nonsense, are certainly essential duties of an editor of ancient poetry, provided that he act with integrity and publicity; but secretly to suppress, the original text, and insert his own fabrications for the sake of providing more refined entertainment for readers of taste and genius, is no proof of either judgment, candor, or integrity.⁸⁰

The key element of the critique lies in an unfolding literary strategy which centres on Ritson's notion of "integrity" and, its attendant, "candor". It was around his own definition of these values that Ritson conducted his onslaught on Percy and those other collectors whose "fabrications" he deplored. Herd, naturally, was excepted.

The fact that Ritson's views coalesced to form the backbone of the contemporary academic approach to popular tradition is always measured against the unease which even those who most avidly support his critical stand feel when dealing with his character. Although, unquestionably, vivid, Ritson was caricatured, to the point of the grotesque, by the propaganda of the Percy 'camp'.

M. L Mackenzie notes that:

...the interest taken in 'translations from poetry of writers remote in time place and spirit' is a significant factor in the transition from the 'lucid self-mastery' of the neoclassical age to the 'rich self-expression' of Romanticism. ⁸¹

What he does not emphasise, however, is the importance of the editorial practices which lay behind that interest to the final shape of self-expression in eighteenth century Scotland. For Mackenzie, the consequences for the shaping of the Romantic movement are examined only to the extent of recognising, like Shenstone, that a public, who has "seen all that art can do," and

had tired of artifice, was ready for the emotional 'rush' of primitivism. The focus of his discussion, however, quickly changes to the development of critical criteria for dealing with those traditional materials and the actual significance of the song collectors in shaping Romanticism is largely glossed over.

This avoidance, which is not peculiar to Mackenzie among modern critics, seems to stem from the adoption of critical procedures which are largely based on Ritson's views and which depend on his notion of fixed and 'authentic' texts delivered, where possible, from the mouth of tradition to an 'informed' authority. This, of course, is convenient for literary critics as it appropriates the past by freezing the dynamic traditional process in a way that allows the critical art to operate within comfortable and exclusively literary parameters. If the real significance of the song collectors in cultural development is to be explored, then the aptness of those critical procedures would have to be addressed. The discomfort involved seems to overwhelm the question by threatening the validity of accepted critical practise. It is only by examining the strategy which lay behind the development of those critical factors in the light of their effect on the traditional creative process that we can begin to appreciate how keenly the adoption of Ritson's critical ideology was to shape and even distort the development of the romantic voice, particularly in Scotland.

The options for an aspiring, provincial man of letters seeking a reputation in the literary world of eighteenth century Britain were, to say the least, limited. With the right connections and a distinct and 'proper' talent some might, like Gay, make a

precarious way under the capricious patronage of the great and the good, but such a strategy generally meant kissing the hand of the literary establishment. Lacking both connections and a regular talent, one alternative was to bite that hand in the hope that it might feed you - if only to keep you at bay.

For Joseph Ritson, born in Stockton-on-Tees on October 2, 1752, the latter option was almost an imperative. Descended from peasant or yeoman stock on his father, Joseph's, side and an artisan background on his mother's, Ritson was raised in inauspicious surroundings, but his father ensured that he received a Latin based education under the tutelage of John Thompson of Stockton. Thomson, by reputation a man of antiquarian tastes, may have shaped Ritson's preoccupations at an early stage. While his education furnished him with a thirst for advancement and sharpened his unquestionable natural ability, his background left him ill-starred for a career in letters. Among the limited options available, law seemed the most suited to his talent and disposition and he was indentured to a local solicitor, John Stapylton Raisbeck, at about the age of seventeen. He later transferred his articles to a Joseph Bradley with whom, it seems likely, he remained after their expiry, until leaving Stockton sometime after November 1775.

His own creative 'muse' is best described by even his closest admirer as 'thankless'.⁸² His literary attempts, however, did gain some local attention which centred on the subject of his work rather than the literary quality when they appeared in a local publication *The Literary Register*, in the early 1770's. His most ambitious work, *Verses to the Ladies of Stockton*, was a mildly

sensational epistle in couplets to certain of those ladies headed by an invocation to them and a verse in praise of the town. Using each of them in successive verses to embody the particular qualities of the town, the piece culminated in a melodramatic appeal to unrequited love for she, who, for Ritson, embodies the essence of Stockton and the ambition of his heart:

The Last in number, yet in beauty first,
 Among Strenshelians happy people! nurst, (*Natives of Whitby*)
 Hail, my ELVIRA! graceful, debonair;
 Among the fairest thou alone art fair;
 In vain I bid the muse attempt thy praise;
 In vain the muse to sing thy charms essays;
 To sing Thy charms alone the heav'nly choirs
 Should raise their halleluia's, strike their lyres;
 The theme but worthy them - Yet gracious deign
 To pardon my sincere, tho' lowly, strain,
 All I dare ask - Adieu, my fair! tho' thou
 Ne'er grant 'st a smile, nor an unclouded brow,
 Thy bard, thy slave I'll be - and with that thought
 My bosom cheer, although my chance be nought.⁸³

It is little wonder that 'Elvira' proved resistant to the heartfelt "sincerity" of the youthful Ritson, yet, between the striking lyres and cheering bosoms it is possible to detect here the same weary consistency to the neoclassical aesthetic that pervades all of Ritson's creative endeavours. The bedraggled spectre of Pope and a few of his beggared acolytes haunts Ritson's work. His critical sense regarding contemporary verse was, as Bronson notes, in thrall to the canons of Dryden and Pope.

Bronson, however, would have us believe that this aesthetic standard was suspended when dealing with traditional material which was to be seen by Ritson as, "a familiar friend: affection for it prevented one from judging it harshly."⁸⁴

Yet, judge it he did and in his *Essay Observations on the*

Ancient English Minstrels, he compares an ancient 'minstrel' fragment of text of *Chevy Chase*, in a vernacular style, with an 'improved' version by the "ballad singers" to illustrate the 'wild and licentious metre' of the ancient piece.

'The Perse owt of Northumberlande,
And a vow to god mayd he,
That he wolde hunte in the mountayns
Off Chyviat within dayes thre,
In the mauger of doughte Dogles,
And all that ever with him be.

The fattiste hartes in all Cheviat
He sayd he wold kill, and carry them away:
Be my faith, sayd the dougheti Douglas agayne,
I wyll let that hontyng yf that I may.'⁸⁵

Quoting the fragment above, he demands of the reader:

How was it possible that this barbarous language, miserably chanted 'by some BLIND CROWDER, with no rougher voice than the rude stile"* should maintain its ground against such lines as the following, sung to a beautiful melody, which we know belongs to them.⁸⁶

"When as King Henry rul'd the land,
The second of that name,
Besides the queen he dearly lov'd
A fair and comely dame:

Most peerless was her beauty found ,
Her favour and her face;
A sweeter creature in the world
Did never Prince embrace....." ⁸⁷

The minstrels, he claims, "would have had little to gain from such a contest". If these two traditional efforts were to be judged as "old friends" , why discriminate between them in such a manner. It could scarcely be argued that either of the two pieces conform strictly to a neoclassical aesthetic but it is the polite order and metric conformity of the 'improved' version which appeals to

Ritson's rude, neoclassical sensibility and Bronson's attempt to relegate that sensibility to a neutral state, as well as being part of a larger effort on his part to overstate a critical equilibrium which Ritson's life and activities deny, obscures our own sense of the ideological development of Ritson's critical agenda.

Lack of success in his own creative endeavours was not enough to discourage Ritson from literary activity. He turned his attention to historical material in general and popular, traditional song in particular. During his time with Bradley, whose work consisted mainly in conveyancing, Ritson's antiquarian interests deepened. It seems likely that the discipline and scrupulous procedures involved in dealing with ancient legal documents found its way into his approach toward literary antiquities when he abandoned his own poetry. This is a critical aspect of Ritson's editorial development. The struggle for legitimacy is the hallmark of Ritson's literary disposition and of his critical legacy. He had no talent for original work, but a neoclassical aesthetic alloyed to a pedantic, legal sense of discrimination set into a brittle-tempered, ideological structure. All that remained to hone that ideology into a keenly agonistic critical blade was an unshakeable conviction in his own moral rectitude.

In his definitive and rigorous bio-critical study of Joseph Ritson, Bertrand Bronson examines that strategy in practice. The depth of his admiration for his subject is, however, such that his interpretation of actions and events tends to smooth them over, where a more useful insight might be obtained in confronting his

own discomfort at the extremes to which Ritson was prepared to go in order to create an impression. Bronson's wariness, needless though it is, if, as he ultimately argues, the ends achieved by Ritson justifies the means of achieving them, appears to stem from a desire to identify with and promote Ritson's literary ideology while distancing himself from the wilful eccentricity and instability of its progenitor.

In a summation of Ritson's achievement, he claims:

Here has been nothing less than a complete revolution in scholarly standards; and it has been brought about by the strenuous and unyielding effort and example of one man. There has since been no counter revolution.'88

This "revolution in scholarly standards" places Ritson as a founding father of an academic establishment and the "strenuous and unyielding example" prettifies and tames an obsessive monomania, nurtured by the thrill of conflict, disguised as a desire for truth. The veil of ignorance which, perhaps, excuses Ritson from recognising or accommodating the aesthetic principles of the traditional audience and the vital nature of their art provides no cover for Bronson, who deliberately fails to give proper significance to the "counter revolution" led by Milman Parry and developed by the oral-formulaic school. Bronson is a committed disciple of Ritson's ideology which sees the literary mediator and not the traditional audience as the authoriser of tradition. He is a true believer and, like any cult member, he is inclined to interpret his mentor in the light of his own unshakeable belief. This allows him to overlook not only Parry's contribution to oral aesthetics but also those inconvenient duplicities which undermine the very moral integrity that Ritson insisted upon as

central to his own critical position.⁸⁹

Ritson's moral criticism is personal and uncompromising and all the more fascinating when it is opposed to a social morality against which Ritson, a peculiar radical, set himself. During the opening skirmishes of Ritson's well documented 'ballad war' with Percy he disagrees, in a letter to their mutual acquaintance J. Cooper Walker, with the latter's claim that "...an editor has a right " to avoid a disgusting orthography of a common word" - at least without affording his readers an opportunity of knowing whether it is disgusting or not."⁹⁰

Here he is implicitly undermining the editorial tactic of orthographic changes in the interest of conforming to contemporary social mores but his actual critical target is more personal, and morally loaded. His real interest lay in using Cooper-Walker as a lever to force Percy to allow public access to his manuscript so as to answer Ritson's allegations of tampering with their 'authentic' nature upon which he has staked his own claim for literary credibility. His determination was to push his own critical agenda to the fore and central to that strategy is the personal morality which, Ritson argues, goes hand in hand with the 'legitimate' authority of the text. He continues in the same letter, in regard to his criticism above:

You will think me certainly singular, probably unjust, possibly scandalous; but in fact I have long entertained an idea that there is a more intimate connection between integrity in literary matters & what one calls common honesty than people in general are aware of - In short, that a man who will forge a poem, a line or even a word will not hesitate when the temptation is greater & the impunity equal, to forge a note or steal a guinea.⁹¹

The contemporary view of Ritson was, as Bronson fairly and

accurately claims, coloured by the propaganda of a literary establishment that was anxious to show support for Percy and to avenge the much resented treatment handed out by Ritson to the popular Thomas Warton. The depth of antipathy toward Ritson is illustrated by Sayer's cartoon with its descriptive sub-text : "Fierce meagre pale no Commentator's friend", and its accompanying biblical reference, from the fourth chapter of the book of Daniel, which exploits Ritson's personal idiosyncrasies and compliments the vision of the hypercritic dressed in the full agricultural regalia of the militant vegetarian.⁹²

The essential focus is on Ritson's non-conformity. Bishop Percy, himself, did much, mainly in his private correspondence, to discredit Ritson personally. This attack was sustained even after Ritson's death. It was Percy who was solely responsible for a scandalous accusation, for which he provides no evidence beyond hearsay, surrounding the cause of Ritson's obvious decline into insanity toward the end of his life, when he claimed :

- His Insanity I think may be traced in most of his critical attempts.....The irritability of and acerbity of his temper, I have been told, was not more remarkable than his immoderate pursuit of venereal Indulgences.⁹³

Even as he wags his vicious tongue, the Bishop, who had already been forced to backtrack by Ritson's accusations, is well on the way to admitting defeat. While he continues to insist on a 'Christian' sense of morality, he is applying morality to individual critical temperament and implicitly accepting Ritson's notion of personal morality linked to critical integrity. By the time Percy died in 1810 the critical current was beginning to strongly favour Ritson's ideas, even though the Bishop had ensured,

by a careful propagation of his enhanced account of the manner of Ritson's death (which found its way into Cromek's *Select Scottish Songs*), that his personal reputation remained in question.

Ritson's rehabilitation was begun in earnest by Scott who had known Ritson personally and probably recognised the injustice of the Percy camp's caricature, although on occasion, as we shall see below, that provided him with a useful means of circumventing his own critical difficulties. Haslewood had already championed Ritson and reprinted some of his less controversial books, but in the *Edinburgh Review* of January 1806 Scott, who notably failed to follow Ritson's critical practises while promoting them as the standard of ethical editorship, raised the two pillars upon which Bronson's academy rests. In the course of a discussion on the Ritson- Percy controversy, Scott homes in on Ritson's critical faculty: "...an industry incapable of fatigue , and a fidelity which defied every power of temptation."⁹⁴

Here, the foundation of a literary establishment committed to academic rigour was laid in place. Industry and fidelity were carved in antiqued marble and polished by succeeding generations of scholars - the motto may have been Scott's but the font was Ritson's own design. This not to say that Ritson's strategy went unchallenged, or that Scott was willing to tie himself to its precepts. A more circumspect interpretation of Ritson's strategy, which questions its basis, is proposed by Jamieson in that same year when he notes that Ritson:

...owed not only his taste (if taste it may be called which taste had none) for antient Minstrelsy; but also the public taste which led people to purchase his compilations and republications from the *Reliques* (this is too bad!), and other such popular works.'⁹⁵

Jamieson is aware that Ritson is consciously biting the hand that feeds him and he is raising the critical issue of the popular taste for this kind of 'treated' tradition. The market created by the likes of Ramsay and Percy for modernised textual versions of traditional material made Ritson's own publications possible. This audience was not uncritical but it voiced its approval in a way that was consistent with a more democratic traditional aesthetic than with the prescriptive method that Ritson was proposing. The demand for a fixed and accurate text never arose from the popular audience but, at Ritson's prompt, from the neoclassically bound literary elite who were anxious to contextualise traditional materials in a way that supported their own historical outlook and cultural prospectus. The social dimension is entirely missed by Scott who, in common with the Ritsonian school he helped to promote, denies the popular audience its authority in the development of songs which have their roots in the traditional imagination.

Jamieson then goes on to question the propriety of applying such rigorous standards to the material at hand:

That Mr. Ritson was most scrupulously honest, according to the strict letter of the law, I am very ready to grant; but I can see no extraordinary merit in that, any more than in his atrabilious, furious and obstreperous abhorrence of forgery of any kind. No man will be a thief, who dares neither use the stolen goods himself, nor hopes to meet with a receiver;...⁹⁶

Bronson chooses to view this preface as a sinking back into the stale air that poisoned the critical atmosphere prior to Scott's article. While it is true that the strength of the language places Jamieson firmly in the Percy camp (and Bronson

expects kindness and sentiments from Ritson's detractors that he does not find in his subject's criticism of others), Bronson's disappointment blinds him not only to the succinct nature of Jamieson's questioning of critical criteria but also to its defence of creativity, implicit in the notion that song editors are 'thieves'. Jamieson recognises that cultural 'theft' is the lifeblood of the popular imagination, a factor that Scott was unable to ignore in his own collecting and creative endeavours.

Ritson's personal moral sense, as well as providing the basis of the critical culture which fundamentally undermined the role of the creative editors, was to lay the foundations for a new academic establishment and it is a testimony to the persistence of this moral critique that it is the underlying tenet of Bronson's faith in both Ritson and an academy which remains impervious to "counter revolution". Bronson is not alone among modern scholars in his admiration. Friedman, although less enthralled than Bronson, is no less committed to this moral ideology when he claims that: "If Ritson did not add greatly to the accumulated store of printed songs and ballads, he at least taught his fellow editors the virtue (my italics) of printing texts exactly as they found them."⁹⁷

The rehabilitation of Ritson, from the contemporary view of him as the caricatured hypercritic to a founding father of the modern academy, parallels the appropriation of popular tradition by an emerging academic elite who, building on Ritson's obsession with a fixed and authentic text, stemmed the natural transfusion of traditional materials into a new literary stream, exemplified by Ramsay.

If we view the products of popular tradition as simply

interesting or amusing fragments of the past then this is of little consequence. However, the very fact that this material was considered as valuable by those cultural elites undermines that notion. If we allow that material to be culturally functional and an important reflection of the traditional values and attitudes of the popular audience, then we must view that process of appropriation in a more naked light.

For an oral society, literacy represents, at very least, a threat to consciousness. The transitional stage from orality to literacy is a period of pronounced psychological turbulence and the subsequent alienation, which has marked *all* such societies, can only be managed if some medium remains in which the values and sensibility of the oral past can be contained and merged with the new realities of the literate world. It is sensible to claim that popular song is and always has been such a medium - a medium where creative imagination operates in a broad sense to allow the psychological impact of new and strange 'realities' to be absorbed into the popular consciousness. If that process is stifled, as it unquestionably was, by the emerging academy's adoption of the suffocating criteria of 'authenticity' and the fixed text, then we can reasonably charge Ritson and his followers as accessories to dysfunction. They stand, side by side, with the social and institutional seekers after models of linguistic purity, typified by Adam Smith, whose role in the suppression of a dynamic culture in Scottish letters is cogently handled by Robert Crawford in the opening chapter of his *Devolving English Literature*.⁹⁸

Admirable though Ritson and Bronson's scrupulous ideals may be, when applied to a literary tradition which creates

authoritative texts by definition, they raise critical questions in relation to the treatment of orally inspired, popular, traditional materials - even if we assume their moral underpinning to be genuinely felt (there is less reason to doubt this in Bronson's case than Ritson's).⁹⁹ Are those values appropriate to the creative processes of the common people and those who translated that material for a growing mass - literate population? If so, what exactly is the moral value of the fixed text translated directly from oral performance? Does it in some way accrue moral value from the salvation of 'authentic' pieces of tradition, however fragmented and qualitatively disparate they may be, or, does this 'morality' simply disguise an unreasonable and self-interested desire to classify and appropriate common noetic stock for the purposes of literary politics?.

We know from the work of Albert Lord that a fixed text rapidly gains authority among popular traditional singers as they become literate, but it is one thing to accept the authority of a text as a consequence of the processes of developing literacy, it is quite another to have that authority insisted upon. It is a curious moral sensibility that denies a popular culture the right to mediate its own development and a pernicious authority which subjugates the processes of creative popular imagination to an aesthetic conviction that is based on inappropriate moral values of rigour and fidelity.

When Ritson declared war on Percy, a casually creative and popular editor, he stimulated a controversy which tickled and diverted a critical elite but there is a portentous vibrancy to his remark, in the advertisement to the first edition of his

Ancient Songs and Ballads, that: "The reader must not expect to find among the pieces here preserved, either the interesting fable, or the romantic wildness of a late elegant publication."¹⁰⁰

This thinly veiled reference to Percy's *Reliques* with its implied neoclassical disdain for "romantic wildness" resonates with an unconscious preconception of the relationship between the creative application of tradition in a literate context and the developing romantic imagination. However, the consequences for that relationship's development in a distinctively Scottish form were profoundly affected by Ritson's critique.

A study of Pinkerton's withdrawal from creative interpretation and editorship under pressure from Ritson provides the first tangible sign that even as the the war on language, driven by the inferiority complex of the Anglo- Scots establishment, prompted a new British literature, a nascent romanticism, gently shepherded by Ramsay and nurtured on the integrative rhythms of a native, popular, Scottish tradition was being sacrificed at the altar of rigour and fidelity - an altar dedicated to a dangerous caricature.

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¹ It is worth noting the possibility that Watson himself may have had relatively little to do with the choice of materials and there is some evidence to suggest that the advocate James Spottiswoode and the Jacobite antiquarian Archibald Pitcairne may have influenced the content. The first volume of Watson's collection consisted largely in older poems in Scots by literary authors such as Dunbar and Henryson which had already been circulating in broadside editions in the intervening period as well as popular works like "Christ's Kirk". Volumes two and three relied more heavily on seventeenth century poems which reflected a trend toward anglicisation in the wake of the union of the crowns and he included works in almost standard English. There were also some popular works gleaned from commonplace books and family albums. For a full analysis of content and sources, see, Harriet Harvey Wood, ed., "Introduction": *Watson's Choice Collection of Comic and Serious Scots Poems*, (Edinburgh, 1977), Vol.II.

² Dave Harker, *Fakesong*, (Milton Keynes 1985), p. 8.

³ *LOC.CIT.* The notion that these editions were aimed primarily at a genteel audience is undermined by their cover price which was a shilling for each volume or the three volumes bound together in calf for half a crown. Even compared to hawkers broadsheet prices, Watson's Collection represents good value and does not seem to have been in any way designed to be exclusive other than through the fundamental exclusion of literacy. Even then it was not uncommon for literate members of the community to read from such miscellanies to those who were fully or only partially literate.

⁴ Watson's Collection is, in fact, remarkable for the absence of propaganda or political works which were common in the English miscellanies that he was trying to emulate.

⁵ Harriet Harvey Wood, Introduction, *Watson's Choice Collection*, (Edinburgh, 1977), Vol. II., p. xvii.

⁶ James Watson, "Introduction" to the *History of Printing*. (Edinburgh, 1713) Although Watson had been imprisoned and exiled for a year and a day to Glasgow (Where he published from The Gorbals) it was for printing a book publicising *Scotland's Grievance Respecting Darien* in 1695. His principal concern here was not simply nationalism but the commercial consequences of the disaster. His ability to forge personal and political alliances in pursuit of the 'gift' of King's printer after the fall of the Stuarts also suggest that commercial pragmatism rates as much consideration as his nationalist ambition. There is also a suggestion that because his father was a supporter of the Stewarts that he was also a 'Pope's printer'. Even though he published works that were generally sympathetic to the Stewart household, such as Crawford's *Genealogical history of the Stewart Family* (Edinburgh, 1705) any notion that his private concerns took precedence over his commercial interests must be contradicted by some of the parliamentary materials he produced when he had successfully overturned Anderson's monopoly such as the 1715 act encouraging loyalty to the house of Hanover and the 1720 act which insisted on registration of 'Papists' who refused to sign loyalty oaths.

⁷ Harker, *Op. Cit.*, p. 9.

⁸ Allan Ramsay, *Works of Allan Ramsay*, eds. Alexander M. Kinghorn and Alexander Law, (Edinburgh, 1970), Vol. IV, p.128.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 138.

¹⁰ Allan Ramsay, *Evergreen*, (Edinburgh, 1724), Title page.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

¹² *LOC.CIT.*

¹³ Allan Ramsay, "The Lass of Peattie's Mill", *Scots Songs* (Edinburgh, 1718), p.6.

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14 Allan Ramsay, "Preface", *Tea Table Miscellany*, (Edinburgh, 1723) p. i.

15 Allan Ramsay, "Preface", *Tea Table Miscellany*, 14th edition, (Glasgow, 1786) p.i

16 Allan Ramsay, *Works*, eds. Kinghorn and Law, Vol. IV., p.140.

17 Andrew Gibson, *New Light on Allan Ramsay* (Edinburgh, 1927), p. 109. According to Gibson it is likely that Ramsay copied the first canto from Part 1 of Watson's collection who 'apparently' followed the edition published by Bishop Gibson in 1691, as is stated in a facsimile reprint of the *Collection*, printed at Glasgow, for private circulation in 1869. In crediting James V with the authorship, Watson may be taking his cue from Bishop Gibson who assumes that a work assigned by the historian Thomas Dempster to James V described as, "De Choreis rusticis Falkirkensibus, epos vernacule, lib. I. quo nihil Ingeniosius aut Graeci aut Latini ostentare possunt", is the original of Christ's Kirk on the Green. The discovery of the Bannatyne and Maitland Mss. reasserted the idea of James I as the author. Ramsay originally followed Watson's lead on the publication in 1718 of the first edition of the two Cantos but 'corrected' this in the three Canto edition published later in that same year. For a fuller discussion of the authorship question see Allan H. Maclaine, "The Christis Kirk Tradition": *Studies in Scottish Literature*, (South Carolina, 1966) Vol.II, pp. 111- 24.

18 A. J. Gurevich, *Categories of Mediaeval Culture*, (London, 1985), p. 35. Gurevich argues that: "The upsurge of urban culture does not mean the end or the 'withering away' of the middle ages but it brings in its train a deepening differentiation within the traditional world picture, which previously had been relatively uniform for the whole of society". Clearly, by the eighteenth century the depth of that differentiation was profound but the move away from "the traditional world picture" is perhaps a more difficult and psychologically fraught process than is generally accepted. The demand for traditional materials, which by their nature reflect the comforting homogeneity of that world, in a society as committed to development and progress as that in which Ramsay lived is, in itself, strong evidence in support of the idea of a deep rooted need for a connection with the cyclical rhythms of the historical past in an age when linear concepts of time were pressurising the individual and collective consciousness to an unprecedented degree.

19 In some respects these responses point to a rear view consciousness loosely analogous to the Hellenic notion of a 'Golden Age' where time is eternal. The revival of the Greek inspired civic sensibility in the Scottish Enlightenment, particularly as expounded by Adam Ferguson in *An Essay on the History of Civil Society*, (Edinburgh, 1966) seems to imply a similar cultural need for abstract models of communion with an historical sense of the past. Ramsay's 'instinctive' approach was an early address to those needs at a popular and functional level but he was also meeting his own needs. The only way to move, for an emerging (literate) society, against the wind of change blowing from an uncertain future may have been, as it was for the Greeks, with their backs turned to it.

20 Allan Ramsay, *Works of Allan Ramsay*, eds. Burns Martin and John Oliver, (Edinburgh, 1953) Vol. I p.66. In noting the supposed difficulty of the form Ramsay allows himself a pre-emptive compliment for his own contribution which is also in this stanza form. In drawing attention to the original author's flexibility of rhyme in the context of a limited vocabulary he is also inviting his audience to prepare to admire what he does with the 'modern' techniques and along the way reminds them that they are part of this progressive scheme and that he is their representative - he is congratulating the age in order to receive its congratulations. This typifies Ramsay's approach to the manipulation of his readers and illustrates the duplicity that underlies his editorial strategy.

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21 Had Ramsay based his work on the original bobwheel stanza as reproduced in the Ruddiman edition of *The Evergreen* the cyclical nature of the work would have been even more marked (it is not called the wheel for nothing). As it stands the short line seems to emphasise the ironic aspects of the episodes while retaining the essentially monotonous chorus effect of the bobwheel. It is perhaps worth speculating that the loss of the full bobwheel was linked to the literary priorities of the modern interpreters who would find the ironic enhancement lent by the shortened tag-line more conducive to the contemporary literary aesthetic. The tendency remains though, even where the work is read silently, to 'join in' with the end of the tag-line.

22 Allan H MacLaine, "The Christis Kirk Tradition: Its Evolution in Scots Poetry to Burns", *Studies in Scottish Literature*, Vol. II., p. 165. MacLaine misses no opportunity to lament the 'decline' into song. Even where he celebrates Burns use of the 'Christ's Kirk' form, (p.235) he dismisses the Poet's use of the form as a 'ballad' in the second ballad. On *Mr. Heron's Election* by distancing it from the tradition (which he grudgingly admits it is related to) by claiming that it is modelled on *The Blythsome Bridal*. Not only does this leave his study of Burns' work in the tradition incomplete, it demonstrates a prejudice against any development in the form which is not a specifically literate production. Given that he speculates earlier that Bishop Gibson's edition from which Watson and Ramsay derived their originals was, in turn, derived from a broadside pamphlet, it is the determined refusal to address the possibility for a positive development of the work in a public and popular domain that is truly lamentable.

23 MacLaine's study of Ramsay and the 'Christis Kirk' tradition should be viewed with caution, although given the lack of critical response to either the work itself or the criticism here (see above), it seems that the latter is by and large assumed to be definitive. In his article MacLaine notes in relation to Ramsay's variation on the Stanza form that he ... 'in all three cantos changes the bobwheel ending of the original stanza, doing away with two line bobwheel refrain.....and replacing it with a simple dimeter tag-line which always ends with the words "that day".' This is clearly not the case. Even in the original canto "this day" is used as a variation where a line of dialogue has preceded the tag-line and in his own two cantos Ramsay deviates from that formula to the point where that phrase or any of its variants are often absent. However, MacLaine's mistaken assumption that every stanza ends with "that day" inadvertently strengthens the argument that, even for a literary scholar, there is a psychological perception of an unvarying, repeated chorus.

24 Ramsay, *Works*, eds. Martin and Oliver, Vol. I., p.58.

25 *Lincolme light* refers here to a type of cloth made in Lincoln and it is important to note that the phrase does have some conceptual function in its echo of the earlier 'light of Laits' (Gloss: Light or wanton in their Manners) but the relational aspect is that associated with literary composition, with the association arising directly from intra-textual, rather than supra-narrative, relationships which depend exclusively on a fixed, shared social comprehension.

26 As with, 'Kirtle Green' which would carry associations of fertility and provide narrative clues to an 'educated' traditional audience and even where type of material is specified as in 'Cork heeled Shoon' the main significance lies in the narrative function of the formulaic phrase rather than the descriptive utility of the language.

27 Ramsay, *Works*, eds. Martin and Oliver, Vol. I., p.58.

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28 Walter Ong, *Rhetoric, Romance and Technology*, (London, 1971), p.114. Ong maintains, here and throughout his study, that learned latin was more than just a linguistic phenomenon and that it structured a whole series of social institutions. The oral - rhetorical tradition with which latin was permanently aligned had, by Ramsay's time, come under pressure from a popular demand for a more emotionally expressive popular literature rooted in tradition. The implications of this for the latin educated elite were such that they perceived a need to control the emerging literary forms. This shaped the cultural establishment's attitude toward tradition and the way in which it could be absorbed into their own programme which was geared to protect those institutions and the cultural power that they represented.

29 Ramsay, *Works*, Martin and Oliver, Vol. I. , p.57.

30 *Ibid.*, p.66.

31 *Ibid.*, pp. 71.

32 *Ibid.*, p.68.

33 There is an exception here to which Ramsay is consistent in stanza 2 where the end line is *this day* which appears on two occasions on the first Canto. This only occurs where the previous line is a line spoken by a character. As such, it would represent no great barrier to audience participation if they were aware of this simple variation.

34 Walter Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, (New York, 1982), p.12. Oral cultures, as Ong observes, are formulary to a degree that is intolerable to a fully literate society and a literate society cannot fully recover a sense of what the word is to a purely oral people. What Ramsay appears to be doing here is bridging that gap for a transitional culture by editing out the formulary overload of the oral culture while simultaneously preserving the vitality of those original oral conditions to which a transitional audience must be attached because they remain as significant elements of psychological integrity in the transition to full literacy. This is not to say that oral cultures are not capable of abstract thinking but that the categories of abstraction remain different for an oral culture and new forms of literary abstraction are not absorbed overnight. This is the crux of Ramsay's position as a cultural interlocutor. He acts as a presiding editor for that psychological mediation as it operates throughout the culture as a whole.

35 Ramsay, *Works*, eds. Martin and Oliver, Vol. I. , p.66.

36 Thomas Crawford, *Society and the Lyric*, (Edinburgh, 1979), p.71.

37 Sven M. Armens, *John Gay, Social Critic*, (New York, 1954), p.2.

38 Gibson, *Op. Cit.*, p.13., citing Allan Ramsay, "Preface" to the quarto edition of Ramsay: *Selected Poems*, (Edinburgh, 1721).

39 Carol McGuirk, "Augustan Influences on Allan Ramsay", *Studies in Scottish Literature*, (Columbia, South Carolina, 1981) vol.16 p.99. Ms. McGuirk cites the "critical apparatus of index and glossary" as highlighting Ramsay's (and Gay's) self-conscious use of vernacular words in order to authenticate "the landscape and the people in the poem while it emphasised the self-consciousness of the writers' use of words". In Ramsay's case, however, it may equally refer to his acknowledgement of a wider commercial audience who were quite simply in need of a glossary.

40 *LOC.CIT.*

41 John Gay, *Poetry and Prose of John Gay*, ed.Vinton A. Dearing, (Oxford, 1974), Vol. I, p.168.

42 Norman Knox, *The Word Irony and its Context*, (London, 1971) p.13. Knox maintains that to blame-by-praise was the dominant meaning of irony during the eighteenth century, but points out that this was a period when the word was widening its area of reference. The irony of blame-by-praise has a characteristic atmosphere and that when that "feeling" arose there was a tendency to call the device which gave rise to it irony even though it was not strictly blame-by-praise. That feeling is present in this passage where there is no actual praise but a kind of counterfeit praise as, for example, in 'her yielding shape.' . Knox also contends that such developments "...In the method and and criticism of blame-by-praise irony do seem to indicate how a sense of dramatic irony evolved." (p.22) Gay's use of irony here also appears to relate obliquely to the rhetorical device of *negatio*. The narrator acts as the mediator of irony who refuses to say what he is actually saying. He will not say that she is a prostitute but he will tell us how she operates as one. This particular utilisation of irony seems to be indicative of the pressures that vernacular literacy was bringing to bear, not just on rhetorical convention but on every aspect of classical conditioning. Gay was caught in the dilemma between loyalty to form and the urgent need to find more and more ingenious ways of expressing individual feelings within the classical form which was driving him to abstraction.

43 Ramsay, *Works*, eds. Martin and Boyd, Vol. I., p. 25.

44 Ralph Cohen, "The Augustan Mode in English Poetry," *Studies in the Eighteenth Century*, (Canberra, 1968), p.190. Cohen argues that, "The features of the Augustan mode formed part of a theory of the mimetic imagination. This theory made it possible for the Augustans to argue that it was the function of art to approximate the vitality and vividness of the world it imitated."

45 Alexander Pope, *An Essay on Criticism*, (1707) (Menston, 1970) p.10.

46 Walter Bate, *From Classic to Romantic*, (Cambridge, 1946), p.36.

47 *Ibid.*, p.37

48 Anthony Thorlby, "Imagination and Irony," *English Romantic Poetry*, (Milton Keynes, 1990), p.132. In providing one explanation of how irony came to be viewed by the Romantics he comments that; '...Irony expresses another dimension of awareness, which does not belong directly to the communication, but in which the latter is seen to exist. Irony is thus a measure of spiritual freedom in the person who is able to appreciate it, freeing him from a too limited understanding of the words spoken or the knowledge offered: and he becomes aware of their limited meaning in a way which expands it ...through an ambivalent awareness, both positive and negative at once, of a larger whole.' This definition can be usefully applied here in relation to Gay not in the full blown sense of the conscious Romantic interpretation, but in terms of understanding the way in which the psychological pressure of creative "imagination" manifested itself through irony and how the need to go beyond a 'too limited' understanding of the language and knowledge offered is evidence of an emotional "surplus" in the neoclassical culture which the classical forms could not contain.

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49 Sven M. Armens, *Op.Cit.*, p.7. Armens contends that since Gay, the non - traditional use of the pastoral has been valid for the propagation of serious thought and supports the notion that his originality arose from his failure to produce meaningful results in the outworn pastoral tradition. His distortion of the genre was the root of his success as a poet. However, he links this to a search for expressive forms arising from the 'decline of the epic since Milton's time.' He seems to suggest that the epic form alone had become an unsuitable medium for the ethical interests of poets and that in some non-specific way they rediscovered ethical 'life' in the pastoral form itself. It seems rather to be the case, and his own evidence (see pp. 1-9) tends to support this, that all classical forms had ceased to be vital for literate poets working in vernacular - the epic form because it was profoundly oral in its disposition and literate procedures, particularly those associated with the vernacular, immediately violated its authenticity and the pastoral because of the radical differences in both the psychological disposition and the relationship to the pastoral theme of vernacular poets compared to their classical models. The 'ethical' vitality of the pastoral did not lie so much in the rediscovery, as in the distortion, of the form.

50 This also works as an allegorical critique in the sense of tackling those "respectable" social elements who in cleaning up the streets drive the trade itself underground again with dangerous consequences for those who practice it. Ramsay was among the first to recognise the circumspect relationship between allegory and irony, which had previously been assumed to be a type of allegory (See Knox, "The Word Irony and its Context," p.10) and pointed out 'the allegorical methods involved in certain treatises that were also ironical, and the irony involved in certain allegories' but he did not '.....identify irony and allegory as variations of the same method.' This underlines Ramsay's acute awareness of irony and its uses.

51 Anthony Thorby, *Op.Cit.*, p.131. Thorby, in laying the ground for his study of the relationship between Romantic Imagination and Irony, distinguishes between a straightforward dissimulant irony which is a half-earnest rhetorical effect (as, it seems fair to claim, employed by Gay) and a broader view which recognises situational irony and how the situation which produced this effect supplies the other half of the earnestness which is generally associated with Romantic poetry. This complementary view is his starting point for Romantic Irony. While it is difficult to argue that Ramsay is supplying the other half here, he is almost certainly augmenting earnestness. By balancing an ironic blessing with a viciously sincere curse he is utilising the situational irony to tip what is already fairly barbed satire into trenchant bitterness.

52 Walter Bate, *Op. Cit.*, p.142. This 'naturalness' should be understood, here, in terms of, Hugh Blair's Associationist notion of an artist who possesses "the power of entering deeply into the character he draws, of becoming for a moment the very person whom he exhibits and of assuming all his feelings." It is this power of 'entering deeply' that is a fundamental distinction between Ramsay and Gay, who could not begin conceive of entering into characters that were, for him, a product of form rather than situation.

53 Harold E. Toliver, *Pastoral Forms and Attitudes*, (Berkely, 1971), P.193.

54 *LOC. CIT.*, Toliver claims, 'It may also be that Gay's ironic playing with various genres is meant merely to throw the reader off the scent of some much simpler proposition - as that, in whatever form, rustics are still rustic and hence inappropriate subjects for serious art.'

55 Venton A. Dearing, Introduction, *Poetry and Prose of John Gay*, (Oxford, 1974), Vol. I., P.6.

125 John Gay, *Poetry and Prose*, Vol. I., p.105.

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57 Albert B. Friedman, *The Ballad Revival*, (Chicago, 1961), P. 132. Friedman highlights the double standard of the neo-classical age by noting the popularity of collections of popular song and drolleries among the literate and even the sophisticated classes of the age.

58 John Gay, *Poetry and Prose*, Vol. I., p.106.

59 *Ibid.*, p.107.

60 This passage in particular seems to represent new levels of distortion in the pastoral form. The mutant creatures are perhaps usefully viewed as the grotesque products of an imagination under pressure from form. Through the burlesque, Gay allows himself to override the constraints of form in support of a critical objective but in doing so he openly displays the potential for synthesis in the form and a connection between imagination and individual creativity. This implied a subjective discourse which conformed to inner rules rather than classically derived generic norms and the link between the grotesque and that discourse laid the foundations for a later Romantic association with a self-referential 'modern irony'. The gradual validation of the 'grotesque' during the eighteenth century amounted in the long run to the rending of the web of values which Alexander Pope had expounded In *An Essay on Criticism*. (See Gerald Gillespie, "Romantic Irony and the Grotesque," in *Romantic Irony*, (Budapest, 1988), pp.323 - 42.) This validation was clearly not Gay's intention but his conflict with form opened up a vista of creative possibility. This vista was admired by Ramsay but in contrast to Gay, whose own sense of self-referential invention was inflamed by the stifling classical agenda which he was seeking to support, the pressure to invent was shaped and softened by an emotional resource in the vernacular tradition of poetry and popular song which was to provide him with a ready made outlet for his own creative "imagination".

61 John Gay, *Poetry and Prose*, Vol. I., p.107.

62 Walter Scott, *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*, ed. T.F. Henderson, (Edinburgh, 1932), Vol I, p. 18. Gay's ironic 'bard' bears a remarkable resemblance to Scott's model of fallen minstrelsy outlined in the theoretical commentary of the *Minstrelsy*. While this will be considered in some detail below, it is worth noting here that Scott's observations on fallen 'minstrels' may be as much rooted in the kind of literary caricature above as in any contemporary 'realities' of oral performance.

63 John Gay, *Poetry and Prose*, Vol. I., p. 122.

64 Friedman, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 87-113. Friedman's work suggests that Gay's choice of 'Chevy Chase' and "The Children in the Wood" as part of Bowzebeus' repertoire implies that the veneration of tradition was on his critical list. Addison had, three years previously, in 1711 (the same year as Pope's influential *Essay on Criticism*) published his 'Chevy Chase' papers in the *Spectator* (nos. 70 and 74) and discussed "The Children in the Wood" (No. 85) but while his intention was to promote the idea that a work could succeed universally on the basis of a simplicity of style and thought, Gay intends, by placing that simplicity in the hands of a simpleton, to undermine the notional democracy of taste which Addison's approach implied.

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65 Bertrand Bronson, *Facets of the Enlightenment*, (Berkeley, 1968), pp.113-115. Bronson draws attention to the importance of Wesley to the growing relationship between religious hymnody and popular and traditional music and cites Horace Walpole's comments in 1766 on Wesley's Methodist opera which features "...boys and girls with charming voices that sing hymns, in parts, to scotch ballad tunes;".

For the religious influence on tradition, see , Friedman (*The Ballad Revival*, p.72.) , where he airs the possibility that "Judas" (Child No.23), the oldest recorded ballad, "...is in some sort a religious imitation". See also his discussion of the 'pseudo ballade'(pp.36-7) which, he claims, "... became in England and Scotland during the fifteenth century and for a few decades afterward the staple mould for political and politico-religious poetry both sophisticated and semi-popular." This view is supported by Victor Neuburg, in *Popular Literature*, (Hammondsworth, 1977), pp.22 -3., in his examination of early broadside fragments.

66 Ramsay , *Works*, eds Kinghorn and Law, Vol. II., p.235.

67 Ramsay is generally supposed to have written or at least "improved" *The Lass O' Patie's Mill* and his use of his own songs hand in glove with others from both the popular and traditional culture suggests that he, at least, placed himself, as a songwriter , firmly within that cultural context.

68 John Gay, *The Shepherd's Week*, (London, 1714), p. 17.

69 Ramsay, *Works*, eds. Kinghorn and Law, Vol. II., p. 231.

70 *Ibid.*, p. 232.

71 Gerald Gillespie, "Romantic Irony and the Grotesque," *Romantic Irony* , ed. Frederick Garber, (Budapest, 1988) pp.328-9. Gillespie seeks to explain the ' mythological and psychological implications of the 'doubling' of consciousness that were a consequence of Romantic Irony and how the recognition of that factor led Coleridge to regard "... true intellectual activity as myth making" and, in a reversal of Enlightenment attitudes, "...history as a continuation of "mythology". " The evidence here seems to support the notion that Ramsay was, perhaps unconsciously, engaged in precisely that kind of intellectual activity albeit in a relatively primitive way.

72 It is worth noting that this was aimed exclusively at a literary audience. Where Ramsay at least assumed a performance aspect to the *Tea Table Miscellany* by providing musical guidelines where he thought it might be appropriate, Herd makes no attempt to provide anything other than the text. This has implications not only where we consider audience but also where we assess the significance of his methods in a cultural context. These 'songs' were not presented as such but as representative texts of an historical culture.

73 Hans Hecht, "Introduction," David Herd, *Songs from David Herd's Manuscripts*, (Edinburgh, 1904), pp. 66- 7.

74 David Herd, "Preface" , *Ancient and Modern Scottish Songs Heroic Ballads &c.* (Edinburgh, 1769), pp. v- vi.

75 Harker, *Op. Cit.*, p.34. It is worth noting that although Herd was aware of the qualitative shortcomings of much of the material left over after the first volume had been published, he was not sufficiently interested or creatively disposed to 'improve' those more fragmented and obscure pieces. He was, however, quite willing to let others such as Percy and Ritson have access to his Mss. In order that they might produce more cogent versions of the texts. In the area of erotic material , however, he did exercise editorial discretion by simply not publishing the material although he recorded it 'conscientiously' in his Mss.

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76 Harker, *Op. Cit.* , p.33. Harker claims that Herd was "Neither Poet nor theorist and therefore unlikely to abuse his sources." This notion that sources were abused when a poet exerted some creative impulse into a *version* of a poem arises directly from those literary theories of antiquarians and academics who cite Herd as a reliable source.

77 Herd, Preface, *Ancient and Modern Scottish Songs* , p.iii.

78 *LOC. CIT.*

79 Hans Hecht, *Op.Cit.* , p. 65. Hecht summarises Herd's character as "... a man truly of the old School, inoffensive, modest, and unambitious in an extraordinary degree..."

80 H. A. Burd, "Joseph Ritson, A Critical Biography" , Reprinted from, *The University of Illinois Studies in Language and Literature*, (1916) , p.162. It is worth noting the oxymoron, "illiterate transcriber", contained in the quotation, which illustrates the confusion in a transitional culture over the exact meaning of literacy. What Ritson meant here was probably 'unschooled' in an antiquarian tradition which he was in the course of inventing. It also illustrates clearly that Ritson was neither aware of, nor concerned with, the traditional creative process but rather with the categorisation and classification of the materials.

81 M.L. Mackenzie, "The Great Ballad Collectors: Percy, Herd and Ritson", *Studies in Scottish Literature* , Vol. II., pp. 213-33.

82 Bertrand H. Bronson, *Joseph Ritson, Scholar at Arms*, (Berkely, 1938), Vol. I., p. 14.

83 Joseph Ritson, "Verses to the Ladies of Stockton" , *The Literary Register*, Vol. IV (No. 36), pp.215-16.

84 Bronson, *Joseph Ritson, Scholar at Arms*, Vol. I., p.21.

85 Joseph Ritson, " Observations on the Ancient English Minstrels" , reprinted in, *Ancient Songs and Ballads* (London, 1877), p. xxx.

86 *LOC. CIT.*

87 *LOC.CIT.*

88 Bronson, *Joseph Ritson, Scholar at Arms*, Vol. I, p. 376.

89 Ritson has his own peculiar view of personal moral integrity which stretched to encompass an attempted fraud on a life insurance company , an act which Bronson endearingly refers to as a " somewhat unscrupulous thing" (Bronson, *Joseph Ritson, Scholar at Arms*, Vol. I., p.248).He ingeniously associates the attempt, by implication, with Ritson's deteriorating state of mind which, for Bronson, covers a multitude of sins. In his literary activities, Ritson was never slow to support of his own critical endeavours and create a virtual defence of his own position by answering his critics in the literary press through the medium of an "Impartial" correspondent, who owed his existence entirely to Ritson. (*Ibid.*, p. 339)

89 Ritson, Letter To J.C. Walker, Nov. 4th., 1789, Bronson, *Joseph Ritson, Scholar at Arms*, Vol. II., p.548. An extract from an unprinted Thorn-Drury transcript letter in Bronson's possession.

90 *LOC.CIT.*

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92 The backlash against Ritson's criticism of Warton which he referred to, himself, as as "my scurrilous libel against Tom Warton" (Bronson, *Joseph Ritson, Scholar at Arms*, Vol. I, p.74.) was not only expected but welcomed by him. The above quote is taken from a letter written to Robert Harrison in an attempt to disarm criticism among those whom he was concerned to keep as literary allies while reaping the benefit of the publicity generated by furore which was taking place in the literary press. This seems to add weight to the conviction that Ritson was pursuing a conscious and ultimately successful policy of furthering his reputation by deliberate controversy. The success of that public condemnation of Warton, made easy by Warton's blatant inaccuracies, was a stepping stone to the confrontation with Percy and it is hardly surprising that those who he had alienated in this instance fell in behind the Bishop. His strategy, however, meant that Warton's defenders, by association, undermined Percy's position with those like Harrison who saw some validity in Ritson's criticism, hence, the attempt to ease the discomfort of possible allies at the vehemence of the attack. Bronson cites this affair as evidence of Ritson's preoccupation with critical truth (p.230) but unless that 'truth' is defined in the light of the literary political strategy it is incomplete. The history of the critical view of Ritson is strewn with conveniently incomplete truths.

93 National Library, Scotland, MS 22.4.10, fol., 66-66V., Oct. 1803.

94 Walter Scott, *Edinburgh Review*. No. VII., pp. 387-413. , Jan 1806.

95 Robert Jamieson, Preface, *Popular Ballads and Songs from Tradition, Manuscripts and Scarce Editions*, (Edinburgh, 1806), Vol. I., pp. xiv-xvi.

96 *LOC. CIT.*

13 Albert B. Friedman, *The Ballad Revival*, (Chicago, 1961), p.239.

98 Robert Crawford, *Devolving English Literature*, (Oxford, 1992) Crawford is particularly interesting as he relates Smith's deliberate exclusion of Ramsay from his literary canon because he "did not write like a gentleman", which is to say he wrote in Scots, and he opens up a useful connection between Ramsay's exclusion as a vital force in Scottish letters and Smith's disposition to recognise even the work of the Makars as fossilised examples of a historical period, rather than ongoing forces in an organic native literature.

98 It is worth noting that if we hold that different texts authorise different meanings we may be moving toward making an argument for a criticism of traditional materials which allows for the dynamic of the popular tradition to be criticised from a literary perspective but one which explicitly recognises the evolutionary nature of the popular creative process in a way that the critical school which Ritson helped found expressly does not.

99 They are misplaced in regard to to the application of a form of criticism which there is no reason to believe is appropriate to the creative process involved.

100 Joseph Ritson, *Ancient Songs and Ballads*, (London, 1829), Advertisement.

CHAPTER III
LITERATURES OF DECEPTION.

Ritson's influence in the field of popular tradition signalled the adoption of an autocratic sensibility based on an ideology of textual legitimacy. This owed more to literary politics than to the critical flux by which means oral tradition, on the basis of an aesthetic agreement between audience and performer, selected and re-selected, material according to its current cultural value. That a neoclassical literary culture should throw up an alternative critique of tradition is not surprising, but the effect of its adoption of Ritson's criteria as its basis was remarkable. Ritson's programme stifled those emerging literary approaches that sought to infuse traditional materials with a modern and popular literary sensibility which affected profoundly the development of a romantic imagination in eighteenth century Scotland.

In a literary culture it is no longer important to view the past ritually, the accumulation and preservation of the noetic materials of an oral culture in textual form make it possible to analyse that stock in specific ways. Ritson's approach to the historical analysis was categorical and conservative. The materials of the past were to be preserved in their 'authentic' condition and their cultural value lay exclusively in that mummified state. For Ramsay, however, the

body of the past was dynamic. His approach applied an historical sensibility to the popular tradition. This arose through a synthetic literature which was conspicuously integrated with the materials it engaged. Ritson's approach relied on a sense of categorical authority which excluded tradition from the process of literary creativity, in line with a neoclassical worldview upon which his critique depended.

Neoclassicism was an old dog determined to extend its day. The dominance and self-confidence of this Latin educated, literary elite was such that any literary development which involved creative individual imagination allied to a traditional sensibility was bound to be affected by that critical authority. This holds true with particular regard to that authority's view of the close relationship between the sense of aesthetic judgment and ethical propriety .¹

Where such an embedded literary mindset is pressurised by a growing revulsion to the inherent uniformity of the neoclassical prospectus to confront inevitable change, even a non-conformist 'mad dog', like Ritson, can be useful. If his ideas can be utilised in stalling the process of imaginative development until it can be better assimilated and manipulated by the dominant literary culture, then his usefulness outweighs his nuisance value.

Ritson's views, informed by a fundamentally neoclassical aesthetic, were seized upon because they proved useful in holding the popular creative process at bay until the

development of the popular literary imagination was safely back in the hands of a reformed, but still essentially neoclassical, establishment. The 'spectator' gave way to the invigilator as new academic elites emerged to control the development of creative processes in accordance with a complementary ethos. Cultural democracy, like its political counterpart, was limited strictly to what was necessary in order to ensure the survival of that establishment. The idea of real cultural development through the popular consciousness was not only unthinkable - in troubled times the spread of ungoverned literary ideas could be socially dangerous.

Ritson's attack on Pinkerton and the latter's retreat from disguised creativity to historical accounting is a pivotal event in the development of eighteenth century Scottish romanticism. Ramsay's nascent romantic imagination was displaced by the acceptance of Herd's editorial practices underwritten by Ritson's moral critique and by the notion which that encouraged of creativity built on a traditional base as a kind of fraud. Ramsay's historical synthesis was undermined by Pinkerton's unwillingness to openly declare his authorship of traditionally inspired works. This, in turn, arose from Pinkerton's fear of the neoclassical establishment to which he, like many of his literary peers, remained in thrall.

The enmity between Ritson and Pinkerton was a minor, but notable, skirmish in the greater battle with Percy. That

Pinkerton was a supporter and acolyte of the Bishop was enough to raise Ritson's ire - that he was a Scot was more than could be tolerated. In a letter to the *Gentleman's Magazine* Ritson roundly abuses the whole Scottish nation, referring to: "The distinguished honours which your native country has acquired by literary imposition upon her neighbours ..."²

Ritson, after comparing him, in an unfavourable light, (a "pickpocket" to their "impudent highwaymen") to Lauder, Bower and MacPherson, his literary countrymen, offers ironic congratulations to Pinkerton on his 'success' in uncovering a complete and hitherto unknown second part to *Hardyknute*. This 'ballad' had for some time had been controversial, in regard to its 'authenticity'. Why, Ritson asks, when the poem had been proved to be "an artful and impudent forgery", does Pinkerton insist upon and develop the deception?

Pinkerton was unable to answer that question to Ritson's satisfaction, but there was an answer and it lay in the nature of the poem itself. *Hardyknute* was, from conception, a work of deception and its development, up until the exposure by Lord Hailes of Elizabeth Wardlaw as its author, was part of an ongoing process of creative deception to which Pinkerton added a complete second part and, notably, a full supporting literature. In the face of an all powerful literary establishment, the possibility of gaining acceptance for a synthetic historical literature based on a popular tradition was untenable. If *Hardyknute* was to find a literary audience

not only its authorial but also its cultural origins had to be disguised.

Hardyknute, is commonly referred to, even by modern authorities taking their cue from Ritson, as a forged "ballad".³ This carries the assumption that the work was conceived as an imitation of a traditional narrative ballad designed for oral transmission. While it is unquestionably the case that the stylistic surface of the poem echoes the ballad form, there is a considerable generic confusion in the poem which owes as much, if not more, to the middle English romance than to the traditional popular ballad. There is currently much interest in the relationship between traditional works and the Romance in the middle ages, so an examination of the stylistic disposition of *Hardyknute* may provide some clues as to how that relationship re-emerged and complimented the development of the Romantic movement in 18th Century Scotland.⁴

Stylistically, *Hardyknute* is more interesting in terms of what it does not do, rather than what it does. The relationship between traditional narrative ballad and the mediaeval romance has its basis in their shared intention of oral performance. To that extent they both operate overt stylistic functions which match the author or performer's intentions to their sense of the listening audience's expectations. In the early romance this is manifested in redundance, and by formulaic phrasing in the narrative ballad. Both of these structural characteristics produce repetitions of patterns that ensure

the message concerned will be preserved and communicated through many oral performances, resulting in a predictability that will meet the expectations of the non-literate audience. The important distinction, however, is that while the formulaic language of the ballad is, as with the oral epic, a language signifying action, the language of the romance signifies stance.⁵

Stately stept he east the wa' 1
And stately stept he west;⁶

The opening lines of the first stanza of the poem is a trenchant example of how the generic synthesis that characterises the narrative as a whole operates at the most basic structural level. On the surface we have what might be described as a stock ballad phrase. Rhythmically and syntactically it matches our expectations as a candidate for Parry's formulaic definition as "a group of words which is regularly employed under the same metrical conditions to express a given essential idea." There is no problem here in terms of the metrical conditions, it is the essential idea that causes the difficulty. If we were to substitute, for example, 'lightly' here for 'stately' we would indeed have a formulaic phrase which occurs often enough in the ballad form to meet Parry's criteria. The substitution may seem a slight matter but it profoundly alters the affiliation of the formulaic discourse to the other structural levels of the work, but in particular with the narrative.

In a traditional narrative ballad an opening formula "Lightly stept he east the wa, and lightly stept he west" , would communicate to a listening audience certain probabilities in terms of the subsequent narrative action. While it is possible to assent to Susan Wittig's view that "...redundance (or formulaic phrasing) provides greater efficiency in the listener's response, because highly probable phenomena are immediately and easily recognised...", it is not possible to agree completely when she continues that such structures, in conjunction with other homologous and intermediate structures in the narrative, enable the listening audience "...to predict accurately the formulaic phrases which will occur next."⁷

What it is safe to assume, however, is that an oral audience will be able to recognise when the wrong formulaic phrases occur next because the "essential idea" will not be consistent with the narrative as it relates to the formulaic construction up until that point. What is certain is that they will recognise that phrase, as such, only in relation to its affiliation to the narrative action. The 'lightly stept' phrase signifies the immediate action of the character and psychologically prepares the audience for possible actions from beyond the castle wall. The subliminal expectation will be that a formulaic construction affiliated to that immanent action will follow. To substitute 'stately' in this phrase immediately subverts the language of action by means of the language of stance, commenting as it does abstractly on the

status and the disposition of the character.

The basic narrative unit of this pseudo-ballad is what might be termed as pseudo- formulaic phrases, which affiliate to the narrative in ways that are quite distinct from those formulaic phrases which structurally determine oral compositions at a sublime level. From the beginning of the poem there is clearly an identifiable attempt to utilise pseudo - formulaic phrasing in an integrative fashion. This is disposed as a spur to the narrative so the implied sense of danger carried by the essential idea, contained in the formulaic phrase in the final line of stanza five, as the king sits,

With noble chiefs in brave Aray, 39
Drinking the blood-red wine

is followed through consistently in terms of a traditional narrative expectation by the opening of the next verse :

"To horse , to horse , my royal liege, 41

Here, once again, the formula is synthesised. With the insertion of "my royal liege", the language of medieval romance is poured into to the narrative impulse of the ballad 'horse' formula and relates conceptually back to romantic conventions (and redundancy) in stanza three. This, in turn, comments on the sons of Hardyknute :

Four yet remain, lang may they live 22
To stand by liege and land

The opening of stanza seven extends the attempt to integrate pseudo-formulaic phrases into the narrative, but the authors own narrative priorities begin to place strain on the strategy:

"Go little page , tell Hardynute, 49
That lives on hill so hie.

The 'message' formula is distorted here by the use of 'little' to sentimentalise the page but his action in taking the message is consistent with the relationship between the narrative and the essential ideas, intimated by the pseudo - formulaic disposition of the preceding two stanzas. It is at this point, however, that any integrative sense of narrative and formulaic disposition breaks down. The opening of the following verse reduces formulaic phrasing to the descriptive and decorative role that it fulfils for the remainder of the first part of the work. Although the essential idea of warning conveyed by the horn blowing episode, which directly follows the pseudo-formula below, to some extent relates to the formulaic construction of the preceding verses, the description of the "horn as green as glass" carries the concept of pseudo-formula into the realms of absurdity, so far as a listening audience would be concerned by introducing elements of fertility associated with colour where it is not appropriate in traditional narrative terms.

Then red, red grew his dark brown cheeks, 57
sae did his dark brown brow

Traditional phrasing now becomes a rhythmic and syntactic mould which the author can fill with her own 'essential' ideas about the past. For the most part these pseudo-formulas are based on the above; "Revenge, revenge" cried Rothesay's heir, "Take aff, take aff his costly jupe!", or its variation, "Sair bleeds my leige! sair, sair he bleeds" and, occasionally, on other formulaic patterns; "When bows were bent and darts were thrawn." 8

Pseudo formulaic phrases are draped like mock ancient banners on the walls of Wardlaw's imagination and the essential ideas that they contain are distinctive and individualised re-interpretations of a national past. She infuses an actual event, the battle of Largs in 1263, with the fictions of antiquity as they would be recognised by a popular literary audience in the early part of the eighteenth century. Her sources are the narrative ballads and romances, not from oral or manuscript sources, but as translated in the popular literature of the day and she conjures from that literature an historical sensibility that is both modern and manipulative.⁹

While the main focus of action concerns the Norse invasion, the discrete critical target is made clear in the opening stanza, the "Britons" whose "... breach of faith Wrought Scotland mickle wae,..." . In between the chivalry, illustrated by Hardyknute's distress over the dying Knight whom he encounters on the way to battle, and the almost gratuitous Christian salute, "mak orisons to him that saved Our souls

upon the rood", is woven a profoundly racial sense of nationalism:

Syne he has gane far hynd out o'er 145
 Lord Chattan's land sae wide.
 That Lord a worthy wight was aye
 When faes his courage 'sayed
 Of Pictish race by mother's side,
 When Picts ruled Caledon -
 Lord Chattan claimed the princely maid
 When he saved the Pictish crown.

His unnamed "faes" of course were the English in the guise of "Britons" and the notion of racial authority here is reinforced by the connection with the Pictish race on his mother's side, emphasising the unbroken racial link. This national and racial underpinning develops through the narrative to the point where it emerges as a direct threat to Scotland's potential enemies. When Thomas, one of Hardyknute's heirs, is addressed by his enemy, who refers to his short lance, (which Hardyknute stated early in the poem was the only weapon he would require):

"That short brown shaft sae meanly trimmed 265
 Looks like poor Scotland's gear,
 But dreadful seems the rusty point!
 And loud he leugh in jeer:

Thomas's reply is succinct and deadly:

"Aft Britons' blood has dimmed it shine; 269
 This point cut short their vaunt"
 Syne pierced the boisterous bearded cheek-
 Nae time he took to taunt.

Read as an historical romance, or a traditional ballad, this poem carries little threat. It becomes a curious 'fragment' of the past merging quietly with all the other fragments that were being unearthed at the time. If, however, a modern consciousness was discovered at work here, in a country that was politically annexed by the descendants of the very enemies to which the poem refers, it becomes something more subversive and *Hardyknute's* desolation when he returns, battle weary, to his castle, lies open to a more overtly political interpretation. *Hardynute* is originally a work of deception out of both a literary and political necessity.

Hardyknute is not an attempt to imitate the past, but, rather, to re-invent it. It is a response which looks to re-interpret history in the light of an emerging national and literary consciousness. It is not a mimetic, but a synthetic, imagination that is at work here, deploying genre in a strategic way that was anathema to the cultural elite, but which was critical to the emerging romantic consciousness of the eighteenth century.

We are encouraged to believe, perhaps through scraps of speculation which have persisted to the present day by those who were involved in the uncovering of the authorial mystery, such as Lord Hailes, that *Hardyknute* was an exercise based on an original ballad fragment. The roots of *Hardyknute*, however, are certainly literary. The stylistic garlands of 'orality' are, consciously or otherwise, hung to keep the

hounds of the literary establishment off the scent of an ungoverned, developing, cultural imagination. If they had been able to run *Hardyknute* to ground they would have found its source in the 'nursery' of the eighteenth century romantic imagination, where the transitional orality of the narrative ballad and the 'reduced' metrical romance lay side by side in the pages of popular literature's chapbooks.

The fundamental change in the relationship between tradition and romance in the early eighteenth century is that their commonality no longer exists in the author or performer's sense of the response of an oral audience, who could be alienated by the absence of convention, but in the author's understanding of a developing popular consciousness which was absorbed with and dependent on the rhythms and language of the traditional past from which it was emerging. Elizabeth Wardlaw recognised that consciousness and perhaps even tried to shape it but it was Ramsay who successfully addressed it. On this occasion, however, even he found it politic to continue to enhance the deceptive strategy.¹⁰

In Watson's 1719 edition of the Poem it is advertised as "A Fragment". Lady Wardlaw claimed to have 'discovered' it written on some shreds of paper used for the bottom of weaving clues.¹¹ The poem's public life originates in a fiction.¹² When, in 1723, Ramsay included the poem in his *Ever Green - A Collection of Scots Poems*, he reinforced the fiction in the miscellany's sub-title, "Wrote by the Ingenious before 1600".

thereby falsely dating the text. He misled his audience further by deliberately altering the orthography of the Watson original to an approximated form of middle Scots, in keeping with the literary company in which he placed it.

He on a Hill his Castle stude' 9
 With Halls and Touris a Hicht,
 And guidly Chambers fair to se,
 Quhair he lodgit mony a Knicht. 13.

Compared to the Watson derived text:

Hie on a hill his castle stood, 9
With ha's and towers a height,
And goodly chambers fair to see,
Where he lodged mony a knight.

Apart from the curious anomaly of Ramsay replacing the Scots "ha's" in the original with the re-anglicised "Halls" we have now a version which looks older and more 'authentic' through its Scots orthography. Ramsay's own agenda is operating here. He is enhancing the fiction of antiquity and the fiction of authorship. It can never be certain to what extent Ramsay was consciously complicit in the latter but the addition of two concluding stanzas in the *Ever Green* version implies that either he was actively assisting Elizabeth Wardlaw in perpetuating the deception or that he added them himself. Whatever the case, if he was the author, his reasons for doing so become part of the ongoing creative deception.

In the Watson edition the work's final stanza leaves a tantalisingly open conclusion:

Loud and chill blew the westlin wind,
 Sair beat the heavy shower,
 Mirk grew the night ere Hardyknute
 Wan near his stately tower.
 His tower that used wi' torches' blaze
 To shine sae far at night
 Seemed now as black as mourning weed -
 Nae marvel sair he sight (sighed)

The air of dark foreboding which dominates the final stanza leans overtly toward a tragic ending; "mourning weed" implicitly signifying immanent death, but this immanence carries through the fiction of the work's existence as a fragment. This consciously inconclusive ending also plants the seed of speculation which generates the sequel.

The two additional stanzas which appear in the *Ever Green* carry that speculation a stage further and realise the nature of Hardyknute's dread:

THAIRS nay licht in my Lady's Bowir
 Thairs nay licht in my Hall;
 Nae Blink shynes round my Fairly fair
 Nor Ward stands on my Wall.
 Quat bodes it? Robert, Thomas say,
 Nae answer fits their Dreid.
 Stand back, my Sons, I'll be your Gyde,
 But by they past with Speid.

As fast I haif sped owre Scotland Faes,
 There ceist his Brag of Weir,
 Sair Schamit to mynd ocht but his Dame
 And Maiden Fairly fair.
 Black Feir he felt, but quhat to feir
 He wist not yit with Dreid;
 Sair schuke his body, fair his Limbs,
 And all the Warrior fled.¹⁴

While there are two possibilities of authorship here, Wardlaw or Ramsay, there seems to be only one possible authorial intention - to lay the ground for a narrative development. The additional 'fragment' hints at the potential for discovery of other fragments. Where the original ending ".....Seemed (my italics) now as black as mourning weed—" reflects on Hardyknute's (and post-union Scotland's) state of mind and an inner sense of desolation, the additional stanzas begin to provide an actual reason. We are no longer left with a weary old man who may have fought his last victorious battle but rather a man whose real problems, the safety of his family as distinct from the abstract notions of national pride and honour, are about to begin and who may not be psychologically equipped to meet those problems. If we admit to Ramsay's awareness of the relevant political potential of the poem, the additional stanzas seem to offer a more concrete expression of the anxieties of the Scottish cultural imagination in the wake of political union. Where Wardlaw's fictional history ends with an almost mythical sense of national dread, Ramsay re-addresses the history in the final two stanzas, inviting his audience not to shift their attention from the mythical past but to reconsider it in the light of the actual concerns of the present. The implication of Wardlaw's fragment is the end of an old song, but Ramsay raises the possibility of a new tune. The self-reflexive nature

of the final two stanzas mark them as distinct from the original where the central meditation is racial and nationalist. This seems to suggest Ramsay as the author and that is further supported by the orthography itself.

As these two stanzas made their first appearance in the *Ever Green* they did so in the Scots orthography with which Ramsay had previously treated the Watson text. In the penultimate stanza, "Dreid" (line 6) matches the end rhyme "Speid" which hints that they may have been composed in that particular form of Scots. While to confuse matters Ramsay promptly rhymes "Dreid" and "Fled" in the following stanza, the case for Ramsay is re-established by Eyre Todd's 1896 text where the original Watson text is reproduced along with the two stanzas from the *Ever Green*. Eyre-Todd performs his own piece of orthographic transformation, re - Anglicising the *Ever Green* stanzas in order to match the orthography of the Watson text.¹⁵ "Dreid" is translated into "dread" in the penultimate stanza and misrhymed with "speed". While Ramsay's orthographic translation of the original *Hardyknute* results in several rhyming eccentricities, there is nowhere in the Watson text where Wardlaw's original orthography is inconsistent with the rhyme. Eyre Todd's re-translation seems to suggest that the penultimate stanza was not the work of Lady Wardlaw and it is reasonable to assume that the final stanza, which continues the story, was also the work of Ramsay. Ramsay's additions perform a critical closing of perspective from the wide

historical vista against which Hardyknute, a distressed model of a monumental past, is set, to the sharp and emotionally taut but vital individual characterised by his final two lines.

There seem to be two possibilities that might account for Ramsay's wish to contribute to this work. The first is that he accepted the originality of the work and wished merely to 'improve' the ending by raising the emotional level without destroying the illusion of the 'fragment', or, that he wished to provide linking stanzas that would form the basis for a narrative development such as that which he had already undertaken with *Chryst's Kirk on the Green*. Whether or not he had such an intention his contribution helped shape the development that arose when Pinkerton 'discovered' the second part of the poem from the lips of an elderly woman who occupied his imagination.

Born in 1758 into a family of successful Edinburgh merchants, Pinkerton received a Latin education at Lanark Grammar School and following his father's death, when he became independently wealthy, he abandoned the law, to which he had been apprenticed, and pursued his antiquarian and historical preoccupations while moving in established London literary circles.

It is worth dwelling on Pinkerton's imagination as it is an interesting place. He was without question a fraud who attempted to pull the wool even over the eyes of his literary mentors when, at eighteen years of age, he offered the

'discovery' to Percy who seriously considered them for a new edition of the *Reliques*. What is notable, however, is the creativity that underpinned his mendacity. When we examine the nature of that creativity we are forced not only to examine the poem itself but also the literature with which he supported his fraud and which is in itself a remarkable and inseparable element of the poem's fiction.

Stylistically, the second part of *Hardyknute* differs from Wardlaw's work in so far as her strategic use of pseudo-formulaic phrases is by and large overridden in favour of his own interpretation of the techniques of tradition which he identifies in the *Dissertation on the Oral Tradition of Poetry* which prefaces his 1781 edition of *Scottish Tragic Ballads*. While he makes no attempt to provide a musical setting for the work (the first of the techniques which he enumerates) he cites the "many arts" that were useful in facilitating the oral transmission among which is his own interpretation of the ballad phrase which, in this case, serves his own particular fictional strategy:

1. The frequent returns of the same sentences and descriptions expressed in the very same words. As for instance, the delivery of messages, the description of Battles, &c. Of which we meet with infinite examples in Homer, and some, if I mistake not in Ossian. Good ones may be found in *Hardyknute*, Part I v. 123. &c. compared with part II v.167, &c. and in *Child Maurice* v.31, with v.67; and innumerable such in the ancient Traditional Poetry of all nations.¹⁶

In this short passage from his first 'dissertation' he integrates his own fraud with the original part of the poem and

into an unbroken line of traditional poetry from Homer to *Child Maurice* complete with references which we are explicitly invited to seek out.

When we do so we find in the original fragment Hardyknute's address to the distressed Knight:

"Sir Knight, gin you were in my power,
To lean on silken seat,
My lady's kindly care you'd prove,
Who ne'er kenn'd deadly hate.

In Pinkerton's second part we are referred to:

"Sir Mordac to the founding ha
"Came wi his captive fere;"
"My syre has sent this wounded knight
To pruve your kyndlie care,"

Pinkerton here skillfully manipulates the phrase "My lady's kindly care you'd prove" in order to integrate his own efforts with those of the original and to pick up on the inconclusive incident upon which his narrative extension depends, but he does so in a way that 'authenticates' the second part by reference to the 'scholarly' dissertation. The content of the text is authorised by the dissertation, the veracity of which is exemplified by reference to both texts. Wardlaw's pseudo-formulaic phrase is re-jigged and re-cycled to operate a distinct and deceptive fictional strategy which moves beyond the text to encompass the developing and increasingly controversial world of antiquarian studies. The inclusion of *Ossian* in this passage of the dissertation is also highly

significant insofar as it allows us to identify Macpherson and Blair as strategic influences in the discussion between text and context that underpins the deceptive creativity here. Pinkerton simply amalgamates the interactive roles of poet and theoretician which fueled the Ossianic compact that we will discuss below.

This does not mean to say that Pinkerton originally intended the dissertation to be read as a fiction. What it does tell us is that, outwith the mimetic boundaries of the neoclassical aesthetic, the creative imagination had to operate in a covert manner - a necessity which proved to be not only the mother of invention but also of her wayward twin, deception.

Pinkerton enhances the deception at every stage of his examination of the techniques of traditional poetry. When he comes to examine alliteration he outlines a brief origin of the technique with the Saxon poets and its consequent influence on Scottish poetry alluding in footnotes to Sir David Lindsay and in the dissertation itself to Dunbar as exemplars of the technique.¹⁷ Pinkerton is applying an antiquarian's compass to tradition that far exceeds Ramsay's in scope but which deliberately skirts Ritson's editorial practise and moral critique. *Hardyknute* is notably absent from this particular examination. He was perhaps conscious of pressing his claim too strongly, but the purpose here is to raise the profile of works that follow, which depend heavily on the technique, by

association with the greatest Scottish poets.

In his examination of the final, and to his mind, "greatest assistance" to the traditional composer, rhyme, he returns to the text of Hardyknute via Ossian and the Spanish romances. The deception is broadened by these extended cultural references which share the simplicity of stanza which "added to the facility of recollection" along with the rhymes which:

...occur seldom and at equal distances: " though when a more violent passion is to be painted , by doubling the rimes , they at once expressed the mind better and diversified the harmony. Of this the reader will observe many instances in this collection , as, *Here maun I lie, here maun I die: Like beacon bricht at deid of nicht: Na river heir, my dame sae deir : &c.*¹⁸

Pinkerton laminates Wardlaw's pseudo-formula between examples drawn from his own version, this time without actually quoting the poem. The reader is then prompted, when they come across these phrases in the text that follows, to authenticate *Hardyknute* for themselves by relating to the knowledge of traditional technique supplied in the dissertation. An implicit equation of authenticity is drawn in the relationship between the dissertation and the text as well as between the reader and the text. We will later see this same equation creatively applied to sublime effect when we come to examine its origins in Macpherson's Ossianic epics and its development in Scott's *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*.

Pinkerton's manipulation of the 'evidence' which he presents to the reader discretely invites them to share in the all encompassing lie of his final paragraph which alleges that

the techniques which he has outlined have resulted in the consequence that:

...the most noble productions of former periods have been preserved in the memory of a succession of admirers, and have had the good fortune to arrive at our times pure and uncorrupted.¹⁹

What is actually going on is pure corruption. The techniques he describes may well have some observable role in the preservation of oral and traditional poetry but what Pinkerton is really describing is the technique of a highly literate student of traditional poetry in re-creating an impression of that poetry by means of constant synthetic integration with the past.²⁰ This relationship relies on an abstract understanding of that traditional past and the nature of that understanding is only revealed when the poem itself is read in conjunction with the dissertation which is a critical and vital component of the fiction as a whole, even as it is discrete to the point of falsehood .

Where Wardlaw 's dialectic with the past was stimulated by the popular literature of the day and Ramsay's improvements driven by his feel for the past and a contemporary popular and commercial ethos, Pinkerton drew from an antiquarian tradition that was caught up in the tension between the Ritsonian quest for the 'authentic' voice of tradition and the commercial possibilities which arose from the re-processing of that voice for a contemporary audience. The accents of tradition were being modified by literary development in the popular culture itself and by the desire of an autocratic elite to distill

cultural authority from Ritsonian notions of moral criticism.

Pinkerton is indebted to Ramsay for the general narrative orientation which, although it depends on the episode of Hardyknute and the fallen knight for its development, is distinguished from the original by its freedom from the nationalist overtones which characterise Wardlaw's poem. While chivalry remains as a conceptual focus for the work, unlike the first part of the poem, where it is an integrative part of the literary strategy, it is supported here exclusively in terms of action and event, typified by Lord Draffan's promise to Hardyknute's daughter, Fairly Fair, who is with him as a consequence of his treachery, which will ultimately be absolved through a chivalric act:

" My meiny heid my words wi care 317
 "Gin ony weit to slay
 "Lord Hardyknute , By hevin I sweir
 " Wi lyfe he sall na gae

The dramatic irony of final line is realised by the concluding narrative action - Draffan's direct confrontation, following a bloody battle where he has demonstrated his personal bravery and skill, with Hardyknute, who challenges:

"Haste mount thy steid, or I fall licht 417
 "And meit thee on the plain;
 "For by my forbere's saul we neir
 " Sall part till ane be slayne"

Draffan, the traitor's, response is heroic and chivalrous:

"Now mind thy aith" , fyne Draffan stout 421
To Allan leudly cryd,
Who drew the shynand blade bot dreid.
And perc'd his masters syde

This use of action to reveal rather than, as with Wardlaw, to comment on the conceptual underpinning suggests that Ramsay's final two stanzas, which shifted the emphasis from Hardyknute's symbolic sense of desolation to an actual sense related to narrative action, is the model for Pinkerton's development along with a better understanding, which he shared with Ramsay, of the priorities of the traditional narrative. It is worth noting, however, that where Ramsay's understanding emerges from a contemporary feel for the popular tradition, Pinkerton's emerges from the studies of the, would be, antiquarian, drawing from a broader comparative spectrum of historical materials and constrained by his awareness of the neoclassical urge to keep imagination in its place.²¹

Where he is certainly indebted to Ramsay is in the nature of his Scots orthography which, even at a cursory glance, can be seen to evolve from the version which Pinkerton follows in his own publication of the first part of the poem.

"Ere the portculie cold be flung, 201
 " His kyth the base court fand;
"Whan scantly o their count a teind
 Their entrie nicht gainstand

Following Ramsay's de-Anglicisation of the text, Pinkerton goes one stage further in the antiquing process by preferring here his own spelling of portcullis, perhaps because of the syntactical verve lent by the 'ie' ending, to either of the standard orthographic alternatives such as; portculzeis or portculeis (15th & 16th C). His use of 'teind' also suggests that he utilises Ramsay's technique in the use of archaic vocabulary toward a conscious aging of the text, as this had since the Reformation become synonymous with the tithe of a tenth of the produce of the parish rather than in the general sense in which it is used here.

The whole of the second part of the poem is distinguished by its conscious utilisation of an almost synthetic Scots which contributes to the overall deception but which we should remind ourselves is drawn from a modern tradition of synthetic imagination consciously begun by Ramsay and which can be traced through to MacDiarmid and beyond in the twentieth century. The critical factor when we look at this tradition is not simply the desire to deceive a critical elite, which was rather a strategic and commercial gesture, but the demands of the collective cultural imagination for a reassessment of its past in times of psychological stress, the source of which, for Ramsay and Pinkerton was the onset of mass literacy just as for MacDiarmid and his successors it was and is the introduction of electronic media. The common thread is the imaginative redeployment of Scots language in the

disposition of creative imagination. If we can force ourselves to look beyond Pinkerton's personal dishonesty we must allow him an important and relevant role in the strategic development of that process.

Each of the earlier texts contribute to the conceptual and narrative orientation of Pinkerton's work in distinct and important ways, but there are other elements at play in the overall deception; forces that arise out of the development in the neoclassical establishment itself which press Pinkerton to add new layers to the deception which Wardlaw and Ramsay were originally forced to embrace in their anxiety to avoid social and literary condemnation. The nature of these new pressures is most apparent when we examine the underlying intention of Pinkerton's two dissertations and the manner of his retreat from deceptive creativity under pressure of exposure from his contemporaries in the field of antiquarian literary studies.

Pinkerton's technical theory of the transmission of oral poetry, which we have noted above, is closely interwoven with emerging enlightenment ideas that were increasingly reshaping critical standards both overtly, as expressed in the passage that follows, and discretely as they informed Ritson's categorical orthodoxy.

For poetry appears not to require the labour of disquisition, or aid of chance, to invent; but is rather the original language of men in an infant state of society in all countries. It is the effusion of fancy actuated by the passions ; and that these are always strongest when uncontrolled by custom and the manners which in an advanced community are termed polite, is evident.²²

If we examine Pinkerton's theoretical amalgam which is condensed into this passage, the disembodied voices of Robertson and Hume, treated with echoes of Smith, Blair and Blackwell are raised and resonate through the discussion, their authoritative tone masking and enhancing the deception. ²³

What Pinkerton intended to provide here is not as we might imagine an underlying scientific explanation of traditional poetry but an underlying pseudo - scientific strategy for its re-creation and, simultaneously, a mask for its modern origins. This element of his creative strategy, as we shall discuss below, is rooted in Ossianic modes of deception but in this case these authorities are entering the strategy as pre-formed elements of authority to support a dialogue between text and commentary; Macpherson, as we will demonstrate, was creating dreams to order for a society of wishfull thinking. Pinkerton is, altogether, more strategic in his use of authority.

In Pinkerton's first dissertation *On the Oral Tradition of Poetry*, the theory informs his examination of the technique of oral and traditional poetry. As well as concentrating on the relationship between the passions, which "have been and will be the same through all ages", and Poetry, which "is the sovereign of the passions, and will reign while they exist", it supports his ongoing assertion of custom related to technique as the primary means of transmission. This is always at the service of the pre-emptive legitimisation of an

essentially fraudulent work. Pinkerton adapts a quasi-empirical critique to support and obscure his creativity.

What emerges is an evolutionary creative strategy where tradition is bundled with a synthetic historical vision, carved out from Wardlaw's relationship with popular literature and enhanced by a veneer of authenticity through the influence of Ramsay's orthographic and aesthetic feel; burnished by Pinkerton's own antiquarian perspective, the final polish is achieved when he integrates, through the commentaries, the associationist ideas which were pressurising and informing the contemporary critical outlook. This compact of deception and creativity was to provide essential fuel for the developing romantic imagination in 18th century Scotland

Deception and the creativity were broadened, by Pinkerton, in the *Dissertation II: On the Tragic Ballad*. Where, in the first dissertation, the theoretical mutually supports the technical, in the second the theory supports and informs the style and manner of the poems in the collection as a whole, but *Hardyknute* in particular. In the following passage we see the influence of the enlightenment harnessed to a literary strategy that provides Pinkerton with a comparative scope in the investigation of manners of a kind which was later to prove the basis of Scott's own creative synthesis.²⁴

It is amusing to observe how expressive the poetry of every country is of its real mannersThe ballad poetry of the Spaniards is tinged with the romantic gallantry of that nation. The hero is all complaisance; and takes off his helmet in the heat of combat when he thinks on his mistress. That of the English is

generous and brave. In their most noble ballad, Percy laments over the death of his mortal foe. That of the Scots is perhaps like their country, more various than the rest. We find in it the bravery of the English, the gallantry of the Spanish, and I am afraid in some instances the ferocity of the northern.²⁵

This assessment may, or may not, strike us as an accurate account of the stylistic qualities of traditional poetry, however, as a blueprint for Pinkerton's strategic approach to the style and content of *Hardyknute*, it could not be bettered.

Pinkerton's creativity is underwritten by a contemporary sense of antiquarian criticism. He also depends on his readership's familiarity with that critique in order to manipulate their response. By carefully outlining two complementary fields of reference in the dissertations - the technical, presented as factual, and the theoretical, with its implied authority, he invites the reader to infer, from what might be described as the 'buzzwords' of empiricism such as *manners* or *passions*, the full pseudo-scientific, empirical resonance of their enlightenment context. Pinkerton triggered responses of authentication by association with elements of criticism which were at that time pressurising and modifying the neo-classical aesthetic. Like many manipulators he underestimated the very forces that he sought to exploit - at least until confronted by the watch-dog of modified neo-classicism, Joseph Ritson.

It is, however, a process of retreat that we are considering rather than an immediate capitulation and an

account of that process illustrates the creeping nature of aesthetic re-assessment in a critical culture that doted on its own absolutes. The very uncertainty in the neoclassical establishment as to the legitimacy of the enlightenment ideals allowed and prolonged Pinkerton's creative negotiations with that critical culture. Only as Ritson's ideas of absolute authority in the origin of the text were reluctantly adopted by the critical establishment and incorporated into that critique was it necessary to drop his creative deception and with it an evolving approach to an historical literature which did not depend on the pronouncements of a critical elite for its success but, as with the traditional materials which it re-processed, on its acceptability to an emerging popular, literary audience. This audience, bewildered by the strangeness of its new found literacy was in need of an acceptable and familiar historical perspective which would cushion its anxieties about the future. Pinkerton's retreat could have held profound implications for the development of that popular literary imagination if his strategic approach to creativity had not proved so seductive to Scott who, as will be argued below, sublimated and finessed it into respectability.²⁶

Just as Pinkerton constructed his fiction in the interplay of the actual texts and the supporting commentary, it is through the relationship between those that we observe the onset of his self- de-construction. Although the dissertations in his *Scottish Tragic Ballads: 1781* and in his revised and

augmented *Select Scottish Ballads*: 1783 remain essentially unaltered, critical publishing alterations suggest that Lord Hailes' judgment in 1783 that the additions to *Hardyknute* were modern because they showed a lack of familiarity with feudal manners had sufficiently cautioned Pinkerton as to begin a process of distancing himself from the poem.

Where the 1781 collection had proudly trumpeted the recovery of this additional part of *Hardyknute* in the advertisement, it no longer appeared in the 1783 edition. This, of course, may have been due to the fact that it had served its commercial purpose, but when we consider that disappearance in conjunction with the bewildering insertion of several Spanish romances between the dissertations and the text of *Hardyknute* we have reasonable grounds for assuming diversionary intent that comments indirectly upon the advertisement's fictive purpose. If he had been allowed to regroup his thoughts in the security of his own creative meditations he would, perhaps, yet have served up a more complex fictional enhancement, but the entry of Ritson forced the debate into the public arena through a letter to the *Gentleman's Magazine* in November 1784.

Pinkerton's response was not yet to bolt but rather to use his influence and Ritson's own reputation to undermine his assertions of fraud. The proprietor of the magazine was also Pinkerton's publisher, Nichols, and he allowed Pinkerton to comment on Ritson's letter anonymously in footnotes, signed

"Editor" which drew attention to Ritson's peculiarities and the "singular" nature of his criticism. The next stage in the process of the public debate, as it is recounted by Bronson, involves a mysterious letter in response to Ritson in the March 1785 edition of the *Gentleman's Magazine*, dated December 8th.²⁷ This letter, which is signed J. Black, claims that he believed all along in Pinkerton as the composer of the second part of *Hardyknute* but, nonetheless, derived great enjoyment from the piece and wished only that future editions might distinguish Pinkerton's endeavours from the rest.

Regarding such an interjection in an age of duplicitous correspondence, practised among others by Ritson, Bronson is quite correct in raising the possibility of Pinkerton as its author, particularly given the coincidence of the correspondent's wish to see a complete edition of the Scottish poets undertaken by Pinkerton and the latter's plans for just such a work. While Bronson notes the mention of a John L. Black in the Percy correspondence, he clearly implies that this was not the correspondent in question and supports that contention by references to a number of mediocre poems in the Pinkerton contemporary style which appeared in succeeding issues of the *Gentleman's Magazine* and which Bronson claims were designed to 'puff' work that Pinkerton intended to publish later. Bronson's evidence here is inconclusive but it slants the case against Pinkerton in a particular way and one which derives from Ritson's original criticism. This is not to

say that Pinkerton was an innocent party but to accept its implications fully is to misunderstand crucial aspects of Pinkerton's literary strategy. While, with Bronson, it is difficult to accept the integrity of Pinkerton's statement in defence of certain kinds of literary forgery, the subliminal implication of which is that it was his intention to "Do good by stealth, and blush to find it fame.", it's presentation in Bronson's case is part of a carefully prejudiced argument in support of Ritson which prompts a misinterpretation of the actual admission of authorship. This centers on remarks in Pinkerton's collection of *Ancient Scottish Poems* :1786 where he refers to himself at some distance:

Perhaps, like a very young man as he was, he had pushed one or two of the points of the deception a little too far; but he always thought that novel and poetry had NO BOUNDS of fiction.²⁸

For Bronson, this is a case of Pinkerton elevating the shame of deliberate deception into admiration for his own cleverness, an assessment that would no doubt have met with Ritson's approval, but that interpretation ignores the fact that the admission itself clearly identifies a literary strategy which was from the outset conceived to operate beyond the confines of the text itself. The duplicity was always at the service of a creativity that Ritson could not understand as it relied on the notion of the materials of tradition as living materials capable of providing not only sources but also, critically, inspiration for contemporary literature.²⁹

It was the product of a creative mind straining against the cordons of a literary establishment that was anxiously engaged in trying to absorb and engage the new empirical doctrines to support its own cherished conservative ideas about what literature should be.

The acceptance of Ritson's fixed, 'authorised' text stifled the potential of an emergent popular historical literature, based on a multi-faceted identification with the materials of tradition. This allowed a neoclassical literary elite, reinvigorated by the empirical 'certainties' of the Enlightenment, to cultivate an attitude to tradition that was consistent with the autocratic political ethos of the day. A communal sense of identification with the materials of the past was subordinated to critically approved individual interpretations emanating from sources that were politically committed to distancing those materials from the critical procedures of their natural inheritors - the increasingly literate popular audience.

The accents of tradition that Wardlaw recognised in the popular literature of her day; Ramsay modernised in the fictional re-creation of *Chryst's Kirk on the Green* and harmonised in the nascent romantic style of *The Gentle Shepherd* and which Pinkerton infused with pseudo - antiquarian scholarship and the synthetic sensibility of the Enlightenment, were drowned out by the hyper-correct modulations of the new literary elites who appropriated and

embalmed tradition as a conversation piece. A developing, integrative and popular romantic imagination was displaced by a private romantic imagination which referred to the modified neoclassicism of the academy. This 'authorised' literary culture did not directly address tradition on its own terms but filtered the material of tradition through a conversation about the past.³⁰

Once tradition was consigned to the museum it could be analysed by the literati; self - appointed curators of the cultural imagination. Under the scrutiny of that authority, the traditional corpse could be worked into a mythical clay from which the dreams of the cultural movers and shakers of the day might be realised. Appropriation of tradition in 18th century Scotland meant that the language of romance was destined to be an exclusive discourse which, although it drew its imaginative resources from the popular materials of the past, refused to admit the critical priorities that had sustained those materials and denied the popular audience a vital role in the contemporary literary culture.

The publication of James Macpherson's *Fragments of Ancient Poetry , Collected in the Highlands of Scotland , and translated from the Gaelic or Erse language* in 1760 marks the point at which this process began; the point at which history commenced in the literary imagination of 18th Century Scotland. Like *Hardyknute* these 'fragments' were conscious works of deception; a deception upon which the fabric of

Macpherson's epics, *Fingal* and *Temora* was spun.

Macpherson's literary deception has been described in many ways; imposture, inauthentic, fraudulent and ungenuine, among others. The difficulty with these and many associated terms is their inability to encapsulate within the overall argument the irrefutable creativity of the Ossianic works. Forgery seems to be the only term which satisfies both major criteria relating to Macpherson's deception. As Joseph Margolis has noted, forgery : 'entails the intention to deceive'.³¹ However benevolent our critical view of Macpherson's strategy, it would be a remarkable claim which denied that intention an essential role in his literary process, even if we only considered the 'protection' of his source materials:

It is now two years since the first translations from the Galic language were handed about among people of taste in Scotland. They became at last so much corrupted, through the carelessness of transcribers that, for my own sake, I was obliged to print the genuine copies.³²

Macpherson's own commentry , on the *Fragments* , is deliberately misleading. There is no evidence provided here or elsewhere that the circulation of 'corrupted' transcriptions were any part of his motivation for the original works. If these remarks refer to the Mss. copies from which he worked himself, then the intention to mislead lies in the notion that they ever circulated among "people of taste" -such was the jealousy with which Macpherson guarded them.³³

As will be argued below, the changes undergone in the

process of translation from isolated fragments to episodes in the "greater work" of the epic *Fingal* fundamentally undermine Blair's original claim in the Preface to the *Fragments*, upon which Macpherson is blatantly trading here, that: "The translation is extremely literal".³⁴ If that were the case in the *Fragments* then it could not be so in *Fingal*. If the latter is, as Macpherson claims, laid before the reader as he found it then the *Fragments* themselves are corrupt translations. Either way, there is an unmistakeable intention to deceive. It will, however, also be argued that this deception was always at the service of a literary process governed by creativity; a process which confirms the usefulness of the only term that appears to accurately fuse the act of deceit with the art of making: "...forgery is clearly linked to the notion of the work of the forge - ... the making or shaping of material objects to serve fraudulently as some original or as passable copies of some original."³⁵

Forgery is also concerned with the act of making; in Macpherson's case the literary making of what was intended to be seen as traditional product:

There is even a sense in which Macpherson's poems are genuine in spite of being forgeries; and once exposed (though the picture remains uncertain in important details), poets and literary historians have chosen to exploit their alleged Gaelic quality.³⁶

While he recognises the problems which arise from the continuing difficulties in interpretation of the relationship between Macpherson's *Ossian* and his original sources he also

notes the cultural resilience that, in the face of that difficulty, endorses their genuine creative power. This is a powerful factor in his refutation of the charge that: "the process of making a forgery is the reverse of creative."³⁷ Macpherson's deception is nothing if not creative forgery.

Creative forgery secures the relationship between Macpherson's work and *Hardyknute*. The historical, national and racial strands of these works and their congruent voices of heroic despair bind them in parallel while Pinkerton's manipulation of the empirical voice of the Enlightenment and the spectre of Ossian itself in *Hardyknute* braids them head to tail, like a Celtic knot.

In a broad sense the voice of Ossian might be seen as yet another gloss on *Hardyknute* insofar as it fulfills the implied prophecy of ultimate national defeat implied by the final stanza of Wardlaw's original. Stafford notes that: "Ossian was the poet of defeatism; heroic perhaps, but offering no hope at all for the future".³⁸ That voice relates to what Stafford identifies, in Morse Peckham's terms, as negative Romanticism in Ossian. The latter's definition of that phenomenon as that of an individual 'filled with guilt, despair and cosmic and social alienation' applies as comfortably to the final two stanzas of Ramsay's amended *Hardyknute* as it does to Ossian.

What distinguishes them, however, is their sense of history. Where Wardlaw and Ramsay's *Hardyknute* is potentially

subversive in its political approach to the external cultural threat, Macpherson's work is addressed directly to the cultural extinction that had effectively taken place after 1745. It is important to stress that this is not simply a consequence of Macpherson's own experience of that reality which, given his highland background was no doubt profound, but also reflects a cultural environment in which a: "...fascination with cultural extinction was the dominant tone in historical literature of the decade or so before Ossian." 39

The relationship between Highland experience and the antiquarian based historical literature effectively distances Macpherson from the popular oral tradition and historical modes of romantic literature which inspired Wardlaw and Ramsay. A distinctive seam of 'authentication' in Macpherson's poetry sets it apart from the emerging popular historical consciousness and firmly aligns it with the historical vision of the literati who sanctioned the work. Pinkerton, while he was to exploit Macpherson's authenticating strategy in the relationship between the text of *Hardyknute* and his own 'antiquarian' commentary, remained largely dependent on medieval Romantic sources and he failed to recognise the creative potential of MacPherson's other great 'poetic innovation' - the bardic voice.⁴⁰

The emergence of this voice represents a completely different approach to literary creativity as it applies to oral tradition. Where Wardlaw, Ramsey and Pinkerton utilised

the verbal, syntactic and ideological possibilities of tradition to make discrete, synthetic commentaries on history, Macpherson: "imaginatively recreated oral culture from the inside." ⁴¹ The bardic voice was the voice of 'authorised' tradition.

While Haywood's examination of the evolution of Macpherson's forgeries in the "making of History", is strategically sound, a fundamental misconception not only qualifies his study but also distorts our understanding of the nature and importance of the processes of authorisation and authentication.⁴² The relationship between the poetry and the priority Macpherson gives to the authenticating scholarly apparatus over literary merit, is, according to Haywood, evidence of his fascination with literary process and the act of making. This is exemplified by the opening statement which the Preface, taken as a whole, is designed to support:

The public may depend on the following fragments as genuine remains of ancient Scottish Poetry⁴³

Haywood's claim would hold true if, as he assumes, Macpherson was the author of the Preface which was in fact written by Blair. While this oversight does not fundamentally undermine Haywood's excellent study, that knowledge forces us to recognise that, from the outset, the concern with 'process' and the 'act of making' was not that of a single individual but the consequence of a shared fascination. Blair was simply the co-ordinator of a literary programme geared

toward promoting the civic and martial values of a cultured class determined to allay anxieties about their own identity.⁴⁴

The creative complex which emerges from the relationship between the Preface and the text of the *Fragments* reduces, essentially, to a pair of mutually regenerative factors; Macpherson's capacity for deception in the interest of creativity and Blair's, in his role as spokesman for the literati, for self-delusion in the interests of cultural wish-fulfillment. Contemporary anxieties about the inherent dangers of this combination are contained by the desire to believe in the existence of a genuine, national, epic poetry and are reflected in the urgent tone of Hume's communication with Blair about the growing scepticism concerning the origin of *Poems of Ossian*:

It is in vain to say that their beauty will support them, independent of their authenticity: No; that beauty is not so much to the general taste, as to insure you of this event; and if people be once disgusted with the idea of a forgery, they are thence apt to entertain a more disadvantageous notion of the excellency of the production itself. The absurd pride and caprice of Macpherson himself, who scorns, as he pretends, to satisfy anybody who doubts his veracity, has tended much to confirm this general scepticism; and I must own, for my own part, that though I have had many particular reasons to believe these poems genuine, more than it is possible for any Englishman of letters to have, yet I am not entirely without my scruples on that head.⁴⁵

Hume goes on to question the internal evidence which Blair finds so convincing and urges him to set about an independent authentication of sources. That Blair made some attempt to do so may indicate that he addressed these concerns

once they had been raised but without his initial willingness to accept Macpherson's work at face value the shared process of wish-fulfilment focussed on the notion, to which Hume implicitly subscribes, that: "the ancient poetry of Scotland ought to have been epic", could never have been realised.⁴⁶

Blair's theoretical underpinning of MacPherson's work became in itself a programme for an historical poetry which in turn validated the programme:

Tradition, in the country where they were written, refers them to an era of the most remote antiquity: and this tradition is supported by the spirit and the strain of the poems themselves; which abound with those ideas, and paint those manners, that belong to the most early state of society.⁴⁷

What Pinkerton strove to achieve in the relationship between text and auxilliary materials, as an act of deliberate creative deception, was already modelled here in this shady artistic equation. By situating the originals in the earliest, almost pre-historical, stage of society through evidence derived, not from the texts, but from an implied MS., 'seen' by the 'translator', Macpherson; Blair, as authoriser, grants him license to roam the borders between oral tradition and historical fact:

One circumstance seems to prove them to be coeval with the very infancy of Christianity in Scotland. In a fragment of the same poems, which the translator has seen, a Culdee or Monk is represented as desirous to take down in writing from the mouth of Ossian, who is the principal personage in several of the following fragments, his warlike achievements and those of his family. But Ossian treats the monk and his religion with disdain, telling him that the deeds of such great men were subjects too high to be recorded by him or by any of his religion: A full proof that Christianity was not as yet established in the country.⁴⁸

The product of that expedition is support for the theoretical underpinning; the historical perspective, with which MacPherson was familiar and upon which Blair would later elaborate in the *Dissertation* that typifies the Enlightenment. Haywood, still under the misapprehension that it is MacPherson who is writing here, claims that the author is drawing on the Irish Fenian cycle in this account and re-contextualising the meeting:

The monk wished to record Ossian's songs, which chronicle "his warlike achievements and those of his family." Ossian's verse was bardic history, the recording of felt experience, empirical data of the past - a Humean regression. The literate monk wished to preserve bardic history. He wanted to make a MS, a contemporaneous "voucher", the most authentic historical source possible. The monk would, if successful, have made a transition from oral to literate culture. It is striking therefore that Macpherson had Ossian refuse the request, thus denying the possible existence of a contemporary voucher.⁴⁹

It is perhaps even more striking when we consider that Macpherson's manipulation of Ossian was delivered at second hand through Blair, the primary 'authoriser' of the text. The process of authentication, from the outset lay at the mercy of a skillful fraud and was undermined by the complicity which arises automatically when good faith parts company with critical reason.

The Preface and the *Fragments* simply prepare the ground for a full scale exploration of eighteenth century literary and cultural sensibilities which could not take place in the direct glare of the moment. There had to be in place both a form for

discussion which would recognise the neoclassical predisposition of the existing literary authorities and a distancing mechanism which would allow for abstract consideration of contemporary ideas and ideals.⁵⁰ The form was epic:

Though the poem's now published appear as detached pieces in this collection, there is ground to believe that most of them were originally episodes of a greater work which related to the wars of Fingal.⁵¹

This early tease in the Preface , concerning the literary possibilities contained in these poetic 'fragments', alerts us to the strategic concerns of Blair as an authoriser. Two pages later another veil is removed:

In particular there is reason to hope that one work of considerable length, and which deserves to be styled an heroic poem, might be recovered and translated, if encouragement were given to such an undertaking.⁵²

While he shies away from an exact term there is little doubt about the form which Blair means to convey by an heroic poem. The original puff of literary possibility evolves into a full scale proposal for a national, epic poetry but, more than this, Blair is actually advertising the future of the past. In proposing that such an endeavor be 'encouraged'. he is inviting both MacPherson to re-create the past along particular lines set out in the Preface and his cultural peers to endorse the products of such a vision. What makes it possible for them to do so is the same device that allows Blair to make the leap from possibility to proposal - the bard.

There can be no doubt that these poems are to be ascribed to the bards; a race of men well known to have continued throughout many ages in Ireland and the north of Scotland. Every chief or great man had in his family a Bard or poet whose office it was to record in verse, the illustrious actions of that family. By the succession of these bards such poems were handed down from race to race; some in manuscript but more by oral tradition. And tradition, in a country so free of intermixture with foreigners, and among a people so strongly attached to the memory of their ancestors has preserved many of them in a great measure uncorrupted to this day.⁵³

Blair establishes, through the Bard, continuity and a sense of purity but he is also adding weight to the literary potential of the *Fragments*. The predominance of oral over manuscript transmission and his willingness to trust the translator's word opens up a huge vista of potential creativity between fragment and translation. All that is required to exploit the context is Macpherson's willingness to deceive in the interests of that creativity and Blair's to acquiesce in that deception so long as it supported the cultural programme. His theoretical model stimulates the metamorphosis of the character, Ossian, into a virtual bard by which means the process of tradition is re-created for an anxious contemporary audience. For the literati, the bard is the guiding spirit in a common dream.⁵⁴ The stuff of that dream is a literature derived from a primary source - the Manuscript; an "empirical unit of historical knowledge" which lent support to an abstract view of history and confirmed their present literary and political sensibility.⁵⁵

The value of these records of antiquity could not be

overstated. As empirical units, they were the process of tradition frozen into the 'traditional' products of a literary culture; products suitable for imaginative manipulation as part of a literary process which fed into the language of Romance. The more fixed tradition became as literary product the more useful it became to the literary process. Macpherson's deception showed what it was possible to do creatively with the accents of tradition and the Ritson inspired hardening of attitudes towards authentication, far from halting this process, simply accelerated its formalisation. The strategy could not, however, have arisen without Macpherson's utilisation of the virtual bard. This bard was more than simply a community historian, telling the past to the future, he was the interlocutor of history conversing with, and organizing the past that, through Macpherson, he was in the process of creating.

Ossian as Bard was a principal part of Macpherson's myth making, establishing a psychological tie from the historical present to the mythic past, and part of the success of the "ancient epics" was owing to Macpherson's structuring of these poems. By means of a fairly complex point of view, he managed to create the illusion that the reader was experiencing directly the "raw and noble passion" of his ancestors.⁵⁶

It is difficult to argue with Greenway's summary of the strategic role of the Bard here. It is, however, worth emphasising that the "complex point of view" was a reduction from a complex of viewpoints garnered from what Greenway

has, himself, characterised as accreted commentaries. The Bard as a "narrative persona" was not, as Greenway points out, Macpherson's invention, (Percy and Thomas Gray had already introduced the bard as the voice of a lost age) but his innovation was that he recognised the possibility of the Bard as mediator between an emerging conception of a historical past and a contemporary sensibility. Macpherson adopted the strategy of the neoclassically minded ballad translators in presenting the materials of tradition in 'authentic' form but the difference lay in the product itself. The artificial nature of Ballads as frozen product instead of living process created the possibility of an illusory past and it was this dream which Macpherson exploited.

This developement can be traced through the evolving theoretical construct and in the process of textual integration by which means the *Fragments* became part of the epic. In the *Preface*, literary judgement is suspended:

Of the poetical merit of these fragments nothing shall here be said. Let the public judge and pronounce.⁵⁷

Here, in 1759, there is nothing in the way of critical judgement to mask the shuffle of bets being hedged. By the time of publication of the *Dissertation* in 1763 the public had well and truly pronounced, prompting Blair to add literary value to the socio-historical value upon which he had concentrated exclusively in the *Preface* :

Besides this merit. which ancient poems have with

philosophical observers of human nature, they have another with persons of taste. They promise some of the highest beauties of poetical writing.⁵⁸

Emerging from a Rouseauesque conception of the corrupting influence of civil society, Blair's premises of taste are rooted in the primitive:

...before those refinements of society had taken place, which enlarge indeed, and diversify the transactions, but disguise the manners of mankind.⁵⁹

but they are sublime in aspiration:

From all this the Celtic tribes clearly appear to have been addicted in so high a degree to poetry, and to have made it so much their study from the earliest times, as may remove our wonder at meeting with a vain of higher poetical refinement among them than was at first sight to have been expected among nations, whom we are accustomed to call barbarous.⁶⁰

He has travelled some way from a non-committal, critical stance to singling out primitive Celtic poetry as a sophisticated and sublime form.⁶¹

What has changed in the interim is that Macpherson has delivered according to the programme laid out in the Preface, where the seed of creativity is planted, and the accumulated literary value is harvested in the *Dissertation*. Blair's new found critical judgement arises directly from the literary and cultural expectations of his age. The nature of this regenerative, creative dynamic is realised in poetry's consistency to the theoritical paradigm and in the theory's expansive accomodation of the literary values which arise. Deception and self-delusion fuse in sentiment and the residue

is indeed a primitive voice; not of Ossian but of the 'authorised' literary culture, mouthing the language of romance:

Cuchulaid sat by the wall; by the
tree of the rustling leaf. His
spear leaned against the mossy rock.
His shield lay by him on the grass.
Whilst he thought on the mighty Carbre
whom he slew in battle, the scout of
the ocean came, Moran the son of Fithil.

Rise, Cuchulaid, rise! I see the ships
of Garve. Many are the foe, Cuchulaid;
many the sons of Lochlyn.

Moran! thou ever tremblest; thy
fears increase the foes. They are the
ships of the Desert of hills arrived to as-
sist Cuchulaid.

Part of this extract from Fragment xiii of the work described there by Macpherson as: "the opening of the epic poem mentioned in the preface" reappear in Fingal as: 62

Rise, said the youth, Cuchulin rise; I see the ships of
Swaran.
Cuchullin, many are the foe : many the heroes of the dark -
rolling sea.

Moran! replied chief, thou ever tremblest, son of
Fithil: Thy fears have much increased the foe. Perhaps it is
the
King of the lonely hills coming to aid me on green Ullin's
plains.

Having left the opening passage almost untouched in translation (a consistent strategy in the evolution of the *Fragments*) this episode, which follows directly on shows immediate signs of Macpherson's development of the bardic

voice. The opening passage is impersonal and descriptive in both works. It is when they are glossed by this episode that those changes in the way it is to be read become apparent. Where the original passage develops from the scene setting, opening as direct dialogue between two characters, in the second, that conversation is controlled by the narrator: "Rise, said the youth" "Moran! replied the blue eyed chief."

The fundamental alteration at the outset of *Fingal* is the empowerment of the teller. This authority derives from Macpherson's creative interpretation and manipulation of Blair's bard as he is described in the Preface. The consequence of this empowerment for the development of the *Fragments* is highlighted in *Fragment VIV*, the episode of Morna and Duchommar, where the entire literary orientation of the original is altered to suit the Ossianic voice. In the original, the context is dramatic dialogue complete with stage direction:

(He gives her the sword, with which she instantly stabs him)

which is transformed in the poetry of *Fingal*:

He gave the sword to her tears; but she pierced his manly
breast.

He fell, like the bank of a mountain stream; strteched out his
arm and said:

The poeticising of the technical which occurs here illustrates the compass of creative possibility available to Macpherson. It is important to remember here that we are

dealing with fragments which were described in Blair's preface as literal in their original translation. It seems reasonable to speculate here upon the possibility that the dramatic orientation of the original fragment suggest that Macpherson, at the time of its publication, had not yet quite made up his mind which way in which the *Fragments* as a whole might develop at a time when Ossian was simply a character in one of the fragments. It seems likely that the power of the literati's dream, as represented by Blair in the Preface, swayed him and gave rise to an epic rather than a dramatic evolution.

In the re-translation of these fragments we also witness Macpherson trying to re-create the illusion of a traditional process at work in order to create an authentic traditional product (as part of the literary process) through the addition of pseudo-formulaic phrases which are related to the epic form. In *Hardyknute*, the syntactical, metrical and ideological forms of tradition allowed contributors to its evolution to experiment with the possibilities of popular literature. In *Fingal* the models are classical and the critical sensibility is the modified neoclassicism of the literati.⁶³ In the opening text (Fragment XIII), one of the main differences in translation is the addition of pseudo-formulas such as: "the dark rolling sea" or "the blue eyed chief". The creation of these phrases mimics Wardlaw's strategy in substituting variants of formulaic diction. This time, however, the

formulaic diction is not that of popular tradition but rather typifies the Homeric phrase - "wine dark sea" etc . It is also removed from its metrical context to support the oracular tone of the Ossianic voice. The strategic use of pseudo-formula takes a further step in "Fragment VIV" . Morna, whose "breasts are like smooth rocks seen from Branno of the streams", rejects Duchomar's advances and declares her love for Cathbat. Duchomar reveals that he has slain the " youth with the breast of snow" at "Branno's stream" which is Morna's cue to pierce Duchomer's " manly breast" , so that he falls like the "bank of a mountain stream".

This is more than just an interesting piece of topographical personification, it is an attempt at a structural re-creation of traditional process trading on antiquarian studies which implicitly refers to the critical programme drawn up by Blair on behalf of the literati. Duchomer's "breast" is further referred to in the two succeeding passages, although in the original fragment he had been stabbed in the side .Through a combination of diffuse, metaphorical synthesis and a technique that might be loosely described as incremental variation Macpherson creates a pseudo-architectonic which corresponds to the dissembled nature of the translated fragment rather than to the priorities of tradition. The structure of tradition is part of a multi-layered system of authentication aimed at providing the literati with a convincing traditional product that reflects

their own literary and political preoccupations..

The fundamentally integrative intention is borne out by Macpherson's decision not to poeticise the stage direction of the final scene in the "Fragments" when he translates it for *Fingal* .

(Upon her coming near him, he stabs
her. As she fell she plucked a stone
from the side of the cave , and placed it
betwixt them, that his blood might not
be mingled with hers)

If this scene had been allowed to remain, the elemental fusion of characters would have been disturbed. Morna's refusal to "mingle" with the character of Duchomer would have been directly at odds with the strategic recreation of what Macpherson imagined to be the bonding sub-structures of tradition. The friable nature of the "Fragments" culled from deliberately obscure gaelic sources, allowed them to be re-glued in translation in such a way as to accomodate the epic form and the bardic voice but, equally important, to do so in a manner that would appear, to the senses of the critical powers, to be 'authentic'.⁶⁴ Authenticity had to accomodate a contemporary sensibility by creating the impression of having incorporated a traditional sensibility.

Authenticity is the germ of Macpherson's creative strategy, a strategy of deception and it is the precise importance attached to that concept by cultural authorities in the eighteenth century that makes them susceptible to fraud. If the author is as familiar with those principles of authenticity

as the critical audience, he is able, by drawing attention to his particular avoidance of what is commonly regarded as improper, to distract attention from the more subtle dissimulation through which the greater fraud is perpetrated.⁶⁵

In "Fragment XIII ", Cuchulaid (Cuchullin in *Fingal*) is less worthy of a footnote than, " the tree of the rustling leaf" which Macpherson reveals to be an Aspen or Poplar tree. When he emerges at the opening of the epic, however, he has acquired a history in the footnotes. More importantly, that personal history evolves into an authenticated social history which provides supporting evidence for the historical accuracy of the text. Together they support the historical claim that Fingal's assistance had been sought by Cuchullin before the story commences and also calls history itself into dispute. The poem, as historical source, re-evaluates history⁶⁶ :

We may conclude from Cuchullin's applying so early for foreign aid, that the Irish were not then so numerous as they have since been; which is a great presumption against the high antiquities of that people. We have the testimony of Tacitus that one legion only was thought sufficient, in the time of Agricola, to reduce the whole island under the Roman yoke; which would not probably have been the case had the island been inhabited for any number of centuries before.⁶⁷

By concentrating interested minds on an alleged innaccuracy of official (Irish) history and quoting another external authority, Macpherson diverts attention from his own duplicity; his creation of a mythical history through a system of authentication which recognised the scrupulous procedures of contemporary historical study while exploiting the fluid

parameters that were a consequence of the increasing relevance of ancient literature to that study.

Haywood notes the irony in Macpherson's calling the exploitation of such mechanisms "imposture", creating the impression that he was utilising these mechanisms while simultaneously pre-empting criticism of the strategy. It is worth pointing out that Macpherson only began to criticise the authenticating footnote after he had turned his attention to 'legitimate' historiography. In the light of this it would be misleading to assume a 'double indemnity' at this point in the creative process.⁶⁸

Macpherson was not content, however, to simply establish the pure, epic nature of the poetry through historical data. He realised the need to establish a sense of continuity if he was to create the impression of a traditional process. Once again, authentication lay in the relationship between text and footnote. In *Fingal* a connection between the ancient epic and a modern (neoclassical) sensibility is made by a footnote, alluding to Milton, which relates to the line "His sheild like the rising moon", which does not appear in the original "Fragment XIII":

* -----His ponderous sheild
behind him cast; the broad circumferenca
Hung on his shoulders like the moon.

We are invited in the commentary to compare the primitive, pseudo-formulaic economy of the ancient phrase

with the cultured expressiveness of Milton's 'modern' epic. There is a simultaneous equation in the compression and expansion of temporal consciousness which links the past to the modern through an evolutionary sense and the modern to the past by reduction. What emerges through the Scotch mist of temporal obfuscation is the impression of tradition tinged with a contemporary sense of classicism - Ossian in a toga; Homer in a kilt and Milton as sartorial advisor.⁶⁹ The suspension of reason produces the article of faith, a national epic poetry.

Macpherson was aware that the illusion of authenticity could be supported by historical and literary gloss but it had also to be established as part of the credible tradition of a primitive people. No matter how strong the desire to discern their own sensibility in embryonic form in the works of Ossian, a sceptical literati could not simply define themselves in terms of what they saw there; what they were not was equally important. They were not superstitious:

* Allad is plainly a druid: he is called the son of a rock, from his dwelling in a cave; and the circle of stones here mentioned is the pale of the druidical temple. he is here consulted as one who had a supernatural knowledge of things; from the druids, no doubt, came the ridiculous notion of the second sight, which prevailed in the highlands and isles.⁷⁰

In order to sustain the faith in a national epic, a sense of continuous sensibility had to be underwritten by history, literature and reason. The myth of progress had to be encoded here in order to accomodate reason, or at least dazzle it. In

drawing attention to the superstition that characterised a bygone era and was consistent with empirical studies of contemporary primitive societies, Macpherson maintained continuity while establishing a sufficient sense of difference. The continuity consists in the establishment of a tradition of cultural class. The druids are characterised here as the arbiters of a primitive sensibility. The difference, Macpherson implies, is that this age is above all that; it is a scientific, empirical age and the literati were the rightful heirs of the cultural mantle. Continuity, for the literati, consisted in the smooth transition of power through history from one cultural elite to another.

But the facilitator of that transition is the bard whose genius, long after the Druids have died out, continues to refine the primitive sensibility to the point where the eighteenth century 'man of feeling' recognises his inheritance - the moral, ethical and aesthetic manners of contemporary 'virtue'. Through the virtual bard, whose literary programme had been validated by the existing cultural authorities in order to allow them to impose their own values on tradition, Macpherson creates the mythology of a cultivated class which distinguished the Caledonian Celts and explained the origins and identity of the literati to themselves. The process of tradition where aesthetic arbitration consists in the immediate relationship between the performer, audience and the tale to be told is subverted and invested with self-fulfilling,

literary values which support the notion of a 'natural' cultural hierarchy and reinforce the neoclassical worldview under the guise of progress.

Macpherson had to flatter their faith in that myth in order to deceive their reason by incorporating tradition in the footnote. In the translated "Fragment XV", Lamderg voices his distress at not finding his lover, Gelchoffa, present on his return from battle:

...But I see her not coming to meet me;
and to sooth my soul after battle.
Silent is the hall of my joy;
I hear not the voice of the bard.
- Bran* does not shake his chains at the gate,
glad of the coming of Lamderg.⁷¹

Macpherson's setting of Lamderg's imaginary scene allows him to create an 'authentic' sense of a primitive way of life by contrasting that with the character's blighted expectations. In the translation from the *Fragments*, the singer has become a bard, integrating Ossian with that scene; a snapshot of a domestic tradition where the hero returns to find his faithful lover and his faithful dog and resume his idyllic, primitive life with the bard in attendance to sing of his deeds and absorb them in a tradition of great ancestors who have also committed heroic acts. Blair's bard, as he appears in the Preface to the *Fragments*, is encoded in the relationship between footnote and text. This is drawn together in Macpherson's footnote on Bran the greyhound which, although ignored in the *Fragments*, is pressed into the service of

creating a sense of custom; a primitive sense of continuity to parallel that of the culturally advanced continuity outlined above:

* Bran is a common name of gray-hounds to this day. It is a custom in the north of Scotland, to give the names of the heroes mentioned in this poem, to their dogs; a proof that they are familiar to the ear, and their fame generally known.⁷²

The accuracy of oral tradition is testified here by the contemporary 'traditional' custom of naming dogs after heroes who appear elsewhere in the poem. By association with the text, the custodian of that tradition is the bard. Macpherson, through the virtual bard, is drawing on the same associations as the bard as he is characterized in the text. In citing the custom he makes the temporal leap from the present to the past through which he weaves the heroes, Bran and Lamderg, into the traditional fabric of the mythical tale. He utilises a literary footnote in order to to validate the impression of an oral process. Macpherson is deliberately synthesising fact and fiction to create the appearance of truth. So long as that appearance satisfied the sanctioned authenticating apparatus, the faith in Humean 'feeling' of the discerning literati, he could perpetrate the fraud by manipulating a reading attitude that, in the confusion of history, literature and myth devolved reason to likliehood.⁷³

Through the translation of the "Fragments" we witness the development of an entirely new literary process - the empowered narrative. Ossian is lifted from the relative obscurity of a

character in one of the "Fragments" to become the director of tradition authorised by the footnotes of history. Reason may have re-established itself in the wake of Macpherson's exposure as a fraud but once so much imaginative faith is invested in a strategy it cannot be put aside, particularly when it is so expressive and powerful as the works of Ossian undoubtedly were to the age. The problem was how to accommodate that strategy in a cultural context. For the cultural elite the problem was solved by Scott whose formalisation of the culture of creative deception will be examined below.

For the popular culture, which was also in Ossian's thrall, it was a more difficult accomodation. Robbed to a great extent of the actual process of tradition, it was left, as a culture in transition, to sort through those oral fragments which were by now profoundly contaminated by authorised, printed, traditional product and to assimilate, in the popular domain, the implications of the bard and the literary values that trickled down with him for popular literary culture. To this end it is worth examining the work of Robert Burns, a familiar figure on both sides of the cultural divide. His relationship with the new authorised literary culture and the extent to which a truly popular literary culture had to subscribe to authorised norms and values might give us some indication of the extent to which the accents of tradition were modified in the second half of the eighteenth century and the implications that this held for a language of romance.

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¹ Walter J. Bate, *From Classic to Romantic*, (Cambridge, 1946), p.50. Bate identifies the Earl of Shaftsbury as the major figure behind the eighteenth Century desire to establish "...a cultivated 'taste' as the fundamental basis of both art and morality." This conception of taste derives originally from a refutation of Hobbes which emphasises an instinctive feeling in man toward promoting the common good and is summarised by Bate (p.51): "The order of the universe proclaims its fundamental characteristic as harmony; harmony being at once the reality and beauty of the universe, it follows that the true, the good, and the beautiful are the same and that the perception of one is the perception of all three." It is not difficult to understand the danger of trying to confront this morally grounded aesthetic with an appeal for dissonance which is an essential impulse behind the eighteenth century romantic 'revival'.

² Joseph Ritson, Letter, *Gentleman's Magazine*, November 1784, pp.812-14.

³ Arthur Johnstone, *Enchanted Ground*, (London, 1964), p.46. In his examination of the relationship between Romances and the modern (18th C.) poetry, Johnstone remarks of the ballads that both "...ancient and modern had already found readers in Dryden and Addison, they had been imitated, and one at least, *Hardyknute* had been forged." This definition of *Hardyknute* as a ballad is consistent with Ritson's definition of the first part of the poem being "a fine and popular ballad" despite it's also being an "artful and impudent forgery" and is generally held to whenever the poem is cited.

⁴ Derek Brewer, ed., "Escape From The Mimetic Fallacy," *Studies in Mediaeval English Romances*, (Cambridge, Mass., 1988), p.2. Brewer claims that: "Even the, so-called, Revival of Romance, that is, Romanticism, in all its vast European ramifications, can be shown to be largely based on, even when apparently reacting against, the literary theories and worldview of Neoclassicism." While Brewer discusses this mainly in relation to the medieval Romance and its influence on romanticism, it holds equal relevance as we come to examine the treatment and translation of popular traditional materials into the literary culture.

⁵ Susan Wittig, *Stylistic and Narrative Structures in the middle English Romance*, (London, 1978), p.46. Wittig explains this distinction by arguing that: "The style of the Romance is different from most other narrative styles....in that its referent does not exist in the real world but in a second-order world of social gesture, a carefully appointed and systematic language in its own right, which is constructed not to approach reality directly but to manipulate it from behind a screen, to make social sense of the relations between human beings as well as between the human world and the natural world." What she appears to be saying is that although narrative ballads (and epic) may depend on similar social phenomena, their relationships to those phenomena are more direct and concrete than those of the Romance which are or tend to be codified abstractions of those direct relationships.

⁶ Elizabeth Wardlaw, "Hardyknute", *Scottish Poetry of the Eighteenth Century*, ed. George Eyre-Todd, (Glasgow, 1896), pp. 17-29. Reprinted from James Watson (Edinburgh, 1719), folio 12. pp. with additional two stanzas from Allan Ramsay, *Evergreen*, (Edinburgh, 1723)

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⁷ Susan Wittig, *Op.Cit.*, p.43. Wittig carries her argument one stage too far here by claiming that formulaic structure results in an audience's ability to accurately predict the next formulaic phrase. This is unfortunate because it detracts from the essential part of her case that formulaic phrases are the building blocks of a predictable world. That world is predictable not because the audience forecasts the next formulaic phrase but because it is familiar with all the materials of construction and it knows, not what comes next so much as, how each succeeding phrase relates to the construction. Just as a layman is familiar enough with building materials to know that glass is not generally used to construct a floor, the traditional audience will expect and admire creative disposition of formulas but only as they are appropriate to the overall architecture of the work.

⁸ Although this latter formula is entirely Wardlaw's construction, it is a notable example of pseudo-formula moulded from a popular oral formula. In this case the common ballad formula, "When bells were rung and mass was sung," appears to be the model for the pseudo-formulaic construction.

⁹ Derek Brewer, *Op.Cit.*, p.2. Brewer notes the loss of popularity of the middle English Romance among the literary establishment at the beginning of the eighteenth century and its translation into "the material of chapbooks". Wardlaw's original composition of the poem around this time taken in tandem with the stylistic and generic confusion of the work seem to offer convincing evidence that the romances, as translated for the popular literature of the day, were an inspirational source for *Hardyknute*. Arthur Johnston confirms that "The gradual descent of the romances to the literature of the nursery", but goes on to point out that although this proved "in one sense an embarrassment to the scholars who tried to revive interest in them in their original forms, it was also an encouragement to the historically minded antiquary, who could thereby trace an unbroken link with the literature of the middle ages." ("Enchanted Ground", *Op.Cit.*, p.32) He then draws attention to the influence of this 'nursery' material in relation to the creative endeavours of eighteenth century poets. It seems fair to claim that in *Hardyknute* we have one of the first examples of creativity inspired by translated romances. It is also worth noting that the link with the literary past which the antiquarians established was just as important to the emerging literary culture as a whole. It was no accident that people were looking for such links, but the psychologically driven imperative of an emerging literary culture pressurised by a sense of alienation which was engendered by the development of the literate imagination.

¹⁰ If Ramsay did recognise a modern consciousness at work here, which his additions seem to suggest, it would be politically prudent to continue the deception particularly if the meditation on the current state of Scotland was to be augmented in any controversial manner.

¹¹ George Eyre Todd, "Introduction," *Scottish Poetry of the 18th Century*, (Glasgow, 1896), p.15.

¹² It is interesting to note here the similarity between this story and that of the discovery of the Percy Ms. lying under a table being used to light fires. As Wardlaw invented her story before Percy gave his account of his discovery, it puts an interesting shade on the origins of the Percy Ms.

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13 Allan Ramsay, *The Ever Green*, (Edinburgh, 1723), p.248. The orthography used by Ramsay here is a kind of amalgam of that found in the works of the other "ingenious" contributors to *The Ever Green* among them poets of the calibre of Dunbar and Montgomerie and anonymous traditional works like *Johnie Armstrang*. This amalgamated orthography lends the weight of tradition and the credibility of the Makars to *Hardyknute* by association. If, as it seems reasonable to assume, Ramsay recognised and wished to further infiltrate the potentially subversive elements of the poem into the popular consciousness, he could have found no more effective way of doing so than by continuing and deepening the myth of authenticity. Ramsay's role in the development of *Hardyknute* as a vehicle of a deceptive literary strategy, which reflected a frustrated cultural imagination, cannot be underestimated.

14 *Ibid.*, pp.263-264.

15 It is also interesting to note that Eyre Todd in re-anglicising the text so as to support his contention of Wardlaw's authorship of the final two stanzas was, albeit unconsciously, continuing the fiction of the text as late as 1896.

16 John Pinkerton, "Dissertation on the Oral Tradition of Poetry," *Scottish Tragic Ballads*, (1781) p. xx.

17 *Ibid.*, pp. xxi - xxiv. As well as using these poets, in his extended footnote to enhance the idea of authenticity by association with a Scottish alliterative tradition Pinkerton examines the 'history' of that tradition providing an interesting interpretation which adds yet another layer to his own fiction. In remarking his surprise that "the respectable editor of ancient Scottish Poems from the MS of George Bannatyne, 1568. Edin. 1770" seems to regard certain Scottish alliterative pieces as "no ancients than the time of Queen Mary. His reasons are only founded on the modern appearances of some particular passages" Pinkerton contends that "intrinsic evidence" which he does not cite proves that they are, despite those appearances, ancient works. No doubt, the same intrinsic evidence would override any questions of modern appearance in his own productions.

18 *Ibid.*, p. xxvii.

19 *LOC.CIT.*

20 Sir Walter Scott, *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*, vol. IV., (Edinburgh, 1932), p.45. Scott notes in his remarks on Pinkerton's compositions that "they are then work of a scholar much better acquainted with ancient books and manuscripts than with oral tradition and popular legends. The poetry smells of the lamp....." It was, however, the same lamp that illuminated Scott's own fiction and to some extent his collecting. His disapproval is informed by a hindsight coloured by the Ritsonian definition of authenticity and in many ways it was only his use of a fictional and distanced narrator that distinguished Scott's strategy from Pinkerton's. Where Pinkerton was forced to deception by the prevailing critical tide, Scott was fortunate enough to catch it on the turn at the point where deception became an acceptable literary tool, so long as the fiction was explicit (and acceptable to a literary elite which had now, thanks to Ritson and the anthropological preoccupations of the enlightenment, developed their own ideas about the role of tradition and the standards by which tradition should be judged). As with MacPherson, Pinkerton's deception, while attracting Scott's disapproval, made his particular brand of historical fiction possible.

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21 Pinkerton, *Op. Cit.*, p. xxiv. Pinkerton offers his comments on 'the true poetic terrible' of which he believes that 'some passages in Hardyknute yield to no attempt of a strong and dark fancy.' By placing the romantic imagination in the context of ancient poetry he is acknowledging the neoclassical aesthetic as legitimate even as he comments on his own construction. This seems to be in line with Brewer's view that the developing 18th century Romantic imagination was based on a neoclassical "worldview". However, it should be noted that this was a worldview that was, under pressure from emerging enlightenment ideas and the demands of an emerging literate culture, moving to accommodate that shift but which remained unwilling to entertain "fancy" as a legitimate literary tool. The only possibility for the acceptance of a creativity which relied on such a technique was through disguise and deception.

23 *Ibid.*, p. ix. Blackwell and Blair appear in a footnote related to the passage above, Blackwell as the Homeric authority and Blair as the expert on Ossian. These authorities are called to mind in the attempt, later on in the dissertation, (see above p.15) to place Hardyknute in an epic tradition. Robertson's influence is prominent in the comparison of the native peoples of America and Scotland (*Dissertation on the Oral Tradition of Poetry*, P. xix.) while if we substitute 'imagination' for "fancy" (Pinkerton's choice of word here is notable because it associates the poems with a mediaeval sense of poetic imagination consistent with the neoclassical worldview) we can detect, in the relationship between poetry and the passions a general Humean thrust. Smith is grafted onto the theory in order to support the second dissertation *On the Tragic Ballad* where his " Sympathetic Spirit" (xxviii) is invoked and allied to the relationship between poetry and passions in order to explain Pinkerton's ideas of the effect of the tragic ballad - an effect which he is trying to create as much as describe.

24 Robert Crawford, *Devolving English Literature*, (Oxford, 1992), p. 116. As well as identifying Scott's " desire for a comparative scope in the investigation of manners" Crawford also traces that impulse to his " Enlightenment teachers. The infusion of Enlightenment sources into Pinkerton's deceptive literature highlights once again the similarity in strategy, distinguished in the main by the actual duplicity of Pinkerton opposed to the fictional duplicity of Scott's narrators. Deception raised the possibility of historical fiction and while Macpherson's Ossianic deception stimulated the direction of Scott's cultural enquiries it is to Pinkerton that Scott, consciously or otherwise, owes his strategic impulse.

25 Pinkerton, *Op.Cit.*, p. xxx.

26 Also indirectly to non -literate audiences who were even more dependent on the rhythms of tradition but nonetheless subject to the pressures of a new legitimacy that accompanied mass literacy.

27 Bertrand H. Bronson, *Joseph Ritson, Scholar at Arms*, PP. 115 -121

28 The publication of this selection marks Pinkerton's acceptance of Ritson's critical procedures which underlie this collection. It is worth noting , however, that the damage done to Pinkerton's reputation by Ritson's attack coloured his reputation to the point where traditional scholars tend to avoid its use as source material despite its Ritsonian authenticity.

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²⁹Arthur Johnston, *Op. Cit.* , p.43. Johnston brings to our attention Warton's appeal for a "poetry endued with new manners and images" and Percy and Warton's shared belief in Hurd's contention that "the manners of romance are better calculated to answer the purposes of true poetry, to captivate the imagination, and to produce surprise, than the fictions of classical antiquity." This is a clear challenge to the neoclassical aesthetic and the vehemence of Ritson's attack on Warton and Percy should give us some hint of where he stood on the question of the romantic imagination and the traditional as a source of inspiration. The history of Ritson's attack on Warton and Percy and as here on Pinkerton concentrates on the rectitude of Ritson's critical criteria and his insistence on a definitive and authentic text at the expense of examining the rectitude of his approach to the contemporary creative imagination. Warton's influence on Pinkerton was undoubtedly marked and his authority was hijacked to authenticate Pinkerton's fiction, citing, as he does in his first dissertation, Warton's, *History of English Poetry* , which Ritson had already lambasted, as an authoritative source for his discussion of poetry accompanied by the harp. When all of these relationships are taken fully into account, as they rarely are, it becomes easier to accept Pinkerton's *Hardyknute* as a conscious work of fiction and, given the violence of the attacks on his natural allies, to understand the prudence of deception.

³⁰ John L. Greenway, *Macpherson's Ossian and the Nordic Bard as Myth*, in *Poets of Sensibility and the Sublime*, ed. Harold Bloom, (New York, 1986), pp. 251-2. Greenway, in noting Herder's remarks on Kretschmann's 'bardic' creativity, to the effect that his works were not *Volkspoesie* but *about Volkspoesie* , touches upon an interpretation of sentimental primitivism which illustrates the inherent flaw in the creative strategy: "Even though myth's truths are not primarily validated by reason, a modern myth must maintain a factual superstructure to complement that part of it which operates extra -rationally. This requirement implies a separation of Faith and Reason which, in fact, worked to render the bardic myth inexpressive."

When this is taken in context with his observation that "the mythic world given symbolic form by Ossian....was for a time more real to the general perception of the age than historical fact." we can perhaps begin to understand the cultural climate in terms of that temporary separation of 'Faith and Reason' ; a manifestation of the cultural capacity for self-delusion which made the Ossianic deception possible. This is particularly the case where, as will be argued below, the cultural authorities are largely responsible for the creative strategy.

³¹ Joseph Margolis, "Art, Forgery and Authenticity," *The Forger's Art* , ed. Denis Dutton, (Berkeley, 1983) p.160.

³² James Macpherson, "Preface," *The Works of Ossian* , (Edinburgh, 1765), p.3.

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33 Fiona J. Stafford, *The Sublime Savage*, (Edinburgh, 1991), p. 124. Stafford notes in regard to his written sources that: 'Macpherson's indignation at the bard's interpolations is somewhat ironic, considering his own treatment of the manuscripts.' Notwithstanding Stafford's talent for understatement when considering Macpherson's forgery she does have a valid argument when she claims this as a proof of Macpherson's acceptance of his own sources as corrupt. She is, however, misleading when she attempts to provide an interpretation of his response to that corruption:

"There is no suggestion that he regarded the manuscripts as being contemporary with Ossian, but rather that the poems, which had been transmitted through the oral tradition, were eventually committed to writing. Macpherson's anger was directed at the unknown bard who had dared alter Ossian's poems, instead of preserving the original compositions."

Here, she fails to recognise the extent to which Macpherson, trading on the credibility of Blair's theoretical underpinning and antiquarian procedures, played on the purity of both oral tradition and MS. 'authenticity' in his own endeavours. Instead, she suggests, that this disgust with corruption of others provided Macpherson with justification for his own interpolations. In allowing this line of argument to emerge unchallenged and by tacitly supporting it Stafford appears to display in equal measure the levels of ingenuity and naivete which have, through the critical history of these works, accompanied the defence of the charges of deception laid against Macpherson. This is confirmed by her determination not to place any obstacle between her readers and the clear inference, also drawn from Gallie's testimony which provides the evidence for this justified 'restoration', regarding Macpherson's motivation for guarding the original Mss.: 'lest they should fall under the view of such as would be more ready to publish their deformities than point out their beauties.' The original sources, as will be demonstrated below, were not protected to safeguard the art of tradition from the harsh scrutiny of contemporary literary procedures but rather to reinforce the illusion of the re-created past, which was critically dependent on the universal delusion that those very procedures were being rigorously applied.

34 Hugh Blair, "Preface," James Macpherson, *Fragments of Ancient Poetry, Collected in the Highlands of Scotland, and Translated from the Gaelic or Erse language* (Edinburgh, 1760) p.i.

35 Margolis, *Op.Cit.*, p.161.

36 *Ibid.*, pp.163-164.

37 Mark Sagoff, "On Restoring and Reproducing Art", *Journal of Philosophy* 75: 453, 1978.

38 Stafford, *Op.Cit.* p.?

39 Ian Haywood, *The Making of History*, (London, 1986), p.71.

40 *Ibid.* p79. Haywood describes the bardic voice as "an innovation in poetic form" the development of which can be traced in the 'fragments'. His claim that Ossian *made* history through that voice creates a fundamental distinction between Macpherson's historical poetry and the evolutionary historical commentary of *Hardyknute*.

41 *LOC. CIT.*

42 *Ibid.* pp. 73-100.

43 Hugh Blair, "Preface," *Fragments*, p.iii.

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44 Howard Gaskill "Introduction," *Ossian Revisited*, (Edinburgh, 1991), p.2. In both of the early editions of *Fragments of Ancient Poetry*: "the translator remains anonymous as does the author of the Preface, Hugh Blair." The importance of recognising Blair's authorship of the Preface cannot be overstated as it not only introduces the notion of a dynamic sense of creativity established in the dialectic between the poet and his literary mentors but also insofar as it draws our attention to an evolving relationship between the form that this poetry would take and the ideology which informed the work. In *A Bulky and Foolish Treatise* (*Ossian Revisited*) p131, Steve Rizza alerts us to the importance of Blair's ideological underpinning, which culminated in his *Critical Dissertation on the Poems of Ossian* in 1765, to the reception of MacPherson's work in the eighteenth century:

"Blair's first publication associated with Ossian was the anonymous *Preface* to the *Fragments of Ancient Poetry*..... which appeared in June 1760. Some two years later, as recently appointed Professor of Rhetoric and Belles-Lettres at the University of Edinburgh, he included in his course a lecture on the Poems of Ossian, and the *Dissertation* is in effect an expansion of the ideas presented in these two documents."

Just as MacPherson's anonymous fragments were to evolve into a national epic so the short, anonymous Preface grew into a complex meditation on the cultural history of Scotland. The prospect of a national epic demanded a commensurate ideology which in turn scaled the epic. Each fuelled the other's potential and proclaimed their interdependence. That the work was commissioned by the literati and reflected many of their preoccupations is confirmed by Dwyer. For this and a comprehensive account of Macpherson's academic background, which allowed him to tap into that ideology, see ("The Melancholy Savage" in *Ossian Revisited* pp. 171-183.)

45 David Hume, "Letter to Hugh Blair", 19th September 1763, quoted in, *Report of the Committee of the Highland Society of Scotland*, ed. Henry Mackenzie, (Edinburgh 1805) p. 5.

46 Fiona J. Stafford, *Op. Cit.*, p.97. Stafford widens the list of subscribers to this notion where she notes that, 'The men who had first encouraged Macpherson to translate his Gaelic verse were in the forefront of a general drive to improve Scottish arts. John Home's controversial tragedy, *Douglas*, 1757 proclaimed the importance of Athenian 'learning and the love of every art', and drew a direct parallel between Greece and Scotland. This admiration for the multi-faceted genius of Athens was shared by David Hume and other members of the Select Society who were all keen to promote improvements, both practical and cultural.' (p.114) The literati were, it seems, intellectually and politically drunk on the idea of a Scottish Homer who could reinforce the neoclassical civic and martial virtues which were lay behind the cultural agenda. See also, John Dwyer, "The Melancholy Savage", in *Ossian Revisited* pp.176-7.

47 Hugh Blair, "Preface," *Fragments*, p.iii.

48 *Ibid.*, p.iv.

49 Haywood, *Op.Cit.*, p.76.

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50 Greenway, "Macpherson's Ossian and the Nordic Bard as Myth", *Poets of Sensibility and the Sublime* p. 245

It is worth considering Greenway's view of the Poems of Ossian as mythical narrative, in the sense of their being a "symbolic apprehension of reality" and his explanation of how that operates:

"The myths of a culture provide an orientation for man's moral experience in that they bestow an objective status upon values of the present, preserving them from relativism. Myths of gods and heroes show that the paradigms for human action not only exist outside man, but can be a part of genesis itself; that is, present values are legitimized, transferred from the profane world to the sacred by projecting them *in illo tempore* (to use Eliade's term): a static time of creation when a culture's truths were established."

What he appears to be saying here is that myth allows a culture to address its own experience in reflection and to establish and reinforce contemporary values in terms of the experience of tradition. The particular relevance for this in a mixed oral and literate culture lies in its promotion of social stability. This, however, demands an authenticated sense of purity in the myth (See Haywood, *The making of History* p.41) which, in the aftermath of political union and national defeat, could only be accomplished if the 'authorisers' of the myth were willing to suspend their disbelief in support of a continuing cultural programme.

51 Blair, "Preface," *Fragments*, p. v.

52 *Ibid.* , p. vii.

53 *Ibid.* , p. vi.

54 Northrop Frye, "Toward Defining an Age of Sensibility," *Poets of Sensibility and the Sublime* , p.14.

Commenting on Ossian as a literature of process Frye, perhaps taking his cue from Johnson, compares it to a dream and contrasts its sense with that of another kind of literature:

"Where the emphasis is on the communicated product, the qualities of consciousness take the lead: a regular metre, clarity of syntax, epigram and wit, repetition of sense in antitheses and balance rather than of sound.

....Where the emphasis is on the original process, the qualities of subconscious association take the lead, and the poetry becomes hypnotically repetitive, oracular, incantatory, dreamlike and in the original sense of the word charming. The response to it includes a subconscious factor, the surrendering to a spell."

While this 'surrender' goes some way to providing an explanation of the temporary separation of "Faith and Reason" as it affected literary sensibilities in the second half of the eighteenth century it is important to understand that this was for Macpherson a literary process that was intended to re-create a traditional product through the illusion that a traditional process was operating. The nature of that re-creation may, in part have to do with his sources but it is worth pointing out that some traditional oral process relies heavily on the compression of sense in order to accommodate the contingencies of memory. The subconscious association here takes place in the binding relationship between performer, audience and the shared knowledge of the story to be told. Far from exhibiting the diffusion of sense that characterises Ossian, oral process shares many of the characteristics that Frye ascribes above to literatures of product, be they Augustan or Romantic.

55 Haywood, *Op. Cit.* , p. 19. Haywood draws our attention here to the role of seventeenth-century antiquarianism in the elevation of the manuscript to 'empirical unit'.

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56 Greenway, "MacPherson's Ossian and the Nordic Bard as Myth," *Poets of Sensibility and the Sublime*, p.248.

57 Blair, "Preface," *Fragments*, p.vii.

58 Hugh Blair, *A Critical Dissertation on the Poems of Ossian - The Son of Fingal*, (London, 1763) p.2.

59 *Ibid.*, p.1.

60 *Ibid.*, p.10.

61 John Dwyer, "The Melancholy Savage," *Ossian Revisited*, (Edinburgh, 1991), p.177. Dwyer notes that it is the: ".....characteristic of 'tenderness' that so impresses Blair about the Ossianic poems. He acknowledges that Homer's capacity for description rivals that of Ossian. He is quite prepared to admit that Homer and Virgil compete successfully with Ossian in the construction of successful images and metaphors. But he argues that, in his combination of the 'sublime and pathetik', Ossian cannot be surpassed by any literature anywhere. That Ossian is a master of the sublime is evidenced, according to Blair in those passages in which he demonstrates the force of nature or nature's man, the mighty Fingal. Sublimity may also be seen in the entire machinery of the epic, including godlike opponents who shake the ground with their blows; marvellous ghosts whose thundering steps are felt across the oceans; and a natural environment harsh and untamed." Possible addition on Celtic side.

62 It is worth noting this example of the intimacy of the relationship between the text and the Preface here. Macpherson refers the reader to the preface and initializes the process of authentication between the theoretical model and the text; the effectiveness of this strategy was not lost on Pinkerton in his expansion of *Hardyknute* (see above)

63 Steve Rizza, "A Bulky and Foolish Treatise" in *Ossian Revisited*, p.141. Highlighting the mimetic interpretation placed on the *Works of Ossian* by Blair in the Dissertation, Rizza provides a thoughtful explanation of the role of that interpretation which supports the illusion of the bard:

"Eighteenth-century readers could safely allow themselves to be carried away by Ossian's description of spirits, as the features of these descriptions which on Blair's account give them the power to transport (their basis in nature for example) are precisely those which allow the reader, in more reflective moments to account for Ossian's beliefs." Blair's, fundamentally neoclassical, critical interpretation explains the reader's experience of Ossian's sublime 'reality' as part of an ongoing regenerative feedback between the creative process and the critical apparatus.

64 For a comprehensive study of the Gaelic sources see, Derick S. Thomson, *The Gaelic Sources of MacPherson's Ossian* (Edinburgh 1951).

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65 Haywood, *Op. Cit.*, p.104. Haywood draws attention to the role of Ambrose Philips in facilitating editorial deception in a climate where poetry and history were mutually bound. Philips, he claims, was so concerned with the historical value of ancient poetry that he established the practise of external glosses, usually in the form of introductions, on the text:

" Philips established this format with the declared intention of presenting the factual and fictional portions of his ballads. The emphasis, however, was always on the former quality. So great was Philips' desire to authenticate this factuality that he also established editorial dissimulation. He rarely pointed out what is fiction."

Macpherson's familiarity with, and manipulation of, the dynamic between external and internal elements of ancient poetry is the source of his deception and his creativity both of which can be seen in the process of poetic evolution, whereby fragments become epic.

66 Greenway, "MacPherson's Ossian and the Nordic Bard as Myth," *Poets of Sensibility and the Sublime*, p. 249. According to Greenway: 'MacPherson's notes are an integral part of Ossian-as-Myth, for they provide a constant empirical commentary, emphasising the historicity and versimilitude of the poems. They also make of Ossian an epic counterpart to Homer, Virgil and Milton, showing that though Ossian expressed a superior Northern morality, he obeyed the "general rules" of the epic. A growing accretion of appended commentary elaborated upon this, beginning with Hugh Blair's essay.'

It is crucial to recognise, as Greenway does, the source of the authenticating structures as Blair's essay. The dynamic of creativity depends on the process of "accretion" that Greenway describes. Through that process the whole spectrum of sensibility was able to be accomodated. The footnotes were one extension of the original authenticating *Preface* but it is important to see that as part of a dynamic creative process between Macpherson and the critical audience rather than as an isolated authenticating device. The "empirical commentary" is the creative, intellectual backchat of an emerging Romantic imagination. The emergence of the footnote is Macpherson's internal contribution to that private conversation.

67 James Macpherson, *Fingal*., p.2.

68 Haywood, *Op. Cit.*, p. 26.

69 Geoffrey H. Hartman, "False themes and Gentle M inds" *Poets of Sensibility and the Sublime*, p.24. Hartman highlights the usefulness of Milton as a mediating figure where he comments: ' It is as if Milton had foreseen the triumph and trivialization of the descriptive-allegorical style. "L' Allegro" and "Il Penseroso" become the pattern for eighteenth century topographical fancies with their personification mania." The particular usefulness of those kinds of models to Macpherson is apparent in the episode of Morna and Duchomer (See above p.16) but Macpherson was also able to harness his aestheticized approach as a stepping stone to what Hartman describes as the '...haunted gound of Romance' by incorporating that approach in the authentication process .

70 James Macpherson, *Fingal* , p. 68

71 *Ibid.*, p. 67

72 *LOC. CIT.*

72 Haywood, *Op Cit* , pp 31-5

CHAPTER IV

THE COMFORT OF PERSONAE:

Identifying Fragments and Inclusive Anonymity in the Poems
and Songs of Burns

For Edwin Muir and David Daiches, who seek to explain eighteenth century Scottish culture almost exclusively in terms of paradox, the ambiguities of feeling and language that they detect in the poems of Robert Burns are direct expressions of a national schizophrenia, or antiszygy. This is interpreted by them as a manifestation of the split personality in a culturally dominated nation condemned to feel in its native tongue, Scots, and think in its adopted commercial and political language, English. Add to this Thomas Crawford's notion of a poet operating out of the tension created between his own personality and the environment from which he drew his inspiration along with Kenneth Simpson's extrapolation of both arguments toward a theory of kaliedescopic rootlessness and the image of Burns that emerges is of a protean model of alienation wrought from the "...Scottish propensity to image building and role playing ...polished by the loss of nationhood."¹

Burns did, however, manage to create and hold a remarkably broad contemporary audience and there exists a general consensus, which extends to include those critics above, that Burns was at times able to address his entire audience in a single voice - a voice which resonates with the accents of

tradition.

While Burns is recognised as a traditional, as well as a literary, artist he is generally judged and found wanting in exclusively literary terms. The failure of Burns to produce a mature romantic literature as a consequence of his propensity to adopt diverse poetic voices lies at the heart of that critique.² The apparent self-contradiction of Burns as a literary artist, however, makes it possible to overlook an essential paradox, that the very diversity which the literary critique condemns may be at the heart of a strategic process for a traditional artist seeking complicity with his audience. Where everything is viewed in terms of a strategic literary politics no single poetic voice can be allowed complete integrity, yet, as we have noted above, it is generally agreed that there is recognisable integrity in some areas of his work. If we cannot account for that integrity exclusively in terms of a literary sensibility, then we are obliged to examine the traditional aspects of Burns's creativity, in particular, as it relates to the role of deception in smuggling the voice of tradition into the contemporary literary culture.

The deceptive creativity of *Hardyknute* had evolved through Ramsay and Pinkerton's interpolations to embrace the priorities of an essentially neo-classical elite, whose appetite for cultural control of tradition was measured in their own authorisation of the greatest cultural deception of the age, Macpherson's *Ossian*. This careful historicisation of tradition illustrates the extent to which that elite influenced

cultural activity at every level by the final third of the century. Through this process, however, 'authenticity' had become a real issue and anxiety over fraud in the wake of *Ossian* meant that opportunities for exporting a traditional sensibility to the literary culture in a disguised form had diminished. The problem for a traditional artist was how to find legitimate expression for his art in a literary culture. Macpherson had pressured the limits of deceptive form but his exposure raised a new question - what was the 'authentic' voice of tradition? For the cultural authorities it was a mordant tongue fixed in the aspic of an 'authorised' text that explained their own elitist sense of identity. The demands of a popular audience on a traditional artist, however, were for a vibrant, evolutionary and inclusive expression which contained their identity.

If we examine Burns's role playing and image making in the light of his being a traditional artist it is possible to view his voices as a kind of sublimation of deceptive creativity, not simply as part of a flawed literary strategy but as part of a discrete oral/literary process aimed at solving the problem of finding an authentic popular voice in the final stages of transition to a literary culture. This problem, for Burns, whose own cultural identity had to be synthesised from both the communal, traditional sphere and from the individualistic neo-classical priorities of a literary education, was part of a complex problem of identity; how to be an inclusive artist in an exclusive culture. The difficulties

presented here cannot be overstated:

...Burns, had to be in himself, and not simply in play, both Calvinist and anti-Calvinist, both fornicator and champion of chastity, both Jacobite and Jacobin, both local and national, both British and European, both anarchist and sober calculator, both Philistine and anti-philistine. He had to write both in Braid Scots and Scots-English and in a blend of the two, being at one and the same time a man of the old homely Scotland of village communities, a forerunner of the Scotland of capitalist farmers employing wage labour and the new agricultural implements, and a poet who shared - even before he went to Edinburgh- something of the Anglo-Scottish culture of the capital.³

Crawford's recognition of the imperatives of "a mind in motion" allow him to make a direct link between diversity of voice and Burns's self-dramatisation through which he emerges as a kind of literary chameleon, absorbing and reflecting the cultural priorities of his immediate surroundings.⁴ In a literary culture which prizes and prioritises originality this is clearly a negative trait. In a traditional culture it is equally bad if the adopted cultural priorities are only skin deep. If, however, they are something more than that, if those surface changes conceal a deeper attempt to discern a truly inclusive aesthetic sensibility, then the process inclines toward a traditional notion of originality where the poet's primary impulse is to merge his consciousness with that of his audience.

The critical view, however, tends toward a sceptical explanation of Burns's adoption of poetic persona, underwritten by a modern antipathy toward sentiment.

The following trifles are not the production of the Poet, who with all the advantages of learned art, and perhaps amid the elegancies and idlenesses of upper life, looks down for a rural theme,

with an eye to Theocritus or Virgil. To the author of this, these and other celebrated names their countrymen are, in their original languages, "A fountain shut up, and a book sealed". Unacquainted with the necessary requisites of commencing Poet by rule, he sings the sentiments and manners he felt and saw in himself and his rustic compeers around him, in his and their native language.⁵

For Daiches, this opening passage to the "Preface" in the Kilmarnock edition of Burns' poems can be viewed as the deliberate calculation of Burns in the persona of the 'man of feeling'. In order to give weight to that view Daiches extrapolates backwards from Mackenzie's review of that work, through which the unfortunate epithet of 'heaven taught ploughman' became associated with Burns. This reinforces the notion of Burns's adoption of persona as a part of a deliberate literary strategy which led Daiches to claim that: "...if Burns was misunderstood in Edinburgh it was in some measure because of the part he had deliberately chosen to play in his Preface."⁶

Burns's comments are viewed here as bait for Mackenzie, impaled on a hook of sentiment; but what is missing from this reading is a recognition of the astute critical framework that Burns is providing for his own work. Daiches recognises that Burns had a lucid sense of his own poetic worth but he fails to recognise that sense as an accessory to a valid and contemporary critical sensibility. The opening sentence of the "Preface", far from being the sentiment driven disclaimer of a peasant poet, contains an implicit criticism of artificial pastoral poetry which relied on classical models for their substance. Those originals, which contemporary critics praised

for their concrete relationship to the subject, were rooted in the poet's direct relationship to the land. It is difficult for anyone, however sophisticated their view, to deny the firmness of that connection in the case of Burns. Such a relationship is mirrored in the final sentence of the extract. Burns's admission of his lack of a classical education is balanced by a profound appreciation of the poetic strategy of the originals which informs his own work. The influence of sentiment in Burns cannot be denied, but there are difficulties for those who isolate that element in order to stress a particular kind of literary programme. The view of Burns's use of the sentimental persona as a vehicle for 'shrewdly done' entrapment is a misconception which occurs when a modern critical ambivalence, engendered by Burns's use of sentiment, tips into scepticism. There is, however, another view of Burns's use of that persona which, although less sceptical of his strategic intentions, does not capitulate to the notion of sentiment as an 'authentic' voice. In such a view, sentiment, along with those other personae which are regularly ascribed to Burns, is symptomatic of the processes which attach to a poetic 'mind in motion' where that mind, acutely aware though it is of contemporary literary sensibilities, is driven by a traditional sense of creativity. The creative priority is what is at question here - the difference between an artist who is struggling toward an original individual voice and one who is anxiously negotiating with the culture as a whole in an attempt to empower the communal voice; a task which is complicated by

the transitional nature of the culture and its increasing stratification.

Crawford claims, in regard to the *Epistle to John Lapraik*, that: "...all this is suspiciously like the disguise adopted in the prefaces to the Kilmarnock and Edinburgh Editions..." - but he also claims that its importance lies in its being "...in some respects Burns's poetic manifesto".⁷

Gie me ae spark o' Nature's fire,
That's a' the learning I desire;
Then tho I drudge thro' dub an' mire
At pleugh or cart,
My Muse, though hamely in attire,
May touch the heart.

O for a spunk o 'Allan's glee,
Or Fergusson's the bauld and slee,
Or bright Lapraik's, my friend to be,
If I can hit it!
That would be lear enough for me,
If I could get it⁸

If this is a deliberate adoption of the persona that Daiches identifies in the "Preface" to the Kilmarnock edition, then what kind of manifesto is it? If the self-dramatisation of the first of these stanzas is to be characterised as Burns's calculated anticipation of Mackenzie's woeful sobriquet, then the only importance we can attach to the poetic models, of the second stanza above, is in relation to the strategic enhancement of a myth that had yet to be firmly established. The contradiction that critics depend on to support this notion is the knowledge that Burns did receive some formal education which gives lie to the myth that he is supposedly promoting here. The weight of a subsequent mythology is press-ganged in

support of a view of the poet as author of that mythology. Yet, if we remove some of that weight from the process of self-dramatisation a more sympathetic interpretation emerges.

"Nature's fire" is not simply a playful line or a dramatic device; for Burns it is at the core of his aesthetic being. Whatever conventional education gave him it was in the fields that he first turned poet and it was through inspiration rather than calculation that this baptism occurred.⁹ It takes a deeply ingrained cynicism to deny that this line is, essentially, at the heart of a genuine poetic manifesto. If we do accept it as such, the self-dramatisation which follows can more usefully be viewed as an accessory to that principle. When Burns says that this is: "a' the learning I desire" he is dramatising himself, but surely not solely for the purpose of creating a yet to be endorsed mythology. The final four lines of the stanza encapsulate the real poetic quandary for Burns as he attempts to marry the concrete realities of his own 'felt' experience with the abstract sentiment of the 'man of feeling'. That resolution is an acting job for a man who is culturally marginalised. His social predicament dictates that he cannot proceed in a literary world with the confidence of a cultural intimate and his ambition and sensibility will not allow him to settle for local popularity. Distanced from an actively exclusive cultural centre there is no way forward as 'himself'. Self-dramatisation, for Burns, was perhaps a matter of cultural necessity, but the nature of his disguise seems to have been almost wilfully distorted by a consistent determination to

observe it through the backward telescope of Mackenzie's romantic observation. The question of identity, for Burns, was already a complex issue. Mackenzie's review enhanced that crisis by further dramatising the poet's own efforts at projecting a native identity toward a literary culture that had solidified from the cultural meltdown of deceptive creativity and theoretical history.

If we set aside the burden of Burns's identity crisis, we find that the models which endorse Burns's manifesto are popular and respectable artistic models. It is difficult to see here how they are designed to anticipate the myth of the 'heaven taught ploughman' appealing, as they did, across a broad cultural spectrum. He is summoning Ramsay and Fergusson as literary models with a traditional sensibility. That sensibility is underlined by their reputation as vernacular poets and cleverly integrated here by Burns's utilisation of Ramsay's pseudo-formulaic phrase, 'bauld and slee', as a characterisation of Fergusson. The making of vernacular literature in an age dominated by the quest for pure language is, in itself, an act of cultural defiance but it is one that trades on the presence of an alternative literary sensibility rooted in both oral and literary tradition. Burns, at this time, is founding his literary claim on a traditional sensibility where originality depends on the re-contextualisation of traditional materials. The act of borrowing is both a compliment and a means of establishing a relationship with an audience through the materials of

'tradition'. The inclusion of Lapraik, however, adds another dimension to the equation of sensibility that Burns is attempting to work here.

Lapraik, for Burns, is an entirely traditional influence, but one which represents a critical measure of Burn's cultural compass as it qualifies, with some care, the nature of the "learning" which Burns desires in the first stanza. "That would be lear enough for me ", he claims, and it is a genuine enough claim in the light of the artistic sensibility which he is attempting to conjure here. Any notion that he is trying to hide his literary background is confronted by an earlier stanza:

I've scarce heard ought describ'd sae weel,
What generous manly bosoms feel;
Thought I 'Can this be Pope, or Steele'
Or Beattie's wark!
They Told me 'twas an odd kind chiel
About Muirkirk

There is clearly a reductive voice making its presence felt in this verse - the comparison of Lapraik with these esteemed neo-classical figures is, in contemporary critical terms, ludicrous and Burns is surely conscious of that. If, however, his reductive temperament is regarded as an aspect of traditional sensibility rather than simply a perverse denial of literary values and a "...feigned self- demeaning..." aimed at securing the attention of a literary establishment, we are able to move toward a more useful explanation.¹⁰

The purpose of this voice here is not the reduction of Pope, Steele and Beattie (who, although a Scot, wrote in

English); they are held up as exemplars of the skills which Lapraik has displayed. The purpose is rather the elevation of Lapraik - a traditional artist - to a position of cultural significance. This is surely not just to impress Lapraik or to enhance the myth of the peasant genius. For Burns, it was a necessary pre-condition of his poetic manifesto that the art of tradition was given equal billing with the art of literature. "Nature's fire" for Burns was ignited in the tension of these opposing sensibilities and fuelled by the possibility of a single voice which might merge contemporary literary values with those of tradition.

Burns's *Epistle to John Lapraik* was prompted by his attendance at a traditional gathering where he heard Lapraik's song, "When I upon my Bosom Lean". The *Epistle* was not in the first instance prompted by literary concerns but by a traditional experience which Burns felt to be important enough to carry through into his literary work. Utilising the standard Habbie stanza, associated with the vernacular poets cited in his poetic manifesto, Burns attempts a cultural synthesis through the sentiments of the 'man of feeling' expressed in the second line of the stanza above which he sees reflected in the feelings expressed by Lapraik's song. The critical elements of form and feeling for Burns are expressed directly in this verse. Sentiment is clearly designated here as the common currency of two cultures competing for Burns's artistic attention and it seems more reasonable to assume that at this stage of Burns's career the elements of self-dramatisation

arose as part of that conflicting dynamic and not only as a consequence of a flawed promotional strategy . The idea of Burns as a kind of cultural 'wide- boy' touting for the approval of his literary 'betters', undermined by a more disinterested reading of the Kilmarnock Preface, is further qualified in this Epistle.

I am nae poet, in a sense,
But just a rhymer, like, by chance 50
An' hae to learning nae pretence,
Yet what the matter?
Whene'er my Muse does on me glance,
I Jingle at her.

Your critic-folk may cock their nose, 55
And say 'How can you e'er propose
You wha ken hardly verse frae prose,
To mak a sang?'
But, by your leaves, my learned foes,
Ye're maybe wrang. 60

What's a ' your jargon o' your schools,
Your Latin names for horns an' stools;
If honest nature made you fools,
What sairs your grammars?
Ye'd better taen up spades and shoals, 65
Or knappin'- hammers.

A set o' dull conceited hashes
Confuse their brains in college classes
They gang in stirks and come out asses,
Plain truth to speak; 70
An' syne they think to climb Parnassus
By dint o' Greek!

This is the naked voice of self-dramatisation for modern critics - Burns in the pose of the natural man of feeling,

cursing the very audience he is seeking to impress. Simpson claims, regarding the use of this voice elsewhere, that: "This may be merely a rhetorical device, but it is likely that a deeper, psychological dimension underlies it." That dimension is measured as: "...a sign of the way in which Presbyterianism and the Scottish character could combine to channel, or interpret, or thwart, Enlightenment thinking."¹¹

Having identified correctly a psychological dimension to role -playing, this critique leans on the generalisation above, which is, itself, an abstract of the 'paradox' theory. However, Simpson observes, astutely, in the *Epistle To Smith*, that: "...the poem develops latterly a real momentum and energy after Burns has expended the earlier striking of attitudes. Here the self-projection is set aside and pressure of feeling surfaces."¹²

Further explanation of this dynamic is curtailed by Simpson's apparent capitulation to the confusion engendered by multi-timbral structures within individual poems. The cause of that confusion, according to Simpson, is the multiplicity and flux of Burns's poetic voices, but it sometimes appears that this confusion is deepened by an ability to recognise the dynamic of a 'mind in motion' without fully sensing its creative disposition. Yet this is not an isolated phenomenon that he calls to our attention.

In the second *Epistle* addressed to Lapraik:

For thus the royal mandate ran, 85
 When first, the human race began,
 'The social friendly, honest man
 Whate'er he be.
 'Tis he fulfils great nature's plan,
 And none but he ! 90

 O mandate glorious and divine!
 The followers of the ragged Nine,
 Poor, thoughtless devils! yet may shine,
 In glorious light,
 While sordid sons of Mammon's line 95
 Are dark as night.

Tho' here they scrape, an squeeze, an growl,
 Their worthless nievfu' of a soul
 May in some future carcase howl,
 The forest's fright; 100
 Or in some day detesting owl
 May shun the light.¹³

Self-projection can be measured as an incremental pressure on emotion. The first of these stanzas presents us with a common Burnsian stance - 'The social, friendly, honest man' - which acts as a launchpad for the declamatory appeal of another of Burns's familiars, the 'natural' poet. These "poor thoughtless devils" straddle the gulf between self-projection and genuine sensibility. They are attached to the poetic persona through a reductive voice which characterises them as victims and to the genuine poetic by the psychology which underpins them. These poetic creatures among whom Burns, as a direct consequence of his self-projection, numbers himself are "thoughtless" in the sense that they are inspired by nature and they are "devils" in the Miltonic sense of Lucifer - as bringers of light to a darkness brought forward by the "sordid sons of Mammons line".¹⁴ The tension created by the

projection of personae, to the point where Burns is psychologically engaged with the projection, breaks in the expression of genuine feeling in the third stanza. The first four lines of this verse are remarkable for the romantic animation that accompanies and drives the emotion. Although the final two lines must be seen, in literary terms, as a failure of nerve they are also a guide to the strangeness of the poetic territory in which Burns found himself. Having pushed self-dramatisation to the limit he found himself in a psychologically unfamiliar, hyper-natural landscape. The fact that Burns rejected irony as an option here may be significant in so far as it apt to appear when form is pressurised by consciousness, as with John Gay's engagement with the pastoral. Here, consciousness is overburdened by its own sense of expansion and discretion seems to have been the better part of valour. Burns simply could not recognise himself as an isolated individual voice. These lines become a prelude to an unsatisfactory (in a literary sense) and rapid retreat to the shelter of the original persona.

Then may Lapraik and Burns arise,
 To reach their native kindred skies,
 And sing their pleasures hopes an' joys 105
 In some mild sphere,
 Still closer knit in friendship's ties
 Each passing year.

This resolution does tell us something about Burns's strategic aims. The search for an inclusive, communal sensibility underlies his poetic manifesto, but the

psychological difficulty of matching a single voice to that strategy in a fragmented culture made a direct approach impossible. So long as Burns maintained and prized a communal sensibility he was, in a literary sense, condemned to obliquity; self-dramatisation produced emotional pressure which, as in the example above, gave rise to an individual voice for which the poet, as evidenced by his hasty retreat to the comfort of persona, was not psychologically prepared. If the search for an original individual voice had been a priority for Burns then the romantic sensibility which surfaced under the pressure of self-dramatisation was the direct route. Burns's failure, or inability to choose that route is perceived as a literary failure, but to make that choice would have obliged him to abandon the search for an inclusive voice which was at the heart of his poetic strategy. Burns could not satisfy that strategy through a process of self-dramatisation which led simply to a psychologizing of self. In order to satisfy his own aesthetic requirements he had to psychologize tradition itself. That route is strewn with the poetic corpses that nourish his critics but the remarkable thing about Burns is just how close he came to success.

Concluding his discussion of *The Vision*, Crawford remarks: "In this one magnificent but little read poem, Burns attains something of Blake's visionary insight, though by different means."

If we ask ourselves what that "something" might be we are obliged to focus on the "different means" at the poet's

disposal. Burns's attempt to marry the 'standard Habbie' verse form with what is, in a neo-classical sense, more modern content, is the first area of difference and guides us to the vernacular underpinning of the work. The opening stanzas of the first Duan (an Ossianic term for the divisions of a digressive poem) are cinematic in the way that they draw in from the external action to focus on the narrator himself evoking comparisons with the ballad and medieval Scots allegory:

The sun had closed the winter day,
 The curlers quat their roarin' play,
 An' hunger'd maukin taen her way
 To kail-yards green
 While faithless snaws ilk step betray 5
 Where she has been,

The thresher's weary flingin'-tree
 The lee-lang day had tired me;
 And when the day had closed his e'e,
 Far i' the West, 10
 Ben i' the spence, right pensivelie
 I gaed to rest.¹⁵

This pair of concrete, scene setting stanzas are balanced by a further pair which draw the focus from external events toward the reflective individual:

There lanely by the ingle cheek
 I sat and eyed the spewing reek,
 That fill'd wi' hoast- provoking smeek, 15
 The auld clay biggin'
 An heard the restless rattons squeak
 About the riggin'.

All in this mottie misty clime,
 I backward mused on wasted time, 20
 How I had spent my youthfu' prime,
 And done nae-thing
 But stringin' blethers up in rhyme
 For fools to sing

Read forward from the first two stanzas, the third is a

continuation of atmosphere building with the "hoast-provoking smee", druglike in its potential to dissolve perception, heralding the spiritual pregnancy of the poem and shading into the psychology of the narrator-poet. Read backwards from the fourth, that stanza takes on an altogether more ethereal quality. "The auld clay biggin" assumes a more corporeal identity and the "restless rattons" acquire a discrete psychological symbolism. The sense of backward movement is prompted by the second line of the fourth verse which subverts and darkens the atmosphere of poetic reverie, "wasted time", which the preceding stanza has evoked.

The smoke clears temporarily and the self-reflexive mood takes on an altogether harder edge as it moves toward the poet's resolution; "That I henceforth, would be rhyme proof." Burns's movement from the concrete physical world to the ethereal and abstract in the first four stanzas is now given additional impetus as this apparent lucidity, quite literally, opens the door to full blown hallucination.

When click! the string the snick did draw;
 An' jee! the door gaed to the wa';
 And by my ingle-lowe I saw ,
 Now bleezin bright , 40
 A tight outlandish hizzie, braw
 Come in full sight.

This apparition is taken to be some "Scottish Muse", but it is the characterisation of that muse and her purpose which is critical. She is earthy and erotic and she has appeared with the single purpose of stopping the poet's "reckless vows".

A hare-brain'd sentimental trace,	55
Was strongly marked in her face;	
A wildly -witty rustic grace	
Shone full upon her;	
Her eye, ev'n turn'd on empty space,	
Beam'd keen with honour.	60

The reductive voice is applied here toward a neo-classical personification of the muse in the attempt to occupy an abstract position from which the traditional sensibility might be empowered in a literary world. There is a definite sense that reduction here is entirely at the service of the search for an inclusive voice. Burns was using a vernacular literary form infused with a modern literary technique which could accomodate a neo-classical poetic sense without alienating a popular audience. The figurative process is designed here to enlarge rather than restrict the cultural community.¹⁶

This continues to work for the poem so long as the narrator is active. Burns goes on to reinforce the erotic characterisation of the muse through a direct physical comparison with his own "bonnie Jean". As in the opening stanzas description acts as a launchpad for a more intense sense of vision. Comparisons, such as those Crawford makes, with Blake, are valid here, but the cinematic quality that provides the motion of following stanzas which animate Ayrshire in the "mantle" of the muse evokes the Scottish ballad tradition.

Here rivers in the sea were lost;
 There mountains to the sky were tost:
 Here tumbling billows mark'd the coast 75
 With surging foam;
 There distant shone Art's lofty boast
 The lordly dome.

The sense of balance created by the alternating "here" and "there", which mediates the integration of nature and art is cleverly contained within a traditional dynamic and signals an attempt to synthesise the immediacy and familiarity of tradition with the elevation of neo-classical literature. This is compounded by an incremental sense of abstraction fuelled by personification - "Art's lofty boast" - is a balance for that of "lights and shades", which "throw a lustre grand" in the preceding verse. In the next two stanzas the dynamic sense of abstraction is expanded through a shift in geographical perspective from the river - 'Auld hermit Ayr staw thro' his woods' - to the borough - 'She boasts a race, to every nobler virtue bred'. These more concrete subjects of personification act as a pair of balancing stanzas which, while they expand the dynamic of abstraction, are simultaneously reductive in so far as they move the focus from a metaphysical abstraction, familiar to the literary world, to a geophysical abstraction through which metaphorical associations can be drawn from direct, everyday experience. The connection between them is kept through a common attribute of personification; the "boast" of Art and the borough. The reductive voice is operating here at a sublime level. Just as the muse is characterised reductively in order to expand the cultural

community so the sense of abstraction is trimmed to the psychology of tradition where concrete and experiential models inform the inclusive voice.

The accents of tradition are fused with an overdriven neo-classical sense of abstraction in order to excite a personal vision of physical, historical and spiritual landscape :

By stately tower or palace fair,
Or ruins pendant in the air,
Bold stems of heroes, here and there,
I could discern;
Some seem'd to muse, some seem'd to dare, 95
With features stern.

That vision is cloaked in the language of romance:

My heart did glowing transport feel ,
To see a race heroic wheel,
And brandish round, the deep-dyed steel
In sturdy blows; 100
While back-recoiling seem'd to reel
Their Suthron foes.

At this point in the poem, responsibility for poetic elevation passes from the figurative to the narrative voice. When that function changes hands the poet engages a new literary community with distinctive psychological needs - a conformity asserted by a call to individuality and creativity.¹⁷ Psychological conformity was also a strategic requirement of traditional creativity but commonality drove creativity here. Burns's difficulties in addressing both of these human communities were exacerbated by the exclusive nature of his neo-classical literary resources and the consequences of reduction.

Personifications of abstract ideas had interrelated describing, as the pictorial representations of surface details (abstraction as concrete image), with narrating, as the ordering of representative events (abstraction as active agent). Once that kind of personification was elided in a supposed act of leveling, the heights became the depths: the abstract that could no longer be represented on the surface was spatially mystified as deep and temporally displaced to the past. Within the new "style", description was psychologized as the gaze that looked within, and narration became the dramatic linking of personal present to personal past.¹⁸

Siskin's remarks here, seem to characterise the real paradox for Burns. Any attempt to undermine the exclusive literary culture drove him toward a very personal and isolated position, alienated from a traditional sense of psychological conformity and unable to accept the individuality that would allow him to merge with the new literary community. His response here is to try to modify the personal nature of the relationship between past and present by historicizing that relationship as a shared experience - "Bold Richardson" the military leader characterised as the chief of an historic martial race. History is underwritten by what Burns assumes to be the common psychological currency - sentiment. Perhaps sensing the loss of elevation, Burns attempts to re-capitalise the romantic momentum and re-incorporate the relationship with the personified agents of abstraction by wandering "Thro many a wild romantic grove" and "Near many a hermit-fancied cove". His failure is highlighted, however by his final destination, where he returns, via "'Nature's God and Nature's law", to a straightforward neo-classical vision, "Beneath old Scotia's smiling eye", in order to arrive at the second Duan. Here the

cumulative consequences of the figurative overload are felt and the narrative voice is once again relieved of poetic responsibility. ¹⁹

Burns attempts to make a virtue of digression through his division of the poem into two 'duans', but the disruption of narrative continuity here is surely a consequence of Burn's failure to fully articulate the romantic voice, which surfaces as a consequence of figurative and narrative relationships in the first half of the work. Having raised the romantic spectre, Burns, as in the *Epistle To John Lapraik*, shies away from what he sees.

Having failed to write up his own destiny in the first duan, Burns falls back on personification to do it for him. After the opening stanza, where the narrative voice is present only to hand over responsibility for the poem by re-announcing the apparition, the poem de-generates into an almost conventional rhetorical model where the identity of the narrative voice is defined by its absence. The figurative muse re-emerges as a medium of 'truths'; the agent of the "Genius of this land". In this role, she defines the spiritual levels and categories through which the narrative voice is identified by his personal relationship to her.

'Some, bounded to a district space,
Explore at large man's infant race,
To mark the embryotic trace 195
Of rustic bard;

And careful note each op'ning grace a guide and guard.

The narrative voice is bound to the figurative when she announces "Of these am I - Coila my name". What follows is a

developmental tale of the making of a poet, from the natural:

Thy rudely -carrol'd chiming phrase,
 In uncouth rhymes,--
 Fired at the simple artless lays
 Of other times. 210

To the sublime:

'I saw thy pulses maddening play, 235
 Wild send thee pleasure's devious way,
 Misled by fancy's meteor ray,
 By passion driven;

"Misled" and "driven" he may be, but he is fully integrated here with a neo-classical sense of literary community. This is the portrait of a man that has joined an exclusive club which depends for its own identity on a larger human community subject to universal feelings. The pecking order is laid out - Thomson, Shenstone and Gray are the models- and Burns advises himself through the muse:

Then never murmur nor repine;
 Strive in thy humble sphere to shine; 260

who wades through the wave of sentimentality, which he adds in the second last stanza, to award him the homespun laurel of holly. This tells us a great deal about what the poet might want to be but little about who he is. What he has done is reinstate order from the chaos which arose through the interplay of figurative and narrative elements in the first duan by capitulating to the hierarchical premises of an established literary community. He has failed to establish his own poetic identity and settled for a reduced literary image, but the reasons for doing so here are as important as the literary failure.

The isolated individualism which was the basis of psychological conformity for romantic writers after Wordsworth was anathema to the traditional aspect of Burns's sense of identity, and when he turned the mirror inwards he saw only himself stripped of community. The literary aspect of Burns' sensibility sought shelter in the elevated norms of an established literary community which depended on the fiction of a uniform community that reflected the poet's identity as an expression of his own aspirations.

Burns's traditional sensibility made it impossible for him to psychologize himself as an individual literary voice and if *The Vision* had been his final word, criticism of his role-playing would be justified. The only validation of that role-playing is through a genuine search for identity, and despite his numerous failures we can still find evidence of that search. The quest for an inclusive voice in an exclusive literary culture demanded an enlargement of the fictions of community. That is what Burns attempted in the first half of this poem. He failed to identify himself fully within an extended, though essentially neo-classical, fictional community; this search demanded an approach which accommodated both the literary and traditional aspects of his identity. The authentic voice, for Burns, was the voice of community, and only when that voice is given full narrative control do we see role-playing realised in its proper strategic context.

In *Tam O' Shanter* the narrative voice establishes itself through a sense of intimacy which rises on the thirst of

"drouthy neibours" as they abandon the business of market day for the social diversions of the public house. The external landscape dissolves in the wake of this convivial evacuation of the streets and comes immediately under the control of the narrative voice:

We think na on the lang Scots miles,
The mosses, waters, slaps and styles,
That lie between us and our hame,
Where sits our sulky sullen dame, 10
Gathering her brows like a gathering storm,
Nursing her wrath to keep it warm.
This truth fand honest Tam O' Shanter,
As he frae Ayr ae night did canter -
(Auld Ayr, wham ne'er a town surpasses 15
For honest men and bonnie lasses)²⁰

This landscape, which is made notable through its absence in the collective mind of the company, is re-created in a psychological dimension which engages the elemental metaphor and reinforces the narrative intimacy. By binding the narrator to the community through its telling ("We" and "our") and to the subject, Tam, as the tale's exemplar, the communal voice is poised to utter universal, authorised 'truth'.²¹ The narrator is empowered in a particular way, acting as a purveyor of communal truths but with the ability to interpret and manipulate the communal response. He is equipped with an overview which allows him to foreshadow the events of the tale in the process of its telling but he also has a role as a partial commentator whose interjections must reflect the communal identity and response, as he does here in parenthesis.

Once the connection with Tam is made the threatening

presence of the "sullen dame" is made, substantial in the form of his wife Kate who is tied (albeit ambiguously) to the supernatural landscape; she anticipates the narrative through her 'second sight :

She prophesied that, late or soon,
Thou would be found deep drown'd in Doon; 30
Or catch'd wi' warlocks in the mirk
By Alloway's auld haunted kirk.

This is exploited cleverly by Burns to stoke up the drama of the work by hinting at a possible conclusion but it also undermines the supernatural since this conclusion is shown to be false. He is already working the ambiguity of the piece and developing the tension between rational and supernatural thought in the traditionally rooted community. The digression which follows on the heels of Kate's prediction hints strongly at a more personal agenda:

Ah! gentle dames! it gars me greet
To think how many counsels sweet,
How many lengthen'd sage advices, 35
The husband frae the wife despises.

This apparent attempt on the narrator's part to ingratiate himself with the female audience trades blatantly on a veneer of 'political correctness' but, as is often the case with such a strategy, the tone is patronising while the sentiment is undermined by the ironic edge that "lengthen'd" lends to the quote - an edge which is honed to the codes of masculine society. He is both charmer and Jack the lad but it is his ability to accomodate and play various roles which oscillate

between the communal and the personal response that underlie the narrative strategy.²²

But pleasures are like poppies spread--
 You seize the flow'r, its bloom is shed; 60
 Or like the snow falls on the river--
 A moment white then melts forever;
 Or like the borealis race,
 That flit ere you can point their place;
 Or like the rainbow's lovely form 65
 Evanishing amid the storm.
 Nae man can tether time nor tide;
 The hour approaches Tam maun ride;

There have been many approaches to what is generally considered a problematic passage, but few of these appear to consider fully the role-playing of the narrator.

Muir's contention that these lines illustrate a linguistic dissociation of sensibility is questioned by Daiches who claims that:

The English in these lines is a deliberately "fancy" English, piling up simile after simile as though to draw attention to the literary quality of the utterance. Mr Muir's explanation of these lines takes no account of this very conscious poetic diction - he sees it simply as English. Burns is seeking a form of expression which will set the sternness of objective fact against the warm, cosy and self-deluding view of the half intoxicated Tam, and he wants to do this with just a touch of irony. What more effective device than to employ a deliberate neoclassic English in these lines?²³

Daiches is surely correct when he draws our attention to the deliberate nature of the neoclassical diction but his explanation, supported by Simpson, is undermined by the failure of his own observations.²⁴ The language may be literary but the poetic dynamism which underlies the 'piling up' of similes

draws our attention rather to the traditional qualities that underpin "the utterance".

In concentrating on the 'cosy and self deluding view' of Tam, he is ignoring the possibilities of a(role -playing) narrator, presented as cosy and self-deluding, whose talents are not quite the equal of his aspirations and in measuring the contrast between "half intoxicated" delusion and "the sternness of objective fact" he is mis-representing vital gradations of sensibility. Tam in fact is not half-intoxicated but "planted unco right" (cosy self-delusion would be struggling at this point to stave off chronic bewilderment) and the narrator himself is no stranger to the bar ("While we sit bousing at the nappy").

The notion that Burns is seeking expression through a single layer of irony, directed by the narrator toward Tam, is misleading because it fails to inspect a secondary level of ironic detachment between Burns and his own narrator. It also fails to consider that if Burns had a reason for his narrator's adoption of a neoclassical diction he also had a reason for his abandoning it. The controlling medium here, as Burns knows intrinsically, is the aesthetic relationship between teller and audience and it is in the interest of maintaining the consistency of that relationship that this modulation occurs.

This narrative interjection appears to be even more self-conscious than in the previous passage. The neoclassical diction is so pronounced and contrasted to its setting that it is almost impossible to imagine that it was not deliberately so. The notion that Burns had to abandon Scots in order to elevate

the poem is not credible and the consciously reductive tone of the final two lines suggests a strategy more directly connected to audience response. A role-playing narrator, whose anxiety to impress and ingratiate himself with his audience has already become apparent would be obliged to consider his role as poet. The literary dynamic of this passage moves in a very precise way. The first four lines of the verse paragraph are quietly poetic but the incremental florification of the four which follow suggest that the narrator is struggling to control the poetic diction. Burns may have deliberately chosen this in order to indicate the underlying presence of a dynamic which exercised an influence more powerful than the creative control of the narrator as poet. The narrator's self-conscious desire to impress as a poet overcomes his ability to express the poetry. He recognises that he is losing his script and clips the wings of his own rhetoric with a markedly curt and controlled return to the vernacular before his audience recognise that he too is 'Evanishing amid the storm' of his neo-classical posturing, a recognition that would undermine his credibility as a communal voice. Burns is psychologizing the traditional dynamic by channeling its force through an individual narrator who, not unlike himself, has literary aspirations tempered by an overriding obligation to a communal sense of cultural identity - the traditional aesthetic. He appears to be sublimating his own role playing through his control of the narrative voice. From this point on the narrator's interjections are less casual and more controlled:

That night a child might understand,
The Deil had business on his hand. 78

Burns's narrator now trades in a common psychology attuned to a manifest sense of evil which is nonetheless open to challenge, albeit under the influence of a different kind of spirit:

Inspiring bold John Barleycorn! 105
What dangers thou canst make us scorn!
Wi' tippenny, we fear nae evil;
Wi' usquebae, we'll face the devil!

These two interjections are vehicles for the narrator's manipulation of the communal voice to reflect ambiguities in the communal psychology. The former accepts evil, implicitly, as an external presence while the latter indicates a process of transformation through which the fear of evil can be made manageable. If it can be made so by an internal transformation, the integrity and substance of the external threat is called into question. The battleground is psychological and the stuff of tradition is the fuel of that psychology²⁵ :

Warlocks and witches in a dance ! 115
Nae cotillon brent new frae France,
But hornpipes, jigs, strathspeys, and reels,
Put life and mettle in their heels.

The provider of the music is the devil himself, "in shape o' beast" , but it is traditional Scottish music played on his pipes that gives "life and mettle" to these supernatural dancers.²⁶ The devil as musician is a creative mediator between tradition and the supernatural.²⁷ Burns is

psychologizing tradition through the supernatural - it is the power of tradition to animate its own ghosts that he is concerned with here.²⁸

A murderer's bairns in gibbet-airns;
 Twa span-lang, wee, unchristen'd bairns;
 A thief new-cutted frae the rape--
 Wi' his last gasp his gab did gape;
 Five tomahawks, wi' blude red rusted; 135
 Five scymitars, wi' murder crusted;
 A garter, which a babe had strangled;
 A knife, a father's throat had mangled,
 Whom his ain son o' life bereft--
 The gray hairs yet stack to the heft; 140
 Wi' mair of horrible and awfu'
 Which even to name wad be unlawfu'.

Tradition becomes its own trope as Burns marries traditional techniques to a vibrant communal sensibility reflected in the relationship between teller and audience. He manages this in a particular and skilful way. Capitalising on the waves of emotional movement created by the increments of horror in the passage above, he accelerates forward:

They reel'd , they set, they cross'd , they cleekit,
 Till ilka carlin swat and reekit,
 And coost her duddies to the wark,
 And linkit at it in her sark! 150

The vertiginous pace of the dancing culminates in a psychological and poetic transportation through which Burns merges the consciousness of the narrator-poet with that of his audience:²⁹

Now Tam, O Tam! had thae been queans,
 A' plump and strapping in their teens;

Their sarks instaed o' creeshie flannen,
 Been snaw - white seventeen hunder linen!
 Thir breeks o' mine, my only pair, 155
 That ance were plush, o' gude blue, hair,
 I wad hae gi'en them off my hurdies,
 For ae blink o' the bonnie burdies!
 But wither'd beldams, auld and droll,
 Rigwoodie hags wad spean a foal,
 Louping and flinging on a crummock,
 I wonder didna turn thy stomach

This interjection is unique in that it is not strategic role-playing. The narrator reveals himself as a shabby, comical figure and the notion that he is ironically detached from his audience at this point is flawed. He is completely engaged with the tale and his response is as a member of the community and not as a manipulative role-player. The power of the tale has triumphed over the teller. He has bewitched himself. The priorities of tradition have been recognised within the confines of the poem. Burns is allowing the narrator to play the traditional response role of the audience; to comment on the tale and pass judgement spontaneously. The individual voice is mesmerised into commonality by the process of the poetry - a process infused with the essence of tradition. Loss of control which threatened to alienate him from the communal audience when he could not sustain a neo-classical diction now absorbs him within that audience. When he tries to sustain an individual literary voice, loss of control isolates the narrator from his audience and, by implication, from his sense of self. As the exemplar of a communal, traditional voice that same loss of control unifies and absorbs him within that audience. He is sharing the common experience of tradition.

Recovering his composure the narrator resumes, but he has revealed himself through his communal identity and his individual poetic pretensions are tightly reined in :³⁰

But here my muse her wing maun cour;
 Sic flights are far beyond her pow'r -- 180
 To sing how Nannie lap and flang,
 (A souple jade she was, and strang)
 And how Tam stood, like ane bewitch'd
 And thought his very een enrich'd
 Even Satan glowered, and fidg'ed fu' fain 185
 And hotch'd and blew wi' might and main:
 Til first ae caper, syne anither
 Tam tint his reason a' thigither

The artistic disposition of the tale has been established and it moves on with a renewed vigour that casts the narrator as a detached mouthpiece, an astute and engaged communal voice and a successful traditional artist. He is still still conducting and heightening the drama, he is commenting ironically on the scene but on behalf of his audience. His self-serving inclinations are, from this point onward, critically subordinated to the priorities of the narrative:

Ah Tam! Ah Tam ! thou'll get thy fairin'!
 In hell they'll roast thee like a herrin' !
 In vain thy Kate awaits thy comin'
 Kate soon will be a woefu' woman! 204

The natural and the supernatural have merged through the emotional dynamic which Tam and Satan share in the face of Nannie's eroticism, a dynamic which depends on Burns's working knowledge of tradition.³¹ The ultimate consequence is that all hell breaks loose. Tam has entered into his own hallucination just as the narrator has been overcome by the power of his own

tale. It is not Burns who has capitulated to the supernatural here but Tam, fueled on whisky and an overheated libido, who has unleashed his own demons.

In *Tam O' Shanter* Burns holds a mirror up to the traditional mindset and reveals a powerful, sometimes overpowering dynamic - but he is careful to treat it as an integrated psychological system with its own abstracted system of meanings and its own solutions to the problems those create:

Now do thy speedy utmost, Meg, 205
And win the key-stane o' the brig:
There at them thou thy tail may toss,
A running stream they darena cross

The loss of Maggie's tail is turned by the narrator into a moral tag, warning against the dangers of drink and sex but that is his own chastened interpretation of the tale. As an individual, with poetic aspirations, he has engaged with the forces of tradition and, like Tam, he has lost control. This tag might, for some, provide an unsatisfactory ending to the poem but it may be that it was designed to be intrusive in order to show that the narrator, like Tam, is chastened by the forces of tradition - they have both learned a lesson.³² In a traditional sense, the tale was over when the tail was lost³³ :

The carlin caught her by the rump,
And left poor Maggie scarce a stump. 218

It is no surprise that Burns has spoken of this poem as his finest work 'in the poetical line' . It is a unique poem in every sense.³⁴ It identifies the poet in terms of

communal voice; a direct consequence of Burns's failure to identify himself fully as an individual literary voice through role-playing. In sublimating that role-playing through the narrator, Burns, the traditional artist, sets himself aside in order to empower tradition in a literary world by psychologizing its processes.³⁵ Toward the end of his article, "Heaven Taught Ploughman?", an altogether more circumspect view of Burns and his role-playing, Simpson asks:

Could it be that Burns's 'tale', traditionally regarded as the culmination of the folk-tradition, may be set alongside these sophisticated experiments in narration, where what happens is important, but how it is recounted is equally important?³⁶

This is perhaps the point at which the argument around identity and personae fuses with that surrounding tradition and the communal voice, a notion which Simpson tacitly recognises in a supplementary question:

And could it be in the play of relationships involving poet, narrator and Tam there is some sort of resolution - albeit temporary- of the poet's problems of identity: multiplicity of identity finds a focus in that play of relationships; paradoxically, in the controlled flux of play lies the basis of stability?³⁷

The argument laid out above suggests an affirmative response to that question although it arises from an essentially different reading of the poem which from the outset regards that work as a literary re-making of traditional process from the inside for a popular audience. Resolution of the problems of identity, temporary though they may be, must extend here from a notion of a shared communal psychology, a set of abstractions that were familiar enough to attract

popular consensus and robust enough to withstand the literary interplay of narrative relationships and its attendant ironies and ambiguities. Burns, the poet, was not isolated here; he was at ease in the company of ghosts that shadow the 'realities' of the traditional world. The "controlled flux of play" is literary in its conception but traditional in its dynamic and it is in the fusion of these particulars that stability occurs.

The accents of tradition here do not accept a subordinate literary role as the 'soft keys' of a romantic discourse but argue strongly on their own behalf for a developing democratic cultural imagination which is self-aware, self-critical, self-mediating and capable of providing genuine competition to the prescriptive and over-managed disciplines of the established literary culture.

That he was only partially successful in negotiating those critical premises in his poetry provides us with some explanation for a shift of focus toward song in the latter years of his life. There is little dispute that as a songwriter and later collector of Scottish songs he was a confident and astute lyricist and editor with a musical sensibility that, although only partly formalised, for the most part ensured empathy with the form. Song provided Burns with a means of escape from those critical fetters but it also allowed him to stake a claim to be a native voice on something approaching his own terms.

Nicholas Roe draws our attention to the cultural anxiety that surrounded the authentication of Burns as a 'native' bard.

This is rooted in the tension between the primitivism expounded by Blair which 'authorised' the Ossianic dream and Johnsonian ideas of language that pressurised the 'native' authority which Roe identifies the focus of anxiety:

It is in this obsession with verifying Burns's genealogy that we can detect most clearly the need to authenticate his claim to be poet of his native culture, to establish a bond between the poet's social milieu and its poetic articulation, to prove the legitimacy of Burns's conception and thus of the poetry which he created in later life. Ossian and Thomas Rowley shadow this quest back to the scene of the poet's nativity - ghostly witnesses to the contrary possibility that Burns's 'natural' poetry might arise from an obscurity which veiled the uncouth genius of the literary fake, the cultural betrayal of the 'Scottish Bard' revealed as a shapeless, nameless impostor.³⁸

Roe contextualises this anxiety as a response to Burns's self-promotion in the preface to his *Poems, Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect* and provides sound reasons for doing so, but this raises questions about Burns' reaction to that response. Self-promotion, even when it achieves the desired effect, has unforeseen consequences and in this case we can only imagine the implications that the cultural demand for identifying Burns as a 'genuine' native voice held for the poet's own sense of identity. When everyone is asking who you really are, you are left with little choice but to join in. Given the difficulty that Burns found in solidifying a sense of literary identity in his work prior to this reaction, it is perhaps unsurprising that his response was, increasingly, to seek shelter in the 'anonymity' of the traditional voice.

His involvement with song suggests a viable response both to that kind of cultural scrutiny and to the questions it raised as

he applied them to himself. Inside song, Burns was able to stake his own claim to be a 'native' poet and tradition itself guaranteed the cohesion of "social milieu and its poetic articulation" in the borrowed psychic familiars and abstractions that empower the traditional narrative in its relation to audience. His awareness, conscious or otherwise, of traditional process secured his "nativity" and pressed his claim to be a "Scottish Bard" while the anonymity of tradition became, perhaps paradoxically, his proof against the ghosts of cultural anxiety and their testament of fakery.

It was not personal anonymity that Burns sought but an anonymity of voice that allowed him to 'lose' himself creatively in a communal identity that spoke as directly to him as it did to the audience it addressed. However, his literary self, whatever that was, was obliged, by the kind of pressures outlined above, to negotiate the terms of his involvement with the traditional voice through the complex of antiquarian and nationalist imperatives that were still exciting the debate that surrounded the idea of a national bard.

Brown's contention that: "After his Edinburgh experience Burns was, in fact, more conscious of the whole spectrum of traditional life than he had been before..." holds true; not simply, as her evidence suggests, in relation to his growing interest in the detail of folk culture but also in his expanding awareness of the importance of that detail to the literary culture in authenticating a modern sense of Scottish bardship.³⁹

His meeting with the Edinburgh engraver James Johnson in

1787 and his subsequent heavy involvement in *The Scots Musical Museum* gave him the opportunity to formalise his instinctive grasp of Scottish song while allowing him to develop an editorial technique that was conducive to his own creativity. The root of Burns editorial practise was fluidity. The programme for the *Musical Museum* was Scottish song, folk or popular, ancient or contemporary, and, following Herd's paradigm, as much of it as could be had.⁴⁰ The difference here was that it could be raised from any source, oral or literary, but there had to be a musical accompaniment because "...tune and text, in the view of Johnson and Burns were inseparable."⁴¹ The perceived 'need' to provide a text allied to Burns propensity to extrapolate from fragments gave rise to an editorial creativity that was not only out of line with the antiquarian agenda but also a direct throwback to Ramsay and Percy.

This is not to say that Burns was unaware of the antiquarian programme, but rather that there was a seam of creative potential between those premises, as expounded by Ritson, and the kind of editorial practise that Burns exploited despite his claims of critical allegiance. Writing on Ritson's "A Select Collection of English Songs" he claims:

"The Collection of Songs" was my vade mecum.- I pored over them driving my cart or walking to labour, song by song, verse by verse; carefully noting the true tender or sublime from affectation and fustian.- I am convinced I owe much to this for my critic craft such as it is.⁴²

There can be little here to leave us in any doubt that Burns was familiar with Ritson's approach to traditional song but

there is a strong suggestion that Burns "critic craft" evolved from intense study of the songs in the collection as much as in the critical framework that Ritson provided, although that clearly left its mark.⁴³ In a letter to William Tytler of Woodhouselee which he encloses along with some recollected song fragments from his early Ayrshire life he states: 'I invariably hold it sacrilege to add anything of my own to help out with the shatter'd wrecks of these venerable old compositions; but they have many various readings.'⁴⁴ If this held up, Burns would be a sacreligious collector indeed, but his openness to "various readings" hints at the creative urgency that Burns experienced in the presence of the fragment. As James C. Dick recognises in his Introduction to *Notes on Scottish Song* :

Robert Burns has left an indelible mark as an original writer of vernacular songs; and he is unique as a reviver of old songs. These latter, as he found them, were mere echoes of the past, and survived only in a word, a line, a chorus or a stanza which he picked up and made into a finished song to perpetuate a melody that required verses.⁴⁵

These "mere echoes" were fragments of common identity for Burns filtered through his transitional sensibility into new configurations of sound and sense that re-addressed the communal voice in an age of encroaching, literary self-awareness. The vocal subtlety of that address is accorded an unconscious accolade by Ritson himself who re-published a number of his originals which had been anonymously contributed to the *Scots Musical Museum* in his own collection of *Scottish Songs* published in 1794.⁴⁶

As a songwriter Burns managed, from the outset, to achieve a complicity of mind and emotion that could set him apart from his poetic role-playing and immerse him in the totality of his world and his response to it. Even where the literary model provides a framework for the song Burns's response suggests an immediacy which subordinates that model to a universal frame.

Now westlin winds, and slaught'ring guns
 Bring Autumn's pleasant weather;
 The moorcock springs, on whirring wings,
 Amang the blooming heather:
 Now waving grain, wide o'er the plain, 5
 Delights the weary farmer;
 The moon shines bright, as I rove at night,
 To muse upon my charmer.⁴⁷

Kinsley's commentary identifies the literary influence of Pope and Thomson in "Song, composed in August", and the formality of language and diction clearly identifies a neoclassical identity in this opening stanza.⁴⁸ Caterina Ericson-Roos complains that: "With its utilitarian outlook on nature and its overloaded and mannered diction this poem does not blend with the simplicity of the tune."⁴⁹ She goes on to cite a number of technical reasons for this failure to marry traditional tune and neoclassical diction and concludes: "The last two stanzas, however, match the expression of the tune much better. Here the stiff description of the landscape is discarded and the poet tells of his feelings of love for the girl Peggy."⁵⁰

The first thing to take issue with here is the notion that this stanza conveys a "utilitarian outlook". This is a

landscape in motion, both figuratively and imaginatively. This movement is contained in the immanence of a malignant breeze, an autumnal *memento mori* to the fertile landscape, and engages with the solitary lover's imagination, lit by the moon, which rides that wind through the shadows of the surface landscape; the hidden, more imagined, terrain where nature 'shuns' the company of man. Having all but erased humanity from the scene in the second stanza Burns re-integrates man and nature in allegory:

Thus ev'ry kind their pleasure find,
 The savage and the tender;
 Some social join and leagues combine;
 Some solitary wander: 20
 Avaunt, away! the cruel sway,
 Tyrannic man's dominion;
 The Sportsman's joy, the murd'ring cry,
 The fluttering, gory pinion!

The violent disruption expressed in the second half of the verse dissociates the lover, defined by his solitary non-disruptive presence, from the brutality of "Tyrannic man's dominion" and ushers the narrative into an imaginative present where the lover addresses the object of his muse. Burns has projected the lover into his own imaginative, natural territory and resolves the personal relationship of lovers through an integrative vision of nature:

Not vernal show 'rs to budding flow'rs,
 Not Autumn to the Farmer,
 So dear can be, as thou to me ,
 My fair , my lovely Charmer ! 40

Without the supposedly utilitarian outlook of the first

three stanzas the final two, however melodious, are rendered meaningless. Even at this early stage in his songwriting and despite the strong literary imprint, this song is conspicuously integrative in the way that it fuses complex ideas with nature and imagination in the anonymity of the narrative voice.

This process becomes more fluid yet as Burns goes beyond the melody for inspiration and works off a traditional fragment:

It was upon a Lammas Night,
 When corn rigs are bonie,
 Beneath the moon's unclouded light,
 I held awa to Annie:
 The time flew by, wi' tentless heed, 5
 Till 'tween the late and early;
 Wi' sma' persuasion she agreed,
 To see me thro the barley.

CHORUS

Corn rigs and barley rigs,
 And corn riggs are bonie:
 I'll ne'er forget that happy night ,
 Amang the rigs wi' Annie.⁵¹

In "Corn Rigs are Bonie" the traditional style that opens the poem reveals Burns's familiarity with the form, and the way that he integrates from the outset with the chorus suggests the architectonic awareness of the traditional artist. When we come to the third line, however, we are illuminated by the same literary moonlight that shines through "Song Composed in August".

The integration of nature and imagination, embodied in the moon kissed lovers, occurs in the temporal slippage, a 'magical'

pause where time plays against its own personification to elevate the landscape to an imaginary plane. When the verse re-integrates with the chorus on the final line, tradition has been grafted onto the discrete complex of literary ideas that have sprung up between the corn rigs of line two and the barley rigs of line eight.

Burns works outward in the second stanza to enhance the atmosphere and personalise the action of lovers in this landscape, simultaneously expanding the imaginative ambience while compressing the focus on their physical presence. The balance is maintained by leaning on resonant variations of the choral extract, "Amang the rigs o' barley" on lines four and eight of the verse which support the traditional context of the lyric. He relies further on that traditional poise in the stanza that follows:

I lock'd her in my fond embrace ;
 Her heart was beating rarely:
 My blessings on that happy place,
 Amang the rigs o'barley 20
 But by the moon and stars so bright,
 That shone that hour so clearly!
 She ay shall bless that happy night,
 Amang the rigs o' barley.

The indirect associations made possible by the traditional framework are now brought into sharp focus in a stanza balanced by a pair of blessings that celebrate the physical nature of their coupling and the metaphysical light in which that took place.

The final stanza reveals a secondary level of imagination in

the recollective voice that stretches back over the narrative and resolves the lyric in a typically Burnsian comparison of emotional and intellectual experience in a communal setting that is drawn up in increments against this compact of nature and imagination. The conclusion draws on his poetic tendency to summarise on a universal plane:

I hae been blythe wi' Comrades dear;	25
I hae been merry drinking	
I hae been joyfu' gath'rin gear;	
I hae been happy thinking	
But a' the pleasures e'er I saw ,	
Tho' three times doubl'd fairly,	30
That happy night was worth them a',	
Amang the rigs o' barley.	

Crucially, that universality reduces to the traditional abstraction that holds both the ideas and emotions of the lyric in place. Burns is applying an individual literary voice to a traditional architectonic and he holds that together by incorporating formulaic abstracts that speak to the traditional framework and are yet robust and flexible enough to carry the literary idea. He eschews pseudo-formulaic deception in order to form a more subtle and literary infused relationship with the abstract premises that support the popular tradition, taking those reassuring rhythmic and syntactic variations and playing them lightly against the self-awareness that accompanies the literary ideas without capitulating to the self-consciousness that marks some of his literary attempts at poetic integration. In his early songwriting we catch glimpses of Burns working inside tradition teasing it out of itself to accommodate the burden of literary consciousness.

This is carried to a sublime level in "Mary Morrison" where the eponymous muse is revisited at the end line of each verse in order to secure the conceptual power that attaches to the complex of ideas and emotions pressurising the narrative:

O Mary at the window be,
 It is the wish'd, the trysted hour;
 Those smiles and glances let me see,
 That make the miser's treasure poor:
 How blythely wad I bide the stoure, 5
 A weary slave frae sun to sun;
 Could I the rich reward secure,
 The lovely Mary Morison!⁵²

This lyric opens in the absence of presence, with the narrative voice labouring to conjure a portrait of "The lovely Mary Morrison" from recollected fragments which evoke comparisons of worldly and emotional wealth drawn up in the light of imagination, excited in the imminence of the tryst, and nature, dissolving in the "sun" and "stoure":

Yestreen when to the trembling string
 The dance gaed through the lighted ha', 10
 To thee my fancy took its wing,
 I sat, but neither heard, nor saw:
 Though this was fair, and that was braw,
 And Yon the toast of a' the town,
 I sigh'd and said amang them a', 15
 'Ye are na Mary Morison.'

The effort of the narrative 'labour' sparks a doubling of consciousness where the narrative voice imagines its own imaginings and creates a recollected scene within the current frame. We are in romantic territory here, but Burns controls that in the diffuse balladry of those depersonalised increments

of local beauty which usher the narrative into the presence of absence: "Ye are na Mary Morrison" - conceptually, he has turned the lyric on its head. Tradition here works as a kind of lightning conductor for the romantic charge of the lyric bringing it to ground in the 'name' of "Mary Morrison". Burns uses the underlying dynamic of tradition to reduce the romantic complex to an essence which resides in the name. For narrator and audience "Mary Morrison" becomes formulaic in the way that it contains the conceptual resonance of the poem. Burns is utilising his awareness of the premises of tradition to fuse the consciousness of audience and narrative voice in that reduced choral line and when it appears again at the end of the third and final verse it is as rhythmically, conceptually and psychologically predictable as any traditional formulaic response.

Oh Mary, canst thou wreck his peace,
 Wha for thy sake would gladly die!
 Or canst thou break that heart of his,
 Whase only faute is loving thee! 5
 If love for love thou wilt na gie,
 At least be pity to me shown;
 A thought ungentle canna be
 The thought o' Mary Morrison.

Here the reverie that spawned romantic consciousness gives way to an overheated urgency, puncturing the composure of the lyric which deflates swiftly into pathos. This potentially ruinous interjection is , however, cushioned by the pragmatism of the language of exchange which refers back to the opening stanza. Burns reveals the narrative voice as manipulative here

when he reduces the parameters of exchange from "love", on equal terms, to "pity", on any terms. This exposes the underlying sexual current of the narrative and identifies the opening lines of this stanza as a compound of sexual urgency and frustration that contextualise the narrative voice as it rises from contemplation through romantic reverie to an agitated and sly present defined from all angles by the absent Mary. Nature and imagination coalesce in the heightened and hopeless tension of the fleshless fantasy contained in "The thought o' Mary Morrison".

In "Mary Morrison" Burns invests that name with the connotative power of the formulaic phrase. He filters the complexity of literary romanticism through a traditional dynamic which allows him to compress those ideas into increments of sensibility that continuously interact with the hyper-charged name to escort meaning through the lyric. The songwriter reworks the formulaic discourse for a literary age but he relies on the associative potential of that discourse to guarantee the critical investment of his audience. In the process Burns sublimates the role of audience to a discrete rapport but in doing so he expands the psychic vocabulary of the popular imagination to accomodate the new, artful literary consciousness.

In these early songs Burns appears to be able to set himself aside from the lyric in a way that he finds difficult to achieve in poetry. This detatchment is critical in containing literary elements within a traditional frame because it allows him space

in which he can settle competing psychological abstractions that arise from the self-awareness which accompanies literacy and the associative commonalities upon which the traditional mindset depends.

*Green Grow the rashes O;
Green Grow the rashes O;
The sweetest hours that e'er I spend,
Are spent among the lasses, O.⁵³*

In "Green Grow the Rashes. A Fragment" Burns conjoins a first person narrative voice to a traditional vocal phrase in order to bind those abstractions and commonalities in a shared psychological space from which the complex of ideas and associations explored in the verses can be addressed:

I
There's nought but care on ev'ry han'
In ev'ry hour that passes O;
What signifies the life o' man,
An 'twere na for the lasses O.
Green grow, &c.

2
The Warly race may riches chase,
An' riches still may fly them, O;
An' tho' at last they catch them fast,
Their hearts can ne'er enjoy them O.
Green grows &c.

The self-reflexive and contemplative consciousness that launches these verses has no place in the oral tradition but they still come off looking and sounding as though they do. This is partly due to the vernacular treatment but mostly to the persistent, familiar exclamation that dresses the endrhyme on lines two and four of the verse. This derives in turn from the strategy employed in the chorus which relates the narrative voice in line four to the traditional repeated phrase of lines

one and two. Burns is containing the elevated literary complex in the verses by hi-jacking a syllable from tradition that triggers the associative potential of the commonplace phrase, a compressed amalgam of fertility and attendant sexuality, which releases its scent in the syllabic gaps between literary expression and is re-charged each time the chorus repeats at the end of the verse. This traditional infestation ameliorates the forces of literary abstraction and allows Burns to operate at a level of literary imagination that tradition alone could neither implement nor sustain and to present the individual narrative voice and its agenda within a context of universal anonymity.

III

But gie me a canny hour at e'en,
 My arms about my Dearie, O;
 An' warly cares, an warlie men,
 May a' gae tapsalteerie, O!
Green grow &c.

IV

For you sae douse, ye sneer at this,
 Ye're nought but senseless asses, O:
 The wisest Man the warl' saw,
 He dearly lov'd the lasses O.
Green grow &c.

V

Auld Nature swears, the lovely Dears
 Her noblest work she classes, O:
 Her prentice han' she tried on man,
 An' then she made the lasses O.
Green grow &c.

As the poem developes Burns is able to refine that abstract vocalisation to a personal level which allows the expression of individual feeling which is projected outward to comment critically on the implications of those ideas and ultimately to re-write the biblical myth of creation. Here, identity is

contained in the universal anonymity of the narrative voice sustained for Burns and the popular audience by the web of connotative meaning that derives from the commonplace phrase.⁵⁴ Burns, however, is not simply manipulating tradition in order to accomodate a literary agenda; he is, as well, a traditional artist and his treatment of that commonplace phrase and its oral-formulaic potential is not passive; he is re-acting to that phrase in a traditional manner, albeit at a sublime level.

Chorus

Green grow the rashes O,
 Green grow the Rashes O,
 The lasses they hae wimble bores,
 The widows they hae gashes O.⁵⁵

This version entitled simply "A Fragment---" the text of which, Kinsley informs us, is taken from a manuscript source, in a letter to Richmond dated 3rd of September 1786, demonstrates Burns interest in ribald song and provides us with a comparative model for the published version. This is a private version and not intended to be published as part of the Scottish song project.

I

In sober hours I am a priest;
 A hero when I'm tipsy, O;
 But I'm a king and ev'ry thing,
 When wi' a wanton Gypsy, O.
 Green grow &c.

II

"Twas late yestreen I met wi' ane
 An' wow, but she was gentle, O!
 Ae han' she pat roun' my cravat,
 The tither to my p__O.
 Green grow &c.

III

I dought na speak- yet was na fley'd
 My heart play'd duntie, duntie, O
 An' ceremony laid aside,
 I fairly fun her c-ntie O.____
 Green grow &c.

According to Kinsley this is most likely to be a re-worked version of a song from Herd's *Ancient and Modern Scottish Songs* that Burns has finessed in order to add some agricultural pungency to the ribald implications of the original.⁵⁶ If this conjecture holds up, then it is fair to assume that this is a reduced version of a traditional song that is rooted, as in the published version, (Kinsley 45) in the sexually connotative commonplace phrase in the chorus. We have only to look as far as the second half of this (Kinsley 124)chorus to realise the extent to which Burns has rescued and even enhanced the traditional potential in his published version. The tone of this, while sexually explicit to a single point of anatomy, fails to trade on the ambience of fertility that contextualises the phrase in a traditional setting. Where Burns extends the traditional associations through the published version in order to agitate the implications of that phrase to the pitch of a literary imagination, this private version drowns that potential in the lyrical incidentals which nurture the fragment's biological sense of urgency.

Whether or not this was an original model for the published version, or, more likely, Burns displaying privately for the company of men, we can demonstrate in the public version a literary imagination engaged dynamically to a traditional

sensibility in order to re-invest an oral commonplace with implicit sensuality drawn from the inherent associative power of the traditional mindset.

In re-activating the connotative potential of the commonplace for a literary age, Burns was marking out a new psychological field for the popular audience and ploughing a double furrow of contingent traditional and literary abstractions that spoke directly and discretely to a culture in transition.

His occupation of this space appears as a counterbalance to role-playing in so far as it relieved him from the immediate burden of self-identification, a proposition which is borne out in his expressed "wish to be the anonymous Bard of Scotland", an ambition which fuelled his zeal for collecting and editing Scottish song in the later years of his life.⁵⁷

If we extrapolate from this early songwriting process we are able to identify in his songwriting and editing in general a parallel strategy through which the literary presence is absorbed in a traditional context. As a strategic means of expressing a traditionally derived sensibility in literature, deception, at the textual and imaginative level of the evolutionary *Hardyknute*, or, of the cultural complicity of *Ossian*, was out of the question given the anxiety which had sprung up around the notion of Burns as a genuine native voice. Sharing the synthetic sensibility of Ramsay, Burns sought similar, integrative ways of working tradition but, unlike Ramsay, he was confronted by an antiquarian mandate congealing

around traditional works. The weakness of that programme lay in its preference for definitive, that is to say complete, versions of traditional ballads which allowed an astute creative imagination to corner the market in the remnants of tradition.

He negotiated that editorial maze with some skill, for the most part simply integrating legitimate and non-intrusive local variations of well known songs and ballads, as in his version of Tam Lin.⁵⁸ Where he does introduce rare, original elements in this text it reveals his attachment to the ballad atmosphere:

Gloomy, gloomy was the night,
And eerie was the way,
As fair Jenny in her green mantle
To Milecross she did gae.⁵⁹

Lyle's evidence suggests, correctly, that this stanza is not: '...a free addition to the narrative but a restatement of a traditional stanza.'⁶⁰ This interjection, however, teeters on the edge of literary romance; that it does not unbalance the ballad is a testament to Burns' sensitivity in treating the traditional narrative, a sensitivity reflected in his own development of traditional fragments.

His development of their "various readings" led to finished articles that complied with the narrative impulse of the fragment and allowed him to capitalise on that style and its underlying traditional premises to generate a vocal anonymity that powered his own original songs.

The worked up fragments and the originals that they inspired expressed a modern sense of commonality and, gathered together

in the contextual anonymity of the *Scots Musical Museum* , a passable sounding of a contemporary Scottish voice.⁶¹ It was his own traditional sensibility that allowed those pieces to be perceived as genuine examples of a native voice although they did not conform strictly to the literary programme. Burns drew his authority as a genuine native voice in song from the collective interactivity of traditional fragments and his own imaginative projections confirmed by a certain confidence that these works individually and collectively would pass muster with "Nature's Judges", the popular audience.⁶² That confidence came about through a profound sense of intimacy with that audience which Burns re-established as part of an abstract but inclusive creative continuum through which the accents of tradition were purposefully engaged to the language of romance in the pre-ordained approval of the popular audience. Here we see a conscious and artful attempt to actualise Parry's traditional equation of the poet 'merging his consciousness' with that of his audience, in a transitional context. Anonymity was the common denominator for the merger of a creative literary sensibility and the traditional critical complex and what emerges is a transitional sensibility that proposed a vital role for tradition in the literary prospectus. Burns ultimate role-play was to become tradition in a literary culture, a sublime deception.

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1 Kenneth Simpson, *The Protean Scot*, (Aberdeen, 1988), p.194.

2 *Ibid.* , p. 243.

3 Thomas Crawford, *A Study of the Poems and Songs of Robert Burns*, (Edinburgh, 1960), p.104.

4 Simpson, *The Protean Scot*, p.186.

5 Robert Burns, *Poems, Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect*, (Kilmarnock, 1786), p. i.

6 David Daiches, *Robert Burns*, (London, 1966), p.109.

7 Thomas Crawford, *Burns, A Study of the Poems and Songs*, pp.77-8.

8 Robert Burns, *The Poems and Songs of Robert Burns*, ed. James Kinsley, (Oxford, 1968), Vol.1, (57)

As Kinsley is generally held to be definitive, all texts except where otherwise stated will be identified according to his classification.

9 Robert Burns, *Robert Burns's Commonplace Book 1783-85*, eds. J.C. Ewing and D. Cook, (London, 1965), p.5.

Burns' first attempt at poetry written at the age of fifteen, "O once I Lov'd a Bonie Lass" was composed in 'a wild enthusiasm of passion' according to Burns for Nelly Kirkpatrick, his fourteen year old co-worker at the harvest.

10 Kenneth Simpson, *The Protean Scot*, p.196.

11 Simpson, *The protean Scot*, p. 197.

12 *Ibid.* , p.198.

13 Kinsley, (58).

14 Kenneth Simpson, *The Protean Scot*, p.242-3. Simpson maintains that Burns's repeated resolution to 'study the sentiments of a very respectable Personage, Milton's Satan' (*Letters* Vol 1 p.108 also 121 & 123) is evidence of a sentimental identification with Satan. This is cast in terms of a particularly Scottish disposition, noted by T.S. Eliot, and, according to Simpson, "acutely relevant to Burns", where the former claims in a discussion of Byron: ' His sense of damnation was also mitigated by a touch of unreality; to a man so occupied with himself and with the figure he was cutting nothing outside could be altogether real.' (T.S. Eliot, *On Poetry and Poets* pp.194-5) Any determination to portray Burns's self- projection as self-obsession obscures an artistic function of Burns' role-playing which was to pressurise the work emotionally as part of a process of self-identification. His failure to identify himself according to a 'romantic conception' through the Satanic persona was not because 'nothing outside could be altogether real' but rather the opposite; that what was psychologically important - the traditional community outside - was altogether too real to allow Burns to identify himself fully as a 'romantic' individual.

15 Kinsley, (62)

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16 Clifford Siskin, *The Historicism of Romantic Discourse*, (Oxford, 1988) p.71 Following on Cohen's argument (Ted Cohen, "Metaphor and Cultivation of Intimacy" *Critical Enquiry* 5, 1978 p.9) , that: "the use of particular types of figurative language can restrict community because it "can be inaccessible to all but those who share information about one another's knowledge, beliefs, intentions and attitudes...." * Siskin maintains that "The mob, in other words, can be shut out." and that "...the proliferation of this type of personification is an essential tool in assembling the specifically eighteenth -century fictions of individuality and community." Burns's utilisation of the reductive voice alloyed to a particular kind of figurative language that typifies the fictions of the neo-classical literary community is essentially subversive in its attempt to enlarge those fictions to accommodate a literate and semi-literate 'mob' who are spontaneous enough to respond to the traditional dynamic but aware enough to recognise the fictions of the literary community from which they are held to be excluded. The reductive voice here is a strategic weapon in the search for an inclusive voice.

17 *Ibid.*, pp.82-3. Discussing Wordsworth, Siskin remarks that "Individuality is asserted as a demand for a renewed sense of community.' and that 'In the absence of personification , the dwelling *in language* upon the "I" as an active agent constituted the self as isolated and thus established the ability to communicate as the condition for dwelling with others." Burns's shift from a reliance on a reductive personification to the narrator as active agent is an attempt to universalise the expanded community that he addresses through that original synthesis; to empower the poet as the 'elevator' of the poetry and to identify himself as a poet in the Wordsworthian sense as 'a man speaking to men' . His failure to identify himself in this way, signalled by a return to a more or less standard neo-classical method in the second 'Duan' , is not simply a failure of romantic nerve but a recognition that he could not psychologize himself as an individual without psychologizing that part of himself which identified strongly with the excluded traditional community.

18 *LOC. CIT.*

19 *Ibid.*, p.70. Siskin, in one sense, confirms the view of a return to personification as the narrative agent as a failure of nerve. The eighteenth-century speaker, he argues, establishes his authority through his anonymity: ' In personification, the procrustean poet desires to fit all things to a specific conception of the human. The result is a transformation of potential chaos into uniform human community that then reflects back upon the speaker as an expression of who he wants to be.' This is exactly the strategy of the second "duan" - to relieve the 'potential chaos' that Burns perceives when he attempts to identify himself as a universalised literary individual by expressing through neo-classical personification the poet that he wants to be. The 'failure' of this poem is the failure to identify with an exclusive literary community and the root of that failure is his sense of his being also a traditional artist with responsibilities to a transitional community, underwritten by the traditional imperative to identify himself with their consciousness.

20 Kinsley, (321)

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21 Maurice Lindsay, *Robert Burns*, (London, 1968), p.261. Lindsay draws attention to Crawford's observation that: 'For the most part, in telling the story,Burns assumes the voice and language of a narrator whose outlook is indistinguishable from that of Jock Tamson.' It is worth pointing out, however, that although this characterisation of the narrator as everyman holds true at certain stages in the process of telling, he is at other times a highly partial and individual commentator with a definite sense of individual role and identity.

22 Mary Ellen Brown, *Burns and Tradition*, (London, 1984) , p.68. The sublimation of role-playing through the narrative voice allows Burns to manipulate his literary audience while the narrator takes care of the immediate oral audience. This creates an exceptional degree of control - even at this early stage - which is geared to the final outcome. This contention is highlighted by Brown when she claims: " What really happens is that Burns as narrator /author recreates the context of legend-telling and adds comments similar to those which might be made if the legend were being told in its natural context. Burns, in poetic form, duplicates this responsive quality in such a way that hearers and readers also find themselves responding, especially toward the unresolved and uncommented upon final action, belief - the loss of Meg's tail. Thus, the way in which Burns has used legend context and content also provokes response from readers and hearers of the poem."

23 David Daiches, *Robert Burns*, p.286.

24 Simpson, *The Protean Scot*, p.204.

25 Mary Ellen Brown, *Op.Cit.*, p.65. Brown, working from Linda Deigh and Andrew Vazsoni's suggestion that "...a belief about which there is a certain ambiguity and ambivalence is the essential core of the folk legend", sheds a distinct light on Burns's strategy here when she explains that: "The core belief provokes alternate reactions from the hearers - belief, indifference scepticism, disbelief, opposition which are often voiced as interruptors in the narrative account. The belief included in the narrative, together with the reactions make up the folk legend. Thus the folk legend is defined by both its content and its context." Here the narrator is both interjecting on behalf of, and manipulating, his audience. His role-playing involves a subtle balance here between individual and the communal voice. Although he may be undermining the notion of a manifest evil, as an individual he is respecting the psychological presence of evil, as a member of a community used to personifying evil in a particular way.

26 Maurice Lindsay, *Op.Cit.*, p.265. Lindsay notes that William Dunbar, in "The Dance of the Seiven Deidly Sins", allots the Devil the bagpipes as his natural musical instrument. In noting this literary antecedent it is important to remember that there are traditional sources for this which Dunbar may also have been drawing upon.

27 Thomas Crawford, *Burns, A Study of the Poems and Songs*, (Edinburgh, 1960), p.220. Crawford agrees with Montgomerie that, for Burns, 'Satan represents the creative energy behind his own best work'. In this poem that representation with which Burns personally identifies shades into an altogether more substantial idea of the devil (in the shape of an animal) drawn from tradition. The merging of these two identities is a vital indication of the poet's instinct that the root of his own creative identity is lodged in the substance of tradition - an instinct that makes this poem possible.

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28 Kenneth Simpson, *The Protean Scot*, p. 205. Simpson claims that the "...effect achieved by such catalogues of horrorsis to make plain that despite the superstitions of of Tam and those like him, the speaker does not take this - or indeed himself - very seriously ." This view is determined by the notion that the narrator is trenchantly ironic in his attitude toward 'Tam and those like him' but as has been demonstrated above, the narrator's sense of irony is self-serving and always with a view to his immediate audience and not the literary audience beyond the poem - that is Burns's concern, not the narrator's. To read this passage as 'comic mockery' is to impose a literary context on a narrator who is telling a traditional tale in a traditional way - these examples are drawn from the first of the three folktales that Burns wrote down for Captain Grose. If, as Simpson suggests (agreeing with Dalches) , this "does not lessen the suspense" then there is clearly a more powerful poetic purpose in this passage to which Burns is trying to draw the reader's attention - the power of tradition. This arises directly out of " Burns' s debt to his oral milieu - " For Burns not only used legend content , he also recreated in the poem aspects of the legend context, the situation of legend exchange." (Mary Ellen Brown, *Op. Cit.*, p. 65)

29 Kenneth Simpson, *The Protean Scot*, p.205. Simpson is accurate when he claims of the narrator : "We are strongly aware of the mind that is regulating the relationship between action and picture, between reality and fantasy, and between drama and commentary." Despite this and his recognition of the narrator's communal role he does not see that mind as a communal mind. Burns utilises the narrator's role-playing to determine his relationship with his immediate audience. In this passage he becomes that audience through the spontaneity of his response. This apparent loss of control is central to Burns's re-creation of traditional process and the regulation of relationships within the poem hinges on the psychology of that communal mind .

30 *Ibid.*, p.203. Simpson again characterises the narrator as ironic in this passage but in doing so he is failing to recognise or respect the narrator's experience of telling the tale. If we read this passage as "endearing self-irony" we are forced to ask what purpose it serves for Burns. If it is simply, as Simpson suggests, one of a number of indicators of "the multi- faceted nature of the speaker's personality" then there appears to be no consistent purpose to the narrator's role playing beyond serving the plausibility of "alternation between incident and commentary" (p.203). This view also relies on an assumption that the narrator, and not Burns, is in complete control of the poem and a failure to recognise that the the narrator's role in the telling is a strategic element in Burns's attempt to empower tradition within a literary context.

31 Mary Ellen Brown, *Op. Cit.*, p.65.

32 Thomas Crawford, Burns, *A Study of the Poems and Songs*, p.223. Crawford observes, of Tam, "...the 'first we hear of him is that experience has taught him a lesson."

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33 Mary Ellen Brown, *Op. Cit.*, p. 67-8. It is worth considering that this moral tag was a consequence of Burns' attempt to parallel 'aspects of the legend in context.' If, as Brown astutely notes, these narrative interruptions, moral asides and comments are 'written substitutes for gestures, dramatic pauses, and for the comments of hearers usually found in oral legend exchanges' perhaps Burns felt it important to provide a contextualized communal response to the loss of the tail which satisfied both the credulous and the skeptical elements of the audience. It is worth noting, however, that the second version of the local tale, supplied by Burns to Captain Grose comes complete with a similar moral tag on the dangers of drink so perhaps Burns was simply staying true to what he imagined to be the legend context.

34 As well as being the only example of this type of narrative poetry it is unique in the sense that it was also a commissioned work drawn directly from folklore. At the request of Captain Grose, Burns, in June 1790, outlines in a letter three stories associated with Alloway kirkyard, the second of which provided the bones of *Tam O'Shanter* which duly appeared, alongside an illustration of the kirkyard, in the second volume of Grose's *Antiquities of Scotland* (1791).

35 Mary Ellen Brown, *Op. Cit.*, p.61 Brown, one of the few critics to seriously address Burns as a traditional artist, suggests that: "Just as Burns often collected and edited folksongs, sometimes changing them to fit his own traditionally formed aesthetic sensibility, in 'Tam o' Shanter' he built a poem upon a legend he heard in his contemporary Ayrshire." This is a critical insight into the creative impulse in Burns which gives proper credence to his understanding of the traditional process which hinged on an awareness of the mutability of form. Brown reinforces this very idea by tracing the sources of the tale beyond Burns's own locality by which means "... the legend and parts of the legend can be established as aspects of shared traditional culture through the discovery of parallels." (p.64)

36 Kenneth Simpson, "Robert Burns: Heaven Taught Ploughman," *Burns Now*, (Edinburgh, 1994), p.88.

37 *LOC. CIT.*

38 Nicholas Roe, "Authenticating Robert Burns," *Robert Burns and Cultural Authority*, ed. Robert Crawford, (Edinburgh, 1997), p.165.

39 Brown, *Op. Cit.*, p.36.

40 *Ibid.*, For a full account of Burns sources see, Brown, pp.29-33.

41 *Ibid.*, p.29.

42 Letter to Dr. John Moore, Aug.2, 1787, (*Letters of Robert Burns*, ed. Ferguson, 1931, Vol.1 p.109.) reprinted in Bertrand H. Bronson, *Joseph Ritson, Scholar at Arms*, (Berkeley, 1938), p.90. : 'It is not often that one catches the antiquary in the very act of influencing literature....It was at least a happy accident that at the right time the right book fell into the right hands.' Bronson's remarks, concerning Burns's response to the "Collection", emphasise the importance of song collections in the formation of Burns's creativity though it is doubtful that either Ritson or Bronson would have approved the obvious intrusion of that creativity into the role of song collecting.

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43 Brown, *Op. Cit.*, p.43. Brown claims that Burns '...began to realise as he delved more and more deeply into the subject through collecting, active participation, and study that the annotations he was capable of making were of equal importance with the texts and tunes that he recovered.' This is an example of Burns's strategic use of a combination of editorial practice and vocal anonymity to underwrite a personal reputation as national bard. This is supported by his remarks to Johnson, noted by Brown, to ensure, through the use of annotation in the interleaved *Museum*, that it should be later published '...making the Museum a book famous to the end of time, and you renowned forever.' (*Letters*, 2:129, no.513) and, of course, by association, himself.

44 Ferguson, J. De Lancey, ed. *Letters of Robert Burns*, (Oxford, 1931) Vol.1, p.116-117., No.125

45 Robert Burns, *Notes on Scottish Song*, ed. James C. Dick (Edinburgh, 1908), Introduction, p. ix.

46 *Ibid.*, p.xi.

47 Kinsley, (2).

48 Kinsley, *Op. Cit.*, Vol. III, pp.1005-1006.

49 Caterina Ericson-Roos, *The Songs of Robert Burns*, (Stockholm, 1977), pp. 96. The tune to which she refers is the traditional air, "I had a horse, I had nae mair."

50 *Ibid.* p.97.

51 Kinsley, (8).

52 Kinsley, (30)

53 Kinsley, (45) also, *Scots Musical Museum*, (77).

54 Kinsley, *Op.Cit.*, Vol. III, p.1034. Kinsley draws our attention to the remarks that accompany the fragment and a short treatise on the nature of men which precede it as written in Burns 1st commonplace book: "I shall set down the following fragment, which, as it is the genuine language of my heart, will enable anybody to determine which of the Classes (of men) that I belong to." This ability to reduce complex theoretical musings to the scale of a 'folk' song and to find that expressing the language of his heart gives some indication of both the degree of compression of ideas and the expansion of emotion that goes into Burns' songwriting process. Given the scale of both it is difficult to find any underlying creative facility here that does not depend on the capacity of the commonplace to generate layers of meaning through the traditional process of association with an audience who are familiar with those systems of abstraction.

55 Kinsley, (124)

56 For a full account of the sources of this and various related printed versions in the *Merry Muses of Caledonia*, see Kinsley, Vol. III pp. 1210-1211.

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57 Mary Ellen Brown, *Op.Cit.*, (London, 1984), p.28. Brown's discussion of Burns' as a collector, editor and composer of Scottish song is both comprehensive and reliable but her occasional failure to recognise fully his artful approach to creativity robs her analysis of a critical dimension that is essential to the study of Burns the 'traditional' artist. The notion that Burns sought personal anonymity through his adventures in Scots song does not sit easily with his ambitious temperament. It is important here to contextualise that anonymity as part of a creative strategy which allowed the poet to realise his own presence in tradition.

58 Emily B. Lyle, "The Burns Text of Tam Lin," *Scottish Studies*, (Edinburgh, 1971) Vol. 15, pp. 53-65. Lyle's thorough examination of the Burns text examines his sources in order to illuminate the process of fusion through which Burns integrated variants into the main text. This reveals him to be a knowledgeable editor with the ability to introduce supplementary traditional detail in a non-intrusive manner, however, she also highlights his literary disposition in as much as he "goes out of his way to avoid repetition and reduces the incantatory effect of the balancing phrases and stanzas." (p.64)

59 Kinsley, (558) ll.153-156.

60 Lyle, *Op.Cit.*, p.61.

61 Burns, *Notes on Scottish Song*, Introduction p.xxxiii. Dick notes that '...All of his songs in the *Scots Musical Museum* were either completely anonymous or, or the authorship was concealed by various initials, which Burns only partly revealed privately to correspondents.' This is an important gloss to the context of his songwriting and editing activities. Following Ramsay's practice of identifying original variations by initials only, implies a category of anonymity that is not quite exclusive and his private revelations were surely guarantees of a sort that made sure the right people (Beattie, Blacklock and Tytler) were aware of his contribution. This allied to his open and vocal promotion of the *Museum*, of which Dick remarks that, over a period of nine years and four of the five volumes, 'Burns effected a complete change in the character of the work and he was the spirit that moved it...' (*Ibid.*, p.xxxiv) ensured his association with the museum and its intended cultural role. This can be read as Burns own attempt to authorise himself through a network of associative implications which simultaneously played anonymity of voice against the ultimate certainty of popular recognition.

62 "Preface," *Scots Musical Museum*, Vol. 2.

CHAPTER V

A ROBBER BARD:

Interpolation, Imitation and Imagination in Scott's Ballad
Collecting.

By association with the new model of tradition, a synthetic blend of Macpherson's creativity and the blind faith of the literati, songs and ballads had undergone a complete transformation in cultural terms, from a communally arbitrated traditional process into the individual products of a community historian - the bard. As such, they were confirmed as empirical units of history, albeit of a different kind to the military and political histories that were already available to the literary culture. The vital history of a contemporary oral culture was distilled into a virtual history at the convenience of a literary culture undergoing an identity crisis. Macpherson's creative deception served the purpose of aligning tradition with a theoretical history of customs and manners and his exposure as mythmaker-in-chief to the literati may well have damaged that relationship. The myth of Ossian was now an intrinsic component of Scottish literary politics and it was vitally important to the continued domination of the literary prospectus that Macpherson's exposure did not reflect badly on the carefully constructed historical edifice for which he provided the imaginative scaffolding.¹

This theoretical history of customs and manners welded to an antiquarian sensibility that described the past through its

'products' provided a framework for Walter Scott's *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*. That this remained, for him, unstrained by the deceptive associations of the former and the creative implications of the latter is clear from the outset:²

It would be throwing away words to prove, what all must admit, the general taste and propensity of nations in their early state, to cultivate some species of rude poetry. When the organs and faculties of a primitive race have developed themselves, each for its proper and necessary use, there is a natural tendency to employ them in a more refined and regulated manner for purposes of amusement. The savage, after proving the activity of his limbs in the chase or the battle, trains them to more measured movements, to dance at the festivals of his tribe....From the same impulse he is disposed to refine the ordinary speech which forms the vehicle of social communication betwixt him and his brethren, until, by a more ornate diction, modulated by certain rules of rhythm, cadence, assonance or termination, or recurrence of sound or letter, he obtains a dialect more solemn in expression, to record the laws or exploits of his tribe, or more sweet in sound, in which to plead his own cause to his mistress.³

In his refusal to waste words proving this universal "truth" Scott reveals himself as an unapologetic son of the Scottish Enlightenment and mimics the contextual assemblies of the chronic grammarian, Adam Smith. Smith gathers poetry in Scots within an Enlightenment construction of the journey from rude to polished civilisation. This, in essence, is Blair's programme, addressed by Macpherson in his creative forgeries and attached to the popular imagination by Pinkerton. Despite the question of authenticity, these deceptions were adopted by Scott, the collector, as part of an historical frame held together by the editor's sense of identification with the central authenticating device - the bard:

...while we are compelled to renounce the pleasing idea, 'that Fingal lived and that Ossian sung,' our national vanity may be equally flattered by the fact, that a remote, and almost a barbarous corner of Scotland, produced, in the 18th. century, a bard, capable not only of making an enthusiastic impression on every mind susceptible of poetic beauty, but of giving a new tone to poetry throughout all Europe.⁴

Scott, perhaps the ultimate educated reader of his day, not only authenticated the traditionally derived text instinctively, but as a modern day bard assumed control of that text, moving through interpolation, as a means of improving existing texts, to imitation as examples of what ballads might become when sifted through this literary process and, finally, to imaginative compositions which utilised traditional machinery but relied contextually on the historical frame demanded by literary authority.

Scott's sense of literary identity depended on fixing the materials of tradition and the evanescent nature of the oral tradition appears almost to have terrified him. In order to satisfy his project, ballads had to be originally the work of an individual bard, a special class of artist, because, as Scott claims in his "Introductory Remarks on Popular Poetry" :

It is indeed easily discovered, that the qualities necessary for composing such poems are not the portion of every man in the tribe; that the bard, to reach excellence in his art, must possess something more than a full command of words and phrases, and the knack of arranging them in such form as ancient examples have fixed upon as the recognised structure of national verse.⁵

Scott is not talking here in terms of traditional notions of originality, as described by Parry. There is no suggestion of the poet merging his consciousness with that of his audience. Scott demands of the poet that he, "... must have that original power of embodying and detailing circumstances, which can place before the eyes of others a scene which only exists in his own imagination."⁶

This is the crucial underpinning of his literary bias: '... only exists in his own imagination.' Scott's view is the antithesis of oral creativity where the coalescing imagination of poet and audience re-vitalise the art in performance. Any notion of a recognised distinction between oral and literary genius in Scott's programme is banished through his account of an underlying historical progress. This overlays the Blair - Macpherson paradigm, depends exclusively on the individual genius of the poet and admits no possibility of the communal imagination which makes oral tradition comprehensible. Here, the interplay between performer, audience and the collected materials of a traditional, poetic culture is made incidental which begins to realise Macpherson's synthetic oral process as the essence of legitimate criticism.

Scott hands down the laurels of poetic genius from Homer to the Scottish Makars and the 'bards' who originally composed the ballads and finally, so far as the Scottish songs and ballads are concerned, to the contemporary adjudicators of original genius, "...the moral philosopher and general historian."⁷ Between them they are able to establish the veracity of narrative by comparing tradition to "...more certain sources."⁸ Scott forces traditional genius into a literary context by sluicing contemporary oral recitations into the stream of literary authenticity that flowed from manuscript sources, as demonstrated in his introductory notes to Sir Patrick Spens:

One edition of the present ballad is well known; having appeared in the *Reliques of Ancient Poetry*, and having been inserted in almost every subsequent collection of Scottish songs. But it seems to have occurred to no editor, that a more complete copy of the song might be procured. That with which the public is now presented, is taken from two MS. copies, collated with several verses, recited by the Editor's friend Robert

Hamilton Esq., advocate, being the sixteenth and the four which follow.⁹

Scott demonstrates his allegiance to Percy by sourcing the literary origin of the ballad in the *Reliques* but immediately makes his reader aware of his own role as improver. This process is designed to head off any criticism of his own editorial practise that might arise by association with Percy. He bolsters his own integrity through careful reference to the manuscript sources, which he authenticates in a footnote by citing their accessibility to the public through his making a copy available to another collector, Jamieson.

The depth of respect paid to the literary manuscripts as empirical units of history is, however, incommensurate with the attention given to oral tradition. The citing of an advocate friend (another educated reader) as an oral source speaks volumes about Scott's relative attitudes in this case. Interminable hours spent in this kind of activity, exemplified by this and the numerous introductions and appendices of the *Minstrelsy*, is not only testament to Scott's dedication but also the foundation for his credentials as a modern bard. Squeezing the gel of authenticity from this volatile synthesis of literary and oral sources was troublesome to Scott. Supremely confident in the handling of written resources, his response to the nervousness excited by instability and variety in the oral tradition and its voices manifested itself in an arrogance which came to typify literary attitudes of the period. These authenticating procedures highlighted what Scott perceived to be the central proof of individual poetic genius in ballad composition - corruption. The more popular the composition of an

ancient poet, he claimed, the greater chance there was of its being corrupted:

...for a poem transmitted through a number of reciters, like a book reprinted in a multitude of editions, incurs the risk of impertinent interpolations from the conceit of one rehearser, unintelligible blunders from the stupidity of another, and omissions equally to be regretted, from the want of memory in a third.¹⁰

The process of oral transmission is subsumed in a literary analogy which attacks the traditional process on grounds that apply more aptly to literate transcribers of oral tradition.

Interpolation is a serious matter in an oral culture and if it breaches the limitations of traditional creativity the audience role would ensure the swift deflation of that conceit. Clarity and fidelity are likewise equally precious in a culture with no technology beyond memory for recording events, but these can be dynamic factors where there is limited noetic capacity and redundancy is built in to the creative process.¹¹

The shortcomings of the performer has its corollary in the vulgarity of the audience who, according to Scott, were unable to appreciate the complex (literary) construction of alliterative mediaeval romance (Scott's imaginative model for ballad composition) and were:

...best amused by a looser diction, in which numerous repetitions and prolonged descriptions enable the comprehension of the audience to keep up with the voice of the singer or reciter, and supply the gaps which in general must have taken place, either through a failure of attention in the hearers, or of voice and distinct enunciation on the part of the minstrel.¹²

Audience and performer are aesthetically united, for Scott, not in a consciousness blending model of oral creativity, but in a

degenerative equation of mutual incoherence. His insistence on treating orally conceived works as poor or, at best, flawed literature is programmatic and this extends to his critique of compositional technique. Rooted in an Enlightenment sense of social and cultural development he extrapolates from a model of simplicity wherein:

'The collections of rhymes, accumulated by the earliest of the craft, appear to have been considered as forming a joint stock for the common use of the profession; and not mere rhymes only, but verses and stanzas, have been used as common property, so as to give the appearance of sameness and crudity to the whole series of popular poetry.'¹³

Scott has a recurring knack of recognising the essence of oral poetry and simultaneously missing the point of his own observations. What he is condemning here is the very stuff of oral tradition, the formulas and architectonic repetitions which ensure not only the delivery of the narrative message but also, through the manner of their disposition, the gloss of currency that attaches to that message. Paradoxically, however, Scott views this dynamic process which keeps the message vital as, quite literally, damaging to the original currency of the message:

Thus, undergoing from age to age a gradual process of alteration and recomposition, our popular and oral minstrelsy has lost, in a great measure, its original appearance; and the strong touches by which it had been formerly characterised, have been generally smoothed down and destroyed by a process similar to that by which a coin passing from hand to hand, loses in circulation all the finer marks of the impress.¹⁴

The essence of reduction in this analogy lies in Scott's characterisation of those who actually use the material creatively. This 'trickle-down' theory of ballad disintegration demands a scapegoat and it is found in the "...aboriginal poets" who "...showed themselves at festivals and other places of public

resort" and are judged by legal statute as "...fit company for the feigned fools and sturdy beggars."¹⁵ Not content to throw the law book at tradition Scott reinforces this condemnation in a literary footnote. Holland's *Book of the Houlat*, sourced from the Bannatyne manuscript, is called in as historical evidence of the antipathy displayed toward an Irish bard at a festival. So, an argument supported by a legal statute is clinched in the authenticity of the manuscript source.¹⁶

In his "Essay on Imitations of the Ancient Ballad" Scott reinforces and expands this notion:

The invention of printing necessarily occasioned the downfall of the Order of Minstrels, already reduced to contempt by their own bad habits, by the disrepute attached to their profession, and by laws calculated to repress their licence.¹⁷

Astutely, Scott now amalgamates the technology of print into the argument. His unmatched facility for recognising the forces at play in cultural transformation is surpassed only by a determination to align those forces with an essentially discredited historical programme that supports and promotes the interest of the literati. It is useful here to notice his reference to an "...Order of Minstrels". This represents a significant broadening of his argument to support Percy's theory of minstrelsy with a technological underpinning in order to accommodate a precocious recognition of the effects of technology on traditional consciousness and, incidentally, prepare the ground for a new order of print minstrels.

The need to re-construct the products of oral consciousness from a catalogue of incremental decay was absolutely vital to Scott's own sense of identity because it licensed him, in the role

of educated reader, to intervene and redeem those texts as the true literary heir of the bard, rather than the non-literate blunderer; the skilful critic whose ingenuity could revive history and restore the original meaning. To reinvent the ballad according to a contemporary literary aesthetic was to breathe life into Macpherson's virtual construct and as a consequence validate the modern bard:

The minstrel who endeavoured to recite with fidelity the words of the author, might indeed fall into errors of sound and sense, and substitute corruptions for words he did not understand. But the ingenuity of a skillful critic could often, in that case, revive and restore the original meaning, while the corrupted words became, in such cases, a warrant for the authenticity of the whole poem.¹⁸

With sublime modesty Scott appends a footnote to these remarks which cites an apposite example. This does not simply serve to consolidate his case but rubber stamps his own credentials as a skilful critic and begins to reconstruct the legitimacy of creative interpolation from inside the antiquarian complex.¹⁹ That move cleared the way for a version of progress which was commensurate with the interests of contemporary cultural elites.

The crucial stage of development between oral performance and printed texts designed for oral performance began to be absorbed by a progressive myth which fails to take account of the commercial sensibilities which inspired the translated oral works and equates literary transgression with improvement. Scott notes in the "Essay on Imitations of the Ancient Ballad" that the taste for popular poetry did not decay with the minstrels and claims that the introduction of literary ornamentation in garlands was a matter of

necessity because it got rid of the hallmarks of oral composition. This, he concludes, was accomplished by means of 'induced refinement', an automatic consequence of the literary process. This literary dynamism '...ornamented the diction beyond that of the rude minstrels' so as to do away with the monotony of the ancient recitals.²⁰

The dynamic of oral decay is intersected at this point, in Scott's thesis, by a rising dynamic of literary improvement. The critical element here depends on recognising the importance of Scott's adoption of this perspective to the emerging mass literary culture. This stance confirmed the autocratic sensibility of the established literary culture which denied a voice to the popular tradition in mediating its own historical materials or in determining the shape of the literature that those materials influenced. The traditional dynamic which underpinned the poetry of Ramsay and Burns was rooted in organic creativity governed by communal authority but, for Scott, tradition had to be fixed in the amber of authenticity to make it comprehensible to a literary culture that was in the process of dreaming up its own history from, among other things, an artificial tradition. Traditionally rooted literature could not be allowed to compete because the natural democracy of taste implied by the oral aesthetic had no place in that dream.²¹

Scott refused to acknowledge the capacity of the traditional process to accommodate change. The interplay between oral and literary process was not a new phenomenon. What was new was the historical programme laid out in the Enlightenment which demanded

that oral products be frozen as definitive texts. The transitional sensibility of Ramsay and Burns which marked the popular reaction to literacy was anathema to the literati and their heirs. The ungoverned adaption of traditional materials to a modern literary sensibility demonstrated by the popularity of Ramsay's and Burns's collections and the synchronic 'corruption' of oral tradition through printed versions signalled cultural chaos to Scott and his contemporaries.

Scott was not without opinions on the literary ethics of ballad collection but the tension between an antiquarian sensibility and his own creative literary aspirations, which centred on the materials and influence of popular tradition, denied him the same critical surefootedness that he displayed when tramping down the oral process.

Scott takes genuine pains to tread a middle way between extremes of opinion that characterised contemporary antiquarian debate, praising fidelity to sources while exercising tolerance toward necessary interpolation. It is interesting to note, however, that the authenticity of manuscript sources for ballads is rarely subjected to any real critical inspection, their mere existence as written sources authorising their status as empirical historical units.²²

In the course of his survey of ballad collections Scott's judicious approach made it possible for him to plant a foot in both camps. While he supported the case for fidelity to sources, manuscript sources in particular, he also accepted the principle of creative interpolation where it proved necessary. This principle, however, was subject to special conditions which were designed to

guarantee the role of the skilful critic.

Allan Ramsay's activities in the the field of popular tradition are treated to the sharp end of Scott's double edged critical tongue. Damned with faint contempt and a fair degree of nitpicking for his relatively faithful transcriptions of what Scott describes as genuine Scottish ballads, Ramsay's "...unhappy plan of writing new words to old tunes without at the same time preserving the ancient verses..." is set upon by Scott on the grounds of ungoverned creativity.²³ This, despite the fact that these were based on short popular songs as opposed to full-blown ballads and that in many cases the original words to Ramsay's variants were well known and available to those who wished to seek them out. In short, Ramsay is condemned for the crime of popular songwriting.²⁴ This is, of course, entirely consistent with Scott's notion that the skilful critic should intervene only to supply that phrase or sentiment which, according to his knowledge, complete or enhance a traditional work. There was no room in this prospectus for impulsive creativity, tradition had to be governed by literary authority, an authority which Ramsay was not held to possess despite the fact that its premises had not yet been formulated. Ramsay's instinctual approach to tradition was unmanageable. If everyone was allowed to appropriate the materials of tradition for their own creative ends, the resultant chaos could undermine the historical authority of the Enlightenment literary programme that Scott was fostering. What he was choosing to ignore was the astounding popularity of Ramsay's creative approach and his role in generating interest in traditional and traditionally underpinned works among an emerging literary class. The denunciation of Ramsay as a model of collecting is all

the more revealing in his substitute:

In fine, the task of collecting and illustrating ancient popular poetry, was never executed by a competent person, possessing the necessary powers of selection and annotation, till it was undertaken by Dr. Percy, afterwards Bishop of Dromore in Ireland.²⁵

The vibrantly flawed 'reverend gentleman' is raised to the podium where, despite Scott's awareness of his resting on feet of clay, he is supported by the credentials of being: "...himself a poet, and ranking highly among the literati of the day."²⁶ This is a trenchant assertion of Scott's necessary conviction that only the citizens of an approved literary culture were fit arbiters of tradition. His choice of Percy as a prototype for the modern bard, despite the uncomfortable questions that Ritson raised around fidelity to manuscript sources, is indicative of Scott's willingness to gloss over questions of credibility where the element of creativity enhanced the literary programme. A.N. Wilson, in noting that Scott was an inferior scholar to Ritson, while remaining broader in range than Percy, remarks:

Yet many of Scott's faults as an editor point the way to the stirrings of his creative imagination. His very desire to 'improve' and prettify the ballads, his inability to leave a good thing alone, were symptoms of his restlessness with the activity, his desire to realize the world of ballads in other ways.²⁷

This partial observation on Scott's relationship to the ballads highlights the excited dynamism of Scott's literary imagination but fails to recognise the strategic ethical construct that it served. Ritson was violently anti-creative in his approach to tradition. His 'snapshot' agenda, derived from Herd, aimed to freeze tradition as it was found. Considered as an element of literary process this was

a laudable and honest approach to preservation but its value to the literati was the possibility it raised of creating definitive versions of traditional works that could be re-interpreted in the image of that cultural elite. Scott recognised the strategic usefulness as well as the literary integrity of that approach but resorted where it was convenient to the practice, established by Percy and his supporters, of faulting the hypercritical Ritson on the basis of his temperament rather than his literary ethics.²⁸

The crucial distinction that allowed Scott to override Ritson's ethical programme in favour of Percy's flawed interpolative procedures was creativity. The "necessary powers" which qualify the modern bard are two-fold. The first was recognition of antiquarian credentials by the literary establishment and the second was the role of poet. While the former, questions of integrity and temperament aside, were accepted by Scott in both cases only Percy is credited on the second count. No one who has read Ritson's youthful attempts at verse would cheerfully call him a poet, but the bishop's contemporary reputation appears to have satisfied Scott. Scott's decision to opt for creativity over fidelity to sources was hardly a matter of choice. The entire development of his literary strategy rested on it. He had to pay lip service to Ritson's ethical stance because of its text-freezing integrity but the absence of editorial creativity would have meant abandoning the cultural resource of tradition to popular versifiers following in Ramsay's footsteps. Neither Scott nor the literary establishment that he represented could allow that to happen. The resonance of tradition in post-enlightenment Scotland was too pervasive and powerful to be left in the popular domain. It was critical to the process of self-

identification that followed political union and the confirmation of identity depended on the managed congruence of literary history and popular tradition.

Scott rejected Ramsay's creative approach to tradition because it was ungoverned, even though in his own day the governing powers of literature thought tradition barely worthy of its attention. He was, however, willing to overlook Percy's mendacious scholarship in the interest of cultural power because it supported a construct of tradition which Macpherson and Blair had worked up between them in a spasm of overheated creativity and wishful thinking. The revelation of the Ossianic dream as blatant mythologising did nothing to undermine the strategy through which it was constructed. The projection of the literati into their own history by means of the virtual bard provided Scott with a strategic foundation for his own creative programme. If the modern bard could be projected back into history by means of the "necessary powers" of creativity and scholarship those same powers could be utilised to project that history back at themselves. Creative and authoritative interpolation was the key to imitation which unlocked the romantic vision contained in the dream of the virtual bard.

The induction of the ballad imitation into Scott's literary project was a matter for subtle cultural negotiation because he was at pains to associate the enterprise with the integrity of the best antiquarian practice at the same time as making the case for a new literary form. To this end, Scott integrates the practise of imitation through an association with David Herd, an accepted though, paradoxically, non - creative paragon of Scottish song collecting.

A brief description of Herd which braids together his positive attributes, both as man and man of letters, is followed by an account of the history of the publication of his collections.²⁹ The brevity of Scott's attention to Herd is interesting not because he spends more effort elsewhere discussing lesser figures but because it signals an assumption that the integrity of the man and his work is accepted fact for the intended readership of the *Minstrelsy*. With this in mind it becomes significant that he should use the history of Herd's publication to puff, at greater length, another more obscure collection which he describes as follows:

A publication of the same kind, being Herd's book still more enlarged, was printed for Lawrie and Symington in 1791.

Some modern additions occur in this later work, of which by far the most valuable were two fine imitations of the Scottish ballad, by the gifted author of the *Man of Feeling* -(now alas no more)- called 'Duncan and 'Kenneth.'³⁰

Scott had made a passing and generally positive reference to imitations when he discussed the inclusion of "Hardyknute" in Ramsay's collection but this is the first public assertion that such works are "valuable". The specific areas where that value accrues have already been laid out in the development of his critique of interpolation. Recognition of Scott's oblique reference to Henry Mackenzie, the poet described above, depends on the same educated background that assumes familiarity with Herd. Following through from this connection, Mackenzie's imitative works are associated with the integrity of Herd's antiquarian activities and the contemporary educated reader recognises the creator of those imitations as poet, skilful critic and leading light of the literati. All these associations assume a greater resonance when contrasted

with Scott's account of Pinkerton which follows on directly.

By Scott's standards of moderation, Pinkerton's treatment is fairly savage. The limitations of his poetic ability are discussed but the main grounds for complaint are the deliberately deceptive intention of his ballad imitations and his limited skill as a critic. Having praised Mackenzie's 'valuable' imitations, Scott now professes genteel outrage at the revelation that "...no less than five..." of the works published in Pinkerton's *Select Ballads* were composed, wholly, or in part, by him and Scott expresses particular affront at his additions to "Hardyknute", not on the grounds of its being an imitation of an imitation but on the basis of Pinkerton's ignorance of its original author.³¹ This waywardness, Scott speculates, was encouraged by a combination of Macpherson's success and overconfident scholarship.

"The poetry smells of the lamp...", is Scott's response to Pinkerton's re-creative efforts.³² This damning phrase is a sweeping dismissal of any claim that might be made on Pinkerton's behalf to the mantle of skilful critic. His lack of familiarity with oral tradition coupled to his preference for literary sources to underpin his ballad imitations are viewed as fundamental flaws in the approach to imitation.

Scott is in the process of synthesising an ethical programme for the modern bard. For him, Pinkerton's literary crime is not to compose imitations but to do so in the absence of ethical creativity exemplified by his failure to recognise the oral process, as defined by Scott, and his attempt to deceive, by disguising his own authorship. Without any examination of his antiquarian credentials in the field of oral tradition, Mackenzie is held respectable by the

simple act of putting his name to the imitations and through a diffuse association with the ethically sound Herd.

Scott's contempt appears, if anything, to have been deepened by Pinkerton's later admission of authorship of these "...pieces of spurious antiquity."³³ It seems, for Scott, that one man's or, in the case of "Hardyknute", woman's "valuable additions" were another's "spurious antiquity". Compare Scott's attitude to Pinkerton's additions to this poem with his approach to Mrs. Wardlaw the composer of the original:

If a young, perhaps a female, author chooses to circulate a beautiful poem - we will suppose that of Hardyknute - under the disguise of antiquity, the public is surely more enriched by the contribution than injured by the deception.³⁴

Scott's well documented fondness for the original poem is surely no excuse for the double standards at operation here nor is his deference to youth or gender. His only defence lies in his stated plea for each case of imitation to be considered separately. He also draws a distinction between two different kinds of imitation, those like "Hardyknute" which he categorises as poetry of language, sentiments and manners, as opposed to the works of modern copyists who, consciously or otherwise, develop an original approach to imitation.

The interpolator, Percy, emerges as as a model imitator of the former kind and following his consistent strategy of using Ritson as a modifier, Scott qualifies his praise of Percy's imitations and, simultaneously firms up his theory of ethical creativity. Ritson's strictures on Percy's creative interpolations were justified where

such licence forms an abuse through its attempt to deceive the skilful critic; when, however, "... the licence is avowed, and practised without the intention to deceive, it cannot be objected to but by scrupulous pedantry."³⁵ This is clearly not in keeping with the allowances made for Lady Wardlaw but all inconsistencies are subordinate to the need to establish ethical and literary parameters of creativity.

If Scott failed to perceive any irony in his approach to defining the modern bard through the notion of ethical creativity he must have been blind to the point of self-deception in his failure to recognise Macpherson, Pinkerton and Ramsay as the strategic models for his own creative imitations of the ballad. The only substantive difference in approach, flexible ethics aside, was Scott's willingness to admit authorship. As he astutely observes in his "Essay on the Imitation of the Ancient Ballad": "...the very desire to unite modern refinement with the verve of the ancient minstrels, will itself betray the masquerade."³⁶

Once more Scott establishes his ability to recognise the parameters of orality while ignoring their implications for his own work. For Scott, it is the art itself that reveals the deception and the heavier the disguise the more easily the work is revealed as forgery. But, by whom will this be recognised? Not, for Scott, by the traditional audience; it is rather the skilful critic who, in the act of appreciating the art, recognises the deception. Both Pinkerton's and Wardlaw's versions of *Hardyknute* are detected as forgery by their historical incongruities but, judged by Scott as separate cases, one is forgivable on the grounds of spontaneous creativity while the other is damned by the smell of the lamp. The

key to imitation is self-revealing; the harnessing of creative "verve" governed by ethically grounded, skilful criticism.

The difficulties of setting parameters of ethical creativity for modern bardship forces Scott along a convoluted path. He needed to associate imitation with an ethical programme but this could not be allowed to hamper creativity. To this end, Scott develops a strand of the argument made against Pinkerton's practices to undermine Ritson's authority:

In short, when Ritson copied from rare books, or ancient manuscripts there could not be a more accurate editor; when taking his authority from oral tradition, and judging between two recited copies, he was apt to consider the worst as the most genuine, as if a poem was not more likely to be deteriorated than improved by passing through the mouth of many reciters.'³⁷

Ritson's "scrupulous pedantry", despite its value in accurately translating orally conceived works for a literary culture proves to be the enemy of interpolative creativity. This is turned against Ritson and used as a measure against which to highlight his flaws as a skilful critic. When combined with Ritson's refusal to subscribe to the thesis of decay and his questionable temperament, these 'flaws' modify Scott's notion of ethical creativity derived from skilful criticism and creative interpolation. By some miracle of moral elasticity, Scott plays both ends of the argument in order to undermine Ritson's authority as a skilful critic of oral tradition, while simultaneously co-opting his name as a benchmark of literary integrity and authoriser of creative imitation:

The author may be permitted to speak as an artist on this occasion (disowning at the same time, all purpose of imposition) as having written at the request of the late Mr. Ritson, one or two things of this kind
.....³⁸

Now, Ritson is played as a banker for Scott's credibility,

despite the fact that the corners of his ethical paradigm have been ground off to accommodate the interpolative curves that Scott's creative verve demands. We could be forgiven for emerging confused from this tortuous circumnavigation of Scott's world of ethical letters but he is never short on revelation. The non-imposing artist is embarked on

The fair trade of manufacturing modern antiques; not for the purpose of passing them off as contraband goods on the skillful (sic) antiquary, but in order to obtain the credit due to authors as successful imitators of the ancient simplicity....³⁹

The underlying purpose of his shady meandering in the field of oral antiquity is the sure footed pursuit of literary reputation.

It becomes increasingly difficult, as Scott's programme is developed, to separate him from his own sense of identification with the ideal bard he is creating. His strategic debt to creative literary deception is buried beneath a framework of historical commentary and camouflaged by a network of literary ethics which are conveniently breached to accommodate the creative contours of the emerging romantic, literary imagination. David Hewitt draws our attention to the complex of motives behind this when he remarks of Scott's stated aim of contributing to the history of Scotland through the notes and commentaries that attach to the *Minstrelsy*, that it was :

...as though the songs were not themselves part of that history, but in the Magnum Opus the emphasis is reversed and historical notes are provided as commentary upon fiction. Literature illustrates history, and history illustrates literature; writing is laid down in layers, comment commenting on commentary. The provision of such varied evidence, presented in such a complex way, and in each case over many years, is that he is never absolutely confident that truth can be captured in a particular form of words; it is as though he were constantly trying to work out trying to work out the relationship of the literary artifact to

what it conveys.⁴⁰

These complex accretions of history, fiction and commentary are held together in the tensile dreams of Scott's developing romantic imagination. Whatever the future held in terms of Scott's analysis of truth and literary artifact, he is at this point, under cover of all this interwoven literary process, engaged in the psychological actualisation of the virtual bard - a fictional construct who relates the context bound truths of tradition to the historical project of contemporary literary elites. Behind the sturdy scholarship and measured criticism, a fantastic hybrid of re-interpreted traditional sensibility and literary authority is throwing back its cloak to show the face of the virtual bard as the mirror image of Scott. If he tries to look beyond that image he sees only himself in rear view gazing into a landscape of his own receding reflections created by a parallel mirror of mythologised cultural history. He cannot fix his own face in the past. As he moves, so does that reflected history according to the literary light he plays on his image, but all projections are contained by the re-constructed past. The root of control for the creative interplay between history and the romantic literary imagination is to choose an actual model from the past whose features can be matched to his own. In the right shade he can superimpose those features and his own likeness reflects back from the past.

Where Macpherson's Celtic bard was a loose agglomerate of Enlightenment hopes and dreams bound together in dislocated Celtic fragments, Scott's relationship with his model had to be more deeply personalised in order to successfully bridge the gap

between the vital process of an oral tradition and the interiorizing of that process by the private reader as frozen literary product.⁴¹

Scott's insistence on Thomas of Ercildoune, a thirteenth century Border poet, as both the author of the mediaeval romance *Sir Tristrem* and as Thomas the Rhymer, the actual character of the ballad, provides him, as Goslee notes, with a model of poetic impulse that stayed with him long after he had abandoned poetry. She also goes further to claim that:

More than the symbolic focus of an impulse or feeling, however, this questing, visionary protagonist who yet comments upon his own art offers a model for analysing the structural and thematic patterns of Scott's major narrative poems....⁴²

The notion that Thomas comments on his own art is central to her analysis of the development of Scott's literary strategy. It is, however, fundamental to that analysis to understand fully the origins and nature of that model. She astutely points to the patterns of mediaeval and renaissance romance through which Scott develops his own narratives but seems less aware of the social, historical and literary agenda through which the popular tradition is modified and contained by preconceived elements of that evolving romantic discourse.

The inclusion and subsequent treatments of *Thomas The Rhymer* in Scott's *Minstrelsy* vitalises the categorical premises of the collection; romantic, historical and imitative through a parallel alignment of each poetic version.⁴³ The original ballad, a conflation of two versions which relies heavily on Mrs. Brown's traditional version (Child 37A) into which Scott claims to have interpolated a

more localised version from an unidentified female source, corresponds implicitly, according to Goslee, to Scott's classification of a romantic ballad.⁴⁴ The second version is Scott's own imitative interpretation of the relationship between Rhymer's prophecies and recorded histories and the third is a designedly modern, imaginative poetry which fuses the relationship between historical and romantic categories:

Although Scott's definitions of historical and romantic in the first two parts of the *Minstrelsy* are only implicit, his use of these categories can further define the interplay between romance and history in the three parts of *Thomas the Rhymer*. In turn this three-part ballad revision and the romance fragment that Scott publishes with it will suggest a model for his own narrative poems.⁴⁵

Goslee's work is extremely valuable in assisting our understanding of Scott's handling of that relationship from a literary perspective. If, however, we choose to follow her analysis with respect to Scott's relationship to the traditional process we may find that an alternative set of circumstances emerge which relate directly to how a language of romance is being coaxed from tradition through Scott's own developing literary procedures.

Scott, according to Goslee, utilises the spatial patterns of romance, the quester's search for transformation suggested by the ballad version, as a working definition of "...the nature of enchanted ground..." in the creative imagination.⁴⁶ If this is the case, it is important to draw a distinction between the literary, medieval romance version, which Scott appends to the ballad commentary and which he is almost certainly infusing into his own versions, and Mrs. Brown's traditional model which is as close to an orally conceived text as we are likely to obtain in a transitional

xi

'O see ye not yon narrow road
 So thick beset with thorns and briers?
 That is the path of righteousness,
 Though after it but few inquires.

xii

'And see ye not that braid, braid road,
 That lies across that lily leven?
 That is the path of wickedness,
 Though some call it the road to heaven.

xiii

'And see ye not that bonny road,
 That winds about that fernie brae?
 That is the road to fair Elfland,
 Where thou and I this night maun gae.

Drawing on Northrop Frye's theory of "vertical perspectives", as modified by Patricia Parker and Frederic Jamieson, Goslee demonstrates how the symbolic contrasts between these extremes of human experience can help "...analyse the link between Thomas the Rhymer's discussions of his language and his art with the elfin queen and Scott's views of the relationship between the play of fiction and the truths of history." This also demonstrates their helpfulness in "...relating the function of minstrelsy and prophecy in 'Thomas the Rhymer' to their usefulness in Scott's modern reassumption of the mediaeval minstrel's role."⁴⁸ If these contrasts, as seems to be suggested, help define the 'enchanted ground' of a developing romantic discourse then the analysis of any link between the internal discussion of language and the evolution of Scott's romantic discourse ought to be organic, assuming, of course, that we are dealing with a traditional ballad. If, however, Scott's version

of the ballad has been finessed in such a way as to accommodate a pre-existing strategy, we are perhaps discussing a different set of relationships.

Scott's version is almost identical to Mrs. Brown's. The three stanzas above represent, in terms of a traditional process, a coherent, trinary formulaic unit which, besides any discrete conceptual information, carries the narrative action forward. What is vital to any message it carries for an educated oral audience is the way in which that formulaic grouping relates to the material which surrounds it.

In Mrs. Brown's original this formulaic grouping is preceded by:⁴⁹

7

O they rade on and further on,
Until they came to a garden green
Light down, light down, ye ladie free,
Some of that fruit let me pull to thee

8

'O no, O no, True Thomas,' she says,
'That fruit maun not be touched by thee,
For a' the plagues that are in hell
Light on the fruit of this countrie.

9

'But I have a loaf here in my lap,
Likewise a bottle of claret wine,
And now ere we go further on
We'll rest a while and ye may dine.'

10

When he had eaten and drunk his fill,
'Lay down your head upon my knee,'
The lady sayd, 'ere we climb yon hill
And I will show you fairlies three.

The traditional coherence of Mrs. Brown's version is enhanced by these balanced pairs of stanzas which prepare the way conceptually and in terms of narrative for Thomas's introduction to

the supernatural. The critical elements which apply here are the order of arrival at this earthly paradise and rejection, at the insistence of the Queen, of heavenly food from the tree of knowledge in favour of the bread and wine. This communion with the supernatural signals and prepares the audience for the sexual congress of Thomas and the Elphin Queen through which the enchanted ground of their destination is mapped.

Scott's version fundamentally disrupts the narrative and conceptual path at this point and a coherent formulaic grouping is reduced by his interpolation of the allegedly traditional stanzas:⁵⁰

ix

O they rade on, and further on;
The steed gaed swifter than the wind;
Until they reached a desert wide,
And living land was left behind.

x

'Light down, light down, now, true Thomas,
And lean your head upon my knee:
Abide and rest a little space,
And I will show you ferlies three.'

Scott's interpolated stanzas disrupt the procession from the natural to the supernatural by crossing a desert and announcing the congress of the characters prior to their entering the garden. Because "living land was left behind", we are already on enchanted ground before the conceptual elements attached to the narrative in Mrs. Brown's version coalesce. Here, Scott is adapting the traditional narrative to accommodate the narrative order of the literary romance using his un-sourced ballad which also conveniently matches the localised border elements of the mediaeval literary text

supplied in the commentary.

In Mrs. Brown's version, Thomas enters the garden before he is shown the vision of the three roads, is admonished not to eat the fruit of knowledge and only then crosses the river of blood, in forty days and nights, to supernatural territory. Her warning to Thomas to hold his tongue on that enchanted ground is to preserve the possibility of his returning to the realm of the natural. As Goslee notes, this represents a direct challenge to Thomas as a minstrel who must trade off his right to speech in Elfland against the possibility of his return, but the challenge to his art is offset by the very possibilities offered up by a return to earth after a walk on enchanted ground, which may include a power of prophecy.

In Scott's version they enter the garden after wading through blood which confirms the notion, consistent with the written romance version, that they are already on enchanted ground when Thomas enters the garden. At this point Scott interpolates three stanzas, the first of which echoes strongly Mrs. Brown's seventh stanza, while the other two are interpolations from the 'border' version which are not consistent with either the traditional version or the mediaeval text:⁵¹

xvii

Syne they came to a garden green,
And she pu'd an apple frae a tree-
'Take this for thy wages, true Thomas;
It will give thee the tongue that can never lie'

xvii

'My tongue is my ain,' true Thomas said;
'A gudely gift ye wad gie to me!
I neither dought to buy or sell,
At fair or tryst where I may be.'

xix

I dought neither speak to prince or peer,
 Nor ask of grace from fair ladye'
 'Now hold thy peace!' the lady said,
 'For as I say, so it must be.'

Scott's editorial apparatus here allows him to address a second challenge to Thomas's language and art. Here, rather than admonish Thomas not to eat the fruit of knowledge, the queen insists that he does when she tells Thomas to "... 'Take this for thy wages...", but in the ironising of the Rhymer's sobriquet, "true Thomas", we infer that these are the wages of sin, an irony reinforced by 'true' Thomas's insistence on his right to lie in the second stanza above. Goslee remarks, that Thomas's claim to his own tongue indicates that he rejects the gift and "...asserts his power of speech in Elfland..." but the argument over language is settled in the last two lines of the final stanza.⁵² Goslee, while recognising the possibility raised by Child that these stanzas are Scott's own modern interpolations, encourages us to view Scott's version as the model for his own fictions where the romantic journey is viewed not only as a spatial pattern but also as "...a playful interlude before more serious choices."⁵³ Working backward from those fictions this is a useful conclusion to draw, but it is crucial to recognise that Scott is authorising his own strategy from the outset. Thomas the minstrel's self-conscious artistry is an editorial imposition on the traditional narrative through which Scott begins to assume control of the traditional process itself. By internalising creativity in the virtual bard Scott is attempting to disguise his literary intrusion at the same time as setting a

poetical agenda which he can carry forward in order to make possible the romantic discourse between history and fiction in the ballad imitations. Projecting the virtual bard onto an actual traditional ballad he sequesters the creative verve of tradition and appends the power of 'seeing' to the literary imagination. The first part of *Thomas the Rhymer* provides the 'educated reader' with historical proof of the individual creative imagination at work in tradition. The Queen's final admonition in Scott's version, which Goslee, perhaps significantly, stops short of quoting, settles any ambiguity surrounding Thomas's silence. The Queen signals her authority on enchanted ground when she asserts, "... 'For as I say, so it must be'..." and his compliance is confirmed, as in Mrs. Brown's version, by his return to earth seven years later. Scott does not need Thomas to assert his powers of speech in Elfland; his claim to his own tongue only applies to his ability to report the journey. The implications of this in regard to Thomas's powers of prophecy are not ambiguous. He has eaten from the tree of knowledge and by accepting the strictures of silence on enchanted ground returns to earth blessed with prophetic gifts of imagination.⁵⁴

xx

He has gotten a coat of the even cloth,
 And a pair of shoes of velvet green;
 And, till seven years were gane and past,
 True Thomas on earth was never seen.

Scott's return to Mrs. Brown's version for the final stanza allows him to bracket his literary interpolations within a traditional sensibility, but there are implications for him as well as for tradition. In a traditional reading of Mrs. Brown's text the supra-narrative function of the opening two lines would indicate

clearly to an educated traditional audience that Thomas returned to earth clothed in supernatural apparel, which explains the gift of prophecy. In returning to the traditional narrative Scott does not need to comprehend the supra-narrative message but the narrative conclusion signals Thomas's compliance with the Queen's wishes and so dresses, quite literally, the irony of the preceding verses in the garb of tradition.

It is not to dismiss Goslee's analysis to remark that her essential argument here, that the relationship between the reader and Thomas is undermined by ambiguity and irony, is perhaps oversophisticated, but simply to reinforce the notion that these elements are brought into play only by the presence in the narrative of a determined literary imagination. If the ballad is regarded broadly as the textual product of a traditional process, as seems largely to be the case in Mrs. Brown's version, these questions do not assume the prominence or the complexity with which Goslee attends them. For a traditional audience the narrative flow and its accompanying conceptual framework exert their own critical pressures, but ironic readings are not part of that process.

Whether or not he is interpolating additional material from a ballad alternative (and in the light of literary intrusiveness and the absence of any record of the lady's version we must seriously consider this) Scott is utilising editorial interpolation in order to manipulate the conceptual and narrative framework to his own creative ends. He is not drawing on a traditional model in order simply to describe a relationship between fiction and history, he is deliberately organising traditional materials editorially, enclosing them in historical commentary and ironising the relationship between

character and art. This acts as a catalyst for the psychological actualisation of a virtual bard in the mythical relationship between literary authority and traditional materials, fused in the heat of the Scottish Enlightenment. Interpolation is creativity for Scott and the essential paradigm here for Scott's consequent fictions is that of creative narrator. Goslee, in a continuation of her examination of the ambiguity of Thomas's tale, contends:

Who narrates his history is not clear either. The apparently omniscient narrator, telling of Thomas's journey in third-person form, is exempt both from the assumed credibility of a first-person account and from both the warnings against Thomas's reliability as a truth teller. Thus the status of the narrative lies , like Elfland, between judgmental extremes. In his own narratives Scott cannot claim such exemption ; instead, he constantly contextualizes his narrators both within their narratives and outside them.⁵⁵

This, again, only holds true when taken in an exclusively literary context. In the traditional sphere the narrator is culture bound to a position of credibility and, as guarantor of narrative veracity, takes full responsibility for the characterisation of the ballad actors. If they are unreliable the narrator has a traditional responsibility to convey to the audience, in a creative way, what they will already know; 'true Thomas' will always be 'true Thomas'.

In this light, the status of the traditional narrative is that of culture bound truth which absorbs all elements between extremes as parameters of belief; the critical focus for the ballad audience is not so much the story, the integrity of which is guaranteed by its place in tradition, but in the way that the narrative is disposed in relation to the conceptual framework raised by the singer, who acts only as narrator by proxy to the tradition. This will not be the case only when someone or something other than

tradition is controlling the controller. Scott hi-jacks the traditional process through creative interpolation of modern, or substitute, stanzas which affects not only the traditional narrative coherence but also the role of the narrator, which prompts Goslee's claims for irony and ambiguity. The narrator's 'exemption' here and the ambiguous status of the narrative are themselves effects of creative editorial contextualisation. It is important to see Scott's creative editorial apparatus at work here, transplanting the marrow of literary process into the frozen bones of tradition so that its skeleton can rattle to his tune. Scott displaces the conceptually loaded language of traditional discourse by exerting his own supra-narrative control, through which he appends tradition to a social, literary and historical framework. The resulting dissonance, recognised by Goslee in the ambiguous status of the narrative, is the death rattle of the traditional voice as it mutates through the twisted vocal chords of Scott's ironically supercharged 'true Thomas' into the discrete mouthings of the modern bard who assumes narrative authority over a traditional process which he recognises but does not fully understand. Scott takes a traditional, orally conceived narrative and makes it about his own writing in order to contain tradition within an historical and fictive framework that makes his own romantic language possible and confirms the domination of an elite literary culture.

From the throat of Scott's actualised bard, the accents of tradition filter through the croaking vocal chords of a literary establishment over-strained with chanting the abstract redundancies of classicism. The new 'authenticated' traditional voice that emerges rings with the authority of antiquarian scholarship, but the

internal echoes of deception in the editorialised narrative, which resonate through Scott's creative imagination, answer in the language of romance. According to David Hewitt, Scott's literary practice, as described in the 'Introductory Epistle' to *The Fortunes of Nigel Clutterbuck*,:

...confirms superbly the central tenet of romanticism, that literature is not the product of the rational mind, but of the imagination, which expresses itself in its own way and by its own rules. Scott declares that he is led by his imagination, and that his work seemingly develops at its own volition.⁵⁶

The point here is that this same literary imagination is actually applying carefully constructed 'ethical' rules through which the imaginative process of traditional creativity is subsumed in wishful thinking. The traditional 'verve' of oral process dissolves in the stream of creative interpolation that powered Scott's developing romantic imagination and it would seem at this point that his own journey to the 'enchanted ground' of literary romance was a single leap away. His decision to pause on the stepping stone of 'imitation', however, hints at some trepidation concerning the underlying psychological currents of literary romanticism and questions the solidity of 'enchanted ground' which lay on the far bank. The status of the second part of *Thomas the Rhymer* as "Altered from Ancient Prophecies" without any actual mention of Scott's authorship presents the reader with what can only be described as a pseudo-ambiguity.⁵⁷ Scott clearly had no intention of passing off the ballad itself as anything other than his own but in discriminating between this and the third part, which was also his own, and clearly announced as "modern, by the editor" we are prompted to question the relationships between the creator and his

materials which provoked him into this kind of spurious differentiation.⁵⁸

The most obvious conclusion to draw is that Scott, poised between the dual roles of editor and author, was attempting to finesse the reader into believing that this second part was somehow fused together from extant materials by a quasi-traditional process. There is an element of truth in this but the shift here from the deception of the creative editor to the self-conscious illusion created by his authorial diffidence signals a significant move in the development of his own literary process.

Drawing on Pinkerton's manuscript, which purports to be the response of Thomas of Ercildoune to 'Black Agnes' of Dunbar, Scott notes, in a spirit of incredulity, that:

This prophecy is remarkable, in so far as it bears very little resemblance to any verses published in the printed copy of the Rhymer's supposed prophecies.⁵⁹

Scott then takes Pinkerton, now described as one of the most able antiquaries of the day, to task over the authenticity of the piece and what follows is Scott's own literary history of the prophecies which centre on Andro Hart's Edinburgh edition of 1615. This is just one more piece in Scott's overall process of historicisation until we recall his earlier denunciation of Pinkerton's 'imitations' and their 'smell of the lamp'.

It is at this point that we remind ourselves that Scott is working to an agenda. Imitation is part of the literary process and before tradition can be fully subsumed by the mainstream of literary romance the ethical conditions for the transfer of cultural authority must be met. These are the ground rules of ethical

creativity. Scott is not trying to finesse the reader into believing that this second part is the result of an actual traditional process so much as he is attempting to engage their imagination in order to show them how to collude in the illusion that the traditional process can be sequestered by a modern literary bard.

It is worth remembering here that Scott recognises imitation as a self-revealing literary product. Pinkerton is discretely involved here as a marker of 'authenticity' for Scott's creative approach. His negative associations with forgery and deceptive imitation only serve to highlight the advantages of ethical creativity where the assumed authority of the controlling literary bard arises not only from his encyclopaedic knowledge of the textual and social history but in his perceived awareness of the traditional process that goes with it, along with his own creative ability. The absence of acknowledged authorship here, in a work that lays no claim to being traditional, advertises the presence of the modern bard as the controlling medium of a process. By failing to lay claim to an imitative work that is obviously his own, he is appropriating traditional process to the literary imagination, but it is vital to his own psychological wellbeing that his reader colludes in that illusion; without that collusion his romantic sense of identity collapses. It is Scott's invisible hand that beckons the reader into the parlour of romance where they are caught up in a web of categorical fictions which, taken together, replicate a traditional process authorised by the controlling bard. From this position of control, Scott feeds off the projections of his audience and their collusion 'authenticates' the literary product as part of an imaginary process of ethical creativity.

As a literary product this second part of "Thomas the Rhymer" is moulded to the shape of the original ballad, but the solidifying mass of literary and social history which is poured into the work fixes tradition in the contextual ambience of an evolving romance.⁶⁰

I

When seven years were come and gane,
The sun blinked fair on pool and stream;
And Thomas lay on Huntlie bank,
Like one awakened from a dream.

II

He heard the trampling of a steed,
He saw the flash of armour flee,
And he beheld a gallant knight
Come riding down by the Eildon-tree

III

He was a stalwart knight and strong;
Of giant make he peared to be:
He stirr'd his horse, as he were wode,
Wi' gilded spurs, of faushion free.

IV

Says-'Well met, well met, true Thomas!
Some uncouth ferlies show to me!'
Says-' Christ thee save Corspatrick brave!
Thrice welcome good Dunbar,¹ to me!

1[The Earl of Dunbar, in the time of the 'Rhymer' was not Cospatrick, but Patrick, seventh Earl.]

Tradition melts before the readers eyes as romantic figures emerge from a strategically localised landscape amidst a blur of contextual abstractions." Scott uses every 'traditional' technique at his command; antiquated spellings, from Ramsay, pseudo-formulaic phrases from Wardlaw, landscape of and an authenticating footnote, in the manner of Pinkerton. This last is all the more remarkable because he is correcting an historical discrepancy that he has deliberately included in his own original text, despite knowing the

true historical facts, in order to generate an ambient authenticity around the piece which both writer and audience know to be an imitation. This self-conscious deception promotes the illusion that he is processing extant materials in a traditional manner, but those materials never existed as part of any single work in the way that they are being presented here and they are accompanied by a subliminal awareness that he is self-consciously editing his own text.

From the first stanza, where Scott integrates the myth of Thomas's return from enchanted ground to his own specific earthly locale, he struggles to control the traditional elements of this process. Alternate lines trade off traditional styles of phrasing with Scott's own poetic impulse. He utilises the impersonal narrator of tradition to set the scene "down by the Eildon-tree" but is unable to resist non-functional literary description, and his sense of relief when the characters collide in exclamation is almost palpable. Scott is off the traditional hook and can move the narrative at his own literary pace through the dialogue of the actors and their immediate demands for action as in "Some uncouth ferlies show to me", which appropriates the language and tone of the original ballad but for quite different ends.⁶²

VI

'A storm shall roar this very hour,
From Ross's Hills to Solway sea'
'Ye lied, Ye Lied, ye warlock hoar!
For the sun shines sweet on fauld and lea.'

VII

He put his hand on the Earlie's head;
He show'd him a rock beside the sea,
Where a king lay stiff beneath his steed,²
And steel-dight nobles wiped their ee.

2 King Alexander, killed by a fall from his horse, near Kinghorn. (Scott's own footnote)

Scott contextualises the narrative in terms of his own enlightened skepticism concerning the power of prophecy and its relationship with history. On this first occasion where 'true' Thomas's powers are questioned by Dunbar, himself a fabulous creature, the narrator appears, for the last time in the piece, in order to give traditional credence to Thomas's supernatural powers before abandoning the narrative to the direct speech of the actors. On this occasion, however, the narrative voice is not the impersonal, contextually credible voice of tradition. Scott trivialises the narrator through his use of the diminutive 'Earlie' for Earl and by injecting a sentimental note which is contextualised by a literary footnote to explain the prophecy. This is not a grown up voice, it is the sentimental language of an infantile tradition sifted through the sophisticated film of a progressive literary mind. It signals to the reader not only the end of the traditional narrator's role in the work but also the presence of the controlling imagination of the subliminal narrator who is responsible not to traditional authority, but to the demands of social history and the romantic imagination which fuels his own artistic programme.

To see, like Hewitt, Scott's narrative strategy in this case as simply ".....a series of dramatic fictions in which a created narrator, writer, speaker or singer presents a new story, or argues a position ,or explores an experience.." is to suggest a randomness to Scott's role-playing which is not apparent here.⁶³

Scott is purposeful in his appropriation of the traditional

narrative voice to the point of ruthlessness, shading a pseudo-formulaic discourse to the contours of literary creativity to the point where it cannot sustain itself in the driven narrative flow. Formulaic discourse is reduced to a level of sentimentality which Scott extrapolates into the hyper-orality of the re-constructed bard. This sublimation of narrative control steals words from the mouth of tradition and robs it of its conceptual coherence for a traditional audience. The supra-narrative function of ballad language is disenfranchised by discrete authorial ventriloquism which animates the romantic figures through whose actions he establishes narrative control. The reader's response is entirely determined by a willingness to engage with the literary concept of traditional process.

Macpherson's bard was a vehicle through which he could recreate a notional history which accorded with an Enlightenment sense of identity; in the first part of *Thomas the Rhymer* Scott reduces that virtual construct to its romantic essence by interpolating stanzas into a traditional ballad through which he deceptively gains control of the traditional narrative voice and shapes it to his own cultural programme. Now Scott, having actualised that bard in his own imagination, invites his readers to collude in that imaginative process so as to raise literary questions about the nature of the rhymer and his art:⁶⁴

XIII

'Enough, enough of curse and ban;
Some blessings show thou now to me,
Or, by the faith o' my bodie,' Corspatrick said,
'Ye shall rue the day that ye e'er saw me!

Dunbar's response to the Rhymer's three curses is to threaten

the messenger and demand positive prophecies. Scott is highlighting the scepticism that pervades his own commentary on the prophecies within the ballad imitation itself and he also highlights an earthy pragmatism, that he sees underlying the supernatural in tradition, through Thomas's compliance:⁶⁵

XVII

'But tell me now,' said brave Dunbar,
 'True Thomas , tell now unto me ,
 What man shall rule the isle Britain,
 Even from the north to the southern sea?

His faith ostensibly restored by the Rhymer's predictions of Scotland's good fortune, Dunbar asks for a final prophecy. This, however, does nothing to divert the skepticism which underlies the narrative. A prophet who delivers blessings to order reveals himself as a pragmatic creature but, like Dunbar, he is a creature under Scott's control. From the subtle shaping of tradition through interpolation, Scott moves through imitation toward a critique of tradition which questions the reliability of its premises by undermining traditional characters - 'true Thomas' is no longer 'true Thomas'. By means of Dunbar, Scott creates a romantic literary construct whose 'traditional' language throughout strains the accents of tradition to the point of pseudo-formulaic absurdity and whose deliberately generated gullibility undermines the status of the Rhymer as both prophet and traditional ballad actor.

In this second stage of the evolution of *Thomas the Rhymer*, ethical creativity has overcome its shyness and blossomed into a subtle and manipulative process through which Scott, with the collusion of his readers, firms up the internalisation of his own re-construction of the modern bard who comments on the underlying

premises of tradition and subverts the supra-narrative discourse by forcefully adapting the formulaic language to the narrative priorities of a literary imagination. By discretely demonstrating to his reader that he is capable of controlling the process of tradition, Scott internalises Macpherson's virtual bard and psychologically actualises the imaginative mythology from which that construct arose. He then modifies that construct to accommodate a programme of ethical creativity. The romantic literary process applied to tradition gives rise to a vapour of illusion which encapsulates the neoclassical idea of 'virtue' in letters while allowing Scott to appropriate the mercurial 'verve' of tradition to the romantic discourse. The conceptual 'magic' of traditional discourse evaporates in a literary alchemy which substantiates Macpherson's virtual bard in Scott's literary imagination. With the tacit permission of his readers, Scott, in the third part of this evolutionary work, projects this chimera back into the ballad, speaking confidently in the language of romance:

In this 'modern' ballad, which he significantly included in the 'ancient' section of the minstrelsy because of its "...immediate connection with the first and second parts of the same story...", Scott links explicitly the historical figure, Thomas of Ercildoune with 'True Thomas', the Rhymer in the actual text of the ballad.⁶⁶ Further identifying this amalgamation as the author of the metrical romance *Sir Tristrem*, Scott, in the opening stanzas, synthesises ballad language with historical detail to set the scene for a performance of an ancient metrical romance by the rhymer, as minstrel. Traditional language, like the pseudo-formulaic "Nor goblets of the blood red wine", in Stanza V. is now completely

overpowered by the literary context and allowed to exist only as a stylistic echo. This variation on a heavily laden conceptual phrase carries no significant message for the traditional audience here, as it does in *Sir Patrick Spens*, where it invokes the sense of impending disaster that pervades the ballad. What emerges from this neutering of formulaic language is a ballad about a ballad which discretely merges other ballads with the historical context as in stanza two where '...crested helms and spears'...Glanced gaily through the broom.' at Coldingknow.⁶⁷ By the time the narrator announces that "True Thomas rose, with harp in hand" in stanza VI, we are already closed in by context and commentary and the controlling voice no longer even resembles the traditional narrator:⁶⁸

VIII

In numbers high, the witching tale
The prophet pour'd along;
No after bard might e'er avail 2
Those numbers to prolong.

2 See introduction to this ballad (Scott's note)*

IX

Yet fragments of the lofty strain
Float down the tide of years,
As, buoyant on the stormy main,
A parted wreck appears.

The scholarship of the contemporary antiquarian merges fully here with the voice of the emerging romantic imagination to fuse text and context in a manner entirely alien to the traditional process. The footnote, following Pinkerton's pattern for integrating text and commentary, confirms for the reader that it is Thomas of

Ercildoune as the author of *Sir Tristrem* who is the subject of the ballad and refers them to Scott's own authoritative commentary derived from the quasi-historical reputation of the assumed author of the mediaeval romance. This is then supported in the commentary by textual evidence from the annals of Robert de Brunne to the effect that no one had since performed this piece in the manner of the original performer. What follows is nothing less than a dramatisation of Scott's own theory of minstrelsy. The "parted wreck" reveals the name of the original 'ancient' ballad of *Thomas the Rhymer* from which this piece evolves and which, by association, represents the condition of all the ballad fragments that Scott has formed into the *Minstrelsy*. The thesis of decay which informs that work becomes, itself, a dynamic component of this romantic reconstruction. The narrative voice is the reaction of a categorical social history and an ethically fronted romantic imagination which finally reduces tradition, in the privatised relationship between author and reader, to an ethically impregnated composite of controlled language and creative deception - the heart and soul of Scott's romantic discourse.

Scott guides us by means of a hyper-narrative, which integrates performance and mediaeval mythology, to a re-constructed version of the story of *Sir Tristrem*. As the controlling voice he is telling both the story and the story of the telling of the story - but to what end? 69

XIII

No art the poison might withstand;
 No medicine could be found
 Till lovely Isolde's lily hand
 Had probed the rankling wound

XIV

With gentle hand and soothing tongue
 She bore the leech's part;
 And while she o'er his sick bed hung,
 He paid her with his heart.

Scott, the social historian, has already told us that Thomas's original performance would never be bettered, so, following his thesis of decay, we must assume a different purpose in his telling of the story here.

These stanzas are less about the original story than about an attempt to re-assert the magical power of language for a literary audience. The medicinal power of Isolde's "soothing tongue", carried into the metaphysical through the analogy of the leech, is recognised by Scott as the essence of traditional process; the healing power of language from which the creative verve of tradition springs. He is looking to translate this 'magical' quality to the printed page and as the modern bard and spiritual heir to 'true Thomas' invest his own creations with that power:⁷⁰

XVIII

Brangwain was there, and Segramore,
 And fiend born Merlin's grammarye:
 Of that famed wizard's mighty lore,
 O who could sing but he?

"Merlin's grammarye" is a magical language, who but 'true Thomas' is fit to sing about that language and who, in turn is fit to sing about the language of 'true Thomas'? The answer is the modern bard alone, who has absorbed the history of tradition and attached its creative verve to his own poetic impulse. There is only

one contender.

The myth of progress upon which Scott's thesis of decay depends allows him to dwell in his own projection, psychologically cushioned by the approval of his readers. He has become the bard who actualises all virtual bards for a literary culture; a self-appointed trustee of a magical "grammartye" whose own romantic identity becomes inextricably bound with his narrative vehicle.⁷¹ Ethical creativity is the means and control of the literary culture is the end but what is left to tradition once its marrow has been stripped?

Scott, almost habitually, contains his literary sense of pace by bracketing narrative episodes with 'authentic' reconstructions of ballad language and as he comes to the close of his re-construction of Thomas's telling of *Sir Tristrem* this strategy re-emerges:⁷²

XX

His ancient wounds their scars expand,
With agony his heart is wrung:
O where is Isolde's lilye hand,
And where her soothing tongue?

XXI

She comes! she comes! - like flash of flame
Can lovers' footsteps fly:
She comes! she comes! - she only came
To see her Tristrem die.

XXII

She saw him die; her latest sigh
Join'd in a kiss his parting breath:
The gentlest pair that Britain bare,
United are in death.

What we are witnessing here is not so much the death of Tristrem as the last breath of tradition as a valid cultural competitor to the neoclassically rooted, literary culture. In the first of these stanzas Scott is so caught up in his own creation that he merges his own controlling voice with the voice of the constructed bard in an appeal for a magical resolution through the language of Isolde. Having worked himself and his construct into to a romantic fever over the plight of Tristrem, Scott attempts to resolve the episode in a traditional context that simply will not sustain the melodramatic pitch of the romantically driven denouement. The resulting sense of reduction as he returns to a pseudo-formulaic construction is palpable and, from a traditional perspective, stanza XXI could be described as one of the saddest verses in the history of Scottish poetry, not for its content which is risible, but for its implications which are terminal. Scott, albeit unconsciously, strips tradition of every shred of dignity it might hope to possess as it confronts the immanence of literacy, and this is highlighted by the final stanza in this grouping. His return to the previous romantic register signals the final cultural function of tradition when it is robbed of the conceptual coherence that fuels its spirit. For Scott, traditional language provides an excuse for the sentiment which will bring tears to the eyes of Thomas's fictional audience, pull the emotional strings of Scott's 'sophisticated' readers and allow them to bathe in the afterglow of romance without capitulating to the psychological uncertainties of the supernatural.

In the three phases of *Thomas the Rhymer* Scott conducts his

readers on a mystery tour of Scottish culture, showing them ancient relics which have been touched up to add "glammer" to the tale, how these relics could be re-constructed to meet the imaginative requirements of the day and, finally, selling them a replica; a night light to glow in the dark enchanted ground of a developing romantic imagination.

To cherish the notion that Scott's *Minstrelsy* is essentially a preservative work is a complete misconception. It is almost entirely a creative work. Every scrap of editorial interpolation, historical commentary, critical analysis and poetic imitation has as its end one aim, the development of a creative romantic imagination which drove Scott straight through the middle of tradition. On the way he moulded the strategies of deception, by which means Ramsay, Wardlaw, Pinkerton and others had circumvented the stifling strictures of a neoclassical sensibility, into a subtle and manipulative theory of ethical creativity by which means polar opposites like Percy and Ritson could be utilised toward the same creative ends. The price was the traditional sense of identity embodied in 'True Thomas'. Scott's *Minstrelsy* is both a monument to writing and a tombstone for tradition.

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¹ Susan Manning, "Ossian, Scott and Nineteenth Century Literary Scottish Literary Nationalism," *Studies in Scottish Literature*, ed. G. Ross Roy, (Columbia, 1982), Vol. xvii, p.49. As well as noting the artificial continuation of the 'authenticity' dispute in the interests of Scottish literary politics, Manning draws our attention to Scott's measured distancing of himself from the Ossianic controversy. Although a firm non-believer in the authenticity of the poems he did not hesitate to trade on those associations "...as an economical means of evoking the Scottishness which was integral to his theme."

²Judith Wilt, *Secret Leaves*, (London, 1985), P. 154. Wilt's fairly convoluted account provides us, nonetheless, with a useful characterisation of Scott's historicism where she contends: "The antiquary digs up or uncovers the past, the theorist "re" constructs the artifact herself." The genderisation of history aside, Wilt maps the implications of this stance when she notes : " Being in time changes: the idea of history requires at least three points on the line of process, requires a shapely past, a wilderness present, and a void or dimly sketched future."

³ Walter Scott, *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*, ed. T.F. Henderson, (Edinburgh,1932), Vol I, p. 1.

⁴ Walter Scott in *Edinburgh Review*, VI, no.12 (July, 1805), p.462.

⁵ Scott, *Minstrelsy*, Vol. I, p. 3.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p.4

⁷ *Ibid.*, p.7.

⁸ *LOC CIT.*

⁹ *Ibid.*, p.216.

¹⁰*Ibid.* pp.9-10.

¹¹ Walter Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, (London, 1982), p. 42. Ong draws our attention to the special nature of oral narrative where he remarks: " Narrative originality lodges not in making up new stories but in managing a particular interaction with this audience at this time - at every telling the story has to be introduced uniquely into a unique situation, for in oral cultures an audience must respond, often vigorously. But narrators also introduce new elements into old stories." Oral cultures are not subject to stasis but that does not result in the kind of decay that Scott describes. If a narrative element is no longer relevant to the tradition it simply disappears but if it is vital it must appear.

¹² Scott, *Minstrelsy*, Vol I, p.19.

¹³ *Ibid.* p.8.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.12.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.18.

¹⁶ *LOC CIT.*, Scott's tactical use of disparate literary sources to re-create the circumstances of tradition demonstrates the antiquarian edge of his historicism which owes a strategic debt to Pinkerton but this is also underpinned by the theoretical history which supports his thesis of decay.

¹⁷ Walter Scott, *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*, ed. T.F. Henderson, (Edinburgh,1932), Vol IV, p. 1.

¹⁸ Scott, *Minstrelsy*, Vol. I, p.11.

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19 The failure to recognise that these very "errors of sound and sense" between versions of a ballad might actually constitute an element of creative process in an oral environment, where new formulas are created by analogy with familiar units of sound and sense, reflects no real discredit on Scott. He could hardly be condemned for failing to recognise aspects of oral creativity which scholars were yet to discover anymore than Ramsay could be held responsible for infringing editorial practices which were still being hammered out in Scott's day.

20 Scott, *Minstrelsy*, Vol. IV, p.2.

21 The assumption of literary hegemony did not simply instigate and promote condescension toward the oral process but was also to colour the way in which its products and influences were absorbed into the literary culture. This in turn held profound implications for the development of the romantic literary voice in nineteenth century Scotland.

22 Scott, *Minstrelsy*, Vol. I, p.23. In a fascinating *volte-face* Scott bemoans the loss of of unknown songs which, had they survived, would have provided Scottish historians (who ... "often refer to old ballads as authorities for general tradition .") with a history of Scotland between 1285-1745. It is quite remarkable, in the light of Scott's chronicle of decay , that he should re-present the ballads as potentially credible historical sources or that he should reveal a contemporary dependence on traditional sources as accepted history. This reveals to some extent the confusion which underlay the absence of literary sources for history making. On the face of it the manuscript was the bedrock of authority but the gaps were being filled in other ways. The chasm which formed along this information fault line carved out a natural route for a stream of mythmaking.

23 *Ibid.*, p 25

24 It is interesting to note that Scott chose not to direct this criticism at Burns but it is not clear whether Burns escaped censure by virtue of being a better songwriter than Ramsay or of being a better or more 'natural' bard.

25 *Ibid.*, pp. 26-27.

26 *LOC.CIT.*

27 A.N.. Wilson, *The laird of Abbotsford*, (Oxford, 1980) p.17.

28 Scott, *Minstrelsy*, Vol. I, p 28. Although Scott used this approach to ameliorate the excesses of Ritson's savage integrity it has to be said that, to his credit , he did not enter into the speculation about personal morality which was part of Percy's approach to undermining Ritson. Scott's view of Ritson was generally compassionate but he still used Ritson's perceived instability as a means of bolstering his support for Percy which was vital to Scott's creative strategy.

29 *Ibid.*, p 43.

30 *LOC. CIT.*

31 *LOC.CIT.*

32 *Ibid.*, p 45.

33 *LOC. CIT.*

34 Scott, *Minstrelsy*, Vol.IV, p.10.

35 *Ibid.*, p.14.

36 *LOC.CIT.*

37 Scott, *Minstrelsy*, Vol. I. p.46.

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38 Scott, *Minstrelsy*, Vol.IV, p.13.

39 *LOC CIT.*

40 David Hewitt, "Walter Scott", *History of Scottish Literature*, Vol.III, p.69.

41 Ong, *Op. Cit.* pp. 131-132. The psychological implications of this shift are recognised by Ong when he notes that: "The printed text is supposed to represent the words of an author in definitive or 'final' form. For print is comfortable only with finality. Once a letterpress forme is closed, locked up, or a photolithographic print is made, and the sheet printed the text does not accommodate changes...". This physical closure encourages a private sense of ownership of the text which is rare in oral cultures where the common stock of "...lore, formulas, and themes..." weaken that sense of ownership. In translating tradition for a literary world this sense of ownership is distilled in Scott's 'educated reader', the modern 'bard' who, as we have seen, is essentially himself viewed in the reflection of a desirable history.

42 Nancy Moore Goslee, *Scott the Rhymer*, (Kentucky, 1988), p. 1.

43 *Ibid.*, p. 5.

44 There is no accurate record of Scott's source for this text. Given the exhaustive detail provided in the commentary this is perhaps surprising although it may be argued that Scott was perhaps preserving the anonymity of this source at a time when ballad singing may not have been considered a 'ladylike' occupation. This seems unlikely, however, and real questions of authenticity are raised by Scott's reliance on this version which, in narrative terms follows closely the romance version which Scott re-prints in his commentary.

45 Goslee, *Op. Cit.*, p.5.

46 *Ibid.*, p.7

47 Scott, *Minstrelsy*, Vol IV, p.88.

48 Goslee, *Op. Cit.*, p.8.

49 Child, (37 A).

50 Scott, *Minstrelsy*, Vol. IV, pp. 87-88.

51 *Ibid.*, pp. 89-90.

52 Goslee, *Op. Cit.*, p. 9.

53 *LOC.CIT.*

54 Scott, *Minstrelsy*, Vol. IV, p.90.

55 Goslee, *Op. Cit.*, p.11.

56 David Hewitt, *Op. Cit.*, p.71.

57 Scott, *Minstrelsy*, Vol. IV, p.99.

58 *Ibid.*, p. 125.

59 *Ibid.*, p.99.

60 Scott, *Minstrelsy*, Vol.IV, p. 120.

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⁶¹ James Reed, *Sir Walter Scott, Landscape and Locality*, (London, 1980), p.9. This localisation of ballad landscape is sourced from the unrecorded version with which Scott interpolates Mrs Brown's original. The purpose here is not simply to provide local colour, but rather to integrate the physical landscape with the abstract context, in Reed's terms: "...a total landscape : land, buildings, people, manners, history, fused by time. Like the ballad makers, he uses his own idiom from the region he knows best, but the approach is transferable... Every walk or ride with Scott, like his writing , with the anecdotal, reminiscent richness of the experienced and informed observer." Reed's recognition of Scott's 'transferable approach' demonstrates a rare and insightful understanding of Scott's re-processing of that idiom by and for an educated, that is to say, literary, reader.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p.121.

⁶³ David Hewitt, *Op. Cit.*, p.79.

⁶⁴ Scott, *Minstrelsy*, Vol.IV, p.123.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p.124.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p.127.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p.137.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.129-130.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, pp.130-131.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p.131.

⁷¹ Goslee, *op. cit.*, p.32. Commenting on Scott's narrative strategy in *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* , she notes that "...the framing narrative dramatizes the flexibility of the oral tradition in action, but is itself an artifact of another sort altogether- that is , of Scott's writing. In turning to the minstrel's inner narrative, we find a more exact representation of traditional, naive, oral narratives and a simpler representation of traditional minstrels in unself-conscious action. Surprisingly, however, we also find a narrative in which writing and its metaphorical extension, the transforming magic of gramarye, play an active part. This activity also symbolically evaluates the outermost narrator as writer." The evolution of this strategy can be traced directly to the three parts of *Thomas the Rhymer* as the process of editorial interpolation and creative imitation fuse together in Scott's romantic imagination. The catalyst for this fusion is the "...transforming magic of gramarye...", the spellbinding 'glammer' of traditional discourse. Scott's inability to recognise the communal nature of this discourse resulted in his substituting imaginative 'verve' for conceptual coherence and as a consequence oral tradition became for Scott about writing in general and his own in particular.

⁷² Scott *Minstrelsy* Vol IV p 132

CHAPTER VI

THE BARD AND THE BOAR: EDITING RELATIONSHIPS

The process of control through which the transitional sensibility was finally frozen out of cultural contention is difficult to extricate from essentially literary accounts of tradition, but there is one area where, perhaps, the gradual dis-empowerment of that sensibility can be traced and that lies between the lines of Scott's relationship with its contemporary embodiment, James Hogg.

The roots of this relationship were nurtured in a curious mix of the commercial and the personal. The demand for authentically sourced texts which was central to Scott's literary prospectus was providentially matched by Hogg's eagerness to supply, almost to order, the materials of Scott's wishes. Like other market relationships this process was subject to distortions, these being Hogg's reliability as a source and Scott's overbearing certainty of his own critical judgment. Hogg's originality of character appears to have left a deep impression on Scott and the shepherd's initial oscillation between deference and defiance toward Scott seems to indicate some difficulty in controlling his sense of awe that such an important figure should seek out the company of a shepherd, albeit one with some natural confidence in his own original flair for letters. Hogg's first literary address to Scott, in a letter of 30 June, 1802, typifies his ambivalence toward an obviously desirable patronage:

Dear Sir,

I have been perusing your *Minstrelsy* for a while past, and it being the first book I ever perused which was written by a person I had seen and conversed with, the consequence hath been to me a most sensible pleasure.

...As I suppose you have no personal acquaintance in this parish, it would be presumptuous of me to expect that you will visit my cottage, but I will attend you in any part of the Forest if you will send me word. I am far from supposing that a person of your discernment-d--n it, I'll blot out that word, tis so like flattery- I say I don't think that you would despise a shepherd's "humble cot an' hamely fare" as Burns hath it; yet though I would be extremely proud of a visit, yet hang me if I know what I would do wi'ye.¹

The sense of social dis-ease felt by the madly "perusing" Hogg gives rise to an almost comical hyper-formality in his opening remarks that would do Austen's Mr. Collins credit. This appears to break down under the author's recognition of its own weight only to be replaced by a conceit which, by drawing notice to the underlying tone, actually reinforces its effect. It does, however, reduce directly to a familiarity of tone which allows Hogg to box at his own weight in plain Scots, with Burns in his corner. The overall pulse of the letter modulates between genuine pride and acute bewilderment in the relationship. Whatever their social differences, Hogg is seeking to equalise that relationship in cultural terms and it appears that, initially, Scott respected that.

This mixture of social diffidence and cultural defiance finds echoes in Burns' relationship with the literati but for the auto-didact, Hogg, who could not even claim the limited formal education of Burns, this relationship is more deeply rooted in the cultural traditions of the borders. It is not insignificant that Hogg, given his prominent role in collecting for the *Minstrelsy*, should feel entitled to encourage Scott to further the relationship through a visit. That this relationship was founded on Scott's hunger for

those traditional materials implies that at every level this was a personal relationship - Scott was after the stuff of tradition and for Hogg, although he may not at that time been fully aware of it, that stuff was vital to his own ambitions. In order to extract the essence of that vitality Scott was obliged to invest in the character of Hogg who, for his part, needed the patronage of a respectable man of letters to further his own literary ambitions.

Hogg's development as an artist was well advanced before the first meeting with Scott who notes of Hogg's time prior to this at Black House that: "...these years were the budding time of his genius."² Although his *Scottish Pastorals, Poems, Songs, etc.* of 1801 was self-financed and failed to make any real impression, its existence seems to have owed more to genuine literary ambition than parochial vanity.³

If we are to portray Hogg as a traditionally rooted writer, which he undoubtedly was, we must qualify our remarks with careful consideration of a contemporary sensibility that attaches to all of his writing, even his ballad imitations. Hogg was the product of a rural environment but he was no 'bumkin'; he may have looked to dated pastoral forms for his literary models but his literary vision was modern and sublime:

O'er Caves of death, and dens of woe,
On rocks the blasted forests hung;
The owlet and the raven too, 95
To dancing satyrs doleful sung.

Near to that awful lake I drew,
Thro' which a passage ne'er was found;
Black vapours hugging billows blue,
In deepest shades the prospect drown'd. 100

Alongst its shores, both high and steep,
Millions of mortals thoughtless play'd;

Fast, fast they dropped into the deep,
Yet still the throng no fear betray'd.

All bent on trifles, ill enjoy'd 105
When once in the pursuer's pow'r;
And millions nothing else employ'd
Than pushing others headlong o'er.

By withered roots what objects hung!
Eager the summit to regain :- 110
Mad hope!- they sprawled and grasp'd and clung,
Till efforts broke the thread in twain.

Infantile screams, and groans and cries,
Now mix'd on ev'ry side arose;
Trembling I turn'd and try'd to fly, 115
But precipieces rude oppose.⁴

This extract from "A Dialogue in a Country Church-Yard" is the climax of a pastoral nightmare in which Nicholas describes to his correspondent Colin the aggravated dream-visions which the latter will in turn explain to him as a premonition of their friend Bryden's death.

In choosing to work the classical pastoral form, Hogg is revealing both a limited scope to his literary background at this time and the importance of Ramsay's influence on his poetry.⁵ That influence, however, is modulated here in a way that draws our attention to Gay's pastorals. We do not look to that source for models of rural character. Hogg's 'swains' are serious and serious minded, supplying, like Ramsay, an antidote to Gay's bucolic clowns. We do, however, recognise in the passage above the kind of pressurised psychology - "Black vapours hugging billows blue"- that emerge in Gay's writing when the classical form struggles to contain a modern sensibility.

The contingent ironic overflow which marked Gay's rustic

interventions is not, however, in evidence here and that pressure is sublimated through the psychology of the character, Nicholas- "Trembling I turn'd and try'd to fly"- and resolved in the acceptance of a traditional premise - second sight. What is quite remarkable, is the ease with which Hogg makes an almost redundant classical form accomodate a modern romantic sensibility in the character's self-consciousness and an attendant gothic overload that reflects an almost medieaval sensibility, a reflection reinforced by an alliterative bent which is traditionalised in the plainness of Hogg's low-flung rhetoric and the incorporation of oral cadences- "...both high and steep,"- and rhythms in the pseudo-formulaic: "Fast, fast they dropped into the deep."

Hogg is engaged in a literary operation that allows for the successful integration of a synthetic imagination with a mimetic form through which he can realise his characters in their full psychological and aesthetic compass. His pastoral moves beyond mere imitations of literary form and influence by supporting the burden of psychological complexity with a contextual underpinning set firmly in traditional ground.

This may be absorbed strategically from *The Gentle Shepherd*, where Ramsay integrated the lives of his characters through the context of popular song, but Hogg submerges the literary process in the deeper rhythms and structures of the traditional mindset that he knows to be the driving psychological force of an actual pastoral dialogue. Where Ramsay rationalises superstition to accomodate a sophisticated view of the emerging urban literary class, Hogg meets it head on in order to capitalise on the residual 'realities' of superstition for a traditional mindset in transition: 6

Acknowledge, hast thou never yet,
 When acting scenes in nature o'er, 50
 An inward recollection met
 Of having viewed the same before?

Nor is it strange: Futurity,
 Though wrapt in mist to human ken
 Seem shapeless; yet a spirit's eye 55
 Some giant features may discern.

When viewed from a literary perspective this is plain superstition linking the phenomenon of *deja vu* to the power of prophecy, but what Hogg is describing here is a closed system of abstractions which allow the traditional community to accommodate the kind of psychological pressures that appear in the climactic scene above, which cannot be explained otherwise within that community and are only resolved within that system of thought. Hogg sees that there is no sense in a contemporary pastoral that describes this world otherwise and he shapes the form to accommodate a system of belief upon which the characters depend for their realisation: "Acknowledge, ..." demands Nicholas. This acknowledgement is an explicit psychological requirement, it is the only thing that will: "...ease a mind quite overborne"- a plea for communal confirmation that supports the speaker's mental and emotional balance and authorises both expression and explanation through a system of shared abstraction that operates within the confines of the poem and beyond in the actual community from which its characters are drawn.

This might be objectionable to the literary rationalist but to reflect the actual position of the traditional/transitional mindset in literature at this point it seems absolutely essential. It

represents a system of alternative 'realities', a bricolage of tradition, myth, religion and romance that Hogg plays mercilessly against the empirical structures of the literary community and which formed the sublime architectonic for his ultimate equation of psychic and supernatural ambiguity, *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*.

The supernatural, as Douglas Gifford rightly claims, is Hogg's "imaginative unit", but here it engages with his literary process as part of an authenticating matrix of identification that does not take contemporary literary certainties for granted.⁷

But my dear BRYDEN, on thy tomb, 185
 The rose of gratitude shall grow;
 And o'er it, (when I pass alone)
 Long long the tear of love shall flow.

Colin's revelation of the loss of their friend, whose death provides an explanation for the dream, signals the resolution of inner conflict and its attendant emotional release. The merging of poetic and psychological process in the eulogy concentrates expression in the formal (English and pastoral) linguistic setting that has characterised the poem as a whole, but the traditional rose motif and the pseudo-formulaic echoes of the final line show that intrinsic formality to be fixed in traditional ambience that emanates from a commanding synthetic imagination. Hogg's engagement with literary modes is from the outset vital and subversive; his natural capacity to mimic form stops short well short of mockery, but it does allow him to question the cultural priorities that attach to form while setting his own psychological agenda through a

closed system of traditional abstractions.

These moments of creativity and conflict characterise Hogg's relationship to the literary establishment in general. Measure them against the determined powerhouse of cultural certainty embodied in Walter Scott and we see the traditional mindset in transition submerge to deeper levels of deception and creativity as natural authority is eroded in favour of the legitimate version.

The opportunity to assist Scott must have held considerable attractions for an ambitious writer. As a living curator of tradition Hogg was an ideal cultural amanuensis, but the internal tension between curator and creator sprung from a fundamentally different mindset to that of Scott. Where Scott had an historical programme around which he sought to mould the collected materials of tradition, Hogg's tradition was a glowing ember and the literary creativity it helped forge was an original alloy of the oral mind in transition. It is hard to imagine that the creative priorities of a mind imbued with generations of traditional 'truths' were likely to be hard fixed on the ethical considerations of a few social historians with a liking for a rude tune. It would, in fact, be scarcely credible if that creativity was geared to anything other than simply adapting the information at hand to the demands of contemporary popular audience. That was the root of Burns' and Ramsay's popular creativity and Hogg was germinated from the same seed.⁸ He was also, by most accounts, nothing if not presumptuous and he may well have presumed further in the matter of creativity in his ballad activities than Scott's critical faculties were able, or inclined, to discern.

In relation to those faculties, Thomas Crawford cites as a

complicating factor the fact that three of the pieces in the *Minstrelsy* were blatant forgeries, passed off as genuine by Scott's friend Richard Surtees, complete with circumstantial evidence of their having been taken down from recitation and produced in an imperfect state to gloss their authenticity. Scott was susceptible to deception, as Crawford puts it, from "a member of his own social class " but how would that same susceptibility affect his dealings with Hogg? ⁹

In *Sir Walter Scott and the Border Minstrelsy*, Andrew Lang goes to exhaustive lengths to clear Scott and, incidentally, Hogg from collusion in the fabrication of the ballad "Auld Maitland". There is little to be gained from trawling once more through these overworked extra-textual grounds and those who wish to do so are referred to the work above. For the purposes of this argument it seems sufficient to say that despite the wealth of circumstantial evidence he supplies in their defence there is one overriding factor to which all circumstances are subordinate - the text, as delivered to Scott, is not the creation of an oral culture.

While the narrative tone of the piece is sufficiently impersonal as to indicate that it is not entirely the work of an exclusively literary mind, the structures and commonplaces that would identify it as partly or wholly derived from an oral process are simply not there. The relentless linearity of the narrative reveals its literary roots and where oral familiars do appear they carry the imposed air of the pseudo-formula:¹⁰

King Edward rade King Edward ran-
 I wish him dool and pain
 Till he had fifteen hundred men
 Assembled on the Tyne.
 And twice as many at North Berwick
 Was a' for battle bound.

In this extract, reprinted by Lang from Hogg's manuscript, the balanced, anthithesised, pseudo-formulaic phrase of the the first line is carried forward by a personalised narrative intervention which is a typically literary intrusion. As with all pseudo-formulaic interventions, it is rapidly subsumed in the demands of the progressive narrative.¹¹

In Scott's *Minstrelsy* version the final two lines are separated and formed into a separate stanza with the addition of two further lines suggested by Hogg in the original manuscript.¹²

VI

King Edward rade, King Edward ran-
 I wish him dool and pyne
 Till he had fifteen hundred men
 Assembled on the Tyne.

VII

And thrice as many at Berwicke
 Were all for battle bound,
 Who marching forth with false Dunbar,
 A ready welcome found

Scott's interpolative contribution as editor is coloured by genteel deception, more the result of wishful thinking, perhaps, than blatant dishonesty. The careful antiquing of language ("pyne" for Hogg's "pain"), so typical of Ramsay's deceptive strategy, is gently managed here so as to accommodate the rhyme scheme and accord with the barrage of historical authenticity that Scott was building

up to defend a piece which was from the outset an object of suspicion.¹³ Scott's period vocabulary was, however, rarely derived from oral sources. As Graham Tulloch notes, his primary object was to provide a "...linguistic setting to compliment the historical setting".¹⁴ He further claims that even "...in the poetry where, where the stylistic influence of the ballads is more noticeable, the influence of written poetry on the vocabulary seems to be far greater than that of oral poetry."¹⁵

Tulloch's explanation for this aligns itself neatly with Scott's own thesis of decay which suggests that linguistic limitations in tradition are the consequence of poorly educated audiences with a limited vocabulary but, like Scott, he fails to recognise the conceptual power which is generated in the formulaic disposition of ballad language and recognised by an educated traditional audience. Scott's linguistic settings were part of an evolving creative strategy for developing an imaginative language of romance which appeared to be rooted in the traditional past. However, when taken in the context that Scott provided through his editorial and historical commentaries, that language could be deceptive down to a single point of orthography or gloss.

His note on line one of verse VII: "North Berwick according to some reciters ", is purposefully manipulative.¹⁶ He has no evidence at this point, except Hogg's manuscript, that this ballad exists at all other than a few verses given to Laidlaw by a servant girl who knew Hogg and of both his supposed sources, the original and Hogg's uncle, Will of Phawhope. To create the impression that there are a number of distinctive oral sources for this piece suggests that the

barely visible hand of Scott has intervened in the economy of facts surrounding the source of the work. There is no evidence of any text or recitation heard by Scott which uses "Berwicke" instead of "North Berwick" but the editorial interpolation, by placing the emphasis on the second syllable through an antiquated spelling sits more comfortably both in the metre and in the historical weave of Scott's notes on the poem. The oblique incorporation of Barbour's account of the siege of Berwick in 1319 as part of an authenticating matrix for the history of "Auld Maitland" is a discrete, strategic association that would not have shamed Pinkerton, himself a master of deceptively authentic atmosphere.

The inclusion in italics of Hogg's modern additions and an acknowledgement in a footnote appears to be a conscious exhibition of scrupulousness on Scott's part but whether Hogg's intention of supplying these additional lines, which conveniently fitted the metre and rhyme of the single inconsistent stanza in the piece, was quite so scrupulous is doubtful.¹⁷

The framework that emerges here is a personalised equation of the Ossianic compact of wishful thinking and creativity modelled on that which arose between Blair and Macpherson. On the one hand we have an establishment figure hungry for material through which he could solidify a projection of his own socio-literary identity and on the other a desperately ambitious rural poet who was very willing to please and creatively geared to the demands of audience. The difference here is that there is no conclusive proof that Hogg was the original composer of the piece but he was the supplier.

The strongest circumstantial evidence for its traditional origin lies with Hogg's affirmation in a tribute to Scott that the

latter heard it delivered as an oral ballad directly from Hogg's mother.¹⁸

The evenings came; more social mirth
 Ne'er flowed around the cottage hearth:
 When Maitland's song first met your ear,
 How the furled visage up did clear,
 Beaming delight! though now a shade
 Of doubt would darken into dread
 That some unskilled presumptuous arm
 Had marred traditions mighty charm. 65

Scarce grew thy lurking dread the less
 Till she, the ancient Minstreless,
 With fervid voice and kindling eye,
 And withered arms waving on high,
 Sang forth these words in eldritch shriek, 70
 While tears stood on thy nut brown cheek-

"Na we are nane o' the lads o' France,
 Nor e'er pretend to be;
 We be three lads of fair Scotland,
 Auld Maitland's sons a' three!"

Thy fist made all the table ring,-
 "By ---, Sir, but that is the thing!" 19

These "Lines to Sir Walter Scott, Bart." propose a set of circumstances never publicly acknowledged by Scott but his silent acquiescence to Hogg's claim is worth noting. It is also notable that lines delivered almost twenty years on in 1820 to celebrate Scott's baronetcy should focus on the disputed authenticity of "Auld Maitland." The extract above is strategically placed after an anecdote concerning their joint exploration of the borders in 1801 searching for artefacts. The incident described the 'finding' of:

"A gallant helmet split in twain!"
 The truth was obvious; but in faith 50
 On you all words were waste of breath;
 You only looked demure and sly,²⁰

This episode, by comparison, bolsters the 'authority' of Scott when he pronounces on Mrs Hogg's delivery of "Auld Maitland". As usual, however, Hogg is playing both ends against the middle. There is a veiled implication that if the verse was "the thing" then the helmet may also have been "the thing" and that Scott should have paid more attention to Hogg in matters of border history and tradition. There may even be a hint of a tease to Scott whose doubts about the authenticity of the verse focussed on the intrusion of "some unskilled presumptuous arm". If the subtext is that Hogg is the genuine traditional authority, then the intrusion of a *skilled* "presumptuous arm", unrecognised by Scott is an affirmation of Hogg's traditional credentials. The use of the arm metaphor is itself an interesting feature; it clearly suggests writing. Hogg describes his technique of verse composition as oral insofar as he often, like Burns, worked the verse in his head before committing to paper - the arm metaphor may provide Hogg with an intriguing means of finessing the literal truth in his own mind. Nonetheless, this extract is still a tacit admission that Scott's 'authority', right or wrong, is the legitimate authority. That acquiescence had serious implications for Hogg and tradition.

Given that there are sixty five verses of "Auld Maitland", none of which demonstrate any consistent sign of a recognisable oral process, we must assume that Hogg's claim, with Scott's quiet complicity, is partly or wholly falsified- at best Scott may have heard a fragmentary version of the full work and that raises

questions about Mrs Hogg's source which strongly focus on Hogg himself, rather than Will of Phawhope, either as original provider of the verses to her, or as creative extrapolater from her traditional fragments. While it is possible to assume that Mrs. Hogg's background fitted her as a source of traditional ballads, the notion that she could memorise this work verbatim without the aid of any recognisable traditional technique is not consistent with any contemporary study of oral poetry nor does the 'fragment' quoted internally in Hogg's address suggest itself as part of a formulaic oral work.

The absence of conspicuous orality in the text combined with the linear narrative projection firmly suggest the presence of a literary imagination in the work but the generally un-intrusive narration and phrasing also suggests an unstudied familiarity with the traditional process- the same unstudied familiarity that permeates the ballad imitations of *The Mountain Bard*.

These imitations, as with "Auld Maitland", are remarkable for the 'traditional' fluency that mobilises the literary process but they are also remarkable for the manner in which they address the audience. Hogg's imitations are driven by a genuine sense of traditional cultural priorities under pressure from the narrative urgency of the literary process. Where tradition and to a lesser extent the transitional culture, exemplified by Ramsay and Burns, governed creativity through the ultimate authorisation or approval of the popular audience, this work was presented to Scott as a quasi-historical reconstruction of tradition, in order for him to authorise the work. Scott was placed as an intermediary between the work and the audience by Hogg, if not as the author at least as the

supplier. In Hogg, the transitional mind had recognised the claim of something other than the popular audience to act as the authoriser of tradition; the audience was placed at second hand to the material and the literary middle man, the educated reader, took his percentage of the cultural credit. By the time Hogg realised this, Scott had already secured that cultural authority on his own behalf and discretely distanced himself from Hogg in a way that guaranteed that position within the bounds of the literary establishment.

"Auld Maitland" with all its attendant obscurities only supports this claim circumstantially. The real importance of that work lies in Hogg's role as supplier of 'tradition' to Scott. Where we find stronger and more compelling evidence for a power shift in the transitional culture is in the overall address of *The Mountain Bard* where Hogg's almost obsessional desire to cultivate a relationship with Scott through his Border connections becomes apparent in the reduction of audience and authenticity to a single point of focus: "Sir Walter Scott, Esq, Sheriff of Ettrick Forest, and Minstrel of the Scottish Borders".²¹

The dedication of this collection of ballad imitations initiates the formalisation of a process that was implicit in Hogg's role as amanuensis to Scott and is now brought to bear on his own literary endeavours. As the only significant figure in Hogg's literary sphere, Scott was fictionalized as both audience and authoriser in order to allow Hogg to negotiate with the literary world on something like his own terms.

There are three titles in the dedication; the first two are significant in terms of the social and cultural relationships they help define, the third is, however, crucial to our understanding of

Hogg's imaginative use of Scott as 'Minstrel of the Scottish Borders'. This title encapsulates both the traditional and historical elements from which Hogg is trying to distill his relationship to Scott. One interpretation echoes his introductory letter to Scott where he attempts to ground the relationship through an incremental sense of reduction - he cannot address Scott as a social equal except through the 'brotherhood' of border minstrelsy. This, in turn, leads us to the core of that relationship, Scott's *Minstrelsy*, and to the notion that Hogg is reading Scott through the latter's own romantic projection of himself reflected in the flickering light of text and commentary that is played against the synthetic screen of history in that work.

Hogg attempts to negotiate that virtual history through the content and the context of *The Mountain Bard* where he utilises the annotated form of the *Minstrelsy* to support his attempts to integrate his own traditional past into Scott's projections. The collection is shot through with Borders lore, particularly concerned with the Scott family, but improvising a ballad on the 'authenticated fact' of "The Fray of Elibank" : the "terrible hurry, Whan Wattie o'Harden was catched wi' the kye," Hogg works Scott's Borders ancestry into his own family 'traditions':²²

Young Harden was bauld as the Persian lion,
And langed his skill and his courage to try;
Stout Willie o' Faldshope ae night he did cry on,
Frae danger or peril wha never wad fly.²³

The second couplet here is glossed in Hogg's "Notes" to the poem: "This man's mame was William Hogg, better known by the epithet of the *Wild Boar of Fauldshope*." This is part of a layered

integration of personal history that works through the poem, the notes and beyond in an attempt to finesse the contemporary relationship. It is worth reminding ourselves here that the traditional source for "Auld Maitland" was Will of Phawhope, Hogg's uncle, and it is the tradition, real or manufactured, which coalesces around that name that allows Hogg to access Scott through the virtual matrix of border history:

The Hogg's and the Bryden's have brought him to dare you,
For the Wild Boar of Fauldshop he strides in the van.²⁴

The gloss on this couplet deepens to personalise the equation of traditional history and private relations:

The author's progenitors possessed the lands of Fauldshop, under the Scott's of Harden for ages; until the extravagancy of John Scott occassioned the family to part with them.²⁵

Here, the feudal relationship is managed in such a way as to implicate the Scott family in the misfortunes of the Hoggs and if Scott needed any further reminder of his feudal 'responsibiity' it is supplied conveniently in another unsourced 'traditional' ballad in the notes. This builds on the manipulative gloss to remind Scott and the reader of the legendary prowess of the "Boar of Fauldshop"; and, as Hogg himself invites us, we should indeed, "Observe how elegantly it flows on."

If ye reave the Hogg's of Fauldshop,
Ye herry Harden's gear;
But the poor Hogg's of Fauldshop
Have had a stormy year.²⁶

This is elegance of a different order that reaches out from the poem to grab Scott by the scruff of his historical imagination and invites him to solidify his own self-image. Whether or not he

succeeded is a different matter. Hogg's anecdote concerning a mock feudal banquet, organised by Scott in honour of the Duke of Buccleuch, throws an ambiguous light on the effectiveness of Hogg's ploy. Hogg describes his own role which centred on a breach of feudal manners when he placed himself at the top table with the Duke and his retinue. From Hogg's perspective, Scott 'rescues' the situation with a respectful request for Hogg's company at his own table leavened by the mock warning, "And moreover":

If ye reave the Hoggs o' Fauldshope,
Ye herry Harden's gear 27

On the face of things this tale might suggest that Scott had adopted, to some degree, the protective feudal mantle suggested by Hogg, but there is a subtext here that suggests Scott simply utilised the role as a means of skilfully defusing a breach of etiquette on a public occasion by ironising the feudal implications of the verse in order to extract Hogg from the situation without further embarrassment to himself. It is useful to remember that the original poem was a somewhat ironic take on romanticism in as much as the action and events highlight the pragmatism of the hero, in this case a Scott engaged by his impending mortality to "Muckle Mou'd Meg". Scott's use of Hogg's 'traditional' supplement on this occasion, and in this manner, tends to suggest that the intended emotional blackmail was not lost on Scott who was displaying for Hogg and the assembled company the limited utility of Hogg's feudal claim.

Another possibility is that the tale was apocryphal and recounted by Hogg, when Scott was no longer alive to correct him, in order to give the impression that Scott valued their relationship on

Hogg's terms. Both scenarios suggest that it is Hogg who is playing with Scott's projections as much as Scott himself. If Hogg is attempting to manipulate Scott's self-image here, he is relating himself purposefully to that ghost when he addresses the mystery correspondent of the "Memoirs of the Life of James Hogg" which preface *The Mountain Bard*.

The friend to whom Mr. Hogg made the following communication had some hesitation in committing it to the public. On the one hand he was sensible, not only that the incidents are often trivial, but they are narrated in a style more suitable to their importance to the Author himself, than to their own nature and consequence.²⁸

If this introduction is not by Scott then it is by someone who possesses more than a passing acquaintance with his style of commentary. This raises either the possibility of Hogg, who was later to prove himself a parodist of some sophistication, as the creator of his own correspondent or of Scott as the discrete correspondent and possibly editor of this memoir.²⁹ The case for the former is weakened by the measured quality of the short introduction to Hogg's epistolary biography which is circumspect to the point of caution. Forewarned, the reader is invited to appreciate the efforts of "...a strong mind and vigorous imagination, to develop themselves..." in the face of financial and cultural hardship, to remind themselves "...that it is only in attaining the last and most recondite recess of human science, that we discover how little we really know..." , to afford themselves amusement at finding "...some real shepherds actually contending for a poetical prize, and to remark some other peculiarities in their habits and manners." In short, the reader is asked to view the memoir as an anthropological

case study, a context that glows in the ambience of enlightenment mythology and defines the poetry that follows : "Above all, these memoirs ascertain the authenticity of the publication, and are therefore entitled to be prefixed to it."³⁰

It seems unlikely, though not impossible, that Hogg would wish to promote his poetry in this context but it is the tenor of the extract as much as the ideas it contains that suggest Scott as the unacknowledged author. The ideas, however are not to be dismissed. They represent either Scott, or his virtual image, as the editing presence in Hogg's relationship to a literary audience:

In 1802, "The Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border" came into my hands; and, though I was even astonished to find such exact copies of many old songs, which I had heard sung by people who never could read a song, but got them handed down by tradition - and likewise at the conformity of the notes to the traditions and superstitions, which are, even to this day, far from being eradicated from the minds of the people amongst our mountains - yet, I confess, I was not satisfied with many of the imitations of the ancients. I immediately chose a number of traditional facts, and set about imitating the manner of the ancients myself. These ballads you have seen; and as they are the first things which you have approved, I have some thoughts of intruding myself once more on the public. ³¹

This extract, from the 1821 edition of *The Mountain Bard* appears to strengthen the case for identifying Scott as Hogg's real, or imagined, correspondent. It is difficult to imagine, in the light of the dedication and their personal history surrounding the *Minstrelsy*, these remarks being addressed to anyone other than Scott. That impression is not disrupted by the assertion of dissatisfaction with Scott's own ballad imitations. A glance backward to Hogg's initial correspondence with Scott and the address of the dedication sets this apparent act of defiance within Hogg's native parameters of cultural authority. He is on firm ground here in his assertion of critical judgement but the final sentence and

the consistent use of standard English reveals his dependency on Scott's approval when the products of his own creative negotiations with tradition are set before the scrutiny of a contemporary literary audience.³²

The absence of that final sentence in the original edition of 1807, or its presence in the 1821 version, suggests two credible options. Either Scott was the original correspondent but wished to keep that relationship discrete to the point of anonymity by editing out references that connected him as Hogg's correspondent in the main body of the memoir, or Hogg inserted the lines for the revised and extended memoir of 1821 in order to trade more blatantly on the relationship at that time. These are not mutually exclusive given that we have two separate editions, one of which has an extended memoir.

The above is the substance of three letters, written at the same date; since which time I have experienced a very unexpected reverse of fortune.³³

This extract appears directly in place of the missing sentence above in the 1807 and after that sentence in a modified form in the 1821 edition:

The above is the substance of three letters, written in the same year, and alluding mostly to Poetical trifles in my friend's hands. Since that time I have experienced a very unexpected reverse of fortune.³⁴

Once more, the absence, or presence, of text which refers directly to the correspondent directs us to those possibilities but, significantly, they are consistent in advertising the original 1807 memoir, which closes at this point, as an edited text. The question is , who is doing the editing and to what purpose?

The circumstantial evidence points to Hogg as the editor of the later text; he is after all priming the memoir for extension and it would seem only natural to revise the original material at the same time. If he was revising that material, himself, he may well have inserted those lines to hint more strongly at Scott as his correspondent but, he might just as well have plucked those lines, as edited out by Scott, from the original letters that formed the memoir.³⁵ This supports the notion of Scott as the editor of the earlier text where the circumspection regarding the content of the memoirs suggests that the author of the introduction would be anxious to distance himself from any potential embarrassment that might ensue from its publication - a good reason for a man of growing literary reputation to cover his tracks by editing out his presence from the text.

The fallout of all this layered discretion creates a corrosive chemistry which works its way into every nook and cranny of their personal and cultural relations. There is a fundamental disorder here which coalesces around Hogg's vacillation between the desire for literary patronage and his instinctive assertion of rights on his own cultural domain offset by Scott's hunger to associate with the spirit of tradition, which he recognises in Hogg, played against his equally instinctive demand for a hierarchical response which allows him to control that spirit and guide it toward the identifying rationale of his own literary programme.

The central negotiation in this distorted relationship centres on the discrete critical presence of Scott. If he had no direct hand in the memoirs above, then it seems more than reasonable to conclude that Hogg was fictionalising his presence to promote his own

literary ends. If he was involved, then, as an editorial presence, he is discrete to the point of anonymity.

It is easy to scent the frustration in Hogg at Scott's reluctance to advertise himself as a patron, a frustration that did not mellow with the passing of time:

On the whole I have never been any thing advantaged by Sir Walter's friendship save by the honour and undeviating steadiness of it which I certainly set a high value on. He never would review a work of mine. Never bring me forward by the least remark in any periodical whatsoever. He was too much of an aristocrat for that. He once promised to review a work of mine I think *Queen Hynde* but he never did it although he had expressed his warmest approbation of it before several friends. I asked him a good while afterwards why he had not kept his word. "Why the truth is Hogg" said he "that I began the thing and took a number of notes marking quotations but I found that in reviewing it I would have been thought to have been reviewing myself. I found that I must have begun with *THE WAKE* or perhaps *THE MOUNTAIN BARD* and summed up; and upon the whole I felt that we were so much of the same school that if I had given as favourable a review as I intended to have done that it would have been viewed in the light of having applauded my own works."³⁶

This account of a 'conversation' published after Scott's death in Hogg's controversial *Anecdotes of Sir Walter Scott* may or may not have taken place as reported by Hogg, nonetheless, it contains the dynamic of Hogg's frustration with Scott's discretion. The idea that Hogg never benefited from his relationship with Scott is a patent nonsense.³⁷ What is eating Hogg is that he cannot allude directly to any published support for his own works and his resentment spills over in his reference to Scott the "aristocrat", a role which he has just ridiculed in the preceding pages of this entertaining and often 'catty' memorial.³⁸ Hogg's overcooked nonchalance in remarking on Scott's promise to review his work - he has to 'think' before he can remember it was "*Queen Hynde*" - is undiluted posturing which satisfies his more than casual intention

of portraying Scott as a breaker of promises and puffing the work itself; trading on the reported "approbation" of Scott which is attested to by "several friends", who remain un-named.

The meat of the anecdote, however, is Scott's alleged assertion that for him to have reviewed the piece he would have been reviewing himself on account of he and Hogg being "so much of the same school". This appears less like a real conversation than Hogg attempting to rationalise Scott's discretion into a position that he could attack on his own terms:

I cannot say that these were Sir Walter's very words but they were precisely to that purport. But I, like other dissapointed men not being quite satisfied replied in these very words which I can vouch for, "Dear Mr. Scott ye could never think that I was in the chivalry school like you. I'm the king o' the mountain and fairy school a far higher ane nor yours.³⁹

The reduction to a familiar linguistic and cultural ground, a pattern again traceable to Hogg's original communication with Scott, allows Hogg to assert his own view that, in the matter of tradition, he was Scott's superior. The kernel of truth contained in that assertion lay dormant in the frozen ground of Hogg's early dependency on Scott's literary patronage and while Hogg is still willing here to trade on Scott's reputation he is now anxious to set the world straight on the matter.

Ahead of his time, as usual, Hogg is deconstructing Scott the 'Border Minstrel' and dedicatee of *The Mountain Bard*, but it is substantially his own fiction that he is deconstructing. Scott's *Minstrelsy* suggests himself as the contemporary embodiment of Macpherson's virtual bard but it was Hogg who took that projection and raised a Borders monument to Scott when he produced *The Mountain*

Bard and invested Scott's projection with the assumed authority of the popular audience. Scott's discretion, however, acted as proof against the truth of Hogg's native superiority so when Hogg tries to pull the rug from under Scott he discovers that he is displacing a spectre of his own generation and is reduced to the almost ridiculous stance of a man who has to publicly "vouch" for the exactness of own words while Scott's vapourise in his recollection.⁴⁰

Scott's public reticence in the matter of Hogg and his works stands guarantor for his own projected bardship by dissociation from the social and literary excesses of 'the Boar', a living example of traditional 'minstrel' in decline as set out in *The Minstrelsy*.

Scott's relationship to Hogg parallels his relations with tradition insofar as he demonstrates a genuine feeling towards his subject governed by a firm sense of social and cultural discrimination. It is, in short, an editorial stance.

That Scott took real delight in Hogg's company is demonstrated by Hogg's regular attendance as a guest at Abbotsford, but many of the anecdotes regarding Hogg suggest that his behaviour was to some extent stage-managed by his host although it is fair to say that his natural eccentricity demanded little encouragement.⁴¹ Scott's social editing of Hogg was as discreet as his literary presence. In his letter to Hogg of January 3rd., 1821 Scott invites him to attend a gathering of the friends of Pitt with the intention that he should perform his party piece, "Donald Macdonald". The invitation is sealed with a note of caution: "Do come if possible and tune your pipes to a clever stave for the occasion."⁴² This pre-emptive strike against the possibility of discord contains a subtle blend of

flattery and warning that suggests an experienced social manager at work setting parameters of behaviour for Hogg's attendance and performance.

That Hogg was aware of this editorial presence, and resented it, is suggested by his remarks following his attempt to question Scott on an alleged propensity to dwell on his aristocratic background:

I once at his house in Castle Street ventured in a large evening party to attempt a quizz upon him for this propensity but he cut me short with a most laughable anecdote. I am not sure that I always got justice from him in this respect. There was no man ever testified more admiration or astonishment at some parts of my productions than he did. But this was always mixed with direct blame of other parts of my prose works but never of my poetry no not in one instance that I can remember of. But with regard to my speeches before other people of high rank he seemed always dubious as if afraid of what was next to come out; and he very often cut me short with a droll anecdote...⁴³

Scott's droll anecdotes are exposed here as a means of editing Hogg in public but the latter's conflation of his social and literary critique in this passage suggests a parallel dynamic. Hogg may have been attempting to puff the integrity of his poetry here by excluding it from Scott's overall critical response but it is clear that in the early stages of their relationship Scott, with Hogg's reluctant blessing, exercised a considerable editorial influence on his poetry. Writing to Scott during the final preparations for *The Mountain Bard*, in November 1806, he states:

I wish you by all means to have as much of your own will as possible, and as I am sensible that I have a failing in being averse to all alterations and condemnations I charge you that when you are truly sensible of a piece or verse being defective that you will maintain your integrity and insist upon its expulsion or amendment.⁴⁴

This letter not only demonstrates Scott's editorial imprint on that work but also provides us with a notion of the extent to which

Hogg was investing critical authority in Scott. The critical equation here is worked out on the basis of compensating for Hogg's stated aversion to criticism and maintaining Scott's integrity. Hogg is openly sacrificing the integrity of his own production in order to secure the authority of Scott as audience - in critical terms, a feudal response. This work was dedicated to Scott and the degree to which Hogg extends his editorial role reveals the depth of his anxiety to please that audience even if it is at the expense of the traditional process that powered his ballad imitations.

Douglas Gifford draws our attention to a developing crisis of confidence in Hogg related to Scott's critical stance on the 'random' elements in his prose work. Hogg acquiesces to that criticism with the excuse that it arises from an absence of sensibility when he reaches beyond traditional bounds.⁴⁵ If, as Gifford maintains, the root of this crisis highlights the importance of tradition in Hogg's creative imagination then it is possible to read Hogg's acquiescence in terms of his abandonment of the traditional audience as the critical measure of that creativity. As Elaine Petrie points out in her introduction to Hogg's *Scottish Pastorals*, Hogg's soaring confidence stems from a thorough knowledge of the community he describes in his collection, the community that formed the *first audience* for his work. (my italics)⁴⁶

He is not losing confidence in his ability to create from a traditional base but he is losing confidence in his ability to accomodate the critical premises of the substitute audience - the educated reader, Scott. This is exacerbated when the critical audience extends to accomodate the full spectrum of Edinburgh

literary establishment. The faultline in his relations with Scott erupts into molten caricature and the vicious parody of Wilson's "Noctes Ambrosianae", published by Blackwood, which ultimately harden into a public image for Hogg that is sourced originally to those editorial drolleries of his literary mentor.

Nevertheless, Scott accomodates their relationship within a matrix of authenticating procedures that reinforced and developed his own authority as a modern bard. Scott's discretion was a controlling editorial presence in Hogg's life which, although it can be generally explained away as a benevolent forbearance toward a social and literary inferior, was rooted in the control of the development of traditional culture and may have masked murkier sentiments that Hogg perceived as jealousy. Whether he has a case or not, the shadow that Scott's 'editorial presence' cast over Hogg's career extended into almost every area of his public and private life. Describing Scott's intercession on his behalf, following an aborted plan to install him as his own shepherd, Hogg remarks:

The plan misgave. Mr. Boyd overbid him and became the purchaser on which Sir Walter was so vexed on my account I having kept myself out of a place depending upon his that he actually engaged me to Lord Porchester as his chief shepherd to have a riding horse, house and small farm free of rent and £20= over and above, but with the strict proviso that "I was to put my poetical talent under lock and key forever." I copy the very words. Of course, I spurned at the idea and refused to implement the bargain.⁴⁷

Hogg's paranoia notwithstanding, this requires more explanation than benevolent patronage can provide. It is generally held that Scott had Hogg's best interests at heart and there is plenty of evidence of Scott's discrete intervention to support this notion but Scott's sympathy toward Hogg's personal misfortunes was always

tempered by his own constitutional outlook.

James Hogg writes that he is to lose his farm, on which he laid out, or rather threw away the profit of all his publications...But then I am a bad comforter in the case of inevitable calamity; and feeling proudly able to endure in my own case, I cannot sympathise with those whose nerves are of a feebler texture.⁴⁸

Although Scott's remarks are not addressed solely to Hogg, he is very definitely included in them; as well as revealing Scott's frustration with regard to Hogg's financial acumen, they are notable for his awareness of letters as a source of Hogg's capital. This seems to weigh somewhat against the notion that Scott had wished Hogg to retire from letters simply to secure his financial position and adds to the impression that Scott's underlying preference was to discretely edit Hogg out of literary contention - he did not want him to write poetry and he did not want him to be an independent farmer. Hogg was expected to know his station as a tied shepherd. This represents a significant shift in attitude from 1806 when Scott wrote to Lady Charlotte Campbell regarding Hogg's ballad imitations:

Some of them, if I (myself a ballad monger) may be permitted to judge, have a very uncommon share of poetical merit; and the author of these beautiful pieces...is now actually a hired servant.⁴⁹

If this was a source of concern in 1806 why was it a desirable option by 1827? Perhaps Scott's experience of Hogg's affairs had tempered his enthusiasm, or perhaps, in the maelstrom of his own personal misfortunes, Hogg's "poetical merit" had slipped his mind. The latter seems unlikely. On May 11th. 1827, Scott wrote in his journal : 'Hogg called this morning to converse about trying to get him on the pecuniary list of the Royal Literary Society. Certainly

he deserves it, if genius and necessity could do so.'⁵⁰ This appears to confirm that Scott fully recognised both Hogg's ability and his circumstances and there can be little doubt of his sincerity when he adds, despite his own natural distrust of such societies, '...Yet I wish sincerely to help poor Hogg, and have written to Lockhart about it.'⁵¹ This makes Scott's desire to force Hogg into tied husbandry all the more puzzling but we gain a strong impression of a determination to help Hogg on Scott's own terms, or not at all. In his final entry, regarding Hogg, on December 27th of that year, Scott considers Hogg's request to intercede with the Duke of Buccleuch over his failing farm. Although he expresses his hope that the estate will be kind to Hogg, he reiterates that the farm was taken against his advice and if things did not go Hogg's way then '*cela ne tiendra pas a moi*'. The absolving aphorism carries a note of finality that emphasises Scott's ultimate sense of detachment from the harrying of 'Harden's gear'. Scott was willing to carry the fiction that cemented their relationship so far as it helped authenticate his own projection as Border minstrel, and no further. If Hogg was unwilling to play the feudal role and recognise the advice of his betters then Scott was placing equally firm limits to *noblesse oblige*.

Scott may or may not have been disengenuous when he claimed that his reticence to review Hogg's work arose from their being "...so much of the same school" but it is difficult to fault Hogg when he commits his grievance to poetry in the "Conclusion" of *The Queen's Wake*:⁵²

But when, to native feelings true,
 I struck upon a chord was new,
 When by myself I 'gan to play,
 He tried to wile my harp away,
 Just when her notes began with skill,
 To sound beneath the southern hill,
 And twine around my bosom's core,
 How could we part for evermore!
 '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!⁵³

The final two lines provide a devastating and unanswerable critique of "Walter the Abott" and his attempt to interfere with Hogg's poetic vocation while the unusually measured claims and observations that precede them enhance their impact.

This verse is the culmination of a poetic history of their relationship from Hogg's perspective and even in the light of supplementary information it is one that rings more or less true and credits Scott with inspiring Hogg to look to his native models for inspiration when "...he told me where the relic lay".⁵⁴ It also rings true in its account of Scott's circumspection, "...the curious eye" he cast over Hogg's original works. It also clearly marks this episode as a turning point in their relationship and what follows, from Hogg's point of view, the demise of Scott the "Forest Minstrel"

But, to the hand that framed her true,
 Only by force one strain she threw.
 That harp he never more shall see,
 Unless 'mong Scotland's hills with me.⁵⁵

Hogg is clearly distinguishing here between Scott's later literary works and the traditionally inspired poetry which grew out

of his ballad collecting. This is also a public assertion of his superiority; if they were of the 'same school', Hogg is the master of the traditional muse and he is conveying this clearly to Scott and anyone else who cares to read it but it is already too late to substantiate his claim with the literary establishment. Whatever the circumstances of his private relationship with Hogg, Scott's public detachment marginalised him as a curiosity and, so far as the literary establishment was concerned, recognised Scott as the contemporary authority on tradition.

"The Queen's Wake" as a whole can be read as an attempt to wrest that authority back from Scott. It is a multi-faceted tour of the Scottish poetic imagination which is spectacularly flawed but affords us an occasional glimpse of the inherent possibilities of an un-authorised native literature rooted in tradition and engaged to a burgeoning romantic sensibility:

"Quare haif ye been, ye ill womyne,
 These three lang nightis fra hame?
 Quhat garris the sweit drap fra yer brow,
 Like clotis of the saut sea faem?

"It fearis me muckil ye haif seen
 Quhat good man nevir knew;
 It fearis me muckil ye haif been
 Quhare the gray cock never crew.

But the spell may crack, and the brydel breck,
Then sherpe yer werde will be; 10
Ye had better sleipe in yer bed at hame,
Wi' yer deire littil bairnis and me"⁵⁶

These opening stanzas from "The Witch of Fife" find Hogg embarking on a ballad imitation of a new order. The ease and delicacy with which he integrates formulaic phrases and ballad dynamics are only slightly distorted here by the adoption of a

pseudo-middle Scots orthography. This orthography is not, as is normally the case, here to deceive the reader into believing that he is reading an authentic ballad text but rather as a conscious simulation of language that signals an ambient, rather than a deceptive, creativity. The formulaic phrases in the first verse are not so much pseudo-formulaic as supra-formulaic, locking in the intended resonance of the traditional discourse and applying it within the context of the linear narrative rather than jarring against it. Hogg is an 'insider' expanding a traditional discourse which trades on the conceptual power of formulaic language infused with the metaphorical spirit of literary imagination: "Like *clotis* of the saut sea faem" (my italics). This is remarkable for the creative impetus it applies to the "saut sea" formula through the supplementary poetic value it acquires from the literary enjambement. This conceptual presence contains the sense of adjustment when Hogg switches to the pseudo-formulaic "It fears me muckil..." of the second stanza which he deploys to simulate the incremental dynamic of tradition as a counterpoint to the psychological tension in the narrative characterisation; a literary dance to a traditional beat. In the third stanza this tension bursts in the imaginative reaction of cause and effect which fuses that psychology to a moral tag that becomes part of a running refrain and enhances the overall conceptual coherence of the traditional elements in the poem while making a significant contribution to the narrative outcome - when it is abandoned it becomes notable by its absence and re-orientates both the narrative and its context by highlighting the empowering effects of the supernatural on women in traditional culture, especially when a man benefits from their

intervention.

The overall effect, which sets the tone for the rest of the poem, is of a lucid fluidity which filters the direct narrative impulse of the literary mind through the resonant conceptual authority of the traditional ballad discourse without serious collateral damage to either form. Hogg's 'imaginative unit', superstition, supplies the current for this supercharged transitional form, but as this short extract makes clear it is about superstition engaged to imagination in a controlled synthesis of traditional and literary values. Applied to *The Queen's Wake* as a whole this reduces the collection to its essence in the vertiginous compression of the exceptional *Kilmeny* where the traditional and literary voices that haunt the collection as a whole are tuned to a harmonising reed in Hogg's synthetic imagination.

Kilmeny, Kilmeny, where have you been?	25
Lang hae we sought baith holt and den;	
By linn, by ford and green-wood tree,	
Yet you are halesome and fair to see.	
Where gat you that joup o' the lilly scheen?	
That bonny snood of the birk sae green?	30
And these roses the fairest that ever were seen?	
Kilmeny, Kilmeny where have you been? ⁵⁷	

This passage sets the poem in a traditional context but not in as traditional a way as might be supposed from the textual surface. The communal voice which conducts the interrogation, simultaneously demarcates, through the nature of those questions, the supernatural boundaries of the tale and creates the circumstances of its telling. As with Burns in *Tam O'Shanter*, Hogg is recreating the traditional process within the tale. This is not traditional, but so far it is about tradition. *Kilmeny's* response, however, lays the traditional

paradigm against the literary outlines of a Scottish literary imagination : The stillness of her eye, like that which "...lay on the emerant lea" reflects traditional experience through the aureate language of the makars projected against the romantic "...mist that sleeps on a waveless sea" and illuminates a stylistic and thematic fusion of oral and literary process:⁵⁸

For Kilmeny had been she knew not where,
 And Kilmeny had seen what she could not declare;
 Kilmeny had been where the cock never crew, 40
 Where the rain never fell and the wind never blew,
 But it seemed how the harp of the sky had wrung,
 And the airs of heaven played round her tongue,
 When she spake of the lovely forms she had seen,
 And a land where sin had never been; 45
 A land of love and a land of light,
 Withouten sun or moon or night:
 Where the river swa'd a living stream,
 And the light a pure celestial beam:
 The land of vision it would seem, 50
 A still, an everlasting dream.⁵⁹

Kilmeny never does "declare" what she has seen directly. What she has seen and done is filtered through the impersonal narrative voice whose own language "When she spake..." is tinged with the accents of the translated bible and the makar. This is the voice of a telling tradition but here, it is also the vehicle of a literary vision which merges in the couplet that begins on line forty. We draw the supernatural association from that first line, an orally driven familiar from "The Witch of Fife", and we see Hogg fuse that association with the overt romanticism that follows through a trope which addresses Kilmeny's stillness. This is literary in its conception but is shaped like tradition to accomodate an harmonic shift between the supernatural and the visionary. The traditional dynamic continues to drive the romantic vision as the narrator

describes the land that she has seen and again we can look to the "Witch of Fife" as a model for the way in which this dynamic leads to a reaction that fuses the particulars of tradition in the Blakean void of the celestial vision.

This traditional impulse, which ebbs and flows throughout the poem, creeps across the visionary tideline and spills an encrypted riddle into that literary space:

In yon green wood there is a walk ,
 And in that walk there is a wene,
 And in that wene there is a maike,
 That neither has flesh, blood nor bane; 55
 And in yon green-wood he walks his lane.⁶⁰

This incantatory spell, expounded by the the narrator in traditional guise, answers the supernatural's question, "What spirit has brought this mortal here?".⁶¹ Thomas the Rhymer is the ghost that haunts "Kilmeny". Like him the heroine falls into a seven year sleep and returns from the supernatural realm with the gift of prophecy, urged by the supernaturals to report back to earth: "Of the times that are now, and the times that shall be".⁶²

She is led through the void "...in the light of a sunless day:"⁶³ beyond a visionary plane to a mountain where she is urged to observe the conduct of supernatural spirits "...in the land of thought".⁶⁴

She looked, and she saw nor sun nor skies, 171
 But a crystal dome of a thousand dies.
 She looked and she saw nae land aright,
 but an endless whirl of glory and light. ⁶⁵

The tide of tradition spews ballad increments into the void to substantiate an allegorical vision of politics and prophecy,

stylistically tuned to Ramsay's *The Vision* that resolves around the limitations of the singer to translate Kilmeny's visions, "So far surpassing nature's law," into song.⁶⁶

Her return to earth after seven years, prompted by begging to see once more her friends and country, breaks the spell (no mortal speaks in the supernatural realm) and Hogg guides the poem back to earth in a traditional context as she wakes, "All happed with flowers in the green-wood wene".⁶⁷ At this point, however, Hogg is obliged to find a different mode of expression for both Kilmeny and "Kilmeny" because she is irrevocably changed by her experience and the traditional context demands a pause before, like Thomas the Rhymer, she returns to "the land of thought" forever. He finds a voice for Kilmeny in the devotional ecstasy of her songs, which bring the world into harmony and he pitches the narrator's voice at his own subliminal limits in the traditionally confluent tones of the literary makar:

The buzzard came with the throstle-cock;	310
The corby left her houf in the rock;	
The blackbird alang wi' the eagle flew;	
The wolf and the kid their raike began,	
And the tod , and the lamb and the leveret ran;	315
The hawk and the hen atour them hung,	
And the merle and the mavis forhooyed their young;	
And all in a peaceful ring were hurled:	
It was like an eve in a sinless world. ⁶⁸	

Where Burns turns to English modes to express the sublime in *Tam O' Shanter*, Hogg looks to traditional literary models. This medieval listing technique linguistically clipped to a common rhetorical note normalises the earthly poetic language at the same time as setting a mesmeric tempo which blends the consciousness back

into the oral undertow which conducts tradition through the poem. This is brought back into play as Kilmeny, like Thomas the Rhymer, once more abandons her earthly home for the "land of thought".

Hogg has constructed a literary work that is consistent with tradition, trades on its conceptual coherence and utilises its underlying dynamic as a catalyst for romantic vision of a high order. The contrast with Scott's categorical approach is remarkable and demands that we pay our respects to a poet whose roots in tradition allowed him to blend oral process into a modern romantic literary imagination and produce something that was coherent in both those terms. He did this through his disposal of the supernatural as a common denominator for both oral and literary psychologies. He does not raise one set above the other but allows the sense of the poem to coalesce in the tension of their own distinctive abstractions - the traditional paranormal and the literary vision. This may be as close as we come to a genuine native romanticism for Scotland. This is not to claim that the work is flawless but to highlight that there was an alternative current of romanticism available to Scottish culture that ran through the literary dreams of Ramsay and Burns and was to an extent realised in this work. That current was diverted by a cultural authority which was determined to squeeze tradition out of cultural contention by defining authenticity in its own mythological terms. Hogg's relationship to Scott highlights the sociology of those myths and the former's initial acknowledgement of that authority which led him to displace the role of audience in tradition is the root of his own marginalisation.

Douglas Gifford remarks of Hogg's effective retirement from

poetry after 1817:

...it was a logical step in his development as a writer that he should do so. The man reared on the concrete imagery, direct style, and storytelling form of the Ballads was bound to find himself out of tune with the poetic conventions of literary society.⁶⁹

On the face of things there is not a great deal to argue with here except to contextualise that logic within the discrete literary politics which led to that discord. The early pastorals convey a real sense of a traditional mindset engaged through its own abstractions toward a literary process, imbued with the spirit of Ramsay and Burns and their own negotiations with the traditional - literary complex. This hinted at the possibility of a cultural identity solidifying from a genuinely inclusive and psychologically contingent romantic discourse realised to a considerable extent in parts of *The Queen's Wake*. That possibility appears to have been distorted by Hogg's desperation to attach himself to Scott's literary coat tails through which he helped substantiate the latter's own projection of himself as a modern bard. Scott's public detachment from Hogg's literary endeavours ensured that the transitional voice was stifled by an absence of legitimacy which occurred when Hogg, in the role of cultural amanuensis, accepted Scott's own fiction of himself and imbued it with the critical authority that traditionally resided in the popular audience.

Hogg's role, as a native traditional voice, was publically edited by Scott who discretely re-drew him as as a contemporary model of a corrupt and fallen minstrelsy, sealing in the process his own projection as the actualisation of the virtual bard - a construct raised on a frozen tundra of tradition.

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¹ Alan Lang Strout, *Life and Letters of James Hogg*, (Texas, 1946), p. 29. As Hogg's occasional, grammatical, spelling and punctuation eccentricities may, to some extent, be considered as an element of style all quotes that follow are reproduced from source unless otherwise indicated.

² *Ibid.*, p.18

³ *Ibid.*, pp.17-19. Strout's account of the "Black House years" represent the period that Hogg spent there as Laidlaw's Shepherd, from 1794 until his meeting with Scott, as a time of artistic growth and development. Although isolated by the nature of his labour, Hogg had access to considerable literary resources, from Ramsay to Pope and Milton as well as current periodicals like the *Spectator*. It would be wrong to consider Hogg as a naive literary artist but it is inconceivable, given the nature of his subsequent verse, that tradition did not make an equal, if not greater contribution to the creative process.

⁴ James Hogg, "A Dialogue in a Country Church-Yard," *Scottish Pastorals, Poems, Songs, &c.*, Ed., Elaine Petrie, (Stirling, 1988), p.24.

⁵ James Hogg, *The Mountain Bard*, (Edinburgh, 1821), p.xv.

⁶ It is important here to distinguish Hogg, as writer, from the supernatural belief system that he is using to underlay the narrative. His anachronistic deployment of a dream sequence in the pastoral may not be incidental. The dream sequence was frequently used in medieval literature as an authorial disclaimer, of a mainly political nature, to circumvent accusations of treason or libel. It was not beyond the wit of Hogg to address a literary politics of which he was aware through his reading of literary periodicals, with analogous discretion. Hogg displayed a consistent circumspection when dealing with the supernatural and it would be misleading to make any hard and fast assumptions about his own attitude even at this formative stage of his writing.

⁷ Douglas Gifford, *James Hogg*, (Edinburgh, 1976), p.12.

⁸ Hogg's first publication, "The Mistakes of a Night" in *The Scots Magazine* of 1794 was written in the Habbie stanza popularised by Ramsay and Burns and they were both fundamental influences in his development as a writer.

⁹ Thomas Crawford, *Scott*, (Edinburgh, 1965), pp. 22-23.

¹⁰ Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, (London, 1982), p.143. Ong remarks, of an oral culture, that: "It cannot organise even shorter narratives in the studious, relentless climactic way that readers for the past 200 years have learned more and more to expect" The text that Scott received does not demonstrate any of the diffuse narrative organisation that typifies the oral process where the story coalesces around the themes and formulas from which the tale is constructed.

¹¹ Andrew Lang, *Walter Scott and the Border Minstrelsy*, (London, 1910) p.33.

¹² Scott, *Minstrelsy of The Scottish Border*, (Edinburgh, 1932), Vol I., p. 245.

¹³ *Ibid.* pp.259-275.

¹⁴ Graham Tulloch, *The Language of Walter Scott*, (London, 1980), p.16.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.61.

¹⁶ Scott, *Minstrelsy*, Vol. I, P.245.

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17 Lang, *op.cit.*, p.39. Hogg's admonition to Scott at the end of his manuscript that: "You may insert the two following lines anywhere you think it needs them, or substitute two better ..." is too casual and fortuitous to be credible. What is surprising is that Scott was not suspicious at finding himself presented with a completed jigsaw with only two missing pieces and to have one piece supplied in the same package, followed on by the second in Hogg's letter of June 30th. 1802. The transparently constructed air that surrounds the recovery of this latter piece is also difficult to ignore: *I have recovered another half verse of Old Maitlan, and have rhymed it thus-*

*Remember Peirce of the Scot
Hath cowr'd aneath thy hand;
For ilka drap o'Maitlan's blood
I'll gie thee rigs o' land*

The two last lines only are original; you will easily perceive that they occur in the very place where we suspected a want. I am surprised to hear that this song is suspected by some to be a modern forgery; this will be proved by most of the old people hereabouts having a great part of it by heart. (Ibid. p.30)

Stupidity on Scott's part can be ruled out in this case of convenience carried a beat too far, wilful credulity cannot. This is underlined by Scott's use of Hogg's remarks in the notes as evidence of authenticity which he qualifies: "To the observations of my ingenious correspondent I have nothing to add, but that, in this and a thousand other instances, they accurately coincide with my personal knowledge." (*Minstrelsy*, p.240). There is no mention here of Scott having heard the text recited by Hogg's mother.

18 *Ibid.*, p.26.

19 James Hogg, "Lines to Sir Walter Scott, Bart.," *James Hogg, Selected Poems*, ed. Douglas Mack, (Oxford, 1970), pp. 93-94.

20 *Ibid.*, p.91.

21 James Hogg, *The Mountain Bard*, (Edinburgh, 1807), Title Page.

22 James Hogg, *The Mountain Bard*, (Edinburgh, 1807), p.50. Hogg prefaces his account by admitting that he is unsure of the christian name of "Harden's son", but his decision to use Wattle, the diminutive of Walter, is not incidental here. In the 1821 edition this is corrected to a more historically accurate Willie, but it seems safe to assume the original 'mistake' was attuned to Hogg's preferred sense of intimacy, an ingredient that was perhaps not quite so vital thirteen years later when Hogg's dependency was tempered by a little success and a little resentment.

23 *Ibid.*, p.51.

24 *Ibid.*, p.53.

25 *Ibid.*, p.66. In the 1821 edition this passage is amended to delineate an actual historical period of four hundred years, according to Hogg's father.

26 *Ibid.*, p. 67.

27 James Hogg, *Anecdotes of Sir Walter Scott*, (Edinburgh, 1983) p. 24.

28 James Hogg, "Memoir of the Life of James Hogg," *The Mountain Bard*, (Edinburgh, 1807) p.1.

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- 29 Alan Lang Strout, *Op. Cit.*, p.33. Whether or not Scott was the actual author of this introduction, there can be no doubt whatever that it was Hogg's intention that he should be. In a letter to Scott of December 1803, regarding his proposal for a volume of poems that was later to become *The Mountain Bard*, Hogg asks "...if we might front the songs with a letter to you, giving an impartial account of my manner of life and education and, which if you pleased to transcribe putting He for I..." . The fact that no such transcription took place, the account being given in the first person straight after this introduction is a further suggestion that if Scott was the author of that introduction that he wished to distance himself from the 'impartiality' of that telling autobiography .
- 30 James Hogg, "Memoir of the Life of James Hogg," *The Mountain Bard* , (1807), p.i.
- 31 James Hogg, "Memoir of the Life of James Hogg," *The Mountain Bard* , (Edinburgh, 1821), p.xxv.
- 32 Strout, *Op.Cit.*, p.35. Referring to his own proposal, which Scott has ignored in their correspondence, regarding the possibility of inserting a subscription proposal in the published work, Hogg remarks , "...but I will engage in nothing without your approbation or permission." Although this remark is addressed to that specific subject it speaks more broadly to Hogg's frustration about the editorial process which is a major topic in this correspondence.
- 33 James Hogg, "Memoir of the Life of James Hogg," *The Mountain Bard* , (1807), p. xxx.
- 34 James Hogg, "Memoir of the Life of James Hogg," *The Mountain Bard* , (1821), p.xxvii.
- 35 *Loc. Cit.* Scott is the only correspondent mentioned in connection with the *Mountain Bard* in the revised memoir and Hogg specifically cites his "encouragement" in that correspondence. While he does not explicitly name Scott as the original correspondent it is difficult, in the light of the information contained in both memoirs, to imagine another candidate.
- 36 Hogg, *Anecdotes of Sir Walter Scott* , pp.29-30.
- 37 Strout. *Op.Cit.*, P.109. Scott's intercessions on Hogg's behalf are a consistent feature of their relationship and although, as we note below, Scott sometimes wearied of Hogg's enterprises, he was always prepared to act discretely in Hogg's interest. Strout quotes Scott's letter to Murray of 1817 which includes an "article on our friend Hogg". This article does not appear to have found its way into print but it does provide some balance to Hogg's partial account. We do not know from this letter whether or not Scott intended it to be published under his own name and therefore it seems fair to include it as part of a discrete matrix of support rather than evidence of Scott's public support for Hogg and his works.
- 38 James Hogg *Anecdotes of Sir Walter Scott* , p. 52. Although Hogg always covers his tracks with frequent and somewhat overstated praise of Scott's temperament and stature, he rarely misses an opportunity to advance himself at Scott's expense or to exorcise long held resentments. This can be both amusing and revealing as in his veiled criticism of Scott - " His fame became so firmly established that he grew quite careless about the previous opinion of his literary friends." There was, however, a darker side to Hogg's gossip tendencies which caused some controversy when it became known to Scott's executors that Hogg intended to publish some tittle-tattle about Mrs. Scott that portrayed her as the illegitimate daughter of a nobleman and as an opium user. (pp.32-33.)
- 39 *Ibid.*, p.30. Douglas Mack notes of this anecdote that: "Hogg originally wrote 'I'm in', but deleted 'in' and added 'the king o' ". This purposeful correction is a testament to Hogg's creativity in the face of reporting events and conversations.

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40 *LOC.CIT.* See previous note.

41 Strout, *Op.Cit.*, pp.40-43. Scott's handling of the episode between Hogg and Ormiston at an Abbotsford dinner illustrates both the eccentricity of Hogg, fueled by alcohol, and Scott's ability to censor the "...fool-in-ham " while simultaneously playing him for his company's amusement.

42 Walter Scott, *Letters of Sir Walter Scott*, ed. Sir Herbert Grierson, (London, 1937), p. 446.

43 Hogg, *Anecdotes of Sir Walter Scott*, p.27.

44 Strout, *Op.Cit.* , p.34.

45 Gifford, *Op.Cit.*, p.18.

46 Hogg, *Scottish Pastorals*, ed. Elaine Petrie, (Stirling, 1988), p. xv.

47 Hogg, *Anecdotes of Sir Walter Scott*, p.29.

48 Sir Walter Scott, *The Journal of Sir Walter Scott*, (Edinburgh,1950), Entry for February 3rd., 1827, pp. 314-315.

49 Strout, *Op.Cit.*, p.56.

50 Walter Scott, *Journal*, p.346.

51 *LOC.CIT.*

52 Hogg, *Anecdotes of Sir Walter Scott* , p.29. Hogg draws our attention to this section of the poem in order to further his grievance.

53 James Hogg, *The Queen's Wake*, ed. Douglas Mack, (Oxford, 1970) p.149.

54 *LOC.CIT.* ,It should be remembered that Hogg was actually integrating tradition in his literary process prior to his introduction to Scott.

55 *Ibid.*

56 James Hogg, "The Witch of Fife," *The Queen's Wake*, pp. 18-19

57 James Hogg, *Ibid.*, p.33.

58 *LOC.CIT.*

59 *Ibid.*, p.34.

60 *LOC.CIT.*

61 *Ibid.*

62 *Ibid.*, p.36.

63 *LOC. CIT.*

64 *Ibid.*, p.37.

65 *Ibid.*, p.38.

66 *Ibid.*, p.40.

67 *Ibid.*, p.41.

68 *Ibid.*, p. 42

69 Gifford, *Op. Cit.*, p.32.

CONCLUSION

The accents of tradition in eighteenth century Scottish literature rise up through the kinds of structures and commonplaces that we find, originally, in the ballad text. Confronted by a ballad text, we are obliged to remind ourselves that for a modern literary culture its meaning is validated as much by its being a text as a sung ballad, but it has not always been so. The implications of that text's operation within a traditional and, subsequently, transitional, complex imposes conditions upon what we can assume about its literary meaning.

The underlying premise of this thesis is that those conditions depend on our understanding of an oral aesthetic that coalesces in the consciousness which governs the relationship between audience and performer in non-literate societies. The spirit of this relationship, as it emanates from the text, has been traced here in the disposition of orally derived formulas, or commonplaces, within that text. By characterising those oral residues as pockmarks of authenticity we have sought access to a conceptual framework of meaning for traditional texts through which we can respect that aesthetic in a literary sense through the contextual abstractions that its operations imply.

Gauging the initial effects of literary intrusion on that framework carried the study toward an assessment of the competing aesthetic priorities in a transitional culture, characterised by the editorial procedures which, with the advent of print technology, ushered traditional texts into the new literary consciousness. We have placed the study of these

competing elements within a social and historical framework that credits their aesthetic origins by identifying on the one hand a stream of creativity arising from the commercial demands of the new popular audience for familiar materials that guaranteed their psychological relationship with the traditional past and on the other a preservative strain associated with cultural elites and their anxiety to secure cultural authority.

This anxiety was identified as the means through which translated materials became absorbed within a manuscript based, historical conception of cultural authenticity in the quest for national identity which followed political union in Scotland. We argued that this anxiety was resolved in the adoption of fidelity to sources as the hallmark of that authenticity. As a consequence of the 'freezing' of the fluid traditional text, the operation of those analytical literary procedures allowed an antiquarian-led elite to reconjecture its own sense of identity, which had run aground on the redundancies of neoclassical form.

While creative engagement with the underlying art of tradition is seen clearly to impinge on fidelity, we also revealed it to be an essential element in the development of an imaginative, romantic discourse. At a time when neoclassical forms had succumbed to the conventions of self-parody or the distorted inventions of irony, in an attempt to accommodate new, imaginative realities, the adoption of critical criteria which demanded fidelity to sources was observed to hold significant implications for the nature of that evolving discourse. We have examined those implications in the light of competition between ungoverned creativity and literary authority in order to illustrate the dynamic of an ongoing regenerative feedback

between oral and literary aesthetics as they compete for space in the developing romantic imagination.

Deceptive imitation has been highlighted here as the initial response of an ungoverned literary creativity, negotiating discretely between a fusion of ideas about tradition and the ethical demands of established cultural authority in order to address the aesthetic and commercial demands of a popular literary audience who were emerging from traditional society. In order to meet that challenge to their assumed cultural authority, secure their influence over this new audience and address their own cultural anxiety, we have demonstrated how those elites had to rewrite the literary programme as an expression of their own identity.

That strategic engagement with self-image was mapped out in the relationship between the progressive mythologies of the Scottish Enlightenment, as represented in the theoretical expositions of Hugh Blair, and the sublime poetic forgeries of James Macpherson. Blair's authoritative representations were characterised as a preface to Macpherson's obsession with literary process applied to the remaking of tradition. This compact of wish fulfilment culminated in the creation of the virtual bard, a construct which substantiated a mythology of exclusive identity for the literati.

We have also outlined an alternative search for an inclusive identity in the poems and songs of Robert Burns, which characterised his role-playing as a strategic element of a maturing transitional sensibility, as well as an aspect of his negotiations with cultural authority. Drawing attention to the sublimation of traditional process in his quest for 'Nature's

fire', allowed us to establish a claim for his re-empowerment of the communal voice through the 'anonymity' of recovered fragments of Scottish song and the implications which that held for development of an authentic native voice in romantic literature.

The democracy of taste which underwrote that potential was, we have shown, anathema to literary elites. At a time when their self-identifying programme was undermined by Macpherson's exposure as a forger, we highlight the urgency to develop a new authenticated model of tradition in order to shore up that authority.

Having identified this model in the constructions of Walter Scott, we followed the theoretical discourse with which he contextualised traditional works in his *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Borders*, in order to elucidate the process of ethical creativity by which means he reinvested the power of critical arbitration in the 'educated' reader. That power was shown to be a prerequisite for a dynamic, governed creativity which was licensed by cultural authority to extrapolate from Scott's analytical prospectus toward a remodelling of tradition, through editorial interpolation and authorised ballad imitation. Unveiling this process allowed for a demonstration of the means by which Scott, with the collusion of his educated reader, dressed his imagination in the garb of tradition in order to actualise Macpherson's virtual bard in his own person.

We have claimed that the authorisation of Scott's exclusive, romantic project dealt a critical blow to the aesthetic premises of Burns's inclusive, native voice. The disempowerment of that voice for the popular audience, however,

has been located in James Hogg's dependency on Scott's patronage, which was shown to be a means by which Scott, already confident in the support of the cultural elite, secured the construct of himself as the modern bard with a new mass literary audience.

In the complex of discrete duplicity through which Hogg supplied 'traditional' texts for Scott to 'edit' for *The Minstrelsy*, we have implied a marriage of convenience through which Hogg, as the natural heir to the inclusive voice, confirmed Scott's status as a legitimate authority, by placing him between the text and the audience, undermining his own native legitimacy in the process. This solidified Scott's own romantic projection of himself as a reconstructed Border minstrel. Once this apparition had solidified we found Hogg being edited in both life and letters by his patron so that his ungoverned behaviour in both areas could be managed. Hogg was, almost systematically, edited into the caricature of a minstrel in decline, according with the thesis of decay which underpinned Scott's notion of oral tradition, set out in the *Minstrelsy*.

In Hogg's failed attempts to re-establish his own credibility with the literary audience we have detected traces of a genuine, native romantic voice, rooted in the inclusive aesthetic of Ramsay and Burns, which sought identity in the fluid commonality of tradition harnessed to the self-seeking dynamic of literary imagination. The disempowerment of that native voice heralds a failure to construct an inclusive romantic identity around the bones of tradition and leaves us at the mercy of reanimated skeletons of the historical imagination dancing with their own shadows in the pale moonlight of Melrose

abbey.

The triumph of image over identity remains a peculiar burden in the Scottish psyche and the contextualised mouthing of Scott's romantic projections are testimony to the crippling potential of cultural authority when it fails to credit the aesthetic root of the popular art upon which it feeds. Above all, we have sought to demonstrate that cultural development in a transitional society depends on creative fluidity between converging oral and literary sensibilities, and that genuine cultural authority is derived from a constructive critical interaction within that flow which allows meaning and identity to coalesce around an inclusive aesthetic. The imposition of an exclusive critical discourse cast a set of meanings on Scottish identity which could only be accessed by those who were able to translate the archetypal blethers of the actualised bard. A language of romance? Perhaps, but not for native speakers.

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