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**AT THE VERGE OF THEIR PROPER SPHERE:  
EARLY NINETEENTH CENTURY SCOTTISH WOMEN NOVELISTS**

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**Submitted for qualification of Ph.D.**

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## A B S T R A C T

Although much has been written of the male novelists who worked in Scotland in the early nineteenth century, little commentary exists on the women publishing fiction at the same time. This thesis aims to undertake a feminist revision of literary history, reclaiming and discussing some lost women writers. It is argued that novels by Scottish women in the early nineteenth century are of significant cultural interest, as well as having literary value in their own right.

In the first chapter, there is discussion of the major feminist and historicist critical works which inform the debate in subsequent chapters and the specific writers selected for study are introduced. Scottish literary histories are surveyed, pointing up their underrepresentation of women fiction writers of the early nineteenth century; nineteenth and twentieth century views of the same writers are compared.

Each of the subsequent chapters includes brief biographical details of the writer(s) discussed and a consideration of modern and nineteenth century views of their writing, where this material is extant. As women writing in the early nineteenth century, the novelists discussed in this thesis were working within severe cultural constraints. They were expected to remain within the 'proper sphere' of the reputable woman. The simple act of publishing their

writings was considered by some enough to place them at the verge of that proper sphere. Often not only their writings, but also their personal character came under the scrutiny of the contemporary critics, hence their frequent preference for anonymity. The ways in which early nineteenth century women writers responded to the cultural constraints upon them are discussed throughout.

Consideration is given in each chapter to the genres in which the novelists chose to work; their work tends to belong to genres considered too popular or feminine to hold significant literary value and this may account in part for their exclusion from literary history. Attention to genre also helps the reader to understand their works and further to recognise the ways in which writers transgress or even subvert generic conventions. This approach moreover serves to demonstrate the range and variety of women's fiction writing in the period. In each chapter there is a detailed examination of the novels themselves, and an attempt to locate the writers within traditions of Scottish and women's writing.

The individual writers whose works are considered in Chapters **Two** to **Six** respectively and the genres within which their novels are positioned are as follows: Jane Porter and Eliza Logan, *historical romance*; Elizabeth Hamilton and Grace Kennedy, the *didactic tradition*; Mary Brunton, the *courtesy novel*; Susan Edmonstone Ferrier, the

*novel of fashionable life* and Christian Isobel Johnstone, whose novels are found to defy genre classification.

The final chapter reiterates the cultural constraints within which the women were writing, before concluding that Scottish literary history is greatly enriched by the inclusion of early nineteenth century Scottish women novelists.

Appendices comprise a full list of publications by the writers under consideration in the thesis, a selective list of other women writers and works uncovered in the course of research, and a compilation of plot summaries of those novels which are discussed in depth.

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Help with proof-reading was provided by Val, Frances and Valentina, all of whom made valuable suggestions, for which many thanks. Elspeth and Monica gave lots of encouragement. Sandy provided the word processor which stood me in good stead throughout the enterprise and I am grateful to my parents who have offered support in many ways as I worked on this thesis.

I could not have completed this thesis without the generous support of my Supervisor, Carol Anderson, whose enthusiasm for the project never dimmed over the years, in spite of all the crises and assorted dramas in the writer's life. Thank you, Carol, for all your help.

## D E D I C A T I O N

This thesis is dedicated to my dear daughter, Louisa.



## A U T H O R ' S   D E C L A R A T I O N

Some of an earlier version of **Chapter One** was published under the title, 'What happened to the tales of our grandmothers?' in Chapman, 74-75 (1993), 5-10.

Certain paragraphs in **Chapters Two, Three and Six** were used in a collaborative essay written with Carol Anderson, entitled, 'The Other Great Unknowns: Women Fiction Writers of the Early Nineteenth Century' which appeared in A History of Scottish Women's Writing edited by Douglas Gifford and Dorothy McMillan (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997) pp.179-195.

## A   N O T E   O N   P R I M A R Y   T E X T S   C I T E D

Due to family commitments, extended travel during the preparation of this thesis to view first editions of primary texts was not possible. Where available, first editions have been used; otherwise the editions of the novels cited within this text are the earliest which were accessible to the writer.

Few, we allow, are exposed to greater perplexities than a female writer, for even if she never really departs from her proper sphere, she is startled sometimes to find herself so near the verge of it.

From an anonymous review of Mary Brunton's Self-Control in the Eclectic Review, 8 (1812), 603-620 (p.618).

## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

## I      Literary Theory and Romanticism

This thesis takes as its subject matter novels written by women in Scotland in the early nineteenth century, a period in British literature more commonly associated with men, specifically the poets at the centre of the Romantic movement: Wordsworth, Coleridge, Blake, Keats, P.B. Shelley and Byron. The traditional view of Romantic literature, taking the term to include only the major writers mentioned above, has been radically revised in the latter part of the present century, with the advent of major new theories of literature, including poststructuralism, new historicism and feminism.

In the light of modern literary criticism, Romantic literature in the late twentieth century is recognised to encompass a great deal more than the handful of poets consistently foregrounded in earlier considerations of the period. Not only have many more poets been brought to light, but the scope of critical enquiry has widened considerably, to include works of prose and fiction. Marilyn Butler, one of the foremost exponents of the new historicist school, grapples with the meaning of Romanticism in the opening chapter of her Romantics, Rebels and Reactionaries; her discussion helps to illuminate how the scope of Romantic Studies has changed in the present

age.<sup>1</sup> In this she sets down two opposing schools of thought, one attempting to understand Romanticism aesthetically 'as a theory about the nature and origin of art', the other seeing it as a historical phenomenon, 'associated with political and social circumstances' (p.8), and argues that neither one of these can be considered independently of the other. Ultimately, she declines to pin down exactly what is meant by the term Romanticism, but highlights instead the pressing necessity for contextualisation. Rather than looking at single writers in isolation she argues for a broader examination of period, taking account of historical and cultural events happening outside the pages of literature, though no doubt making some kind of impact upon it.

Other present day critics tend to take it as read that the term, Romanticism, refers to a period rather than a specific school of thought, for instance David Simpson writes,

By *Romanticism* I mean, very roughly, the writings of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, sharing a general historical situation but not necessarily held together by any essential or prescriptive characteristics. Literary critics and historians have traditionally posited such characteristics in a manner allowing them to distinguish between what is more or less "romantic", early and late romantic, pre- and postromantic, highly or antiromantic. Such usages are seldom consistent, and have mostly been employed to justify one set of preferences over others.

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1. Marilyn Butler, Romantics, Rebels and Reactionaries: English Literature and its Background 1760-1830 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981). Further references to this book are given after quotations in the text.

Or, as another critic publishing in the same book simply asserts, 'Romanticism cannot be defined'.<sup>2</sup> Another recent anthology of writing on the period alludes to the wider remit of Romanticism in the late twentieth century in its title and subtitle, Beyond Romanticism: New Approaches to Texts and Contexts 1780-1832, and as well as considerations of much-studied writers like Shelley and Coleridge, includes discussion on lesser known writers as varied as Benjamin Robert Haydon, Thomas Warton, Mary Wollstonecraft, Richard Hurd, Elizabeth Montagu, and Helen Maria Williams, amongst others.<sup>3</sup>

During the early nineteenth century there was an explosion of interest in literature in general: printed books and pamphlets were reaching a greater audience than ever before, some novels and poems achieving the equivalent of today's best-sellers. Review publications like the Gentleman's Magazine and the New Monthly Magazine enjoyed enormous popularity. At that time Scotland was home to a thriving literary scene in general - most notably in Edinburgh, where a number of the popular literary journals of the day were published; journals like Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, the Edinburgh Review, the Quarterly Review and others all issued forth from Edinburgh, a city

2. David Simpson, 'Romanticism, Criticism and Theory' in The Cambridge Companion to British Romanticism, ed. by Stuart Curran (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp.1-24 (p.1); Marshall Brown, 'Romanticism and Enlightenment', pp.25-47 (p.25).

3. Beyond Romanticism: New Approaches to Texts and Contexts: 1780-1832, ed. by Stephen Copley and John Whale (London: Routledge, 1992).

that was some time home not only to one of Scotland's most celebrated writers, Walter Scott, but also to a number of the women novelists considered in this thesis. Various literary critics and historians have explored the role of the review in the literary culture of nineteenth century Britain and throughout this thesis, account is taken of contemporary views of the writers under consideration, as published in the review journals of the day.<sup>4</sup> It is striking that despite the attention many of the novels considered in this thesis received in the literary journals of their own day, few have survived to be noticed in the present age.

This thesis is concerned with women writers of the Romantic Age, living and working in Scotland. All the writers considered here published their works in the early part of the nineteenth century; most enjoyed some critical notice in their own day, yet seldom have any of them been included in even the more recent considerations of the period that tend to be more attentive towards the less well known

- 
4. On the role of the review, the following works by modern critics are of particular interest: Marilyn Butler, 'Culture's Medium: The Role of the Review' in The Cambridge Companion to British Romanticism, ed. by Stuart Curran (1993), pp.120-147; Ina Ferris, 'From trope to code: The novel and the rhetoric of gender in nineteenth-century critical discourse' in Rewriting the Victorians: Theory, History and the Politics of Gender, ed. by Linda M. Shires (London: Routledge, 1992), pp.18-29; R.D. Mayo, The English Novel in the Magazines, 1740-1815 (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1962); Kathryn Shevelov, Women and Print Culture: The Construction of Femininity in the Early Periodicals (London: Routledge, 1989).

writers.<sup>5</sup> It is true that a small number of recent literary critics have paid some attention to Scottish women writers of this period, but these tend not to focus upon the writers in their Scottish context, viewing them instead from a wider, British perspective. Gary Kelly for instance, writes of Jane Porter 'adding the "matter of Scotland" to the "matter of Ireland" in the developing fiction of nationalism in Britain'. The title of Kelly's book, English Fiction of the Romantic Period points up the different perspective he takes on writers like Porter. Similarly, Anne K. Mellor fits Susan Ferrier into the picture of 'Feminine Romanticism' which she builds up in her book, Romanticism and Gender very effectively, the writer's Scottish identity being acknowledged but not explored in any depth. Conversely, as Joanna Russ has pointed out, the categorising of a writer as 'regionalist' can also be somewhat negative:

It seems clear that the label *regionalist*, so often applied to women writers, indicates not only that the writer in question concentrates on a particular region, but also that the work is thereby limited (and not of "broad" interest) and therefore of interest not primarily for literary reasons but for its sociological or quasi-historical interest. The

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5. A History of Scottish Women's Writing, ed. by Douglas Gifford and Dorothy McMillan (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997) was published shortly before this thesis was completed and includes an essay on novelists publishing in this period by Carol Anderson and Aileen M. Riddell, entitled 'The Other Great Unknowns: Women Fiction Writers of the Early Nineteenth Century', pp.179-195.



"regionalist" is a second-rate fictioneer, a documentary-maker manqué(e).<sup>6</sup>

The writers examined in this thesis are perhaps best considered as at least twice marginalised: once, for their gender, and once more for their nationality, condemning them to 'regional' status, if indeed they are allotted any status at all. While other Scottish writers of the same period, such as Walter Scott and James Hogg are increasingly being taken up in studies on Romanticism, the women writers remain largely forgotten.<sup>7</sup> If, as David Hewitt has recently argued, 'For much of this century the work of Walter Scott has been ignored, or condescendingly noticed', it is difficult to find appropriate words to describe what has happened to the women novelists who were his contemporaries.<sup>8</sup>

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6. Gary Kelly, English Fiction of the Romantic Period: 1789-1830 (Harlow: Longman, 1988), p.95; Anne K. Mellor, Romanticism and Gender (London: Routledge, 1993), particularly pp.49-52; Joanna Russ, How to Suppress Women's Writing (Texas: University of Texas Press, 1983), p.53. Further references to these books are given after quotations in the text.
  7. Again, the essay by Carol Anderson and Aileen M. Riddell in the new A History of Scottish Women's Writing (1997) goes a little way towards righting the balance. For a survey of recent material published on writers such as Scott and Hogg, The Association for Scottish Literary Studies annually publishes an issue of the Scottish Literary Journal entitled 'The Year's Work in Scottish Literary and Linguistic Studies', in which essays on each historical period consider the articles and books on Scottish writers published that year.
  8. The quotation is the opening sentence of David Hewitt's essay, 'Walter Scott' in The History of Scottish Literature: Volume 3: Nineteenth Century, ed. by Douglas Gifford (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1988), pp.65-85 (p.65).

Modern critical theory offers new and stimulating ways of approaching literature, which inform much of the discussion in this thesis. One of the most influential modern schools of thought is poststructuralism, which includes deconstruction, after the work of the French critic, Derrida. Deconstruction involves the deciphering of texts in such a way as to find meaning perpetually deferred, and has been taken up in Romantic studies by critics such as Paul de Man.<sup>9</sup> This kind of intensive theorising can be inward-looking, however, putting 'theory before literature' in the words of Janet Todd, who advocates a materialist approach to literary studies as the most viable alternative available to the present day critic.<sup>10</sup> In contrast to poststructuralism, New Historicism acknowledges that the author of the text belongs to a particular cultural environment and this is the approach largely favoured by the writer of this thesis, although in the consideration of some novels, poststructuralist theory has also been applied. This mixing of approaches is not unprecedented. The various schools of thought regarding critical theory are not entirely mutually exclusive; feminists such as Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, for instance, draw on poststructuralist psychoanalysis as well as materialist criticism, and more recently, a reviewer remarked of a

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9. A useful survey of the range of theories applied to Romantic writing is undertaken by Cynthia Chase in her Introduction to an anthology of critical essays entitled Romanticism, ed. by Cynthia Chase (Harlow: Longman, 1993), pp.1-42.
10. Janet Todd, Feminist Literary History: A Defence (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1988), p.14.

critical work by Ina Ferris that the book,

Seamlessly combines reception theory, feminist criticism, and Bakhtinian deconstruction with a healthy dose of material history.<sup>11</sup>

New Historicism and materialist criticism generally have had the effect of cracking open historical periods, inviting readers to explore outwith the established canons of literature. Academics representing a wide variety of viewpoints, including gay, black, feminist and Marxist, tend to base at least a part of their studies upon the recovery of 'lost' writers, whose omission from the canon is believed to be a direct result of their gender, sexual orientation, class or colour. In the case of this thesis, a feminist point of view, drawn from a number of different sources, drives the arguments throughout.<sup>12</sup>

## II    Some Issues for Women missing from       Scottish Literary History

### i     The Broader Picture of Missing Women

In a letter of 1845, Elizabeth Barrett Browning bemoaned the absence of poetic 'grandmothers' for women like

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11. Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth Century Literary Imagination (London: Yale University Press, 1979); quotation from Jill Rubenstein, '1800-1840' in Scottish Literary Journal 'The Year's Work in Scottish Literary and Linguistic Studies: 1991 1992', 32-62 (p.33); Ina Ferris, The Achievement of Literary Authority: Gender, History, and the Waverley Novels (London: Cornell University Press, 1991).
12. This is elaborated fully in Sections IV and V of this chapter.

herself, writing in the second half of the nineteenth century.<sup>13</sup> Modern scholarship, fueled by feminism has established that there was no real absence of female forebears. Anthologies such as Ann Stanford's Women Poets in English, Cora Kaplan's Salt and Bitter and Good, and Roger Lonsdale's Eighteenth-Century Women Poets give the lie to that notion.<sup>14</sup> Similarly, in the field of the novel, critical studies such as Gary Kelly's English Fiction of the Romantic Period and feminist literary history books such as Ellen Moers' Literary Women, Jane Spencer's The Rise of the Woman Novelist, Dale Spender's Mothers of the Novel and Janet Todd's The Sign of Angellica, point towards a rich tapestry of women's writing through previous centuries.<sup>15</sup> The contemporary English woman writer need not, like Barrett Browning, founder for want of literary ancestors. Thanks to the recent wave of feminist scholarship, many lost writers have already

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13. Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Letters, 2 vols, ed. by Sir Frederic George Kenyon (London: 1897); I, p.229.
  14. The Women Poets in English, ed. by Ann Stanford (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1972); Salt and Bitter and Good: Three Centuries of English and American Women Poets, ed. by Cora Kaplan (London: Paddington Press, 1975); Eighteenth-Century Women Poets, ed. by Roger Lonsdale (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990).
  15. Ellen Moers, Literary Women (first published 1976; repr. London: The Women's Press, 1986); Jane Spencer, The Rise of the Woman Novelist from Aphra Behn to Jane Austen (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986); Dale Spender, Mothers of the Novel: 100 Good Women Writers before Jane Austen (London: Pandora Press, 1986); Janet Todd, The Sign of Angellica: Women, Writing and Fiction, 1660-1800 (London: Virago, 1989). Further references to these books are to the editions cited here and are given after quotations in the text.

repossessed their spaces on library shelves. In the context of Scottish Literature, however, the problem of missing women writers continues, although much alleviated by the recent publication of Douglas Gifford and Dorothy McMillan's A History of Scottish Women's Writing (1997).

In the field of Scottish poetry, recent anthologies such as Catherine Kerrigan's fine An Anthology of Scottish Women Poets and Tom Leonard's Radical Renfrew, both consciously promoting women poets, have helped to instate a sense of Scottish women's poetic heritage.<sup>16</sup> As far as early novelists are concerned, however, much work remains to be done. Most of the fiction considered in this thesis is out of print, some of it for well over a century. The novels have to be hunted down in the Rare Book collections of libraries and are therefore not readily visible to the general reader. A consideration in Section III.i of those histories currently available which include material on the early nineteenth century (when there was an escalation in the number of women novelists working in Scotland) proves illuminating, though it reveals more about the academic discipline of Scottish literary history than it does of early nineteenth century novels by Scottish women. However, it must be said that A History of Scottish Women's

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16. An Anthology of Scottish Women Poets, ed. by Catherine Kerrigan (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1991); Radical Renfrew: Poetry from the French Revolution to the First World War by Poets Born, or Sometime Resident in, the County of Renfrewshire, ed. by Tom Leonard (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1990). Further references to these books are given after quotations in the text.

Writing (1997) has permanently changed the configuration of Scottish literary history, albeit that given the book's very broad remit, it can only feasibly alter the picture of particular periods to a limited degree.

In the following section of this chapter, a number of those major literary histories of Scotland which include material on novelists of the early 19th Century are surveyed, in order to form a picture of the literary landscape of Scotland they present.<sup>17</sup> Their representation is somewhat skewed, giving a poor idea of the women writing in Scotland at the time. Indeed one could be forgiven for concluding that there were no Scottish women novelists of note prior to Susan Ferrier, on the strength of a number of these literary histories. Further, even Ferrier's importance in terms of Scottish literary history is deemed somewhat negligible, in the opinion of some of these same critics. On the other hand, a glance through the Directory of

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17. J.H. Millar, A Literary History of Scotland (London: Fisher Unwin, 1903); Kurt Wittig, The Scottish Tradition in Literature (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1958); David Craig, Scottish Literature and the Scottish People 1680-1830 (London: Chatto & Windus, 1961); Maurice Lindsay, History of Scottish Literature (London: Hale, 1977); Francis Russell Hart, The Scottish Novel: A Critical Survey (London: Murray, 1978); Roderick Watson, The Literature of Scotland (London: Macmillan, 1984); Horst W. Drescher and Joachim Schwend, eds, Studies in Scottish Fiction: Nineteenth Century (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1985); Andrew Hook, ed., The History of Scottish Literature, Volume 2, 1660-1800, (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1987); Douglas Gifford, ed., The History of Scottish Literature Volume 3, Nineteenth Century (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1988); Marshall Walker, Scottish Literature Since 1707 (London: Longman, 1996). Further references to these books are given after quotations in the text.

Authors in the Scottish Fiction Reserve, compiled for the National Library of Scotland, suggests that the peculiar lack of women writers in the histories is not a representative reflection of the situation. More recently, the 'Select Bibliographies of Scottish Women Writers' compiled by Fiona Black and Kirsten Stirling add a great deal of detail to the previously indistinct picture.<sup>18</sup> In fact, there were many women novelists writing and being published in Scotland in the early nineteenth century; this chapter introduces some of those writers to the reader.<sup>19</sup> The omission of women writers from literary history is fairly commonplace according to feminist critics; the survey of Scottish literary histories which follows here, certainly bears this out.

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18. Moira Burgess, Directory of Authors in the Scottish Fiction Reserve, (Edinburgh: National Library of Scotland, 1986); Fiona Black and Kirsten Stirling, 'Select Bibliographies of Scottish Women Writers' in A History of Scottish Women's Writing ed. by Douglas Gifford and Dorothy McMillan (1997) pp.677-707 (pp.677-691 for pre-twentieth century writers).
19. Other reference books found particularly useful in tracking down these long lost women include: The Feminist Companion to Literature in English, ed. by Virginia Blain et al, (London: Batsford, 1990); Robert Chambers, A Biographical Dictionary of Eminent Scotsmen, 3 vols (Edinburgh: Blackie, 1847; revised and continued by the Rev Thomas Thomson, London: Blackie and Son, 1875); Chamber's Cyclopaedia of English Literature: A History, Critical and Biographical, of Authors in the English Tongue, 3 vols, (1843; revised by David Patrick, London [n. pub], 1901-1903); The Book of Scotsmen Eminent for Achievement, ed. by Joseph Irving (Paisley: Gardner, 1881); The Dictionary of National Biography, ed. by Leslie Stephens and Sidney Lee (London: Smith, Elder, 1892); An Encyclopedia of British Women Writers, ed. by Paul Schlueter and June Schlueter, (New York: Garland, 1988); A Dictionary of British and American Women Writers 1660-1800 (London: Methuen, 1987), and Dictionary of British Women Writers (London: Routledge, 1989) both ed. by Janet Todd.

## II    ii    The Women Writers considered in this Thesis and their place in Scottish Literature

A good example of what tends to be the prevailing attitude to women writers in Scottish literary history comes to light when David Craig (1961), posits the question, 'Scott, Galt, Hogg, Lockhart, Stevenson - do they not together render a great range of the national life?' (p.140). If perhaps not deserving of the answer, 'No', the question at least requires the qualification that this 'great range' is exclusively male. The inclusion in the proposition of the writings of Scottish *women* - such as Mary Brunton, Charlotte Bury, Helen Craik, Susan Ferrier, Elizabeth Hamilton, Christian Johnstone, Grace Kennedy, Eliza Logan, Jane and Anna Maria Porter, Catherine Sinclair, Rosalia St Clair (the list goes on and on) - necessarily adds a quite different, that is, a female, dimension to the 'great range' provided by the men.

It is of course not within the scope of this thesis to give full consideration to the writings of all the Scottish women publishing work in the early nineteenth century. A number of representative writers has therefore been selected, specifically in order to show the variety of the novel-writing undertaken by Scottish women in the period. The writers whose works are considered in the course of this thesis are Jane Porter (1776-1850), Eliza Logan (*floruit* 1823-9), Elizabeth Hamilton (1758-1816), Grace Kennedy (1782-1825), Mary Brunton (1778-1818), Susan



Edmonstone Ferrier (1782-1854) and Christian Isobel Johnstone (1781-1857).<sup>20</sup>

The whole question of the criteria by which writing is adjudged to belong to Scottish literature is a very awkward one, which various critics have attempted to address. Francis Hart struggles to engender a 'Theory of Scottish Fiction' in the concluding chapter of his The Scottish Novel: A Critical Survey and meets with a number of difficulties, including the following problem, symptomatic of such attempts to resolve the issue:

What David Craig called a "swithering of modes" and others have named "antisyzygy" or "dissociation of sensibility" has consistently appeared as a modal feature of Scottish fiction. The mixtures have been numerous: grotesque humor and pastoral sentiment; broad satire and severe piety... tragedy and farce. Are such rapidly alternating and extreme responses to experience to be explained as cultural distinctiveness or cultural dissociation? (p.406)

Emphasis upon recurrent motifs is, he finds, no less paradoxical, and a discussion of language simply points up more difficulties. It is now generally accepted that a national literature does not necessarily require a separate homogeneous language; this point has been proved time and again in the modern period. The example of American, Canadian, Australian, West Indian literatures - all of which use varieties of the English language - amply justify the claim. It is a valid proposition that Scottish

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20. A full list of publications by the writers under consideration in this thesis is given in **Appendix I**. A select list of writers and works uncovered in the course of research is given in **Appendix II**.

literature may be written in English and that writing in Scots (for which there is no formal standard language and inevitably a lack of vocabulary for certain discourses) should not be regarded as the only viable means of expression for Scottish writers.

Including in the literary canon of Scotland only those writers who manifest a preoccupation with Scotland or Scottish identity narrows the canon quite unnecessarily. Writers like Hamilton, Brunton and Ferrier certainly do not explore only, nor unreservedly applaud, anything that might be construed as a Scottish national character. That is not to say, however, that they do not concern themselves with what they perceive to be the 'national life'. The 'great range of the national life' as it is perceived by Craig and other critics, before and after him, is perhaps not very strongly reflected in the writings of early 19th century Scottish women, to whom overt Scottishness, generally speaking, is not of paramount importance. Elizabeth Hamilton wrote Letters of a Hindoo Rajah (1796) and Memoirs of Modern Philosophers (1800) as well as the more overtly 'Scottish' The Cottagers of Glenburnie (1808); Jane Porter wrote Thaddeus of Warsaw (1803) as well as The Scottish Chiefs (1810). Nonetheless, novels dwelling on overtly Scottish themes are clearly of more immediate concern to those interested in the Scottish context; the novels chosen for close examination in this thesis reflect this.

Although the women writers whose works are discussed in this thesis do not, in their novels at least, tend to

promote the idea of a strongly separatist Scottish national identity, their perception of 'the national life' should not be dismissed out of hand. Their 'ideal Scotland' might well be a very Anglicised place, but then this does very much reflect the time in which they wrote, a century after the Union of Parliaments in 1707. Their writings came out of a time coined by Robert Crawford as Scottish writing's 'British phase'.<sup>21</sup> Writing of the eighteenth century, Crawford comments,

In response to the cultural and political pressures... and sometimes in a direct response to the teachings of Rhetoric and Belles Lettres, Scottish Literature involved a continuing examination of, and response to, the strains and possibilities of Britishness. Insightfully, awkwardly, entrepreneurially, Scottish writing entered its British phase. (p.46)

Women writers such as Hamilton, Brunton, and Ferrier did not seem to feel the need to 'reach back into the past of Scotland to win a complete theme on which to write and a complete order within which to write' as Edwin Muir writes of Scott.<sup>22</sup> Rather, when they wrote of Scotland, they wrote of the place which they knew from their own (however limited) experience as modern day Scottish, but also British, women. Some of the women writers, nevertheless did reach back into the past to find the material for their novels. Jane Porter, for instance had in fact published two historical novels - Thaddeus of Warsaw (1803) and The

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21. Robert Crawford, Devolving English Literature (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), p.46.
22. Edwin Muir, Scott and Scotland: The Predicament of the Scottish Writer (London: Routledge, 1936; repr. with Introduction by Allan Massie (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1982)), p.100.

Scottish Chiefs (1810) which dealt with the time of Robert the Bruce and William Wallace - well before Scott's Waverley in 1813. Like that of the other women writers mentioned above, however, the Scotland which Jane Porter portrays in The Scottish Chiefs is a somewhat Anglicised place, in the main very much in keeping with contemporary (i.e. early nineteenth century) unionist thought.

Andrew Hook notes in his Introduction to The History of Scottish Literature: Volume 2, 1660-1800 (1987), that only 'in the early nineteenth century does writing become for Scottish women a possible source of supplementary income' (p.8), providing this as a rather intriguing reason for the exclusion of women writers (with the exception of some of those 'remembered for occasional poems or songs in Scots' (p.7)) from this volume of the History. The suggestion that only those writers who earn a 'supplementary income' by their writing are deserving of a place in history is plainly absurd. To judge writers by their earnings lacks vision, to say the very least: Robert Fergusson died a 'pauper lunatic' in the Edinburgh Bedlam, yet his place in the Scottish literary canon is (rightly) unquestioned.<sup>23</sup> And, of course, to carry the earnings proposition to its furthest extreme in the other direction, would be to suggest that those who earned the most were the best.

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23. As described by Sydney Goodsir Smith, ed., Robert Fergusson 1750-74, (Edinburgh and London, [n.pub] 1952), Appendix I, 197-9 ('The Edinburgh Bedlam') quoted in the Introduction to Poems by Allan Ramsay and Robert Fergusson ed. by Alexander Manson Kinghorn and Alexander Law (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1985), p.xxi.

Luckily, this is not one of the criteria normally considered vital in the study of literature and writers, although it is not without precedent. Elaine Showalter, for instance in her A Literature of Their Own states that she is 'concerned with the professional writer who wants pay and publication'.<sup>24</sup> Unlike Hook's, Showalter's thesis rests upon the professional status of women writers: that is what her book is about. As far as Hook is concerned, however, it is only in the case of women that he finds it necessary to rely upon the writers' earnings as some kind of indicator of their worth.

It is also worth pointing out that, contrary to Hook's assertion, there were, in addition to the song-writers, one or two Scottish women novelists in the 1700s. Lady Mary Hamilton wrote several novels, the first of which - Letters from the Duchess de Crui - was published in 1776; Anne Eden's novel, Confidential Letter of Albert; from his first attachment to Charlotte to her death. From the Sorrows of Werter was published in 1790; and Elizabeth Hamilton's first novel - Translation of the Letters of a Hindoo Rajah - dates from 1796. Charlotte Lennox serves as another example of a woman novelist whose works date from the eighteenth century, although her position is somewhat problematic, as not all critics consider her a Scottish

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24. Elaine Showalter, A Literature of Their Own (Princeton University Press, 1977; revised London: Virago Press, 1982), p.12.

writer.<sup>25</sup> All this interestingly tends to again point up the problem of defining what is meant by the term *Scottish literature*: it is worth noting that none of the works mentioned in this paragraph are 'Scottish' in a particularly obvious way.

The women whose work is considered in this thesis all belonged to Scotland for at least a formative period in their lives. Whether their work is overtly concerned with Scotland, or Scottish identity, it is nevertheless informed by Scottish discourses, being written by women who lived in Scotland. It thereby may be argued that it belongs in the history of Scottish literature.

### III Critical Approaches to

#### Early Nineteenth Century Scottish Women Writers

##### i Negative Views: Scottish Literary History prior to the 1990s

Historians of Scottish literature are, it should be pointed out, not totally oblivious of a female presence in Scottish literary history, even those writing prior to the publication of A History of Scottish Women's Writing.

However, their analyses of the writings of these women tend

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25. She is included in Christopher MacLachlan's survey, '1650-1800', in 'The Year's Work in Scottish Literary and Linguistic Studies: 1987', Scottish Literary Journal, (Association for Scottish Literary Studies, 1991), 6-12 (p.8).

to be somewhat superficial, if not plainly prejudiced. An early example of the anti-female bias is to be found in Millar's History (1903) in which the author, like others after him, simultaneously venerates and denigrates Susan Ferrier, with comments such as the following, which refers to her satirical treatment of the Fairbairn household in her second novel, The Inheritance (1824):

First rate, must be the verdict, of its kind; but perhaps a little cruel. No man could have barbed the dart so cunningly. (p.544)

According to Millar, then, Ferrier's description of the family is, somewhat curiously, both first rate, and of questionable worth in terms of morality. Millar chooses the adjective 'cruel' to describe the writing, rather than a less disparaging term such as 'witty' or 'satirical', almost as if the Fairbairns were a real family, in need of defence from Ferrier's weapon, her pen. Millar also declares the writing demonstrably female, by virtue of the excessive cunning it displays.

Women in literature, of course, from time immemorial, have been noted for their cunning; Millar deftly (and, arguably, rather cunningly) slips from an analysis of the passage he quotes from The Inheritance to an analysis of the character (practically a character assassination) of its author.<sup>26</sup>

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26. Nancy K. Gish finds Hugh MacDiarmid guilty of the same slippage in an essay he wrote about Rebecca West, in which (as Gish comments), 'the attack soon shifts ground to conflate linguistic inadequacy with gender inadequacy, West's inability as a *woman* to handle the violence, ugliness, and shame beneath the surface of life. It takes a '*man* tae write aboot Edinburgh'.

Warming to his theme, he is soon inviting the reader to sample another passage which 'will help to show how formidable a person Miss Ferrier must have been to those she happened not to like' (p.545). Susan Ferrier's formidability is outwith the scope of the present work, since the concern here is with literature and gender rather than literature and writers' personalities. But it is nevertheless a useful demonstration of a well-attested fact of literary history, that women writers to a far greater extent than men, tend to have not only their works examined by critical eyes and written up for the press, but also their personal characters. Mary Brunton's comments in a letter published after her death with the fragment, Emmeline (1819), are particularly apt in this regard:

To be pointed at - to be noticed and commented upon - to be suspected of literary airs - to be shunned as literary women are, by the more unpretending of my own sex; and abhorred as literary women are, by the pretending of the other! - My dear, I would sooner exhibit as a rope dancer.<sup>27</sup>

Of course, when Millar embarked on his analysis of Ferrier's character, he was writing long before the current feminist movement, and so his text provides some easy pickings; it is nevertheless hard not to be infuriated by some of his patronising comments, such as that he makes of Mrs Grant of Laggan: 'It is interesting to watch the

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...Continued...

Quoted from Nancy K. Gish, 'Hugh MacDiarmid (1888-1978)' in The Gender of Modernism, ed. by Bonnie Kime Scott (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990) pp.274-286 (pp.277-8).

27. Mary Brunton, Emmeline With Some Other Pieces (Edinburgh: Manners & Miller, 1819), p.xxxvi.



schoolgirl, with her rhapsodies of enthusiasm, gradually merging in the mature and experienced matron' (p.540). It is not necessary, however, to reach back into a book written nearly a hundred years ago in order to observe an anti-female bias in Scottish literary history, particularly that concerned with the early 19th century, when the women writers do not easily fall into the categories of the male tradition as created by the male critics. A bias is clearly discernible in much more recent works.

As well as omitting women from the writers who (for him) 'render a great range of the national life', Craig (1961) elsewhere in his history, mentions and dismisses Susan Ferrier and Elizabeth Hamilton somewhat disparagingly, within a sentence or two. Ferrier's Marriage (1818), he carps, is 'Scotland's nearest to a "society novel"' (p.200), implying that the novel fails somehow to live up to the appropriate standard for that category of literature. It is not necessarily the case that a 'society novel' was what Ferrier intended when she wrote Marriage, so her failure in achieving this aim is debatable, to say the least, and anyway, some would argue that she did not fail at all.<sup>28</sup> In his comments on Hamilton's hugely popular Cottagers of Glenburnie (1808), Craig echoes Millar, in conflating his feelings towards the creator of the novel and those concerning the work itself, when he states

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28. For instance, Nelson S. Bushnell, 'Susan Ferrier's Marriage as Novel of Manners' in Studies in Scottish Literature, 5 (1968), 216-228. Other admirers and critics of Ferrier's work are discussed in full in Chapter 5.

severely that the novel/author 'takes up a typically Victorian soup-and-sanitation attitude to the working classes' (p.214). At least, however, Craig knows the proper title of the book which he mentions; Maurice Lindsay's (1977) disregard for women's writing or at least that of Elizabeth Hamilton, seems rather apparent, when he tellingly refers to 'The Cottagers of Glenbervie' [sic] (p.323). On the other hand, he is aware of, if not too enamoured with the works of Mary Brunton, a writer who often escapes the notice of the Scottish literary historian/critic. His knowledge of Brunton, however, on closer inspection, also seems wanting. His reference to Emmeline as her 'best novel' (p.324) suggests he may not be aware that this posthumous novel is not merely unfinished, but was barely started: at one hundred pages long, including unrevised notes which were appended to the text by her husband, it is little more than a fragment.

Of the women writing in the early 19th century, Kurt Wittig (1958) mentions only Ferrier, dispensing with her achievement in less than one sentence, 'in the three novels of Susan Ferrier... an occasional secondary character is all that "gets across" to the modern reader' (p.245). Like Wittig, Francis Hart (1978) makes no mention of any women other than Ferrier, although he does find a good deal more to say about her. In a chapter entitled 'The Other Blackwoodians', he makes particular note of Ferrier's similarities to John Galt. Of course, as Hart notes, Galt's first publication, The Ayrshire Legatees in 1820,

postdates Ferrier's Marriage by some two years. As he also somewhat contrarily remarks, the connection drawn between these two writers by a number of modern critics (not least himself) is not one of which Ferrier would have approved. Watson (1984) in The Literature of Scotland manages to dispose of Susan Ferrier, Mary Brunton and Elizabeth Hamilton in the space of a paragraph, commenting, 'these writers intended to instruct and 'improve' their readers' and singles Ferrier out for a few lines of mildly favourable criticism, 'she writes with more humour and penetration than her predecessors' (p.269).

In Drescher and Schwend's Studies in Scottish Fiction: Nineteenth Century, there is no mention of any other women writers of the early Nineteenth Century, although there is an essay on Susan Ferrier by Herbert Foltinek.<sup>29</sup> Foltinek, like so many of the other critics, takes the opportunity of writing about Ferrier to belittle her achievements. He writes,

Why is it that even in her first novel lively scenes are never sustained for long, that epigrammatic reflections are always superseded by prolonged sections of insubstantial and rambling moralising? ...Seen in its entirety, each of the three novels shows basically the same weaknesses. Vivid descriptions, telling incidents, and superb dialogues are embedded in drifts of inferior writing. While her presentation is logically consistent, its artistic incongruity cannot fail to jar. Even Marriage, which carries greater conviction than its successors, comprises long passages where mere penmanship has to make up for the absence of original design. (p.140)

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29. Herbert Foltinek, 'Susan Ferrier Reconsidered', in Studies in Scottish Fiction: Nineteenth Century, ed. by Horst W. Drescher and Joachim Schwend (1985), pp.131-145.

In the light of such sweeping, hostile criticism, it is difficult to believe that in her own time, Susan Ferrier was often compared favourably to Jane Austen, a writer not customarily associated with 'mere penmanship'. Susan Ferrier herself of course blatantly invites comparison with Jane Austen, by opening her The Inheritance (1824) with the sentence, 'It is a truth, universally acknowledged, that there is no passion so deeply rooted in human nature as that of pride' which both in syntactical structure and content closely parallels the opening sentence of Jane Austen's Pride and Prejudice published over a decade earlier in 1813. Happily, not everyone in present-day criticism finds so much at fault in Susan Ferrier's novels as Herbert Foltinek, indeed female critics such as Nancy L. Paxton and Mary Cullinan find a great deal to admire, although Foltinek's opinions do seem to largely coincide with those of the literary histories which are so influential.<sup>30</sup>

Andrew Hook's Introduction to The History of Scottish Literature, Volume 2 is reticent, to say the least, in terms of its attitude towards women writers. However, his essay entitled 'Scotland and Romanticism: The International Scene' in the same volume, contains an interesting reference to Jane Porter, a writer whose name rarely turns up in the Scottish literary histories. (In these, any

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30. Mary Cullinan, Susan Ferrier (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1984); Nancy L. Paxton, 'Subversive Feminism: A Reassessment of Susan Ferrier's Marriage', in Women and Literature, 4 (1976), 18-29.

mention of early 19th century Scottish women writers is normally confined to Hamilton, Brunton and Ferrier.) Jane Porter's The Scottish Chiefs, was phenomenally successful immediately upon its publication in 1810 and was reprinted several times during the author's lifetime and after. Andrew Hook credits this novel with having played a part, though not a particularly significant one in his opinion, in 'producing the situation through which in the nineteenth century Scotland gained its mythopoetic identity throughout Europe and America' (p.310): all the more wonder then, that this writer is so mysteriously absent from other Scottish literary histories and mentioned so fleetingly in this one.

Douglas Gifford, in an essay entitled 'Myth, Parody and Dissociation: Scottish Fiction 1814-1914', concludes a less than enthusiastic discussion of Ferrier, Brunton and Hamilton, the 'improver-satirists' as he pigeonholes them, with the comment,

These women may be detached; but they lack a consistent point of view, so that their work is no real and coherent social critique, and all that remains is the nostalgic love of old Scots songs and old-fashioned couthiness.<sup>31</sup>

Such dismissive generalisations are just as harmful to the standing of these writers as the condescending attitude of early critics like Millar. Apart from anything else, to lump the three writers together in this fashion (as so many critics before Gifford have also done), is to deny their -----

31. This essay is in The History of Scottish Literature, Volume 3: Nineteenth Century, ed. by Douglas Gifford (1988), pp.217-258 (p.238).

very real differences from one another. They do all write didactic work, and thereby might rightly be called 'improvers' - but then so could a great many other novelists of their era: Ann Radcliffe, Jane Austen, Fanny Burney and Walter Scott all wrote novels which moralised to some extent, but it can hardly be suggested that all these novelists are greatly similar to one another, except perhaps in that one respect. This grouping of novelists could also be said to lack 'a consistent point of view', but then this is not necessarily a negative criticism. In the late twentieth century, a variety of points of view within a group of writers, or a selection of works by one writer, or even within a single item of writing, may even be regarded as a positive rather than a negative quality. Poststructuralist and Bakhtinian theory point up the fruitfulness of texts which offer the reader multiple voices. More recently still, Marshall Walker in his Scottish Literature since 1707 (1996), is conscious that,

The number of published Scottish women writers increased dramatically in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, making neglect of their work until recently a cause of critical embarrassment.

Yet he opens a short discussion of the song-writers and novelists belonging to the period with the following rather patronising statement:

While men were occupied with post-Union politics, philosophy, social theory, economics and the milieu of revolution, women writers maintained, often anonymously, a brief for the more immediate realities of love, rural life and the household. (p.46)

Scottish literature's historians tend to fail to take any account of the particular constraints under which women

published fiction in the early nineteenth century. In their own time, women were considered by some to be at the verge of their proper sphere simply in the act of publishing fiction. Biographical material on the writers variously alludes to the particular pressures of being female and intellectual. Elizabeth Hamilton, for instance, writes in a letter of hiding a volume of Lord Kames's Elements of Criticism under a cushion when visitors arrive, 'lest she should be detected in a study which prejudice and ignorance might pronounce unfeminine'.<sup>32</sup> For all that she recognises such a view must stem from 'prejudice and ignorance', Hamilton nevertheless prefers to conform to gender expectations, at least in appearance. Similarly, Grace Kennedy's biographer notes that 'female authors have frequently been accused of neglecting those duties which are considered as more peculiarly belonging to their own department in life, when they enter on the higher ground of literary pursuits', but goes on to assure the reader that Kennedy,

Was entirely free from any fault of this kind; indeed so completely was this the case, that even in the minute niceties of ladies works, she excelled as much as in the higher endowments of her mind.<sup>33</sup>

Other women writers, such as Susan Ferrier and Mary Brunton, lived in fear of being discovered as novelists. This reticence is all too understandable, given the tone of -----

32. Elizabeth Ogilvy Benger, Memoirs of the late Mrs Elizabeth Hamilton. With a Selection from her Correspondence, and other Unpublished Writings, 2 vols, (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme and Brown, 1818), I, p.50.

33. 'Account of the Author' in The Works of Grace Kennedy, 6 vols (Edinburgh: Oliphant, 1827), I, pp.vi-vii.

some contemporary (i.e. early nineteenth century) opinion of women writers. The following passage, from which this thesis takes its title, is not untypical:

A female, advancing thus into public notice, should consider herself as in a kind of representative capacity, becoming, if we may be indulged the expression, a sample of her sex, whole generations of which, whose virtues confined them to the vale of domestic life, are less the objects of attention and discussion than one such character. If therefore, it could be supposed that self respect were too weak a principle, a generous regard to the feelings of those of whom she will be vulgarly deemed a fair, though prominent specimen, ought, we conceive, to produce a constant and delicate watchfulness. That this has not uniformly been the case, we need not refer to the Sapphos of antiquity to prove.

Few, we allow, are exposed to greater perplexities than a female writer, for even if she never really departs from her proper sphere, she is startled sometimes to find herself so near the verge of it as to require the most vigilant caution. But surely the danger should serve rather to increase her watchfulness, than to apologize for her temerity. Should she wilfully transgress, she must consent to be treated as an exile, outlawed in her native country, and regarded with a suspicious and contumelious eye in the foreign land upon which she enters. Nor let such an one complain of privations necessary to the course to which she has volunteered. The pleasures of the adventurer cannot be those of home. The enjoyments of such a female cannot be feminine.

There may be situations, indeed, in which we can imagine a female, making a voluntary sacrifice, and embracing opportunities of usefulness, from which she internally shrinks. But few, we believe, are called to unnatural duties; those who are, may be respected as martyrs; those who are not, and yet venture, deserve a reprehension more severe than we could willingly bestow.<sup>34</sup>

Although this long discursive passage occurs in the course of a review of Mary Brunton's Self-Control, the novel itself is not mentioned once in the consecutive paragraphs

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34. Anonymous review of Self-Control, Eclectic Review, 8 (1812), 603-620 (p.618).



quoted. Awareness of the particular cultural constraints under which the early nineteenth century woman writer worked helps to appreciate the kinds of writing they undertook.

In the Scottish literary histories, however, women writers of the early nineteenth century are not usually considered in the light of the cultural context determined by their gender. They have rather tended to be subject to a restricted number of fates: (1) total exclusion, (2) cursory mention, or (3) a good deal more adverse criticism than seems justified by their work and the success/critical acclaim such works earned in their own day. This is not to suggest that popularity necessarily denotes lasting merit; however, the contemporary reviews do provide a context of considerable cultural interest.

### III ii Voices in History

Nineteenth century opinion of some of these women writers could hardly be more different from that of the present century. For instance, in a review of Scott's Waverley, a critic in the Quarterly Review ranked Elizabeth Hamilton with Maria Edgeworth, while another, some years later in the New Monthly Magazine, deemed her *superior* to the Irish

writer.<sup>35</sup> Of Mary Brunton's Self-Control (1811), one contemporary critic wrote, 'parties have been formed respecting it; some extolling it to the skies, and others depressing it below its real merits'.<sup>36</sup> Some women novelists, such as Christian Johnstone and Jane Porter, were highly successful in their own day, not just in terms of book sales, but also in terms of contemporary criticism. Christian Johnstone's entry in the Dictionary of National Biography includes the mention that her Clan-Albin, a National Tale (1815) was 'described by Professor Wilson as a novel of great merit, full of incident and character, and presenting many fine and bold pictures of external nature'. And in Chambers' A Biographical Dictionary of Eminent Scotsmen [sic] Johnstone's biographer mentions the names of Johnstone and Scott in the same sentence - praise indeed - writing as follows,

Sir Walter Scott's novels were already bringing Scotland into vogue, and several writers were throwing themselves into the popular current; but of all the followers of the "Great Unknown", none was received with greater favour than Mrs Johnstone.

Some of the contemporary praise of Jane Porter is hardly less brilliant; of Thaddeus of Warsaw (1803) one commentator concludes, 'Altogether, the work has more merit than can be ascribed to the crowd of productions of this class [i.e. romance]'.<sup>37</sup> Her second novel, The Scottish  
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35. Anonymous review of Waverley in Quarterly Review 11 (1814) p.355; New Monthly Magazine 13 (1820) p.273.

36. Anonymous review of Self-Control in British Critic 38 (1811), 213-220 (p.213).

37. Anonymous review of Thaddeus of Warsaw in the Monthly Review, n.s. 43, (1804), 214-215 (p.215).

Chiefs (1810), was ranked by a reviewer in the Glasgow Magazine 'with the first of the modern race of novels'.<sup>38</sup>

Another critic, rather more censoriously setting out a number of factual errors, is nevertheless only slightly less enthusiastic about this second novel, commenting,

These blunders, perfectly excusable in any writer, hurried away by the ardour of composition on such a subject may be easily corrected; and, as we have always experienced candour, where we have found genius and good sense, we doubt not that Miss Porter will thank us for pointing them out, and correct them in the future editions of her most interesting work. We are not much in the practice of praising either novels or romances; but we shall think worse of the taste of the readers of such works than we do even at present, if many editions of *The Scottish Chiefs* be not called for, and called for soon.<sup>39</sup>

The word 'genius' which appears in the above review, is rather startling: in the early nineteenth century it was not a term casually applied to women.<sup>40</sup> Perhaps, however, the list of 'blunders' preceding the use of the word 'genius' was intended to subdue the effect of the superlative praise embodied in the term.

Susan Ferrier's novels were similarly very warmly received upon their publication. Walter Scott famously referred to

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38. Anonymous review of The Scottish Chiefs in the Glasgow Magazine (1810), 67-74 (p.74).

39. Anonymous review in the British Critic 37, (1811), 247-256 (p.256).

40. The topic of female genius is thoroughly investigated by Christine Battersby in her Gender and Genius: Towards a Feminist Aesthetics (London: Women's Press, 1989) in which she reports on her research into the use of the term *genius* in the nineteenth century. Like *author*, the term *genius* was at that time, generally held (at least by the men who wrote about it) to be correctly used only in reference to persons of male gender.

Ferrier as the Scottish member of 'that feminine trio to which England supplied Jane Austen, and Ireland Maria Edgeworth',<sup>41</sup> and William Blackwood wrote that a correspondent of his had been reminded of 'Miss Austen's very best things' by Ferrier's The Inheritance.<sup>42</sup> It is an inescapable fact that women writers such as these enjoyed very considerable success and acclaim in the field of the novel in the early nineteenth century. Many other enthusiastic reviews may be found in journals of the day, and some of these are discussed in relevant chapters of this thesis. Whilst not all the contemporary critics were enamoured of the writings of these women, their works have been increasingly belittled by critics from the late nineteenth century onwards.

Germaine Greer interestingly comments on what she calls the 'phenomenon of the transience of female literary fame',

Almost uninterruptedly since the Interregnum, a small group of women have enjoyed dazzling literary prestige during their own lifetimes, only to vanish without trace from the records of posterity,<sup>43</sup>.

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41. Quoted by James E.M. Irvine in his Introduction to The Inheritance (1824; repr. Bampton: Three Rivers Books, 1984), p.xiv.

42. Memoir and Correspondence of Susan Ferrier 1782-1854 ed. by John Doyle (London: John Murray, 1898), p.174. Herbert Foltinek erroneously attributes this view of Ferrier to Blackwood himself, in relation to Marriage, remarking that 'few would still subscribe to Blackwood's claim' in his Introduction to Marriage (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), p.xvi.

43. Germaine Greer, "Flying Pigs and Double Standards" Times Literary Supplement, 26 July 1974, p.784. Quoted by Elaine Showalter, A Literature of Their Own (1977), p.11.

Contemporary critical success does not of course necessarily confer lasting literary status upon any writing: literature, like all aspects of Western culture, is subject to trends, and new and different ways of thinking. So-called 'improving' literature, much looked down upon by twentieth century critics (as by Craig and Gifford above) was at one time - not so very long ago - considered in a much less censorious fashion. The main point here however, is that while male writers go in and out of fashion, they do tend to retain their place in literary history while women writers, once out of fashion, are not only dropped from the canon, but also, as it were, from literary history. In the following section, this tendency to sideline women writers from literary history is further considered, in the light of feminist attempts to redress the balance, 'to record new choices in a new literary history' in the words of Elaine Showalter.<sup>44</sup>

#### IV Evaluating Women's Writing: Feminist Perspectives

The absence of women writers from Scottish literary histories, effectively displacing them from the Scottish tradition, does not seem particularly unusual, when compared with the histories of other literatures - such as English and American - in which very few women writers were included prior to the advent of feminism. Ian Watt's

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44. Elaine Showalter, A Literature of their Own (1977), p.36.

history of the early novel, The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding famously devotes little attention to women writers; this despite Watt's own admission that the 'majority of eighteenth-century novels were actually written by women'.<sup>45</sup> Early feminists such as Ellen Moers tended to remain somewhat under the influence of critics like Watt, for instance in her Literary Women she reports that Watt 'honored [Mme de Staël] as precursor of his study of the rise of the novel' (p.207), but makes no mention of his flagrant omission of women novelists generally from that study.

Jane Spencer deals with the same period as Ian Watt in her critical work, with its deliberately resonating title, The Rise of the Woman Novelist from Aphra Behn to Jane Austen, which serves as something of a corrective to Watt's male-dominated picture of the early novel. Although not the first critic to take Watt to task for his blinkered approach, Spencer's revision of the literary history that critics such as Watt put in place, is probably the most comprehensive study of women's writing in the period.<sup>46</sup>

When it comes to revising established histories by way of including less well-known and acclaimed literature, one

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45. Watt, Ian, The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding (London: Chatto & Windus, 1957; repr. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1963), p.310.

46. Other feminist works tackling similar territory include Dale Spender's Mothers of the Novel: 100 Good Women Writers before Jane Austen (1986) and Janet Todd's The Sign of Angellica: Women, Writing and Fiction, 1660-1800 (1989).

major stumbling-block for critics is the perennial question of how such writing may best be evaluated. A number of critics have set themselves the task of addressing this tough question. For example, Jane Tompkin's Sensational Designs concludes with a chapter entitled, '"But is it Any Good?": The Institutionalization of Literary Value' and deals with the terms of literary value in regard to nineteenth century American women's writing.<sup>47</sup> Tompkins formulates the most common objections to studying American women's writing of this period as follows:

People often object...that while one may affirm the power or centrality of a novel on the grounds that it intersects with widely-held beliefs and grapples with pressing social problems, that affirmation does not prove anything one way or another about the literary value of the text, and does nothing to guarantee its status as a work of art...For criticism, the objection goes, concerns itself with the specifically *literary* features of American writing. And what distinguishes a work as *literature* is the way it separates itself from transitory issues...The fact that a work engages such issues, in this view, is an index not of its greatness, but of its limitation; the more directly it engages purely local and temporal concerns, the less literary it will be, not only because it is captive to the fluctuations of history, but also because in its attempt to mold public opinion it is closer to propaganda than to art, and hence furnishes material for the historian rather than the literary critic.  
(p.186)

Using the example of anthologies of American literature published between 1919 and 1962, Tompkins effectively demonstrates that standards of judgement have changed radically during this period; the literary values which seem incontestable to the critics of one age are not

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47. Jane Tompkins, Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction 1790-1860 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985). Further references to this book are given after quotations in the text.

necessarily so to those of another. She goes on to comment of successive editions of one particular anthology, as follows, 'in addition to a sharp narrowing in the range and number of authors, there has been a virtual rewriting of literary history, as entire periods, genres, and modes of classification disappear' (p.189).

Jane Tompkins urges a new constitution of American literature, which places literary value not merely upon the 'timeless, universal ideal of truth and formal coherence' (her formulation of the prime requisites of indisputably good literary texts in the eyes of this century's (predominantly male) critics) but upon texts which do 'a certain kind of cultural work within a specific historical situation...expressing and shaping the social context that produced them' (p.200). Women's writing especially, not just in America, but also on the other side of the Atlantic throughout the British Isles, tends to fulfil this kind of office, often commenting in particular upon the role of women in contemporary society. In their Introduction to A History of Scottish Women's Writing, Douglas Gifford and Dorothy McMillan signal their awareness of this factor, writing:

A history, especially in so far as it is retrospective, allows certain texts to be read as cultural documents alongside others that we might, in spite of current levelling theoretical approaches, want to privilege as having special aesthetic primacy.

They conclude,

It is probably a necessary condition of a history of writing that some of the past writing that it discusses is not of as high a quality as some of the contemporary writing that it leaves out. (p.xxi)



The problems facing the history-makers, of which writers merit inclusion or exclusion are as insuperable today as ever.

The issue of evaluation - of what critical 'values' are most important - underlies the compilation of all anthologies and canon formation. Compilers of anthologies have tended to be as reticent as the historians, in regard to the publications of women writers through history. In the field of Scottish poetry, for instance, an anthology which has been used in Scottish universities and schools and which was published in a new edition as recently as 1983, includes work by only around a dozen women poets as compared with poems by some 75 men.<sup>48</sup> On the other hand, Catherine Kerrigan's anthology of Scottish women poets published in 1991, includes work by over a hundred women. Of course Kerrigan was working to a very different agenda from Lindsay; as she writes in her Introduction,

My purpose in producing this work was to provide a starting, not a finishing, point for the very real challenge that awaits those who are committed to the reclamation of women's literature. (p.10)

It is not simply a matter of pitting these two different collections of poets against each other, in order to ascertain which deserve notice. The situation Tompkins (1985) describes besetting the American 'professoriate' strikes a chord with the writer of this thesis, as it seems

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48. A Book of Scottish Verse, ed. by R.L. Mackie (first published 1934; revised and updated by Maurice Lindsay (London: Robert Hale, 1983)).

equally applicable to Scottish literary history today. She writes:

The struggle now being waged in the professoriate over which writers deserve canonical status is not just a struggle over the relative merits of literary geniuses; it is a struggle among contending factions for the right to be represented in the picture America draws of itself. (p.201)

In the field of Scottish literature, Tom Leonard, in the Introduction to his poetry anthology, Radical Renfrew (1990) echoes Tompkins's sentiment when he writes,

A person must feel free to go back into the past that is Literature, go where they like and meet equally with whom they will. If a model of Literature has been created that prevents this, that model should be removed, and with it the metaphors that restrict the open nature of people's access. (p.xxvi)

Such a preventative 'model of Literature' as Tom Leonard critically outlines above has been very much in evidence in the histories of Scottish literature, discussed above. The authors of these histories tend to caution the interested reader against sampling the writings of early nineteenth century women; readers are encouraged to take the literary historian's word for it that these women's writings are beneath notice.

In the conclusion of her discussion on 'The Subject and the Text', Catherine Belsey - though concerned with literature in general, rather than Scottish Literature in particular - pinpoints a problem that is particularly relevant in the context of Scottish Literature:

Having created a canon of acceptable texts, criticism then provides them with acceptable interpretations,

thus effectively censoring any elements in them which come into collision with the dominant ideology.<sup>49</sup>

Scottish women fiction writers of the early nineteenth century continue to be largely omitted by the historians, perhaps because their works do not tend to conform to today's dominant ideology, at least as this is perceived by these same historians. The current attitude towards 'improving' literature, as previously referred to, is a good case in point.

Joanna Russ comes to the same kind of conclusion at the end of her groundbreaking text, How to Suppress Women's Writing (1983), when she describes her initiation into an appreciation of the black woman novelist, Zora Neale Hurston's work, Their Eyes Were Watching God (1937). On first reading, she found the novel 'inferior to the great central tradition of Western Literature', but on later re-reading the novel, in the light of a number of key critical works on Black women's writing, she found 'it was astonishing how much the novel had improved in the interval'. This episode provoked a number of questions which can easily be transposed into the situation in Scottish literature today:

Could it be that all these authors [i.e. black women] were not - as I had unthinkingly assumed - in subsidiary traditions, but *parallel* ones? And that the only thing unique, superior to all others, and especially important in my tradition - was that I was in it? Was centrality really a relative matter?  
(p.137)

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49. In her essay 'Constructing the Subject: Deconstructing the Text' in Feminist Criticism and Social Change, ed. by Judith Newton and Deborah Rosenfelt, (London: Methuen, 1985), pp.45-64 (p.58).

## V Feminist Theory and this Thesis

### i Feminist Critiques of Scottish Literature to Date

This thesis argues that although the novels of these early 19th century women fiction writers do not necessarily fit comfortably into the literary map of Scotland as hitherto drawn up, their writings are nevertheless worthy of a place in the history. Feminist theory offers many new and interesting ways of approaching women's writing, but has so far been little utilised in the field of Scottish literature, at least prior to the publication of A History of Scottish Women's Writing, partly due to simple arithmetic: even now there are few feminists working in this field.

A significant strand of feminist debate in Scottish literature which has previously emerged has tended to be concerned with later writers, or with men. One early attempt to offer a more synthesised approach to Scottish women's writing is to be found in an article by Carol Anderson and Glenda Norquay, entitled 'Superiorism', published in 1984, in which the writers promote the need for 'some co-operative spirit, a collective effort to uncover the social and cultural history of women in Scotland'.<sup>50</sup> Carol Anderson has written on a number of feminist issues, from the representation of women in Scottish fiction (by men) to more recent work on various

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50. Carol Anderson and Glenda Norquay, 'Superiorism' in Cencrastus, 15 (1984), 8-10 (p.10).

twentieth century Scottish women writers.<sup>51</sup> Jenni Calder is another critic who has presented new and interesting feminist-driven readings of Scottish women writers.<sup>52</sup> Women-centred editions of journals such as Chapman also point towards a brighter future for the recognition of Scottish women's writing.<sup>53</sup>

The new collection of critical essays as A History of Scottish Women's Writing, edited by Douglas Gifford and Dorothy McMillan, was published just prior to the completion of this thesis, and has totally changed the face of the study of Scottish women's writing. In more than forty essays by academic critics, applying a wide range of theories and methodologies, a history is plotted, spanning the years from the early sixteenth century, to the present

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51. See for instance, Carol Anderson, 'The Representation of Women in Scottish Fiction: Character and Symbol' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Edinburgh, 1985) concerning male writers from Scott to Grassie; 'Listening to the Women Talk' in The Scottish Novel since the Seventies: New Visions, Old Dreams ed. by Gavin Wallace and Randall Stevenson (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1994), pp.170-186, which focuses upon Jessie Kesson, Emma Tennant and Sharman Macdonald; 'Debateable Land: The Prose Work of Violet Jacob' in Tea and Leg-Irons, ed. by Caroline Gonda (London: Open Letters, 1992), pp.31-44.
52. See for instance, Jenni Calder, 'Heroes and Hero-makers: Women in Nineteenth-Century Scottish Fiction' in The History of Scottish Literature: Volume 3, Nineteenth Century ed. by Douglas Gifford (1988), pp.261-274, which as the title implies includes a survey of the period, although the main focus for discussion in this essay is Margaret Oliphant (1828-1897).
53. See Chapman 27-28, 1980, entitled 'Woven by Women'; Chapman 74-75 (Autumn/Winter 1993), entitled 'The Women's Forum: Women in Scottish Literature' and Chapman 76 (Spring 1994), entitled 'The Women's Forum: Women in the Arts in Scotland'.

day, considering a host of writers belonging to all kinds of genres, including essayists, novelists, poets and dramatists. The editors comment that,

What [the] volume does is to present a series of possibilities, to envisage a kind of fluid paradigm. It does not present a canon; it offers instead some possible maps of the country and a series of possible routes through it. (p.xix)

In A History of Scottish Women's Writing, women novelists of the early nineteenth century are considered in the essay by Carol Anderson and the writer of this thesis, which has already been mentioned. Outwith this publication, however, there are very few examples of critics or historians in the field of Scottish literature using feminist theory to explore early nineteenth century novels by Scottish women. Dorothy Porter McMillan's essay, 'Heroines and Writers' and Joy Hendry's, entitled, 'A Double Knot on the Peeny' each concern women writers belonging to this period, but both these essays take account of over a hundred years of Scottish women's writing, and are concerned with both poets and novelists, so that discussion of individual writers is necessarily succinct.<sup>54</sup> Some early 19th century Scottish women writers - for instance Jane Porter, Mary Brunton and Susan Ferrier - have come to the attention of feminist critics outwith the sphere of Scottish literature and their analysis is considered in the relevant chapters in this thesis.

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54. Dorothy Porter McMillan, 'Heroines and Writers' in Tea and Leg Irons: New Feminist Readings from Scotland ed. by Caroline Gonda (1992), pp.17-30. Joy Hendry, 'A Double Knot on the Peeny', in In Other Words: Writing as a Feminist, ed. by Gail Chester and Sigrid Neilsen (London: Hutchinson, 1987), pp.36-45.

Lagging a little behind English and American literatures in respect of the application of feminist theory, feminist academics specialising in Scottish literature are probably more prone to the early anxieties of feminists working in the field of literature generally, as summed up by Annette Kolodny in her keynote article, 'Dancing through the Minefield: Some Observations on the Theory, Practice, and Politics of a Feminist Literary Criticism':

If we are scholars dedicated to rediscovering a lost body of writings by women, then our finds are questioned on aesthetic grounds. And if we are critics, determined to practice revisionist readings, it is claimed that our focus is too narrow, and our results are only distortions or, worse still, polemical misreadings.<sup>55</sup>

Kolodny's observations are just as apt today, more than fifteen years since the writing of this article. The metaphorical field of feminist criticism within Scottish Literature perhaps more than in other literatures, is still today littered with explosives and despite a significant leap forward in the publication of A History of Scottish Women's Writing, the need 'to negotiate the minefield' remains as pressing as ever.

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55. First published in Feminist Studies 6:1 (Spring 1980) 1-25; reprinted in Feminisms: An Anthology of Literary Theory and Criticism ed. by Robyn R. Warhol and Diane Price Herndl (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1991) pp.97-116 (p.101).

V     ii     Feminist Literary History and Scottish Women's  
Writing in the Early Nineteenth Century

In her useful introductory book, Feminist Literary History: A Defence, Janet Todd outlines the type of literary history which she advocates:

I should like to urge a kind of historically specific, archival, ideologically aware but still empirically based enterprise, using a sense of specific genre as well as notions of changing female experience. This kind of feminist literary history, calling on the work of British feminists concerned with ideology and on historians of culture, would, I think, be a corrective to the early American feminist criticism, on which it is none the less based but which in its enthusiasm for cultural change rushed into premature and erroneous generalizations.<sup>56</sup>

The 'early American feminist criticism' which Todd refers to above includes Spacks's The Female Imagination which she criticises for asking huge questions which it fails to answer, Moers's Literary Women (1976), Elaine Showalter's A Literature of Their Own (1977) which, Todd writes 'made no aesthetic case for the critically ignored genre these women chose, but focused instead on the social context and guilt of the enterprise' (p.26), and finally Gilbert and Gubar's The Madwoman in the Attic in which the aim was to expose 'a common, female impulse to struggle free from social and literary confinement through strategic redefinitions of self, art, and society'.<sup>57</sup> The feminist literary history which Todd favours is undoubtedly informed by all of these

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56. Janet Todd, Feminist Literary History: A Defence (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988), p.7.

57. Patricia Meyer Spacks, The Female Imagination (New York: Knopf, 1975); quotation taken from Janet Todd (1988), p.28, from Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, The Madwoman in the Attic (1979), p.xii.



critical approaches, but is not as restrictive as any one of them. For instance, although she censures Spacks for her generalisations, she still follows that critic's definition of feminist criticism, which she quotes from Spacks as follows:

To include any mode that approaches a text with primary concern for the nature of female experience in it - the fictional experience of characters, the deducible or imaginable experience of an author, the experience implicit in language or structure.<sup>58</sup>

This thesis follows the spirit of Janet Todd's outline of feminist literary history as detailed above. The field of study is exclusively restricted to the writings of women. There is no apology for taking this position; as Todd puts it,

Women are, after all, in history as material entities...they form a kind of non-identical paradigm of the historical process itself. (p.82)

It is possible, like Janet Todd, to 'accept a difference in male and female experience and...not [to] regard it as essentialist in any pejorative way to stress it' (p.138).

Following Todd's suggestion, a 'specific sense of genre' has been brought to bear upon the writers under discussion in this thesis. Genre is, as defined by Chris Baldick, 'a recognizable and established category of written work employing such common conventions as will prevent readers

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58. Quoted by Todd (1988), p.5; from Patricia Spacks, 'The Difference It Makes', in A Feminist Perspective in the Academy, ed. by Elizabeth Langland and Walter Grove, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), p.14.

or audiences from mistaking it for another kind'.<sup>59</sup> Todd (1988) writes that by considering literature according to genre, the critic may break down the 'aristocracy of discourse' and throw a fresh light upon 'genres that have been despised as popular or feminine' (pp.99-100). She continues,

To ignore genre is often to be led astray by a momentary critical fashion and to be pulled away from any consideration of intention in the most obvious sense, what literary gestures originally signalled or what strangeness the author conveyed in her disrupting of expectation. (p.100)

By the same token, the identification of the genres within which the Scottish women writers considered in this thesis were working leads to a useful starting place for new readings. An understanding of genre helps the reader to approach texts in an informed and sympathetic way.

In her book The Sign of Angellica: Women, Writing and Fiction, 1660-1800 Janet Todd puts her theory into practice, setting up a mixture of genre and other categories within which to explore the writers she is investigating. Thus, chapter headings in her study range from those on specific writers, 'Life after Sex: Delarivier Manley' through those which focus on chronological periods, 'The Female Wits: Women Writers of the Restoration and Early Eighteenth Century' to those concerned with types (or genres) of novels: 'Novelists of Sentiment:...' ; 'The Fantasy of Sensibility:...' and so on. Jane Spencer, who

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59. Quoted from Chris Baldick, The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990).

similarly covers a great range of women writers in her The Rise of the Woman Novelist (1986), adopts a scheme involving a move from the initially unsegregated themed chapter 'Wit's Mild Empire: The Rise of Women's Writing' to a strongly generic organisation of women's writing within a number of posited traditions, such as 'The Tradition of Protest', 'The Didactic Tradition', and 'The Tradition of Escape'.

## V     iii   Methodology

Scottish women's writing of the early nineteenth century has too often been lumped together as a rather uninspiring mass; this thesis, by examining novels under generic headings, attempts to suggest the very wide range of novel-writing undertaken by Scottish women in the early nineteenth century as well as highlighting some significant strands existing within it. In structure, the thesis broadly follows a model set up by critics such as Janet Todd (1989) and Jane Spencer (1986). In the chapters which follow, a course is plotted through a number of genres, whose boundaries blur increasingly, until in the case of Christian Johnstone, categorisation proves impossible.

From the huge range of material available in this period, the writers and/or novels chosen for particular attention in this thesis illustrate the wide variety of women's fiction writing in Scotland in the early nineteenth century. Works by Jane Porter and Eliza Logan are examined

as examples of *historical romance*; those by Grace Kennedy and Elizabeth Hamilton represent a tradition of *didactic fiction*; by Mary Brunton, *courtesy novels*; by Susan Ferrier, *anti-fashionable novels of fashionable life*. The relevant genre classifications are defined in each chapter, an exercise which points up the ways in which writers may most usefully be approached and also the very real difficulties of constraining writers under rigid headings. It is shown that while novels may be usefully read in generic terms, although they also strain against the confines of the genres in which they are classified here.

The concluding chapter of Jane Tompkins's Sensational Designs (1985), provides Susan K. Harris with the title of her essay, '"But is it any good?": Evaluating Nineteenth-Century American Women's Fiction', in which she pushes forward the tentative suggestions in Tompkins's book chapter, encouraging the reading of non-canonical American women's literature in terms of *process*:

That is, to see it within the shifting currents of nineteenth-century American ideologies. Acknowledging that imaginative literature is both reactive and creative, we can examine the ways that it springs from, reacts against, or responds to the plots, themes, languages in the discursive arena that engendered it at the same time that it creates new possibilities for that arena by reshaping old words into new ones.<sup>60</sup>

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60. Susan Harris, '"But is it any good?": Evaluating Nineteenth-Century American Women's Fiction', American Literature, 63 (1991), 43-61 (p.44). Further references to this essay are given after quotations in the text.

Harris's focus is on sentimental fiction written by women in America in the mid-1800s, but her approach can usefully be applied to other fictions, and proves very fruitful in the discussion of Scottish women writers of the early nineteenth century. In the concluding section of her essay, Harris provides a list of eight groups of questions by which nineteenth century American women's fiction may be analysed and evaluated. While the primary organising principle of this thesis is generic, as already discussed, Harris's paradigm nevertheless proves very useful, and the questions she asks inform the debate in each of the following chapters. For instance, Harris asks,

What is the intertextual *gestalt* of the novel? From what other texts does it take its premises? How does it transform these premises to fit its own peculiar needs? How appropriate is its "rereading" or its "misprisioning" of the earlier texts? (p.61)

In this regard, throughout the thesis, the Scottish women writers under discussion are contextualised in a range of terms: significantly that of other women's writing of the time and before, and that of Scottish literature generally. Consideration of the context within which the women writers published greatly aids the understanding and appreciation of their work.

In positioning the writers in their Scottish context, particular attention is paid to the ways in which they make use of Scots language - whether to denote social class, age, or some other factor. Consideration is also given to the political stances of the writers concerned. For instance, their perceived conservatism is questioned and an attempt is made to establish what specific political points

are being made by these writers, whether overtly or covertly, about the time in which they lived. Referring to late eighteenth century novels, Nancy Armstrong writes that,

Stories that revolve around courtship and marriage offered a way of indulging in fantasies of political power with a kind of impunity, so long as these were played out within a domestic frame of reference, and so long as the traditional relationship between husband and wife was ultimately affirmed. Domestic fiction, in other words, provided a way of talking about conflict and contradictions within the socio-economic sphere while remaining remote from that world.<sup>61</sup>

Many passages in the novels considered within this thesis are shown to be loaded with covert messages about women's position in society, lack of access to advanced level education and so on. An exploration is made of the ways in which the novelists use their women protagonists to transgress or even subvert the conventions of the genres they inhabit. While the heroines of historical romance, for example, may seem highly conventional, a subtext often indicates otherwise.

It is one of the purposes of this thesis to suggest a significantly altered configuration of Scottish literary history. The vigorous 'disappearance' of so many women's texts from the Scottish literary canon severely limits their ability to impact upon their potential inheritors, a somewhat bleak state of affairs. In the following chapters, nineteenth century reviews are compared with more

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61. Nancy Armstrong, 'The Rise of Feminine Authority in the Novel', Novel 15, (1982), 127-145, (p.133).

recent critiques of the novels in question (when either/both of these are available) in order to illustrate and draw attention to the ideological changes that have shaped critics' responses to works by Scottish women writers.

Moira Burgess, in the Introduction to her pioneering anthology, The Other Voice tentatively suggests the existence of a distinctive Scottish women's voice:

I think there is a music, or tone of voice, peculiar to Scottish women's writing, which is clearly heard in most of the pieces in this collection, and it is not a sentimental one. It tends rather to an ironic detachment, particularly perhaps when the writer is observing other women.<sup>62</sup>

It is not the purpose of this thesis to support the idea of such a kind of homogeneous women's tradition in Scottish literature; on the contrary, such generalisations are avoided. Instead, emphasis is laid on the variety (in tone, and in genre) of early nineteenth century women's fiction writing in Scotland. Nevertheless, certain recurring thematic preoccupations provide a focus for discussion, in particular a concern with issues specific to women, for instance the difficulties inherent in the socially allocated roles of mothers, daughters and wives. As Jane Spencer writes in The Rise of the Woman Novelist (in the context of English literature) there are a number of themes in women's novels 'which they treated in a way significantly different from their male counterparts and -----

62. The Other Voice: Scottish Women's Writing since 1808 ed. by Moira Burgess (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1987), p.i.

which entitle us to refer to 'women's traditions' in the novel' (p.viii). While eschewing the idea of the specifically Scottish women's voice, it is nevertheless possible to trace 'women's traditions' in Scottish literature, similar to those described by Spencer, and this is undertaken in the following chapters.

This thesis argues that the inclusion of women fiction writers of the early nineteenth century in the history of Scottish literature would make a significant difference to the very concept of Scottish literature. As Robert Crawford (1992) has said, 'Scotland and Scottish culture, like all nations and cultures, require continual acts of re-imagining which alter and develop their natures' (pp.14-15). The 'Scottish Tradition in Literature' (in the coinage of Kurt Wittig (1958)) is significantly altered and developed by the inclusion of women writers in its scheme, since their presence in the history of Scottish literature means the acceptance that there exists not just one, but a number of parallel, often overlapping, traditions in Scottish literature. Within this broader representation of Scottish literature, the role of early nineteenth century women fiction writers - who have to date been largely ignored or misrepresented in the histories - is clearly quite substantial.



## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **JANE PORTER, ELIZA LOGAN AND THE HISTORICAL ROMANCE**

## I Introduction:

### Jane Porter, Eliza Logan and Scottish Literary History

This chapter concerns novels written by two women: The Scottish Chiefs: A Romance (1810) by Jane Porter (1776-1850), published some years before any of Walter Scott's novels appeared and St Johnstoun; or John, Earl of Gowrie (1823) and Restalrig; or The Forfeiture (1829) by Eliza Logan, both published in the wake of Scott's highly successful Waverley novels.<sup>1</sup> Very little information has been uncovered regarding Eliza Logan. She is listed in the Directory of Authors in the Scottish Fiction Reserve in which the dates she flourished, 1823-1829, are given, but no other details are recorded.<sup>2</sup> Despite considerable efforts by the writer of this thesis and library staff at the University of Glasgow, the Mitchell Library and the National Library of Scotland, combing through journals of the day and numerous reference works, standard and obscure, no further information on Logan came to light in the course of research for this thesis. Her novels were published anonymously, Restalrig with the legend 'by the author of St

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1. Jane Porter, The Scottish Chiefs, 5 vols (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees and Orme, 1810); Eliza Logan, St Johnstoun; or John, Earl of Gowrie, 3 vols, (Edinburgh: Maclachlan and Stewart, 1823) and Restalrig; or The Forfeiture, 2 vols (Edinburgh: Maclachlan and Stewart, 1829). Further references are to these editions and are given after quotations in the text. Plot summaries of these novels are provided in Appendix III.
  2. Moira Burgess, Directory of Authors in the Scottish Fiction Reserve (Edinburgh: National Library of Scotland, 1986).

Johnstoun or John, Earl of Gowrie' on the title page.<sup>3</sup> Of Jane Porter, on the other hand, there is quite a fund of biographical material.

Along with her novel-writing sister, Anna Maria (1780-1832), Jane Porter enjoyed considerable celebrity in her own day, precipitating a good deal of coverage in the literary press, not just about her novels but also about their writer. Both women merit long entries in the Dictionary of National Biography and are cited in other nineteenth century reference works.<sup>4</sup> Jane Porter was the daughter of a Scottish mother and Irish father. Her formative years were spent in Edinburgh, where interestingly one early childhood friend was the young Walter Scott. According to her entry in the Dictionary of National Biography, 'Walter Scott... was a frequent visitor at their [i.e. the Porter family's] house, and he... delighted them with fairy tales or stories of the borders'.

Though many of the Porter sisters' works are partly concerned with Scottish affairs, Jane Porter's second novel, The Scottish Chiefs, is the only one of them to deal

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3. The novels are attributed to Eliza Logan in Andrew Block, ed., The English Novel 1740-1850: A Catalogue (London: Grafton, 1939) as well as in the catalogues of Glasgow University Library and the National Library of Scotland. Thanks to Julie Coleman in Special Collections for attempts to find biographical material on Logan.
4. Dictionary of National Biography, 63 vols (London: Smith, Elder, 1875-1900). Further references to The Dictionary of National Biography are to this standard edition.

with an exclusively Scottish theme, making it of particular interest to historians of Scottish literature, not least because it predates Scott's Waverley (1814), traditionally credited with being the first historical novel. In an alleged conversation with George IV, Scott apparently credited Porter's The Scottish Chiefs with being 'the parent, in his mind, of the Waverley Novels'.<sup>5</sup> It is possible that the anecdote regarding Scott's conversation with the King is apocryphal. However, there is no doubting the fact that with her first novel, Thaddeus of Warsaw (1803), based upon real-life figures in recent Polish history, including the nationalist General Kosciuszko (a topic on which her brother, a well-travelled historical painter would have been able to furnish her abundantly) and The Scottish Chiefs, concerning the period in Scottish history belonging to the national heroes William Wallace and Robert the Bruce, she did anticipate the publication of Scott's first novel, Waverley, by a period of some years.

In an occasional series entitled, 'Gallery of Literary Characters' in Fraser's Magazine, an otherwise rather snide portrait of Jane Porter nevertheless contains the following tribute,

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5. Anonymous, The National Portrait Gallery of Illustrious and Eminent Personages of the Nineteenth Century; with Memoirs, 5 vols, (London: Fisher, Son & Jackson, 1834), V, p.5. In this book, some 175 'illustrious and eminent personages of the nineteenth century' are profiled. The Porter sisters appear to have been very highly regarded at the time, since essays on them comprise two of only eight on women in the entire five volume set (the other six women profiled all being members of royal or aristocratic families).

It is to her fame that she began the system of historical novel-writing, which attained the climax of its renown in the hands of Sir Walter Scott; and no light praise it is that she has thus pioneered the way for the greatest exhibition of the greatest genius of our time. She may parody Bishop Hall, and tell Sir Walter -

"I first adventured - follow me who list,  
And be the *second* Scottish novelist."<sup>6</sup>

Scotland is of course renowned for historical romance due to the massive contribution of Sir Walter Scott, which overshadows all other writing in Scotland in the first quarter of the nineteenth century. Scott was unarguably the most popular historical romance writer in the early nineteenth century (he did though have the benefit of some very clever marketing strategy: being, without question, the best-publicised writer of his time) but he was far from being the only (or the first) one.<sup>7</sup> In his essay, 'Sir Walter Scott and the Tradition of the Historical Novel Before 1814', Rainer Schowering unequivocally gives the lie to this notion, although in his opinion, having surveyed a great deal of the literature in his checklist,

Pride of place still belongs to Scott, ahead of the many other contemporary novelists, for exciting and effective story-telling, for instilling life into

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6. 'Gallery of Literary Characters, No.LXIX: Miss Jane Porter' in Fraser's Magazine, 11 (1835), p.404.
7. David Hewitt writes 'the Scott phenomenon may be represented as the product of successful marketing, rather than authorial genius. Scott was the first author to be promoted in a modern way... Without Constable's marketing flair, it may be argued, Scott's novels would not have been the first best-sellers. Few critics have been able to reconcile these two extreme positions with any comfort.' Quoted from his essay 'Walter Scott' in The History of Scottish Literature: Volume 3, Nineteenth Century ed. by Douglas Gifford (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1988), pp.65-87 (pp.65-66).

history and for careful handling of facts and sources.<sup>8</sup>

Although highly lauded in her own time and indeed for many years after her death, Porter has fared less well in the present day. Her significance in terms of the evolution of the historical novel in Scotland is rarely noticed. In his scholarly treatise on the Scottish historical novel, John MacQueen quotes from Georg Lukács's The Historical Novel, as follows,

What is lacking in the so-called historical novel before Sir Walter Scott is precisely the specifically historical, that is, derivation of the individuality of characters from the historical peculiarity of their age.<sup>9</sup>

MacQueen shares this view with Lukács, consigning anything written prior to Scott (designated by others a historical novel), to a heap of 'so-called historical novels' (my italics) and confining his discussion of the form to that select band of writers, Scott, Galt and Hogg, whose works loom large in all the Scottish literary histories, usually - and again in this case - blotting out the contributions of any minor writers, and, it almost goes without saying, that of all women writers, minor or otherwise. This view of MacQueen's - that prior to Scott, characters in

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8. Rainer Schowerling, 'Sir Walter Scott and the Tradition of the Historical Novel before 1814', in The Living Middle Ages, ed by Uwe Böker et al, (Regensburg: Mittelbayerische Druckerei- und Verlags-Gesellschaft mbH, 1989), pp.227-262 (p.231).
9. John MacQueen, The Enlightenment and Scottish Literature, Volume Two: The Rise of the Historical Novel (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1989), p.7. MacQueen quotes from Georg Lucacs, The Historical Novel, translated by Hannah and Stanley Mitchell (London, 1962: Peregrine reprint, 1969).

historical novels were not moulded so as to show the historical peculiarity of their own day, but that of their writer's - is reinforced by other critics. Gary Kelly, for instance, shares the sentiment, but does not however consider that this aspect of historical novels prior to Scott's makes them defective:

Characterization and plot in The Scottish Chiefs... present a fantasy of social reconstruction and reform through idealized and individual middle-class virtues. The fantasy bears a relation to contemporary political realities insofar as it proposes personal self-discipline, religious piety, domestic virtue, and nationalistic self-dedication as solutions to political and social conflicts in the modern world.<sup>10</sup>

However, having built up a case for Porter's novel being a serious attempt to address social issues of the day, Kelly goes on to undermine its position, concluding somewhat disparagingly that the 'sensational and exciting' romance of The Scottish Chiefs is nevertheless 'an escape from rather than an addressing of present-day social and political realities' (p.97). Kelly does nevertheless champion Porter as a significant early historical novelist, a view which is far from being universally shared.

John MacQueen identifies a chain of literary events in Scottish history linking Macpherson's Temora (1763) to Scott's Waverley (1813) by way of Henry Mackenzie's novels of the 1770s: The Man of Feeling (1771), The Man of the World (1773) and Julia de Roubigné (1777). No mention, however, is made of Jane Porter's Thaddeus of Warsaw (1803)

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10. Gary Kelly, English Fiction of the Romantic Period 1789-1830 (London: Longman, 1989), p.97. Further references to this book are given after quotations in the text.

or The Scottish Chiefs (1810), both published well before Scott's Waverley, both set in the historical past, both concerned with the effects of historical events upon the lives of individual characters. It could easily be argued that Jane Porter provides a useful link in the gap of over thirty-five years between Mackenzie's last novel and Scott's first: Thaddeus and Wallace, with their tender feelings rarely concealed much below the surface are *beaux ideals* very probably modelled to a certain degree after that singular man of feeling, Mackenzie's Harley.

Taking a strikingly different view from MacQueen's, Stuart Curran traces an alternate path towards Scott when he writes,

It can be documented that, though Scott received the credit [for inventing the historical novel], women charted the course he followed to his success. There were three in particular: Maria Edgeworth, Jane Porter, and Sydney Owenson... Jane Porter's Scottish Chiefs... is of particular import for working out the formulas by which the nineteenth-century historical novel would people crucial events with fictional characters.<sup>11</sup>

Jane Porter's sister Anna Maria, who published before Jane, might also provide a stepping stone, linking the eighteenth century writers to those of the nineteenth. James Smith writes of Anna Maria Porter's first novel, Walsh Colville (1797),

The influence of the sentimental male heroes portrayed in such novels as Mackenzie's The Man of Feeling is

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11. Stuart Curran, 'Women readers, women writers' in The Cambridge Companion to British Romanticism, ed. by Stuart Curran (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp.177-195 (p.191).



noticeable.<sup>12</sup>

MacQueen comments on the narrative device adopted by historical novelists of inventing an 'auctorial persona [to] intermediate between the work and [the writer]' and by such means, 'setting the book in an imaginary world larger than itself' (p.26). He traces this back to Mackenzie's three novels (and before them to Marivaux), from the works of Scott, for whom it was a 'favourite narrative device', and Galt, who 'on occasions tries something of the same kind', and, of course, its most elaborate nineteenth century exponent, Hogg, who used the framing structure to great effect in his The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner (1824). In Eliza Logan's St Johnstoun (1823), he could have found another fine example of the device. This novel opens with a 'Prefatory Notice to the Reader' signed by one Peregrine Rover, and dated September 3, 1823, in which it is claimed,

Little more has been done than to copy an old MS., which pretends (with what probability let the reader judge for himself) to explain one of the darkest and most mysterious pages of the History of Scotland. (I, pp.ii-iii)

One hundred pages of the third volume of the novel are taken up with a copy of Peregrine Rover's letter to Tacitus Torpedo, in which he sets out the full, mysterious circumstances of the finding of the manuscript, in a place which may be approached only by water, at Wolf's Crag, near Fastcastle. Peregrine Rover, might be said to occupy the

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12. Entry for 'Anna Maria Porter' in the Dictionary of British Women Writers, ed. by Janet Todd (London: Routledge, 1989).

same kind of narrative space as Hogg's 'Editor' in his The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner (published the following year). Logan's use of a framing device for her tale is unquestionably as sophisticated as that of Hogg. Logan's choice of name for her 'Editor', Peregrine, is an unusual forename to say the least, one probably best known then - as now - from Smollett's Peregrine Pickle (1751) in which many well-known people were pilloried. Peregrine Pickle is a picaresque hero, thus a 'Rover' and it seems clear that Logan is purposely alluding to the earlier work, suggesting an intellectual intertextual playfulness on her part.

Porter and Logan's achievements in the field of the historical romance add a different and worthwhile dimension to Scottish literary history which has unfortunately been completely overlooked to date. Since women writers generally have received little attention in the histories of Scottish literature, no attempt has previously been made to contextualise a writer like Porter within women's traditions of writing.<sup>13</sup> In this regard, there is a considerable measure of intertextual exchange between her publications and those of other Scottish women writers of her day. For instance, her Thaddeus is cited as a

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13. Such a contextualisation of women writers was not part of the remit of the recent A History of Scottish Women's Writing, ed. by Douglas Gifford and Dorothy McMillan (Edinburgh: Edinburgh Press, 1997), although the essay by Carol Anderson and Aileen M. Riddell (pp.179-195) tentatively moves in this direction, considering Porter along with various other novelists of the day.

favourite character by the highly moral heroine of Mary Brunton's Self-Control (considered here in Chapter Four). Further, according to a footnote in the 1839 edition of The Scottish Chiefs, Joanna Baillie deemed Porter's description of 'the burning of the Barns of Ayr, and of Wallace's appearance in the conflagration to be one of the sublimest descriptions she had ever read'; in the same footnote, Porter directs the reader to Baillie's Metrical Legends (1821) in which 'the reader may find her eloquent words on the subject'.<sup>14</sup>

As for Eliza Logan, her novels - along with any biographical information about their creator - have in the present century almost disappeared without trace. This of course is a fate which meets a great many writers and books in the course of time. It is a fate, however, that is more likely to befall those that can be easily marginalised, like Logan, who falls into multiple marginalising compartments: as a woman writer about whom no biographical material exists, as a writer of romance, a regional writer and so on.

In Scottish literary history, a narrow frame is consistently set up around Scott and his contemporaries such as Hogg and Galt, making romance genre fiction in this period seem the preserve of the male writer, when in point of fact, women writers accounted for a great deal of this

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14. Jane Porter, The Scottish Chiefs, 2 vols (London: Bentley, 1939), I, ch.29.

kind of fiction. Important and talented as the male writers undoubtedly were, a consideration of the works of their female contemporaries provides a fuller and more interesting picture of the state of Scottish literature in the early nineteenth century.

## II Generic and Gendered Contexts

The novels considered in this chapter are described as *historical romances*, the first of the genres to be examined in this thesis. Understanding this genre classification of fiction and how it relates to certain other genres helps to construct an informed and sympathetic reading of the texts.

### II i Romance

Jane Porter use the term *romance* herself as an adjectival subtitle for her novel, The Scottish Chiefs: A Romance, and Eliza Logan too, in the Dedication of the second volume of Restalrig writes of 'throwing the garb of romance around the characters' in her book. Whilst *romance* was originally used to denote 'A tale in verse, embodying the life and adventures of some hero of chivalry, and belonging in matter and form to the ages of knighthood' (according to the O.E.D.), this meaning was later extended to include works of prose, eventually evolving into its very loose modern meaning, embracing a wide range of narrative fiction - everything from historical novels to hackneyed, 'true

romance' style love stories. Thus, works with as little in common as the medieval French Roman de la Rose, Sir Thomas Malory's Le Morte Darthur, Sir Walter Scott's The Bride of Lammermoor, Daphne du Maurier's Rebecca and the latest Mills and Boon title, may all be lumped together into the generic category, *romance*.

*Romance*, as it is used in this thesis, is perhaps best defined in terms of the way in which it has been perceived to differ from its near relation, the novel. Clara Reeve, writing in the eighteenth century, sets out the difference between the two genres as follows,

The Romance is an heroic fable, which treats of fabulous persons and things. - The Novel is a picture of real life and manners, and of the times in which it is written.<sup>15</sup>

The two terms (i.e. *romance* and *novel*), with reference to early nineteenth century literature, have tended in recent years to be conflated to a certain extent. In The Rise of the Woman Novelist, Jane Spencer comments on a discussion by Northrop Frye as follows,

Northrop Frye has called the novel 'a realistic displacement of romance', which uses 'the same general structure' as romance but adapts it to 'a demand for greater conformity to ordinary experience'. The

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15. Clara Reeve, The Progress of Romance, I, p.111, quoted by Jane Spencer in The Rise of the Woman Novelist from Aphra Behn to Jane Austen (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), p.182. Further references to Spencer's book are given after quotations in the text.

difference between the two genres would seem from this point of view to be one of degree rather than kind.  
(p.181)<sup>16</sup>

The term *romance* in this discussion is taken to denote a specific kind of novel in which there is little conformity to 'ordinary experience', the extraordinary being very much the order of the day.

Romances tend to follow a few specific conventions in terms of plot, one of the most common of which, for example, is for the romance to commence with a loss of identity of some description, and conclude with the restoration of the same. Northrop Frye (1976) traces a number of conventions, including this one, right back to the ancient Greek romances, commenting,

In the Greek romances we find stories of mysterious birth, oracular prophecies about the future contortion of the plot, foster parents, adventures which involve capture by pirates, narrow escapes from death, recognition of the true identity of the hero and his eventual marriage with the heroine. We open, let us say, Guy Mannering, written fifteen centuries later, and we find that, although there are slight changes in the setting, the kind of story being told, a story of mysterious birth, oracular prophecies, capture by pirates, and the like, is very much the same. (p.4)

Acknowledging the formulaic structure of romance is not however to presume the novels under consideration here are lacking in interest. Porter and Logan use romance inventively, and Porter at least, in ways that came to be adopted by later writers. The loss of identity topos, for  
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16. Jane Spencer quotes from Northrop Frye, The Secular Scripture: A Study of the Structure of Romance (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1976). Further references to Frye's book are given after quotations in the text.

example, so much a stock in trade of romance, is used in The Scottish Chiefs not for an individual character, but the nation state of Scotland as a whole, an idea that Scott was later to develop, in several of his novels, including for instance Waverley (1814) and The Heart of Midlothian (1818). Instead of a character having his identity restored at the close of The Scottish Chiefs, a mysterious box is opened, revealing the lost - and now restored - Scottish regalia, once more in its proper place in Scotland, symbolic of Scotland's continuing identity as an independent state.

Northrop Frye (1976) writes, 'The central element of romance is a love story, and the exciting adventures are normally a foreplay leading up to a sexual union' (p.24). While this characteristic feature of romance is undoubtedly the easiest to mock - Alison Light amusingly sums it up as 'frail flower meets bronzed god' - the love interest, like the mysterious identity motif in such a novel as The Scottish Chiefs, is not always quite as formulaic and conservative as its detractors suggest.<sup>17</sup> Along with a couple who might be considered frail flower and bronzed god in The Scottish Chiefs is the memorable figure of a woman

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17. Alison Light, 'Returning to Manderley' - Romance Fiction, Female Sexuality and Class' in British Feminist Thought: A Reader ed. by Terry Lovell (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990) pp.325-44 (p.341).

who is a spurned admirer and whose passion and unrequited love eventually drive her to a mental breakdown.<sup>18</sup>

Other traditional elements of romance fiction include its setting in situations remote from ordinary life, achieved for example by the use of exotic locations and/or fabulous - even supernatural - characters and events. Characters in romances are frequently figured taking part in extraordinary events - sometimes, though not by any means always, of great historical consequence. The transposition of the action in a novel to a different historical period in itself creates a sense of remoteness. As the modern novelist, L.P. Hartley observes in the first sentence of his novel The Go-Between, 'The past is a foreign country: they do things differently there'.<sup>19</sup> The use of the past as a setting for fiction continues of course to the present day but this romance convention has a long ancestry. The very earliest known romances in English were set in the distant past from the present day of their writers: the Middle English romance, Sir Orfeo, for instance, is set in ancient England; Malory's Le Morte Darthur, is set in a time long before documented history; and Edmund Spenser wrote his Faerie Queen in an obsolete style, to imitate authentic antiquarian romances. By the late eighteenth century, fiction writers had also begun to explore the less

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18. The relationship between the three major figures in The Scottish Chiefs is discussed in full in Section IV.

19. L.P. Hartley, The Go-Between (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1953).



distant past as a setting for romance. Ann Radcliffe's The Italian (1797), for example, opens in the year 1764 - less than forty years prior to its publication date, a far cry from the pre-history setting of some earlier romances, but nevertheless remote enough to provide allure.

## II ii Historical Romance and the Gothic

Some of the customary trappings of the gothic novel have recently been catalogued as follows:

An antiquated and foreign setting; Shakespearean allusions; moonlight gleaming through casements and stained-glass windows; inanimate objects suddenly endowed with supernatural life; subterranean passages; cowardly and garrulous servants; the church's inability to provide a haven from wickedness; mysterious sighs and hollow sounds; lamps extinguished by sudden gusts of wind.<sup>20</sup>

In the Romantic period, gothic fiction had a considerable impact upon poetry, as can be seen in works such as Scott's Marmion (1808) (in which the bricking-up of a nun provides a truly Gothic - and utterly horrific - image) and in Byron's dramatic poem, Manfred (its plot - as is so often the case in gothic romance - hingeing upon a suggestion of incest). The Scottish dramatist Joanna Baillie examined the theme of addiction to artificial fear, such as is induced by the gothic, in one of her Plays on the Passions (1812), Orra: A Tragedy, in which the heroine requests that

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20. Caroline Jane Gonda, 'Fathers and Daughters in Novels from Eliza Haywood to Mary Brunton' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Cambridge, 1991), p.169.

her maid frightens her with a scary story, saying:

... Tell it, I pray thee.  
And let me cow'ring stand, and be my touch  
The valley's ice: there is a pleasure in it.  
Yea, when the cold blood shoots through every vein;  
When every pore upon my shrunken skin  
A knotted knoll becomes, and to mine ears  
Strange inward sounds awake, and to mine eyes  
Rush stranger tears, there is a joy in fear.<sup>21</sup>

During the early nineteenth century, the motifs of gothic romance became rather hackneyed, making it an easy target for parody; the genre was perhaps most famously sent up by Jane Austen in Northanger Abbey (published posthumously in 1818) in which Catherine Morland comically savours all kinds of ludicrous fears about General Tilney and his family home at the abbey. However, elements of the gothic continued to be used without irony too, and often to great effect, for instance by Jane Porter, Walter Scott and Eliza Logan.

The opening of Eliza Logan's Restalrig, sets a thoroughly gothic tone:

[Sprott] shortly afterwards found himself in the midst of the ruins of the monastery [at Berwick], and near to the place of rendezvous, - which, however, from the shade thrown by the parts of the building still standing, and the numerous labyrinths formed by the ruined masses that lay on the ground, he found it no easy matter to discover.

This abbey, the oldest in Scotland, had also been one of the most extensive and splendid. It was here, if ancient records may be believed, that its immaculate abbess, and her nuns, influenced by holy zeal for the safety of their souls, performed an act of barbarous heroism, which has been the means of transmitting their names to a degenerate and incredulous posterity.

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21. Quoted by Ellen Moers, in Literary Women (New York: Doubleday, 1976; repr. London: The Women's Press 1986), p.91.

(I, p.4)

The actual physical appearance of the Abbey is hardly even sketched in for the reader; rather, an atmosphere is created, with hints of tumbled walls, darkness and shadow, and a ghastly history mysteriously alluded to, without being properly filled out. The eerie surroundings are all set for a ghostly apparition, and the reader is not disappointed, when stumbling upon a gloomy arch, Spratt,

Was challenged from within by a voice whose tones were so peculiarly harsh and sepulchral, that they required to be but once heard to be ever after remembered.  
(I, p.8)

It is well nigh impossible to draw a clear line between gothic and historical romance. There is no definitive border: each genre frequently carries some of the paraphernalia of the other. The story in gothic romance is often set in the distant past (just like the historical romance), a device which allows the author considerable freedom. In the Preface to the First Edition of The Castle of Otranto (1764) Horace Walpole claims the novel is a translation of an Italian original, dating from 1529. Further, he goes on to suggest that the events described in the manuscript date from 'between 1095, the era of the first crusade, and 1243, the date of the last, or not long afterwards'.<sup>22</sup> The reader of The Castle of Otranto is, then, separated from the action by a huge gulf in time and even the most fantastic aspects of the story are lent some credence by virtue of the fact of their distance in time

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22. Horace Walpole, The Castle of Otranto (1764; repr. London: Collier-Macmillan, 1966) p.15.

from present-day 'reality' as this is perceived by the reader.

Just as gothic romance often shares a setting in the past with historical romance, so too does the latter 'borrow' certain motifs from the former. The supernatural, at the core of every gothic novel - whether explained away at the outcome or not - frequently plays a significant role in historical romance. Again, the setting in time often allows the writer certain freedom in this respect; even the most sceptical of readers might be able to swallow the idea of supernatural happenings in the past, at the same time as preferring rational explanations of present-day events. The attractiveness (to the reader) of the supernatural as a component of the romance, coupled with the low esteem in which it was held by the enlightened thinkers of the day (in the early nineteenth century), tended to leave writers with the unhappy choice of pleasing readers by including some supernatural element in the plot, or avoiding reviewers' objections, by omitting the same. Most writers of historical romance steered a somewhat hazardous middle course, allowing for the possibility of a supernatural element, without actually crediting it.

The historical romance provides something of a counterbalance to the audacious fantasizing of the gothic. Like the gothic, the historical romance remains a favourite genre today: best-selling novels by authors such as Mary Stewart and Philippa Gregory attest to its continuing

popularity, with readers, and significantly, with women writers.

## II    iii    The Regional Novel and Scotland as a Backdrop for Romance

In the early nineteenth century, the real (but unfamiliar) Highlands of Scotland proved an ideal location for romance. At the time, there was quite a vogue for the so-called *regional novel*, notably a genre primarily developed by women writers and again influential upon Scott and later writers. The Irish writer, Maria Edgeworth's Castle Rackrent (1801) enjoyed great success, as did The Wild Irish Girl (1806) by her fellow country woman, Sydney Owenson (Lady Morgan) which in the words of one recent critic, 'made both her and romantic Ireland the fashion'.<sup>23</sup> It is worth noting too that the Scottish writer Elizabeth Hamilton's The Cottagers of Glenburnie (1808), though not of course a romance, was likewise immensely popular at this time. The terrain of the Highlands of Scotland was to be most famously used by Scott and although his debt to MacPherson's Ossian poems has often been remarked, Scott is still popularly credited with having *invented* the particular image of the Highlands that prevailed during the Romantic age. Prior to Scott's Waverley, however, in Jane Porter's The Scottish Chiefs the Highlands were used to

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23. Quoted from the entry on Sydney Morgan in The Feminist Companion to Literature in English, ed. by Virginia Blain et al (London: Batsford, 1990).

great effect in creating the romantic backdrop to the story of Wallace and Bruce and indeed used (unromantically) in Elizabeth Hamilton's The Cottagers of Glenburnie (discussed in the next chapter), which also predates Scott's novels. The Scottish landscape is dealt with in different ways by several of the authors under consideration in this thesis and is returned to throughout.

Gary Kelly (1989) has commented that the Porter sisters,

... took the topographical descriptive elements of the Gothic novel and put them in relation to the national theme by relating topography to national character. In The Scottish Chiefs, for example, the highlands and hill country of Scotland are associated with a Swiss-like independence of spirit and simplicity of life. Landscape and description (including description of war-ravaged countryside) are also used for the kind of sublime effects found in Gothic novels, but the Porter sisters are far less interested in landscape as a stimulus for Sentimental subjectivity than in the connection between landscape and subjectivity of a different kind - 'national character' - a connection long established, of course, in Enlightenment sociology. Novels such as The Scottish Chiefs put this relatively new element in prose fiction at the disposal of the literature of Romantic national consciousness, one of the most powerful forces in the modern world. (p.98)

It is not necessary to search for long through The Scottish Chiefs in order to find examples of the kind of use of landscape about which Gary Kelly writes above. Time and again throughout the novel, the reader is treated to fabulous landscape descriptions, as in the following passage, describing a remote Highland scene:

Turning suddenly to the left, he struck into a defile between two prodigious craggy mountains; whose brown cheeks trickling with ten thousand rills, seemed to weep over the deep gloom of the valley beneath. Scattered fragments of rock, from the cliffs above, covered with their huge and almost impassable masses

the surface of the ground. Not an herb was to be seen; all was black, barren, and terrific.

(I, pp.312-313)

The remote Highlands, here being shown penetrated through a 'defile', conjures up images of frontiersmen pressing ahead into North America and connects with contemporary (i.e. early nineteenth century) ideas about the noble savage, later to be taken up to great effect in the American setting by James Fenimore Cooper in his Leatherstocking Tales (1823-1841), and in the Scottish context by Scott, for instance in 'The Two Drovers'.<sup>24</sup> The Scottish Highlands are portrayed by Porter as fiercely, terrifyingly *other*; unknown, perhaps unknowable. This passage and others like it are very suggestive of the connection between landscape and nationality of which Kelly writes.

Marilyn Butler quotes a reviewer of Waverley in an issue of the Quarterly of 1814 who writes that characters in novels of the time are not merely 'men, but Irish, Scotch and French', a characteristic feature that is more evident in the later novelist, Eliza Logan's work than in Jane Porter's.<sup>25</sup> Eliza Logan relies not on landscape description, but on a sophisticated use of Scots language to breathe life into her picture of the Scottish nation. Emma Letley, in her study of Scots language in nineteenth century fiction, From Galt to Douglas Brown, having quoted

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24. 'The Two Drovers' was published in Scott's Chronicles of the Canongate, Vol. 1 (1827).

25. Marilyn Butler, Romantics, Rebels and Reactionaries: English Literature and its Background 1760-1830 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), p.155.

an extract from Waverley, in which Fergus MacIvor converses with Baron Bradwardine, proceeds to analyse closely MacIvor's language, finding,

Whilst his language in the first paragraph stresses his Scottishness, his French phrase in paragraph three characterises his French education and his relationship with the Jacobite cause. His language variation is part of his characterisation and is *descriptive* of his national and historical position.<sup>26</sup>

In the same manner, following in Scott's footsteps, publishing when he was well established in his career as a novelist, Eliza Logan, in both St Johnstoun and Restalrig makes a very astute use of Scots language, apparently attempting to reflect the times of which she writes.<sup>27</sup> For example, in her novels, Scottish servants speak Scots; ministers speak the language of the pulpit, Standard English, as do the aristocracy - just as one might expect

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26. Emma Letley, From Galt to Douglas Brown: Nineteenth-Century Fiction and Scots Language (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1988) p.15. Further references to this book are given after quotations in the text.

27. Whilst Porter's influence upon Scott is, for the most part a matter for conjecture, the same is not true of Scott's influence upon Logan. In the preface to St Johnstoun, she makes a clear reference to his famous 'Postscript which should have been a Preface' (the seventy-second chapter of his Waverley) as follows: 'I perfectly agree with the Prince of Novelists, that prefaces are seldom or never read'(p.ii). In the Advertisement published as a frontispiece to the second volume of her Restalrig, she again pays homage to Scott, stating, '[the style of literature] has of late years been so greatly improved and enriched by a master hand, whose works have been welcomed and read with avidity by all civilised nations'.



at the turn of the seventeenth century, when the crowns of England and Scotland were finally united.<sup>28</sup>

Logan shows King James I and VI speaking Standard English in a formal register in the normal course of events, as in the following speech, when he questions another man's accent,

"Ye appear... to be a sensible man, and your bearing seemeth to us beyond your station. How chanceth your so proper speech?" (St Johnstoun, I, p.86)

As the novel progresses, however, Logan displays a perceptive understanding of the nuances of language when she represents the King slipping register into broad Scots, when his temper is tried. This seems very naturalistic: his speaking in Scots, the language of his childhood, gives the impression that his most deeply-felt emotions are being expressed.<sup>29</sup> In the following passage, a deputation of

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28. See 'A History of Scots' in the Introduction to The Concise Scots Dictionary, ed. by Mairi Robinson (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1985): 'Following the Reformation in 1560... Scotsmen of all classes were coming for the first time into regular visual and aural contact with writings in southern English: aural in that at least once a week, and in the case of devout people several times a week, they heard readings from the English Bible, and sermons in a language partly modelled on Biblical English'. (p.xi)
29. Edwin Muir writes of Scottish dialect poetry, 'Anyone... who chose to enter into this problem of Scottish dialect poetry from the psychological side, could make out a good case for the thesis that Scottish dialect poetry is a regression to childhood, an escape from the responsibility of the whole reason to the simplicity and irresponsibility of the infant mind. To most of us who were born and brought up in Scotland dialect Scots is associated with childhood, and English with maturity', in Scott and Scotland: The Predicament of the Scottish Writer (1936; repr. Edinburgh: Polygon, 1982), p.42.

kill-joy Calvinist ministers of Edinburgh have come to protest to the King about some English comedy players performing in a theatre within the city. Logan resourcefully has the ministers speak a rather pompous, syntactically complex brand of Standard (biblical) English, whilst the King angrily replies in broad Scots:

"The ministers of the reformed established kirk of this realm have heard, with grief and humiliation, that it hath been the pleasure of your Majesty to allow of the introduction within it of certain profane and idle persons from England, styled comedians, whose licentious representations manifestly tend to the subversion of good order"

[to which King James I and VI replies]

"Have we escaped the meddling prerogative o' the Pope, to be priest-ridden in this fasion? Na! by my saul, the players shall gang on though a' the ministers i' the kingdom should join i' the cry again' them"  
(I, p.281)

Logan's use of Scots language has the effect of humanising her characters, lending them credibility. Some of Porter's characterisations in The Scottish Chiefs are too much idealised to have this effect; in this regard at least, Logan appears to owe more to Scott than to Porter. In the following passage, the specifically Scottish identity of the speaker is set up not only thanks to his strongly Presbyterian point of view, but also by his distinctively Scottish diction:

"...the hostel of Loretto was once a part o' the auld bigging that was sae meikle thought o' a while syne, when the deevil's skipper, the Pope, guided the helm; but I'm thinking ye'll be of my notion once ye win in, that it's put to a wysser-like purpose now, than when it cuitled up a when lazy monks, at the expense o' poor deluded creatures, who thought themselves weel repaid, (bless their doited souls!) whan the cursed auld hypocrites gied them some bit rotten timmer to glour at, that they called a piece of the true cross... our Lady o' Loretto is wordye a thousand o'

her, for though she taks your money, she gi'es ye something better for it than leeing promises."  
(St Johnstoun, I, pp.13-14)

In The Scottish Chiefs, it is striking that the characters, regardless of nationality, birthright, education or any other component, all speak a brand of language which might best be described as Shakespearean English. The following quotations suffice to illustrate this point:

[Soulis to Lady Helen Mar]  
"Scream they strength away, poor fool! for thou are now so surely mine, that heaven itself cannot preserve thee." (I, p.289)

[an old Highland cottager to Wallace]  
"Your honour... must pardon the uncourtliness of our ways; but we give you the best we have; and the worthy Loch-awe cannot do more." (III, pp.313-314)

[a soliloquy by Wallace]  
"Rain on ye torrents; ye are welcome to William Wallace. He can well breast the mountain storm, who has stemmed the ingratitude of his country."  
(V, p.209)

Porter's debt to Elizabethan drama is further borne out in speeches like the following, which in its conclusion clearly recalls the words of Christopher Marlowe's Dr Faustus, shortly before his own death. The speech is made by a ghostly apparition which appears to Wallace, alone on a desolate hillside, shortly before his demise,

"No choral hymns hallow thy bleeding corse; - wolves howl thy requiem and eagles scream over thy desolate grave!... who I am ... will be shewn to thee when thou hast past yon starry firmament. But the galaxy streams with blood." (V, p.139-140)

It is worth noting that a similar ghostly visitation appears to Scott's Fergus MacIvor in Waverley, shortly before his death: it is not impossible that Scott was influenced in this by Porter.

In spite of the Scots language used by some of her most esteemed sources, such as Blind Harry's Wallace and Barbour's Brus, Porter eschews this language variety, and thus loses out on a very useful narrative device for creating a sense of national identity. Some of the characters in Porter's The Scottish Chiefs seem positively two-dimensional when placed up against such naturalistic personalities as those who appear in Eliza Logan's novels, who speak a living language, in much the same way as so many of the Scottish characters in the Waverley novels as well as various characters in the works of other writers considered in this thesis, including most famously Elizabeth Hamilton's The Cottagers of Glenburnie (1808).

Emma Letley (1988) comments that 'a dialogue between Galt and Smollett would become one between an association of dialect with defect and an association of Scots with a superior moral status' (pp.6-7). A different sort of dialogue might be set up between Porter and Logan: the former having all her characters, morally good or bad, speaking Standard English; the latter bestowing Scots-speaking characters with honour and good reputation. When, in Restalrig, Roger Dewlap, Logan's Scottish manservant, goes to stay in London with an Englishman of his own rank, his horror at the new English fashion of tobacco-

smoking provides one of a number of highly amusing episodes of comedy in Logan's romances:<sup>30</sup>

"I dinna ken what I hae done to be smeeked out this gait like a brock, for gin I had na gane out o' yere house at yere bidding, ye might hae taen a pickle clean strae and done it decently, and no settin up a stink that gars me scunner to think how ye let the thing ye raised it wi' intil yere ain mouth. But ye've seen the last o' me I'se promise ye, though I might weel hae looket for some help frae you, in regard o' my master." (I, p.275)

In her characterisation of Roger Dewlap, Logan, mainly through the use of Scots language, identifies the same sort of distinctively Scottish qualities as Scott did for his Scots-speaking characters in the Waverley novels.

J. Derrick McClure has written that Scott,

If not strictly the first then certainly the greatest exponent of the practice, demonstrated brilliantly the resources of Scots - its enormous vocabulary, its wealth of idiomatic expressions, its vast fund of proverbial lore, its peculiar aptness for rhetoric, for argument and for backchat.<sup>31</sup>

These are the very qualities with which Logan imbues the speeches of her Roger Dewlap, who continually steals the scenes in which he appears in Restalrig, in rather the same way as for instance, Scott's Caleb, manservant to the Master of Ravenswood, in The Bride of Lammermoor does, who, though a character of minor importance in the novel as a

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30. Incidentally, Jane Porter, on the other hand, is singularly serious-minded in The Scottish Chiefs, allowing no humour to detract from the high dignity of her heroic tale.
31. J. Derrick McClure, 'Scots in Dialogue: Some Uses and Implications' in Scotland and the Lowland Tongue: Studies in the Language and Literature of Lowland Scotland in Honour of David D. Murison, ed. by J. Derrick McClure (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1983), pp.129-148 (p.129).

whole, nevertheless makes a lasting impression upon the reader, with his engaging Scots speeches at intermittent intervals, throughout the novel. Roger Dewlap - like Caleb - is not a central character in Restalrig, yet he is never very far from the action. His first appearance in the novel is unheralded; he is overheard heroically standing up for the honour of the Restalrig family in an Edinburgh tavern (the very sort of thing Caleb too is wont to do),

"Haud yere ill scrapit tongue, I tell ye, anent auld Restalrig,... Ye hae forgotten the last night already, when I held ye by the weasand aneath the table till ye cheepit like a field mouse." (I, p.62)

To some extent taking advantage of the early nineteenth century vogue for regional fiction, by dint of landscape description and use of Scots language respectively, Porter and Logan each create a Scottish scene befitting the historical romance they set within it.

## II    iv    Romance: A Woman's Genre?

Like Scott, but without the advantages his gender afforded him, not only giving him the kind of education never offered a girl, but also the kinds of living experience outside the home, which were utterly outwith the reach of contemporary women, young or old, Porter, Logan and other forgotten women writers too, forged a serious path for themselves in the apparently not-so-serious field of romance, by rooting their fictions in the non-fiction of history. Twentieth century literary criticism suggests

that the world of the women's romance is not necessarily quite as lightweight as might previously have been supposed.

The particular involvement of women in the field of romance in *English* literature in the Romantic period has been well-documented and the texts themselves intelligently analysed in recent years by feminist critics such as Eva Figes, Ellen Moers, Dale Spender, Janet Todd and Jane Spencer.<sup>32</sup> In the field of Scottish literature, early women writers of all kinds of fiction remain largely ignored; however, the work of feminists studying English and American women writers can illuminate their Scottish counterparts. Jane Spencer (1986) suggests that romance - then as now - is often 'a covert protest against the neglect and tedium of women's lives' (p.186).<sup>33</sup> Of course, it is not only in its readership that romance is strongly associated with women; as Spencer comments,

It is ... noticeable that all the most 'romantic' kinds of fiction were strongly associated with female authorship or audience, from the French romances,

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32. Eva Figes, Sex and Subterfuge: Women Writers to 1850 (London: Macmillan, 1982); Ellen Moers, Literary Women (1976); Jane Spencer, The Rise of the Woman Novelist (1986); Dale Spender, Mothers of the Novel: 100 Good Women Writers before Jane Austen (London: Pandora, 1986); Janet Todd, The Sign of Angellica: Women, Writing and Fiction, 1660-1800 (London: Virago, 1989).
33. This suggestion is reinforced with regard to present day readership, by recent sociological studies of the field. See for example, Bridget Fowler, The Alienated Reader: Women and Popular Literature in the Twentieth Century (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991) and Terry Lovell, Consuming Fiction (London: Verso, 1987), who both find escapism to be the most appealing aspect of the romance to its twentieth century readers.

through the amatory fictions of Manley and Haywood, to the Gothic novel, whose greatest practitioners included Ann Radcliffe and Mary Shelley. (p.183)

Focusing on the feminocentric romance, Spencer asserts that the attraction of this genre to women (writers and readers alike) is mainly attributable to the fantasy of female power which romance, unlike some other genres of literature, affords its admirers. Spencer comments that in romance fiction romantic love is 'the cause of actions that changed the world' (p.184). She does not mention Porter's The Scottish Chiefs in this regard: in that novel the entire plot rests upon Wallace's love of his wife and an undercurrent of women's desire colours the narrative throughout.<sup>34</sup> Another important factor in women favouring the historical romance is noted by Gary Kelly, who comments that this medium offered a way for women 'to appropriate into acknowledged women's genres [i.e. the romance] such men's learned discourses as history, biography, antiquarianism, and 'popular antiquities', or folklore'.<sup>35</sup> This claim is likewise borne out in the historical romances under consideration in this chapter.

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34. This issue is explored further in Section IV.

35. Gary Kelly, 'Revolutionary and Romantic Feminism: Women, Writing, and Cultural Revolution', in Revolution and English Romanticism: Politics and Rhetoric, ed. by Keith Hanley and Raman Selden (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1990), pp.107-130 (p.116).



Neither Porter nor Logan used their romances to pursue any kind of overt feminist agenda.<sup>36</sup> Nevertheless, they both took the opportunity offered to flex their intellectual muscles in other directions. Interestingly, they each used the footnoting and prefatory apparatus available to the fiction writer as a platform from which to promote their own political vision. They both contributed to the serious intellectual debate current at the time and indeed still taking place today, regarding the relationship between history and fiction, an area fraught with critical and authorial anxiety.

### III History, Fiction and Integrity:

#### Women Voice Opinions

It may well be that Scott omitted the date 1745 from the title page of Waverley (1814), because, as he claims, he thought it might 'anticipate the nature of the tale by announcing so remarkable an era'.<sup>37</sup> Nevertheless, he did subtitle the novel, ''Tis Sixty Years Since', clearly indicating that the work has a historical setting, no doubt

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36. As Chris Weedon writes, 'being a woman is no guarantee that one's writing will challenge hegemonic norms or employ a different, resistant and specifically female discourse' in Feminist Practice and Poststructuralist Theory (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987), p.170.

37. Sir Walter Scott, Waverley, or, 'Tis Sixty Years Since (Edinburgh: Ballantyne, 1814; repr. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986), footnote p.37. Further references are to the Penguin edition and are given after quotations in the text.

very well aware of the appeal this would have for his potential readership. Scott was not the first to use his title pages to alert potential readers to the historical setting of his works. Jane Porter used the technique some years before, publishing her The Scottish Chiefs at a time when the Scottish clan chiefs held little political sway: the very words 'Scottish Chiefs' themselves clearly signalled its retrospective theme (i.e. the novel had to be set in a time when there were such people as 'chiefs' in Scotland). Similarly, though much later, the titles of Eliza Logan's St Johnstoun; or, John, Earl of Gowrie and Restalrig, make telling references to real people and places of historical interest.

The relationship between fiction and history - where the line should be drawn between the one and the other - is an area full of anxieties for author and literary critic alike. This has been the case since before Porter's novels were published. Taken from a review article of The Scottish Chiefs, published in 1810, the following passage highlights the problematic relationship between the 'two departments' as felt by one critic,

For our parts, we are disposed to doubt the propriety of thus intermixing the two departments of history and romance. False impressions are given with regard to the one, and in the other, the fire of invention is checked. Miss Porter boasts, indeed, and we believe with reason, that she has bestowed great pains to render her narrative conformable to, or at least not inconsistent with, the truth of history. Such diligence is certainly meritorious, yet we doubt whether her work would not have been more interesting, had it been withheld. Pleasure, not instruction, must be the leading aim of such compositions... The chief circumstance which must render any narration attractive, is, that one interest should pervade the

whole; not merely one person in whom we are interested, but one object of desire which we wish for from beginning to end, but the attainment of which is obstructed by obstacles, which only rivet our attention more strongly upon it. But as the events of real history are not arranged for the purpose of amusing the world, it is rare, indeed, that they present any unity of this kind... It would be wise in [Miss Porter] to chuse a subject which might afford greater scope to her imagination, and might enable her better to preserve those unities, which are equally requisite to the perfection of a work of fancy, whether in poetry or prose.<sup>38</sup>

Such anxieties about the relationship between history and fiction are still present today. Hilary Mantel's recent contribution to the field of novelised histories of the French Revolution, A Place of Greater Safety (1992) had as many detractors as applauders - some critics taking exception to her representation of events not chronicled in reliable historical documentation; others venerating her meticulous attention to detail and her ability to bring the historical events to life for the modern reader. The main anxiety about fiction rooted in historical events seems still to be, as it was for the nineteenth century reviewer quoted above, that the historical fiction may somehow contaminate or even destroy the 'real' history it is based upon. As the early reviewer has it, history is for instruction; fiction for entertainment. It is arguable that the relationship between history and fiction is particularly fraught in the Scottish situation, because of the Calvinist distrust of art and imagination.

One modern critic, Ina Ferris, outlines the continuing

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38. Anonymous review of The Scottish Chiefs in the Scots Magazine, 72 (1810), 278-283 (p.283).

debate about the relationship between the two genres as follows:-

History and fiction require each other because the identity of each depends on its difference from the other; but each seeks either independence (a mutually agreed upon boundary) or dominance (an extension of the boundary).<sup>39</sup>

She goes on to rehearse the arguments which took place between Scott, and his supporters and critics upon the publication of Old Mortality (1816) and concludes,

Even as they tied the "faithful page" of history to law, reason, and divine order, they granted to fiction (illegitimate, irrational, and irreligious) the power of initiation vis-à-vis history. Fiction is active, mobile, and aggressive; by contrast, history emerges in their account (appropriately enough for a civil discourse) as rather like a Waverley hero: passive, loyal, and oddly vulnerable. Like the Waverley hero, it may win in the end, but its victory depends on a certain kind of fiction. (p.160)

Jane Porter asserted her right to participate in the debate raging amongst the *literati* (men) by making use of prefatory space in various editions of The Scottish Chiefs, and in so doing, may be said to have probed the boundaries of women's proper sphere. The novel is a narrative based upon the eventful life of the Scottish hero, William Wallace, between the years 1296, and his death in 1305. At a first glance through the various prefaces, Jane Porter appears to make little claim to exact historical accuracy. Even discounting the fact that her book is subtitled 'A Romance', making fairly clear the writer's own sentiments

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39. Ina Ferris, The Achievement of Literary Authority: Gender, History, and the Waverley Novels (London: Cornell University Press, 1991) p.139. Further references to this book are given after quotations in the text.

regarding the categorisation of her work, prefaces to the first and later editions appear intended to put the reader squarely in the picture in this regard, although various statements she makes seem somewhat contradictory. In James Hogg's The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner (1824) the Editor's admission in the very first paragraph of the narrative, 'to tradition I must appeal for the remainder of the motley adventures' immediately alerts the vigilant reader to the possibility that the Editor's story may be less than complete. 'Tradition' being what it is - a great source of folk and fairy tales, for instance - it can certainly not be relied upon to provide incontrovertible intelligence. In Jane Porter's Preface to the first edition of The Scottish Chiefs, she too discloses a debt to 'tradition', as follows:

In the sketch which history would have laid down for the biography of my principal hero, I have not added to the outline, excepting, where time having made some erasure, a stroke was necessary to fill the space, and unite the outline. Tradition has been a great assistant to me in this respect. (p.vi)

In addition to this statement, Porter goes on to assert, 'my history [is] intended to be within the bounds of modern romance' (p.xxv), thus juxtaposing the two terms, *history* and *romance* to unintentional oxymoronic effect. Even in the first edition, 'Blind Harrie' is specifically cited as a source, while in later editions, Porter gives very full information regarding her sources. In her 'Retrospective Introduction to the Standard Edition of The Scottish Chiefs' (1831) for instance, Porter cites her childhood nurse, Luckie Forbes, as a major source of information about 'the wonderful deeds of William Wallace' (p.viii).

Thus, far from claiming exact historical accuracy, Porter goes to considerable lengths to emphasise the thoroughly traditional nature of her tale, freely and unashamedly admitting to filling in gaps in the history and writing 'romance'.

Though openly attesting to her frequent embellishment of the pages of history, Porter nevertheless does claim, quite conversely, that the major events she relates in her romance have foundation in historical truth. Scott makes much the same claim in his celebrated *Seventy-Second* chapter of *Waverley*, subtitled, 'A Postscript, which should have been a Preface' when he writes,

I have embodied in imaginary scenes, and ascribed to fictitious characters, a part of the incidents which I then received from those who were actors in them. Indeed, the most romantic parts of this narrative are precisely those which have a foundation in fact.  
(p.493)

Fiona Robertson has recently commented that Scott,

Insists in theory as well as in practice on the interdependence of history and fictional form. He prefaces *Ivanhoe*, for example, with an astute and knowing Dedicatory Epistle from one antiquary to another, reflecting on the problems of combining history and fiction, and on the novelist's duties to his historical material. Instead of emphasizing the educative value of historical fiction, the preface to the most influential novel of the nineteenth century suggests that historical fiction may not only depend upon but also perpetuate the reader's ignorance - that it might be an escape from and denial of history rather than a new medium for analysing it.<sup>40</sup>

The culture of knowledge existing in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the contemporary readers'

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40. Fiona Robertson, Legitimate Histories: Scott, Gothic and the Authorities of Fiction (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), p.6.

hunger for factual information, might be recognised as the factor motivating writers such as Scott, Porter and Logan to include history in their fiction. Marilyn Butler writes of the text of Erasmus Darwin's poem Botanic Garden (1791) being purposely upstaged by its footnotes:

Anyone trained by journal-reading to respect the latest learned intelligence (and the customary sign of its presence, the footnotes' parade of authorities) would begin to read the upstaged poem for its footnotes, rather than the other way round - a reader-response Darwin presumably hoped for.<sup>41</sup>

She goes on to include Scott's Waverley Novels in a list of examples of texts in which writers provide an 'antinarration in the form of footnotes', by which Butler demonstrates 'how consistently the "romance" element in Romanticism was checked and undercut by a self-conscious modernity or a distancing intellectuality' (pp.129-30). Jane Porter might usefully be considered another case in point, the seeming contradictions regarding her use of history and romance reflecting the intellectual climate in which she wrote.

One interesting exception to Porter's claim of broad historical accuracy is to be found in her rendition of Wallace's death. Having asserted that 'the rope of Edward should never sully his animate body!' (V, p.316), Porter's Wallace dies of a broken heart upon the scaffold, rather than being subjected to the undignified death which history

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41. Marilyn Butler, 'Culture's Medium: the Role of the Review' in The Cambridge Companion to British Romanticism, ed. by Stuart Curran (1993) pp.120-147 (p.129). Further references to this essay are given after quotations in the text.

relates.<sup>42</sup> In an endnote, Porter clearly alludes to her deviation from history in this regard,

The words of such a sentence are too horrid to be registered here. I read them (when it was in the possession of the late Sir Frederick Eden,) in the original death-warrant of the Duke of Norfolk... and their sanguinary import, would be too dreadful for humanity to credit their execution, did we not know that it has been done. (V, p.393)

Here, the writer simultaneously fudges history (in the narrative of the romance) whilst upholding history in the footnote apparatus, claiming her previous sight of a legal document containing the precise facts of the matter, the 'sanguinary import' of Wallace's death-warrant, by the terms of which the hero was executed.

Eliza Logan's St Johnstoun appeared almost a decade after Scott began publishing his Waverley novels and was certainly influenced by his works. With regard to sources of information, the novel carries two very interesting epigraphs in the first volume. These read as follows:

Whichsoever of these opposite systems we embrace; whether we impute the intention of murder to Gowrie, or to the King; insuperable difficulties arise, and we are involved in darkness, mystery, and contradictions.  
ROBERTSON'S History of Scotland

Out of Scotland we hear that there is no good agreement, but rather an open diffidence, betwixt the King and his wife, and many are of opinion that the discovery of some affection between her and the Earl of Gowrie's brother, who was killed with him, was the truest cause and motive of that tragedy.  
Sir RALPH WINWOOD'S Memoirs

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42. The dignified death Scott affords Bois-Guilbert in Ivanhoe (1819), falling dead before Ivanhoe's lance touches him at Rebecca's trial by combat, faintly recalls the romanticised death given to Wallace by Porter.



According to these quotations, documented history provides no entirely conclusive version of the tale which Eliza Logan tells in her novel. She thus stridently demonstrates that arguments about historical accuracy can be redundant. In the 'Dedication to The Right Honourable James, Baron Ruthven', published in Restalrig, she is perfectly open and frank regarding her use of a mix of authentic and romanticised history, when she writes,

In the following story, I have attempted to detail the sequel of the bloody tragedy, which, in the beginning of the seventeenth century, so materially affected the fortunes of your Lordship's house; and, while I have thrown the garb of romance around the characters in this tale, I have throughout adhered, as much as possible, to historical and traditional truth.

Signed THE AUTHOR, Edinburgh, 1st December 1828.

Again, as with Jane Porter there is a definite element of ambiguity in Logan's attitude towards the relationship between history and fiction. She adheres 'as much as possible, to historical and traditional truth' - presumably considering the one kind of 'truth' to be as the other.

St Johnstoun opens in a quite un-romance-like fashion with a seemingly authoritative essay on the Society of Jesus and the role of its commander in the early 17th Century:

Their General was chosen for life, and possessed the most unbounded power. He alone nominated the officers employed in the government of the Society whom he could remove at pleasure; in him was also vested the uncontrolled disposal of the immense revenues and incalculable riches of the order; and to his commands the members were not only sworn to render the strictest outward obedience, but to resign their wills and understandings.

That these men were employed by the Pope to forward his views in every country in the world, and every court in Europe, we are assured by all historians who have written of the times in which they flourished.  
(I, pp.9-10)

The first and second paragraph quoted above provide quite a good demonstration of Logan's frequent juxtaposition of the two disparate truths which she identified. The first paragraph is a highly bigoted, Protestant-coloured 'traditional' version; the second verifiably 'historical' (though of course the Society of Jesus - its members known as Jesuits - still flourishes today, spreading the word of the Catholic faith). To those of a certain persuasion, the anti-Jesuit bias of the first paragraph might well be accepted as being as authoritatively 'historical' as the second. Thus, the gap between 'historical' and 'traditional' can be seen to shift quite formidably depending upon the point of view of the reader.

Both Porter and Logan use the device of the omniscient narrator, frequently allowing the reader to view events and to obtain knowledge which remains obscured from characters in the texts. Clearly they can have had no factual sources for certain events which they relate and here both writers might be said to have added to the stock of 'traditional' truth, fleshing out conversations and discussions which may be surmised to have been held, in the light of other verifiable information about the time. Ann Rigney usefully clarifies the substance of the historical novel when she comments,

We can say therefore, that the discourse of the historical novel does refer to real, historical events (with or without the explicit support of sources); but that it *represents* those events in a narrative which combines a variable number of invented and factual evenemential elements [i.e. events], and does so

according to a discursive-contract that allows for such a combination.<sup>43</sup>

The romance writer's world is traditionally thoroughly subjective: that is part of the nature of romance.

Objectivity is clearly not necessary, or even desirable in the mysterious romance world of heroes, heroines and wicked villains. Notwithstanding this, the complaint of one literary historian who has written on Porter's The Scottish Chiefs in some detail, A.D. Hook, that The Scottish Chiefs is 'totally ahistorical', is something of an exaggeration.<sup>44</sup> Hook rests this claim on a number of issues, one of which involves his belief that Porter's Wallace 'is less noble than the historical original... because he is only moved to action by the death of his wife' (p.189). Porter's deviation from the 'historical original' of Wallace can hardly be proved: the true nature of Wallace's character is anybody's guess. Written five hundred years after his death, Porter's characterisation of Wallace is not necessarily any less accurate than Hook's conception of him nearly two centuries later.

As Porter points out in the Preface to the first edition, the particular circumstance of Wallace taking up arms following the violent death of his wife, 'though it may be thought too much like the creation of modern romance, is

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43. Ann Rigney, 'Adapting History to the Novel', New Comparison, 8 (1989), 127-143, p.134.

44. A.D. Hook, 'Jane Porter, Sir Walter Scott and the Historical Novel' in Clio 5, (1976), 181-192 (p.189). Further references to this article are given after quotations in the text.

recorded as a truth in the old poem by Blind Harrie' (I, p.ix-x). Though Blind Harry's Wallace can hardly be regarded as the most historically accurate document, it does nevertheless constitute one of the earliest records of this period of history and of Wallace in particular, and would therefore automatically be referred to by anyone interested in the events of that time. Hook's further remonstrance, that a Wallace as noble as the 'historical original' would not fall victim to 'a sentimental, feminine intrigue' probably says more about Hook, suggesting his definite bias, than it does about Porter or her hero. Ros Ballaster, on the other hand, here commenting about the early French romance, offers a less prejudicial way of viewing novels like Porter's,

The French romance presented love as the sole motivation and engine of change behind every major historical event... It thus fictionalized history at the expense of the masculine "public" sphere and privileged women as the primary force in culture and civilization by their judicious use of their power to inspire love in the nation's heroes.<sup>45</sup>

Hook goes on to berate Porter for the crime of making 'Wallace... very much of the stamp of Thaddeus' in spite of the centuries supposed to separate them, both being 'perfect Christian gentlemen' (p.189). There seems no good reason, however, why two men living in different centuries must of necessity be tremendously different from one another in character. Both being (as Porter perceived them) virtuous heroes of historical romance, both must

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45. Ros Ballaster, 'Romancing the Novel: Gender and Genre in Early Theories of Narrative' in Living by the Pen, ed. by Dale Spender (London: Teacher College Press, 1992), p.193.

possess the essential noble qualities of the romance hero, ergo two similar men.

Finally, and somewhat damningly, Hook accuses Porter of being 'guilty of the two capital crimes of the historical novelist identified by Lukács in The Historical Novel: of 'romantically monumentalizing the important figures of history or dragging them down to the level of private, psychological trivia'' (p.189). It is no doubt true that Porter 'romantically monumentalizes' the life of Wallace - this is, after all, more or less precisely what she set out to do: to weave a romance out of the traditional tales of the life of Wallace. As for 'dragging them down to the level of private, psychological trivia': it has to be said that not even monumentally important historical figures are above psychological make-up, trivial though this may seem to Lukács and Hook.

Faced with this sort of criticism, it is useful to return to Porter's own testimonial as regards her use of historical information. At the time of publishing The Scottish Chiefs, she was, after all, no stranger to the idea of mixing history and fiction. Like The Scottish Chiefs, published two years later, Porter's first novel, Thaddeus of Warsaw (1808) was a runaway success, which enjoyed many reprints during her lifetime. She was later to write in the Introduction to the 1831 Standard Novels edition of this first novel, 'Thaddeus of Warsaw was the first - a class [of novel] which, uniting the personages

and facts of real history or biography, with a combining and illustrative machinery of the imagination, formed a new species of writing in that day' (p.viii). Jane Porter undoubtedly places herself at the forefront of a literary movement, begun upon the publication of Thaddeus, and continued with The Scottish Chiefs, albeit somewhat quickly superseded by Scott's works.

The historical romance afforded Porter and Logan (and others) the opportunity to contribute to intellectual debates amongst the *litterati* of the day, such as that concerning the relationship between history and fiction, the kind of debate not at that time normally open to contributions from women. Further, under the cover of historical romance, women writers could obliquely make political statements - as for instance Porter appears to do in The Scottish Chiefs. An aspect of that novel which probably added to its interest when it appeared, is the resemblance of the events it relates to more recent events in Scottish history - the Jacobite uprisings of the preceding century. This connection can hardly have escaped the notice of the contemporary reading public, affording a certain extra *frisson* of excitement. Perhaps wary that her novel might be seen to promote rebellious nationalism, however, Porter writes an ending which may have had its message for her own time; The Scottish Chiefs closes at Wallace's funeral, Ruthven having arrived with 'honourable offers of peace from the young King Edward' (V, p.389), news which overjoys Bruce, who longs for peace. In later editions of the novel, a final paragraph is added,

explicitly underlining this peaceful, happy ending, concluding 'and a lasting tranquillity spread prosperity and happiness throughout the land'.

Superficially, Porter and Logan's historical romances may seem rather inconsequential; however, it has been shown in this section that they deal with some serious contemporary issues, pushing back the boundaries of the 'proper sphere' of the woman writer in their time, inserting their own points of view into the culture. They may yield a great deal to the modern reader, taking the appropriate reading position. The two writers display complex and sometimes apparently contradictory views as is further demonstrated in the following section, which offers readings of the novels driven by late twentieth century literary theory.

#### **IV Re-reading Historical Romance by Scottish Women Writers**

Porter's The Scottish Chiefs to date has received very little critical attention and as a result has not been subjected to any substantial theoretical analysis. Logan's novels, furthermore, have completely escaped critical notice, far less been examined in any depth. In this section, critical analysis of The Scottish Chiefs in particular, from a feminist perspective indicates that contrary to received notions (at least in the field of Scottish literary history), historical romances such as

those by Porter and Logan contain much that is of interest to the modern reader and literary historian.

In the discussion which follows, two of the female characters in Porter's The Scottish Chiefs are explored with a view to revealing certain undercurrents stirring beneath the relatively calm surface of the text. What at first appears a thoroughly conservative view of acceptable femininity in the novel, through close reading yields a much less emphatic stance. Indeed, critical analysis suggests a definite ambivalence: paradoxically, Porter appears to promote both conservative and radical views of femininity simultaneously. The Scottish Chiefs is one of those novels which lends itself very well to psychoanalytic reading of the kind undertaken by Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar in their study of Victorian writers, The Madwoman in the Attic (1979). They decipher the Grimm story 'Little Snow White' finding that the tale represents the distillation of all stories concerning the 'essential but equivocal relationship between the angel-woman and the monster-woman' (p.36). The relationship between Helen and Joanna Mar in The Scottish Chiefs in many respects reflects that of the step-mother and daughter in the Grimm story. Just like the fairy-tale Queen, Helen's real mother 'brought forth a daughter, and ... died' (III, p.364) and like the fairy-tale King, the Earl of Mar takes a new wife very soon after her death.

Like the fairy-tale step-mother, Joanna is extremely beautiful; the following passage, for instance, describes



the electric effect her appearance has upon Lennox, when he first sees her:

Lady Mar had hardly attained her thirty-fifth year; but from the graces of her person, and the address with which she set forth all her charms, there was a dazzling fascination about her which so bewildered the faculties of the gazer, that he found it impossible to suppose that she was more than three or four and twenty. (II, pp.156-157)

Also in keeping with her fairy-tale counterpart, Joanna is excessively vain - 'her mirror ... told her she was fairer than all the ladies around' (III, p.368) - and murderously jealous of her step-daughter - on seeing Wallace express anxiety over Helen's health, Joanna 'would willingly at that moment have stabbed her in every vein' (III, p.70). When she finally realises Wallace can never be her own, she vengefully marries his enemy, De Warenne:

The vows which [she] pledged at the altar to De Warenne, were pronounced by her as those by which she swore to complete her revenge on Wallace, and, by depriving him of life, prevent the climax to her misery of seeing him (what she believed he intended) the husband of Helen Mar. (V, p.135)

Helen's beauty, like that of Snow White, outshines that of her step-mother, through whose eyes it is often jealously regarded, as in the following passage, describing Helen from Joanna's point of view:

Her bosom, heaving in the snowy whiteness of virgin purity; her face radiant with the softest blooms of youth; all seemed to frame an object, which malignant fiends had conjured up to blast her [step-mother's] hopes. (III, p.48)

Her beauty, however, is not only skin-deep: time and again Helen's purity of soul (as well as body) is attested to, primarily by her exemplary behaviour at all times, but also by direct references, of which the following glowing report is fairly typical:

Had she been in the wilds of Africa, with no other companion than Wallace, still would those chaste reserves, which lived in her soul, been there the guardians of her actions; for modesty was as much the attribute of her person, as magnanimity the character of her soul. (IV, p.343)

Superficially at least, then, there are considerable similarities between the fairy-tale, 'Little Snow White' and the relationship between Helen and Joanna in Porter's The Scottish Chiefs if not any especial likenesses in other aspects of the novel. However, a close reading of The Scottish Chiefs reveals that Porter, far from pandering to patriarchal stereotypes, may in fact be understood to be an early example of the women writers Gilbert and Gubar applaud in The Madwoman in the Attic:

Women writers... concerned with assaulting and revising, deconstructing and reconstructing those images of women inherited from male literature, especially... the paradigmatic polarities of angel and monster. (p.76)

In Helen and Joanna Mar, Porter does, at first glance at least, seem to provide stereotypical paradigms of angel and monster. Yet her work is not as straightforward as all that. For, as Gilbert and Gubar point out,

Examining and attacking such images, however, literary women have inevitably had consciously or unconsciously to reject the values and assumptions of the society that created these fearsome paradigms. Thus, even when they do not overtly criticize patriarchal institutions or conventions... these writers almost obsessively create characters who enact their own, covert authorial anger. (pp.76-77)

If covert authorial anger may ever be detected in a character in fiction, it is in Porter's Joanna Mar, a woman who is utterly unable to repress her desires, and is thus constantly struggling against the role forced upon her by her female gender. Joanna Mar, it has been said, 'is one

of the most believable characters in the novel: unlike so many of the others, her actions are reasonably motivated, her inward struggle is recognised, and... she is complex enough to feel remorse'<sup>46</sup>. It is pertinent to note that Joanna feels very little remorse about her actions until her ambitions for monarchy are utterly thwarted. Like Lady Macbeth's (and the echo of the Shakespearean character is undoubtedly intended), Joanna's remorse manifests itself in madness.

Although few characters in The Scottish Chiefs are provided with full biographical details (none of the 'chiefs' are, for instance), this is precisely what Jane Porter does give in the case of Joanna Mar, suggesting Porter's particular interest in this character. The reader learns that Joanna is the daughter of a beautiful Norwegian princess 'who had ran away with the Earl of Strathearn from her father's court' and that Joanna had 'inherited her faults with her graces; and came from her hands just as nature had formed her, with no ideas but those of a high notion of her own beauty and hereditary consequence' (III, p.362). Joanna receives no moral education, and by the age of sixteen, she is fully as reckless as her own mother (now deceased) had been in her youth. Stressing the importance of education in forming a young woman's character, Porter partially excuses some of Joanna's unseemly behaviour in adulthood.

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46. Hannah Hinson Jones, 'Jane Austen and Eight Minor Contemporaries: A Study in the Novel 1800-1820' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 1979), p.223.

Had her parents behaved more responsibly in regard to their daughter's upbringing, Porter suggests, Joanna's future would have been very different indeed.

During his wife Isabella's confinement, prior to the birth of her second child, the Earl of Mar seduces Joanna, his wife's young companion. Joanna is not presented as some helpless innocent in this affair, being led astray by an adult, but as a foolish teenager, lacking in moral principle, knowing little better:

Instead of revolting at the idea, of the husband of her friend addressing her with the voice of passion, she only contemplated her triumph in having rivalled the charms of so beautiful a woman as Isabella of Mar. (III, p.364)

One aspect of Joanna's personality above any other, is thoroughly evident here: her rather pitiful immaturity. The Earl of Mar might well be expected to have behaved better, being *in loco parentis*; as her forty-year-old host, in whose home she is staying, he is clearly figured by Porter to be as much to blame as his sixteen year old victim. Unlike his paramour, however, the Earl of Mar has been educated sufficiently to feel a troubled conscience following this, 'his first dereliction from virtue' (III, p.366): his continuing repentance rehabilitates his character in the course of events, whereas Joanna's character simply lurches from bad to worse, possessing very little in the way of moral values herself, and having no adult mentor to offer guidance.

Joanna is figured as falling in love with Wallace, at her very first sight of him. This is not all that surprising, given the picture Porter has painted of her hero. From the start, she presents him, not only as the perfect, caring husband (at the opening of the novel he is rushing off home from affairs of state importance, in order to save his wife any undue anxiety; later he is figured happily dandling a baby) but also as extraordinarily sexually attractive. One of the earliest depictions of Wallace in the novel is positively cinematic in effect. He stands on a cliff-edge, like some fantastic superhuman being, with the stirring sound of bagpipes heralding his appearance:

At the loved sounds [of the well-known *pibroch* of Lanarkshire], which had not dared to visit their ears since the Scottish standard was lowered to Edward, the hills seemed teeming with life.- Men rushed from their fastnesses, and women with their babes, eagerly followed, to see whence sprung a summons so dear to every Scottish heart. Wallace stood on the cliff, like the newly-aroused genius of his suffering country. His long plaid floated afar, and his glittering hair streaming on the blast, seemed to mingle with the golden fires which shot from the heavens. Wallace raised his eyes: a clash, as of the tumult of contending armies, filled the sky; and flames, and flashing steel, and the horrid red of battle, streamed from the clouds upon the hills.  
(I, p.122)

Scott was later to use this kind of striking landscape detail to great effect in his presentation of outlaws, who are frequently figured on cliff edges, silhouetted against the skyline, as Wallace is here.<sup>47</sup>

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47. Daniel Cottom writes, 'a scene that Scott repeats in several novels is that of a passionate woman suddenly appearing in an elevated position, outlined against the sky: a woman who has become unwomanly and yet who is as compellingly transcendent in her violent

Wallace's effect upon Joanna, when he first comes into her presence, freshly arrived from a battlefield is similarly arresting:

She started at the appearance of Wallace: But it was not his garments dropping gore, nor the blood-stained faulchion in his hand, that caused the new sensation: It was the figure, breathing youth and manhood, it was the face, where every noble passion of the heart had stamped themselves on his perfect features; it was his air, where majesty and sweet entrancing grace, mingled in lovely [*sic*] union. They were all these that struck at once upon the sight of Lady Mar, and this made her exclaim with herself. "This is a God!"  
(II, p.118)

The narrator claims that it was not Wallace's blood-soaked appearance that effected the thrilling sensation in Lady Mar, but there is undoubtedly an erotic charge in the image, the 'indescribable pleasure' of spilt blood as the heroine of a later novel was to pronounce it.<sup>48</sup> The eroticism in this description is a distinctive characteristic of Joanna Mar.

Compared to Joanna, Helen, her step-daughter, in spite of (or perhaps to some extent because of) her virtuousness, appears to pale, in terms of modern reader interest, to virtual transparency. No doubt conscious that the reader may find it difficult to identify with such a heavenly

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...Continued...

appearance as Scott's rivals are when they meet on the grounds of violence.' in The Civilized Imagination: A Study of Ann Radcliffe, Jane Austen and Sir Walter Scott (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p.190.

48. This phrase is used by Mary Douglas in Susan Ferrier's Marriage (Edinburgh: Blackwood, 1818) when she views the blood-stained chamber where David Rizzio is supposed to have been murdered (II, p.110).

character as Helen, Porter does what she can to inject some vitality into her virtuous heroine, without, however, bringing her state of purity into question. Women novelists of this period were more or less compelled to include model women in their narratives in order to counterbalance their position as women at 'the verge of their proper sphere' (i.e. being women novelists). The necessity of an element of didacticism in women's novels is a topic fully developed in the following chapter.

At any rate, close reading reveals the character of Helen is not quite as insipid as she superficially appears. Certainly, she can be admired as an ideal of nunlike purity and indeed she identifies very strongly with precisely this image, as the following quotation shows, yet even as she is figured setting her sights upon becoming a nun, a certain sexual longing, in Helen's words, 'wild emotion', creeps into her thoughts:

She loved to meditate on the words with a serious design, Edwin had spoken in jest;- that she made herself a nun for Wallace! "And so I will," said she to herself; "and that resolution stills every wild emotion. All is innocence in heaven, Wallace! You will there read my soul, and love me as a sister."  
(III, p.359)

Porter shows Helen's immense strength of character in the way she manages to exercise self control over emotions to which her step-mother surrenders, time and again. The issue of self-control is one that surfaces frequently in the novels considered in this thesis, not least one of Mary Brunton's, which takes the words as its title, Self-Control (1810) and is also concerned with a heroine exercising

self-control in order to cope with overwhelming passionate desire.

After Wallace's death, Helen does indeed join a nunnery. The reader's last sight of her 'wan but beautiful form' (V, p.383) is in the final moment of her life, collapsing, over the coffin of her beloved, a thoroughly gothic image. Helen's wanness does not come about as a result of her recent bereavement; she is frequently represented as ethereal and wraithlike throughout the novel. Wallace, towards the end of the first volume happens upon her in a chapel, praying for his safety:

There was something so celestial in the maid, as she stood in her white robes, true emblems of her own innocence, before the footstool of God; ... every word [of her prayers] and look breathed so eloquently the virgin purity of her soul. (III, p.196)

Wallace calls her 'Holiest of earthly maids'.

Even when the couple are eventually married (a ceremony they go through in order to preserve propriety when they share his prison cell, rather than for any other reason), there is no question of a physical relationship between them. Helen's estimable self-control has ruled it out.

Theirs is represented as no ordinary love affair:

This passion of the soul, (if such it may be called?) which has its rise in virtue, and its aim the same, would be most unjustly degraded, were it classed with what the herd generally entitle love.... It has nothing selfish: in every desire it soars above this earth; and anticipates, as the ultimatum of its joy, the moment when it shall meet its partner before the throne of God. (IV, pp.336-7; p.338)

Nothing more sordid than a filial kiss ever passes between Wallace and Helen, before or after their marriage.

Joanna's painful, passionate lust for Wallace strikes a



rather different note, prefiguring the pent up emotions associated with historical romance written in the present day:

What then was... the wild distraction of her heart, when she first beheld Sir William Wallace; and found in her breast for him, all which, in the moment of the most unreflecting intoxication, she had ever felt for her lord; with the addition of feelings and sentiments, the existence of which she had never believed, but now knew in all their force? - Love, for the first time, penetrated through every nerve of her body, and possessed her whole mind... and after a short struggle, she surrendered herself to the lawless power of a guilty and ambitious love.  
(III, pp.369-370)

The language of the above quotation carries a considerable sexual charge, which is detonated when Joanna throws herself upon Wallace at various opportunities, making her seem pitiable in the extreme, suffering that infamous bane of the (usually male) courtly lover's life - the ceaseless pain of unrequited love.

Helen's well nigh constant self-abnegation helps to substantiate Wallace's identification of her with his saintly first wife, Marion (whose death resulted in his joining the cause for Scotland), but it is when her behaviour might be described as 'out of character', that she becomes the more compelling for the modern reader. For instance, there is the time when she travels disguised and unaccompanied to London (V, pp.252-266); or when she makes a lonely journey from Snawdown to Stirling Castle under cover of darkness to bring a treacherous letter she had found to the attention of her father and Wallace (III, p.399). Incidents such as these are passed over swiftly in

the narrative, as if Porter believes that to describe them at any length might somehow tarnish Helen's flawless image.

Regarding the fourteen day journey to London by sea, Porter provides few details; Helen pays her passage with jewellery and travels as a boy, her agitation increasing as the days pass. With regard to the second outbreak of Helen's initiative referred to above - the journey to her father at Stirling, with news of treachery near at hand - the reader learns nothing of Helen's own thoughts as she makes her way to the castle to inform her father of the news. It is her father who details the dangerous circumstances of her journey to Wallace:

As soon as the family were gone to rest, she wrapped herself in her plaid, and finding a passage through one of the low embrasures of Snawdoun, with a fleet step made her way to the citadel, and to me. She gave me this letter. (III, p.399)

Though the reader is often throughout The Scottish Chiefs offered a clear insight into Helen's (and others') thought processes, on the occasion of her lone journeys, this view of her consciousness is lost.

Helen's journey to London is not the only occasion on which she dons male attire. In fact, her disguise for this expedition is provided by Wallace himself, when she wears it with his permission (in fact at his instigation), in order to escape from Lord de Valence in France. On this first occasion, she is greatly saddened when she has to lay aside the costume, telling the maidservants who attend her, "Take care of that suit; it is more precious to me than

gold or jewels" (IV, p.342). In what proves to be a providential arrangement (since she will require the outfit again later on) she arranges with her staff for it to be kept in her apartment, wherever she is lodged.

Having allowed her virtuous heroine a modicum of self-determination (deciding to make this journey at all is an uncommonly enterprising endeavour, for such a passive heroine and not at all within the bounds of woman's 'proper sphere' by the standards of the day) Porter hastily backtracks, having Helen faint at the threshold of Wallace's dungeon, suddenly having become conscious of the impropriety of arriving there, not only unsolicited, but also in male guise:

All her wandering senses, which the promulgation of his danger had dispersed at Hunting-tower and maintained in a bewildered state even to the moment of her seeing him in the dungeon, now rallied; and in recovered sanity smote her to the soul. Though still overwhelmed with grief at the fate which threatened to tear him from her and life, she now wondered how she could ever have so trampled on the retreating modesty of her nature, as to have brought herself thus into his presence; and in a voice of horror, of despair; believing that she had for ever destroyed herself in his opinion, she exclaimed, "Father of Heaven! how came I here?" (V, pp.269-70)

However, being the selfless creature she is, Helen cares very little about her appearance, and upon finding herself welcomed to his cell by Wallace, quickly forgets about her improper (i.e. unwomanly) disguise. It is Wallace that requires, "She must be habited, as becomes her sex, and her own delicacy" (V, p.295) before accepting an invitation to an audience with the King.

Helen's cross-dressing is thrown into sharp relief by that of her step-mother, who has an important part to play in the plot of The Scottish Chiefs in the guise of the Knight of the Green Plume. Unable to win Wallace over with her feminine graces and charm, Joanna takes the very unconventional step of acting the part of a knight to conquer her hero by the qualities she knows he admires the most - manly courage and strength. Having proved his valour on the battlefield 'by many a brave deed performed at his commander's side' (V, p.29), the Knight of the Green Plume is graciously entreated by Wallace to reveal his true identity:

"If it depends on me, to unite so brave a man to my friendship for ever, only speak the word, declare your name, and I am ready to seal the compact... whoever you are, whatever you may have been, brave chief, your deeds have proved you worthy of a soldier's friendship, and I pledge you mine". (V, pp.49-50).

Wallace swallows his words when he discovers it is none other than Lady Joanna Mar beneath the helmet of the brave soldier, to whom he had pledged his warmest friendship only moments before. The declaration, 'whoever you are, whatever you may have been' would appear to encompass all possible eventualities - and thereby raises Joanna's rather pathetic hopes, so that she reveals herself and again proposes marriage to her hero. Wallace, however, has not imagined the possibility that his fellow-soldier is a woman and finding this to be the case, he is not just surprised, he is thoroughly revolted:

The prowess of the knight of the green plume, the respect he owed to the widow of the Earl of Mar, the tenderness he ever felt for all of woman-kind, were all forgotten in the disgusting blandishments of this determined wanton. (V, p.54)

Finding Wallace immune to her protestations of love, Joanna's disappointment is so great that she suffers a mental breakdown; suddenly her very sanity is in question: she has 'a desperate and portentous expression in her countenance... Her eyes glare with the fury of a maniac' (V, pp.57; 58) and she finally gives vent to her jealous fantasies about Helen and Wallace, thus revealing not only a thorough hatred for her rather too good to be true step-daughter, but, more tellingly, a total misconception regarding the relationship between Helen and Wallace. Porter presents Joanna quite sympathetically, while illustrating that her unmitigated misery is the inevitable result of behaviour that crosses the accepted boundaries of femininity, beyond the 'verge of the proper sphere'. Mary Brunton was later to take a similar course in her final novel-fragment, Emmeline in which a woman who acts against the accepted norms - committing adultery and getting divorced - is simultaneously condemned and empathised with.

Porter shows that Joanna has nothing to judge Helen by, other than her own behaviour as a young woman, and never having received any real moral guidance, the 'passion of the souls' experienced by her young step-daughter and Wallace is utterly incomprehensible to her. In the course of her outburst, it transpires that she had actually been emulating Helen (at least by her own way of thinking), in her disguise as the Knight of the Green Plume. As she says 'with bitter derision',

"Men are saints, when their passions are satisfied. Think not to impose on her, who knows how this vestal Helen followed you in page's attire, and without one stigma being cast on her maiden delicacy! I am not to learn the days and nights she passed alone with you in the woods of Normandy!... And now, relinquishing her yourself, you leave a dishonoured bride to cheat the vows of some honester man!" (V, p.59)

Porter here faces up to an ugly reality for many women with reference to marriage: Joanna knows from her own bitter experience that 'men are saints when their passions are satisfied'. Clearly her marriage as little more than a child bride, to a lusty forty-year-old man taught her this lesson.

Porter's insightful history of Joanna helps the reader to infer that the character's problems are not exclusively her own fault. Her poor education has resulted in the absence of a moral framework by which to temper her actions: the repercussions of this are shown to be disastrous and far-reaching, providing something of a cautionary tale for the reader. Several of the other novelists under consideration in this thesis address themselves to questions of personal morality and the supreme importance of the education of women, a matter taken up in the following chapter with regard to Hamilton's The Cottagers of Glenburnie.

At the close of The Scottish Chiefs Joanna Mar is confined as a lunatic, driven out of her mind with remorse. She is figured as an incoherent, dangerous madwoman, enveloped in scarlet velvet, providing an image which might well be interpreted as something of a precursor of the repressed female anger bubbling under the surface of certain scenes

in later, Victorian fiction, by women writers such as the Bronte sisters and George Eliot; perhaps the first *bona fide* example of Gilbert and Gubar's (1979) 'Madwoman in the Attic'. Porter's characterisation of Joanna fits into a pattern posited by Jenni Calder who writes,

The intense moral attitudes characteristic of Calvinism identifiable in some writers, mean that sexual and assertive women are often shown as threatening, and are usually destroyed or rejected in order to maintain the moral order.<sup>49</sup>

Writing with reference to male-female interchange in the Waverley novels, Ina Ferris has commented:

Scott's outlaw women like Meg Merrilies and Madge Wildfire tend to be masculine in form and dress. The constructs of gender that have become so firm in the mid-Victorian novel of Dickens and Thackeray demonstrate a certain mobility and fluidity in the Waverley Novels.<sup>50</sup>

The fluidity of gender constructs to be found in the Waverley novels is evident not only in the decidedly 'manly' outlaw women, but also frequently in peculiarly 'feminine' men. Darsie Latimer, who is dressed in female clothes to travel to Crackenthorp's Inn at the closure of Redgauntlet (1824) is perhaps the most obvious case in point, and in addition to this physical manifestation of femininity (to which he submits very reluctantly), he and other Scott heroes, such as Edward Waverley, are uncommonly

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49. Jenni Calder, ed., Stevenson and Victorian Fiction (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1981), p.24.

50. Ina Ferris, The Achievement of Literary Authority: Gender, History, and the Waverley Novels (London: Cornell University Press, 1991), p.101.

See also Judith Wilt, Secret Leaves: The Novels of Walter Scott (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1985) for a discussion of male and female identity in Scott's novels.

passive - a quality traditionally associated with the feminine rather than the masculine character. Taking a similar stance to Ina Ferris, Susan Morgan argues that 'the appropriate feminist critical approach to nineteenth-century British fiction is to discuss not simply women, whether as authors or as characters, but masculine and feminine, whether appearing as men or as women, as authors or as characters'.<sup>51</sup>

Jane Porter's outlaw woman, Joanna, is a voluptuous beauty, who, in many respects, is presented as a victim of circumstance. Her adoption of a male disguise does not prevent her retaining a definite elegance; the Knight of the Green Plume is eminently graceful, as witness this, the reader and Wallace's first sight of him/her:

A knight of a very majestic mien, and habited in a suit of green armour studded with gold. He wore a helmet, from which streamed a long feather of the same hue. (V, p.8)

Thanks to the 'mobility and fluidity' of gender constructs in The Scottish Chiefs, the Knight of the Green Plume's elegant carriage and demeanour does not (even in the course of several weeks) give him away as a masquerading woman.<sup>52</sup> The character of Wallace himself also gives Porter some opportunities to explore gender characterisation. In Fraser's Magazine, a commentator has great fun in sending

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51. Susan Morgan, Sisters in Time: Imagining Gender in Nineteenth-Century British Fiction (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), p.14.

52. The term 'mobility and fluidity' is taken from the Ina Ferris (1991) quotation given above.



up the less than warrior-like character of Wallace that Porter presents in The Scottish Chiefs:

Wallace wight is drawn as a sort of sentimental dandy, who, if we mistake not, faints upon occasion, is revived by lavender water, and throughout the book is tenderly in love.<sup>53</sup>

Sir Walter Scott too, is reported by Hogg as having taking exception to Jane Porter's representation of Wallace, saying that his character had been 'frittered away to that of a fine gentleman', once again implicitly calling into question the hero's masculinity.<sup>54</sup> These criticisms do tend to exaggerate Porter's manipulation of Wallace's role. Given his loving personality, his interest in babies, and empathy with the decorum of ladies, Porter's William Wallace, might be termed something of a feminised man, reminiscent of Henry Mackenzie's Man of Feeling more than Blind Harry's Wallace. Her Wallace is certainly not the ferocious and blood-thirsty freedom fighter as figured in some of the histories; hers is a man imbued with a feminised personal and national conscience. In The Scottish Chiefs, Wallace is undoubtedly deeply sensitive, but he is also inestimably courageous and heroic. Another contemporary reviewer of the novel, comments on her portrayal of the character less censoriously:

From this account of him nothing can be imbibed but what is honourable and praise-worthy; the spirit of

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53. Anonymous 'Gallery of Literary Characters No. LXIX: Miss Jane Porter' in Fraser's Magazine, 11 (1835), p.404.

54. James Hogg, Domestic Manners of Sir Walter Scott (1834; repr. Stirling: Eneas Mackay, 1909), p.212.

the purest patriotism, the love of virtue, and the love of God.<sup>55</sup>

It is interesting to note that Jane Porter's novelist sister, Anna Maria, is said to have 'feared that her [own] heroes might be viewed as women masquerading as men' (according to her entry in the Dictionary of National Biography).

Sharing many of Jane Porter's Wallace's characteristic qualities, the hero of Eliza Logan's Restalrig, one Walter Logan, might also be considered something of a feminised man. Much like Scott's Edward Waverley, Walter Logan is more often figured as a passive victim of events than their instigator. Being under an attainder after the wrongful execution of his father as a traitor, at the beginning of the romance he is forced to travel *incognito* within Britain (having just returned from a six year sojourn on the continent) and upon coming to London, thanks to the ministrations of one former connection who remains loyal, he is put under the protection of Queen Anne herself. This royal protection entails a confinement which might be usefully characterised as a sort of feminisation: Restalrig's movements are restricted to the extent that he may only leave the apartments set aside for his use in Denmark House at the express command of the Queen. In order to remain safe, he must remain within a limited sphere, abnegate all his own initiative and live a thoroughly passive existence, responding solely to the

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55. Anonymous review of The Scottish Chiefs in the British Critic, 37, (1811), 247-256 (p.255).

Queen's will, the Queen, incidentally being the only woman shown to have real power in this novel.

Walter Logan thereby experiences something of what it is to be a member of the opposite sex (though still of course of a very privileged class): totally at the mercy of others (in this case not a father or husband, but Queen Anne). His femininity is not, however something that is simply a result of his circumstances. His general sensitivity - sensibility, even - is emphasised from the very outset, in his behaviour towards the Sprotts (whose near relation had wrongfully condemned his own father) and is nowhere more clearly demonstrated than in his reaction to the loss of his pet dog, Mignon, in London,

Never did that best portrayed of all prisoners - he of Chillon - lament the departure of the lovely bird which cheered his existence with more than mortal sympathy, than did our hero that of his little companion. (Restalrig, I, p.118)

Though Eliza Logan has no characters physically cross-dressing, as has been shown, she does nevertheless give her hero a certain feminine disposition, which, like that of Porter's Wallace, allows different interpretations. On the one hand, these feminine heroes could simply be unreconstructed descendants of Harley, the archetypal man of feeling; on the other, they may be read (as they have been here) as modern - i.e. early nineteenth century - tentative propositions on literary notions of gender. Porter, in The Scottish Chiefs, and her contemporary, Eliza Logan (to a lesser extent) in her St Johnstoun and Restalrig, appear to have relished muddying the boundaries

between genders, creating a cast of characters including women with supposedly 'masculine' characteristics like great physical strength, initiative and decisiveness, and likewise a number of men with supposedly 'feminine' warmth, tenderness and grace. Patricia Meyer Spacks writes of the 'fundamental separations of socially contrived gender' in eighteenth century fiction:

To the "masculine" realm belong self-love, reason, sublimity, art. Social sentiment, emotion of all kinds, beauty, and nature associate themselves with the "feminine".<sup>56</sup>

In the examples of early nineteenth century historical romance that have been considered in the course of this chapter, the 'fundamental separations' are, I believe purposely, not at all clear cut; the boundaries of the 'proper sphere' are blurred.

## V Conclusion

The inclusion of writers such as Logan and Porter in the history of Scottish literature of the early nineteenth century facilitates a much broader and more representative understanding of that period.

In the course of this chapter it has been demonstrated that Scottish women writers of the early nineteenth century,

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56. Patricia Meyer Spacks, Desire and Truth: Functions of Plot in Eighteenth-Century English Novels (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), p.235.

like their English contemporaries, took advantage of the vicarious opportunity to possess power which the romance offered. The novels considered here are not feminocentric, having male protagonists, yet women are vital to the plot in all three. Love between men and women is figured as the most powerful force in the world, the *primum mobile* in civil war and affairs of state. Romance-writing allowed women to express their desires through escapism and may be considered, as Jane Spencer (1986) puts it, 'a covert protest against the neglect and tedium of women's lives' (p.186). At the same time as indulging in escape from the real present day world, however, women romance writers were also imagining the possibility of a more felicitous future world. Porter's and Logan's feminised heroes may be considered part of that vision, of a world where relationships between men and women are of paramount importance and their respective desires may be met without causing either to suffer or inflict neglect or brutality.

The disenfranchised early nineteenth century woman who wrote and published romance (and other kinds of fiction) was afforded a truly empowering experience that was not a fantasy. The printed page of the novel offered women a platform from which they could have a voice in intellectual debates of the day. Porter and Logan, like a number of other women writers of that time, seized the opportunity offered. They delivered their own views on a wide range of issues, such as the relationship between history and fiction, as discussed in this chapter, as well

as producing their own visions of nationhood and of the qualities desirable in male and female gender, suggesting that some of women's 'proper sphere' might also be appropriate to men. They tentatively addressed issues of particular concern to women, such as marriage and education (for example in Porter's treatment of Joanna and Helen), which are major features in the work of several of the other women writers under consideration here, not least in the work of Hamilton, whose The Cottagers of Glenburnie comprises a primary focus of the next chapter.

### **CHAPTER THREE**

#### **ELIZABETH HAMILTON, GRACE KENNEDY AND THE DIDACTIC TRADITION**

I     i     Introduction: Elizabeth Hamilton  
and Grace Kennedy

Elizabeth Hamilton's The Cottagers of Glenburnie, A Tale for the Farmer's Inglenook (1808) and Grace Kennedy's Father Clement: A Roman Catholic Story (1823) and Dunallan; or Know What You Judge, A Story (1825) are the novels under consideration in this chapter.<sup>1</sup> The writers were the subject of various biographical sketches in the nineteenth century; neither is much remembered in the present one however. Grace Kennedy tends to be noticed even less often than Elizabeth Hamilton.

Born in Belfast to a Scottish father and Irish mother, Elizabeth Hamilton (1758-1816) lived from an early age with close relatives in Stirlingshire. From the evidence of her published correspondence, as an adult she strongly identified with the Scottish, rather than the Irish element of her heritage referring for instance, in one letter to

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1. Elizabeth Hamilton, The Cottagers of Glenburnie, A Tale for the Farmer's Inglenook (Edinburgh: Manners & Miller, 1808); further references are to the second edition, (Manners & Miller, 1808) and are given after quotations in the text. Grace Kennedy, Father Clement: A Roman Catholic Story (Edinburgh: Oliphant, 1823); Dunallan; or Know What You Judge, A Story (Edinburgh: Oliphant, 1825). References given after quotations in the text are to The Works of Grace Kennedy, 6 vols, (Edinburgh: Oliphant, 1827), in which set, Father Clement is II; Dunallan, IV and V. Plot summaries of these novels are provided in Appendix III.



the Scots as 'my good country folks'.<sup>2</sup> Hamilton contributed to the whole gamut of publishing in the Romantic age. She wrote a substantial amount of non-fiction, including essays in journals and treatises on education and religion, as well as three novels: her 'black baby' (Benger, II, p. 126), Translation of the Letters of a Hindoo Rajah (1796); Memoirs of the Modern Philosophers (1800); and lastly The Cottagers of Glenburnie (1808). Hamilton also wrote a work dubbed a 'quasi-novel' by Gary Kelly, her Memoirs of the Life of Agrippina, the Wife of Germanicus (1804), as well as poetry and songs.<sup>3</sup>

Though The Cottagers of Glenburnie was undoubtedly her most successful work, Hamilton's Memoirs of the Modern Philosophers, in which she satirises the Jacobin philosophies of Godwin and his circle, enjoyed enough success in its own day for a commentator in the Gentleman's Magazine (1816) to remark of its stridently feminist anti-heroine, Bridgetina Botherim, that she had become 'a

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2. Elizabeth Benger, Memoirs of the Late Mrs Elizabeth Hamilton, With a Selection from her Correspondence and Other Unpublished Writings, 2 vols, (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1818), II, p.73. Further references to this work are given after quotations in the text.
  3. Gary Kelly, 'Revolutionary and Romantic Feminism: Women, Writing, and Cultural Revolution' in Revolution and English Romanticism: Politics and Rhetoric ed. by Keith Hanley and Raman Selden, (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1990), pp.107-130 (p.123). Further references to this essay are given after quotations in the text.

proverbial point in conversation'.<sup>4</sup> Botherim was not the only one of Hamilton's creations to become proverbial: Hamilton's biographer in the Dictionary of National Biography notes that her Mrs MacClarty (a leading character in The Cottagers of Glenburie) 'is still a figure of interest for Scottish readers'.<sup>5</sup> Her predilection for female leading characters underpins her particular interest for feminist readers. Sir Walter Scott drew attention to Hamilton in the closing chapter of his Waverley, entitled, 'A Postscript, which should have been a Preface', in which he comments of Hamilton and Mrs Grant of Laggan, that their 'genius is highly creditable to their country,' Hamilton's Cottagers giving a picture of the 'rural habits of Scotland... with striking and impressive fidelity'.<sup>6</sup> Hamilton was something of a pioneer in Scottish literature, venturing to the very the boundaries of her 'proper sphere', not only through writing a very popular novel centred upon a woman, Mrs Mason, who single-handedly effects a revolution in a Highland village, but also by peopling that novel with working class characters who use authentic vernacular speech (many years before John Galt). It is a great misfortune that a writer who made such an

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4. Quoted in Elizabeth Hamilton's entry in the Dictionary of British Women Writers ed. by Janet Todd (London: Routledge, 1989), p.312.
  5. Dictionary of National Biography, 63 vols, (London: Smith, Elder, 1885-1900). All further references in the text are to this edition.
  6. Sir Walter Scott, Waverley, or, 'Tis Sixty Years Since (Edinburgh: Ballantyne, 1814; repr. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986) pp.493-494.

impact in her own time, is largely forgotten in the present day.

Grace Kennedy (1782-1825), though she is granted a full column entry in the Dictionary of National Biography and more than a page in A Biographical Dictionary of Eminent Scotsmen, has somehow slipped through the net of not only the Scottish literary histories, but also feminist dictionaries of women writers, intended to reinstate missing women, like herself.<sup>7</sup> Born in Ayrshire, as a child she moved to Edinburgh, where she remained until her death. Like many women writers of her time, she shunned publicity and published anonymously during her lifetime, well aware of the boundaries of her 'proper sphere', as is clear from the 'Short Account of the Author' which was published posthumously, in The Works of Grace Kennedy.<sup>8</sup> As well as a number of works intended for young people including The Decision; or Religion must be All, or is Nothing (1821) and Profession is not Principle; or, the Name of Christian is not Christianity (1822), and religious tracts for adults, Kennedy published two complete novels also intended for adults: Father Clement (1823) and Dunallan, or Know what

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7. A Biographical Dictionary of Eminent Scotsmen, 3 vols, ed. by Robert Chambers (Edinburgh: Blackie, 1847; Revised throughout and continued by the Rev. Thomas Thomson, (London: Blackie & Son, 1875). She is not noticed for instance in The Feminist Companion to Literature in English: Women Writers from the Middle Ages to the Present, ed. by Virginia Blain et al (London: Batsford, 1990), or in the Dictionary of British Women Writers ed. by Janet Todd (London: Routledge, 1989).
8. The 'Short Account of the Author' is discussed in Section IV.

you Judge (1824). She also wrote a fragment of a third, Philip Colville, a Covenanter's Story, which was published posthumously in 1827. Her works are applauded in A Biographical Dictionary of Eminent Scotsmen (1875) as follows:

The incidents they relate are happily devised and full of interest; the characters, besides being natural, are admirably delineated; the dialogues in which they express their sentiments are given in natural everyday phrase, instead of stilted declamation; while their religious teaching, instead of being obtruded, arises spontaneously from the actors of the scene, or the incidents described. Such are their excellencies, not usually to be found in that species of literature which may be termed the religious novel, and the works of Grace Kennedy show how well she was qualified to obtain distinction in the more ambitious departments of intellectual competition.

Grace Kennedy's Father Clement caused quite a sensation following its publication in 1824; indeed some fourteen years after its first publication, the novel was still topical enough to be censured in the Christian Observer, for the 'unfair and dangerous practice of condemning one's opponents in works of fiction'.<sup>9</sup> Later on, Father Clement inspired the publication of a novel in direct response, meticulously contradicting the profoundly anti-Catholic stance fostered by Kennedy's novel.<sup>10</sup> And later still, in -----

9. Christian Observer (1837), p.307; quoted in Elisabeth Jay, The Religion of the Heart: Anglican Evangelicalism and the Nineteenth-Century Novel (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979) p.226.
10. This retaliatory novel was Father Oswald. A Genuine Catholic Story published anonymously in 1842. In Robert Lee Wolff's Gains and Losses: Novels of Faith and Doubt in Victorian England (London: Garland, 1988), Wolff quotes the 'anonymous Catholic, seething with anger' who wrote Father Oswald as follows: [its aim is] 'to present an antidote to the baneful production of "Father Clement"' (p.34).

1858, Grace Kennedy's novel even merited a mention in George Eliot's Scenes of Clerical Life in which a certain Miss Pratt opposes the view of the Christian Observer (given above) saying,

This story of 'Father Clement' is a library in itself on the errors of Romanism. I have ever considered fiction a suitable form for conveying moral and religious instruction, as I have shown in my little work 'De Courcy,' which, as a very clever writer in a the 'Crompton Argus' said at the time of its appearance, is the light vehicle of a weighty moral.<sup>11</sup>

Given the fact of the interest her books aroused in nineteenth century readers and writers, Grace Kennedy's absence from Scottish literary history is lamentable.

Hamilton and Kennedy's didactic novels superficially appear to conform to nineteenth century strictures on the woman writer's 'proper sphere', but in fact both writers, whether consciously or unconsciously, stretch the boundaries of that sphere to some extent. In order to understand the ways in which they subverted the tradition within which they chose to write, it is first essential to recognise the characteristics of the didactic mode of writing.

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11. George Eliot, Scenes of Clerical Life, 2 vols, (London, 1858), II, p.78. Miss Pratt is incidentally also the name of a chatterbox character in Susan Ferrier's The Inheritance (1824).

## I    ii    The Didactic Novel:

### Definitions, Influences, Critical Dilemmas

Conduct literature of the eighteenth century and earlier (which was mainly written by men) can clearly be regarded as a precursor to didactic fiction (primarily written by women), a mode of writing which was especially prevalent in the early days of the novel, and well into the nineteenth century. Also sometimes known as conduct fiction, didactic novels generally comprise a cross between 'story' (the backbone of the novel) and 'lesson' (the keystone of the conduct book).<sup>12</sup>

Writers of didactic fiction, such as Hamilton and Kennedy, have largely escaped the notice of Scottish literary historians and have therefore not previously been considered in relation to the conduct book tradition, of which two of the leading eighteenth century exponents were Scots. James Fordyce's Sermon's to Young Women (1766) and John Gregory's A Father's Legacy to his Daughters (1774) are the very models of this type of literature.<sup>13</sup>

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12. The terms of this definition are borrowed from Katherine Sobba Green, who writes that the courtesy novel is, 'a hybrid form born of women's needs, a cross between "story" and "lesson", between the novel and the courtesy book', in 'The Courtesy Novel (1740-1820): Women Writing for Women', (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Georgia State University, 1983), p.5.

13. Fordyce's Sermons is perhaps best known in the present day for being the tedious text which Mr Collins reads to the Bennet girls in Jane Austen's Pride and Prejudice (1813). The writings of Fordyce and Gregory are returned to in Section IV.

In didactic novels (as in conduct literature), little or no attempt is made to disguise the open intention to instruct the reader. The works of Grace Kennedy and Elizabeth Hamilton, which may best be characterised by their didacticism, are quite typical of this mode of writing. The term *didactic* often carries negative connotations in literary history; it is positively not meant in any pejorative sense in this thesis. Indeed, the aim in this chapter is not to ignore or denounce the insistently didactic rhetoric in novels by Elizabeth Hamilton and Grace Kennedy, but, in the words of J. Paul Hunter, to 'see their accomplishments both as units of discourse and as novelistic wholes', of real interest in the field of Scottish literary history.<sup>14</sup>

Hamilton and Kennedy were by no means alone in the early nineteenth century Scottish writing scene, in their desire to instruct their readers. Several of the women writers considered in this thesis openly professed didactic aims. Susan Ferrier's didactic streak is her major flaw according to such critics as Herbert Foltinek and Nelson S. Bushnell,<sup>15</sup> and Mary Brunton clearly wanted her novels to -----

14. J. Paul Hunter, Before Novels: the Cultural Contexts of Eighteenth-Century English Fiction, (New York: Norton, 1990), p.56. Further references to this book are given after quotations in the text.

15. Herbert Foltinek in his Introduction to Susan Ferrier's Marriage (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971) and his essay 'Susan Ferrier reconsidered' in Studies in Scottish Fiction: Nineteenth Century ed. by Horst W. Drescher and Joachim Schwend (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1985), pp.131-144. Nelson S. Bushnell, in 'Susan Ferrier's Marriage as a Novel of

educate as well as entertain, as can be seen in the following extract from a letter she wrote,

A lofty moral... is necessary to my style of thinking and writing.<sup>16</sup>

Lofty morals were of course precisely what the critics expected from women writing within their 'proper sphere'.

It can of course also be argued that many writers even today are in the business of instructing their readers, albeit in a much less overt manner. For instance, Angela Carter (1940-1992) ironically and self-consciously takes up the didactic tradition with her radical revisions of fairy tales, through which she might be said to be teaching readers how to process this kind of literature from a feminist standpoint. The kind of didactic writing that was popular in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, however, was much more emphatic in its teachings, which did not have to be inferred by the reader, but were clearly set out as instruction *per se*, often only very lightly encumbered by story or plot.

One close relation to the didactic novel is the popular religious tract, many of which were circulating around

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...Continued...

Manners', in Studies in Scottish Literature 5 (1968), 216-28.

16. Letter dated 27 October, 1815 published in Emmeline, with some other pieces: To which is prefixed A Memoir of her Life, including some extracts from her Correspondence (Edinburgh: Manners & Miller, 1819), p.lxxxii.



Britain in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. These tracts took the form of moralistic pamphlet literature and were published and distributed by religious organisations such as the Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge, primarily being intended to counter the supposed ill-effects of the humble (and sometimes bawdy) chapbook.

It is precisely the kind of undiluted didacticism which appears in such publications as the Cheap Repository Tracts, which tends to be unpalatable to today's readers and critics.<sup>17</sup> In Before Novels, J. Paul Hunter analyses modern critics' distaste for the didactic tradition in novels, stating,

In eighteenth-century novels and many nineteenth-century ones, the didacticism is open and intense, and modern readers often balk at being addressed so directly and insistently, especially when... what is being taught goes against the grain of modern sensibility... When criticism has had to deal with didacticism... in the novel and elsewhere it has almost always become hesitant and apologetic, and the tendency has been to minimize or deny the presence of didactic elements as much as possible and to pronounce the residue an unfortunate flaw. (pp.54-55)

In recent years, however, a number of feminist critics have attempted to consider didactic texts in a less overtly apologetic way. Marilyn Butler, for instance, makes the following comments about works by Maria Edgeworth:

Her early stories (like the children's series The Parent's Assistant (1796) and the novel Belinda) feature very sensible protagonists, often girls, who learn an unconventional degree of independence, and come to rely upon themselves instead of society. Later she developed the genre for which she is best remembered, naturalistically observed stories set

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17. The Cheap Repository Tracts series, published between 1795-98, was edited and mainly written by Hannah More.

among the Irish peasantry. Both types of story are didactic, in the grave public-spirited manner of the Enlightenment. The Irish tales, for example, are designed to make the English better disposed towards their neighbours by bringing out the warmth and humour of the peasantry; they are also a semi-documentary record of Irish manners, phrases and customs.<sup>18</sup>

Butler addresses the issue of didacticism in such works fairly neutrally. Another critic who is not much inclined to view Maria Edgeworth's didacticism as a flaw is Dale Spender, who writes,

What has struck me in the criticism of her writing that I have encountered is the focus on her didacticism and moral tone, and the condemnation of such use. I would not want to quarrel with the idea that Maria Edgeworth does have a moral purpose in her writing. She does see character development as primary: if the character is sound the life is good; if the character is weak - and the circumstances debilitating - then the life is difficult. But I see little to object to in this approach. When William Shakespeare explored the flaws of character it was called tragedy; when Maria Edgeworth undertakes a similar exploration it is called didacticism.<sup>19</sup>

To paraphrase Spender, then, traditionally in the context of literary history, *didactic* has been regarded as synonymous with *nonliterary*; she demonstrates this to be a false assumption in the course of her book. Nancy Armstrong, to cite another example of a feminist critic with a more positive approach to didactic texts, in her Desire and Domestic Fiction, states that one of her objectives is to 'dissolv[e] the boundary between those texts that today are considered literature and those that, like the conduct books, are not'. She goes on to argue

18. Marilyn Butler, Romantics, Rebels and Reactionaries: English Literature and its Background, 1760-1830 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981) p.96.

19. Dale Spender, Mothers of the Novel: 100 Good Women Writers before Jane Austen, (London: Pandora, 1986), p.291.

that 'the distinction between literary and nonliterary was imposed retrospectively by the modern literary institution upon anomalous works of fiction'.<sup>20</sup>

In the novels of Elizabeth Hamilton and Grace Kennedy, the didacticism is indeed 'open and intense' (to use J. Paul Hunter's phrase) and these writers have suffered critical derision as a direct result. J. Paul Hunter (1990) provides a useful list of characteristic features of didactic literature, describing six of its features in particular which 'seem important in clarifying at once didacticism's cultural significance and the modern resistance it has generated' (pp.228-9). These six characteristics are summarised below:

Didactic texts should:

- (1) incorporate 'a powerful sense of good and evil';
- (2) have 'directness and ... faith in language to affect the behavior of readers in rational and predictable ways';
- (3) have a 'heightened tone and urgent sense of intensity';
- (4) have a 'tendency to address readers directly and personally';
- (5) involve 'basic assumptions about what writing is for' (i.e. primarily to *instruct*, not to *entertain*);
- (6) employ 'tones of authority and the air of certainty'. (pp.228-242)

Hamilton and Kennedy in general adhere to these characteristic features of didactic literature, with the possible exception of item No. (4). In this regard, Kennedy especially tends not to address the reader

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20. Nancy Armstrong, Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), p.9. Further references to this book are given after quotations in the text.

directly; she does not indulge in introductory sections to her novels, as was the wont of so many of her contemporaries, including Porter and Logan as discussed in the preceding chapter.

If not subjected to much in the way of direct address, the reader of both of these writers is nevertheless perpetually 'interpellated' by the author.<sup>21</sup> The reader is usually given little choice but to take up a position of agreement with the narrative voice, or, as in the case of the quotation below from The Cottagers, join the witless as the butt of the joke:

And here let us remark the advantage which our cottages in general possess over those of our southern neighbours, theirs being so whitened up that no one can have the comfort of laying a dirty hand upon them without leaving the impression, an inconvenience which reduces people to the necessity of learning to stand upon their legs without the assistance of their hands; whereas in our country custom has rendered the hands, in standing at a door, or in going up or down a stair, no less necessary than the feet, as may be plainly seen in the finger marks which meet one's eye in all directions. (p.140)

It is worth noting that for all her condemnation of the slovenliness of the Scottish cottages, a sentiment she shares with other writers of her time, Hamilton does use a first person possessive, 'our' to describe them, thus

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21. Louis Althusser coins the term 'interpellate' and discusses its meaning in Lenin and Philosophy and other essays, translated from the French by Ben Brewster (London: NLB, 1971), pp.162-165.

signalling her identification with them.<sup>22</sup> She thereby, to an extent, softens her comments, at the same time as helping the reader to agree with her sentiment. Hamilton's affiliation with Scotland is clear from her published correspondence. There is not only the previously-mentioned letter in which she refers to the Scots as 'my good country folks' (Benger, II, p.73). In addition, to the poet Hector MacNeil, she argues for the institution of the Scots language as a school subject, lamenting the passing of her native '*gude Braid Scotch*', and continuing, 'It is a shame in our own country to find how few can read their *native* tongue with any ease or propriety' (Benger, II, p.20).

## II Scottish Contexts

Contrary to J. Paul Hunter's (1990) depiction of critics being 'hesitant and apologetic' in their approach to didactic texts, Scottish literary historians seem to prefer to ignore this kind of writing. Grace Kennedy's entire oeuvre is thoroughly didactic in tone, and it is no coincidence that her contribution to the field of Scottish literature has been consistently overlooked throughout the twentieth century.

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22. In Mary Brunton's Self-Control (1811; repr. London: Pandora Press, 1986), for instance, the heroine, Laura Montreville is very impressed with a cottage in England: 'She followed him into a room, which, unacquainted as she was with the cleanliness of the English cottages, appeared to her quite Arcadian' (p.248).

Though not overlooked altogether like Kennedy's works, Hamilton's most popular work, The Cottagers of Glenburnie has not been much appreciated by the historians. The novel has been repeatedly misrepresented in twentieth century criticism, not least in terms of mistaken assumptions about the plot. For instance, contrary to published opinion, despite her strenuous activities in the village of Glenburnie, in her efforts with the MacClarty family, Mrs Mason is wholly thwarted. To cite one of the most recent critics to perpetuate this misconception about the novel, Gary Kelly (1990) comments, 'Mrs Mason... reforms the domestic practices and relations of her hosts, the MacClartys, then those of the entire village' (p.124). This is simply wrong: the MacClarty family remain hostile to her 'improvements' to the bitter end. As a contemporary reviewer wrote, 'Mrs Mason finds her kinswoman [Mrs MacClarty] incurable'.<sup>23</sup> The same might be said of her whole family. The son marries a smuggler's daughter against his mother's wishes and the resultant argument ends with Mrs MacClarty and her daughters homeless. Having set up home elsewhere, one daughter deserts her mother, leaving an illegitimate baby in her charge. The other daughter, Jean, as the reader learns in an 'Appendix' to the second and later editions of the novel (purportedly a letter to the author from an old acquaintance of the MacClartys) ends up married to a cousin with whom she keeps an inn on a

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23. Anonymous review of The Cottagers of Glenburnie in the Edinburgh Review, 12 (July 1808), 401-410 (p.403).

well-travelled road.<sup>24</sup> Far from prospering, however, the second generation MacClartys are, according to the letter, on the verge of bankruptcy. This is due to stiff competition from another inn nearby, newly opened and run as a clean, neat and tidy home from home by a former 'scholar of Mrs Mason's' (p.407).

Mrs Mason's effect on Glenburnie may be represented as little short of miraculous, but does fall short of converting the MacClarty family to her way of thinking. There are various possible conclusions to draw from this 'failure' of Mrs Mason to effect total reform of everyone resident in the village of Glenburnie. Elizabeth Hamilton perhaps appreciated that her medicine of reform would be unpalatable to some. Her various lessons are presented with consummate common sense; perhaps that same common sense told her that some degree of failure is inevitable. Mrs Mason's reflection on her situation upon arriving in the MacClarty household is pertinent in this regard,

She was now, for the first time in her life, completely her own mistress, but she was already sensible that the idea of a life completely independent of the will of others is merely visionary, and that in all situations some portion of one's own will must necessarily be sacrificed. (p.177)

Misconceptions about the plot tend to suggest a less than rigorous approach to such novels by hostile critics.

J. Paul Hunter (1990) pinpoints modern critics' difficulty

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24. This artificial apparatus of a letter to the author recalls again the tradition of 'Editorship' that persists in Scottish literature in the nineteenth century, most famously in Hogg's Confessions, as discussed in the preceding chapter.

in finding an appropriate method by which to approach didactic texts when he writes,

Many early novelists traditionally left out of the canon... would find their rightful place in literary history if critics could suspend their disbelief long enough to embrace the didactic rhetoric in their books and see their accomplishments both as units of discourse and as novelistic wholes'. (p.56)

Certainly, it is hard for the modern reader not to find some of Mrs Mason's condescensions jarring. She takes on the problems of the MacClarty family (who do not ask for her help) from a singularly superior position, which is regularly and strenuously reinforced by the narrative voice. She often tries to embarrass family members into more appropriate behaviour by boldly pointing out their shortcomings and she allows no arguments. In the following passage, Mrs Mason attempts to shame Mrs MacClarty 'into a greater degree of nicety with regard to cleanliness':

Mrs MacClarty then took down a bottle of runnet, or yearning, as she called it, and having poured in what she thought a sufficient quantity, tucked up the sleeve of her gown, and dashing in her arm, stirred the infusion with equal care and speed.

"I believe, cousin," said Mrs Mason, hesitatingly, "I believe - you forgot to wash your hands."

"Hoot!" returned the gudewife, "my hands do weel eneugh. I canna be fashed to clean them at every turn."

"But you go about your work with such activity," rejoined Mrs Mason, "that I should think it would give you little trouble if you were once accustomed to it; and by all that I have observed, and I have had many opportunities of observation, I believe that, in the management of a dairy, cleanliness is the first, the last, the one art needful." (pp.200-201)

It is hardly surprising that Mrs MacClarty takes offence, at such criticism from Mrs Mason, to whom she has generously afforded her full hospitality. Yet, leaving



niceties of etiquette aside, when considered in the light of Scottish life and manners as Hamilton then knew them, her view can be appreciated on a different level.

According to accounts of the time, the state of the MacClarty home when Mrs Mason visits it, was not all that unusual in the rural community. At least the room she was given had only been used for feeding chickens: T.C. Smout refers to one contemporary writer who,

Describes how his mother always knew it was time to put the porridge on the fire when she heard the family cow standing behind her pass water for the second time.<sup>25</sup>

As Smout goes on to comment, 'It is obvious why Sir Archibald Grant of Monymusk in Aberdeenshire instructed his factor to dump cottars' houses on the farm dunghill when he had evicted their occupants' (p.287). If Hamilton's and indeed Mrs Mason's tone tends to grate upon the ear of the twentieth century commentator, the degradation suffered by 'the lower orders' (as Hamilton terms them in a letter) ought to grate more.<sup>26</sup> Contemporary reviewers were struck by the accuracy of Hamilton's representation of peasant life. One reviewer, for instance, writes:

The picture of their actual practices and notions is drawn... with admirable liveliness and fidelity, and without any attempt to produce effect by the broad glare of exaggeration. Full credit is given for their real merits; and, even when their faults are

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25. T.C. Smout, A History of the Scottish People: 1560-1830 (Glasgow: Collins, 1969; repr. London: Fontana Press, 1972), p.287. Further references to this book are given after quotations in the text.

26. Benger, II, p.73.

displayed, the amiable or respectable traits in their character are brought forward along with them.<sup>27</sup>

One way in which Hamilton characterises the peasant class is in their use of the Scots language. Hamilton's contribution to the development of the novel in Scotland through her innovative use of Scots language is often overlooked. David McKie's criticism of Hamilton, that she 'attributes ignorance, laziness, dirtiness and lack of hygiene to her vernacular-speaking characters', is one that is generally shared amongst those writers who have examined her work at all.<sup>28</sup> Emma Letley makes much the same point, remarking that English language in The Cottagers of Glenburnie is equated 'with moral superiority and dialect with defect and a coarse moral sense'.<sup>29</sup> A slightly less disparaging point of view is that of Gary Kelly, who writes of the 'domestic realism' of Hamilton's Scots language; he too concludes, however, that 'Scots... is to be equated with lower-class rank and the ignorance and stubbornness of oral culture... wisdom is expressed in standard written English'.<sup>30</sup> In this regard, it is useful to see a broader perspective which posits that, 'civilization was largely a linguistic concept, establishing a terrain in which

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27. Edinburgh Review 12 (July, 1808), p.403.

28. David C. McKie, 'Scottish Fiction and Scottish Society 1800-1832' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Stirling University, 1980), p.60.

29. Emma Letley, From Galt to Douglas Brown: Nineteenth-Century Fiction and Scots Language (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1988), p.33.

30. Gary Kelly, English Fiction of the Romantic Period 1789-1830 (London: Longman, 1989), p.91.

vocabulary and syntax distinguished the refined and civilized from the vulgar and the savage'.<sup>31</sup> Transposing this argument to the early nineteenth century Scottish situation, members of Edinburgh polite society throughout the eighteenth century and continuing well into the next, were obsessed with ridding themselves of any traces of Scottishness in the language they used daily, in order to get ahead in the new British society. This pro-Britishness, Robert Crawford (1992) argues, did not so much indicate an anti-Scottish stance as a utilitarian one: it was very much in the interests of Scots to make the most of the alliance, which was after all a *fait accompli*. In the words of T.C. Smout,

There was no doubt that even highly educated Scots felt themselves backward, boorish and uncouth in the company of the wealthier squirearchy of England with whom they came increasingly in contact. Few landed Scots doubted that England began with a more polite and more desirable civilisation than their own, or that it was a duty of patriotism to match and even to outshine the southerners' model whether it was in teacups, in good tone or... in farming. (p.271)

In regard to language specifically, numerous pamphlets were published in the late eighteenth century, decrying the use of coarse Scotticisms instead of their genteel English counterparts. One such publication, entitled, 'Scotticisms [*sic*], arranged in Alphabetical Order, Designed to Correct

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31. Olivia Smith, The Politics of Language 1791-1819 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), p.vii; quoted by Robert Crawford, Devolving English Literature, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), p.18. Further references to Crawford's book are given after quotations in the text.

Improprieties of Speech and Writing',<sup>32</sup> provides a good case in point. The writer's plan, as he sets it out in his 'Advertisement' to the second edition of the pamphlet, is 'to put young writers and speakers on their guard against some of those Scotch idioms, which, in this country, are liable to be mistaken for English'. The connection between 'proper' language and the progress of civilization (as mooted above by Olivia Smith, 1984) is captured succinctly in this same 'Advertisement' by the writer's observation:

That, of late, there has been a strange propensity, in too many of our people, to debase the purity of the language, by a mixture of foreign and provincial idioms, and cant phrases; a circumstance, which has in other countries generally preceded, and partly occasioned, the decline of learning, and which of course must be matter of regret to those who wish well to British literature.

Viewed in the light of the contemporary Scottish society in which they lived, as evidenced by publications such as this, novelists' guarded use of Scots language, at that time suffering something of a linguistic cringe, is hardly surprising. What is perhaps surprising is women novelists' use of this language variety at all. Hamilton was a pioneer in bringing the Scots language to the page of the novel, not simply for comic effect. For instance, she gives Robert MacClarty deathbed utterances that are far from humorous in tone, here using Scots to great effect, the rhythmic flow of his speech heightening the pathos of the scene, as his son stands before him:

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32. Professor Beattie, 'Scoticisms, arranged in Alphabetical Order, Designed to Correct Improprieties of Speech and Writing' (Edinburgh: Creech, 1787).

"Sandie!" exclaimed the dying man, "is it indeed my son, my son Sandie? Thank God, I sall see him ere I die, to gie him my blessing. Come, Sandie, winna ye come to me? Dinna be frightened. Ye have cost me sair; but God kens how truly I forgie you - come and tak my blessing." (p.239)

Hamilton does use Scots humorously as well, of course, and no less successfully. When the fastidious Mrs Mason requests a basin and water to wash herself upon rising, after her first night's sleep at the MacClarty's, announcing 'until I wash, I can proceed no farther in dressing myself," Mrs MacClarty's reply is a witty put-down:

"Dear me," replied Mrs MacClarty, "I'm sure you're weel enough. Your hands ha' nae need o' washing, I trow. Ye ne'er do a turn to file them." (p.168)

Mrs Mason's quest for cleanliness works at the level of metaphor as an analogue to her rather sterile language use, preferring the 'civilised' English to the earthier Scots, which adds to her air of aloofness. Douglas Gifford comments that Hamilton's Mrs Mason is typical of,

A host of other pompous men and women who act as wooden struts for their story's heavy bourgeois respectability.<sup>33</sup>

It seems to the present writer that at least part of this wooden-ness of character stems from her use of Standard English. Mrs MacClarty's Scots, on the other hand, is much more down to earth - like her character - and at the same time more congenial, even when she is being critical. The

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33. Douglas Gifford, 'Myth, Parody and Dissociation: Scottish Fiction 1814-1914' in The History of Scottish Literature, Volume 3, Nineteenth Century, ed. by Douglas Gifford (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1988), pp.217-259 (p.238).

frequently-repeated Scots phrase in The Cottagers of Glenburnie, 'I canna be fashed' (though later, according to Sarah Tytler 'linger[ing] chiefly as a tradition of darker ages') became a very popular maxim in its day, as did various other of the Scottish phrases Hamilton used in this novel.<sup>34</sup> Hamilton's position regarding the use of Scots was somewhat ambivalent. Somehow, a writer like Hamilton had to find a way of synthesising two competing voices in regard to her use of language: on the one hand, characters who make a success of their lives - like Mrs Mason - speak Standard English; on the other hand, Hamilton was clearly drawn to the Scots language.

A look at the Morrison couple in The Cottagers of Glenburnie illustrates the problems created by Hamilton's dual position on this topic. Mrs Morrison's natural and unaffected delight at the prospect of her husband's promotion to village schoolmaster is expressed in Scots:

"As for reading, he may compare wi' the minister himsel'! The kittlest word canna' stop him... I canna expect every ane to think as highly of my gude-man as I do; but I am sure I may safely say, that baith for learning and worth, he's equal to a higher post than being schoolmaster o' Glenburnie." (p.363)

Yet in the next breath, suddenly realising that Gourlay (the minister) is present, she switches register to Standard English, replying to a comment he makes,

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34. 'Sarah Tytler' is the pen-name of the later Scottish novelist, Henrietta Keddie (1826?-1914). Her words are quoted from Jean L. Watson's 'Prefatory Note' to The Cottagers of Glenburnie (Glasgow: Dunn & Wright, [n.d.]), p.9. Gary Kelly, in English Fiction of the Romantic Period (1989) comments on Scots phrases popularised by Hamilton, p.91.

"Oh, sir... we have nothing to do with fashion; but I hope we shall be grateful to God and our friends for all their kindness, and that you will prevail on William not to put from him such an advantage as this blessed offer." (p.364)

Within their own home, the couple happily converse in Scots (for instance, in the chapter preceding the one considered here a dialogue between them is given in Scots), yet in the presence of a figure of authority, they speak Standard English. This is perhaps at the root of Douglas Gifford's (1988) criticism that in The Cottagers of Glenburnie (and works by other women), rather than 'a social critique... all that remains is the nostalgic love of old Scots songs and of old-fashioned couthiness' (p.238).

As she illustrates in this novel, Hamilton has a good ear for the Scots language, yet there is no escaping the underlying message that she considers it is not an appropriate language for progress. In this regard it is illuminating to recall (from her letter quoted previously) that Hamilton wanted the Scots language to be a school subject, i.e. something to be learned from books, rather than being spoken freely in everyday life. In this sentiment, there is little doubt that she was very much reflecting the mood of the time, accepting that Standard English led to advancement. The Scots language, on the other hand, was something that could be appreciated aesthetically. Rather than simply giving vent to nostalgia, Hamilton's use of Scots in The Cottagers of Glenburnie, illustrating the conflict of feelings about language use at the time, might be usefully viewed as an early example of the linguistic debate that has gradually

become more sophisticated as it rages on in Scottish literature, right up to the present day. More than a century after Hamilton's The Cottagers of Glenburnie, Lewis Grassie Gibbon's heroine in Sunset Song (1932) is torn between her identity as the Scottish Chris (at home) and her English self in the schoolroom. Likewise, in William MacIlvanney's Docherty (1975), the debate is rehearsed again, from the point of view of Conn as a schoolboy.<sup>35</sup> Elizabeth Hamilton's tentative foray into this area, serves as an early ventilation of a problem that continues to plague writers to this day.

In Kennedy's Father Clement, the action is set just south of the border (Scotland is within sight, but the Montagues and Clarenhams all live in the north of England) and not a word of dialect Scots tarnishes the pages. The protestant family is pro-British enough to believe the Churches of England and Scotland to be much the same. A brief appearance of vernacular Scots, in Dunallan while well-observed, and showing Kennedy's skill in representing the language variety, is rather marred by the inauspicious circumstances in which the Scots language is to be found. A friend of Catharine's describes the home of a poor family:

A woman, squalid and dirty, held a miserable child by the arm, occasionally shaking him violently.

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35. See Lewis Grassie Gibbon, Sunset Song (1932; repr. London: Longman, 1971), p.36; and William MacIlvanney, Docherty (1975; repr. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1985) pp.112-113.



'I'll learn ye, ye handless little devil - ye'll ken how to break every thing ye touch - what ha'e ye done wi' the bottle?'

'I could na' help it, mother,' screamed the child.

'Gi'e him't weel,' cried a man who lay stretched out in his clothes on a miserable filthy bed. 'I'll help ye if ye canna.'

'Ye'll help me! Ye had better help me to some meat for his stomach, lying up there for half the day when naething ails ye.' (V, pp.151-52)

The adoption of 'proper' language was, in the first quarter of the nineteenth century, inextricably tied up with the notion of improvement. Scots dialect, Kennedy suggests in the above extract from Dunallan, is the resort of vulgar, lazy folk.

Robert Crawford (1992) writes of Scottish writers developing 'a "British Literature" throughout both the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, before a more explicitly nationalist, post-British literary consciousness came to the fore in the twentieth century' (p.9).

Elizabeth Hamilton and Grace Kennedy both demonstrate their allegiance to this new branch of writing, born of the Union of Parliaments in the eighteenth century, and continuing throughout the nineteenth century.

The writers' attitudes toward social class, in the case of Elizabeth Hamilton at least, have been something of a bone of contention in the field of Scottish literary history, as is clear from the comments made by David McKie (1980) and others with regard to her use of Scots language.

### III The Middle Class Ethos

Ever conscious of her 'proper sphere', Elizabeth Hamilton characteristically belittles her novel - 'the little work' - in a letter to Dr S. in 1808, writing,

The little work which is now advertised [The Cottagers of Glenburnie] was written solely with a view to shame my good country folks into a greater degree of nicety with regard to cleanliness, and to awaken their attention to the source of corruption in the lower orders. (Benger, II, p.73)

Such pronouncements (though it has to be remembered that this one at least was made in a private letter) do resonate uneasily on the modern ear: such blatant condescension seems quite extraordinary by today's standards. It is nevertheless possible to venerate Hamilton for her courage in setting out to effect such a massive change: as Gary Kelly has commented, 'As promised in the novel's Dedication, Hamilton has shown how a woman may revolutionize the revolution while remaining within "her" sphere, and thus accomplish what men, in their public and political sphere, apparently could not'.<sup>36</sup>

The demarcation of social class is very noticeable in the pages of didactic novels and is apparent in the novels by Hamilton and Kennedy. Unusually, Grace Kennedy proposes that her writing should be of use in the improvement of the gentry, rather than what she calls the 'lower ranks'. In a letter to her publisher at the time of writing The Decision (1821), Kennedy wrote,

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36. Gary Kelly, Women, Writing and Revolution 1790-1827 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993), p.289.

It has often struck me that amongst the great variety of excellent little works published of late years, for the purpose of attracting the attention and regard of young people to the subject of religion, scarcely any have been addressed to the youth of the higher classes... It is true, works suited to the poor are equally calculated to teach truth to the rich, when written in the correct and beautiful style that many of them are; but the characters described, and the attendant circumstances, are generally taken from the lower ranks and habits of life, and young people of a higher class too soon learn from those whose opinions they naturally adopt, to consider religion as an excellent thing for the poor, without, at the same time, feeling that they are equally interested in the truths it teaches.<sup>37</sup>

Hamilton, on the other hand, had no qualms about directing her pitch towards the 'lower orders', including plenty of practical advice for her countryfolk, such as how to best care for invalids.

One of the most memorable incidents in The Cottagers of Glenburnie is the death of the head of the MacClarty household, a man whose life could, it is implied, perhaps have been saved by the incorporation of a few timely measures. Hamilton does not need to resort to direct addresses to the reader in order to make her point: the correct reading position is clear throughout. Instead of calling in the professional doctor to the bedside of her ailing husband, the feckless Mrs MacClarty calls in one of her neighbours, John Smith, whose advice not only clearly contradicts that given by Mrs Mason (who advocates 'fresh air and cooling beverage'(p.222)), but also sounds at best haphazard, if not just plain daft:

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37. Quoted in the 'Account of the Author', The Works of Grace Kennedy, I, p.ix.

After talking a great deal of nonsense about the nature of the disorder, [Smith] took out his rusty lancet, and bled the patient in the arm, at the same time recommending a poultice of herbs to be applied to his head, and another of the same kind to his stomach; desiring, above all things, that [the patient] might be kept warm, and get nothing cold to drink.  
(pp.222-223)

In all, John Smith's advice for treatment does not appear too far removed from the sort of thing to be found in John Moncrief's Poor Man's Physician of 1712, a collection of remedies which seem much more closely related to medieval sorcery than modern day medicine and is credited by T.C. Smout (1969) with having been 'the most popular Scottish book of family medicine' (p.258) until at least the late eighteenth century. One particularly unsavoury remedy from this volume is for falling-sickness in children, and reads as follows:

Take a little black sucking puppy (but for a girl take a bitch-whelp), choke it, open it, and take out the gall which hath not above three or four drops of pure choler; Give it all to the Child in the time of the fit, with a little tiletree flower water, and you shall see him cured, as it were by a Miracle.<sup>38</sup>

In The Cottagers of Glenburnie, John Smith's 'cure' would certainly have depended upon a miracle, and in the event, none is forthcoming. Mrs Mason's common sense advice, on the other hand, strongly recalls a very different family medical book available in Scotland at the time: William Buchan's Domestic Medicine, first published in 1769, which, according to David Hamilton, in his history of Scottish medicine, The Healers, 'appeared in numerous editions for almost a hundred years, only disappearing in Britain in 1846'. The main difference about this medical book and the

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38. Quoted in T.C. Smout (1969), pp.257-8.

ones that preceded it, was that Buchan intended 'laying medicine more open to mankind'. David Hamilton elaborates as follows,

Much of the emphasis of early 18th century medical practice was based on obscurantism and baffling over-elaboration of prescribing in an attempt to secure medical practice as a profession. Buchan's philosophy took the opposite direction since he attempted to explain simply to the general public the theory and treatment of disease.<sup>39</sup>

David Hamilton's comments echo those of Smout, who refers to Domestic Medicine as 'a monument of common sense and good advice simply expressed...'. Smout, however, goes on to make a number of points in terms of social class, as follows:

Domestic Medicine is a monument of common sense and good advice simply expressed... The numerous editions certainly testify to a large following by upper and middle-class wives to whom, from its tone, it is primarily addressed. What following did it have below those strata? Clearly Buchan meant it to affect the poor as well, for he frequently refers to them... He wrote consciously for a patriarchal society in which the minister or the laird might be able to exercise some influence over the medical practices of poor families, in which upper-class health-visiting was popular, and in which servants were often closely imitative of their mistresses in dress, and might well have been no less imitative in matters of child-rearing since they were themselves often closely involved in helping to rear upper-class children. (pp.258-9)

The imitation of those of 'superior' social rank is a practice advocated most highly in The Cottagers of Glenburnie, and not only with regard to medicine.

Elizabeth Hamilton's keen sense of class consciousness is apparent throughout The Cottagers of Glenburnie. Early on

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39. David Hamilton, The Healers: A History of Medicine in Scotland, (Edinburgh: Canongate, 1981), p.132.

in the novel, the reader learns from Mrs Mason's history (related by her to Mary Stewart in the framing narrative of the novel), that she has from the age of ten been closely involved in an upper class household, that of a family called Longland. There, though employed in various lowly positions herself, first as a needlewoman, then as assistant to a housemaid, and so on, she makes the most of her situation, grasping the opportunity as intimate observer of the landed classes to learn as much as she can from her 'betters'. Her principal mistress during her adolescence in service is one Miss Osburne, a poor relation of the family, who as a devout and dutiful Christian, takes it upon herself to improve her young maid. Mrs Mason describes her debt to Miss Osburne as follows,

I had now acquired sense enough to know what an inestimable benefit was conferred upon me by my dear Miss Osburne's kind instructions. To her goodness I am indeed indebted for all I know. From her I not only learned to read with propriety, to write a tolerable hand, and to case accounts; but, what was more valuable than all these, from her I learned to think. (p.48)

Mrs Mason's own improvement in time led to her rise from orphan pauper to wholly independent adult thinking woman. Her comfortable independence in later life is mainly thanks to a bequest from her employer, grateful for her lifelong loyalty to his family (though typically, she was always sensible enough to save what she could of her own earnings towards her retirement).

Hamilton presents Mrs Mason as one whose own rise from the rank and file make her living proof of the benefits to be gained from diligent effort and self-belief. Having made a

success of her own life, against the odds, she feels qualified to instruct and thereby hopefully improve the lot of the so-called lower orders, in a way that might be more acceptable to them than having the instruction provided by a landed woman, who had inherited wealth and whose patronage could hardly avoid being seen as condescension. It is noticeable that her own improvement comes not from the wealthy aristocratic family with whom she lives as a young woman, but from one of their impoverished relations. To a certain extent, Hamilton transcends class barriers, bringing Miss Osburne 'down' and Mrs Mason 'up' to meet as a middle class in a middle ground. Here self-improvement is not only possible and desirable, but positively - materially and spiritually - rewarded.

It should also be noted that Hamilton likewise shows the other side of the coin, demonstrating the ease with which one can drop through the social strata, as in the case of Bell Stewart. Social standing, she shows, has to be earned and maintained: it is much more a state of mind than a state of material possession. As Jane Austen was later to do, with characters such as the gruesome and laughable Lady Catherine in Pride and Prejudice and the perfect English gentleman, Knightley, in Emma, Hamilton demonstrated that in order to retain their superior social station, members of the gentry must merit the respect and loyalty of the 'minions'. Foolish behaviour is invariably rewarded by unequivocal loss of station. In the words of her father, Bell Stewart's offence is,

To connect all notions of happiness with the gratification of vanity, and to undervalue the respect that attends on integrity and wisdom. (p.341)

In effect, there is little to choose between her fate and that of the MacClarty children, though they never had the advantages she was afforded.

Kennedy and Hamilton's seemingly unquestioning assumption of superiority to their intended (contemporary) readers can make them seem impossibly self-important to the twentieth century reader. Yet this inability to identify with the writers on the grounds of their attitude towards class, does severely limit the modern critics' appreciation of such texts. At the same time as promoting middle class values, Hamilton creates a well-realised working class woman character, Mrs MacClarty, some of whose predicaments are quite affecting, and no doubt touched many of her contemporary readers. In the following passage, Mrs Mason's objective middle class values contrast strongly with Mrs MacClarty's understandable subjective maternal desire to spare her daughters from too much manual labour during their childhood (there will be plenty of this for them as working class adults):

"O poor things," said their mother, "they have not been used to it; they have eneugh of time for wark yet."

"Depend upon it, " said Mrs Mason, "young people can never begin too soon; your eldest daughter there will soon be as tall as yourself."

"Indeed she's of a stately growth," said Mrs MacClarty, pleased with the observation; "and Jenny there is little ahint her; but what are they but bairns yet for a' that; in time, I warrant, they'll do weel eneugh. Meg can milk a cow as weel as I can do when she likes."



"And does she not always like to do all she can?" said Mrs Mason.

"O we manna complain," returned the mother, "she does weel eneugh." (pp.138-39)

It is simply a matter of historical fact that in the early nineteenth century, for women especially, it was predominantly members of the middle (or higher) classes who had access to formal education, and leisure enough to devote themselves to novel-writing.<sup>40</sup> Grace Kennedy and Elizabeth Hamilton are far from being alone, nor are they particularly extreme in their unabashed middle class consciousness. Their views are quite representative of those held by people in their (resolutely middle class) station at that time. Although she is writing of fiction that appears to be solely concerned with courtship and marriage, in her Desire and Domestic Fiction, Nancy Armstrong (1987) makes a contention that seems very pertinent to Hamilton's and Kennedy's novels. She argues that,

Narratives which seemed to be concerned solely with matters of courtship and marriage in fact seized the authority to say what was female, and ... they did so in order to contest the reigning notion of kinship relations that attached most power and privilege to certain family lines. This struggle to represent sexuality took the form of a struggle to individuate

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40. Working class women did however publish poetry and songs. See Valentina Bold, 'Nature's Making: James Hogg and the Autodidactic Tradition in Scottish Poetry' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Glasgow, 1998); Tom Leonard, ed., Radical Renfrew: Poetry from the French Revolution to the First World War by Poets Born, or Sometime Resident in, the County of Renfrewshire (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1990). David Vincent, in his Bread, Knowledge and Freedom: A Study of Nineteenth Century Working Class Autobiography (London: Europa Publications, 1981) remarks on the 'silence' of working class women in the field of autobiography.

wherever there was a collective body, to attach psychological motives to what had been the openly political behavior of contending groups, and to evaluate these according to a set of moral norms that exalted the domestic woman over and above her aristocratic counterpart. (p.5)

It is worth noting that some of the sternest critics of Scottish women's didactic novels - for instance Douglas Gifford and David McKie, as previously commented upon - tend to privilege class issues over gender issues. Nancy Armstrong (1987) on the other hand, conflates the issues, considering 'the rise of the novel and the emergence of a coherent middle class ethos as being one and the same as the formation of a highly elaborated form of female' (p.10). In the light of this view, the strongly middle class tendency of authors like Hamilton and Kennedy needs to be seen in context. Some aspects of novels such as those by the writers under consideration here, that are of particular interest in regard to their 'formation of a highly elaborated form of female' may be overlooked when critics concentrate primarily upon issues of social class.

#### IV i Traditions of Women's Writing

##### Hamilton and Kennedy Evading Cultural Silencing

Both Elizabeth Hamilton and Grace Kennedy comfortably fit into traditions of women's writing as established by recent feminist critics such as Jane Spencer and especially Mitzi Myers, whose essay on Hannah More has proved particularly

illuminating.<sup>41</sup> Myers has described the characteristics of religious tracts in a way that also captures the flavour of the overtly didactic novels of the early 19th century. She writes,

Conventional, predictable, all their plots arguments pitting vice against virtue and all their characters boldly labeled, now a warning, now an exemplar, these print prescriptions frankly design to change their readers and their world. (p.265)

The similarity between the two kinds of writing is not coincidental: Elizabeth Hamilton acknowledged More's Cheap Repository Tracts as being models for her own The Cottagers of Glenburnie<sup>42</sup>. Another recent critic, Stuart Curran, mentions Hamilton by name, along with Mary Wollstonecraft and others, as belonging to a tradition of women writers in the period who concern themselves in their novels with 'the dispossessed and marginalized'<sup>43</sup>. While Hamilton did not hesitate to acknowledge More's influence upon her work, she makes no mention of Mary Wollstonecraft, whose influence is also evident in The Cottagers of Glenburnie. Elements of similarity between that novel and Wollstonecraft's Original Stories (1788) including something of the structure of the

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41. Jane Spencer, The Rise of the Woman Novelist from Aphra Behn to Jane Austen (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986). Mitzi Myers, 'Hannah More's Tract for the Times: Social Fiction and Female Ideology' in Fetter'd or Free? ed. by Mary Anne Schofield and Cecilia Macheski (Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1986), pp.264-284; p.265. Further references to these works are given after quotations in the text.
  42. Hamilton, in her inscription to Hector MacNeil, with which The Cottagers of Glenburnie opens, alludes to 'the tracts in the "Cheap Repository"'.
  43. Stuart Curran, 'Women Readers, Women Writers' in The Cambridge Companion to British Romanticism ed. by Stuart Curran (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp.177-195 (p.187).

novel - a frame narrative involving two young ladies being kindly instructed by a relative, named Mrs Mason - are unlikely to have been pure coincidence and suggest Hamilton empathised with her revolutionary predecessor in spite of appearances to the contrary in her satire of Godwin's circle, the novel Memoirs of Modern Philosophers (1800).

Hannah More wrote that 'Charity is the calling of a lady; the care of the poor is her profession'.<sup>44</sup> Both Hamilton and Kennedy were to reinforce this statement in their didactic novels. Contemporary attitudes towards the role of women in society were conservative to say the least, and their role as novelists was considered by many to be highly contentious. The writings of the Scottish Enlightenment thinkers are particularly interesting in this regard. Though Scottish moralists like James Fordyce and John Gregory were of course characteristically conservative in their attitude towards women, this stance is somewhat tempered by their attitude towards the novel. Scottish Enlightenment thinkers such as these are credited with being 'among the first moralists anywhere to propagandize the novel as a respectable literary form and, especially, as an effective mechanism for the molding of sensitive

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44. Hannah More, Coelebs in Search of a Wife: Comprehending Observations on Domestic Habits and Manners, Religion and Morals (1808), The Complete Works of Hannah More (New York: J.C. Derby, 1856), II, p.372; quoted by Mitzi Myers (1986), p.274.

youth'.<sup>45</sup> Gregory and Fordyce in their conduct books both advocated qualities that were perceived to be naturally female, such as modesty: as John Gregory wrote in his A Father's Legacy to his Daughters,

When a girl ceases to blush, she has lost the most powerful charm of beauty... Nature has made you to blush when you are guilty of no fault, and has forced us to love you because you do so.<sup>46</sup>

In the anonymous 'Short Account of the Author' published in The Works of Grace Kennedy, the following passage leaves the reader in no doubt as to her unwavering sense of propriety:

The genuine modesty of her character, made her wish to remain unknown as the author of those works, till fully conscious she was about to depart from this world.... (I, pp.i-ii)

Both Fordyce and Gregory wrote that for educated women to presume to display a superior knowledge (to that normally attributed to women), was not only to be regarded as very poor form indeed, but was also a foolproof way of rendering those women quite repugnant to the male gaze. Due to her involvement with Henry Mackenzie's Mirror and Lounger (both of which were used to propagate the moral philosophy of the

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45. In the words of John Dwyer in his Virtuous Discourse: Sensibility and Community in Late Eighteenth-Century Scotland (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1987), p.6.

46. This extract from John Gregory's A Father's Legacy to his Daughters (1774) is reproduced in Women in the Eighteenth Century: Constructions of Femininity ed. by Vivien Jones, (London: Routledge, 1990), p.46.

Enlightened Edinburgh *literati*<sup>47</sup>), as well as the evidence of her own published letters, there is no doubt that Elizabeth Hamilton was aware of the possible repercussions of appearing too knowledgable in the eyes of the opposite sex. In her 'Biographical Fragment' (in Benger (1818)) Hamilton refers to an incident in her childhood when a certain Mrs Marshall, upon finding Elizabeth reading, 'quietly advised her to avoid any display of superior knowledge, by which she might be subjected to the imputation of pedantry'; she also 'once hid a volume of Lord Kaim's [sic] Elements of Criticism under the cushion of a chair, lest she should be detected in a study which prejudice and ignorance might pronounce unfeminine' (I, p.50). Similarly, in the 'Account of the Author' given in The Works of Grace Kennedy, the writer comments,

Female authors have frequently been accused of neglecting those duties which are considered as more peculiarly belonging to their own department in life, when they enter on the higher ground of literary pursuits; but she was entirely free from any fault of this kind; indeed so completely was this the case, that even in the minute niceties of ladies works, she excelled as much as in the higher endowments of her mind. Her retired and deeper studies, and her writing, never interfered with other duties and

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47. John Dwyer writes, 'The Mirror and Lounger viewed their function as the cultivation of the virtue of Scottish citizens and the condemnatin of the vices that were appearing among them. Henry Mackenzie, the acknowledged leader of the Mirror club, regarded himself primarily as a moralist and wanted his works to be judged in ethical terms' (p.25). It is worth noting here, with reference to the absence of women from Scottish literary history, that Elizabeth Hamilton, a regular contributor to The Lounger, does not merit a mention in Dwyer's study. Similarly, in Literature and Literati: The Literary Correspondence and Notebooks of Henry Mackenzie, Volume I: Letters 1766-1827 ed. by Horst W. Drescher (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1989) a list of contributors to The Lounger (note 23, p.133) omits Elizabeth Hamilton.

occupations. She never for one moment discovered the slightest literary parade, and had no hours set apart in which she was not to be intruded upon. She wrote with the desire and hope that her works might be of use; but the employment was her pleasure and amusement. (I, pp.vi-vii)

Kennedy is thus positioned very well within her 'proper sphere' by her biographer.

Despite stern moralists like Fordyce and Gregory (amongst others) disseminating a seemingly bleakly conservative view of woman's proper (i.e. domestic) sphere of influence, didactic novelists such as Elizabeth Hamilton and Grace Kennedy could nevertheless glean some encouragement in those same thinkers' views, thanks to their support of the medium of the novel as a means of cultivating the moral sensibility of their readers. As Hamilton wrote in her Letters: addressed to the Daughter of a Nobleman on the Formation of Religious and Moral Principle, truth 'must sometimes permit herself to be arrayed by the hand of fancy'; the novel was one way of addressing the truth (or didactic message of the text) palatably.<sup>48</sup> The Enlightenment moralists' approval of the novel was of course limited to a very specific type: Fordyce celebrated Richardson, whose novels he felt could be 'read with advantage'. He is less enthusiastic about other (unspecified) novels:

Is it not manifest ... that such books lead to a false taste of life and happiness; that they represent vices

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48. Elizabeth Hamilton, Letters: Addressed to the Daughter of a Nobleman on the Formation of Religious and Moral Principle (London, 1806); quoted by Nancy Armstrong, Desire and Domestic Fiction (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), p.212.

as frailties, and frailties as virtues; that they engender notions of love unspeakably perverting and inflammatory; that they overlook in a great measure the finest part of the passion, which one would suspect the authors had never experienced; that they turn it most commonly into an affair of wicked or of frivolous gallantry; that on many occasions they take off from the worst crimes committed in the prosecution of it, the horror which ought ever to follow them; on some occasions actually reward those very crimes, and almost on all leave the female readers with this persuasion at best, that it is their business to get husbands at any rate, and by whatever means? Add to the account, that repentance for the foulest injuries which can be done the sex, is generally represented as the pang, or rather the start, of a moment; and holy wedlock converted into a sponge, to wipe out at a single stroke every stain of guilt and dishonour, which it was possible for the hero of the piece to contract. - Is this a kind of reading calculated to improve the principles, or preserve the Sobriety, of female minds?<sup>49</sup>

The novels of Elizabeth Hamilton and Grace Kennedy, on the other hand, were very much 'calculated to improve the principles, [and] preserve the Sobriety of ... minds', though neither was solely concerned with the improvement of women.

Both writers were strongly motivated by a philanthropic desire to improve the lot of their readers in general: the former in both a practical and spiritual sense, the latter mainly in a spiritual sense. Mitzi Myers (1986) has commented, 'didactic genres ... were modes in which female authors evaded cultural silencing to speak with teacherly force and sometimes technical innovation' (p.265). This is certainly true in the case of Kennedy and especially Hamilton. Throughout her career, Hamilton demonstrated a

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49. This extract from James Fordyce, Sermons to Young Women (1766) is reproduced in Women in the Eighteenth Century: Constructions of Femininity ed. by Vivien Jones (London: Routledge, 1990), p.178.



keen interest in the field of female education: in addition to theorising on the subject, publishing various tracts, she was, according to Rosalind Russell, 'one of several women who assisted in the running of the Edinburgh House of Industry, for which she wrote Exercises in Religious Knowledge (1809). The inmates, according to the 1808 report (appended to the Exercises) were 'mostly women and girls reduced to prostitution, begging and dependence on parish support'.<sup>50</sup> In the case of The Cottagers of Glenburnie, the minister, Gourlay, regrets the waste of the pedantic schoolmaster Brown and expounds upon the importance of good teaching practices:

"We have suffered enough from the pedantry of a blockhead who piqued himself upon *hic, haec, hoc*, and who, though he has no more pretensions to being a scholar than my horse, is as proud as he is stupid. Until he came into the office the school of Glenburnie had always maintained a respectable character; and the instruction which our youth received at it was, so far as it went, solid and useful... I once, and only once, endeavoured to persuade him how much he would abridge his own labour and facilitate the improvement of his scholars by adopting a regular method of teaching, and introducing certain rules into his school. But if I had attempted to take from him his bread he could not have been more indignant, nor considered himself as more deeply injured".  
(pp.353; 355)

In Chapter 18 (pp.362-390), entitled 'Hints concerning the Duties of a Schoolmaster', in a long dialogue between Morrison, who is to be the new schoolmaster, Mrs Mason and Gourlay, a new code of practice for teaching at the Glenburnie school is thrashed out. Hamilton's didactic  
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50. Rosalind Russell, 'Women of the Scottish Enlightenment: Their Importance in the History of Scottish Education', (unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of Glasgow, 1988), p.27.

message is thus propagated very persuasively in the form of rational discussion between authoritative adults, conscious enough of their own shortcomings to believe such a discussion necessary and valuable.

Grace Kennedy foregrounds the nourishment of a spiritual sense of well-being on the part of her protagonists (and by their example, her readers). The writer of the 'Account of the Author', comments,

A short time before her departure from this world, she said to a beloved friend who attended her, that she now wished her friends to know that she released them from their promise of secrecy regarding her works; that the truths which she had endeavoured to urge upon others she found completely sufficient to support her own soul, and she thought if this was known it might tend to their being of more use to those who read them. (I, p.xiii)

Unlike Hamilton, Kennedy displays little interest in pragmatic issues to do with education, health and cleanliness; her primary concern is religious. The above biographical passage suggests she saw not just her books as providing useful spiritual lessons to others, but also her own self.

#### IV    ii    Religious Strands

Whilst Presbyterianism was undoubtedly an important strand in the religious map of Scotland from the Reformation onwards, it is important to recognise that it was far from being the only religion open to Scottish Christians in the

nineteenth century.<sup>51</sup> The doctrine of Calvinist Presbyterianism, which inspired such landmarks in Scottish literary history as Burns' 'Holy Willie's Prayer' and Hogg's Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner, does not appear to have inspired much in the way of early women's novel-writing in Scotland.

Inherent in Calvinist theology is a grave distrust of women; its profoundly anti-feminist tone provides plenty of material for women writers to protest against.<sup>52</sup> The writers considered here, however, shied away from it almost completely, perhaps believing that to criticise a religion with such a strong tradition in Scotland as Calvinism, would place them beyond their 'proper sphere'. It was one thing to 'evade cultural silencing' (in the words of Mitzi Myers (p.265)), but women who wanted to get into print had to be extremely careful about the subjects of which they chose to write. Grace Kennedy's description of a character in her Father Clement, Ernest Montague, a melancholic adherent of Calvinism, implicitly criticises this strand of religion by recognising the negative effect it has on a young mind:

He had ... been early led to the study of those deep and mysterious doctrines which are more particularly taught by the Calvinistic reformed churches; and

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51. Callum G. Brown, in The Social History of Religion in Scotland since 1730 (London: Methuen, 1987) shows just how many avenues were available then.
52. John Knox's The Monstrous Regiment of Women (1558), in which he attacks women in positions of authority as acting against natural as well as religious law, serves as an early example of Scottish Calvinism's profound mysogyny.

which, as they lead directly to the contemplation of the character and ways of God himself, the source of all other being and action, are calculated to absorb all the powers of a reflecting young mind... [and] must necessarily lead to melancholy. (II, p.19)

While criticism of Calvinism tended to be covert, and mild even then, the Catholic church was an institution that women railed against explicitly, apparently without the threat of repercussions. Anti-Catholic views had been rife since the Reformation and enjoyed something of a vogue in early Gothic literature: Ann Radcliffe for one, made use of Catholic paraphernalia to great effect in such novels as The Italian (1797); in the Scottish context, James Hogg's priest, Roger Bacon, in The Three Perils of Man: War, Women and Witchcraft (1822) dabbles in the black arts. Grace Kennedy's Father Clement is probably the most thorough and systematic attack on Catholicism in Scottish fiction of this period, although she was not the only woman writer to take an anti-Catholic stance. In her description of the Catholic Society of Jesus, Eliza Logan leaves room for little but disapproval:

It was the system of the Society of Jesus, that, where the Church was concerned, the end sanctified the means employed for her welfare; and the fruits of the doctrine of expediency were, of course, where her supposed interests demanded it, treachery, treason, and assassination. (St Johnstoun, I, pp.8-9)

In St Johnstoun, however, Logan writes of the Society of Jesus in order to create a Gothic atmosphere: it is not a central issue in the novel.

Grace Kennedy is probably alone in devoting a whole novel to the vilification of Catholicism. Incidentally, Kennedy's own words in regard to the Jesuits (in Father

Clement) are barely distinguishable from those of Logan (in St Johnstoun which was, significantly, published in the same year as Father Clement, 1823): their antipathy towards Catholicism would appear to be a sign of the times.

Kennedy's characterisation of the Society is as follows:

The end principally proposed by the Order of Jesuits was to gain converts to the church of Rome, with which view they had dispersed themselves in every country and nation; and, with unceasing industry and address pursued the end of their institution. No difficulty was considered too great for them to overcome - no danger too imminent for them to meet - no crime, in the service of their cause, of which they were not considered capable. (II, p.98)

Women writers did not, however, limit themselves to being critical of sectarian religious views. On the contrary, they took the opportunity that the novel offered to show the important place that the right religion could play in women's lives. Religious faith is one area in which women were able to assert their self-determinism in print with a measure of impunity. This is not to say, however, that the religious views expressed in women's novels of the time were particularly radical: nonetheless, theological argument afforded women writers one serious field of interest in which to engage on an equal footing with men. Women writers such as Grace Kennedy and Elizabeth Hamilton set themselves the task of promoting their own strands of Protestantism. Callum G. Brown (1987) writes,

There are serious doubts ... about whether Scottish presbyterians of the period of the Industrial Revolution were distinctively Calvinist... there are some grounds for believing that the entrepreneurial and business classes, not to mention sections of the lower-middle and working classes, overthrew Calvinist theology in favour of Arminianism and an open evangelicalism of a Methodist variety. (p.13)

In Kennedy's Dunallan, Catharine's gradual acceptance of Methodism is shown to be a matter of common sense, once the most popular misconceptions about that religion have been set aside. Catharine's close friend, Elizabeth, tells Catharine what she understands to be 'methodistical' as follows:

"I mean that narrow uncharitable spirit which limits all goodness to a few strict, and, to people who live in the world, - impracticable rules; such as never going to a party of more than a few religious people, or at least mostly religious - never stirring out on Sunday unless to go half a dozen times to hear some canting preacher - never opening your mouth but to pronounce some religious sentence; and holding in utter contempt all the pleasures derived from the cultivation of taste, or literature, or whatever can embellish or charm in life, - indeed, every thing but the contemptible pursuits of the self-satisfied sect."  
(V, p.179)

Elizabeth is soon brought to book for what is shown to have been a wholly inaccurate picture of Methodism, which is single-mindedly advocated in Dunallan with as much vehemence as is brought to bear against Catholicism in Kennedy's Father Clement.

Within the covers of Father Clement, the reader is treated to a rendition of the historical process of the Reformation in microcosm. A Protestant family is pitted against a Catholic one and it is little surprise to the reader which one wins out in the end. In the course of the novel, through a series of dialogues between divines and devotees, (as well as potential devotees, like Maria Clarenham) Kennedy displays considerable knowledge not only of the Scriptures and the teachings of a wide range of theologians. As well as her knowledge of Calvin, she

alludes to others such as Fénelon and Pascal - as the narrative voice in the novel comments,

In those days... it was... thought essential, at least among Presbyterians and the descendants of non-conformists, to train their young people, and those they considered under their charge, by a much more laborious and deep course of religious study than is thought necessary in our more enlightened days.<sup>53</sup>  
(II, p.57)

Several factors unite to ensure the appeal of Protestantism in the eyes of the reader. One interesting factor in view of Kennedy's promotion of Methodism in Dunallan, is that in Father Clement as much as possible is done to play down the difference between different strands of the Protestant church.<sup>54</sup> Dr Lowther, the Presbyterian chaplain and favourite of the family at Illerton Hall, is the person to whom Maria Clarenham turns for advice on the Protestant church. Though a Presbyterian himself, in his conversations with Maria he does not restrict himself to any particular branch of the Protestant church. The following is his advice to her:

"Accept from me the articles of belief of the different Protestant Churches," said he. "You may hear much of the want of union which exists among us... Here is the Confession of Faith of the Church of Scotland, and also the Catechism taught in every parish-school in that country: The articles also of the Church of England. The belief of the Swiss and Dutch Church is allowed to be the same as that of Scotland. You will find that there is scarcely a shade of difference in the faith of all these Churches. The minor sects of Protestants also agree in those articles, which are by all considered as essential; and, as the Bible is the only standard of truth with all Protestants, we may hope and trust that

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53. François de Salignac de la Mothe Fénelon (1651-1715), a French Roman Catholic prelate and theologian; Blaise Pascal (1623-62), a French Catholic theologian.
54. The topic of Methodism and its attractions for women in particular, is returned to in Section IV iii.

time will do away those differences which all good men amongst us lament... and then that blessed time may be hoped for, when true Bible Christians will alone, as they alone are, be acknowledged by all as the only true Church."

(II, pp.181-2)

Maria's delight at being for once able to understand religious devotions in which she participates is especially poignant. Upon hearing Dr Lowther pray, she exclaims, "Precious English prayers!... Oh how different from the rapid unmeaning words [in Latin] with which our priests pretend to guide our devotions" (II, p.182). Under the cover of the didactic novel, Kennedy is able to voice opinions on the topic of religious faith that might not otherwise be feasible.

Step by step, Kennedy builds her case against the Catholic faith and by the end, rejection of that church is the only possible outcome for Maria Clarenham, and by implication, the interpellated reader. The novel closes with the narrator taking a look into a bright future in which Catholicism is no threat to the Protestant church:

The Roman Catholic traveller would sigh as he remembered, that in Britain his church is almost forgotten; her places of worship in ruins; or, stripped of the character they once bore, now dedicated to another faith; her services regarded as unmeaning ceremonies; her doctrines held as too absurd to be professed by rational men, therefore explained away by those who wish to regard her few remaining members as brothers and fellow-countrymen; her claim to unchangeableness and infallibility charged as an illiberal accusation of her enemies; and his church, in her thus fallen state, considered as justly complimented, by being characterised as having advanced in improvement with society, and with other churches. (II, p.300)

In The Cottagers of Glenburnie, Mrs Mason's religion is again a central focus, and also of an Anglican Protestant



persuasion. Gary Kelly (1989) has observed that 'the centrepiece of The Cottagers is Mrs Mason's discourse on faith and works, which is delivered in the very middle of the tale' (p.90), and there is indeed no escaping the idea that the discourse was intended to be a focal point in that novel. Kennedy and Hamilton both took the opportunity that the didactic novel offered to rehearse theological arguments, promoting their religious beliefs, without however transgressing the boundaries of their 'proper sphere'.

#### IV    iii    Finding a Proper Sphere:

##### **The Representation of Exemplary Women**

Mrs Mason, the middle class protagonist of The Cottagers of Glenburnie has a highly suggestive name. *Masonry* after all, involves not only skilled workmanship, but specifically the manipulation of *stone*, a very unyielding material. A *mason* requires not only craftsmanship, but great physical strength, both of which qualities Mrs Mason draws upon throughout her youth and adulthood. Rather than manipulating stone, however, Mrs Mason's forte might best be characterised as a kind of social manipulation, intended to help people make the most of the opportunities presented to them.

Like her creator, Mrs Hamilton, Mrs Mason never marries, yet she assumes the married title, 'Mrs' in adulthood. The

most probable reason for (Mrs Hamilton and Mrs Mason) preferring to use the married title is that it afforded its holder a good deal more authority than the maiden one. Widows enjoyed a considerable degree of independence, not generally allowed to women in the early nineteenth century.<sup>55</sup> David C. McKie (1980) offers no evidence for his statement that Elizabeth Hamilton was a single parent:

While she adjusts to such realities as her own illegitimate child by adopting the title Mrs without marrying, Hamilton attributes ignorance, laziness, dirtiness and lack of hygiene to her vernacular-speaking characters. (p.60)

The claim seems to be little more than a bogus presumption from someone who makes no secret of his contempt for Elizabeth Hamilton. Following a well-trodden path that quickly becomes familiar in the literary history of women, opinions about a woman's writing are laid aside, while the writer's own character is sullied, to no particular end. There can be no mistaking McKie's opinion of Hamilton - that she is a complete hypocrite.

Mrs Mason's social position - as a Mrs, but importantly, without a husband - is conspicuously authoritative in the novel. Having no father or husband to submit to, she is afforded an independence and status rare for any woman, and probably impossible for a married one. Spinsterhood, thus characterised, is not in the least a pitiable state for a

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55. Jane Spencer (1986) writes, 'A single woman was considered in law to have her own separate existence, but she was supposed to be under her father's authority. It was the widow who held the most independent place a woman could have in society' (p.12).

woman, in the way it is so clearly characterised in other works of fiction from the same period.<sup>56</sup> On the topic of spinsterhood, Janet Todd remarks,

It is not surprising that women put considerable effort into raising the status of the single woman, and their frequent praise of the single life is a sturdy strand throughout the eighteenth century, given impetus by the sentimental ideas of solitude and contemplation and by the cult of friendship.... Many women writers would make attractive portraits of single independent women. Clara Reeves's The School for Widows shows a woman preferring a poor independent existence as a village schoolteacher to the dependence of a companion, while Elizabeth Hamilton's The Cottagers of Glenburnie (1808) depicts an exemplary old maid, old-fashioned, kindly and tolerant, who organises and reforms a whole neighbourhood.<sup>57</sup>

An old maid Mrs Mason may well be, but Hamilton portrays her as positively enviable in that state, being conspicuously successful in her endeavours, earning a sense of self-worth probably not often achieved by women in her time. Though she fails with the irredeemable MacClartys, Mrs Mason singlehandedly brings about a kind of social revolution in Glenburnie, one that is very far removed from the recent real life revolution in France. Mrs Mason's revolution in Glenburnie notably results in the reformation for the better of almost all the inhabitants' lives, without any bloodshed - a very significant achievement. Mrs Mason's bloodless revolution brings to mind Porter's later vision of Scotland at the close of The Scottish Chiefs. Both writers fantasise about a harmonious future,

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56. Anne Elliot in Jane Austen's Persuasion (1818) serves as a good case in point, the happy ending of her story depending upon her escaping spinsterhood.

57. Janet Todd, The Sign of Angellica: Women, Writing and Fiction, 1660-1800 (London: Virago, 1989), pp.210-211.

the instigation of which hinges upon women, whether by men acting in their cause (as in The Scottish Chiefs) or by a woman acting in her own right (as in The Cottagers of Glenburnie).

Grace Kennedy's women characters are more conventionally feminine than Hamilton's Mrs Mason, at least in the sense that they defer to men whenever possible. Dunallan opens with the protagonist, Catharine, dreading her forthcoming marriage to Dunallan, arranged by both sets of parents as a way of preserving her father's title. Far from having control over her life and future like the mature Mrs Mason, Catharine, a young woman, is completely at the mercy of the men in her life - the control being transferred from father to husband upon her marriage. Yet Dunallan's control over his wife is very different in character from that of her father over her. While her father expects Catharine to do *his* pleasing (which she in turn is, for the most part, pleased to do), Dunallan expects circumspection from her, rather than blind obedience. Grace Kennedy's seeming vindication of masculine superiority seems positively anti-feminist by today's standards.

This tendency amongst early women novelists (particularly those who wrote didactic fiction), to appear to write against their own best interests is summarised below in the words of Jane Spencer (1986):

Women who spoke in support of masculine authority found it easier to have their work accepted than those who protested against it... [and] however much the basic fable of the reformed heroine encouraged a

message of conformity to existing patriarchal society, the working-out of her story required a concentration on female moral progress; an investigation of the woman's mind; and the conclusions that women are capable of moral growth... women writers were drawn to the didactic tradition not because they wanted to preach female subordination, but because this tradition could be used for the development of a new and more complex treatment of female character. (p.143)

Spencer's comments are pertinent to Kennedy's novels, since they are both concerned with the moral growth of female characters, who are shown to be perfectly capable of spiritual and intellectual progress. Kennedy does not protest against men's authority over women; nevertheless, her treatment of female character is fairly complex. Her protagonists are rational women striving for spiritual well-being.

Hamilton disparages any notion of male intellectual superiority, arguing in an extended essay of 1815,

At some schools for girls, conducted on the Lancastrian model, it has been found necessary to procure monitors from the boys' schools established in the same place, no girl in the school appearing to be endowed with the requisite qualities. Whence this incapacity? From nature? No; merely from the operation of previous circumstances, which had been more favourable to the exercise of the faculties in one sex than in the other.<sup>58</sup>

This was a longstanding view of Hamilton's and can be traced back to The Cottagers of Glenburnie. While Morrison looks after the education of the boys in the Glenburnie

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58. Elizabeth Hamilton, Hints addressed to the Patrons and Directors of Schools; Principally intended to shew that the benefits derived from the new modes of teaching may be increased by a partial adoption of the Plan of Pestalozzi, (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1815), p.81.

school, Mrs Mason takes on the challenge of educating the girls. According to the narrative voice,

While the boys, by being constantly engaged, either in observing the operations that were going on without doors, or in assisting in them, had their attention exercised, and their observation called forth, the girls, till able to spin, were without object or occupation. After the first week the labour of the wheel became mechanical, and required no exertion of the mental faculties. The mind, therefore, remained inert, and the power of perception, from being so long dormant, became at length extinct. (pp.387-388)

Hamilton, unlike Kennedy, in this way protests quite vociferously against the subjection of women, laying the blame for this upon their inadequate education. Mrs Mason undertakes to remedy the situation in the Glenburnie school and by the novel's close, along with Morrison, she can glean great satisfaction from

The happy effects of their joint efforts in improving the hearts and dispositions of the youth of both sexes, and in confirming them in habits of industry and virtue. (p.397)

The same 'habits of industry and virtue' are usefully cultivated in both boys and girls, according to Hamilton in this passage; further, they are cultivated equally by a male and female teacher. This has implications for women's 'proper sphere', since it suggests that men and women ought to be on an equal footing.

In the first part of the novel's framing narrative, Mrs Mason tells Mary Stewart her own biography, which bears testimony to the ideas she later implants in Glenburnie. She tells of an industrious childhood: there is no question of her mind becoming stagnant. In her working life she achieves a great deal, eventually rising from orphaned servant to the role of English governess to the Longlands

children. Mrs Mason does not fill out much in the way of details regarding her own advancement: it is somewhat incidental to the primary subject of The Cottagers of Glenburnie, which concerns Mrs Mason's self-imposed project to improve the village.

In Kennedy's Dunallan, on the other hand, the prime focus of attention is Catharine's voyage of self-discovery, peaking in her moral maturity at the close of the novel. Catharine's improvement is achieved principally through her own efforts, with some input from her husband's aunt, some from the evangelical Miss Morven, and a good deal from her husband himself, who gently prods her into his way of thinking. He encourages her to reflect upon all her actions and words and trust to her Christian conscience to show her the right way to behave. Ultimately, Kennedy posits, everyone is answerable to God. Catharine needed Dunallan to point her in the right direction, but her steady moral growth means that, by the end of the novel, Catharine has achieved the sense of justified self-assurance which her character significantly lacked at the outset.

Mitzi Myers' (1986) comments on Hannah More - quoted below - are pertinent to this idea of women finding strength within themselves:

From the ideological materials at hand, didactic women like More shaped a new ideal of educated and responsible womanhood. Through female influence and moral power, this cultural myth's new women would educate the young and illiterate, succor the unfortunate, amend the debased popular culture of the

lower orders, reorient worldly men of every class, and set the national household in order. (p.265)

Kennedy and Hamilton similarly played a part in shaping this 'cultural myth'. At the same time as being living examples of that myth in action, through their didactic texts, within those texts they show other women achieving self-fulfilment, in diverse enterprises. In their own ways, Hamilton's and Kennedy's female protagonists all become successful, not only in their own eyes, or in the confines of their households, but in the opinions of the world at large (in a necessarily limited sense; none of the heroines in these novels strays very far from home).

Grace Kennedy's Dunallan may best be considered as something of a *bildungsroman*, tracking Catharine's growth from thoughtless youngster to conscientious Methodist wife. As a 'mistaken heroine who reforms' Catharine Dunallan is a late example of what Jane Spenser (1986) has identified as one 'central female tradition in the eighteenth century novel': that of the 'fallible, but unfallen heroine, who learned from her mistakes and reformed her ways' (pp.141-2). Mary Brunton's heroines, considered in the next chapter, belong to the same tradition. Maria Clarenham, the female protagonist in Father Clement, likewise falls into this broad category. Again in this latter novel Kennedy casts her heroine as a thinking woman, to some (necessarily limited) extent in charge of her own destiny, not merely an obedient chattel. Her obedience depends entirely upon her accepting it on an intellectual level. Maria Clarenham is certainly not a nineteenth



century equivalent to a modern-day feminist, yet her story does have considerable resonance with regard to female experience of subjection. She seeks to liberate herself from the Roman Catholic faith. Her experience could be read as analogous to liberation from patriarchal authority. At the close of the novel, Clarenham does not end up independent, except from the Church of Rome. She does, however, achieve a quality of life which was not hers at the outset:

Her talents and information, and evident superiority, at least in holiness of principles and knowledge of Scripture... rendered her soon the person in the family to whom each other member looked with most affection and esteem, or dread. The case was the same with the domestics and the people: the good and well-intentioned loved and esteemed - the ill-disposed and bad feared their lady. (II, pp.298-99)

Her mentor, Dr Lowther, points out to her that to become acquainted with the religious controversies of fourteen centuries (as is necessary in order to wholly dismantle the tenets of the Roman Catholic faith) 'To a female ... is impossible' (II, p.132). While certainly smacking of conservatism - with the implication that the *male* mind is capable of handling such massive quantities of information - Dr Lowther shows, by his further comments, that this kind of ('male') learning is at any rate quite unnecessary. He argues that the Catholic church relies upon historical tradition far more than the Scriptures and that Maria's dissatisfaction accords with a Protestant (and thinking) regard for the holy words of the Bible, as opposed to unquestioning observance of what he characterises as antiquarian rites.

Lowther insists on the abandonment of tradition when it has been retained merely for tradition's sake and in this, he shares a sentiment with Hamilton's Mrs Mason. As Gary Kelly (1989) comments, 'everywhere Mrs Mason uses reason and personal example to counter the dead hand of "custom", the basis of traditional culture' (p.90). The following speech by Mrs Johnstone, a friend of Mrs MacClarty's, serves to demonstrate the kind of obstacles Mrs Mason faces:

"It was but the day before yesterday that I cam upon Madam [Mrs Mason] as she was haddin the strainer, as she called it, to Grizzly, desiring her a' the time she poured the milk to beware o' lettin in ane o' the cow's hairs that were on her goon. 'Hoot,' says I, 'cow's hairs are canny, they'll never choak ye.' - 'The fewer of them that are in the butter the better!' says she. 'Twa or three hairs are better than the blink o' an ill ee,' says I. 'The best charm against witchcraft is cleanliness,' says she. 'I doubt it muckle,' says I; 'auld ways are aye the best!'" (pp.259-260)

Mrs Mason endeavours to show the inhabitants of Glenburnie the advantage of rational thought over the 'auld ways', which are far from being 'the best'. Her eventual education of the villagers has the same effect as Lowther's encouragement of Maria to contemplate the Bible and to think for herself: at the end of both novels, thinking for oneself is shown to secure personal liberation.

While at the end of Dunallan there is no question of Catharine having any kind of independent means of existence (quite apart from any other issues, a young married woman of the time could not be independent of her husband), nevertheless (like Maria Clarenham before her) she has attained by her own efforts a certain stature, which seemed

impossible at the outset of her tale. At the beginning, Catharine believes a happy life is one 'of pleasure and amusement', by the end, she has realised that the truth of her husband-to-be's words, that true happiness is gained by 'a life of usefulness alone' (IV, p.56). This insight - as to the value of usefulness - is inescapably bound up with Catharine's new and firm faith in Methodism, a church which had a particular strength of allegiance amongst women in the nineteenth century.<sup>59</sup>

One possible reason for women finding Methodism an attractive option is that this faith afforded women themselves a standing very close to that of men, at least within the spiritual church, if not within physical church buildings. G.J. Barker-Benfield comments that 'the center of worship first shifted from the parish church to the hearth of outlying farm kitchens' and continues, 'very significantly, women themselves preached'. Further, Davidoff and Hall write that the 'most important agents in the spread of Evangelical [Methodist] religion among the upper classes seem to have been the female members of their

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59. Faith and good works are, interestingly (as in the Methodist faith), 'the means to holy living and the life hereafter' (in the words of Gary Kelly (1989), p.90) in the Episcopalian Anglican faith, to which Elizabeth Hamilton converted from Presbyterianism. Statistics are scarce, but Callum G. Brown in A Social History of Religion in Scotland (1987) quotes one Aberdeen preacher who noted male membership decreasing rapidly between 1835 and 1850 (p.52).

families'.<sup>60</sup> John Wesley, the early Methodist preacher, who visited Scotland on missions in the 1740s and 1750s, 'seems to have been personally favourably inclined towards the ordination of women' according to Jane Aaron, a specialist on Methodism in Welsh writing in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. She comments,

Eventually, a few women were granted permission to serve as meeting leaders and itinerant preachers within the English Methodist sect, on the grounds of their having received an 'extraordinary call': Dinah Morris in George Eliot's novel Adam Bede is a fictional portrayal of one such votary. Wesley argued, somewhat tenuously, that as early Methodist gatherings generally took place in the open air, or in private homes, the bar against females speaking in church [as set out in Corinthians 15: 'Let your women keep silence in the churches...'] did not apply.<sup>61</sup>

Grace Kennedy's Catharine Dunallan, though her calling is presented as far from extraordinary (i.e. it is implied that anyone may follow in her footsteps) provides another fictional portrayal of a woman who leads religious meetings. It is only in Dunallan's absence that Catharine is responsible for directing the religious meetings in their home, so it is perhaps possible to overplay the significance of this achievement. Yet at the opening of the book, the idea of Catharine being capable of leading any kind of meeting at all, far less such an important one

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60. G.J. Barker-Benfield, The Culture of Sensibility: Sex and Society in Eighteenth-century Britain (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), p.270. Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850 (London: Hutchinson, 1987), p.123.

61. This and the previous quotation from Jane Aaron's unpublished conference paper, given at the ESSE Conference, Norwich, September 1991), pp.5-6.

(taking into her charge the nourishment of the souls of the household and estate staff) is quite preposterous.

Although Kennedy and Hamilton approach the issue of gender quite differently, it is evident from their works that both writers had a specific interest in topics of particular concern to women. Hamilton at least definitely has something of a radical edge, suggesting what might have seemed at the time to be quite incredible: the possibility that one woman could be the *primum mobile* of a revolution in social mores. Kennedy too, through her promotion of Methodism, suggests at least one possible avenue into which thinking women may channel themselves in order to make a difference in both their own and other people's lives.

## V Conclusion

Contrary to some expectations perhaps, it has been shown in this chapter that novels by Kennedy and Hamilton are worthy of some critical attention. Conservative up to a point, with their resolutely middle class mores, both writers nevertheless explore issues of considerable cultural interest.

Hamilton is undoubtedly significant in women's literary history: in some respects she is progressive, not only in her attitude towards women, addressing difficult questions about female education, for instance. So too, in her wider

view, she attempts to inculcate an ethos of self-improvement in the poor, and thereby revolutionise the world. Her innovative use of Scots language and working class characters make her of particular interest in the development of the Scottish novel.

Grace Kennedy's works likewise contain much of interest to women's and Scottish literary history, not least the religious debates she conducts in her novels, promoting a religious strand not commonly associated with Scottish literature - Methodism, which she shows to have particular attractions for women.

Hamilton and Kennedy each played a significant role in the early nineteenth century literary scene from which they emerged. They are far from being 'soup and sanitation' writers, as David Craig once referred to Hamilton.<sup>62</sup> There should be a place in Scottish literary history for their representations of national (be it Scottish and/or British) life and character, which very much reflect the time in which they wrote, a time when women had a 'proper sphere' which they transgressed at their peril.

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62. The 'soup and sanitation' phrase is quoted from David Craig, Scottish Literature and the Scottish People, 1680-1830 (Chatto & Windus, 1961), p.214.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **MARY BRUNTON AND THE COURTESY NOVEL**

## I Introduction

### i Mary Brunton and Scottish Literary History

Mary Brunton (1788-1818) published only two novels during her short life: Self-Control: A Novel (1811) and Discipline (1814). The completed fragment of a third work, Emmeline, was arranged with some biographical material and correspondence by her husband and published after her death as Emmeline, With Some Other Pieces (1819). All three of these works are considered in the course of this chapter.<sup>1</sup>

In his biographical sketch published with Emmeline, Alexander Brunton commented that his wife's novels 'rose very fast into celebrity, and their popularity seems to have as quickly sunk away' (p.cv); in fact Self-Control and Discipline continued to command enough attention to be 'republished in Bentley's Standard Novels in 1832, and in cheap editions in 1837 and 1859'.<sup>2</sup> Further, all three works have enjoyed reprints in the late twentieth century: both Self-Control and Discipline re-appeared in 1986,

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1. Mary Brunton, Self-Control: A Novel (Edinburgh: Manners & Miller, 1811; repr. London: Pandora Press, 1986); Discipline (Edinburgh: Manners & Miller, 1814; repr. 1815); Emmeline, With Some Other Pieces (Edinburgh: Manners & Miller, 1819). References given after quotations in the text are to the later editions listed here. Plot summaries of these novels are provided in **Appendix III**.
  2. From the entry on Brunton in the Dictionary of National Biography, 63 vols, (London: Smith, Elder, 1885-1900).



whilst a new edition of Emmeline with a scholarly introduction was published in 1992.<sup>3</sup>

Glancing through the few references to Mary Brunton in the modern standard Scottish literary histories, it is striking that (as is the fate of so many women writers at the hands of the historians) what are perceived to be the *less* appealing aspects of her novel are blown up out of all proportion, to the detriment of the more interesting elements. In the case of Mary Brunton, those historians of Scottish literature who do not pass over her works altogether, tend to lock on to her explicit didacticism, and fail to notice the quiet radicalism seeping through her two completed novels.

There are of course exceptions to this. Dorothy Porter McMillan begins to investigate Brunton as a proto-feminist in her essay, 'Heroines and Writers' in which she surveys Scottish women writers from Lady Grisell Baillie (1665-1746) to Willa Muir (1890-1970).<sup>4</sup> The huge remit of this essay, spanning centuries, means however that space for Brunton (and the other writers considered) is necessarily very limited. In the recent A History of Scottish Women's

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3. Self Control and Discipline appeared as part of the 'Mothers of the Novel Series' (London: Pandora, 1986); Emmeline, with an introduction by Caroline Franklin (London: Routledge, 1992).
4. Dorothy Porter McMillan, 'Heroines and Writers' in Tea and Leg-Irons: New Feminist Readings from Scotland ed. by Caroline Gonda (London: Open Letters, 1992), pp.17-30.

Writing, the chapter jointly written by Carol Anderson and the writer of this thesis challenges received notions of Brunton's works, although as she is just one of five writers considered in the essay, limitation of space again precludes a thorough analysis.<sup>5</sup> As a result of essays such as these, Brunton's status in Scottish literary history is hopefully improving.

It is salutary to note, however, that as recently as 1988 in the comprehensive The History of Scottish Literature's third volume, concerned with the nineteenth century, Mary Brunton rates just a passing mention in only one essay, that by Douglas Gifford. In this she is listed with various other women writers as one of 'the main examples of the first wave of women 'improver-satirists'', and her work does not come under any scrutiny (unlike Elizabeth Hamilton's Cottagers and Susan Ferrier's novels, which are at least discussed, however briefly).<sup>6</sup>

In one earlier work to consider the period, Maurice Lindsay's History of Scottish Literature (1977), Brunton's novels rate some approval, particularly in regard to her representation of Scottish Highland life, albeit grudgingly

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5. Carol Anderson and Aileen M. Riddell, 'The Other Great Unknowns: Women Fiction Writers of the Early Nineteenth Century' in A History of Scottish Women's Writing ed. by Douglas Gifford and Dorothy McMillan (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997), pp.179-195.
6. Douglas Gifford, 'Myth, Parody and Dissociation: Scottish Fiction 1814-1914' in The History of Scottish Literature: Volume 3, Nineteenth Century (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1988), pp.217-258 (p.237).

given. However, what Lindsay might be said to give with the one hand is positively snatched away with the other, counterbalancing each modicum of praise with a good dose of negative criticism. He writes,

The second half of [Discipline is] a not unsuccessful attempt to portray Highland manners but wholly out-classed by Waverley.

Although [in Discipline] the moralizing is heavy-handed and the character of Miss Mortimer reflects the embodiment of the Calvinistic anti-pleasure principle at its most unctuous, there are some deft sketches of manners.<sup>7</sup>

Further references to Brunton in the Scottish literary histories have already been discussed in Chapter One, Section III.

Despite her poor showing in Scottish literary histories, in recent years Mary Brunton has received an increasing amount of critical attention, especially from feminist critics (mainly outside the field of Scottish literature), many of whose writings are considered in more detail later in this chapter. Although Brunton is generally regarded as a minor writer, she is nevertheless credited by some with having pushed forward the medium of the novel. One recent critic for instance, is not alone in her view that,

[Mary Brunton's] sensitive understanding of human motivation and human frailty, resulted in a quite penetrating psychological approach to

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7. Maurice Lindsay, History of Scottish Literature (London: Hale, 1977), p.323.

characterization. This was her contribution to the development of the novel.<sup>8</sup>

Another modern critical view of the writer is given by Gary Kelly, who alludes to Mary Brunton's works in some of his writings on the Romantic period, although he does not anywhere comment upon her works specifically in any depth. In one essay, for instance, he remarks,

While Edgeworth, the Porter sisters, and Lady Morgan addressed issues of national social reconstruction, other women novelists such as Amelia Opie, Elizabeth LeNoir, and Mary Brunton continued to specialize in conventionally feminine domains of sentiment, the domestic affections, and local, quotidian, and domestic life. These subjects, too, were political, however.<sup>9</sup>

The 'conventionally feminine' tag seems fairly unpromising - conventional femininity is after all not necessarily what a feminist reader hopes to find in a text. However, the adjoining statement, that 'these subjects, too, were political' is very suggestive. As Nancy Armstrong points out, domestic fiction was by no means only concerned with domesticity:

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8. Ann H. Jones, Ideas and Innovations: Best Sellers of Jane Austen's Age (New York: AMS Press, 1986), p.113. Dale Spender considers Brunton an important example of the women writers she denotes 'the mothers of the novel' in Mothers of the Novel (London: Pandora, 1986) p.338. Similarly, Janet Todd, in the entry for Brunton in her Dictionary of British Women Writers (London: Routledge, 1989) echoes this view of Brunton's significance. Further references to these books are given after quotations in the text.
9. Gary Kelly, 'Romantic Fiction' in The Cambridge Companion to British Romanticism ed. by Stuart Curran (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp.196-215 (p.207).

Domestic fiction... provided a way of talking about conflict and contradictions within the socio-economic sphere while remaining remote from that world.<sup>10</sup>

It is demonstrated throughout this chapter that Brunton seized the opportunity the novel offered to travel vicariously outwith her own 'proper sphere' and into this 'socio-economic sphere' identified by Nancy Armstrong. Although Kelly (1993) does not examine works by Brunton in detail, his recognition that writers like her demonstrate political motivation undoubtedly open different and much more fertile avenues from those didactic dead-ends set up by the Scottish literary historians already referred to. Brunton's feminist, rather than her 'feminine' message is a primary focus in this chapter, in which it is shown that Brunton is far from conventional.

## I     ii        Some 19th Century Perspectives

In distinct contrast to the low profile attending Brunton's novels in the context of Scottish literary history in the present century, in her own day, her works were very well-known indeed. Her first novel, Self-Control, attracted a great deal of critical attention, not all of it expressing praise. In the words of one contemporary critic, in Edinburgh 'parties have been formed respecting it; some extolling it to the skies, and others depressing it below

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10. Nancy Armstrong, Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), p.133.

its real merits'.<sup>11</sup> Published opinions on the novel differed widely. Some critics overlooked Brunton's originality, and honed in on certain seemingly conventional dramatic elements in the plot, making Self-Control appear sensational and lightweight. The anonymous reviewer of the novel in The British Review for instance, writes of its heroine,

As for poor Laura, she is assailed in a summer-house, and critically rescued; she is carried off in a curricule; she is transported across the ocean; she is importuned at the grave of her mother.... She is presented to us in all the fainting, dying, and dissolving predicaments, in which the warm imagination of the writer could place her without giving her up to final ruin.<sup>12</sup>

The 'poor Laura' to whom this reviewer refers, a helpless, passive victim of circumstances beyond her control, could hardly be further removed from the active heroine which twentieth century feminist readings of the text disclose; some of these are considered later in this chapter.<sup>13</sup>

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11. Anonymous review of Self-Control, British Critic 38, (1811), 213-220 (p.213).
  12. Anonymous review of Self-Control, British Review, 2, (1811), 450-454 (p.452).
  13. See for instance, Katherine Sobba Green, The Courtship Novel 1740-1820: A Feminized Genre (Kentucky: Kentucky University Press, 1991), especially Chapter 12, entitled 'Mary Brunton: The Disciplined Heroine' (pp.120-134); also Sara Maitland, Introduction to Self-Control (London: Pandora Press, 1986); and Sarah W.R. Smith, 'Men Women, and Money: The Case of Mary Brunton' in Fetter'd or Free?: British Women Novelists 1670-1815 ed. by Mary Ann Schofield and Cecilia Machesi (Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1986), pp.40-58. Further references to these works are given after quotations in the text.

Jane Austen, who began publishing just after Brunton (her Sense and Sensibility appeared less than a year after Brunton's Self Control) echoes the sentiments of the British Review commentator quoted above when, having at last managed to track down a copy of Self-Control, she wryly comments that it is 'an excellently-meant, elegantly-written Work, without anything of Nature or Probability in it'.<sup>14</sup> Austen's difficulty in obtaining a copy of the novel attests to its popularity: it sold out of more than one edition very quickly indeed. It is interesting to note that as well as its several unabridged editions, Self-Control was published in epitome in one of the many magazines circulating in the early nineteenth century.<sup>15</sup> Jane Austen later jokingly writes of improving upon Laura Montreville's heroic bid for freedom by canoe in Self-Control in a novel of her own, with a heroine who,

Shall not merely be wafted down an American river in a boat by herself, she shall cross the Atlantic in the same way, & never stop till she reaches Gravesent.  
(Ehrenpreis, p.8)

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14. Quoted in Anne Henry Ehrenpreis's Introduction to Jane Austen Northanger Abbey (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1972; repr. Penguin Classics, 1985), pp.7-24 (p.7). Ehrenpreis comments that Austen had trouble in acquiring a copy of the novel. Further references to this Introduction are given after quotations in the text.
15. R.D. Mayo lists the following item in the 'Catalogue of Magazine Novels and Novelettes 1740-1815' within his The English Novel in the Magazines, 1740-1815 (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1962): 'iiii. SELF-CONTROL, a Novel in 2 Volumes (1811). Glasgow, I (March - April 1811). 2 parts (6700 [words]). An epitome of Mary Brunton's novel of the same name, published in 1811.' (p.586).

In her Introduction to Northanger Abbey, Anne Henry Ehrenpreis reinforces Austen's position regarding Self-Control, stating that her 'comments reflect Jane Austen's congenital distaste for the absurdities of contemporary literature' (p.8). Ehrenpreis concludes that Austen had a 'congenital distaste' for Brunton's work, but this is not borne out in Austen's fiction writing. Ann H. Jones has presented a convincing case for Austen owing a debt to Brunton; Jones points up the similarities between Brunton's Self-Control and Discipline and Austen's Mansfield Park (1814) and Emma (1816) respectively, suggesting that Austen perhaps had more than a little regard for her Scottish contemporary.<sup>16</sup>

Not all the critics in the nineteenth century, or the more recent ones, for that matter, have been as harsh upon Self-Control as those already mentioned. A reviewer of Self-Control in the Scots Magazine, for instance, focuses upon the insightful psychological make-up of Brunton's characters, which her 20th century admirers also tend to notice. In Self-Control, the reviewer in the Scots Magazine,

Found a vigour of thought and expression, with a knowledge of human nature, which raised it far above the ordinary level.... The various passions which agitate the heart of the heroine, are described with a solemn and tempered energy, extremely suited to her character, and displaying, to great advantage, the powers of the writer. The analysis of the motives of human action forms also a prominent feature.... This is a quality the more deserving of attention, as it is, we think, rarely found in female writers, who, though they often excel in the delineation of external

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16. Ann H. Jones, (1986), pp.95-105.



manners, do not generally dive so deep into the recesses of human nature.<sup>17</sup>

The rather jaded view of female writers *en bloc* expressed in this review, suggests a certain reluctance on the reviewer's part to give the novel full due credit, but the tone is altogether more serious and enquiring, and as a result, more generally objective about the novel than some. Likewise, a reviewer in the British Critic, while not entirely praising the novel, judges that Self-Control 'may fairly rank in the higher, though not highest, class of novels'.<sup>18</sup>

Brunton herself was far from content with Self-Control. In a letter to her friend Mrs Izett, dating from 1812, the year after Self-Control was first published, she reveals the full extent of her own dissatisfaction with the novel:

I think the story of Self-Control is defective - it is disjointed - it wants unity. The incidents, particularly in the second volume, have little mutual connection. This appears to me the capital defect of the book. It is patch-work - the shreds are pretty, and sometimes rich; but the joining is clumsily visible. (Emmeline, p.xlviii)

However, Brunton did not accept all the criticism laid against it. The hair-raising concluding section of Self-Control, involving the heroine hurtling down unknown rapids in Canada, tied into a canoe, Brunton concedes is somewhat out of place, though she goes on to defend it, primarily, but not solely, upon aesthetic grounds:

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17. Anonymous review of Self-Control, Scots Magazine 73, (1811), 203-212 (p.205).

18. British Critic 38, (1811), p.213.

The American expedition... in the author's opinion, the best-written part of the book is more conspicuously a *patch* than anything else which it contains. Though I do not see the outrageous improbability with which it has been charged, I confess that it does not harmonize with the sober colouring of the rest. We have all heard of a "peacock with a fiery tail;" but my American jaunt is this same monstrous appendage tacked to a poor little grey linnet.

She wryly goes on to joke, 'As to the faults found with the incidents, they are at least four times as numerous as the incidents themselves' (Emmeline, p.xlviii).

The general reception of Brunton's next novel, Discipline, published in 1814, was much less mixed than that of Self-Control. The critic in the Anti-Jacobin Review, for instance, is impressed with Brunton's abilities as a novelist and concludes,

From the account which we have given of "Discipline," our readers will be enabled to form an adequate estimate of its merits and defects, the former of which, it is just to observe, greatly overbalance the latter. The subject, indeed, is one of peculiar difficulty, and required a combination of talents and acquirements, which few writers are found to possess, to treat it with judgment and effect.<sup>19</sup>

Similarly, a critic in the Monthly Review, appreciates the novelist's craft when he comments on Discipline,

This volume also contains a description of that dreadful abode of human misery and degradation, a mad-house; and the melancholy varieties of the place, but, above all, the characteristics of the keeper, are delineated with a masterly appearance of reality which makes the illusion painfully complete. - In the pathetic minutiae of the mother's death-bed, and in the vivid horrors which attend that of the father, the fair author succeeds in establishing what Lord Kaimes has termed *ideal presence*; and she proves her powers to be so superior, that we may have been

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19. Anonymous review of Discipline, Anti-Jacobin Review, No.200, vol.48, (1815), 18-30, (p.30).

induced to scrutinize almost unreasonably the few defects of her work.<sup>20</sup>

The very real praise in this review is, for the twentieth century reader informed by feminist debate, no doubt slightly diluted by the casual and to all intents, irrelevant mention of Brunton's appearance. As has been noted earlier in this thesis, once again here gender informs the review in a rather insidious way. The clichéd and always diminishing description, 'fair author' says nothing about her performance as a novelist. Writing on this theme, Ina Ferris comments on an essay entitled, 'On the Female Literature of the Present Age' which appeared in the New Monthly Magazine in 1820, as follows:

Its survey of over two dozen women writers depends on and produces a composite female figure whose traits are slotted in as the individual women pass in review. Despite significant variations in the individual portraits and despite their accommodation of such unfeminine qualifiers as 'bold' and 'original', certain stock traits are reiterated, and they coalesce into the ideal lady whose outline governed the article from the beginning. Thus Felicia Hemans is marked by 'grace and beauty', Mary Brunton by 'harmony and proportion,' and Jane Austen by 'simple elegance' and a 'harmonious mind'... the figuration that marks early nineteenth-century critical prose routinely naturalizes gender by conflating women's writing and women's bodies.<sup>21</sup>

These casual references to a woman writer's body may offend twentieth century sensibilities but in spite of

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20. Anonymous review of Discipline, the Monthly Review 78, (1815), 397-400 (p.400).
21. Ina Ferris, 'From Trope to Code: The Novel and the Rhetoric of Gender in 19th Century Critical Discourse' in Rewriting the Victorians: Theory, History, and the Politics of Gender ed. by Linda M. Shires (London: Routledge, 1992), pp.18-29 (pp.24-5).

this, it is clear that the writer in Monthly Review admired this second novel of Brunton's. And, if the mention of 'fairness' seems to trivialise, the same can not be said of the rest of the paragraph quoted above from that review. The allusion to Lord Kames reminds the reader once again just how close to the Scottish Enlightenment writers like Brunton were working, suggesting an intellectual milieu involving disciplines outwith (but significantly contributing to) the sphere of fiction writing.

Reviews of Self-Control, Discipline and Brunton's last work, Emmeline, interestingly often develop into discourses on the medium of the novel itself, in particular the purpose it is supposed to fulfil.<sup>22</sup> The following extract is from a review of Emmeline which appeared in the British Review:

To estimate properly the full interest of this species of composition, we should anticipate, in idea, the progress of time, and suppose ourselves contemporaries with posterity. The interest with which the novels of the present day will be perused by distant generations, may be conjectured from the avidity with which we should, at this moment, read similar descriptions of the manners and habits of ancient Greece or Rome, provided such descriptions had been furnished by the classical writers of antiquity, and had come down to our times... Most assuredly we should have obtained in this way more accurate knowledge of what the world was, during the epoch of Grecian splendour and Roman greatness, than we can now draw

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22. According to Alexander Brunton's Memoir of his wife, published in Emmeline, rather than a novel, 'Emmeline' was the first (and only) part Brunton undertook of a series: 'She resolved at last to attempt a collection of short narratives, under the title of Domestic Tales.' (p.lxxxiii).

either from the orators, the philosophers, or the satirists of antiquity.<sup>23</sup>

Of more immediate concern than the picture of life provided for posterity, however, according to many of the reviewers of Brunton's novels, is the picture she paints for the contemporary 'misses' who may be influenced by reading her work. Ostensibly dangerous tendencies in her novels are pointed up in such reviews. The reviewer of Self-Control in the Scots Magazine seems positively outraged by the example set by Brunton in her heroine Laura, who falls in love with the charlatan Hargrave:

The error into which Laura has fallen, of being seduced by mere figure and superficial accomplishments, is not one of rare or improbable occurrence: it is the reigning error of the youthful and the fair. Our self-controlling heroine, therefore, in being guilty of it to so extraordinary a degree, has set an exceedingly bad example to the world, and to the rest of her sex. The passion, indeed, is unfortunate, and it is one in which the reader can with difficulty sympathize; but as this last circumstance is so unfavourable to the interest of the work, we can scarcely suppose the author to have had it in contemplation.<sup>24</sup>

It is impossible to pass over this quotation without remarking on the reviewer's absurd notion of the novel setting a bad example to 'the world and to the rest of [Brunton's] sex' as if women were a separate entity from 'the world'. Bound up with this, is the idea of the novel having a moral duty to act as an educator, being a medium through which an example should be set, allowing something useful to be learned by (female) readers. A commentator in

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23. Anonymous review of Emmeline, British Review 14, (1819), 483-497 (p.486).

24. Scots Magazine 73 (1811), 203-213 (p.212).

the British Review echoes the sentiments expressed in the Scots Magazine when he writes (some years later):

On the Novel of Self-controul... what still occurs to us in a very objectionable point of view, is the fault which it commits, in common with many other Novels - written with a sincere intention of inculcating moral and religious principles - of inadvertently administering nourishment to the passions, by too circumstantial and glowing pictures of the perils of innocence and the stratagems of seduction - of bringing images of unlawful pleasure before the mind of the young reader, especially of the tenderer sex, which may prove too strong for the interdiction which accompanies them.<sup>25</sup>

Self-Control was not the only one of Brunton's novels deemed to contain material of a dangerous nature; Discipline too came in for a share of adverse criticism over rather less heinous issues, however. A writer in the Monthly Review, for instance, draws attention to what might appear to the modern reader little more than a trifling point of etiquette, but it is presented as a serious omission, rather as if the commentator viewed the novel as a kind of rule book in disguise:

As novels are supposed to describe the present customs of society to future ages, foreign lands, and country misses, it may be well to observe that the tale before us is not sufficiently explicit on the rules respecting *chaperons*; since Miss Percy and Miss Arnold appear at the first Ball, and the subsequent masquerade, without any protecting lady.<sup>26</sup>

In order to agree with the taste of the contemporary critics at least, the woman's novel, in order to remain within the 'proper sphere' was required to be serious, to teach useful lessons; the topic has been examined in some  
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25. British Review 14, (1819), 483-497 (p.489).

26. Anonymous review of Discipline, Monthly Review, n.s.78 (1815), 397-401 (p.400).

depth in this thesis, in relation to the writings of Elizabeth Hamilton and Grace Kennedy.<sup>27</sup>

Consideration of the contemporary reviews of Brunton's novels points up the particular pressures endured by women writers of the early nineteenth century. Brunton wrote to one friend that she would rather 'exhibit as a rope-dancer' (Emmeline, p.xxxvi) than be revealed as a novelist; to another she wrote,

If, before Self-Control went to press, I could have guessed that it would be traced to me, I would certainly have put it in the fire. It is now universally believed to be mine; and this, in spite of its success, I shall always think my misfortune. (p.lxxi)

Such vehement feeling is understandable in the face of the sort of criticism to which a woman opened herself by committing her writing to print. Brunton's claim (regarding Self-Control) that 'all the excellencies of the book are attributed to Mr.B., while I am left to answer for all its defects' (Emmeline, p.xxiii) seems to hit the mark as far as her contemporary critics are concerned.

The harsh demands of the cultural situation in which Brunton wrote are demonstrated in the treatment of the writer and her works in the review publications of her own time. In the following section, her works are contextualised within the genre of 'courtesy novels', a

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27. Brunton's own sentiments on the matter of providing useful lessons to her readers are discussed fully in Section II.

genre which allowed writers like her to cope with cultural pressure, and to conform to the expectations of their culture, without however, necessarily dispensing with a distinctly personal political agenda.

## II The Courtesy Novel

Opinions amongst twentieth century critics are far from unanimous as to how Brunton's novels may most usefully be categorised. Utilising a descriptive term coined by Barbara Brothers and Bege K. Bowers, Gary Kelly designates Brunton's works novels of 'manners, sentiment, and emulation'.<sup>28</sup> This, he asserts, was the dominant form of the novel during the Romantic period, taking in a great many variants, such as gothic romances, and both regional and historical novels. Given its catch-all remit however, this classification does not throw much light on the works of Mary Brunton.

Another genre classification under which Brunton's novels have occasionally been considered is that of the Evangelical novel, but while religion looms large in her works, this classification tends to disregard other,

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28. Gary Kelly, in 'Romantic Fiction' (1993), p.207; refers to Reading and Writing Women's Lives: A Study of the Novel of Manners ed. by Barbara Brothers and Bege K. Bowers (London: UMI Research Press, 1990).



equally important aspects of the novels, not least their covert feminism, most notably in the particular regard they express concerning a young woman's use of her usually quite short period of limited adult independence, prior to marriage.<sup>29</sup>

Brunton's novels are categorised in this thesis as *courtesy novels*, which may be characterised as a particular strand of didactic fiction, related to the novels discussed in the previous chapter, yet different and in many ways more complex. The term *courtesy novel* was coined by Joyce Hemlow in an essay she wrote on Fanny Burney, in which she comments,

The writers of courtesy books... endeavoured to enliven their precepts and examples by pleasurable and entertaining devices borrowed from the novel, while some of the novelists attempted to justify and dignify their new art by including the reputable and useful matter of the courtesy books. The transference of the developed techniques of the novel into the courtesy books, or the application to the novel of the courtesy book with all its appurtenances, resulted in a variation of both novel and courtesy book which might be called the courtesy novel.<sup>30</sup>

Katherine Sobba Green in her book The Courtship Novel (1991), takes Hemlow's definition of the courtesy novel as a starting point, but goes on to theorise within the genre

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29. For instance, Hannah Hinson Jones, 'Jane Austen and Eight Minor Contemporaries: A Study in the Novel 1800-1820' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 1979) and Nicola Jane Watson, 'Purloined Letters: Revolution, Reaction and the Form the the Novel 1790-1825' (unpublished D.Phil. thesis, Oxford University, 1990) both refer to Brunton's works as Evangelical novels.

30. Joyce Hemlow, 'Fanny Burney and the Courtesy Books' PMLA 65, (1950), 732-61 (p.757).

still further, resulting in her definition of the sub-genre which gives her book its title. According to Green, courtship novels stand apart from other genres of novels in a number of respects, primarily in that they take as their subject matter the time between a girl's 'coming out' and her marriage, and are to do with one of the very few times in a woman's life in which she may exercise a degree of autonomy - in making the right choice for her future happiness:

Thematically they offered a revisionist view: women, no longer merely unwilling victims, became heroines with significant, though modest, prerogatives of choice and action. (p.2)

Courtship novels, Green goes on, feminized the hitherto masculine novel in several ways:

First, they valorized the central figure in the plot while reducing male characters to minor roles. Second, they brought the reader into the ordinary sphere of women, typically using domestic settings... Third... courtship novelists rendered their works gender-specific, appealing selectively to a community of identificatory readers, women of the middle and upper classes. Fourth, unlike many contemporary writers, these novelists did not include in their works prolonged scenes of sexual pursuit, machinations that, in any case were never successful with their prudent heroines. Finally, courtship novels were didactic; they theorized overtly on women's conduct - at times replicating the repressive views of male-authored conduct books, and at other times expressing the incipient feminism that had begun to question received roles for women. They exposed threats to women's peace: authoritarian parents, rakish suitors, and even fashionable London. On the two issues of education and marriage, especially, courtship novelists sought to raise women's expectations. (p.13)

Mary Brunton's novels do not quite fit the mould produced by Green, indeed, in respect of the fourth element she sets up in the passage above, Self-Control falls far short of the mark, since, in the words of another critic, it

'is almost entirely about sexual harassment'.<sup>31</sup> If ever there was a novel that contained 'prolonged scenes of sexual pursuit', Self-Control is it. In this thesis, the term *courtesy novel* is therefore preferred, since this allows the inclusion of both novels and even the fragment Emmeline, which does not feature a young unmarried woman and thereby does not fit into Green's *courtship* categorisation. Nevertheless, it is true (as Green includes as part of the Courtship Novel remit) that the heroine, Laura, is far too virtuous to allow the wicked Hargrave to succeed in his machinations. It is worth noting that in this respect Brunton was challenging another traditional assumption, that purity is synonymous with weakness - a lesson taught by the so-called seduction novel of the eighteenth century. Jane Spencer comments that

In the typical seduction tale it was apparent that the heroine was seduced precisely *because* she was pure and innocent, and therefore unguarded: it was virtue that made her likely to fall.<sup>32</sup>

Far from creating a Clarissa-like character, living out a tragic destiny as a result of her own purity, Brunton's Laura Montreville is a figure of active heroism, drawing strength from her integrity and forging the very details of her own fate. Apart from Emmeline, the pitiful protagonist

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31. Katherine Anne Ackley, 'Violence Against Women in the Novels of Early British Women Writers', in Living by the Pen ed. by Dale Spender (London: Teacher College Press, 1992) pp.212-224 (p.212). Further references to this essay are given after quotations in the text.
32. Jane Spencer, The Rise of the Woman Novelist from Aphra Behn to Jane Austen (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), pp.112-13). Further references to this book are given after quotations in the text.

of Brunton's incomplete work, after much tribulation her heroines achieve an agreeable marital union. Katherine Sobba Green writes that the courtship novel,

Probed, from a woman's point of view, the emotional difficulties of moving toward affective individuation and companionate marriage despite the regressive effects of female role definition. In this sense, the novel of courtship appropriated domestic fiction to feminist purposes... this subgenre fostered heightened awareness of sexual politics. (p.2)

Mary Brunton's courtesy novels manifest the influence of works in both the genres already considered in this thesis: the historical romance and the didactic novel. In the two completed novels and the fragment extant of Emmeline, she managed to marry a number of disparate influences: in the words of one recent critic, she purposely 'set about ... contriving a romantic novel with a moral message'.<sup>33</sup>

Brunton herself professed little admiration for the field of historical romance, writing to Mrs Izett in 1810, 'Fiction disguises the simplicity, and destroys the usefulness of true history; and the recollection of the true history deprives me of all interest in the fiction' (Emmeline, p. xxxii). In Self-Control she employs the device of a description of Hargrave's reading material by which to explain the root of his depravity:

[Hargrave] by accident stumbled on a volume of Peregrine Pickle, which he devoured with great eagerness; and his mother, delighted with what she was pleased to call a *turn for reading*, took care that this new appetite should not, any more than the old ones, pine for want of gratification. To direct it to

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33. Mary McKerrow, 'Joanna Baillie and Mary Brunton: Women of the Manse' in Living By the Pen ed. by Dale Spender (1992), pp.160-174 (p.167).

food wholesome and invigorating, would have required unremitting though gentle labour: and to labour of all kinds Mrs Hargrave had a practical antipathy. But it was very easy to supply the young man with romances, poetry, and plays; and it was pleasing to mistake their intoxicating effect for the bursts of mental vigour. A taste for works of fictions, once firmly established, never after yielded to the attractions of sober truth; and, though his knowledge of history was neither accurate nor extensive, Hargrave could boast of an intimate acquaintance with all the plays, with almost all the poetry, and as far as it is attainable by human diligence, with all the myriads of romances in his mother tongue. (p.41)

Nonetheless, romance writing undoubtedly influences Brunton's work: the chase scenes, such as when Warren carries Laura off in Self-Control (pp.113-114), or when Ellen races her curricule against her mounted friends in Discipline (I, pp.52-53), would not seem out of place in the kind of fiction that is the ruin of Hargrave. However, this kind of episode is not the norm in Brunton's novels, and more often than not, she seizes the opportunity to comment upon romance-writing, taking up a positively anti-romance stance, rather than adding her own contribution to that genre. As Sarah Smith (1986) has it:

She is fascinated with the tinsel of the bad romantic novel; she uses it constantly; but she plays with it as an intelligent naive mind does, showing her fascination by pulling the thing apart. (p.56)

The term *romance* in Self-Control, is never used lightly, though often with the narrator's tongue firmly in cheek, and is sometimes even used apologetically, as for example in the following instance:

Between Laura and De Courcy, almost from the first hour of their acquaintance, there seemed (to use the language of romance) a sympathy of souls; - an expression which, if it has any meaning, must mean the facility with which simple, upright, undesigning minds become intelligible to each other. (p.99)

Brunton's parenthetical comment, '(to use the language of romance)' tells of a self-consciousness in deploying the term, suggesting a certain reticence about its propriety, implying that 'the language of romance' cannot be relied upon. Later in the same novel, she humorously draws attention to Laura's pragmatic nature, as for instance in the following episode:

She was soon engaged with Mrs Dawkins in a dissertation on various branches of household economy, and to the eternal degradation of her character as a heroine, actually listened with interest to the means of improving the cleanliness, beauty, and comfort of her dwelling. (p.107)

Brunton continues to debunk any romantic flights of fancy on the part of the reader throughout the novel, for example, the narrator comments,

The only habit, common to love-lorn damsel, in which Laura indulged, was that of preferring solitary rambles; a habit however, which had been imbibed long before she had any title to that character. (p.247)

The writer seems to be just as uncomfortable with the notion of romance within the covers of Discipline, Ellen wryly remarking at one point,

Heroines of romance often show a marvellous contempt for the common necessities of life; from whence I am obliged to infer that their biographers never knew the real evils of penury. (II, p.298)

The anti-romance sentiment expressed in Brunton's novels concurs with the writer's didactic attitude. The idea of fiction being used to set an example to readers is one that was close to Brunton's heart and was a topic she returned to time and again in her letters; she perhaps states her case most vehemently in the Preface to Self-Control which takes the form of a letter of dedication to the dramatist Joanna Baillie. In this, she writes:

In the character of Laura Montreville the religious principle is exhibited as rejecting the bribes of ambition; bestowing fortitude in want and sorrow; as restraining just displeasure; overcoming constitutional timidity; conquering misplaced affection; and triumphing over the fear of death and of disgrace.

This little tale was begun at first merely for my own amusement. It is published that I may reconcile my conscience to the time which it has employed, by making it in some degree useful. Let not the term so implied provoke a smile! If my book is read, its uses to the author are obvious. Nor is a work of fiction necessarily unprofitable to the readers. When the vitiated appetite refuses its proper food, the alternative may be administered in a sweetmeat.

Later, in a personal letter to Joanna Baillie, with whom she was by then regularly corresponding, her view is reinforced, when she writes that she

Merely intended to shew the power of the religious principle in bestowing self-command; and to bear testimony against a maxim as immoral as indelicate, that a reformed rake makes the best husband.<sup>34</sup>

Perhaps unconsciously, though given her penchant for works by Samuel Richardson, this seems unlikely, her words in this letter to Baillie echo Richardson's own, in his Preface to Clarissa, a novel which he stated was intended 'to warn children against preferring a man of pleasure to a man of probity upon that dangerous but too commonly received notion, *that a reformed rake makes the best husband*'.<sup>35</sup> Unlike Richardson's Clarissa, Laura does not become a victim of her own virtue. Brunton offers a pragmatic resolution, promoting through Laura the idea of a woman resisting the well-trodden self-sacrificial path and -----

34. From a letter dated March 1811 published in Emmeline (p.xlii).

35. Quoted from The Works of Samuel Richardson, 12 vols (London: Sotheran, 1883) IV, p.xii.

instead valuing her self, without however departing from her proper sphere.

The following passage, quoted from a letter Brunton wrote to her brother in regard to her final work illustrates that her earlier determination endured; she had no ambition to deviate from the path of instruction, even though she recognised that this hampered her freedom as a writer:

I do not need to write for bread; and I would not write one volume, merely to gain the fame of Homer. A moral therefore is necessary for me; but where to get one on which to found a tale that will be readable, is the question. A lofty moral, too, is necessary to my style of thinking and writing; and really it is not easy to make such a one the ground-work of any story which novel readers will endure. (Emmeline, p.lxxxii)

This stated compulsion for lofty morals might well distract the modern reader from the radical undertow that tugs throughout Brunton's novels. The straightforwardly moral 'groundwork', a prime requisite of the courtesy genre, is certainly always in place, but Brunton's novels also serve as a platform for the writer to voice her opinions on a number of political issues of the day, particularly those that concern women, although not exclusively so. One issue for instance that Brunton touches upon in Discipline is the anti-slavery debate, which may indeed be considered relevant to the progress of feminism.<sup>36</sup> Brunton is able to

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36. An assessment of women's contribution to the anti-slave movement is made in Moira Ferguson, Subject to Others: British Women Writers and Colonial Slavery 1670-1834 (London: Routledge, 1992). She writes, 'I argue that anti-slavery protest in prose and poetry by Anglo-Saxon female authors contributed to the development of feminism over a two-hundred-year period. Concurrently, their texts misrepresented the very African-Caribbean slaves whose freedom they



articulate an emotional contribution to the anti-slavery lobby through the filter of Maitland, the central male character in Discipline:

Himself a West India merchant, and interested, of course, in the continuation of the slave-trade, he opposed, with all the zeal of honour and humanity, this vilest traffic that ever degraded the name and the character of man. In the senate of his country he lifted up his testimony against this foul blot upon her frame, - this tiger-outrage upon fellow-man, this daring violation of the image of God. Alas! that a more lasting page than mine must record, that the cry of the oppressed often came up before British senates, ere they would deign to hear! (I, pp.275-76)

Poverty is another politically-charged issue which Brunton foregrounds for her readers. Ellen's horror at the ugly face of grinding poverty may well invoke the same kind of feelings in the reader:

Some women, apparently of the lowest rank, were searching for bargains among the trash which lay upon the counter; while others seemed waiting to add to the heap. All bore the brand of vice and wretchedness. Their squalid attire, their querulous or broken voices, their haggard and bloated countenances, filled me with dread and loathing. (III, p.113)

Women at the other end of the social spectrum - 'fine ladies', no less - merit little more regard in Brunton's novels. Prefiguring Ferrier's critique of that class of women in Marriage (1818) and its successors, in Self-Control Brunton makes much of Laura's ingenuous puzzlement at the behaviour of fine ladies, as for instance when she

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...Continued...

advocated. These writers, moreover, displaced anxieties about their own assumed powerlessness and inferiority onto their representations of slaves. The condition of white middle-class women's lives - their conscious or unconscious sense of themselves as inferior - set the terms of the anti-slavery debate.' (p.3).

is pointedly not invited to eat with a lady of fashion in Edinburgh:

The lady received them most graciously, inquired how long they intended to stay in Edinburgh; and on being answered that they were to leave it in two days, overwhelmed them with regrets, that the shortness of their stay precluded her from the pleasure of their company for a longer visit. Laura regretted it too; but utterly ignorant of the time which must elapse between a fashionable invitation and the consequent visit, she could not help wondering whether the lady was really engaged for each of the four daily meals of two succeeding days. (p.47)

In Discipline too she continues a sustained attack on these improvident ladies, at one point bluntly drawing the following thoroughly negative comparison between fine ladies and a tortoise-shell dressing-box:

Art had exhausted itself in the elegance of the pattern and the delicacy of the workmanship. It was every way calculated to arrest the regard of fine ladies; for, like them, it was useless and expensive in proportion to its finery. (I, p.175)

Jane Spencer's suggestion about the appeal of the didactic tradition to women writers generally, is particularly pertinent in regard to Brunton's work (not discussed by Spencer):

Women writers were drawn to the didactic tradition not because they wanted to preach female subordination, but because this tradition could be used for the development of a new and more complex treatment of female character. (p.143)

In Brunton's first two novels, the reader can chart the development of the novelist by considering her increasingly complex treatment of her female leading characters. The third heroine she embarked upon, Emmeline, marks a further development, in an innovative direction: her character is probably the first serious and sympathetic depiction of a

divorcée in Scottish literature, and does not appear to have been prefigured in English literature either.

The modern reader's understanding of Brunton's fiction is much advanced by the recognition of the particular genre to which her works belong. As Green (1991) writes of the courtship novel (which in this case is equally applicable to those belonging to the courtesy genre):

While uninitiated 20th century readers may see [these novels] as no more than quiet renderings of domestic stories, eighteenth- and nineteenth-century women readers were much more likely to feel personally interested in what they perceived as a progressive, feminist attention to their subject position. (p.11).

A comment like the following, made by Mr Percy about his daughter Ellen in Discipline no doubt struck a chord with Brunton's contemporary readers:

'It is a confounded pity she is a girl. If she had been of the right sort, she might have got into Parliament, and made a figure with the best of them. But now what use is her sense of?' (I, p.11)

Brunton pays particular attention to female subject positions throughout her novels.

### III Mary Brunton's Women: Cautions and Inspirations

The title Self-Control connotes a kind of distancing from emotions that is utterly at odds with the strength of feelings experienced by the heroine of Brunton's first novel. Not by any means a traditional swooning heroine, Laura endures an involuntary passion so powerful and all-

consuming that it renders her unromantically unconscious on occasion, brings on not at all picturesque nosebleeds and generally makes her life a misery. Yet it would miss the point altogether to assume that her passion renders her powerless. Far from it: her active heroism has already been remarked and besides this, as one critic has recently commented,

Although Laura is characterised by silence, faints, and illnesses which punctuate and point to the heroism of her self-control, characterised in fact by all the signs of powerlessness, she in fact exerts considerable covert power by these very means. Thus, for instance, her last brain-fever is indirectly responsible for Hargrave's death - he commits suicide out of remorse.

Brunton thus elevates the ideology of self control and discipline into a rhetoric of female power, converting a virtuous powerlessness into something much more aggressive and disruptive.<sup>37</sup>

If in some respects Self-Control is not quite successful (as indeed its author and some contemporary critics felt) nevertheless Brunton's painstaking anatomy of Laura's turbulent emotional state is a very significant achievement. In a letter to her friend, Mrs Izett, Brunton is rightly indignant at those who reject her representation of passionate desire:

It is alleged, that no virtuous woman could continue to love a man who makes such a debut as Hargrave. All I say is, that I wish all the affections of virtuous persons were so very obedient to reason.<sup>38</sup>

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37. Nicola Jane Watson (1990), p.175.

38. Emmeline, p.xlix. Brunton's point here, that passions are not obedient to reason, is a problem that is also addressed by Christian Johnstone (the focus of Chapter Six in this thesis) in her poignant history of Lady Augusta, in Clan-Albin (1815).

Laura's hopeless longing for Hargrave signals a psychological depth of character not at all commonplace in literature of the early nineteenth century.

Sarah Smith has said that in a way Discipline is like 'a comment on the relatively conventional heroine-hero relationship of [Self-Control]' (p.44), and indeed it does seem useful to consider Ellen as a comment on Laura.

Brunton's second heroine is decidedly - and naturalistically - flawed, while except for her irrational (nevertheless realistic) desire for an inappropriate suitor, the same cannot be said of Laura Montreville.

Despite a catalogue of adventures and mishaps that would have quickly defeated a less stoic character, Laura scarcely wavers from her path of righteous virtue throughout all her tribulations. Brunton herself, when she had nearly finished Self-Control, also in a letter to Mrs Izett used a very apt sartorial metaphor to illustrate the problems inherent in having a heroine like Laura

Montreville:

If ever I undertake another lady, I will manage her in a very different manner. Laura is so decently kerchiefed, like our grandmothers, that to dress her is a work of time and pains. Her younger sister, if she ever have one, shall wear loose, floating, easy robes, that will slip on in a minute. (Emmeline, pp.xxxi-xxxii)

In her Literary Women, Ellen Moers jokingly refers to an incident in the adventures of the heroine of Ann Radcliffe's The Mystery of Udolpho (1794) when Emily, fleeing from terrible danger, goes outside without a hat:

They travel in breathless silence through the Apennines... until they come to a little town where in

the "morning light now glimmering on the horizon," Emily at last appears to the rustic inhabitants. "Her appearance excited some surprise... for she was without a hat." It is with relief that we learn on the next page that Emily can cope, even with this emergency: she has "purchased a little straw hat, such as was worn by the peasant girls of Tuscany".<sup>39</sup>

Brunton's Laura Montreville, likewise, is able to cope with the most varied of circumstances from kidnapping attempts to canoeing down a Canadian river, without compromising her position as a virtuous woman both in fact as well as, importantly, in outward appearance: a woman thoroughly ensconced within her proper sphere.

Brunton emphasises in all three of her works that a woman's propriety does not stem from empty-headedness. In her essay entitled 'But is it any good?', Susan Harris comments on nineteenth century American women writers' avowed desire,

To improve their own educations - their classical, not their domestic, educations - to learn Greek, Latin, and the higher mathematics,

a desire that is replicated in their novels.<sup>40</sup> Outwith her novels, Brunton's husband testifies to her interest in her own education. He writes,

In the evening, I was in the habit of reading aloud to her, books chiefly of criticism and Belles Lettres. Among other subjects of her attention, the philosophy of the human mind became a favourite study with her, and she read Dr Reid's works with uncommon pleasure. She renewed her acquaintance with our best historians.... She added a little German to her

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39. Ellen Moers, Literary Women (New York: Doubleday, 1976; repr. London: The Women's Press, 1986) p.138.

40. Susan K.Harris 'But is it any good?: Evaluating Nineteenth Century American Women's Fiction', American Literature, 63 (1991), 443-61 (p.51).

acquisitions in language. She repeatedly began, but as often relinquished, the study of mathematics. Where the address to the intellect was direct and pure, she was interested and successful. (Emmeline, pp.ix-x)

Brunton did have reservations about the education of women, however. Echoing her light-hearted (but at the same time quite serious) stated preference for exhibiting as a rope-dancer over being revealed as a writer, in a letter to Mrs Balfour she comments,

I am clear for furnishing women with such accomplishments as are absolutely incapable of being converted into matter of exhibition; and such, in the present state of society, are classical learning and mathematics. (Emmeline, p.xcvi)

Following the precepts of Fordyce and his ilk in the conduct book tradition, Brunton asserts that intellectual display should be avoided at all costs. In all three of her novels, she pushes the point home. 'No woman,' she muses in Emmeline, 'was ever the more beloved for even momentary superiority' (p.49), although this bald statement does not tell the whole story. It is the appearance of superiority she recoils from, not its presence, which she does not deny. In Self-Control, Laura is in a position to defeat her father at a game of chess:

The move was hers; and the Captain, in the heat of victory, overlooked a step by which the fortune of the game would have been reversed. Laura saw it, and eagerly extended her hand to the piece; but recollecting that there is something in the pride of man's nature that abhors to be beaten at chess by a lady, she suddenly desisted. (p.55)

Women, Brunton implies in her novels, sometimes quite overtly, are frequently men's intellectual equals, if not their superiors, though they are duty-bound to conceal it, by the cultural milieu to which they belong.

Ellen Percy in Discipline, is for a time a hostage to her very expensive, but nevertheless extremely poor education. She learns to her cost that ladies' accomplishments - fancy needlepoint, piano-playing, school-girl French - are more or less redundant when it comes to the business of earning one's living as an independent woman. In Ellen's best friend, Juliet Arnold (who, like others belonging to her social set, deserts the heroine when she becomes destitute), Brunton provides a perfect case in point. Ellen, the first person narrator/protagonist of Discipline (writing with the benefit of hindsight) comments:

Miss Juliet Arnold... was educated to be married.

Let no simple reader, trained by an antiquated grandmother in the country, imagine my meaning to be that Miss Arnold was practised in the domestic, the economical, the submissive virtues; that she was skilled in excusing frailty, enlivening solitude, or scattering sunshine upon the passing clouds of life! - I only mean that Miss Arnold was taught accomplishments which were deemed likely to attract notice and admiration; that she knew what to withdraw from the view, and what to prepare for exhibition; that she was properly instructed in the value of settlements; and duly convinced of the degradation and misery of failure in the grand purpose of a lady's existence. (I, p.38)

Attending together a school for young ladies, Ellen and Juliet received some 'seven years of laborious and expensive trifling' (I, p.42) in the name of education. When Ellen finds herself penniless, her so-called accomplishments open few doors on the employment market. As a governess, she can offer little more than the ability to teach 'her knowledge of the various arts of squandering time' (II, p.280) and thus her services are little in demand. Ellen is fortified in this time of strife however,



by the religious principles instilled in her by her mother's friend, Miss Mortimer, while Ellen's own former friend, Juliet Arnold, has no such principles to fall back upon when she herself becomes destitute. Brunton contrives a situation full of pathos in regard to Juliet, while not releasing the girl from some culpability for her condition, and was to follow much the same path with Emmeline, her third protagonist heroine who despite being morally reprehensible (deserting husband and children to marry another) is nevertheless figured as highly pitiable. The old curate at Euston (the estate where Emmeline lives with her second husband) Brunton writes in Emmeline,

Bowed his gray head to De Clifford, [and] glanced compassionately on the bride. "God help thee! poor thing," thought he; - "so young, and yet so wicked! God help thee!" (p.27)

The issue of self-control is inextricably bound up with the matter of education. The hedonistic urges that dominate Juliet Arnold and Emmeline are also present in Self-Control in which the expensively educated Julia Dawkins is figured as a helpless captive of whichever novel she has most recently read. Her mother makes an insightful comparison of her two daughters, laying the blame for Julia's uselessness firmly at the door of her education:

July... larnt to paint, and to make fillagree, and play on the piano, and what not... [but] she came home just as she went... she could'nt do no more in the shop nor the day she was born...

I had Kate brought up in another guess-way; for I larnt her plain work and writing, and how to cast accounts; and never let her touch a book, except the prayer-book a-Sundays; and see what's the upshot on't. Why, though July's all to nothing the prettiest, nobody has never made an offer for she, and Kate's got married to a warm man as any in his line hereabouts. (p.51)

A sound, practical education, Mary Brunton argues in a subtext throughout her novels, stands women in good stead for whatever may lie ahead in their lives. Nevertheless, it is not solely about planning for later employment opportunities. Katherine Sobba Green (1991) comments that Brunton's

Unrelieved caricature of Mrs Boswell does demonstrate the strength of Brunton's opinion that women have greater duties than to amuse themselves and that intellectual improvement is required so that they may fulfil them. (p.131)

Pitted against the negative cautionary tale of Mrs Boswell, are the positive examples of Laura Montreville and Ellen Percy who each derive a great deal of personal satisfaction and a certain spiritual equilibrium from undertaking studies in the somewhat unusual (for women of the day) disciplines of mathematics and chemistry respectively. Prefiguring Ellen's strained relationship with Mrs Boswell, Laura and Lady Pelham in Self-Control provide a fine example of contemporary conflicts of view regarding the matter of women's education. Lady Pelham, unaccustomed to intellectual activity for its own sake (although she does work quite hard at her dissembling from time to time) holds the education of ladies in very low esteem, compared to her niece, for whom it is a source of great personal satisfaction:

Forthwith she [Lady Pelham] was fired with a strong aversion to philosophers in bibs, and a horror at she-pedants, a term for reproach which a dexterous side-glance could appropriate to her niece, though the author of these memoirs challenges any mortal to say that ever Laura Montreville was heard to mention ellipse or parabola, or to insinuate her acquaintance with the properties of circle of polygon. Nothing moved by Lady Pelham's sneers, Laura continued her

studies, impelled partly by the duty of improving the most valuable faculty of an immortal mind, partly by the pleasure which she derived from the study itself. (p.255)

Following in Laura's path and again reflecting Brunton's own views on the matter, in Discipline Ellen cheerfully relates her forays into the male bastion of chemistry:

[Sidney] contrived to initiate me into the first rudiments of a science, which has no detriment except its unbounded power of enticing those who pursue it... in the course of my experiments, I made a discovery infinitely more important to me than that of latent heat or galvanism; namely, that the prospect of exhibition is not necessary to the interest of study. (II, pp.174; 175)

The message is pressed home again when later on, finding herself with some time on her hands again, Ellen applies herself to the study of Gaelic:

I had heard Maitland praise the variety, grace, and vigour of the Gaelic language... so, in mere dearth of other employment, I obliged Cecil to instruct me in her mother-tongue. (II, p.283)

Brunton's recognition of the benefit women may derive from intellectual stimulation was perhaps of especial interest to one particular strand of women in the population: spinsters. A number of Scottish women writers under consideration in this thesis show a marked interest in the topic of spinsterhood in their novels - writers such as Susan Ferrier and Elizabeth Hamilton, for instance - and Brunton too has a fair amount to say on the matter. Her letters once again provide a valuable complement to the evidence of her novels; to Mrs Balfour, she writes, for instance,

These hard times compel so many women to celibacy, that I should think it no bad speculation to educate a few for respectable old maids; especially such as have minds strong enough to stand alone, and *romantic*

enough, not to chuse to marry, merely for the sake of being married. (p.xcvi)

With reference to her fiction, it is in Discipline that Brunton makes her clearest statements regarding spinsterhood. Sarah Smith (1985) has commented,

Miss Mortimer and Charlotte Graham, who are not married and not young, are not penniless and not powerless either. They are defined, and think of themselves, in positive terms of social power rather than through the 'negative' of their unmarried state. (p.52)

Ellen Percy takes up the issue towards the close of Discipline, when she writes that,

Some misses lately arrived from a boarding-school, have begun to call my sister an old maid; yet I do not perceive that this cabalistic term has produced any ill effect on Charlotte's temper, or on her happiness. (III, p.275)

Marriage, Brunton implies throughout her writings, is not by any means always desirable: as Ellen remarks early on in her story, 'Marriage is like sin; if we often allow it to be presented to our view we learn to look without starting' (I, p.96). Intellectual adventure is one avenue which Brunton advocates as a worthy pursuit for all women, that may have had a particular resonance for unmarried women of the time, i.e. women seeking fulfilment outside the range of matrimony.

As well as championing spinsterhood, through the use of positive single role models in her novels, and addressing problems encountered by young unmarried women, Brunton turns her attention to the female experience of the family. One very noticeable factor which recurs in much of the fiction examined in this thesis is the lack of natural

mothers of the many young heroines featured in the novels. Brunton is another adherent to this convention in both her novels: Laura Montreville's feckless mother dies very early on in Self-Control and Ellen Percy's mother, though a much more personable character in the little the reader learns of her, suffers a similar fate, dying within a few pages of the opening of the novel.

Unlike the step-mother figure in some of the novels referred to earlier on in this thesis, in the case of Mary Brunton's novels, both the heroines are to a great extent mothered by women outside the immediate family. Though in Self-Control Laura is victimised by the ghastly Lady Pelham, a character who in some ways bears more than a passing resemblance to Lady Joanna in The Scottish Chiefs, a wicked stepmother of the fairy-tale order, she is also provided with two much more venerable mother-figures: Mrs Douglas, the wife of the parish minister at the village of Glenalbert, and the estimable Mrs De Courcy, into whose family Laura is later to be married, neatly transforming the character who appears the most maternally inclined towards her, into a maternal figure in fact - her mother-in-law. Ellen Percy, similarly, has the kindly Miss Mortimer (interestingly, a spinster mother-figure) as an early mentor, largely thanks to whose lessons she is able to cope alone with a great number of life trials. Often these trials involve characters - like Lady St Edmonds and Mrs Boswell - who let her down, by shunning the mothering role Ellen might reasonably expect from them, considering they are her temporary chaperone and employer respectively.

Mrs Boswell in Discipline recalls Lady Pelham of Self-Control, though it is interesting to note that Lady Pelham's blood-tie to Laura does not make her any more helpful towards her charge. In each novel, these surrogate mother characters afford no benign influence upon the heroine. Far from offering maternal care or guidance, Lady Pelham and Mrs Boswell even fail to offer their charges protection. Lady Pelham's home offers Laura no safe haven; she remains at the mercy of Hargrave thanks to her 'protector's' machinations, and Ellen's total physical collapse of course comes from within the Boswell family home, rather than in the supposedly hostile outside world.

Brunton's emphasis that blood relations in themselves count for little is underlined by the fact that those characters who perform the role of goodly surrogate mothers to her heroines - like Self-Control's Mrs Douglas and Discipline's Miss Mortimer - are much more sympathetically drawn than the natural mothers which she depicts.<sup>41</sup> In Self-Control, there is a direct comparison between a natural mother, and a surrogate, making clear Brunton's belief that bonds of nature (as claimed by blood-relations) are cultural constructs, rather than natural laws:

[Mrs Douglas] was in every respect Lady Harriet's opposite. Of sound sense, rather than of brilliant abilities; reserved in her manners, gentle in her temper, pious, humble, and upright; she spent her life in the diligent and unostentatious discharge of Christian and feminine duty; beloved without effort to engage the love, respected without care to secure the

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41. Except for Mrs Percy, who is presented as something of an ideal.

praise of man. She had always treated the little Laura with more than common tenderness; and the child, unused to the fascinations of feminine kindness, repaid her attention with the utmost enthusiasm of love and veneration. (p.4)

In both novels, it is significant that while natural bonds require certain duties - such as Laura's to care for her parents and aunt upon their respective deathbeds - stronger links may justifiably be forged with worthy people outwith the family. Susan Ferrier continues this debate in Marriage, using the device of separated sisters to demonstrate that the efficacy of parenting lies not in the maternal (blood) bond, but in the character of the prime carer - related, or not.

The mother-daughter relationship was of paramount importance to women novelists of the time generally, not only in Scotland; time and again reference is made to it in contemporary fiction. Amelia Opie's comment in her novel, Adeline Mowbray (1804), offers an insight into the way the mother-daughter relationship was viewed by one woman writer in the early nineteenth century, and proves useful when applied to that relationship as depicted by Brunton in her novels:

There are two ways in which a mother can be of use of her daughter: the one by instilling into her mind virtuous principles, and by setting her a virtuous example: the other is, by being to her in her own person an awful warning, a melancholy proof of the dangers which attend a deviation from the path of virtue.<sup>42</sup>

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42. Quoted by Jane Spencer in '"Of Use to Her Daughter": Maternal Authority and Early Women Novelists' in Living by the Pen, ed. by Dale Spender (London: Teacher College Press, 1992), pp.201-211 (p.205).

Laura Montreville's mother provides a prime example of the latter type described by Opie; Ellen Percy's mother is much closer to the first, though Mrs Percy's character is scrutinized enough to reveal one or two faults. Ellen Percy, as a motherless child, holds up the image of her mother as something of a saint, an exercise in which she is rather aided and abetted by her mother's dearest friend, Miss Mortimer, who delivers several panegyrics in respect of her old companion. As an adult, however, Ellen regrets that her mother neglected her upbringing in certain areas:

She had an elegant, a tender, a pious mind.... But, alas! her too partial fondness overlooked in her darling the growth of that pernicious weed, whose shade is deadly to every plant of celestial origin. She continued unconsciously to foster in me that spirit of pride. (I, pp.15-16)

As a mother herself at the time of writing her memoir, Discipline being written in the first person as an autobiographical monograph, she is undoubtedly intending not to repeat her mother's mistakes with her own children. Though Mrs Percy's mothering hardly serves as an 'awful warning' to use Opie's phrase, she is shown to have been somewhat remiss in certain areas of Ellen's upbringing. As her daughter later reflects, Mrs Percy did nothing to curb Ellen's propensity for pride, a fault which is shown to cost the heroine dearly. Ellen's mother, then, rather than providing a purely positive or negative example for her daughter, is presented naturalistically, as a flawed character herself, as indeed is Ellen, even at the end of her story; she does not 'reform' completely. She may, in the course of her tribulations have reined in the former



extent of her vanity, but even as her story draws to a close, she freely (and much to the reader's delight) admits,

I was very glad... when I handed him his tea, that my hand and arm were quite as beautiful as ever.  
(III, p.264)

Ellen's belief that having fun is part of woman's proper sphere is one factor that makes her character so very attractive to the reader. 'Let it not... be imagined that my whole life and conversation were as solemn, and as wise, and as tiresome as possible', she writes in the penultimate chapter of Discipline,

The flowers of the moral world were doubtless intended to scatter cheerfulness and pleasure there; and the woman who contributes nothing to the innocent amusement of mankind has renounced one purpose of her being. (III, p.234)

As Ellen takes her leave from the reader, she gives an assurance that she 'retain[s] a little of the coquettish sauciness of Ellen Percy' (III, p.275); the lasting impression is not of some vain fine lady, but a metaphorically and literally well-rounded modern woman.<sup>43</sup>

It is possible for readers in the present century to overlook Ellen's modernity altogether, not only because they anticipate what Katherine Sobba Green (1991) called 'quiet renderings of domestic stories' (p.161) - i.e. women in their proper sphere - but also because Ellen ends up in the Highlands of Scotland, a region most commonly associated in literature of the period with Scott's

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43. 'Modern' here is intended to be understood in the context of the early 19th century.

romantic vision. Brunton's representation of the Highlands, however, is individual and innovative.

#### IV Figuring Scotland

It has been acknowledged in the course of this chapter that Brunton's works have in recent years received a fair measure of recognition from feminist critics, for whom the writer's major interest lies in her gender. To date, however, very little attention has been paid to Brunton's representation of Scotland, which is of course of especial interest in the field of Scottish literature. This is not the opinion of at least one commentator, David C. McKie, who dismisses Brunton's representation of Scotland out of hand, commenting,

Brunton says least about modernity and Scotland... little in either novel which is distinctively national let alone as alive to the emergence of modern Scotland as Edgeworth of Ireland.<sup>44</sup>

However, McKie's position is one that is very hard to maintain: it is not at all difficult to view Brunton's representation of Scotland as highly modern in some respects. When, for instance, she decries the contemporary fashion for the Highlands, she is positively up-to-date:

Whoever recollects the inns at C-i-gh and B-rr-le, and no doubt many others, as they stood two-and-twenty

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44. David C. McKie, 'Scottish Fiction and Scottish Society 1800-1832' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Stirling University, 1980), p.57.

years ago, will be at no loss for the prototypes of Miss Percy's house of entertainment. Later travellers in the Highlands may not find her description agree with their experience. The 'land of the mountain and the flood' has of late been the fashionable resort of the lovers of the picturesque, and of grouse-shooting; the refuge of those who wish to skulk or to economise; of fine gentlemen and fine ladies, who find the world not quite bad enough for them. The accommodations for travellers are of course improved. It were devoutly to be wished that this had been the only change effected by such visitants. (endnote, III, p.287)

Unlike Scott in Waverley, Brunton does not tend to romanticise the Highland characters in Discipline. As Sarah Smith (1986) writes,

The heroic Scott concentrates on the chiefs; Brunton's Cecil Graham is colorful and quaint, but she is clearly the same sort of character and involved in the same kind of decisions as Charlotte or Ellen. Brunton's Highlanders are not in a world wholly other from that of Edinburgh; some of them have lived in Edinburgh and even in London, and Maitland has lived in the West Indies. They have a coherent moral life and a relationship to the Scottish past; their heroism under the difficulties of defeat is more adult, if less vivid, than Scott's heroical-tragical rodomontade. (p.54)

Brunton provides a distinctive and interesting down-to-earth depiction of Scottish Highland life. The topic is opened up seamlessly, through the device of Ellen's interest in Cecil Graham (the Highlander she befriends in Edinburgh), whetting the reader's appetite for the later discourse on Highland culture, when the heroine herself travels into that territory.

In a letter to a friend, Brunton jokes that a reviewer commented of Self-Control, 'the author must be Scotch, for there are two scotticisms in the book'.<sup>45</sup> Brunton's expressions of empathy for Scotland however, are not

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45. Letter to Mrs Izett in 1811 (Emmeline, p.xlv).

limited to 'two scotticisms'. Her allegiance is clearly discernible in Self-Control when Mrs De Courcy chooses for her son to study at the University of Edinburgh:

Desirous that her darling should enjoy the benefits of the most liberal education, yet afraid to trust him to the temptations of an English university, Mrs De Courcy went for some years to reside in Edinburgh during the winter. (p.88)

Commenting on this situation, one of the novel's reviewers wrote,

The author informs us, that De Courcy had been educated in the University of Edinburgh, because his mother, whom his father had left his sole guardian, would not trust his morals in an English University; as if the morals of a young man were not watched with more vigilance in the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge, than in the gay metropolis of Scotland, where, if we be credibly informed, there is neither academical dress nor academical discipline. In this instance the author betrays the national prejudices of her country; but it is the only instance, in which we observed her doing so; unless we must consider the giving of a presbyterian form to the family devotions in De Courcy's house, as another.<sup>46</sup>

The anonymous reviewer here ironically betrays his own national prejudice (in favour of the English) which tends to make his criticism of Brunton's bias seem somewhat fatuous. This is just one of many examples of Brunton's advocacy for Scotland, insinuated throughout Self-Control and set down more explicitly in Discipline.

Towards the end of Self-Control, as Laura Montreville finally returns to Scotland, the calm detachment of the narrator is jettisoned as the omniscient voice suddenly breaks into a highly enthusiastic apostrophe to Brunton's native land:

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46. British Critic, 38 (1811), p.215.

Land of my affections! - when 'I forget thee, may my right hand forget her cunning!'; Blessed be thou among nations! Long may thy wanderers return to thee rejoicing, and their hearts throb with honest pride when they own themselves thy children! (p.428)

This kind of spontaneous, affectionate outburst might prompt the reader to infer that Brunton, in Self-Control at least, is simply sentimental about Scotland. An informed reading of the novel reveals a different story: she reflects on a number of serious issues of a modern, specifically Scottish tenor throughout. As early as the second page, for instance, in her characterisation of Laura's mother, Brunton raises the difficult issue of language differentiation between Scots and the English:

To Scottish ears, the accent of the higher ranks of English conveys an idea of smartness, as well as of gentility; and Lady Harriet became an universal favourite. (p.2)

Without particularly foregrounding the matter, Brunton nevertheless manages to succinctly capture the essence of the insecurity that contemporary Scots were suffering regarding their own language(s), resulting in the national linguistic cringe discussed in the previous chapter.<sup>47</sup> Brunton here shows she has little regard for the sort of Highland folk who would admire a person for their accent over and above the more serious matter of their character.

In later chapters it is the English who are shown up for their attitude towards Scottish 'foreigners'. Laura's

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47. Brunton, as can be seen in Discipline, has a particular interest in Gaelic rather than Scots, which Elizabeth Hamilton championed.

London landlady presses the heroine to wait to speak to her daughter, Kate, who, Mrs Dawkins declares,

"Can tell you all about Scotland; and it is but natural to think that you'd like to hear about your own country, now when you're in a foreign land, as a body may say." (p.50)

When the said Kate (Mrs Jones) does arrive, her anecdotal chat about her Scottish honeymoon, intended to show up the Scots as fools, backfires on the speaker, ironically revealing herself as snobbish and ignorant:

"So off we set, and went two stages to breakfast, at a place with one of their outlandish names; and to be sartain, when we got there, we were as hungry as hounds. Well, we called for hot rolls; and, do but think, there wasn't no such thing to be had for love or money."

Mrs Jones paused to give Laura time for the expression of pity; but she remained silent, and Mrs Jones resumed: "Well, they brought us a loaf as old as St Paul's, and some good enough butter; so thinks I, I'll make us some good warm toast; for I loves to make the best of a bad bargain. So I bid the waiter bring us the toast-stool; but if you had seen how he stared, - why, the pore fellor had never heard of no such thing in his life. Then they shewed us a huge mountain, as black as a sootbag, just opposite the window, and said as we must go up there; but, thinks I, catch us at that." (p.53)

Mrs Jones returns to her favourite topic - deplorable Scotland - when she later has Laura and her father to tea. She is horrified to learn that the Montrevilles speak Gaelic - 'Mercy upon me,... can you make that outlandish spluttering so as them savages can know what you says? Well, if I had been among them a thousand years, I should never have made out a word of their gibberish' (p.107). And she continues to demonstrate her intolerance of Highlanders with her every utterance: of her stay in Glasgow she exclaims,

"Then I looked out, and seed a matter of forty of them there savages, with the little petticoats and red and

white stockings, loitering and lolling about the inn-door, doing nothing in the varsal world, except wait till it was dark to rob and murder us all, bless us!" (p.108).

The comedy of these scenes featuring Kate Jones is tempered by underlying messages concerning attitudes to language and nationhood, issues that Brunton was to return to and consider in more depth in her second novel, Discipline.

Alexander Brunton writes of his wife's attitude to the specifically Scottish material in Discipline:

A part of the book from which she herself received very great pleasure in the composition, and from which she anticipated with the most confidence its popularity, was the sketch of Highland manners in the third volume. She had been delighted with the pictures of Irish character which Miss Edgeworth has drawn so skilfully. The little which she had seen of the Highlands convinced her that materials for a similar attempt might be found there of not inferior interest. She was anxious in her enquiries; and eager in giving form to the information which she gained. (Emmeline, p.lix)

He also writes poignantly of her admiration, mingled with regret at the publication of Waverley, which she felt gave by far the superior representation of Highland life. In the Preface to to Discipline, Brunton herself acknowledges earlier writings by Elizabeth Hamilton and Anne Grant, but goes on to compare her own depiction of the Highlands unfavourably with that of 'the author of Waverley':

The author cannot help expressing a strong feeling of regret, that the close of her story may, from its subject, seem to provoke a comparison [to Waverley] which it is most truly her interest to avoid.... Whatever may be the faults of the following pages, the author is persuaded that no one who peruses them will believe her to be so destitute of common understanding, as to aim at competition where it were so truly absurd, or to intend imitation where imitation were so hopeless. (pp.ix-x).

Her husband argues the case that Brunton's own 'very different style, and ... entirely... different point of view, would only be the more attractive [having been prefigured by the publication of Waverley], because attention had previously been directed to their subject'.<sup>48</sup> Alexander Brunton's argument has much to commend it: it is true that the Highland scenes in Discipline superficially have little to gain by direct comparison with those in Waverley: Scott is undoubtedly the more accomplished writer of the two. Yet consideration of Brunton's treatment of the Highlands yields its own rewards.

When she ventures northwards with Charlotte Graham, Ellen Percy is at first fairly unsympathetic towards Scottish Highlanders, this despite her earlier friendship with Cecil Graham, under whose instruction she had taken lessons in Gaelic. When Charlotte travels with Ellen to the Graham clan homeland, Glen Eredine (of which Maitland is later revealed to be chieftan), Ellen's snobbish distaste for the natives is all too apparent. For instance, in regard to one person whose warm hospitality she receives, she comments:

It was plain that Miss Graham and I affixed somewhat different ideas to the word 'gentleman'; however, upon the claims of his ancestors, I was obliged to admit this *gentleman* to our dinner-table. (III, p.203)

Ellen's haughty attitude quickly changes however, as soon after arriving in Glen Eredine she realises how wrong she  
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48. Quoted by Ann H. Jones (1986), p.108; from Alexander Brunton, Memoir of Mary Brunton, prefaced to the 1832 edition of Discipline, p.33.



has been in dismissing the locals as if they were completely uncouth. It is she herself who is found to be wanting in social grace when she turns up to take part in the dancing at the customary ball after the tenants' harvesting of the landlord's corn. She is disappointed to find the place deserted, and then ashamed when she is berated by a local man for expecting to dance so soon after the death of one Kenneth Graham, deemed by her accuser, 'the best blood in Eredine'. Ellen is forced to rethink her position, being,

Struck with such an instance of delicacy in persons whom I considered as little better than savages.  
(III, p.228)

Ellen's earlier insight that the Highland 'mode of life [was] so oddly compounded of refinement and simplicity' (III, p.194) is borne out when she goes to stay there.

In Discipline's Highland scenes Brunton makes use of the kind of 'anti-narrative' footnoting apparatus, in fact endnotes, already discussed in **Chapter Two** with regard to Jane Porter. Endnotes are used variously by Brunton: to translate phrases given in Gaelic or English in the text into the other language; to give ethnographic information, such as, for example, the origin of the Elfin arrow (endnote, III, p.281); and to provide further information to fill out and reinforce the veracity of details given within the main text, for instance, in a long endnote on various Highland rituals regarding marriage, Brunton notes that 'The ceremonial of the wedding is conducted exactly according to Cecil's statement' (endnote, III, p.283). The

endnote provides a forum for Brunton to demonstrate the breadth of her own knowledge, highlighting her understanding of another language, and her reading, referring readers at one point to '*Mrs Grant's Essays on the Superstitions of the Highlanders*' (endnote, III, p.285), breezily mentioning 'Mr Malthus' (endnote, III, p.283) at another. An endnote is also brought into play when she presents the bedlam episode, this time giving herself the opportunity to deplore in print the recent state of an Edinburgh lunatic asylum, now happily much improved:

Miss Percy's description is far, indeed, from exaggerating the horrors of some lunatic asylums in Edinburgh, as they existed twenty years ago. One of these, which was even more recently the disgrace of Scotland and of human nature, is now managed with great attention to the health and cleanliness of its miserable inmates. (endnote, III, p.285)

It is of course not only Highland life that is considered in the text and endnotes of Brunton's novels. In Self-Control and Discipline the author presents a woman's-eye view of urban life in both London and Edinburgh. The grandeur of the Highland landscape in Discipline is starkly contrasted with scenes taking place in the cities, where danger lurks all around, a recurring theme in writing of the Romantic age.<sup>49</sup> The hostilities of the cosmopolitan outside world of the city are all too apparent in Self-Control, when Laura visits the art dealers in London and is regarded as if a prostitute. In Discipline, having

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49. Blake's 'London' from Songs of Experience (1794) serves as one illustration of the Romantic theme of urban alienation, which is present in many works of the period.

travelled to London to sell a ring, Ellen finds she cannot afford a carriage to take her to the jeweller's and has to make her way through the streets on foot, being 'more than once boldly accosted' (II, p.188), as if a common street-walker. Later again, Brunton returns to the theme of urban alienation when she describes Ellen's continuing terror of city life as she makes her way through Edinburgh:

It was almost dark; and the thoughts of passing unprotected through the streets of a great city filled me with alarm. I breathed painfully, and scarcely dared to speak even in a whisper. Every time that my exhausted companion stopped to gather strength, I shook with the dread that we should attract observation; and when we proceeded, I shrunk from every passenger, as if from an assassin. Without molestation, however, we reached Miss Arnold's abode. (III, pp.127-128)

Like Scott in Waverley, Brunton figures the visitor crossing two notional borders to arrive in the Highlands: one between England and Scotland, the other between Lowland and Highland Scotland. She uses Ellen to demonstrate the kind of unnecessary misunderstandings which can occur between the two neighbouring cultures of Highlands and Lowlands, in which regard, she realistically depicts Edinburgh as having more in keeping with London than northern Scotland. In Brunton's Highlands, the reader encounters a genuine attempt to capture the distinctive spirit of the place at a certain point in time. Like Hamilton's The Cottagers of Glenburnie, Porter's The Scottish Chiefs and various Scott novels, Brunton's Self-Control and Discipline both close with a picture of life in the Highlands progressing harmoniously towards an improved, 'civilised' future.

## V Conclusion

Although Brunton's works have lately begun to receive a measure of attention from feminist critics, in the field of Scottish literary history they have largely been overlooked. Brunton's new-found standing in feminist circles is in itself noteworthy: that a Scottish woman writer is, for instance, credited by some with having influenced the work of a writer such as Jane Austen, significantly raises her profile in English literary history and ought to be reflected in that of her native country.

Her works were well regarded by women writers of the period, including at least two of the other women writers whose works are considered in this thesis. Elizabeth Hamilton writes,

Let no-one say that imagination does not operate on this side of the Tweed: what do you think of "Discipline"? - of "Waverley"? - of "Guy Mannering"? Are they not all excellent in their own way?

and Susan Ferrier gave a copy of Discipline to her friend Mrs Connell, deeming the work, 'One of the very few novels ... fit for family use'.<sup>50</sup>

Mary Brunton, in all three of her works, used the courtesy genre to didactic, but not always conservative ends. Her women protagonists, Laura, Ellen and Emmeline are well-

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50. Elizabeth Benger, Memoirs of the Late Mrs Elizabeth Hamilton, II, p.186; Memoir and Correspondence of Susan Ferrier 1782-1854 ed. by John A. Doyle (London: Murray, 1878) p.125.

realised complex individuals who in the course of their tales learn important lessons and thereby to some extent act as exemplars (and sometimes cautions) for other young women. Brunton herself seems to have learned a lesson from the virtually flawless Laura, making her two succeeding heroines progressively flawed (and thus increasingly plausible as well as more interesting). The last of these is an adulteress, presenting her creator with a particularly difficult intellectual challenge: how to make a reprehensible transgressor the object of the reader's sympathy. Brunton rises to this challenge and succeeds in making Emmeline worthy of the reader's pity.

While for the most part holding true to the conventions of the genre of the courtesy novel, Brunton nevertheless manages to inject some innovations into the genre. Her representation of the Highlands in Discipline, for instance, is striking and memorable, and marks something of a new departure for Scottish novels. Her three heroines are likewise quite innovative, being no ciphers, upon which to lay improving moral tracts, but psychologically motivated, often troubled individuals, who are trying to find their way in a world that sometimes seems quite unintelligible and can be very unfair.

Brunton was driven in her work, continuing to write and publish in the face of a great deal of hostile criticism. The image of a rope-dancer, used by her to illustrate how little self-exhibition appeals to her, provides a good

analogy for the precariousness of her position as a novelist in the early nineteenth century, balancing upon a very fine line that marked the border of the virtuous woman's position in society. As has been shown in the course of this chapter, on one level Brunton's novels appear to be quiet domestic tales, figuring women safely within their 'proper sphere'. On another level, however, her novels provided a forum for the writer from which to legitimately pass comment upon political and social issues of the day, in spite of her gender, thereby covertly transgressing the bounds of her own proper sphere. Her near contemporary, Susan Ferrier, whose works are the focus of the following chapter, similarly skilfully toes the line required of the woman writer; in her case, the medium of comedy comes to the fore as a kind of smokescreen to conceal her political and social commentary.

## CHAPTER FIVE

SUSAN EDMONSTONE FERRIER:

*ANTI-FASHIONABLE NOVELS OF FASHIONABLE LIFE*

# I Susan Ferrier and Tides of Comment:

## i 'The Fair Author'

Susan Ferrier (1782-1854) lived all her life in Edinburgh. She was the daughter of a lawyer, and through this connection she came to meet Walter Scott, with whom she was later to become great friends. At the request of Scott's sisters, Ferrier visited him at Abbotsford when his health began to fail. Scott was instrumental in arranging a beneficial publishing contract for her last novel, Destiny (1831); it was 'dedicated to Scott, who recommended it to Cadell, and in consequence of his judicious bargaining Miss Ferrier received £1,700'.<sup>1</sup> Ferrier wrote two other novels prior to this: Marriage (1818) with the help of her friend Charlotte Clavering, and The Inheritance (1824).<sup>2</sup> All three works are discussed in the course of this chapter.<sup>3</sup>

Ferrier published all her works anonymously; Marriage was reputedly taken by some to have been written by the author

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1. According to her entry in the Dictionary of National Biography (London: Smith, Elder, 1885-1900).
  2. Charlotte Clavering is credited with having written the 'History of Mrs Douglas' in Marriage, which comprises Volume I, Chapter XIV.
  3. Marriage, A Novel (Edinburgh: Blackwood, 1818); The Inheritance (Edinburgh: Blackwood, 1824); Destiny, or The Chief's Daughter (Edinburgh: Cadell, 1831). References given after quotations in the text are to the first editions of Marriage and Destiny and the second edition of The Inheritance (Edinburgh: Blackwood, 1825). Plot summaries of these novels are provided in **Appendix III**.



of Waverley.<sup>4</sup> Scott generously gave the lie to this notion when he published the following comment in a postscript to The Legend of Montrose (1819):

I retire from the field [of Scottish fiction] conscious that there remains behind not only a large harvest, but labourers capable of gathering it in. More than one writer has of late displayed talents of this description, and if the present writer, himself a phantom, may be permitted to distinguish a brother or perhaps a sister shadow, he would mention in particular the author of the very lively work entitled "Marriage".<sup>5</sup>

Ferrier writes of revealing her authorial identity to Scott for the first time some ten years after he published this remark, although as her biographer John Doyle points out in the Memoir and Correspondence, just because she believed the authorship to be a secret from Scott, 'it does not follow that it was so' (footnote, p.146). A review of Marriage in 1818 concludes with the following solicitation for Ferrier to reveal her identity:

We trust the fair author will not be long silent; and that, when she next comes forth, she will not hesitate to disclose a name, which, whatever it may be she is in no danger of dishonouring.<sup>6</sup>

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4. In a letter to a friend Ferrier writes, 'I saw H. Mackenzie yesterday, and she says her sister writes from London that 'Marriage' is much admired and generally attributed to Walter Scott'. Quoted from Memoir and Correspondence of Susan Ferrier 1782-1854 based on her private correspondence in the possession of and collected by her grand-nephew John Ferrier, ed. by John A. Doyle (London: John Murray, 1898), p.144. This book is hereafter referred to as Memoir and Correspondence.
  5. Quoted in Memoir and Correspondence, pp.146-7. Further references to Memoir and Correspondence are given after quotations in the text.
  6. Anonymous review of Marriage in Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, 3, (1818) 286-294 (p.294).

Ferrier's long-lived unease at being labelled as a novelist recalls that of other Scottish women writers already discussed in this thesis, whose work predated hers. Though superficially light-hearted, the following comments Ferrier wrote in a letter to a friend are underpinned with a serious tone - analogous to the strategy of concealment that she (and many of her contemporary female writers) frequently adopted in novels. Ferrier had to be very careful about who she let in on the secret of her authorship:

Should my book ever be published, how shall I get a copy sent to you? And, dear, will you *never, never* say to anybody that it is mine, and commit this epistle to the flames and not leave it lying about? I am become a person of such consequence in my own eyes now, that I imagine the whole world is thinking about me and my books. I turn red like a lobster every time a novel is spoken of, and whenever the word authoress is mentioned I am obliged to have recourse to my smelling-bottle. (Memoir and Correspondence, p.245)<sup>7</sup>

The plea, '*never, never* say to anybody that it is mine', is not purely mock-serious. In view of the prevalent opinion at the time, that women who wrote novels were teetering 'at the verge of their proper sphere' in society, her anxieties about discovery are all too understandable.

In 1851, some twenty years after the publication of her last novel and not long before her death, presumably in the belief that she had no longer had anything to lose by so doing, she at last consented to give her name to her

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7. Doyle (1898) notes that the date of 1817 attributed to this letter to Lady Charlotte Bury is at odds with part of its content (p.245).

works.<sup>8</sup> By this time, however, her identity had been well known among the Scottish *literati* for decades. In 1831 for example, in the satirical series 'Noctes Ambrosianae' she had been named as a novelist.<sup>9</sup>

In view of the tone of some of the biographical material published after her death, Ferrier's reticence seems to have been fully justified. Like that of so many other women writers through history, Ferrier's physical appearance, irrelevant as it is to her competence as a writer, came under intense scrutiny. The following cordial account of Ferrier appears in the Memoir and

Correspondence:

One of the few survivors of the generation who knew her in her days of youth and vivacity describes her as 'dark, tall and handsome, a most attractive personality, and a brilliant conversationalist; the centre of a brilliant coterie in Edinburgh.'

A footnote by Doyle is appended to this passage, containing an unnecessary and thoroughly sour rejoinder; he writes: 'the tradition of her own family does not confirm this account of Miss Ferrier's good looks. The miniature shows a vigorous and expressive face, with fairly well-shaped but not very regular features' (p.15).

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8. See the anonymous essay, 'Miss Ferrier's Novels' in Temple Bar, 54 (1878), 308-328, (p.315).

9. 'Noctes Ambrosianae No. LVIII' in Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, 30, (1831), p.533.

## I    ii    Contextualising Ferrier in the Nineteenth Century

Compared to all the other writers considered in this thesis, there is a positive wealth of biographical and critical material relating to Susan Ferrier, who is the subject of more than one biographical monograph as well as Doyle's Memoir and Correspondence. She is granted an entry in a number of reference works, dating from both her own century, and the present one.<sup>10</sup>

A consideration of the comments of some of the critics of Ferrier's own time, once again reinforces the argument of this thesis that women's literature may be more fully understood in the context of its own *milieu*. Scott's enthusiasm for Ferrier has already been demonstrated, and his opinion was shared by many. During the nineteenth century, including quite a long period after her death, Susan Ferrier's works were compared favourably to many near contemporary women writers. For instance, in Blackwood's

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10. In addition to the Memoir and Correspondence, biographical works include for instance, Aline Grant, Susan Ferrier of Edinburgh: A Biography (Denver: Swallow, 1957); Mary Cullinan, Susan Ferrier (Boston: Twayne, 1984). Reference works from the nineteenth century containing an entry on Ferrier include, William Anderson, The Scottish Nation, 3 vols (Edinburgh: Fullarton, 1863); Chamber's Cyclopaedia of English Literature, 3 vols, (1843; revised: London, 1901-1903); as well as the Dictionary of National Biography. She is represented in many twentieth century literary dictionaries, including the Dictionary of British Women Writers ed. by Janet Todd (London: Routledge, 1989) and The Feminist Companion to Literature in English ed. by Virginia Blain et al (London: Batsford, 1990).

Edinburgh Magazine the anonymous reviewer of Marriage writes,

She is, in the first place, both as acute and as extensive an observer, as Miss Edgeworth herself; like her, she portrays, with equal facility and accuracy, every gradation of social life, from the highest ton of the cool and indifferent metropolis, where every body's maxim is "nil admirari," down to the enthusiastic ignorance of a poor Highland laird's "purple" daughters.... [She] unites some of the best qualities of Edgeworth and Burney.<sup>11</sup>

Later, William Blackwood wrote to Ferrier that a correspondent of his had been reminded of 'Miss Austen's very best things' by her (then unpublished) The Inheritance (Memoir and Correspondence, p.174). Upon publication of The Inheritance, a reviewer in Blackwood's writes,

She has all that Miss Austin had - but she is not merely a Scotch Miss Austin. Her mind is naturally one of a more firm, vigorous, and so to speak, masculine tone.<sup>12</sup>

The review concludes with a confident assertion that Ferrier's works will be recorded in literary history, since they have 'so largely and so permanently embellished' the 'department of literature' (p.674). Similarly an unsigned overview of Ferrier's works in 1878 contains the following statement:

The name of Susan Edmonstone Ferrier is one that has become famous from her three clever satirical and most amusing novels of 'Marriage', 'The Inheritance', and 'Destiny'. They exhibit, besides, a keen sense of the ludicrous almost unequalled. She may be said to have done for Scotland what Jane Austen and Maria Edgeworth have respectively done for England and Ireland - left portraits painted in undying colours,

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11. Review of Marriage in Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, 3 (1818), 286-294 (pp.286-287).
  12. Anonymous review of The Inheritance in Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine 15 (1824), 659-674 (p.659).

of men and women that will live for ever in the hearts and minds of her readers.<sup>13</sup>

Comparisons were not just limited to female contemporaries. In one of the 'Noctes Ambrosianae' series, published in Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine in 1831, the dialogue concerning Susan Ferrier's novels (primarily about the recently-published Destiny) finds her work highly praiseworthy, comparing her latest novel to the writings of Sterne or Goldsmith:

Tickler

Her novels, no doubt, have many defects... but they are all thick set with such specimens of sagacity, such happy traits of nature, such flashes of genuine satire, such easy humour, sterling good sense, and, above all - God only knows where she picked it up - mature and perfect knowledge of the world, that I think we may safely anticipate for them a different fate from what awaits even the cleverest of *juvenile* novels.

North

They are the works of a very clever woman, sir, and they have one feature of true and very melancholy interest, quite peculiar to themselves. It is in them alone that the ultimate breaking down and debasement of the Highland character has been depicted...

Tickler

...In her last piece there is one scene of this description, worthy of Sterne or Goldsmith.<sup>14</sup>

In early nineteenth century opinion, Ferrier's skills as a novelist improved novel by novel, although this opinion has not survived into the present century. The anonymous reviewer in the Edinburgh Review of 1842, comments,

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13. 'Miss Ferrier's Novels', Temple Bar, 54, (1878): 308-328, p.308.

14. 'Noctes Ambrosianae' No. LVIII, in Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, 30 (1831), p.533.

In Miss Ferrier's next novel [after Marriage], 'The Inheritance', the advance made in artistic skill and dexterity was remarkable... The last of Miss Ferrier's novels, 'Destiny, or the Chief's Daughter', appeared in 1831; and though few novelists can be expected to proceed in a regular course of improvement, such we think was in this instance the case.<sup>15</sup>

# I     iii    The Twentieth Century Backlash

The nineteenth century view of Ferrier, as illustrated above, contrasts very sharply with the comments made in an essay dating from the present century, in which Wendy Craik writes,

[Ferrier] wrote three novels: Marriage,... The Inheritance... and Destiny... She was wise to do so. Reading them, one doesn't regret her small output. Plainly she had only material enough for three, if that. Marriage has by far the most gusto; and if The Inheritance has more polish, it has also more longeurs; by the time she writes Destiny the sands of inspiration are running out.<sup>16</sup>

Craik's sentiment is later echoed by Herbert Foltinek who writes:

The book (Marriage) became an instant success, which in time encouraged the author to launch another Scottish novel. This was so well received that she saw fit to publish a third narrative after another interval. By that time she had written herself out

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15. Anonymous review of Bentley's 'Standard Novels' editions of Marriage, The Inheritance and Destiny (1841) in the Edinburgh Review, 74 (1842) 498-505 (p.502; p.504).

16. Wendy Craik, 'Susan Ferrier' in Scott Bicentenary Essays ed. by Alan Bell (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1973) pp.322-31, (p.323).

and wisely refrained from further literary endeavours.<sup>17</sup>

The superiority of the first novel to either of the later ones is fairly well established in what little twentieth century criticism there is on Susan Ferrier. Francis Hart writes that most commentators find Destiny 'disappointingly evangelical or pietistic' but goes on to assert that in fact 'the religious didacticism has not increased'.<sup>18</sup> In the hope of redressing the critical balance somewhat, in the course of this chapter the focus is in particular upon Ferrier's later two novels - The Inheritance and Destiny, both of which have been severely treated at the hands of modern critics.

Given the high esteem in which Ferrier's novels were held in their own time, this century's frequently low opinion of her work is something of a paradox. Where she might be considered a notable string to Scottish literature's bow, her works have tended to be very much undervalued. In recent years, her admirers have gained some ground in the history of Scottish literature: critics such as Jenni Calder, Dorothy Porter McMillan, Carol Anderson and the writer of this thesis have all attempted to boost Ferrier's standing as a notable writer in Scottish literary

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17. Herbert Foltinek, 'Susan Ferrier Reconsidered' in Studies in Scottish Fiction: Nineteenth Century, ed. by Horst W. Drescher (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag Peter Lang, 1985), pp.131-144, (p.131).

18. Francis Russell Hart, The Scottish Novel: A Critical Survey (London: Murray, 1978), p.57.



history.<sup>19</sup> In addition, Ferrier has attracted some enthusiastic attention, particularly from feminist scholars, outwith her Scottish context.<sup>20</sup> The opinions of such critics are returned to variously throughout this chapter.

On the one hand, in the context of this thesis, Susan Ferrier has fared a great deal better than any of the other writers under consideration, simply in terms of the amount of academic writing her work has generated. On the other hand, however, Herbert Foltinek's (1985) remark that 'Ferrier has attracted little scholarly interest over the years' (p.131) remains fairly accurate. It is a pity that Foltinek, a renowned authority on Ferrier, and editor of the one of her novels most recently in print, the Oxford University Press edition of Marriage (1971), being himself fully conscious of the dearth of scholarly apparatus available to readers interested in her, nevertheless does little to redress the balance. He is, if anything, even

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19. Jenni Calder, 'Heroes and Hero-makers: Women in Nineteenth-Century Scottish Fiction' in The History of Scottish Literature: Volume 3, Nineteenth Century ed. by Douglas Gifford (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1988), pp.261-273 (pp.266-268). Dorothy Porter McMillan, 'Heroines and Writers' in Tea and Leg Irons ed. by Caroline Jane Gonda (London: Open Letters, 1992), pp.17-30 (pp.23-24). Carol Anderson and Aileen M. Riddell, 'The Other Great Unknowns' in A History of Scottish Women's Writing ed. by Douglas Gifford and Dorothy McMillan (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997), pp.179-195 (pp.189-192).
  20. See, for instance, Anne K. Mellor, Romanticism and Gender (London: Routledge, 1993); Nancy L. Paxton, 'Subversive Feminism: A Reassessment of Susan Ferrier's Marriage', Women and Literature, 4 (1976), 18-29. Further references to these critical works are given after quotations in the text.

more disparaging about her works than many of those who had written on her before. For instance, in the same essay in which he apparently bemoans the lack of critical attention to Ferrier, he writes of her novels,

Vivid descriptions, telling incidents, and superb dialogues are embedded in drifts of inferior writing. While her presentation is logically consistent, its artistic incongruity cannot fail to jar. Even Marriage, which carries greater conviction than its successors, comprises long passages where mere penmanship has to make up for the absence of original design. (p.140)

Foltinek seems to share wholeheartedly the sentiments of Ferrier's first major biographer, whose critical double-edged sword strikes Ferrier's works time and again throughout the Memoir and Correspondence. His appraisal,

Work such as Miss Ferrier's, of which the main feature is satire, qualified by kindness, and restrained and guided by good sense.

could possibly be building up to a sympathetic judgement, but is swiftly undercut by his concluding remark, 'but not marked by any artistic perfection of style' (p.22).

Writing some eighty years later, Frank Doubleday's exploration of Marriage is another good case in point. He even manages to cast into doubt Scott's enthusiasm for Ferrier's work by acidly remarking, 'When Scott praised Marriage, he chose his words; he did not say a very good novel but "a very lively work"'.<sup>21</sup> J.H. Millar's remark about a passage in The Inheritance, 'First rate, must be -----

21. These words end Frank Doubleday's essay of the same name, 'A Very Lively Work' in his Variety of Attempt: British and American Fiction in the Early Nineteenth Century (London: University of Nebraska Press, 1976), pp.61-77 (p.75).

the verdict, of its kind' - provides a further example of the kind of barbed compliment that readers come to expect in the field of criticism of Ferrier.<sup>22</sup> By qualifying his remark that the work is 'first rate' with the words 'of its kind', he simultaneously 'rates' Ferrier as being at the forefront of something, and denigrates her, casting into doubt whether her prowess is an achievement worth noting. Another twentieth century critic, Nelson S. Bushnell, makes a thoroughly negative assessment of Ferrier's technical abilities, writing:

The structure is episodic, the successive episodes being arranged to provide contrast, or to display examples of manners unrelated to the central story.... The author seems to have sensed a casualness of design in this story and has made a few half-hearted attempts at coherence, introducing the Scottish volume with an English scene, returning to England in the interpolated history of Mrs Alicia Douglas... and interlarding the English volumes with news from Scotland.<sup>23</sup>

The prejudicial tone of the above is very distinct. The author is clearly found at fault, with her 'half-hearted attempts at coherence'; and the critic's choice of the verbs, 'interpolate' and 'interlard' illustrate Bushnell's scornful attitude towards the writer of Marriage.<sup>24</sup> With

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22. J.H. Millar, A Literary History of Scotland (London: Fisher Unwin, 1903), p.544.
23. Nelson S. Bushnell, 'Susan Ferrier's Marriage as a Novel of Manners', Studies in Scottish Literature, 5 (1968), 216-28 (p.225).
24. The Oxford English Dictionary, includes the following meaning of the term 'interpolate': 'To introduce (words or passages) into a pre-existing writing; esp to insert (spurious matter) in a genuine work without note or warning'. The other term, *interlard*, with its inescapable cookery connotations - meaning to insert fat between layers of meat - is similarly derogatory.

'friendly' critics like these, Susan Ferrier does not need enemies.

Change in opinion regarding Ferrier's works can be traced back to the very end of the last century, when an article in Macmillan's Magazine provides an early example of the kind of opinion that came to predominate in the twentieth century, in which Marriage came to be valued so much more highly than either of its successors:

Upon the whole The Inheritance is to be preferred to its predecessor... It is hardly necessary to criticise Destiny, which presents the faults of the other novels in an exaggerated form.<sup>25</sup>

It is at this point, at the close of the nineteenth century, that critics first begin to suggest Ferrier's work is seriously flawed by its didacticism: a clear indication that there is a cultural process at work, that taste is changing. The topic has become a familiar one in the context of this thesis; all the women writers considered here come in for a measure of denunciation on account of their didacticism. It is interesting to contrast the view of the writer in the Edinburgh Review of 1842, who asserts that Ferrier's works, 'are truly Novels, not 'dramatic sermons, in the manner of Coelebs' (p.498). The shift in taste is all too evident in even the very opening paragraph of the Macmillan's Magazine review of the Memoir and Correspondence:

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25. Stephen Gwynn, review of Memoir and Correspondence of Susan Ferrier entitled 'Miss Ferrier' in Macmillan's Magazine, 79, (1899) 419-427 (p.424; p.425).

Unhappily she was possessed with the desire to convey moral instruction, and that has overlaid her humour and her genuine faculty of creation with a dead weight of platitudes under which they must inevitably sink. (p.419)

As time passes, what is perceived to be overt didacticism in Ferrier's novels becomes more and more unpalatable to the critics writing on her works. Thus, in the Introduction to the 1929 edition of Destiny, Margaret Sackville is totally unapologetic in her comment:

Susan Ferrier's third and last novel, Destiny, has a brilliant beginning but unfortunately becomes tedious as the story proceeds on account of the heavy masses of indigestible moralising which it contains... So it happens that side by side with her magnificent humour are passages of the same depressing piety which made what were called the Sunday-books of my childhood so formidable, in which dreadful little prigs lived (or more usually died) for the edification of their worldly relatives.<sup>26</sup>

This commentary utterly contradicts that already quoted from the Edinburgh Review, in which the reviewer makes special note of the fact that the tone of Ferrier's novel is very far removed from that of the 'Sunday-books' (such as Coelebs in Search of a Wife (1808) by Hannah More, specifically cited in the article). In his Introduction to a modern edition of The Inheritance, following in this somewhat odd tradition of introducing Ferrier's novels with grave reservations, James Irvine comments as follows:

All three novels have the same faults and virtues... they are all too full of sententious digressions (fortunately easily skipped)... In her last novel, Destiny, written at the time of her father's death,

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26. Margaret Sackville, Introduction to Destiny or The Chief's Daughter by Susan Ferrier, (London: Eveleigh Nash & Grayson, 1929), p.v.

the didactic moralist seems to have gained the ascendant over the comic satirist.<sup>27</sup>

It is my contention that Ferrier's didactic stance has been increasingly exaggerated in recent criticism. Certain adjectives seem to have worked overtime in twentieth century descriptions of Ferrier's novels; words and phrases like 'didactic' (in its modern, incriminating sense), 'overly moralistic', 'sermonising' abound. There are other ways of considering her novels, after all, as is only too clear from another glance at some of the more recent criticism of them: her didacticism is far from being the most striking feature of her work.

Ferrier's letters have sometimes been given in evidence of her didactic streak, but they also highlight the writer's inquiring mind, and her continuing worries about her moral responsibilities as a novelist. Her views on the subject are complex. In a letter to a friend, later published in the Temple Bar, she writes,

Now I don't think, like all penny-book manufacturers, that 'tis absolutely necessary that the good boys and girls should be rewarded and the naughty ones punished. Yet I think, where there is much tribulation, 'tis fitter it should be the consequence rather than the cause of misconduct or frailty.<sup>28</sup>

Lady Charlotte Bury quotes a letter from Ferrier in her own The Diary of a Lady in Waiting in which Ferrier writes of Maria Edgeworth's novel Patronage that it is,

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27. James E.M. Irvine, Introduction to The Inheritance, (Bampton: Three Rivers Books, 1984), p.viii.

28. Anonymous article entitled 'Miss Ferrier's Novels' in Temple Bar, 54 (1878), 308-328 (p.311).

The greatest lump of cold Lead I ever attempted to swallow... I cannot discover a particle of imagination, taste, wit, or sensibility; and without these qualities I never could feel much pleasure in any book.<sup>29</sup>

But it is not strictly necessary or for that matter desirable, to apply to Ferrier's letters in order to find evidence of her stance on didacticism. It is her novels that are the subject of the present work and evidence from the novels themselves provides the key. In The Inheritance, far from being Sunday-schoolish, sternly teacherly in tone, the narrative voice is often quite playful regarding the very idea of didacticism, as can be seen from the following comment,

Much might be said upon this subject [Miss Pratt's tendency to speak falsehood - whether intentional or not], but few readers are fond of digressions, especially when of a moral or didactic nature; the cause of Miss Pratt's observations must therefore be left to the construction of the world, which is seldom disposed to be over-charitable in its conclusions.  
(II, p.2)

In a passage like this, Ferrier neatly manages to have a foot in both camps: ostensibly eschewing the idea of didacticism, while making a value-laden judgement on 'the world, which is seldom disposed to be over-charitable in its conclusions'.

As well as going some way to countering the writings of their nineteenth century equivalents, twentieth century critics have set themselves the task of finding an

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29. Lady Charlotte Bury, The Diary of a Lady in Waiting (London and New York, 1908), II, p.176. Quoted by Vineta Colby, Yesterday's Woman: Domestic Realism in the English Novel (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), p.98.

appropriate genre classification for Ferrier, without however arriving at any concord on the matter.

## II A Genre for Ferrier:

### The *Anti-Fashionable Novel of Fashionable Life*

Ferrier's novels include certain elements manifested in each of the genres discussed thus far in this thesis. Like Brunton, Ferrier drew on didactic and romantic strands in her novels. The courtesy tradition feeds into all her novels, with their feminocentric plots, concerning young women on the verge of adulthood and marriage. On the theme of young women's behaviour, Ferrier is however decidedly satirical about Fordyce's Sermons, introducing the title as a text recommended by eccentric relatives, the spinster aunts in Marriage and in Destiny, Edith's London Aunt, who sends a copy to her niece, and is described by the narrator as being 'at least fifty years behind the rest of the world in her ideas' (II, p.51). Whilst the courtesy tradition is evident throughout Ferrier's works, her increasing reliance on romance and gothic conventions can be seen especially in The Inheritance and Destiny: an infant's identity is switched at birth, not to be revealed until adulthood; a



ship-wrecked eldest son returns from the dead; mysterious strangers lurk in the mist.

In the present century, Ferrier's work has not only been summarily dismissed as overly didactic; it has been classified as belonging to a multitude of genres. Francis Russell Hart (1978), a somewhat rare Ferrier advocate, observes that Destiny 'can be seen as a Scottish analogue to Persuasion' (p.66), and this does seem a productive way to view Ferrier's works: as something distinctly Scottish, though intrinsically related to English fiction involving the same kind of subject matter.<sup>30</sup> Glenroy's infatuation with his family tree in Destiny can hardly but remind the reader of Anne Elliot's father poring over his copy of the peerage at the opening of Persuasion (1818). Ferrier writes,

Glenroy had... an open but haughty countenance, and a lofty though somewhat indolent air... He was proud, prejudiced, and profuse; he piqued himself upon the antiquity of his family, the heroic deeds of his ancestors, the extent of his estates, the number of his followers. (I, pp.4-5)

Evidence for Ferrier consciously connecting with Austen's works is not hard to find. Ferrier's delight at reading Emma (1816) for instance, can be seen from her letters; she writes to Charlotte Clavering,

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30. Hart is not alone in this view of Ferrier. Loraine Fletcher writes, 'Destiny has some of the characteristics of Persuasion, a novel that I believe clearly influenced Ferrier' in 'Great Expectations: Wealth and Inheritance in the Novels of Susan Ferrier', Scottish Literary Journal, 16 (1989), 60-77, (p.70).

I have been reading 'Emma', which is excellent; there is no story whatever, and the heroine is no better than other people; but the characters are all so true to life, and the style so piquant, that it does not require the adventitious aids of mystery and adventure. (Memoirs and Correspondence, p.128)

Ferrier's debt to Austen is perhaps nowhere more obvious than in the opening sentence of The Inheritance, which so closely echoes that of Austen in Pride and Prejudice (1813). 'It is a truth, universally acknowledged, that there is no passion so deeply rooted in human nature as that of pride', writes Ferrier; 'It is a truth, universally acknowledged, that a single man with a good fortune, must be in want of a wife' writes her predecessor. Other less dramatic, but clearly identifiable nods to Austen are made throughout The Inheritance and Destiny. Just as in Emma George Knightley rebukes the heroine for her less than fine feelings towards Miss Bates, Edward Lyndsay chides Gertrude about her uncharitable feelings purportedly towards unnamed persons (but in fact towards certain members of the house party at the Rossville estate):

"I flatter myself I am a Christian," said she; "and yet I cannot help thinking there are people in the world who are very tiresome, very impertinent, and very disagreeable; yet I don't think it would be a very Christian act were I to tell them so."

"Certainly not," answered Mr Lyndsay, with a smile; "you may think them all those things; but if you think of them, at the same time, in the spirit of kindness and Christian benevolence, you will pity their infirmities, and you will have no inclination to hurt their feelings by telling them of faults which you cannot mend." (I, p.175)

As well as associating her works with those of Austen, critics have proposed a wide range of approaches to Ferrier's novels.

Nelson S. Bushnell (1968) entitles his critical essay, 'Susan Ferrier's Marriage as a Novel of Manners' thereby precisely signalling *his* genre categorisation of her first novel, a classification of Ferrier that is in his usage, intended to be pejorative. On the other hand, David Craig's comment, that 'Marriage is Scotland's nearest to a society novel', suggests he does not use the term prejudicially, although, of course, he does find that Marriage fails to live up to the categorisation.<sup>31</sup> When F.R. Hart (1978), finds Ferrier's works to be good examples of 'manners fiction' (p.57), he does not resort to loading the term in this assessment of her work. Furthermore, like many other critics, he very much relishes her sense of humour, calling Ferrier 'the forerunner of Muriel Spark' (p.62) as he concludes his discussion of the arrival of Death (in the shape of the hearse that carries the living Miss Pratt to the Rossville estate and heralds Rossville's last day on earth) in The Inheritance (II, pp.234-239).<sup>32</sup>

It has been said that Ferrier's comic talent wore off in the course of time between the publication of her three

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31. David Craig, Scottish Literature and the Scottish People 1680-1830 (London: Chatto & Windus, 1961), p.200.

32. Wendy Craik (1973) also writes with enthusiasm about this scene: 'the idea of death, thus introduced, enters the reader's mind almost without his noticing it, with all the atmosphere of comedy that Miss Ferrier requires to subdue the Earl's death, when it happens, to her comic design, and to make it, though not at all callous, superbly funny' (p.328).

novels, while her evangelism proliferated.<sup>33</sup> Ferrier has, by the time of Destiny undoubtedly dispensed with such grotesques as the girls on the Glenfern estate in Marriage, who look like frights and whose names alliterate (the purple-armed Belle, Becky, Betty, Babby and Beenie); gone too are characters like The Inheritance's Miss Lilly, whose utter vacuousness is perhaps best demonstrated by quoting one of her typically empty-headed comments. Speaking of Colonel Delmour, she comments, "It's the oddest thing that he should not like poetry... for he is so handsome" (I, p.287).

What Ferrier's reader is presented with instead in Destiny is a cast of characters whose personalities are more neatly observed and not nearly so overblown as those of the most comic creations in the former two novels. Destiny's M'Dow is probably the most like Ferrier's earlier grotesques. The reader's first meeting with him sets the tone for all his appearances throughout the novel; for ever thoroughly repugnant:

He dealt much in stale jokes and bad puns; he had an immense horse-laugh, which nothing ever restrained, and an enormous appetite, which nothing seemed to damp... To sum up his personal enormities, when he spoke he had a practice of always advancing his face as close as possible to the person he was addressing. (I, p.46)

Though in some ways he recalls Dr Redgill in Marriage, M'Dow is considerably more rounded - not just a collection  
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33. Francis Hart (1978), however, contests this view, observing that 'the religious didacticism has not increased; rather the satiric caricature such commentators relish in the earlier novels is virtually gone' (p.64).

of bad manners and no taste, he has a fully realised personality, that a caricature such as Dr Redgill lacked. In her Introduction to Destiny, Margaret Sackville (1924) comments,

[Ferrier] presents indeed the almost unique spectacle of a witty puritan. All through her work her wit scintillates, flashes, darts like summer lightning against sombre skies. She is both dazzling and depressing, and in no other writer perhaps is the line between dullness and brilliance more clearly drawn. (p.vi)

Sackville's somewhat purple prose captures the anomaly that Ferrier presents the reader: sometimes hilarious, on occasion sanctimonious, Ferrier's novels slip out of casual classification.

As well as didactic/society/manners fiction, Ferrier's works are often considered under the 'regional' heading. Vineta Colby (1974) for instance, writes,

While not a regionalist in the manner of Sir Walter Scott, Susan Ferrier made capital of the landscape and local color of Scotland and the peculiar national characteristics of the Scots.... Like Maria Edgeworth, Susan Ferrier is today read mainly for her "local color". (p.100)

Francis Hart (1978), on the other hand, finds Destiny to be 'Susan Ferrier's only novel of manners in the regional mode' (p.64). Mary Cullinan (1984), remarks that 'Susan Ferrier is important to the study of Scottish literature... because she gave birth to the first Scottish novels of manners' (p.i). Loraine Fletcher (1989) follows suit, finding that Ferrier's works,

Have been treated primarily as novels about courtship, marriage and female education... place[d] in [the] context of Regency Scotland... [discussed as] regional novels... Ferrier throws in too, for good measure, a

few helpings from the Gothic, the sensationalist and the silver fork schools of fiction. (p.60)

The Inheritance and Destiny are undoubtedly more gothic and sensationalist than Ferrier's first novel. While Wilkie Collins would be hard pressed to top the appearance of the mysterious Mr Melcombe in Destiny, passage after passage in The Inheritance, like the one quoted below, owe more than a passing debt to gothic fiction:

Gertrude... with a beating heart, went on her way as fast as terror and agitation would permit. She groped her way down the little turnpike stair, and along a dark passage, in an old part of the house, to a door which opened upon the lawn. But there all things stood disclosed in the light of a full moon, and calm, cloudless sky, and her heart almost failed her as she marked her own dark shapeless shadow stealing along on the silvery path. (I, pp.248-9)

Mary Cullinan (1984) has remarked, Ferrier's works 'do not fit easily into the established genres of their time. They are not 'silver fork' novels, like those of Lady Charlotte Bury and Catherine Gore... and they are not simply social satire' (p.106). As has been demonstrated here, faced with the 'eclectic jumble of subjects' Ferrier gathered together for her readers, generic classification has proved quite a struggle for most of the commentators.<sup>34</sup> In this thesis, it has been found productive to approach Ferrier's novels under the loose identification of *novels of fashionable life*, which does not seem to limit her work as much as so many of the other possible categorisations. Ferrier's high satirical sense of humour give her novels of fashionable life an edge that sets them quite apart from some of the

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34. A phrase used in connection with Ferrier by Loraine Fletcher (1989), p.60.

less adventurous productions in this field by other writers of the day.

Ferrier does not, in the manner of some contemporaries of the 'silver fork' school, present members of high society in her novels as grand, thrilling aristocrats, whose lives may be viewed by the reader with wonder and vicarious excitement. Instead, she takes the opportunity the novel offers her to question all manner of issues to do with fashionable life. The landed gentry bear the brunt of her humour. She satirises characters like Glenroy and Lady Elizabeth in Destiny for instance, mercilessly, holding them up as examples of vain, selfish creatures. The culture in which such characters may thrive is also held up for the reader's scrutiny. Nowhere is this more evident than in her minute dissection in The Inheritance and Destiny of the unfair patronage system of appointing ministers in Scotland, which was becoming fairly common in the early nineteenth century.<sup>35</sup>

In The Inheritance a situation arises where Gertrude has the church living at Rossville to endow. She had intended to give it to William Leslie, on whose behalf her cousin Anne Black had modestly petitioned, writing,

The present incumbent is old and infirm, and an assistant and successor is to be immediately appointed. I do not ask you to recommend William Leslie, because you ought not to recommend one to fill so sacred an office who is utterly unknown to you; but if you would name him to Lord Rossville... you will

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35. See Loraine Fletcher (1989).

confer a heartfelt obligation on your faithful and affectionate cousin. (II, pp.22-3)

Later, however, Gertrude (albeit with a guilty conscience) awards the living to one of Colonel Delmour's feckless, fashionable friends; in the words of Lyndsay, 'a superannuated *bon vivant* hanger-on of the Monteiths'.

Reinforcing the grave importance she laid upon the matter, in Destiny Ferrier returns to the topic of placing the responsibility for a church living in the hands of unsuitable members of the upper class and again implicitly, but unambiguously condemns it by presenting a worst case scenario. Glenroy's right to choose a minister for the parish without any consultation is presented as preposterous; his view of just one branch of the church serves to make the point:

[He] had a vague, confused apprehension that an Evangelical pastor was a sort of compound of a Popish priest, a stiff-necked Presbyterian, a sour-faced Covenanter, a lank-haired Seceder, a meddling Jesuit, a foul-tongued John Knox, a what-not, that had evil in its composition. (I, p.44)

Ferrier no doubt enjoyed exacting authorial retribution for Glenroy's lack of proper concern for the office, by saddling him with the odious, altogether repugnant M'Dow. This man is so far removed from the proper duties of his ministry that he would go to any lengths to pursue financial endowments from his sponsors, but does not deign to lower himself as far as visiting sick parishioners. "The truth of the matter is, I really don't like to go to



their houses; they're a dirty set, and I have an extremely delicate stomach," he explains (III, p.256).<sup>36</sup>

Ferrier's novels of fashionable life do not merely describe the glamorous antics of those enjoying the high life: they provide a thorough critique of such folk. Indeed, they might best be described as novels that are *anti-fashionable* life. Ferrier delights furthermore in deflating the vogue for Scotland itself, which was at its zenith of fashionableness when she was in her writing prime.

### III Scotland in Vogue

Though according to Francis Hart (1978) 'Destiny is Susan Ferrier's only novel of manners in the regional mode' (p.64), Ferrier makes much of specifically Scottish issues in all three of her novels. The Inheritance shares with Destiny a predominantly Scottish setting, whilst in Marriage, approximately half of the action takes place in Scotland, half in England - whether in London or Bath. Yet in Marriage too, some in fact would say more so in Marriage than in the latter two, the concept of Scottishness - as something very distinct from Englishness - is foregrounded.

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36. It is not only in his selection of M'Dow as the local minister that Glenroy's dereliction of religious duty is pointed up. His offer of assistance in securing a church living to Ronald Malcolm - with no regard whatsoever as to the boy's suitability for entering such a profession - is shown to be thoroughly negligent.

Some critics are rather dismissive of Ferrier's representation of Scottish culture. Douglas Gifford, for instance, comments on her penchant for 'old-fashioned couthiness', writing,

Mrs Violet McShake, the ancient Edinburgh tenement dweller of Inheritance [sic: in fact Mrs Macshake appears in Marriage], represents the strengths and weaknesses of such [i.e. early nineteenth century Scottish women's] writing. Grotesque and vividly of the past, there is an unintentional ambiguity in the way she commands our respect yet shocks our sense of good manners which captures the woman writer's dilemma; the impossibility of synthesising the didactic, improving message with the fascinated, affectionate description of the grotesque aspects of Scottish society which are seen as anachronisms.<sup>37</sup>

Gifford appears to be implying that Ferrier is wrong to view characters like Mrs Macshake as anachronistic. However, as Robert Crawford and others have observed, Scots, as a language used by the upper classes was dying out by the end of the eighteenth century, when (as was discussed in Chapter Three of this thesis) upwardly mobile citizens were signing up in droves for elocution classes in Edinburgh.<sup>38</sup> Far from being wrong in viewing Mrs Macshake as something of an anachronism, in this particular instance, Ferrier is perhaps capturing the mood of the time of which she writes. Mrs Macshake is in a sense a woman rather out of her time.

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37. Douglas Gifford, 'Myth, Parody and Dissociation: Scottish Fiction 1814-1914' in The History of Scottish Literature: Volume 3, Nineteenth Century ed. by Douglas Gifford (1988), pp.217-258 (p.238).
38. See Robert Crawford, Devolving English Literature (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), pp.22-41.

Emma Letley charges Ferrier with making the Scots language seem ridiculous in Marriage, by glossing words such as 'beast' and 'spitting', which are not at all obscure, commenting,

If Juliana is given a herring and it is referred to as a "beast", then even the most obdurate Southron could deduce that she is talking about the fish. Similarly, it is not taxing the reader's ingenuity too far to expect him to infer that "spitting", used in any case in colloquial English, has to do with the rain.<sup>39</sup>

On the other hand, Letley makes no mention of the many footnotes of Ferrier's which provide useful information. For example, the explanation that *braxy mutton* is meat from 'sheep that have died a natural death, and been salted' (II, p.86) seems to be helpful and is hardly likely to be generally known. It is somewhat anomalous, however, that when Ferrier's use of Scots language gets particularly dense - as for instance when Violet Macshake speaks in Marriage, she omits to provide a glossary at all. In the modern Oxford University Press edition of Marriage (1971), her speeches are very heavily glossed, so that a paragraph such as the following one has some seven notes appended by the modern editor, Herbert Foltinek:

'Gin your roebuck's nae better than your last, atweel it's no worth the sending'; poor dry fisinless dirt, no worth the chowin'... Your muirfowl war na that ill, but they're no worth the carryin'; they-re dong cheap i' the market enoo, so it's nae great compliment. Gin ye had brought me a leg o' gude mutton, or a cauler sawmont, there would hae been some sense in't; but ye're ane o' the fowk that'll ne'er harry yourself wi' your presents; it's but the pickle poother they cost you.' (II, p.133; O.U.P. edition, p.219)

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39. Emma Letley, From Galt to Douglas Brown: Nineteenth-Century Fiction and Scots Language (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1988), pp.57-58.

Ferrier's lack of glossary, at the very point when it seems indispensable to the modern reader, suggests her footnoting is not as straightforwardly pedantic as Emma Letley claims. The nineteenth century vogue for footnotes has been discussed earlier in this thesis and given Ferrier's acute sense of humour, it seems highly likely that the unnecessary footnotes are in fact her subtextual comment on contemporary mores. Ferrier is simultaneously sending up the fad for footnoting by having some spurious ones of her own, and making fun of the vogue for all things Scots. Her over-definition of certain terms undoubtedly carries a comic charge; as Letley herself comments, certain footnoted meanings would be obvious to 'even the most obdurate Southron'. Only the humourless could take offence at Ferrier's grave explanation that 'The Highlanders use [the] term of respect [Sir] indifferently to both sexes' (I, p.22). And a definition like the one Ferrier gives for *stoup* - 'A stoup is neither a bucket, nor a pitcher, nor a jar, nor an anything but a stoup' (The Inheritance, I, p.38) - suggests a criticism of Standard English, rather than Scots.

On the other hand, Herbert Foltinek, Marriage's modern editor, in all solemnity annotates not only obscure Scots terms: we learn, for instance, that *nowts* are 'literally 'cattle'' (note (2), p.37), but are also given information about many terms that are simply not in the least obscure. When in his edition of Marriage, Lady Juliana is described as 'A bonny bargain', the reader is directed to an endnote which demystifies the term: '*bonny bargain*: a fine purchase

(used ironically)' (note (5), p.26). Similarly, Foltinek gravely annotates Ferrier's 'slop-bason' with the translation, 'slop-basin' (p.57), demonstrating the modern taste for footnotes in academic scholarship at its most laughably pedantic. No doubt Ferrier would have found the numerous extra footnotes appended to her work highly amusing.

Ferrier does not only send up the vogue for all things Scottish through the device of satirical footnoting. This fashion in contemporary society is humorously addressed in the main text of all her novels. In Marriage, for instance, Aunt Grizzy and Mary are invited to Mrs Bluemits' *salon* as little more than curiosities from Scotland, for the supposedly intellectual Southerners to marvel at:

[Mrs Bluemit's] guests were... always expected to be distinguished, either for some literary production, or for their taste in the *belles lettres*. Two ladies from Scotland, the land of poetry and romance, were consequently hailed as new stars in Mrs. Bluemits' horizon. (III, p.232)

The condescension of the English ladies contrasts to telling effect with the behaviour of their Scottish visitors: Aunt Grizzy's utter ingenuousness and Mary's impeccable fine manners. In The Inheritance, other pompous English women (Mrs Waddell and Mrs Major) are ridiculed by Ferrier, for their mindless acceptance of the vagaries of polite society, which has apparently ruled out the appreciation of Scottish lyrics for a time. When Mrs Waddell is asked by Lady Rossville to sing a Scottish song, the following debate ensues:

"Scotch songs!" repeated Mrs Waddell, with astonishment and contempt. "I hope, cousin, you don't think me *quite* so vulgar as to sing Scotch songs. I assure you they are quite exploded from the drawing-room now; they are called kitchen songs," with an affected giggle.

"Call them what they will," said Lady Rossville, "I shall certainly learn to sing the songs of my own country, and to sing them, too, in my own way, *con amore*."...

"But I assure you, cousin, nobody sings them now," said Mrs Major, vehemently. (III, pp.18-19)

Ferrier thus disparages the fashion-driven expulsion of Scots (language) from drawing rooms.

Ferrier has been specifically criticised (along with other women writers) for her 'nostalgic love of old Scots songs' (Gifford (1988), p.238). Far from indiscriminate applause for Scots songs in general, however, Mr Lyndsay, the voice of reason in The Inheritance, makes it plain that Scottish songs, like those in any language (and shortly thereafter there is reference to a 'hackneyed' Italian song), are often,

"Coarse, vulgar, and silly,... and most of them sung from beginning to end would certainly be somewhat of a penance; but many of them are charming and a verse here and a verse there, in almost all of them, will be found to possess infinite beauty." (III, p.21)

Continuing with her commentary on the state of Scottish life in terms of the fashion *cognoscenti*, Ferrier opens Destiny with an amusing send-up of the current vogue for the Scottish Highlands in fiction, self-consciously saturating the passage with clichés:

All the world knows there is nothing on earth to be compared to a Highland Chief. He has his loch and his islands, his mountains and his castle, his piper and his tartan, his forests and his deer, his thousands of acres of untrodden heath, and his tens of thousands of

black-faced sheep, and his bands of bonneted clansmen, with claymores and Gaelic, and hot blood and dirks. (I, p.3)

Later in the same novel, Lady Elizabeth is horrified to find her step-daughter Edith has been staying in London with some very unfashionable relations, the Ribleys. However, she decides she may yet be able to introduce the young woman into polite society on the strength of her fashionable Scottish nationality:

"How can I possibly be of any service to you, after you have spent six weeks in such society? How could I possibly introduce you with any effect? Scotland and Scotch people, and Scotch books and scenery, and so forth, happen to be in fashion at present; and I could present you perfectly well, as just arrived from Scotland.... But if you remain where you are [with the Ribleys], I can positively do nothing for you." (III, p.99)

Throughout her novels, Ferrier wreaks havoc on this kind of uninformed, fashion-led view of Scottish culture and landscape. Nevertheless, and somewhat contradictorily, when in any of her novels the authorial voice discusses the relative merits of Scotland and England, the romantic in Ferrier wins through, Scotland invariably being chosen as vastly preferable. In the following passage, from Destiny, for instance, the reader is assailed with a number of rhetorical questions, followed by an unshakeable response, in Scotland's favour. England may be 'fairer', but that fairness is a superficial quality, and not something Scotland should strive for, according to this point of view:

All who have perceptions must be aware there is a difference between England and Scotland, and that all the powers of steam and locomotion have not yet brought them to assimilate. Wealth, the progressive wealth of bygone ages, with all its power and its

experience, its confidence and its consistency, is there [in England] everywhere apparent; while in Scotland the marks of iron-handed necessity are still visible, even through the beauteous covering which genius and romance have cast over her. And what though it be so? and why should Scotland blush to acknowledge a somewhat harder lot than that of its richer, fairer sister? What though its soil be more sterile, its skies more stormy? Are not these defects more than atoned for in the ever-varying beauties of its winding shores, its rocky streams, its lofty mountains, its romantic glens? And the eye accustomed to these will feel, even amid England's fairest scenes, -

"England, thy beauties are tame and domestic,  
To one who has roamed on the mountains afar."

And Scotland, with all its wants, will ever be to its own children the "land of our love, our fathers' home." (III, p.58)

It is not only through the narrative voice speaking directly to the reader that Ferrier cites Scotland as far preferable to England. It is, after all, no accident that the happy endings of her novels all entail the newly-married couples settling down to their blissful futures on *Scottish* soil. Mary Cullinan (1984) writes of Ferrier's heroines, 'They choose finally to live a retired domestic life in Scotland rather than a brilliant social life in England' (p.111). Again, the novels seem to a fair measure to favour the *anti-fashionable* life.

The novel attractions of city life, Ferrier asserts again and again in her works are short-lived, compared with the lasting happiness to be derived from life in a small Scottish community, although she does allow a little optimism about the New Town in Edinburgh, describing the view from Calton Hill as follows: 'Beneath, the old town reared its dark brow, and the new one stretched its golden lines' (Marriage, II, pp.111-112). The loneliness of the



city, so well documented by Mary Brunton, also looms large in Ferrier's novels. In Destiny, life in London is positively bewildering to Scottish visitors and holds no charm at all for the narrator:

To Edith and Mrs Macauley the scene (in London) was more strange than pleasing. The simple dwellers in a remote and thinly-peopled country, where each individual, with all his little history of joys and sorrows, was known and sympathised with, they looked almost with affright on the busy crowd that everywhere surrounded them, and beheld with amazement the bustle, the activity, the energy, that everywhere pervaded this living mass; while, in the midst of seeming anarchy, each and all moved in his own sphere, one of myriads, yet as much apart from all fellowship or cognisance of those around him as though he stood alone in the universe. (III, pp.60-61)

Vineta Colby (1974) was one of the first critics to observe that in Ferrier's novels, 'characters show their real natures - and the quality of their early education - by the way in which they respond to the Scottish landscape' (p.100). Despite Ferrier's often satirical representation of Scotland, the appreciation of Scotland is fundamental to the character make-up of all her heroines.<sup>40</sup>

At the beginning of The Inheritance, Gertrude experiences something of an epiphany when she sees the Rossville estate for the first time. Her perception of the land as something brilliant to be possessed, when she comes into

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40. Ian Campbell somewhat cynically writes, 'Susan Ferrier knew how to flatter her Scottish readers, the putting-down of English social aspirations and the return to Scotland at the end of complex plots being obvious devices by which the novels' popularity in Scotland would be enhanced', in his essay 'The Novels of Susan Ferrier' in Susan Ferrier 1782-1854 (Edinburgh: National Library of Scotland Exhibition Catalogue, 1982), p.14.

her inheritance, rather than as brilliant on its own merits, regardless of ownership is an important aspect of Gertrude's early character (and indeed as she matures in the course of the novel, her attitude changes):

Gertrude gazed with ecstasy on all around, and her heart swelled with delight as she thought this fair scene she was destined to inherit; [she also had] a vague poetical feeling of love and gratitude... to the Giver of all good. (I, p.18)

As the above passage makes plain, Gertrude has, at the outset of the novel, a considerable way to go in terms of moral development, in order to arrive at a genuine sense (rather than a 'vague poetical' one) of appreciation of nature, in the form of the harsh, but tremendous Scottish landscape (as well as of her Christian God, 'the Giver of all good'). Nonetheless, she does have an innate appreciation of nature, unlike her (supposed) grandfather, Lord Rossville, of whom the narrator comments,

There is a mental blindness, darker than that which shrouds the visual orb, and nature's works were to Lord Rossville a universal blank, or rather they were a sort of account-book, in which were registered all his own petty doings. It was here he had drained - here he had embanked; here he had planted - there he had cut down. (I, p.55)

Similarly, in Destiny, as Glenroy and his cronie, Benbowie, cross the water to Inch Orran, they are concerned only with commerce and are quite oblivious to the scenic panorama opening up before the reader. Ferrier skilfully parallels the one view with the other, laying image upon image, building up two radically different ways of seeing exactly the same scene:

The crystal depths of the limpid waters over which the sun was shedding his noonday effulgence suggested to their minds images of herrings, fat, fresh, or salted, with their accompaniments of casks, nets, and busses;

the mountains in their stern glory, with their lights and shadows and lonely recesses, to them showed forth heath-burning, sheep-walks, black-faced wedders, and wool. The copsewood, tender and harmonious in its colouring, free and graceful in its growth, was, in their language, "hags and stools"! of price and promise; and as they touched the shore of Inch Orran, they broke into no idle raptures about the water-plants, the fern, the wild flowers, the tall foxglove, the gray rocks and bright mossy stones, half hid beneath the broad-leaved coltsfoot, that formed the rich and variegated foreground; for they were casting searching looks for "black tang" and "yellow tang"... and such other ingredients as enter into the composition of that valuable commodity called kelp. (I, pp.63-64)

Later in the same novel, Florinda's considerable moral superiority over her mother can be measured in terms of their very different reactions to the Scottish landscape; Lady Elizabeth begins the following dialogue with her daughter, with an indictment of some very similar landscape features to those picked out for approbation by the narrative voice, as quoted above:

"I have been excessively alarmed - those dreadful precipices and that shocking water!"

"Quite charming, mamma," said Lady Waldegrave. "It seemed as if Scott's beautiful description of the Trossachs had started into life"...

"Nonsense, my dear," exclaimed Lady Elizabeth; "it is a frightful, a *dangerous* road... If I had had the slightest recollection of it, I never should have attempted it, even to gratify you, my sweetest - those tremendous rocks on one hand, and the lack on the other - shocking!" (II, pp.140-141)

Florinda (Lady Waldegrave) herself, however, despite ranking well above her mother in the moral index of appreciation of Scottish landscape, falls a long way short of her cousin Edith, not least by stating her preference for Italy. Edith's love of Scotland, rather like that of the narrative voice, is totally unassailable. When one evening Edith is requested by Florinda to say something 'on

the charms of moonlight', she chooses to quote from a favourite poem, 'Thalaba' by Ossian, then highly-fashionable and likely to please her step-sister.

Florinda, however, does not respond very positively, exclaiming,

"It wants the charm of an Italian moonlight - the rich, warm, glowing, indescribable charm which there pervades the atmosphere and fills the heart; as some one, Madame de Staël, I think, has well said, the very perfume of the flowers in Italy produces something of melody on the senses... Naples - dear, dear, loved Naples!" (II, p.226)

The fashionable verse of Ossian may do well enough for Edith to fulfil specific demands (e.g. rhapsodise about moonlight for her step-sister) but she does not need to borrow words to express her love of her homeland, a feeling she distinguishes from mere *admiration*:

"However much I might admire, and even enjoy, the fair skies and the flowers and the melody and the odours of Italy, I am sure I should ever love the clouds and the mountains, the firs and the heather, of my own native land; to me the very hooting of these owls has a charm, as associated in my mind with all that I love, or ever loved." (II, pp.227-228)

Ronald Malcolm's first return to Inch Orran in Destiny provides another example of a response to the Scottish landscape; this one underlining a certain emphasis which accords with Edith's sentiments quoted above. The Scottish landscape, for all he appreciates its greatness, is of much less import in itself to Ronald, than the happy family life he associates with it:

The mountains gleamed with ever-changing hues of gold and crimson and purple; each tufted isle and rock and tree shone in the 'rich sadness' of eve's last splendour. Not a breath ruffled the surface of the water; not a sound broke the stillness of the air, save the distant bleating of the sheep, and the soft

rippling of the waves as they crept gently along the shore, or broke with faint effort upon the bare fantastic roots of some stately beech, whose stem rose like a mast of gold from the bosom of the waters. But not all the pomp and glory of the scene could arrest the gaze of him whose eyes were fixed on the walls that contained the treasures of his heart, the first, the only objects of his young affections. (I, p.332)

Ronald's appreciation of the very great worth of family-life (valued much above and beyond their setting) demonstrates his great moral strength. A happy ending in Scotland is his reward. The connection drawn by Vineta Colby (1974) between landscape appreciation and moral worth has been further developed by Anne K. Mellor (1993). It is clear that Ferrier's representation of Scotland has many facets and cannot be viewed as merely satirical or merely Romantic. Threads running through her work include a concern with moral values and development, so she has a didactic aspect, though it is not as crude and simple as some critics seem to imply. What is more, there are other aspects of her work still relatively little discussed. When Anne K. Mellor comments on the correspondence between landscape and character in Ferrier's work, she opens up new avenues for exploration. She writes,

Those characters capable of responding positively to the awesome grandeur of the Scottish highlands are also capable of valuing rational discourse, disciplined behavior, the domestic affections, the equality of women, and the dictates of an enlightened Christianity. (p.103)

Ferrier's treatment of some of the topics listed by Mellor above, in particular with regard to the position of women in society, is well worth close examination.

### III Women by Ferrier

#### i Educating Women for Marriage or Else

Jenni Calder comments that 'Susan Ferrier... in Marriage writes, however briskly and amusingly, about women who simply hang about waiting for husbands. They have no reality except in terms of the marriages they are to make, or fail to make, or make and then ruin'.<sup>41</sup> However, the reader only has to look as far as Marriage to find Ferrier addressing this issue head on. Lady Emily, dear relation and confidante of the heroine, Mary, and to many the most appealing character in the novel, speaks very scornfully about the role of women as defined by Calder:

Married ladies only celebrated for their good dinners, or their pretty equipages, or their fine jewels. How I should scorn to be talked of as the appendage to any soups or pearls! Then there are the daughters of these ladies - Misses, who are mere misses, and nothing more. Oh! the insipidity of a mere Miss! a soft simpering thing with pink cheeks, and pretty hair, and fashionable clothes; - sans eyes for any thing but lovers - sans ears for any thing but flatters - sans taste for any thing but balls - sans brains for any thing at all! (II, p.273)

Through Emily, Ferrier is able to give voice to a radical (and *anti*-fashionable) view, that of a contemporary woman's exasperation with the status quo, in which fashionable women belonging to that echelon of society *do* 'hang about waiting for husbands [and do not have any] reality except in terms of ... marriages'. A pitiable state of affairs, as Emily is all too well aware, but perhaps an honest

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41. Jenni Calder, Women and Marriage in Victorian Fiction (London: Thames and Hudson, 1976), p.18.

reflection of the society in which Ferrier existed and of which she wrote. Ferrier makes her opinion about this predicament very clear in Marriage as well as in her other two novels, generally castigating the kind of women whose only interest in life is marriage, and placing her portraits of such women alongside others of much less single-minded and self-absorbed dispositions, making clear her own ideas on the subject of women's proper sphere.<sup>42</sup> In Ferrier's view, education was the way by which women could rise above the narrow conventions of their lives and begin to fulfil their personal potentials. Her novels are littered with thinly disguised expositions of the subject of women's education.

Often in literary criticism, Ferrier's didacticism is, in my opinion, over-stated. On the other hand, her interest in the topic of education in all three of her novels, may be quite fairly described as correspondingly under-stated. The terms 'didactic' and 'education(al)' are used more or less interchangeably in some contexts, but this is not the case in the present work, and it is therefore pertinent at this stage to reiterate the distinction between the two. In essence the difference between novels with an education(al) theme and didactic novels in the context of this thesis is that the latter are intended to inculcate certain sentiments, the former to explore educational issues.

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42. This is explored further in Section IV ii.

In her book on Susan Ferrier, Mary Cullinan (1984) writes of the contemporary interest in the topic of education, commenting:

As many critics have pointed out, most of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century fiction centers on education in the broadest sense. Tom Jones and Great Expectations, Gulliver's Travels... can all be termed novels of education in that the heroes learn truths about the world and about human nature. Women writers, however, tended to be concerned with the education of women, and their novels focus on specific educational issues. (p.108)

In all three of Ferrier's novels, the writer focuses on the topic of female education. Vineta Colby (1974) has commented of Marriage that it 'might more accurately have been titled "Education", for its theme is the effect of childhood conditioning and training upon character' (p.102), and whilst it is perhaps the one of Ferrier's novels most overtly concerned with education, the same theme is incorporated into both her later novels. Anne K. Mellor (1993) suggests a significance in Ferrier's own education, at James Stalker's Academy in Edinburgh, parenthetically commenting on the fact that James Stalker's Academy was '(one of the first coeducational schools in Scotland)' (p.49). She does, however, scrupulously point out in an endnote, that the place of Ferrier's education is by no means certain. Cullinan (1984), for example, states (in regard to Ferrier),

She may have gone briefly to an infant school, but otherwise she received a basic education at home. Like most upper middle-class girls of the period, she was taught to read and do simple sums; but the emphasis in her education was on drawing, music, domestic crafts, and 'manner' - all enticements which could win a young woman a husband. At a young age she also learned the art of managing a household, for, as her siblings moved out, her father came to depend heavily on her. (p.11)



The successful educations (male and female) in Ferrier's novels, it has to be said, are not undertaken in schools, coeducational or not: they are conducted at home, in large part by dutiful parents.<sup>43</sup> In Destiny, for instance, Captain Malcolm's discussion on education with Glenroy is very pertinent.

"Oh, I have no doubt you have done all you could for him," said the Chief slightly; "but we all know there are few gentlemen fit to educate their sons."

"Yet I believe it is from their parents that children receive by far the most important part of their education," replied Captain Malcolm.<sup>44</sup> (I, p.146)

Interestingly, Ferrier, not given to a great deal of footnoting apparatus in her novels (translations of Scotticisms in Marriage apart), at this point refers the reader to 'Mrs Barbauld's admirable Essay on Education' which of course backs up Malcolm's point of view, that a child's 'habits and opinions will be much more influenced by [his parent] than by his tutor, and these are ... the most important parts of education' (I, p.146).

If the idea of Ferrier being much in favour of coed schools is rather doubtful on this evidence, Mellor's views on her education do, on the whole, seem more congruent with the sentiments expressed in her novels than Cullinan's. When

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43. The dutiful parents in Ferrier's novels, especially in terms of female education, are more often than not adoptive, rather than biological mothers an issue that is explored further in Section IV.ii.
44. This conversation provides one of only too many examples throughout Ferrier's works of virtuous middle class characters showing far greater sense than their supposed 'betters'.

Mellor comments that 'Ferrier's Marriage can be read as a fictional translation of Wollstonecraft's Vindication' (p.49), she reinforces Nancy L. Paxton's (1976) view of the novel as a profoundly feminist text. Paxton writes that all three of Ferrier's novels,

Sound a curiously strident note that seems more in harmony with the tone of early English feminists than with the Christian moralists of the Victorian decades. All three disclose feminist parables beneath the orthodox morality of the plots. (p.19)

Mellor takes Paxton's reading a few steps further, using the novel itself to argue a very convincing case.

On the other hand, Cullinan's characterisation of Ferrier as a homely body, a woman educated solely to please men (be it prospective husbands or her own father) fails to take full account of the radical ideas her novels convey. Even Herbert Foltinek (1985) recognises the presence of a feminist message, though he assumes that because it is submerged, Ferrier must have been fighting against it, where another more compelling view argues that contemporary mores forced her to express her feminist sentiment in this covert fashion. Foltinek writes,

Though Susan Ferrier's outlook on life remains conventional throughout, she does intermittently raise issues that were to affect the role of woman in the future. Seen from this angle, the flow of conventional sermonising might be explained as an attempt to stifle subversive thoughts that had infiltrated her mind and to repress states of feeling that threatened to upset her own mental tranquillity. The feminine consciousness which controls her narratives has a critical edge to it which is prone to rebel against received standards of conduct. (p.142)

When writing on the theme of education, in the same way as she presented other 'political' issues which interested

her, Ferrier persistently lightened her message with high comedy, rarely, however, belittling the difficulties posed by particular situations. When, for instance, the elegant Gertrude happens upon some local urchins on the Rossville estate in The Inheritance, the following conversation ensues:

"Would not you like to be made nice and clean, and have pretty new clothes?" [asked Gertrude]

"Ay!" answered one of them with a broad stare, and still broader accent.

"And to go to school, and be taught to read, and write, and work?"

"Naw!" answered the whole troop with one voice, as they renewed their splashing with fresh vigour.  
(I, pp.36-37)

The lack of a good education means a character like Mrs Malcolm (of Inch Orran) in Destiny superficially provides much amusement for the reader while on another level her empty-headedness is shown to make her little short of dangerous. Were she to have any say in the running of the Inch Orran estate, the results could be catastrophic. Her views on 'improving' the estate make the point all too clear:

"I was just saying this morning what an improvement a town would be on the water-side; it would be a great ornament, and of great use in making a stir and giving employment to poor people, and very convenient too. I'm surprised it has never struck anybody to set such a thing a-going, when there's such a want of employment for the poor." (I, pp.81-81)

The Glenfern aunts in Marriage serve as another case in point. They labour under the false notion that they are helping the poor on the estate by undertaking work which could much more usefully be given over to the locals, providing them with gainful employment (I, p.80).

Nancy L. Paxton (1976) has observed that Mary, the heroine of Marriage, has been educated (at home) 'as if she were a boy; her reason has been cultivated by study, she has been taught modern languages, and has been encouraged to think for herself' (p.23). Much the same might be said of the heroine of Ferrier's third novel, Destiny. After his second daughter Florinda's departure from the estate, Glenroy wastes little time worrying about his first daughter Edith's education, an omission that was most probably to her great benefit later on:

A governess was talked of for Edith; but that was such a secondary consideration that Glenroy could not be troubled to make any exertion to procure one. So, in the meantime, she received lessons from Mr Ellis in the solid branches of education along with the boys. (I, pp.35-36)

Needless to say, it is Edith, rather than the heiress, Florinda, who ends up the more well-rounded individual in Destiny. It is easy to infer that Ferrier is proposing that one's destiny is not simply a foregone conclusion; the factor of education is all-important.

In Ferrier's fiction, those women who like to exhibit their intellect, tend not to have much of one to speak of - *vide* the hilarious salon in Marriage, hostessed by the pretentious Mrs Bluemits, or the excruciating conversations about literature in The Inheritance, in which various characters prefer to use books for merely fashionable purposes, as ornaments, rather than to read them.

"It's very well for people to write poetry who can't afford to buy it," said Miss Bell, with a disdainful toss; "the Major has bought a most beautiful copy of Lord Byron's works, bound in red morocco - rather too fine for reading, I think; but he said he meant it to lie upon my sofa-table, so I couldn't find fault"...

"To be sure, Bell, as you say, it's a better business to buy poetry than to write it," said Mrs Black. (I, pp.281-282)

This is a sentiment perhaps shared by another branch of Gertrude's family, the Larkins:

"This is beautiful," said Mrs Larkins, displaying some fine engravings in one of [the books] to her sisters-in-law; "I never saw this before, 'Fisk, by Mrs.Tigg,'" reading the title of it.

"Fishie, my dear," whispered Mr Larkins, as if a little ashamed of her mal-pronunciation.

"Dear! is that Pesecchye?" said Miss Larkins; "a sweet, purty thing it is."

Gertrude could almost have cried at this Malaprop murder of "Psyche, by Mrs.Tighe". (III, pp.116-117)

Ferrier was an inhabitant of Enlightenment Edinburgh, a hotbed of the very newest ideas and philosophies, the very home of modern thinking. Although in her novels she complies with the conduct book admonition against women writers making an ostentatious show of their learning, her intellectual dexterity and erudition can nonetheless be clearly discerned without too much reading between the lines of her novels. Writing as a modern thinking woman, Ferrier had a great deal to say both to contemporary women and about their proper sphere.

#### IV    ii    The Fashionable and Not So Fashionable Lives of Ferrier's Women

In the course of her three novels, Ferrier took the opportunity to explore many different examples of

fashionable and unfashionable women: even setting aside the central heroines, her novels are positively bustling with women of all kinds. In The Inheritance one of the most memorable characters is the oddly fascinating, if at times irritating chatterbox, Miss Pratt. She is a woman with an opinion about everything from acts of parliament right down to the appearance of Lord Rossville's shaving mirror, a subject, the narrator puns, the Earl 'would not be bearded upon' (I, p.89). An uncommon friendship is struck up between Gertrude's Uncle Adam and Miss Pratt, neither of whom is fashionable; indeed they are both unconventional enough to be positively anti-fashionable. Ferrier writes,

Uncle Adam was astonished. He had read of women ascending to the skies in balloons, and descending to the depths of the sea in bells; but for a woman to have entered the *sanctum sanctorum* of the Stock Exchange, and to know to a fraction the difference between 3 per cents red. and 3 per cents acc., and to be mistress of all the dread mysteries of scrip and omnium! it was what Uncle Adam in all his philosophy never had dreamed of, and Miss Pratt rose at least 5 per cent in his estimation. (II, p.294)

If anyone in Ferrier's novels is fully self-possessed, it is Miss Pratt, whose blatant disregard for 'the eyes of the world' which so trouble Bell Black (I, p.207 and elsewhere), gives Ferrier lots of scope for humour, nowhere put to better use than in her arrival at Rossville in a hearse, already alluded to in Section II.

In Destiny, the reader encounters a corresponding character in the figure of Mrs Macauley. On first view, she may appear to belong to a stock type of Scottish character to be found in many early nineteenth century novels: that of the Highland seer. In Christian Johnstone's Clan Albin

(1815), for instance, we find just such a character in Moome, and in John Galt's The Entail (1823), Mrs Eadie is another. Mrs Macauley differs significantly, however, from characters such as these in being, on closer scrutiny, much more down to earth than they tend to be. In terms of Ferrier's own previous fiction too, Mrs Macauley stands apart from the eccentric Miss Pratt of The Inheritance and Marriage's absurd Glenfern aunts, in that the comedy she provides is much more temperate.

Some of Mrs Macauley's pronouncements seem little short of ridiculous: for instance, at one point she waxes mystical about an invitation from Inch Orran to Glenroy, "I cannot say I like it. Three people invited, and for three days. There's something - I cannot tell what - in such an invitation" (I, p.164). Yet there tends to be more than a grain of good sense too in what she says; for example, when quizzed about the odd warning quoted above, it emerges that her apprehension may well be justified. As she goes on to point out, the invitation in question offers an exact repayment of Glenroy's own hospitality towards Inch Orran and therefore suggests Inch Orran is reciprocating in the most cursory way, rather than offering a true hand of friendship to his neighbour (and blood relation). Thus, while her warning has the semblance of mysticism, it is actually firmly grounded in common sense.

Far from just serving a comic turn, Mrs Macauley is seen to be an insightful and intelligent woman, one who has no

difficulty in discerning the difference between 'love and land' (II, p.74), unlike so many of Ferrier's less agreeable characters. Mrs Macauley serves as a kind of moral touchstone in the novel: characters' opinions of her provide something of an index to their own virtue. Thus, during the fashionable Lady Elizabeth's time at the Castle, Mrs Macauley is 'wholly banished' (I, p.40), whilst at other times she is more or less a permanent guest. On the one hand, she becomes the mother that Edith never had; on the other, Glenroy's attitude towards her is little short of contemptuous:

She was one of those happily-constituted beings who look as if they could "extract sunbeams from cucumbers".... She had also just as much religion as an irreligious man could tolerate; for her religion was a compound of the simplest articles of belief, and certain superstitious notions of second-sight, visions, dreams, and so forth, which sometimes afforded amusement, or, at any rate, always served for ridicule. (I, pp.37-38)

In each case, the kind of attitude a character holds towards Mrs Macauley reflects the character's own strength or shortcomings.

In Ferrier's novels, women who are very fashionable tend to be depicted as deficient mothers. Loraine Fletcher (1989) has considered Ferrier's novels as a critique of the upper classes, about whom the novelist is indeed scathing, something that is supported by her disparaging view of the mother and daughter relationships within that class. The importance of a fitting mother-daughter relationship is stressed in all three of Ferrier's novels. It is the mother's duty to serve as an appropriate role model for her daughter, and Ferrier makes much of the disastrous



possibilities of inadequate mothering. Lady Juliana in Marriage, when viewed from this point of view, may be seen as something of a victim (of fashionable life) herself:

Under the auspices of a fashionable mother, and an obsequious governess, the froward petulance of childhood, fostered and strengthened by indulgence and submission, had gradually ripened into that selfishness and caprice, which now, in youth, formed the prominent features of her character. (I, p.8)

Lacking an appropriate mothering role model, Lady Juliana in turn becomes a wholly inadequate mother; the pathetic and hopeless attempts of Mary to do her duty by this feckless mother reinforce the notion that this problem of mothering is self-perpetuating. It is a pattern which may, however, be broken by a foster/adoptive mother, a character-type to be found within all three of Ferrier's novels, though in neither of the later ones as prominently as Mrs Douglas in Marriage.

Ferrier's preoccupation with the subject of mothering is not restricted to those mothers with biological ties. All three of her heroines - Mary, Gertrude and Edith - are to all intents and purposes, motherless, though Edith is the only one whose mother actually died during her infancy. Mary's mother voluntarily hands her mothering role over to her in-law, Mrs Douglas, before departing for England with her other daughter (thus laying the ground for a comparison between the up-bringsings of the twin girls later in the novel), and Gertrude's mother, Mrs St Clair, turns out to be something of an imposter in that role, when it transpires that Gertrude's dearly loved nurse, Marianne

Lamotte, (who died when she was just nine years old) was in fact, her real mother. Anne K. Mellor (1993) writes,

The absence of idealised nursing mothers in women's writing suggests that the Romantic women writers wished to rest their concept of maternity not on biological essentialism, but on social construction. The most successful mother in Susan Ferrier's novels is an adoptive mother, Mrs Douglas in Marriage - although adoptive mothers can also be irresponsible, as is Mrs St Clair in Ferrier's The Inheritance. (p.82).

Gertrude differs from Mary and Edith (of Marriage and Destiny respectively) in that she is a young adult when she first appears in the narrative of The Inheritance. This, of course, is dictated by the plot inasmuch as the truth of her background is not uncovered until well on into the novel, but it is not only a plot device. It is used by Ferrier to explain Gertrude's intrinsically good character, which stems from the fact that she spent her formative years in the care of a loving mother. Her relationship with the woman she supposes to be her mother, Mrs St Clair, is necessarily, and to all purposes favourably, coloured by this. Though her birth mother's dissimulation was a result of straitened circumstances and a misconceived desire to do her best for her child, Mrs St Clair's motives are entirely selfish.<sup>45</sup> Try as she might, Mrs St Clair is unable to infect Gertrude with her inherent dishonesty, as Gertrude is the daughter of a loving, if misguided, mother. Before

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45. To some extent Marianne Lamotte succeeded in her endeavour: Gertrude has no reservations about admitting (before she knows that Mrs St Clair is not her real mother) "I loved her [Mrs Lamotte] as my mother" (I, p.253), little realising the literal truth of the matter, that Mrs Lamotte is her mother.

Gertrude's true parentage is revealed, the narrative voice explains her difference from her supposed mother:

There is something in human nature which recoils from an artificial character even more than from a faulty one, and where the attempt fails, the revulsion generally produces a character of a totally different stamp. (I, p.10)

This explanation, however, fails to take account of children who *do* turn out to be as artificial as their mothers - Florinda in Destiny, for instance, or Adelaide in Marriage. Gertrude's saving grace, it would appear, is the presence of a good and loving mother during the early years of her life, when the character to emerge in adulthood begins to be formed.

Mrs St Clair counsels Gertrude, 'a daughter's best friend must be her mother' (II, p.218) although their relationship does not reflect this sentiment at all. Mrs St Clair is frequently reduced to commanding her daughter, a situation that does not arise in the mutually respectful 'foster' mother/daughter relationships. Although, says Mrs St Clair,

"As Countess of Rossville you may wish to forget what is due to me as your mother, I will not relinquish my claims to you as my daughter; I *will* be obeyed!"  
(II, p.258)

The empathy between the heroines of Ferrier's other novels and the mother-figures who 'foster' them is clearly one of true friendship more than familial relation; they are not related by blood. Mrs Douglas adopts Mary in Marriage, and Mrs Macauley in Destiny fills much the same mother role when she temporarily 'adopts' Edith, providing her with a protector when she is disinherited: both 'mothers' serve as

examples of the sort of companionate relationship Ferrier appears to approve of between mothers and daughters throughout her novels. In contrast to these relationships, the friction between Gertrude and Mrs St Clair is very much like that experienced by a number of the real mothers and daughters of the upper classes, that is, women in fashionable life, in all three novels. When the narrative voice comments, 'There existed no sort of sympathy or congeniality of mind between the mother and daughter [Mrs St Clair and Gertrude] - there seemed little even of that natural affection which often supplies the want of kindred feeling, or similar tastes, and which serves to bind together hearts which no human process ever could have brought to amalgamate' (I, p.11), it might as well be commenting about Adelaide and Lady Juliana, or Florinda and Lady Elizabeth, between whom there appears to exist no 'natural affection' at all. Mary in Marriage tries hard to love her mother, but there is absolutely no reciprocity on the part of her fashionable mother, who had so easily shrugged off her infant daughter.

While mother-daughter relationships in their fashionable and unfashionable varieties lie at the heart of all three of Ferrier's novels, inhabiting the periphery are a number of spinsters, who are affected by the fashionable life to varying degrees. Some, like the eccentric maiden aunts in Marriage and Miss Pratt in The Inheritance lead happy enough lives, oblivious to the mores of fashionable society of the time. The spinster's lot, however, in Ferrier's depiction is generally not as happy as it should be. In

The Inheritance, for instance, Miss Becky Duguid's expectation of a carefree life as a spinster is thwarted by her selfish relations, who constantly take advantage of her, being unable to view her, in her spinster state, except as something useful to them:

Miss Becky Duguid, as a single woman, had vainly expected to escape the cares and anxieties of the married state. She had heard and seen much of the indifference or the ill-humour of husbands, of the troubles and vexations of children; and she thought from these evils I am at least free; I can go where I like, do what I like, and live as I like. But poor Miss Becky soon found her mistake. Brothers and sisters married; nephews and nieces sprung up on all hands, each and all expecting to be distinguished by Aunt Becky's bounty, while every parent levied the most unconscionable taxes upon her time and capabilities.... Such was Miss Becky Duguid, walking in the vain show of liberty, but, in reality, fettered hand and foot by all the tender charities of life. (I, pp.333; 342).

The quiet desperation of the spinster's lot has particular resonance, given Ferrier's own spinster status.

The hopeless future prospect for the portionless woman is another gloomy aspect of women's experience figured in all its awfulness by Ferrier, this time in Destiny. Edith's pitiable state, being doomed to financial dependence upon unprepossessing men is presented as a situation full of pathos:

[Edith] was, as may be supposed, profoundly ignorant of all those things in detail; but the simple fact that she was destitute was sufficiently strange and appalling.... The state of Glenroy's affairs had been communicated to Sir Reginald by letter. A reply was received, requesting that Edith would continue to consider Glenroy as her own, and make him her banker, until proper arrangements could be made to secure her future comfort and independence. But to remain at Glenroy, or receive pecuniary aid from Reginald, were both out of the question; and she therefore prepared to bid a long, a last adieu to the home of her youth - to her father's house. (III, pp.31-32)

While Ferrier stops well short of making any overt declaration on the rights of women in her novels, she does nevertheless build up a picture of the subjection of women, in a number of ways. In particular, there is a kind of cumulative effect of numerous slights at women by male characters in her novels. Ferrier's first novel opens with the Earl of Courtland's conversation with his daughter regarding his decision about her future husband, assuring her that,

Love was now entirely confined to the *canaille*; that it was very well for ploughmen and dairy-maids to marry for love; but for a young woman of rank to think of such a thing, was plebeian in the extreme!  
(I, p.6)

The Earl's snobbish argument, that love has nothing to do with marriage for women of rank, adds to Ferrier's decidedly *anti-fashionable* stance. In the lives of fashionable people, she shows, even something as important as marital union is debased to a matter of superficial show. Having made his view known to her, the Earl 'was too much engrossed by affairs of importance, to pay much attention to any thing so perfectly insignificant as the mind of his daughter' (I, p.8). Jokily punning on 'affairs of importance' (for Juliana's affairs of love were important to her), Ferrier makes plain the injustice of the Earl's position. Flouting the parental law however, Juliana makes an unhappy marriage anyway, in the name of love, a feeling she quickly relinquishes, in the manner of her fashionable up-bringing. Later in the same novel, her daughter abides by parental desire and also makes an

unhappy marriage: Ferrier does not pretend there are simple solutions.

When at the opening of The Inheritance Gertrude is born, the narrator remarks of the event,

Mrs. St. Clair... gave birth to a daughter, which, as Mr. St. Clair sensibly remarked, though not so good as a boy, was yet better than nothing at all.<sup>46</sup>  
(I, p.5)

In Destiny too, the subordinate role of women is established from early on, Glenroy securing a tutor for the nephew in his care, yet although 'a governess was talked of for [his daughter] Edith... that was such a secondary consideration that Glenroy could not be troubled to make any exertion to procure one' (I, pp.36-37). Later his declaration 'that there ought to be an Act of Parliament to prevent women from travelling' (II, p.118) on the one hand is uncomplicatedly amusing, on the other, however, it reinforces this cumulative build up of anti-female bias. Ferrier clear-sightedly holds up a mirror to the prevailing attitudes to women in the time in which she wrote: she shows that the proper sphere of women is conceptualised very differently by different kinds of characters. Later in Destiny Edith narrowly escapes financial dependence upon Reginald, another character who harbours a thoroughly low opinion of women, as he makes clear when he utterly rejects Edith's advice regarding his marriage:

"Excuse me," he replied impatiently; "but women cannot possibly judge of those things. They may be of use to

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46. A sentiment which recalls Mary Brunton's Mr Percy remarking about his daughter, 'It is a confounded pity she is a girl' (Discipline, I, p.11).

one another in the way of advice, and if you will take up your residence with us, I am convinced you might be of service to Florinda." (III, p.308)

Finally, when Lord Rossville in The Inheritance makes the speech quoted below, the reader solely amused by his monotonous pedantry misses a shiver of terror that this kind of admonishment might induce in the contemporary woman reader. He angrily reproves Gertrude for having strolled out one morning unaccompanied:

"It was a maxim of Julius Caesar's, unquestionably the greatest conqueror that ever lived, that his wife must not only be spotless in herself, but that she must not even be suspected by others; a maxim that, in my opinion, deserves to be engraven in letters of gold, and certainly cannot be too early, or too deeply, imprinted on the young and tender female breast."  
(I, p.45)

In an age when women writers were considered to be teetering at the verge of their proper sphere by publishing their work, Ferrier's creation of a character who unfavourably compares the behaviour of his ward to that of Caesar's 'spotless' wife seems perfectly authentic: Lord Rossville's admonition of Gertrude is not as amusing as it may at first appear to the modern reader. The constraints placed upon young women of the day were positively rigid.

## V Conclusion

Whilst generally being afforded a place in Scottish literary history (more of an achievement than most of her female contemporaries), Susan Ferrier's achievement as a novelist tends to be devalued, critics taking exception to



her didactic tone, and failing to enquire beyond it. In the course of this chapter, some attempt has been made to counter the negative criticism her works have often received.

Far from writing novels solely concerned with documenting the glittering lives of fashionable people, Susan Ferrier concerned herself with debunking the myth, bringing the fashionable down to size, valorizing the unfashionable happy home life and exposing the unhappy fashionable home life. Distinct enough in themselves to be viewed as belonging to a different category to any of those distinguished in previous chapters, in some respects, her novels can nevertheless be seen to draw upon aspects of all the genres previously discussed here. The novels contain romantic and didactic strands, and appear to have been influenced by the courtesy tradition. The title 'novels of fashionable life' captures something of Ferrier's work without however seeming to do it proper justice. Ferrier's are superb, scathingly *anti*-fashionable novels, all with a feminist sub-text.

In Ferrier's novels, like those of many other women writers of her time, there are covert debates on various political issues, particularly those concerning women's lives; throughout all three, she interrogates the notion of women's proper sphere. She stresses the importance of a good education, which she presents as the only way by which an early nineteenth woman may enjoy a kind of liberation -

that of the intellect - while greater freedoms, such as financial independence, remain for the most part untenable (such was life for women at that time). Like Mary Brunton, Susan Ferrier takes a wry look at what becomes of women who are denied the basic opportunity of an education and contrasts this with the advantages for women fortunate enough to receive one.

There is no doubt an element of nostalgia in Ferrier's representation of Scotland, but generally hers is a modern (for the early nineteenth century) woman's view of Scotland that has a serious forward-looking perspective. To cite just one brief example, when she writes of the contrast of the old and new towns in Edinburgh, the former 'reared its dark brow', as the latter 'stretched its golden lines' (Marriage, II, pp.111; 112), far from indulging in nostalgia, she is positively looking ahead to a bright 'golden' future.

Christian Johnstone, whose novels are the focus of the next chapter, like all the women writers considered thus far, presents huge difficulties when it comes to attempting a helpful genre classification. Like Ferrier's novels, but even more so, Johnstone's present the reader with a positively 'eclectic jumble of subjects'.<sup>47</sup>

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47. A phrase used by Loraine Fletcher (1989) regarding Ferrier's novels (p.60).

**CHAPTER SIX****CHRISTIAN ISOBEL JOHNSTONE: BREAKING THE BOUNDS OF GENRE**

## I Introduction to Johnstone and the Oscillating Critical Voice

Of all the Scottish women novelists under consideration in this thesis, Christian Isobel Johnstone (1781-1857), is probably the most prolific. Her writing career began in 1812 when she and her husband took over the editorship of the Inverness Courier; from that time onwards Johnstone actively pursued a literary career, through both journalism and creative writing. In later years, together with her husband, Johnstone founded a number of cheap periodicals in Edinburgh - including the weekly The Schoolmaster and the monthly Johnstone's Magazine which was in 1834 amalgamated with Tait's Edinburgh Magazine. Johnstone had been writing for Tait's for some time prior to the two magazines merging, at which point however, her role changed significantly, when she assumed the editorship to all intents and purposes, without, however, being formally appointed to that post. According to one mid-nineteenth century commentator,

She now formed a permanent connexion with [Tait's Edinburgh Magazine] and although not, strictly speaking, the editor, she had entire charge of the literary department, and was a large and regular contributor. She was to Tait what Professor Wilson was to Blackwood; the ostensible always, and, indeed, the real editors being the respective publishers.<sup>1</sup>

Apart from her formidable career in journalism, Johnstone was noted for the interest she took in new, up and coming  
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1. William Anderson, The Scottish Nation; or the Surnames, Families, Literature, Honours, and Biographical History of the People of Scotland, 3 vols, (Edinburgh: Fullarton, 1863), III, p.713.

writers, such as the radical poet Robert Nicoll (1814-1837), whose work was first published under her auspices.<sup>2</sup> Over and above all this, Johnstone wrote a number of books for young people as well as two novels for adults - Clan-Albin (1815), and Elizabeth de Bruce (1827), both of which are discussed in this chapter.<sup>3</sup> Her greatest publishing success, was with her very popular cookery book, The Cook and Housewife's Manual (1826).<sup>4</sup>

Christian Johnstone was a best-selling author in her own day, who was well-known and indeed celebrated amongst the Edinburgh *literati*. In an essay about Wordsworth, Thomas de Quincey sets Johnstone apart from other women writers of the time, such as Joanna Baillie and Mary Russell Mitford, who, for all their expertise in authorship, he claims wrote

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2. In the Centenary Edition of Robert Nicoll, Poems and Lyrics: with a Memoir of the Author (first published, Edinburgh: 1835; Centenary Edition, Paisley: Gardner, 1914) a 'slightly abridged' form of Christian Johnstone's 'Sketch of the Life of Robert Nicoll', first published in 1842, is reprinted.
3. Clan-Albin: A National Tale, 4 vols, (Edinburgh: Macreadie, Skelly and Muckersy, 1815); Elizabeth de Bruce, 3 vols, (Edinburgh: Blackwood, 1827). References given after quotations in the text are to the first editions. Plot summaries of these novels are provided in Appendix III.
4. The Cook and Housewife's Manual was published under the pseudonym, 'Mrs Margaret Dodds, of the Cleikum Inn, St Ronans' - after the character in Scott's St Ronan's Well (1823). By 1858 some ten editions of this book had appeared, and its popularity continued for some considerable time after that. The most recent edition of the book was published in London by Rosters (1988).

mainly for pleasure.<sup>5</sup> Rather patronisingly, he has 'no doubt that the little cares of correcting proofs... would be numbered amongst the minor pleasures of life' (p.209) for women writers like them. However, he continues, 'Mrs Johnstone of Edinburgh has pursued the profession of literature - the noblest of professions, and the only one open to both sexes alike - with even more assiduity, and as a *daily* occupation' (p.209). In this respect, Johnstone does perhaps differ most greatly from the other writers considered in this thesis, in that she did not turn to writing simply as an intellectually stimulating pastime. As many women writers were to do in later years, though very few before her, Johnstone chose writing as a remunerative concern, one of the very few available by which it was possible for a woman to earn a decent living on her own merits.

When Johnstone's Clan-Albin was first issued in 1815, it was very warmly received by the critics. An early reviewer commends Johnstone's depiction of the Scottish Highland character, remarking,

Not only is she familiar with all the minutest details of the life led in these sequestered regions; but there is in the general tone a certain breath of Highland spirit, which lets us deeper into the interior of the mountain character, than the most laboured external delineation.<sup>6</sup>

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5. De Quincey's Works, 15 vols (Edinburgh: Black, 1862); II: 'Recollections of the Lakes and the Lake Poets: Coleridge, Wordsworth, and Southey'. Further references to this book are given after quotations in the text.
6. Anonymous review of Clan-Albin in the Scots Magazine, 77 (1815), 849-854 (p.850).

A year later, in The Monthly Review, a commentator wrote of this same 'well-imagined' and 'well-written' novel,

This novel has obtained a degree of reputation that is by no means inconsiderable, and it is not unworthy of some distinction.<sup>7</sup>

He goes on to laud the book for its 'moral advantages', which furthermore,

Are not limited to the mere innocent employment of reading, which may detain the mind from lower or worse occupation: but it may prove the foster-mother to many good and honourable feelings, in the same manner as the sickly and meretricious sentiments of much modern trash may produce results altogether the contrary. (p.84)

Moreover, he compares Johnstone's characterisation, not at all unfavourably, with that of Scott:

The Highland characters are drawn with a masterly hand, more especially that of the piper; and, although some native characters in "Waverley" may be more striking in particular points of view, probably no one is sustained throughout with more felicity than that of Hugh in the present work. (p.90)

More than a decade after the success of Clan-Albin, Johnstone's Elizabeth de Bruce was published, once again to no little critical acclaim. In the New Monthly Magazine, for instance, the reviewer begins with faint praise, if any, but ends up judging some parts of the novel to be worthy of Scott himself, perhaps the greatest accolade a critic could bestow at that time:

The work has many faults; but may perhaps boast still more beauties... is rich in traits of genuine character, and abundant proofs of the spirit and vigour of the writer in scenes that call forth his best powers. Thus the heroine is a character, whose genuine interestingness and attractions are often finely developed, and well sustained, even until the

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7. Anonymous review of Clan-Albin in the Monthly Review, 80 (1816), 84-91 (p.84).

close.... [The work has] no inconsiderable share of humour, and a few scenes not unworthy of the great master magician himself.<sup>8</sup>

These reviewers were by no means alone in drawing a comparison between works by Scott and Johnstone. The following dialogue appeared in one of the satirical 'Noctes Ambrosianae' series published in Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, after the issue of Elizabeth de Bruce:

SHEPHERD

Do you ken onything about Elisabeth De Bruce, a novelle, in three volumes, announced by Mr Blackwood?

NORTH

Nothing - but that it is the production of the lady who, a dozen years ago, wrote *Clan Albin*, a novel of great merit, full of incident and character, and presenting many fine and bold pictures of external nature.

SHEPHERD

Is that the way o't? I ken her gran'ly - and she's little, if at a' inferior, in my opinion, to the author o' the *Inheritance*, which I aye thought was written by Sir Walter, as weel's *Marriage*, till it spunked out that it was written by a Leddy.<sup>9</sup>

In a roundabout way, the proposal is thereby made that Elizabeth de Bruce ranks with works of Scott's, since it is deemed worthy of Susan Ferrier, whose work is in turn itself deemed worthy of Sir Walter Scott. Later still, Johnstone's entry in the Biographical Dictionary of Eminent Scotsmen also mentions her proximity in standing to Scott:

She wrote *Clan Albyn*... which was published anonymously at Edinburgh in 1815, and obtained great popularity. Sir Walter Scott's novels were already bringing Scotland into vogue, and several writers were

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8. Anonymous review of Elizabeth de Bruce in the New Monthly Magazine, part 3 (1827), 99-100 (p.99).
9. 'Noctes Ambrosianae No. XXIX', in Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, 25 (1826), p.781.



throwing themselves into the popular current; but of all the followers of the 'Great Unknown', none was received with greater favour than Mrs Johnstone.<sup>10</sup>

Johnstone's novels undoubtedly do stand up to comparison with Scott's in certain respects though they are not by any means simply imitations of his. Johnstone herself was painfully aware of the comparisons that might be made, and considered herself to be a far inferior novelist to Scott. In the Preface to Clan-Albin, she makes the following assertion:

In justice to the Author, it ought to be mentioned, that the first half of this Tale was not only written but *printed* long before the animated historian of the race of Ivor had allured the romantic adventurer into a track, rich, original, and unexplored, and rendered a second journey all but hopeless.<sup>11</sup>

Christian Johnstone did not simply make a 'second journey' in Clan-Albin, following another's tracks: her depiction of the Highlands is in its own way as rich and original as Scott's in Waverley. In this chapter her ingenuity and dexterity as a novelist is illuminated, demonstrating her interest to Scottish literary history. Prior to examining the novels themselves, however, it is pertinent to consider Johnstone's representation in twentieth century literary history and criticism.

Johnstone's name rarely appears in Scottish literary histories, which would be a real puzzle, were it not for

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10. Quoted from Johnstone's impressively long entry in A Biographical Dictionary of Eminent Scotsmen, 3 vols, ed. by Robert Chambers (Edinburgh: Blackie, 1847).

11. From the 'Advertisement by the Editor', which opens the first volume of Clan Albin, pp.i-iv (p.iii).

the fact that so many of her female contemporaries have likewise virtually disappeared from view in twentieth century critical works, as remarked upon variously throughout this thesis. It comes as little surprise to learn that from her high profile position in the nineteenth century, as 'one of the most esteemed of modern female novelists', in the present century her fame has dwindled to a mere occasional passing mention.<sup>12</sup> Johnstone, like more than one or two of the other authors under consideration here, provides the literary historian with a prime example of what until very recently seemed to be the woman's lot in Scottish literary history: great contemporary success followed by swift and almost absolute relegation from history after death.

The recently published A History of Scottish Women's Writing, in which she receives attention both as a novelist and journalist in separate essays, puts an end to her banishment from the history books and starts a much-needed process which may see her established in her rightful place.<sup>13</sup> Ralph Jessop paints a picture of Johnstone as a radical journalist in his essay in A History of Scottish

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12. Quotation taken from William Anderson, The Scottish Nation, III, p.713.

13. See A History of Scottish Women's Writing ed. by Douglas Gifford and Dorothy McMillan, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997) in particular the following essays: Carol Anderson and Aileen M. Riddell, 'The Other Great Unknowns: Women Fiction Writers of the Early Nineteenth Century' (pp.179-195); and Ralph Jessop, 'Viragos of the Periodical Press: Constance Gordon-Cumming, Charlotte Dempster, Margaret Oliphant, Christian Isobel Johnstone' (pp.216-231).

Women's Writing (1997), closing with a comment that the message in an article of hers on the Poor Laws is 'chillingly prescient of our own times' (p.228).<sup>14</sup> He also mentions her Clan-Albin, remarking that it,

Reveals something of the robust, worldly nature of her writing, a novel which begins with the death of a woman shortly after giving birth and with the down-to-earth concern about arranging to have a recently bereaved mother suckle the new-born infant - nothing as frank as this in the contemporary works of Jane Austen! (p.224)

In their essay in the same collection, Carol Anderson and the writer of this thesis also foreground Johnstone's radical political stance as a novelist.<sup>15</sup>

Prior to the History of Scottish Women's Writing, Johnstone's name hardly features at all in any of this century's Scottish literary histories, unlike the names of Ferrier, Brunton and Hamilton, who tend to receive at least a little notice. Her fascinating work as an essayist has previously been recognised by just a few critics. In 1983, for example, Odile Boucher published an essay, noting Johnstone's pre-eminence as a literary commentator. She remarks that it is regrettable no extract from Tait's Edinburgh Magazine was published in a recent book of essays on the Victorian novel in British periodicals, since in her opinion, that journal,

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14. The article Jessop refers to is 'Condition of the Labouring Poor, and the Management of Paupers in Scotland', Tait's Edinburgh Magazine, n.s. 7 (November and December 1840), 681-96; 749-60.
15. Carol Anderson and Aileen M. Riddell, 'The Other Great Unknowns' (1997), especially pp.187-189.

Merits a place next to the oft quoted essays and reviews of Fraser's Magazine, The Edinburgh Review or The Athenaeum... [and was] an organ of Radical ideas carrying on in Scotland the work of the Westminster Review of London.<sup>16</sup>

Johnstone's name crops up again in a more recent critical article in which Robert Morrison lists an essay of Johnstone's, entitled 'Day-Dreams' as one of a host of 'notable articles' published under William Blackwood's auspices at Blackwood's magazine.<sup>17</sup> Morrison does not, however, proceed to discuss this (nor for that matter many of the other 'notable articles' he mentions), instead he encourages modern readers to seek them out for themselves. Thus, in this context, Christian Johnstone really is no more than a name in a list. She also turns up occasionally in unpublished theses relating to Scottish Literature. For instance, her novels are considered, mostly favourably, in a thesis from 1980 in which it is noted,

Clan-Albin creates an unusual hybrid as Johnstone intersperses a typical 18th century novel plot with shrewd social observation. The plotting itself reveals a competence not uncommon among her

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16. Odile Boucher, 'The Criticism of Fiction in Tait's Edinburgh Magazine, 1832-1850', Studies in Scottish Literature, 18 (1983), 75-84. She refers to A Victorian Art of Fiction: Essays on the Novel in British Periodicals, 1830-1850 ed. by John Charles Olmsted (New York & London, 1979). The quotation here is from Boucher, p.75.
  17. Robert Morrison, 'Blackwood's Under William Blackwood', Scottish Literary Journal, vol. 22, no. 1 (May 1995), 61-65 (p.63). Johnstone's essay entitled 'Day-Dreams', appeared in Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, 22 (1827), 724-729.

illustrious contemporaries but her dramatised social conflict makes more interesting reading.<sup>18</sup>

Johnstone's interest in social conflict - particularly as dramatised in her novel Clan-Albin - is discussed in Section IV: The Radical Politician. In another unpublished thesis, some of Johnstone's publications are scrutinised for their socio-linguistic import.<sup>19</sup>

Outwith the field of critical works with a specifically Scottish remit, and in spite of her great interest as a radical writer, evident in both her essays and novels, Johnstone's work has received little notice in the many compendiums of women writers published in recent years, though she does merit a cogent, if short, entry in The Feminist Companion to Literature in English, where her Clan-Albin is credited with being 'both gripping and humorous'.<sup>20</sup> One critic who has recently published some interesting work on Johnstone's Clan-Albin is Katie

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18. David McKie, 'Scottish Fiction and Scottish Society 1800-1832' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Stirling, 1980), p.56. Further references to this thesis are given after quotations in the text.
  19. Lindsay Ann Hewitt, 'A Sociolinguistic Approach to the Study of Literary Dialect in the Work of John Galt and Christian Johnstone' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Glasgow, 1992).
  20. For instance, she is not mentioned in the Dictionary of British Women Writers ed. by Janet Todd (London: Routledge, 1989) or the Bloomsbury Guide to Women's Literature ed. by Clare Buck (London: Bloomsbury, 1992). She has an entry in The Feminist Companion to Literature in English: Women Writers from the Middle Ages to the Present, ed. by Virginia Blain et al (London: Batsford, 1990).

Trumpener, whose criticism is referred to at various points throughout this chapter.<sup>21</sup> She writes,

The genre of the national tale [is] reforged [by Clan-Albin], under the influence of Waverley and Guy Mannering. (p.266)

She places Johnstone at the heart of a tradition from which she had been lost for most of this century.

One reason why a writer such as Christian Johnstone may have slipped from notice in the twentieth century is the protean nature of her novels. Like that of so many of her female contemporaries, Johnstone's fiction proves to be very slippery when it comes to genre classification.

## II Generic Issues

Simple genre classification has proved a problem with the works of all the writers under consideration in this thesis, none of which seem to fit entirely comfortably into the available categories. Johnstone's works, likewise, defy categorisation, perhaps to an even greater degree. The influence of many genres may be detected in her novels, a topic which is explored below, but Johnstone's own views on novel-writing also shed some light on the matter.

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21. Katie Trumpener, Bardic Nationalism: The Romantic Novel and the British Empire (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1997). Further references to this book are given after quotations in the text.

Like Scott, and indeed several of the other women writers already discussed in this thesis, Johnstone took the opportunity afforded by a preface to address the reader directly. In the 'Advertisement' to Clan-Albin the reader learns something of the author's intentions in writing the novel:

[The tale] neither usurps the privileges of the moralist nor the preacher. It appears indeed to have merely the plain, direct character, and single-hearted purpose, of the old-fashioned novel, with no loftier design than harmlessly to beguile a few of those hours which can neither be devoted to business nor redeemed to wisdom. (p.ii)

This passage strikes a note that Johnstone was often to return to as a journalist, in the pages of Tait's Edinburgh Magazine. For instance in 1845 she was to write,

We could sometimes wish that Sectarians and Tractarians, Protestants and Romanists, and all sorts of theorists and controversialists, would leave the flowery domains of fiction to their original purposes, as the common pleasure and recreation ground of civilized communities, as places whence bitterness and jealousies are fenced out, and which are set apart for the graces and amenities of life.<sup>22</sup>

Yet for all her protestations of the novel's duty to entertain, rather than be used dogmatically, Johnstone was not averse to a little moralising herself. Her rationale for including discussion of political issues in her novels, is perhaps best expressed in her own words in Tait's:

We do not think any book worth perusal which does not either inculcate some useful moral, or tend to some general purpose. Let the epicureans of literature say what they please, Utilitarianism is the great

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22. Review entitled 'The Spring Novels' in Tait's Edinburgh Magazine, n.s. 12 (May, 1845), 299-310 (p.310); quoted by Odile Boucher (1983), p.81.

principle which, in this department, as well as in every other, must ultimately prevail.<sup>23</sup>

It would however be a mistake to view Clan-Albin, or for that matter Johnstone's later novel, Elizabeth de Bruce primarily as 'improving' books, say in the way one might Hamilton's The Cottagers of Glenburnie, in which whatever else the writer accomplishes, the motive of improvement is clearly evident. Johnstone for the most part couches any improving messages comfortably within dialogue amongst characters, allowing her vicariously to argue the issues which interest her and win the reader over to her point of view, without however resorting to simple dogmatism. In this way, she avoids the over-zealous sermonising often to be found in works by writers such as Hannah More and to some extent Elizabeth Hamilton.

A connection with the courtesy tradition is evident from the fact that in both of Johnstone's novels, the issue of suitable marriage is seen to be a major and appropriate concern for women generally. Caution against the allure of the reformed rake - central to Mary Brunton's Self-Control - is an important theme in Clan-Albin. Just as Laura Montreville was entreated to make an unsuitable match by her father in Self-Control, Monimia Montague in Clan-Albin is vociferously encouraged by her guardian figure to make a thoroughly unsuitable marriage simply on the grounds of her

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23. 'The Talent of the Aristocracy and the Aristocracy of Talent' in Tait's Edinburgh Magazine, n.s. 2 (August, 1835), 515-518 (p.517); quoted by Odile Boucher (1983), p.82.



suitors, Sir Archibald's pedigree. Although much of Sir Archibald's villainy - for instance, the attempted rape of a girl in Ireland (which only failed when he was apprehended by Norman MacAlbin), his theft of a valuable hunting dog, his resistance to the educational improvement of the troops - is unknown to Monimia's guardian, the Highland Clearances for which he is responsible are no secret. Nevertheless, her guardian has no hesitation in trying to persuade Monimia of the suitability of the match, advising her,

"Whatever little faults he may have, his aunt says, that a prudent, handsome girl like you, might make what she pleased of him. Besides he is to reform the moment he marries." (II, p.46)

Monimia, like Laura Montreville before her - though not having to overcome passionate feelings as Laura did - wisely resists. There are other admonitory references to ill-considered marriages in Clan-Albin, too, not least when Lady Augusta recounts her own sad history. Having no parental guidance, when she falls in love she consents to marry in secret, very much to her later regret, when her husband returns to his family and their infant child is lost. For a time she seriously contemplates suicide. Lady Augusta concludes her biography by pointing out 'the fatal effects of passions, however laudable, indulged in defiance of reason and prudence' (II, p.85). The other side of the coin - the pleasure of a happy marriage - is explored in both of Johnstone's novels, with the perfect match of Monimia and Norman amongst others in Clan-Albin, and in Elizabeth de Bruce, the happy pairing of Elizabeth and Wolfe Grahame, as well as that of the thoroughly eccentric

couple Effie and Gideon Haliburton, a marriage match made in Presbyterian heaven.

Johnstone's novels therefore do deal with issues pertinent to the courtesy genre, but these are not central to the novels, as they are, for instance in Brunton's works. With its male protagonist, Clan-Albin has no place in the courtesy genre any more than it has in the didactic category of The Cottagers of Glenburnie. Her novels might to some extent be considered under the categorisation of *thesis-novels*, a genre much praised by Tait's Edinburgh Magazine (i.e. Christian Johnstone herself), according to Odile Boucher (1983). The *thesis-novel* has been described as,

A didactic novel in which the resources of fiction are used to discuss and confirm a particular thesis or idea, concerned, for example, with politics, society, morality or philosophy.<sup>24</sup>

Johnstone's novels develop beyond this, however, since they expound a wide variety of theses, rather than a single idea, as is more often the case with thesis-novels, such as Harriet Beecher Stowe's famous anti-slavery novel, Uncle Tom's Cabin (1852). Rather than having the intention of attacking single political principles or philosophies, taking a wider perspective, it is possible to view Johnstone's novel Clan-Albin as having the central idea of highlighting social injustices in the late eighteenth and

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24. Martin Gray, A Dictionary of Literary Terms (Harlow: Longman, 1992), p.251.

early nineteenth centuries in a more general sense.<sup>25</sup> This stretches the remit of the thesis-novel out of all recognition.

The few modern critics who have considered Johnstone's novels have generally not applied themselves to questions of genre. David McKie (1980) comments that Johnstone's Clan-Albin is 'an unusual hybrid' (p.56), while Katie Trumpener (1997) places Clan-Albin firmly within the 'genre of the national tale' (p.266), a rather loose categorisation, which encompasses novels as different as Waverley and The Cottagers of Glenburnie. Though they comprise something of national novels and thesis-novels, Clan-Albin and Elizabeth de Bruce also owe more than a little to other genres, notably gothic and historical romance fiction. Just as Porter insisted upon the historical accuracy of much of her The Scottish Chiefs, Christian Johnstone makes certain claims regarding her Clan-Albin in the prefatory 'Advertisement' to that novel:

As it now appears, it relates wholly to another period of society; and its most striking characters and incidents are anything but fictitious. That high-born and hard-fated woman, who was driven abroad in early life by the ruin of her family and the misfortunes of her country, and who returned from France to an insular and solitary refuge among the humblest of that once powerful clan, whom her knowledge and her virtues long improved and blessed, is far indeed from being the portrait of fancy. (p.iii)

It is not however only in the Advertisement that Clan-Albin makes a definite connection with historical romance. In

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25. The social commentary/political perspective of Johnstone's novels is returned to in Section IV.

its plotting, the novel's debt is clear from its very opening, with the arrival of a mysterious young woman in a remote highland village, who gives birth to a son and then dies, from which point on, romance motifs abound in Clan-Albin.

Locations utilised in this first novel include gloomy castles and a Spanish convent; important letters are intercepted; characters include those staples of romance fiction, the wandering musician and the orphan hero, amongst others: all this is the very stuff of gothic novels. In Elizabeth de Bruce, Johnstone likewise makes use of a number of romance conventions, including mysteries over the true identity of some of the characters (not least Elizabeth de Bruce herself, who, it transpires, does not belong to the distinguished de Bruce family at all), people in disguise (one character resorting to cross-dressing in order to escape detection by his enemies), and a fair share of gothic locations, including the well-nigh obligatory dimly lit castles and churches. Like Ferrier, Johnstone draws on this genre quite designedly. In Clan-Albin, for instance, she has her hero imitate the gothic style of description when he relates his journey through a chateau in Spain to meet with Flora. The pastiche of the Gothic is very well managed:

By the time that I had followed old hobbling Andrea and his flaring torch across wide courts and lofty halls, and ascended flights of stairs, and descended others, and travelled round sweeping corridors, and heard the wind whistling through long galleries, and saw it waving old banners, and descended more stairs which led to a chamber as large as a church, gloomy as a tomb, and hung with ragged tapestry, I was quite in the mood of seeing sights, and hearing noises, -

trap-doors creaking beneath my tread, and boards opening behind the tapestry by a spring, and discovering stairs, leading the Lord knows whither. (IV, p.223).

Johnstone's characteristic humour is in good supply throughout Clan-Albin, nowhere more in evidence however, than in her amused critique of gothic/romance fiction. Much of the early action in Clan-Albin takes place on the island of Eleenalin, the traditional burial ground of the Chiefs of Clan-Albin and a place with sinister undertones for the superstitious-minded Highlanders. When Lady Augusta announces her intention to live there,

Her humble friends at first regarded her proposal of living among the spirits of her ancestors as something bordering at once on madness and presumption. Often at midnight dreadful screams had been heard to issue from the island, and often a pale blue light had been seen playing there, amid surrounding darkness. (I, p.40)

Johnstone wryly continues, 'Lady Augusta had now lived in Eleenalin undisturbed for upwards of thirty years'.

Again linking with the genre of romance fiction and establishing Johnstone's credentials as a Romantic writer - is the importance of landscape in her fiction. In Clan-Albin, the reader encounters a landscape in some respects rather like Ferrier's. Anne K. Mellor has identified two traditions of 'feminine sublime' which may be usefully considered in this context.<sup>26</sup> The first of these is the 'Radcliffean' type, grounded in the pleasure (rather than fear) with which heroines respond to magnificent

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26. Anne K. Mellor, Romanticism & Gender (London: Routledge, 1993). Further references to this book are given after quotations in the text.

landscapes. Mellor gives an example from Radcliffe's The Mysteries of Udolpho (1794) - 'For Emily St.Aubert and her father, the grandeur of the Pyrenees "soften, while they elevate, the heart, and fill it with the certainty of a present God"' (p.95). In regard to the women writers considered in this thesis, Jane Porter, not mentioned by Mellor, might be considered another case in point. The second tradition of feminine sublime marked out by Mellor is the category that perhaps better describes Johnstone's novels, and - as Mellor points out - is that to be found in Susan Ferrier's works. For writers such as Ferrier, Sydney Owenson, and Helen Maria Williams, Mellor comments,

Sublime landscapes are home scenery, the location of blissful childhood memories. Confronting magnificent mountains and lakes, their characters experience a heightened sensibility, not of anxiety, but of love, reverence, and mutual relationship... they represent [this experience] as a flowing out, an ecstatic experience of co-participation in a nature they explicitly gender as female. For them, this female nature is not an overwhelming power, not even an all-bountiful mother. Instead nature is a *female friend*, a sister, with whom they share their most intimate experiences and with whom they cooperate in the daily business of life, to the mutual advantage of each. (p.97)

Lady Augusta experiences the sublime beauty of the island she inhabits quite without the terror that often accompanies this sensation of the sublime on the contemplation of beauty in art and in literature. She is perfectly at home in Eleenalin, with the family memories it evokes in her. Throughout Clan-Albin this idea of sublime joy being experienced through the contemplation of the beauty of the Highland homeland is reinforced. For instance,

Myriads of stars were sparkling in a deep blue sky; which no vapour stained; and the thinness of the atmosphere gave a brilliancy to the planets, and a lustre to the moon, which might have rivalled their resplendence in a tropical climate. The surrounding scenery, now shrouded in universal white, was sweetly sleeping in the moonlight, save where a heavy mass of shadow marked the abrupt outline of the breaks and defiles of the mountains. Fantastic frostwork, pendant from every rock and shrub, glittered in the moonbeams like the enchanted creations of oriental fancy. (II, p.195)

Norman's sensitivity towards the landscape, and the epiphany of descriptions like the above, contrast strongly with the inability of other characters to appreciate the grandeur before them. Johnstone's use of landscape appreciation as an index to character worth predates that of Ferrier. Montague, a landowner in Clan-Albin, feels anything but at home in the Highland environment. The whole scene is alien to his sensibilities: not only does he fail to register the beauty of the surroundings, he feels intimidated by the indigenous population. He complains,

"Here, I cannot take a step for heath, and stubs, and rocks, and lakes:- dark hills closing around me, mid cows frightening me out of my senses, getting my stockings soiled, and my shoes wet quite through, among mosses and moors; and not a soul to be seen save some droll looking man with a short petticoat, who cannot speak a word of my mother's tongue, and may, for aught I know, be a Frenchman in disguise."  
(I, p.262)<sup>27</sup>

While romance and didactic fiction provide two strands of influence in Johnstone's novels, the legacy of writers such as Mary Brunton and Susan Ferrier is no less evident. Although the narrative in Clan-Albin mainly concerns the development of the novel's male protagonist, Johnstone's

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27. Johnstone's representation of Scottish society is explored in the following section.

particular concern for issues affecting young women is evident throughout both her novels; similarly, her attitude towards the fashionable life is no less evident and these topics are returned to in the appropriate sections below. The rich complexity of Johnstone's novels make them break out of the bounds of genre-classification. They are simultaneously like and unlike all of the women's novels discussed thus far.

### III Representing Scotland

Although Johnstone eludes ready classification, she is arguably of considerable significance in Scottish literary history for her depiction of Scottish life. In an innovative reading of Clan-Albin, Katie Trumpener (1997) argues that at the end of the novel, the Albin clan village, Dunalbin,

Becomes home to a new transnational British community. Where once a series of clearances sundered an ancient community forever, Scottish, Irish and English ex-soldiers and expatriates live in harmony. The clan of Albin has been shattered; a new Albion is born; and the genre of the national tale has been reformed, under the influence of Waverley and Guy Mannering, to depict the texture of emigrant and imperial experience. (p.266)

At the beginning of the narrative, Glen-Albin is cleared to make way for sheep and the old community there is disbanded for ever, the clan members making new lives for themselves in North America, and mostly refusing the invitation to return from exile when Norman MacAlbin later writes to them



as the incumbent laird. The 'twenty cottage smokes rising in Dunalbin' which Moome counts in 'the spring of 1810' (IV, p.337) do not in the main belong to Highlanders: repopulation of the glen has required influx from Ireland and England. Christian Johnstone in Clan-Albin envisions Scottish Highland life in the very recent past and documents the passing of an era.

In a manner resembling Scott, and perhaps drawing on Anne Grant's Essays on the Superstitions of the Highlanders of Scotland, with Translations from the Gaelic (1811), through a number of comprehensive footnotes, (not used ironically, like Ferrier), Johnstone delineates various disparate customs peculiar to the indigenous population of the Highlands, the sort of thing an in-comer like Montague might well find intimidating, simply due to a fear of the unknown. The female tradition of waulking, for instance, is described in full; and when the community sings a parting lament, 'We return, we return, we return no more!', in setting off from Glenalbin, a footnote informs,

This is a wild desponding strain, sung or played by the Highlanders on leaving their country. Verses expressive of local regret are adapted to this melody by the inhabitants of different districts. (I, p.140)

Clear division between Lowland and Highland cultures is highlighted later in the narrative when Hugh goes to Glasgow to sell jewellery for Lady Augusta in order to pay off debts incurred by friends of her family. He is immediately accused of theft by the Glasgow traders and has to return to the Highlands empty-handed; in the prejudiced

eyes of the Lowlanders, no Highlander could have obtained such jewellery by honest means.

While in Clan-Albin Johnstone concentrated on depicting the rural culture of the Highlands, touching on urban life only briefly, in Elizabeth de Bruce, the city plays a much more important part. The novel makes passing reference to a wealth of characteristics of early nineteenth century Edinburgh culture, including for instance, the popularity of literary reviews and other kinds of magazines, the resources of the Advocates' Library, the incorporation of trades guilds and societies, life for the inhabitants of tenements (as opposed to rural dwellings) and so on. In Clan-Albin Johnstone decried urban characters' mistrust of Highlanders; in Elizabeth de Bruce she gives voice to rural characters' fears about city-dwellers. For instance, when her husband stays out after dark, Effie Haliburton imagines the city streets roamed by murderers and body-snatchers,

"If Dr Munro, or ony o'thae villain colleginars clap a plaister on his mouth i' the dark, and make an atomy o' my Gideon! - Oh, what for did I let him gang wandering through this Sodom and Gomorrah of a town, his lee lane; for, with a' his clergy and lear, he has never a grain of motherwit to guide himsel'." (III, p.20)

Johnstone portrays the Highland character in Clan-Albin as belonging to a noble race, quite distinct from other people in Britain, not only through describing incidences of prejudice, and introducing stylistic nuances of characters' speech patterns (as detailed later in this Section), but also in authorial commentary, as for example in the following passage:

The simple, and unaccommodated lives of the inhabitants, their romantic virtues and enthusiastic attachment to the Chief, and the Clan;- every pleasing peculiarity of national manners, which then had marked them a distinct people, - a race which society in its progress seemed to have forgotten, - undebased by its corruptions, unimpressed by its usages, still bearing the lofty character of heroic times, - all combined to seize the imagination, and to interest the heart through its powerful medium. (I, p.47)

The peculiarities which had 'marked [Highlanders] a distinct people' as described in the first volume, are just distant memories by the end of the last. It seems unlikely that the 'lofty character of heroic times' will survive in the new incarnation of the clan. Highland culture by the end of the novel is no longer something that separates Highlanders from the outside world. The Highlands at the end of the novel *belong* in that modern world.

One of the ways in which Johnstone shows the modern world stamping its mark on Glen Albin is in her dealing with the contentious issue of religion in Scotland, a topic also taken up by various other women writers of the time as noted elsewhere in this thesis. Johnstone steers a difficult course but manages to maintain an interested but dispassionate stance throughout, gently poking fun at the pretensions of some of the different religious groups and amusingly describing the Highlanders' general indifference to such matters. The following passage, for instance, relates the Eleenalin inhabitants' supposed conversion from Catholicism to Calvinism and privileges the point of view of neither Buchanan, the staunch Calvinist, nor the Highlanders (both parties, however, managing to secure a share of the reader's sympathy):

Long arguments consequently ensued, or rather dogmatical assertions on the one side, and warm exclamations on the other. Moome and the Piper denied the imputation of Catholicism, for the Chief had converted the whole glen one Sunday morning by dismissing the priest, and driving them to the Presbyterian minister with a *yellow-stick*; yet they affirmed that sufferings in this life would abrogate future punishment, had no small reliance on "works", persisted in giving alms in sickness to purchase the prayers of the poor, and firmly believed, notwithstanding all Buchanan could affirm, that certain relics in the possession of Moome would cure all manner of diseases. (I, p.167)

Similarly, in Elizabeth de Bruce, Johnstone steadfastly declines to privilege one religious faction over another, consistently maintaining her distanced stance. Towards the close of the novel, Lord John de Bruce displays some discomfort over Aileen O'Connor's Catholicism, discomfort that is not, however, in the least shared by Elizabeth:

Elizabeth knew well that part of this liberal declaration was intended to console her on the death of her mother, an avowed and zealous member of the church of Rome. But this unfortunate lady had been more devoted to feelings of true charity than to dogmas of sectarian belief, and, though her daughter was grateful for every kindness, this was a subject on which her mind required no soothing. (III, p.379)

Johnstone presents a thoroughly modern, progressive point of view in regard to religion; as Trumpener points out, when the Clan-Albin women adopt Mary Fitzconnal, they

Cure her of religious intolerance, and fit her to marry one of their own. She is not asked to renounce her national heritage, only to live with those different from her. (p.217)

As well as documenting the declining Highland culture and demonstrating an unusually tolerant position regarding contemporary religion in Scotland, Johnstone uses dialect in direct speech to assist in her representation of Scottish character. As previously remarked, one

contemporary reviewer commented that Johnstone's piper character, Hugh, has more 'sustained felicity' than any of Scott's inventions.<sup>28</sup> An examination of the piper Hugh's speech patterns, suggests one characteristic that might have prompted this remark. In the following passage, for instance, Hugh describes the Glenalbin parish schoolmaster, George Buchanan. The reader is at once aware of the distinctive cadences in this character's speech, as well as in the content, something of Hugh's particular (Highland) preoccupations:

At the argument, as I am told, the parson is a mere joke to him... He will make you believe the world is all a notion; and that we just fancy that we hear, and see, and smell; then he holds forth on essences and spirits, (which shows there are spirits in the low country as well as in our own) - and the *genealogy* of vibrations and vibratiuncles, - which no doubt among the Saxons is a namely class. Then (by your leave) he use [*sic*] such strange words it would make you wonder to hear him, for the Gaelic nor the Saxon neither won't hold him again, he's off to the Hebrew and the Welsh in a minute; and tells you the name of every star that shines; and what the merry dances are made of; and how many miles it is to the moon, and how many barley-grains would go round her; and how the big bens were once all on fire. (I, p.101)

In Elizabeth de Bruce, Johnstone again denotes nuances of Celtic speech, this time with particular reference to Irish characters, such as Monica Doran. The following passage serves as illustration:

[Slattery] informed him that Dame Monica, with kind wishes, begged that he would not look at her, nor speak to her, nor seem, that night, to know her, for his own sake, and for the sake of those who were dear to him; that she knew whether he was going, and he would soon hear more of her and hers - and she bade

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28. Anonymous review of Clan-Albin in the Monthly Review, 80 (1816), 84-91 (p.90).

God keep him in this wild land - his heart from evil  
and his hand from blood.

Not a little surprised at the messenger chosen for the extraordinary message, which Slattery had evidently translated out of the bold figurative Irish in which it had been hurriedly sent, Grahame knew not what to resolve. (II, p.343).

It is not only the differences between speakers of different first languages that Johnstone points up in her novels, however. Johnstone's use of Scots dialect in her 'West Country Exclusives' (a series of sketches published in her Edinburgh Tales (1845-6)) is investigated in a Ph. D. thesis which sets out to explain 'the range of functions dialect serves: its role in creating the impression of verisimilitude and the development of characterisation, together with its wider thematic and stylistic functions'.<sup>29</sup> In her examination of the 'West Country Exclusives', Lindsay Ann Hewitt demonstrates that Johnstone had an acute ear for the Lowland Scots as spoken in the Ayrshire (West Country) region.

In Clan-Albin Johnstone distinguishes very little between any dialects other than Standard English and Highland English, the main difference being the more figurative use of language in the latter (rather than being expressed in the use of dialect words). One or two Irish characters are given short vernacular speeches, usually, as in the following passage, for comic effect:

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29. Quoted from the Abstract of Lindsay Ann Hewitt, 'A Sociolinguistic Approach to the Study of Literary Dialect in the Work of John Galt and Christian Johnstone' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Glasgow, 1992).

"I hope, friend, you don't intend to make your tea of that water," said Drummond, running to overtake his company and addressing himself *en passant* to a tall raw-boned swarthy figure, who filled a tea-kettle with its own lid, from a muddy pool before his cabin-door, in which many ducklings were dabbling. The Irishman heard that the accent was *foreign*, and with great nonchalance replied, - "Och, master, in this country, the thicker the water the stronger the *tay*."  
(III, p.354)

There is very little trace in Clan-Albin of any Lowland Scots dialects. It might even be said that Johnstone positively avoids the use of Lowlands Scots at some points in this novel, going as far as to 'translate' into a common form of spoken English for instance, the Lowland Scots 'I canna be fashed' catch-phrase celebrated by Elizabeth Hamilton in her The Cottagers of Glenburnie:

Hugh [was] a very beneficial example of industry, neatness, and arrangement; and almost charmed him out of the half-lazy, half proud - "I can't be troubled," - the national reproach from the banks of the Tweed to John o'Groat's House. (II, p.158).

In Elizabeth de Bruce, on the other hand, perhaps having over the years gained confidence in her writing abilities, and having seen novels containing quantities of Scots dialect frequently being published (for example, works by Scott, Hogg and Galt), Johnstone demonstrates a newfound relish for dialect Scots. The novel opens with a dialogue in vernacular Scots between two Edinburgh worthies, one Deacon Daigh and one Benjie Burlin, burghers returning home, well-oiled, from a guild meeting. A sample of Daigh's gossip serves to illustrate Johnstone's virtuosity with this particular strain of Lowland Scots:

"He [Mr ---, a great advocate] is for certain ane o' Luckie's clecking.<sup>30</sup> I was as near her lug as I am to you, sir, when he made the grand speech again' her that lost her the tierce plea wi' her step-bairns. 'The de'il sned the souple tongue o' ye,' quoth she, half laughing, as his gown ga'e us a wap when he gaed bye us into the robing room, sucking a sweet oranger, - 'gif my shears had been in my hussey-case yon morning, ye wad na hae played me this slippery trick;' for it's bruided, sir, though I ay thought it but a silly clatter, that the great Mr --- was like tonguetacked for the first half hour o' his life; but that has been weel made up to him in a wonderful speat o' speech ever since syne, the words bolt-bolting out, before the FIFTEEN on the bench, like sheeled pease frae a mill happer." (I, p.10)

Johnstone seems positively to delight in the use of Scots in Elizabeth de Bruce, sometimes employing it to great bathetic effect, rather than the simple comic effect of making vernacular speakers appear foolish, which she used in Clan-Albin. When the pompous Standard English-speaking Mrs Hutchen and her fashionably-educated daughter, Juliana, invite the eccentric seceding minister, Gideon Haliburton, to a party, Johnstone uses vernacular Scots to undercut their pretensions:

Lady Harriette... prevailed upon Mrs Hutchen to send Mr Gideon Haliburton an invitation to the great impending party; and as Mrs Hutchen and Juliana had lately learned that, among very great people like themselves, "*characters and oddities, originals and queer mortals, and lions,*" were of approved fashion, those ladies were happy to oblige their guest; and an "At Home" was accordingly dispatched to the Sourholes.

"What am I to make o' that pasteboard ticket, my wee man? What for need the vain woman have telled me she was "At hame?" said Gideon to the Whittret... "Ou, just write back - ye're glad to hear it, as she'll be the less fash to her neighbours." (II, p.21)

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30. Luckie Metcalfe is a *howdie* (midwife).



The Scots language lends weight to the Whittret's gruff rebuttal of the invitation.<sup>31</sup> Mrs Hutchen uses language according to a fashionable code, thereby excluding those who are unable or unwilling to decode it. Taking the part of a kind of everyman, the Whittret rejects participation in the social life of a fashionable elite, perhaps aware of the status Haliburton is likely to be accorded, that of one of the class of fashionable '*characters and oddities, originals and queer mortals*'. The Whittret's use of Scots, and Gideon Haliburton's too, notably using 'telled' and reading 'At home' as 'At hame', reinforce their down-to-earth worthiness. They use language to say what they mean, not as an affectation.

Like Susan Ferrier, Christian Johnstone is profoundly anti-fashion. This however, is just one aspect of what transpires to be a thoroughly radical attitude threading through her novels.

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31. 'The Whittret' is the name given to the privy counsellor of Elizabeth de Bruce's guardian, Monkshaugh. He was 'a dwarfed, wizzened, elvish being of the very smallest size of the human species in stature and girth, Laps and Esquimaux not excluded. A century before he might have been taken for Monkshaugh's imp or familiar.' (I, p.32).

#### IV The Radical Politician

In her barely concealed criticism of the upper class, Johnstone treads a similar path to that of Susan Ferrier and Jane Austen, whose satirical treatment of gentry characters carries with it the implication that this class deserve to retain their exalted rank only so long as they are worthy and capable of taking proper responsibility for those they govern. In the relationship between Lady Augusta and the other inhabitants of Eleenalin in Clan-Albin, Johnstone paints an innovative picture of correspondence between social classes. She shows Lady Augusta and one of her retainers, the nursemaid Moome, sharing some common interests and enjoying each other's society. At one point, they discuss oral literature together: the narrator comments,

In the Highlands there is but one sort of literature (if it may be so called) for the vassal and his Lord. Every class utters the same sentiments, clothed in the same words, and expressed in the same accent. There are no Miltons and Popes for the tasteful and educated; and ballads, "Proverbs" and "Seven Champions," for the vulgar. Hence an identity of tastes and attainments, which, however lowly the condition, elevates the intellectual being to the level of the highest; and induces the ennobling consciousness of equality with all that is really exalted. Though the beauties of Gaelic poetry are by no means quaint, or metaphysical, they do not always lie on the surface. In fine perception, and lively sensibility to a felicitous image, or a delicate *trait* of sentiment, the vassal may indeed excel his Lord, from having studied more profoundly that figurative, bold, and *epithetical* language, technically termed *deep Gaelic*. (II, p.23)

Johnstone's disparaging depiction of all but a few of the gentry generally in both her novels contrasts very strongly with the kind of ideal in class relations figured in the

friendship between Moome and Lady Augusta. Though Montague in Clan-Albin is something of a stock comic character - more than a little like some of the caricature figures Ferrier was to portray in her Marriage (e.g. the Glenfern aunts or Dr Redgill) - he is seen to be thoroughly negligent, a foolish man, and not at all worthy of the care of those whose livelihoods depend upon his management of the Glenalbin estate. His refusal of a slice of cake when visiting socially sums up his general feeble-mindedness:

"Not" added he, "that I doubt of the cake being very good cake;- so I hope you will take no offence on that score. To be sure it is natural for every man to prefer his own country, - but I assure you ladies I have eat very good cake in Scotland, let people say what they will. As to buttering toast, every nation has no doubt its own fashion; perhaps butter may be plentier with us than you." (I, p.258)

Montague's peculiar notions about the Scots are hardened by Johnstone into something much more dangerous in the person of the next landowner, Sir Archibald, in the same novel:

A man between thirty and forty; of fashionable appearance, and *formed* manners. In England he affected the Highland Chieftan; in the country the man of fashion, - one who knew *life* and loved to enjoy it. His history and character was that of hundreds in England; in the Highlands it was summed up in a few words;- "He has put out fifty smokes." (II, p.9)

The happy ending of Clan-Albin rests upon a message that is radical, if not revolutionary in tone, when the nature of the laird's role is completely over-hauled:

*Servitudes* and *thirlage* of all kinds, and the cheerless and listless exertions of occupation at the will of a superior, were forever banished from Glenalbin. Its Chief chose to be the friend of prosperous and active men, not the master of needy, abject, and desponding slaves. (IV, p.336)

Johnstone did not limit her criticism to the dehumanising treatment men received as vassals of immoral lairds; in

Clan-Albin she turns her attention to conditions in the British army, coming to judge this institution most unfavourably. She figures the hero, Norman MacAlbin, thoroughly repulsed by the degrading conditions suffered by men serving in the army. Determined to do what he can to relieve the situation, he decides to try to engage the soldiers' leisure-time attention with readings of 'improving' literature, such as 'select stories from the Cheap Repository, the Evenings at Home and the Popular Tales of Miss Edgeworth' (II, p.302). He does not attempt to shame them into his way of thinking, but instead, hopes to whet their appetites, planting a germ of self-improvement which the men may choose to accept or reject as they wish. His approach is much less strident than Mrs Mason's in Glenburnie and is thereby perhaps a little less jarring to the sensibilities of the twentieth century reader (as well as, presumably, to the soldiers whose interests he has at heart). He is well aware of the danger of thrusting his own opinion too forcefully and modestly sets aside his personal agenda when it is inappropriate to continue, as, for instance in the following passage, when the men have had enough of his moral tales:

The least indication of yawning from Ellis, or whistling from Pat Leary, (who sometimes forgot his manners), was warning to Norman to shut his book for the night. (II, p.302).

It is very telling that Johnstone has Norman's efforts to improve the troops thwarted not by the supposedly dullard minions themselves, unwilling to take the opportunity he is offering them, but due to the paranoia of men in promoted

ranks. One commander remarks to Colonel Grant (in charge of the regiment in which Norman serves):

"How should *scholars* and *philosophers* condescend to observe the trifling minutiae of regimental orders: leave those things to my ignorant brutes, and do you console yourself with commanding politicians and readers, - if they are not too enlightened to be commanded." (II, p.309)

Norman is thereafter forbidden by his superior to continue with his programme of enlightenment for the troops. His 'fostering' of the men in his troop echoes Norman's own fostering by the Glen Albin natives (a topic which is addressed in the following section) and Katie Trumpener (1997) suggests that,

Clan-Albin proposes the reconfiguration of patriarchal institutions such as the British Army... its traditional emphasis on conflict replaced or influenced by traditional feminine ideals of conciliatoriness, inclusiveness, and nurture. (p.218)

In addition to her critique of class issues, throughout Clan-Albin Johnstone draws the reader's attention to a series of live political issues, affecting Scottish life in the early 1800s. At the time of publication, some of the worst atrocities of the Highland Clearances (at Strathnaver in Sutherland) had recently taken place, and Johnstone leaves no room for doubt in the mind of the reader as to the rights and wrongs of the clearances when she writes of a similar event at Glenalbin:

The lease of Glenalbin had been for some months in the possession of a stranger, who was to cover with sheep that country where hundreds of human creatures had lived, and enjoyed life. The banishment of the last of the clan was now fixed and inevitable; and the tears and shrieks of the women, the deep and hopeless grief of the men, the wailings of feeble aged, and helpless infancy... formed a spectacle of woe which might have touched even the cold heart of him whose

selfish luxury had produced misery so wide spreading and extreme. (I, pp.125-6)

Johnstone also uses the consciousness of her hero Norman McAlbin to explore some of the more unappealing effects of the continuing Industrial Revolution, as for instance in the following description of the vista he surveys when he journeys through the Midlands:

Numerous smoky manufacturies... rose in this prosaic region, and... every stream polluted by the dirty puddle of some dye-vat or filling-mill, [he] regarded the "Mange-rotis" of the plains, as, at the warning of a bell, they marched to labour or refreshment, - a Highland feeling of contemptuous pity took possession of his mind... he recalled all he had formerly heard of the "division of labour" and the "wealth of nations" with an asperity which succeeding years softened down, but never wholly removed. (II, p.187)

Johnstone's political agenda is much less covert than that of her female contemporaries, writers like Hamilton, Brunton, and Ferrier, who tended to disguise their more pointed criticisms of modern society in order to remain - or at least to appear to remain - within their proper sphere. Being a literary critic herself perhaps gave Johnstone the confidence she needed to be more straightforward in her political commentary: the fact that she published her novels anonymously may also have had a bearing, giving her a 'cloak' to hide behind. Her liberal-mindedness is clearly evidenced throughout her writings, sometimes much more overtly than is the case with her novels. The title, True Tales of the Irish Peasantry, as related by themselves. Selected by Mrs Johnstone, from the Report of the Poor-Law Commissioners (1839) bears testimony to her political leanings, which were always in favour of the underdog, and often vociferously so - be it

the down-trodden, mistreated soldiery in Clan-Albin, or Ireland's miserable poor, as is the case of the True Tales... mentioned above, as well as in her Elizabeth de Bruce, in which the plight of the rebelling Irish is notably pointed up by Gideon Haliburton:

"But this hounding out of runagate sogers upon a miserable country, to slay, burn and spuilzie, is to me but a dark dispensation, - Papist land as Ireland is. Our ain brave auld Scotland, in her day of treading down and humiliation, felt this scourge, - when the red hand of the slayer was thrust into her peaceful bosom, - yea, the purple hand of bloody Cla---." (I, p.63)

Johnstone's political stance in real life was precious enough to her to bring about the end of at least one business partnership over the head of it: according to a near contemporary commentator, the Johnstones sold their half of the Edinburgh Weekly Chronicle because their political views were irreconcilable with those of their co-proprietor, William Blackwood, who was 'heart and soul with the Tories'.<sup>32</sup> Ralph Jessop (1997) quotes two extracts from Carlyle's letters in which he wrote of Christian Johnstone, the first deeming her worth 'half a dozen Cockney "famed women"' then,

Four years later in another letter from his London home to Tait, Carlyle again drew a broad comparison between London and Scottish authors in praising Johnstone's True Tales of the Irish Peasantry: 'Pray offer the good brave-hearted lady my hearty remembrances, good-wishes and applauses. - Radicalism, I grieve to say has but few such practical adherents!

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32. See Johnstone's entry in Robert Chambers, A Biographical Dictionary of Eminent Scotsmen.

Radicalism, when one looks at it here, is - a thing one had rather not give a name to!<sup>33</sup>

In some of her journalism, Johnstone's interest in political issues is much more foregrounded than it is in her novels, however throughout Clan-Albin, the reader is treated to glimpses of the 'real life' of the time of which she was writing. Important battles in the Peninsular War in which Norman MacAlbin fights in the British army, for instance, are specifically dated, and real war-heroes named:

It was now the 16th of January, that ever-memorable day, when the British army, goaded to desperation, like a lion at bay, turned on its false pursuers. It would be a waste of words to attempt any record of the triumphs of that day, when General Moore, by a death of glory, closed a life of honour and virtue.  
(IV, p.73)

In Clan-Albin, the reader also finds perceptive comments on more general historical developments. For instance, the colonisation of parts of North America by emigrating Scots and the positive advantages to be gained from this for Scots at home:<sup>34</sup>

The preceding winter [1807-8], which [Norman] had passed in Ireland, was one of great hardship over all the Highlands and Isles of Scotland. The crop had been scanty, the season wet, and the harvest very late... the produce of the *Transatlantic Glen-Albin* wheat, and Indian Corn, sent down the Mohawk and Hudson rivers, re-shipped at New York, landed at Fort William early in spring, and conveyed across the country by long trains of panniered little horses, nourished the people of Glen-gillian and the

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33. Ralph Jessop (1997), p.224, quotes from The Collected Letters of Thomas and Jane Welsh Carlyle, 25 vols, ed. by C.R. Sanders, K.J. Fielding, C. de L. Ryals et al (Duke University Press, Durham, N.C., 1970-97), VII, p.311; XI, p.234.

34. Interestingly Brunton also touches upon Scots emigrating to North America in her Self-Control.



surrounding districts while too many Highlanders suffered all the miseries of famine. (IV, p.97)

At the same time as presenting this kind of documentary style historically and sociologically accurate narrative, but on a more light-hearted note, Johnstone also takes the opportunity offered by her Clan-Albin to comment humorously on some of the less progressive developments in this period. For instance, she satirises the pointless 'improvements' of one landowner, Montague, who,

Insisted on the strangers walking out to view his improvements; and they were compelled to follow him. The improvements consisted chiefly of a poultry yard and piggery, a slight painted paling and wicket, that formed a strange contrast with the massive pile it meant to enclose. (I, p.270)

Montague's next plan for improvement is to whitewash his castle, an absurd idea that his companions understandably find highly amusing; as one wryly remarks, 'I strongly suspect that the first hard rain would for ever efface that superb monument of English improvement, - a white-washed castle' (I, p.271).

Johnstone's political agenda, apparent to the twentieth century reader, did not escape the notice of her contemporary readers. The reviewer of Clan-Albin in The Monthly Review passes the following comment:

Under this veil, he has attempted, and not without skill, to enforce many of his own sentiments; and, if some of these are rather more warm than considerate, yet, as they are invariably the expressions of a generous feeling, and are made to flow very naturally from the persons who display them, we should be

unwilling to exercise any critical jurisdiction to their prejudice.<sup>35</sup>

Given the use of the masculine pronoun, this reviewer was evidently unaware of the gender of the writer (Christian Johnstone published anonymously) and this perhaps goes some way to explaining his reticence in censuring her for the 'warm sentiments' she expresses in her novel. In her overt presentation of political issues, Johnstone is closer perhaps to the 'verge of her proper sphere' than any of the women novelists already considered. Her approach to issues of specific concern to women is similarly fairly radical for a woman writer of the time.

## V Feminism, Fostering and Fine Ladies

Johnstone took a keen interest in contemporary women's writing. She was responsible for the serial publication, The Edinburgh Tales (1845-46), in which more than half of the content comprises writing by women, including Johnstone herself, Catherine Gore, Mary Russell Mitford, Catherine Crowe and Mary Howitt.<sup>36</sup> When Marion Reid's long tract, A

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35. Anonymous review of Clan-Albin in the Monthly Review, 80 (1816), 84-91 (p.91).

36. The Edinburgh Tales, conducted by Mrs Johnstone, 3 vols (Edinburgh: Tait, 1845, 1846). The Edinburgh Tales were immensely popular, not only as a collectable serial (in which format the weekly and monthly parts sold up to 30,000 copies) but they were also a considerable success in their completed format, when bound together into three volumes. (See Johnstone's entry in Robert Chambers, A Biographical Dictionary of Eminent Scotsmen.)

Plea for Women, championing women's suffrage was published, Christian Johnstone reviewed it approvingly; it is interesting however, as Susanne Ferguson, the editor of a modern edition of the Plea puts it, that

[Johnstone] thought that a change in attitude resulting in women being trained to keep themselves instead of being obliged to depend on husbands for subsistence would do more for women than formal equality in civil rights.<sup>37</sup>

Though any feminist credentials Johnstone might have had would not of course have been termed such in her own day, it is nevertheless possible to detect something of a feminist agenda in her novels, in the importance she places upon the role of women in them. Though Clan-Albin might be termed a *bildungsroman*, charting the development of the male protagonist, Norman MacAlbin, Johnstone's interest in women's issues generally can be discerned from the fact that she foregrounds several women characters within the novel, most notably Lady Augusta and her retainer, Moome, as well as Monimia, who eventually marries Norman.

Many of the central characters in nineteenth century Scottish novels by women have lost their mothers, and are therefore being brought up motherless or by surrogates, with varying degrees of success, a topic which has been

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37. Marion Reid, A Plea for Women (Edinburgh: Tait, 1843); repr. with An Introduction by Susanne Ferguson (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1988), p.vi.

discussed in preceding chapters of this thesis.<sup>38</sup> Norman MacAlbin, however, has lost both of his parents at the very outset of the novel, his mother dramatically dying just after giving birth to him. He is nursed as an infant by Mary MacAlbin until the Clearance of the village, after which he is brought up in a household largely comprising women, with Lady Augusta and Moome each participating in elements of his parenting. Johnstone shows in Clan-Albin a heroic man being formed without a father or other ideal male figure to look up to and model himself upon; Norman's heroism stems from Moome and Lady Augusta, the two most important influences upon him in his formative years.

Woman was indeed the tutelary genius of Norman's wayward fate. Her kindness had preserved his feeble existence, fostered his infancy, and tended his childhood; she had been his earliest and almost his only friend, and from her lip of love he had imbibed those lessons, which would have told him to "drain his dearest veins," in protecting the meanest of a sex so sacred. In every felicitous occurrence of his life, Norman could trace the agency of woman, - and through so endeared a medium every blessing was to him twice blessed. (III, p.108)

Moome and Lady Augusta, despite their very different backgrounds, both have valuable lessons to pass on to the young Norman. Moome's warm compassion, her delight in traditional lore, her great skills in the art of storytelling, comprise useful lessons for rounding Norman's character. In the following passage, Moome spins tales for one of the village children:

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38. For instance, Mary Brunton's Laura Montreville and Ellen Percy, of Self-Control and Discipline respectively, Jane Porter's Lady Helen, of The Scottish Chiefs, the five girls - Belle, Becky, Betty, Babby and Beenie - in Ferrier's Marriage, and the Stewart girls in Hamilton's Cottagers.

She began to entertain her youthful auditor with many a marvellous, and awe-inspiring tale, of ghosts, wraiths, warnings, fair dreams, second sight, second hearing etc etc. For nearly eighty years Moome had been familiar with these supernatural appearances, and she now spoke of them with all the calmness of philosophy. No one could have a firmer conviction of everything that favours superstitious belief; but as no man is a hero to his valet, no ghost was an object of intimidation to Moome, and she descanted with calm seriousness, while Mary sat shivering with horror. (I, pp.25-6)

Rather like those of the spinster aunts in Susan Ferrier's Marriage, Moome's superstitions are gently parodied whenever they surface:

The very morning Sir Norman MacAlbin died, she had seen a favourite cow stretched dead on the green plat before her door, choked with a potato; and the day the clan was warned she had seen a surly strange dog chase her favourite white hen. (I, p.178)

Though Moome gives the reader (and Norman) cause for laughter on a number of occasions throughout the novel, on the whole her influence upon him in his formative years is shown to be a benign and useful one. From Lady Augusta, the lessons to be learnt are, as her name implies, of a much more august nature. From this foster-mother, Norman picks up something of his serious philosophical slant, later to manifest itself in his practical improvements for the inhabitants of Glen Albin. Lady Augusta's speeches throughout the novel are punctuated with serious reflections on a wide range of topics, from the inhumanity of trading in slaves, to the corrupt decadence of the French royal court prior to the Revolution. 'Luxury must be a very fine thing indeed,' she comments at one point, 'if the accumulation of wealth be an object of greater

importance to the welfare of states than a numerous, and above all, a *happy population*'. She continues,

I know little of the political interests of kingdoms but I would gladly think they are not incompatible with the happiness of men. I should be sorry to believe that in any country there could exist a difference between political prosperity and individual welfare, - relative ascendancy, and solid internal strength. (I, p.190)

Her influence upon the boy she fosters is very evident in the man he becomes: one who takes on the mantle of fosterer himself, of those for whom he feels responsible in army and civilian life - as soldier and laird respectively.

Johnstone shows that it is the agency of woman (in the shape of Lady Augusta, Moome and later Monimia) that is responsible for fashioning a modern thinking man, one who might be capable of reforming the army, according to his traditionally 'feminine ideals of conciliation, inclusiveness, and nurture'.<sup>39</sup> These feminine ideals are shown to be paramount, the very key to a harmonious future.

Through the wise and erudite Lady Augusta, Johnstone demonstrates something of the intellectual potential of women, given access to education. This is another theme that Johnstone has in common with several of the other writers considered here. Her interest in the topic of education - whether formally dispensed in the classroom or learned in the company of wise mentors - is clear, from the extent to which she foregrounds this subject in both her

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39. Katie Trumpener (1997), p.218.

novels.<sup>40</sup> Her general interest has already been implied in this chapter, in connection with Norman's attempts to enlighten the soldiery in Ireland (in Clan-Albin), but it is in the field of female education, a topic to which she repeatedly returns, that her views are of the most interest in the context of this thesis. These views are probably best expounded in Elizabeth de Bruce.

In her early years at least, the heroine of Johnstone's second novel has something of the natural upbringing recommended by Rousseau to bring out the natural goodness in the child, in its ideal unfallen state, uncontaminated by society (in his Emile (1762)). Indeed Johnstone alludes to Rousseau in this novel, with regard to Elizabeth, saying that her,

Musical tastes, which made so much of the enjoyment of her solitary life, were of Rousseau's third order. Her soul was instinct with melody - the murmurs of her infancy were musical, and the wild warbling of her dreams more touching than her most finished song.  
(I, p.108)

In one major respect at least, however, Johnstone's opinion does differ from Rousseau's, inasmuch as her view of the ideal education for Elizabeth is one that is proposed by the French writer as being suitable only for boys.<sup>41</sup> Before finally being taken under Gideon Haliburton's wing for some spiritual guidance and more formal lessons,

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40. Of course, outside the field of fiction, her editorship of The Schoolmaster journal over a number of years also makes plain her interest in this topic.

41. The demarcation between men and women as theorised by Rousseau is discussed in Janet Todd, The Sign of Angellica: Women, Writing and Fiction, 1660-1800 (London: Virago, 1989), p.117.

Elizabeth de Bruce is very much left to her own devices, with no harmful repercussions:

By the age of seven Elizabeth had a larger collection of old Irish and Scottish ballads, each to its own tune - and that often a very fine one - and of metrical and other legends, than any individual in the "Hillside parishes" excepting Frisel, who a century or two earlier might have figured as a troubadour, or a Harper at the least. The mill, the moss, the shelter of the shepherd's chequered grey plaid... and the "rockings" of the winter fireside, with a memory singularly tenacious for whatever she loved, all contributed to swell her traditionary stores.  
(I, p.95)

The appreciation that Elizabeth has for oral literature is shared by certain characters in Clan-Albin; in fact within the two novels, a natural liking for literature - whether traditional song, folk tale or so-called 'higher' writings - is a good marker of character worth. The intellectual stimulation Lady Augusta and Moome derive from literature (as previously noted) could hardly be further from the dull response of the English Lady Glanville to reading matter in general:

The plates of the dresses of the month, and the pages of the *almanachs* [sic] *des gourmands*, the only work she ever read; tho' all the world now reads, when asked if she had seen such fashionable poems and novels as obtained notoriety, - "She *had of course* seen them." (Clan-Albin, IV, p.105).

In Elizabeth de Bruce, Johnstone again pokes fun at the pretensions of characters who bogusly affect a predilection for literature, based upon fashion, rather than taste. A prime example is the case of Elizabeth's kinsman, Robert Grahame (Monkshaugh), who, 'scandalized at the shameful neglect of the little girl' periodically takes it upon himself to,



Fashion her manners, for which purpose Elizabeth was at sundry times invited to drink tea at his mansion; and in her eighth year was gravely presented with a copy of Gregory's Legacy, accompanied by a suitable exhortation. (I, p.94)

For himself, however, Monkshaugh enjoys a wide variety of reading matter:

That gentleman's own weekday reading was chiefly confined to the "Book of Common Prayer," the Almanack, and a System of Cookery, illustrated with plates and enriched by a treatise on carving. But the taste for polite letters had begun to revive in the fashionable circles of the Scottish metropolis, just about the period that he had flourished as a beau, so that he still retained a gentlemanly acquaintance with the names of Shakespeare and Mr Pope, and an intimate acquaintance with the popular tea-table miscellanies of the day, with the elegant papers of the Mirror and Lounger. He knew also that young ladies, as part of their education, ought to read the Spectator abridged and Clarissa Harlowe, together with Fordyce's Sermons. He even sometimes vaunted to Elizabeth of having once seen the "Ayrshire ploughman" in Bailie Creech's shop, in his celebrated top-boots, buck-skin breeches, and buff waistcoat. (I, p.110)

Since he retains a fine library (which he does not use), the literary-minded Elizabeth has free rein to read as much as she likes, though this has to be undertaken clandestinely, since her enthusiasm for literature is generally frowned upon by elders. Elizabeth's love of literature is however shared by her husband, Wolfe Grahame, and this common interest, offering lots of matter for discussion, is shown to add a comradely dimension to their relationship, which it can be inferred, does not suffer from the usual fixed demarcation between man's and woman's proper spheres.

During her adolescence, for some two years, Elizabeth de Bruce is placed under the tutelage of a fashionable governess appointed by Mrs Hutchen. Mrs Hutchen's own

daughter, Juliana, having had a much longer stretch under a similar governess, makes just enough silly appearances in the novel to allow the reader to draw their own conclusions regarding the 'advantages' of this kind of sophisticated education. Of the governess, the narrator comments,

Her understanding of duties was a fixed thing; so many hours a day to Italian, music and French, for so many guineas per annum, with a rigid and unyielding enforcement of that petty code of petty regulation for person, dress, demeanour, &c instituted in the fashionable boarding-school where she had first been a half-boarder and subsequently a teacher.

(I, pp.106-107)

Throughout the pages of Elizabeth de Bruce, Johnstone returns to a critique of 'fine ladies' that was first evident in Clan-Albin. Robert Grahame's adoring description of his mother (in Elizabeth de Bruce), for instance, ironically reinforces the narrator's earlier description of her as 'peevish, sickly, but doting' (I, p.27):

"'I am worn out, Robie,' was her speech to me the very day before her decease, as she sat on that settlee in full dress, her yellow negligee wi' the bugle stomacher and robings spread over her haunch hoop, triple ruffle cuffs, full frizzled and powdered toupee, wi' side buckles, laced head, embroidered high-heeled slippers, silver-fringed gloves, diamond clasp and ivory fan; wi' her work-bag, hussey-case and gold-rimmed spectacles beside her - for idleness was what she could not thole - 'I am worn out, Robie,' she said, 'but it will soon be over; and, while I tarry in the body, no-one shall mistake the household maidens for the leddy of Monkshaugh and Kippencreery Wester.'" (I, p.376)

Liberal-minded, educated women - like Elizabeth de Bruce and before her, Monimia Montague in Clan-Albin - have little in common with the likes of Robert Grahame's fine mother. In Clan-Albin, Monimia busies herself trying to find ways to best help the interests of ordinary folk living locally - at one point spending money intended for dresses for herself, on wool, since 'spinning and knitting

was expected to afford an humble domestic employment to the women and girls scattered over the district' (II, p.42); she is vindicated and much gratified later when she learns the stockings fashioned by these women have been traded by them to acquire materials they have more need of. Starting up cottage industries is seen to be very far from the norm for ladies of fashion in Clan-Albin, and indeed in Elizabeth de Bruce. In the latter, Lady Harriette Copley makes a very amusing speech (quoted below), affecting to defend fine ladies against any imputation of idleness, while simultaneously pointing up the trivial concerns of their everyday life:

"I defy Clarissa Harlowe herself, Lady Rentletree, to have got through half the business which I did when a leader, or even a simple follower of ton. The life of a char-woman is luxurious repose to that of a woman of fashion of all-work, who, to keep her place, must skim more volumes than a monthly reviewer - play more than a music-doctor - write twenty times as many letters as Pamela or Miss Seward - patronise artists - criticise literature - visit and be visited - see every thing - and know every body, were it only to say, she knows them not. Besides all this, she must wear shoes and stockings, and have her hair combed, as well as other females; nay must sometimes look over the dinner-bill - scold the housekeeper - even occasionally nurse a sick child." (II, p.279)

Throughout both these novels Johnstone stresses the very significant role women play in forming the characters of tomorrow's men and women (a role in which men are figured as wholly peripheral). On the one hand, this may seem fairly conservative, reinforcing the nurturing, stay-at-home view of women's proper sphere. On the other hand, however, these are the very attributes her male heroes aspire to, having received the benign influence of intellectually and spiritually sentient women. Both

novels, like Ferrier's, contrast modern, liberal-minded women with ladies of fashionable life, much to the detriment of the latter.

## VI Conclusion

Christian Johnstone's Clan-Albin and Elizabeth de Bruce are long novels with thoroughly complicated and in some regards, rather far-fetched plots. They were highly regarded in their own day (according to the evidence of the nineteenth century literary journals and biographical compendiums) and still have much to offer the present day reader. From the point of view of literary history, and Scottish literary history in particular, as examples of national tales, they are of some import.

As well as offering an intellectual woman's eye view of a number of general political and social issues of the day in which they were written, from the colonisation of North America to the slave trade, in her novels, Johnstone reflects on issues of great national significance, such as the Highland Clearances. The importance of intellectual substance of character is an idea reiterated throughout both novels, particularly foregrounded in her depiction of fashionable society. Furthermore, Johnstone investigates a number of issues of particular interest and importance to women of the day: issues such as female education and the role of women in motherhood, whether by blood or fostering.

Her conception of the proper sphere of women again tentatively presses back boundaries.

In these two novels it is possible to trace strands of most of the influences that shaped the fiction of the other women writers under consideration in this thesis. Perhaps one of the reasons that Johnstone has failed to appear in histories of Scottish literature, in spite of being one of the 'Eminent Scotsmen' of the nineteenth century, is that her work in some respects transcends genre and is thereby very difficult to fit into the existing frameworks.<sup>42</sup>

Christian Isobel Johnstone presents the Scottish literary historian with quite a challenge. Her prolific publishing output, encompassing editorial work, freelance essay-writing, fiction writing - both short stories and novels - for children as well as adults, pamphlet-writing and even cookery-writing, defies any easy categorisation of her work. Her output has elements in common with a myriad of writers, but its complexity makes it slide out of easy comparison with any one in particular. Straddling various categorisations, her novels positively break the bounds of genre.

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42. As previously noted, she has a sizeable entry in Robert Chambers' A Biographical Dictionary of Eminent Scotsmen (1875).

**CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION**

**AT THE VERGE OF THEIR PROPER SPHERE:  
EARLY NINETEENTH CENTURY SCOTTISH WOMEN NOVELISTS**

In the article from which this thesis takes its title, a commentator in The Eclectic Review reflects on the position in society of the woman novelist:

Few, we allow, are exposed to greater perplexities than a female writer; for even if she never really departs from her proper sphere, she is startled sometimes to find herself so near the verge of it, as to require the most vigilant caution. But surely, the danger should serve rather to increase her watchfulness, than to apologize for her temerity. Should she wilfully transgress, she must consent to be treated as an exile, outlawed in her native country and regarded with a suspicious and contumelious eye in the foreign land upon which she enters. Nor let such an one complain of privations necessary to the course in which she has volunteered. The pressures of the adventurer cannot be those of home. The enjoyments of such a female cannot be feminine.<sup>1</sup>

All the novelists who have been discussed in this thesis might well be considered adventurers, publishing novels in the face of some very hostile reactions, such as this. The adamant self-belief which this pursuit of publication suggests shines through in the women's various writings. Each of the writers has, to a greater or lesser extent, been, in the words of the reviewer above, 'outlawed in her native land' in a sense: none of them having been granted much approbation or space in the histories of Scottish literature to date.<sup>2</sup> Women novelists are figured in this review teetering at the verge of their proper sphere, but their situation might be better figured as the writers attempting to adjust the boundaries of that proper sphere.

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1. Anonymous review of Self-Control in the Eclectic Review, 8 (1812) 603-620 (p.618).
2. Susan Ferrier is something of an exception, as she has been singled out for particular note by some literary historians, although as is demonstrated in **Chapter Five**, much of the critical analysis of her work is apologetic, if not negative.

In the early nineteenth century context, the topic of differences between male and female experience and the representations of this in fiction was often discussed in literary journals, usually to the detriment of women writers. Remarks made in reference to Ferrier's works specifically, but encompassing women's writing generally in Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, serve to make the point.

In the following passage, the adventurer conceit is reiterated:

The arrangements of society among us are such, that women spend by far the greater part of their lives with women, and men with men; and seldom does it happen, that the characters of any considerable number, either of males or of females, is understood by a person of the opposite sex. Men, above all, are mysterious beings to women. They flatter themselves that they thoroughly comprehend us, and they do, indeed, seize, with great facility, on as much of our nature as is sufficient for their purposes. But, behind this there remains an immense and a highly interesting region, which is, and, we suspect, must always continue to be, untouched upon by the most adventurous of female explorers... the limits of their terra incognita are now much more contracted than those of ours.<sup>3</sup>

In one of the 'Noctes Ambrosianae' series, Tickler comments that Susan Ferrier's novels demonstrate a 'mature and perfect knowledge of the world', preceding this with the amusing parenthetical remark: 'God only knows where she picked it up'.<sup>4</sup> Amusing though it is, this remark also carries a serious charge. As has been shown throughout this thesis, women of the early nineteenth century were not supposed to be worldly; they were heavily culturally

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3. Anonymous review of Susan Ferrier's Marriage in Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, 3 (1818), 286-294 (p.286).
4. 'Noctes Ambrosianae No. LVIII', in Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, 30 (1831), p.533.



constrained. Their 'proper sphere' was the domestic one; worldly adventuring belonged solely to the sphere of men. Scottish women writers, like women writers elsewhere, used the novel to redefine the confines of their proper sphere, taking the opportunity the printed page offered them to express views normally culturally silenced due to their gender.

The writer has found genre classification to be a useful way of approaching the diverse works of early nineteenth century Scottish women novelists. The ease with which the writers have been pigeon-holed as 'didactic' contrasts sharply with the difficulty in finding appropriate genres within which to study their works most constructively. On the one hand, genre classification helps to point up significant differences between various works of fiction, disentangling writers who are often otherwise overlooked or indiscriminately lumped together; recognising the variety of genres within which these writers worked allows an appreciation of the very great range of material produced by Scottish women novelists in this period. On the other hand, genres necessarily impose their own limitations, often suggesting definite boundaries instead of imprecise overlaps between writers. The relationship between the fiction of all the writers considered in this thesis might best be imagined as a series of overlapping circles, each one substantially separate, but some proportion of it connecting with all the others.

In the course of this thesis, early nineteenth century women novelists have been shown to be of significant cultural interest. The women writers persistently challenge the role (or proper sphere), repeatedly set down for them by various commentators, who were often thoroughly patronising, as in the following case, also drawn from a review of a Susan Ferrier novel in Blackwood's:

Men shew themselves in the shocks and rude collisions of the world, and men paint this - Women tread upon the carpet, and they understand our gentle, and each others gentlest motions there.<sup>5</sup>

A few instances serve to illustrate ways in which the women writers considered in this thesis challenge the conventions regarding the proper sphere of the woman in their society. Jane Porter and Eliza Logan use their seemingly conservative historical romances to allow them entry to a debate unfolding amongst the (predominantly male) *literati* regarding the relationship between history and fiction. Elizabeth Hamilton, despite representing working class folk in a manner that is not wholly sympathetic, demonstrated that such folk could be prominently featured in novels, and thus paved the way for later novels of working class life. Her religious outlook was shared by Grace Kennedy, who promotes Methodism, a strand of religion which gives women a role of intellectual beings on a par with men, a theme which Margaret Oliphant picked up later in the nineteenth century. Mary Brunton foregrounds the often inadequate education women have to contend with and has her heroines study the supposedly 'masculine' disciplines of mathematics

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5. Anonymous review of The Inheritance in Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, 15 (1824), 659-674 (p.660).

and chemistry. Ferrier, like the others, an intellectual writer, debunks the myth of glittering fashionable life. Johnstone in Clan-Albin represents Scottish highland life from a modern-minded, unromantic point of view. In these and many other ways that have been considered in the course of this thesis, the women novelists opened up new vistas for themselves to explore, at least tentatively straining against the role prescribed for them by their culture.

Early nineteenth century Scottish women novelists countered the conduct literature prescription for the proper female sphere, suggesting other sometimes very alluring ways of being, to their contemporary mainly women readership. Their depiction of women protagonists who think for themselves, thirst for knowledge and are able to enjoy intellectual stimulation for its own sake, offers a kind of alternative conduct literature, one which places a high value upon women's self-fulfilment. Beyond the 'modern' characterisation of protagonist women in their novels, early nineteenth century Scottish women novelists challenged the notion that 'the auld ways are aye the best' in other ways throughout their writings.<sup>6</sup> For instance, some used the Scots language to characterise the spirit of the time in which they wrote. Elizabeth Hamilton for one had a great affection for Scots language, although the voice of authority in her novels is Standard English:

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6. In the words of a character in The Cottagers of Glenburnie (p.260).

together with other women writers of the day, she documents the passing of 'gude braid Scots'.<sup>7</sup>

The novelists discussed in this thesis add a different dimension to the 'great range of the national life' of Scotland that is rendered by Scott, Galt, Hogg, Lockhart and Stevenson.<sup>8</sup> Jane Tompkins describes texts by early American women novelists doing 'a certain kind of cultural work within a specific historical situation... expressing and shaping the social context that produced them' and it has been shown in the course of this thesis that the same is true of early nineteenth century Scottish women writers.<sup>9</sup> As feminist literary historians in the late twentieth century increasingly look to the writings of women to convey the bigger historical picture, novelists such as Porter, Hamilton, Brunton and their contemporaries, some of whom are discussed in this thesis, offer a fascinating, unfamiliar view into Scottish culture and the literary scene in the early nineteenth century, from the female perspective. As has been seen in the preceding chapters, contrary to their frequent representation in the histories as unrelievedly dull moralists, Scottish women

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7. Elizabeth Ogilvy Benger, Memoirs of the late Mrs Elizabeth Hamilton. With a Selection from her Correspondence, and other Unpublished Writings, 2 vols, (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme and Brown, 1818), II, p.20.
8. David Craig, Scottish Literature and the Scottish People 1680-1830 (London: Chatto & Windus, 1961), p.140.
9. Jane Tompkins, Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction 1790-1860 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), p.200.

novelists of the early nineteenth century demonstrate a range of spirited attributes in their novels. Even at the remove of nearly two centuries, their works have considerable appeal: they are often intellectually stimulating, sometimes mysterious and thrilling, frequently funny. They perhaps also have a particular potency for women, readers who share the writers' sphere, however proper it may be.

Scottish women novelists of the early nineteenth century belong to an overlapping parallel tradition to that of their male contemporaries and add a fresh dimension to the literary map of Scotland in the period. At the verge of their proper sphere as they undoubtedly were at the time, adventurous women writers such as these still have a great deal to offer the modern reader.

## APPENDIX I

List of Works by Writers Considered in Thesis**Mary Brunton**

Self-Control: A Novel (Edinburgh: Manners & Miller, 1811)

Discipline (Edinburgh: Manners & Miller, 1814)

Emmeline, With Some Other Pieces (Edinburgh: Manners & Miller, 1819)

**Susan Edmonstone Ferrier**

Marriage, A Novel (Edinburgh, Blackwood, 1818)

The Inheritance (Edinburgh: Blackwood, 1824)

Destiny, or The Chief's Daughter (Edinburgh: Cadell, 1831)

'Maplehurst Manor' (outline sketches for undeveloped novel)  
(in Susan Ferrier 1782-1854 (Edinburgh: National Library of Scotland Exhibition Catalogue, 1982))

**Elizabeth Hamilton**

Translation of the Letters of a Hindoo Rajah; Written Previous to, and During the Period of His Residence in England. To which is Prefixed a Preliminary Dissertation on the History, Religion and Manners of the Hindoos (London: Robertson, 1796)

Memoirs of Modern Philosophers: A Novel (Bath: Crutwell, 1800)

Letters on the Elementary Principles of Education (Dublin: Colbert, 1801)

Letters on Education (Bath: Robertson, 1801)

Memoirs of the Life of Agrippina, the Wife of Germanicus (Bath: Robertson, 1804)

Letters Addressed to the Daughter of a Nobleman on the Formation of Religious and Moral Principle (London: Cadell and Davies, 1806)

The Cottagers of Glenburnie; A Tale for the Farmer's Ingle-nook (Edinburgh: Manners & Miller, 1808)

Exercises in Religious Knowledge (Edinburgh: Manners & Miller, 1809)

A Series of Popular Essays Illustrative of Principles Essentially Connected with the Improvement of the Understanding, the Imagination, and the Heart (Edinburgh: Manners & Miller, 1813)

Examples of Questions Calculated to Excite and Exercise the Infant Mind (Edinburgh: Walker & Greig, 1815)

Hints Addressed to the Patrons and Directors of Schools; Principally Intended to Shew, that the Benefits Derived from the New Modes of Teaching May Be Increased by a Partial Adoption of the Plan of Pestalozzi. To which are Subjoined Examples of Questions Calculated to Excite and Exercise the Infant Mind (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme & Brown, 1815)

### **Christian Johnstone**

The Saxon and the Gaël; or, The Northern Metropolis: including a View of the Lowland and Highland Character (London: Tegg & Dick, 1814)

Clan-Albin: A National Tale (Edinburgh: Macredie, Skelly and Muckersy, 1815)

The Wars of the Jews, as related by Josephus. Adapted to the Capacities of Young Persons (London: Harris & Son, 1823)

The Cook and Housewife's Manual; Containing the most Approved Modern Receipts etc (under pseudonym, 'Mrs Margaret Dodds, of the Cleikum Inn, St Ronans') (Edinburgh: for the author, 1826)

Scenes of Industry displayed in the Bee-hive and the Ant-hill (London: Harris, 1827)

Elizabeth de Bruce (Edinburgh: Blackwood, 1827)

The Students; or, Biography of Grecian Philosophers (London: John Harris [n.d.; National Library of Scotland suggests ?1827])

Diversions of Hollycot; or, The Mother's Art of Thinking (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1828)

Nights of the Round Table, or Stories of Aunt Jane and her Friends (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1832)

True Tales of the Irish Peasantry, as Related by Themselves. Selected by Mrs Johnstone, from the Report of the Poor-Law Commissioners (Edinburgh: Brown, 1839)

The Edinburgh Tales (including some work by others) (Edinburgh: Tait, 1845-46)

**Grace Kennedy**

The Decision; or, Religion Must Be All or is Nothing  
(Edinburgh: Oliphant, 1822)

Father Clement; A Roman Catholic Story (Edinburgh:  
Oliphant, 1823)

Profession is not Principle; or, The Name of Christian is  
not Christianity (Edinburgh: Oliphant, 1823)

Jessy Allan, the Lamé Girl, a Story Founded on Facts  
(Edinburgh: Oliphant, 1823)

Anna Ross, a Story for Children (Edinburgh: Oliphant, 1824)

Dunallan; or, Know What You Judge; A Story (Edinburgh:  
Oliphant, 1825)

Philip Colville, or, A Covenanter's Story (unfinished)  
(Edinburgh: Oliphant, 1825)

Andrew Campbell's Visit to his Irish Cousins (Edinburgh:  
Oliphant, 1829)

**Eliza Logan**

St Johnstoun; or, John, Earl of Gowrie (Edinburgh:  
Maclachlan and Stewart, 1823)

Restalrig; or The Forfeiture (Edinburgh: Maclachlan and  
Stewart, 1829)

**Jane Porter**

The Two Princes of Persia: Addressed to Youth (London:  
Crosby and Letterman, 1801)

Thaddeus of Warsaw (London: Longman and Rees, 1803)

Sketch of the Campaign of Count A. Suwarrow Ryminski  
([n.pub; n.d.], 1804)

Aphorisms of Sir Philip Sidney with Remarks (London:  
Longman, Hurst, Rees & Orme, 1807)

The Scottish Chiefs: A Romance (London: Longman, Hurst,  
Rees and Orme, 1810)

The Pastor's Fire-side: A Novel (London: Longman, Hurst,  
Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1817)

Duke Christian of Luneburg, or, Traditions From the Hartz  
(London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, Brown and Green, 1824)



Jane Porter (cont.)

Tales Round a Winter Hearth (with Anna Maria Porter)  
(London: Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown, and Green, 1826)

Coming Out and The Field of the Forty Footsteps (with  
Anna Maria Porter) (London: Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown and  
Green, 1828)

Sir Edward Seaward's Narrative of his Shipwreck and  
Consequent Discovery of Certain Islands in the Caribbean  
Sea: With a Detail of Many Extraordinary and Highly  
Interesting Events of His Life from the Year 1733-1749 as  
Written in His Own Diary edited [i.e. written] by Miss Jane  
Porter (London: Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown and Green,  
1831)

## APPENDIX II

Select List of Fiction by Scottish Women  
Publishing in the Early Nineteenth Century  
(excluding those listed in Appendix I)

**Blackford, Martha** (pseudonym of Lady Isabella Moncrieff Stoddart) (1774-1846)

The Scottish Orphans, A Moral Tale, Founded on an Historical Fact (1823)

Arthur Monteith: A Moral Tale... being a Continuation of the "Scottish Orphans" (1823)

William Montgomery, or The Young Artist (1825)

The Eskdale Herdboy; A Scottish Tale for Young Persons (1850)

**Brown, Elizabeth Cullen** (fl.1819-1832)

The Sisters of St Gothard (1819)

Passion and Reason: or, the Modern Quintilian Brothers (1832)

**Burgess, Mary Anne** (1763-1813)

The Progress of the Pilgrim Good Intent (1800)

**Bury, Charlotte Susan Maria** (1775-1861)

Self Indulgence (1812)

Conduct is Fate (1822)

Alla Giornata and Suspirium Sanctorum (1826)

A Marriage in High Life and Flirtation (1828)

The Separation and The Exclusives (1830)

Journal of the Heart (1830; 2nd series, 1835)

The Three Great Sanctuaries of Tuscany (1833)

The Disinherited, and the Ensnared (1834)

**Bury, Charlotte Susan Maria (cont.)**

The Devoted (1836)

The Divorced (1837)

Diary Illustrative of the Times of George IV (1839)

The History of a Flirt (1840)

The Manoeuvring Mother (1842)

The Wilfulness of Woman (1844)

The Lady of Fashion (1856)

The Two Baronets (1864)

**Campbell, Dorothy Primrose (1793-1863)**

Harley Radington, A Tale (1821)

**Craik, Helen (1750?-1825)**

Julia de Saint Pierre (1796)

Henry of Northumberland, or The Hermit's Cell (1800)

Adelaide de Narbonne, with Memoirs of Charlotte de Cordet  
(1800)

Stella of the North, or The Foundling of the Ship (1802)

The Nun and her Daughter (1805)

**Kelly, Isabella (Fordyce; afterwards Mrs Hedgeland)**  
(c.1758-1857)

Madeleine, or The Castle of Montgomery (1794)

The Abbey of St Asaph: A Novel (1795)

A Modern Incident in Domestic Life (1803)

**MacKenzie, Mary Jane (fl.1820-1829)**

Geraldine; or, Modes of Faith and Practice (1820)

Private Life; or Varieties of Character and Opinion (1830)

**McTaggart, Anne (Hamilton) (1753?-1834)**

Memoirs of a Gentlewoman of the Old School (1830)

**Porter, Anna Maria (1780-1832)**

Artless Tales (1793)

Walsh Colville (1797)

Octavia (1798)

The Lake of Killarney (1804)

A Soldier's Love (1805)

The Hungarian Brothers (1807)

Don Sebastian (1809)

The Recluse of Norway (1814)

The Knight of St John (1817)

The Fast of St Magdalen (1819)

The Village of Mariendorpt (1821)

Roche-Blanche (1822)

Honor O'Hara (1826)

Tales Round a Winter Hearth (with Jane Porter) (1828)

The Field of the Forty Footsteps (with Jane Porter)  
(1828)

The Barony (1830)

**Richardson, Caroline Eliza Scott (1777-1853)**

Hermione; or The Defaulter (1816)

**St Clair, Rosalia (pseudonym of Agnes Hall) (1777-1846)**

The Son of O'Donnell (1819)

The Highland Castle, and the Lowland Cottage (1820)

The First and Last Years of Married Life (1821)

Clavering Tower (1822)

The Banker's Daughters of Bristol, or Compliance and Decision (1824)

Fashionables and Unfashionables (1827)

The First and Last Years of Wedded Life (1827)

Ulrica of Saxony (1828)

Eleanor Ogilvie, The Maid of the Tweed (1829)

The Doomed One; or They Met at Glenlyon (1829)

The Pauper Boy, or The Ups and Downs of Life (1834)

**Scott, Lady Caroline Lucy** (nee Douglas) (1784-1857)

A Marriage in High Life (1828)

Trevelyan (1837)

The Old Grey Church (1856)

**Sheridan, Caroline Henrietta** (Callander) (1779-1851)

Carwell; or Crime and Sorrow (1830)

Aims and Ends and Oonagh Lynch (1833)

**Smyth, Amelia Gillespie** (c.1787-1857)

Tales of the Moors (1827)

Selwyn in Search of a Daughter and Other Tales (1835)

**Spence, Elizabeth Isabella** (1768-1832)

Helen Sinclair (1799)

Sketches on the Present Manners, Customs and Scenery of Scotland (1811)

The Curate and his Daughter (1813)

A Traveller's Tale of the Last Century (1819)

Old Stories (1822)

How to be Rid of a Wife (1823)

The Lilly of Annandale Tales (1825)

Dame Rebecca Berry, or Court Scenes in the Reign of Charles II (1827)

## APPENDIX III

## Plot Summaries of Novels Discussed

## Chapter Two:

## Jane Porter, Eliza Logan and the Historical Romance

(1) Jane Porter, The Scottish Chiefs: A Romance

The Scottish Chiefs tells the story of the exploits of the Scottish patriot, William Wallace. The novel opens with Wallace agreeing to look after a mysterious box at the request of Sir John Monteith, who gives him no clue as to what the box contains, but instructs him that it is to remain sealed until Scotland is free. Shortly after this, Wallace's wife, Marion is killed at the hands of a member of the English troops garrisoned at Lanark, at which point Wallace takes up arms and leads the revolt against the English.

Many notable Scottish dignitaries are represented throughout: the Earls of Ruthven, Badenoch, Mar and Buchan, amongst others. The action primarily happens in Scotland, taking in the captures of Dumbarton and Stirling and the burning of the barns at Ayr, but also spills over into France (where Wallace, now accompanied by Bruce, carries out a daring mission, rescuing Lady Helen Mar from the clutches of her abductor Lord de Valence), and England, where Wallace meets his fate on the scaffold at the Tower of London.

Subplots revolve around Wallace's relationships with various characters: his adoration for his wife, continuing unabated until his own death; his friendships with the young Bruce and Edwin Ruthven; his untainted love for Helen Mar. The strength of the love of Helen Mar and her step-mother, Joanna, for Wallace is a major focus throughout the novel.

The Scottish Chiefs ends after the Battle of Bannockburn, with a formal funeral for Wallace, whose body has been returned to Scotland for burial. Helen Mar throws herself prostrate upon his coffin and perishes there, just before the mysterious box which Wallace had guarded to his death is opened to reveal the regalia of Scotland, ready for the impromptu crowning of Bruce.

(2) Eliza Logan, St Johnstoun; or John, Earl of Gowrie

The novel is set at the end of the sixteenth century. A stranger by the name of Francis Austin, together with a woman, arrives at the Lady o' Loretto Inn, opposite Musselburgh on the Firth of Forth. He tells the innkeeper, Macsticket, who is a Presbyterian clergyman, that he is delivering a falcon to King James VI. Macsticket knows the King's falconer and arranges an introduction for Austin. Really he is a Jesuit, bent upon forwarding the views of the Pope in the Scottish court; his travelling companion is the Mother Superior at a nunnery in Rome. The Jesuit (as

he is referred to throughout the novel) has Macsticket's reprobate son Laurence under his influence.

The plot revolves around the intrigues of these characters and members of the royal court, including James VI, Anne of Denmark and their retinues. The love between the Earl of Gowrie and a lady in waiting to the Queen, Lady Agnes Somerdale, forms a major strand of the plot. The novel closes shortly after Gowrie and his brother Ruthven have been killed by the duplicitous King and his henchmen. Various narrative threads are tied up in the concluding pages: the Queen deems the King a hypocrite, but is unmoved by the deaths of Gowrie and his brother; Lady Agnes lives the remainder of her life in tranquility in a foreign abbey; Laurence takes over the Lady of Loretto Inn, lives the life of a sot and consequently dies one; the Jesuit goes on to take part in the Gunpowder Plot.

### (3) Eliza Logan, Restalrig; or The Forfeiture

A friend of Lord Gowrie's, Walter Logan of Restalrig, who played a peripheral role in St Johnstoun, is the protagonist of this novel, which opens in 1608 in a small town on the Berwickshire coast. In the first scene of Restalrig, a corrupt local notary, George Sprott is summoned to a lonely spot, where he is met by a stranger, obscured by darkness. The stranger alludes to the odium under which the King has lain since the death of Gowrie and his brother and the courtiers' failure to gain credit for a



conspiracy theory. Sprott is easily bribed into forging letters between Restalrig and Lord Gowrie, establishing the fact of a conspiracy against the King. Sprott himself is then betrayed and hanged for possession of the letters he had forged. Sprott's father and sister flee, and are later befriended by Walter Logan. Logan, still under the King's attainder, travels *incognito* to London where Sir Robert Carey arranges for him to receive the Queen's protection.

Another strand of the narrative concerns the various machinations undertaken by the villainous dwarf, Humphrey, and his brother, Lord Roger Algerton. The plot lines concerning Logan and the Algertons converge when Lord Algerton falls on hard times and has designs on the fortune of Rosa Grey, whose hand has been promised since childhood to Walter Logan. Various intrigues ensue. The blameless Annie Sprott travels to London with her father, who dies there; she later becomes Rosa Grey's maidservant, and falls in love with a footman. Humphrey Algerton arranges for the abduction of Rosa Grey to France, then returns to Scotland, where he murders his brother; shortly afterwards he himself dies on a sea crossing.

A twist in the plot allows Logan to coincidentally meet up with Rosa Grey in France, after his Restalrig title has been restored. They are later married for love, quite independently of their parents' earlier attempts to arrange their marriage.

### Chapter Three:

#### Elizabeth Hamilton, Grace Kennedy and the Didactic Tradition

- (1) Elizabeth Hamilton, The Cottagers of Glenburnie,  
A Tale for the Farmer's Inglenook

This novel tells the story of the revolutionary effect of one woman, Mrs Mason, upon the small Highland village of Glenburnie at the close of the eighteenth century. The plot is organised into two separate strands. A framing narrative concerns Mrs Mason's dealings with the Stewart family of Gowan-brae, beginning with her *impromptu* visit to their household en route to a relative in Glenburnie, when she tells her life story to one of the two daughters, Mary, and is snubbed by the other, Bell. Towards the end of the novel, Mrs Mason is invited to stay with the Stewarts again, when she learns of Bell's impropitious marriage and is coincidentally able to furnish the family with her own knowledge of the husband's lowly background: Bell is thus brought down to size. This narrative strand ends with Mary Stewart making a good marriage with a gentleman farmer.

The major narrative strand concerns Mrs Mason's stay in Glenburnie, first of all with her cousin, Mrs MacClarty and later with other, less recalcitrant inhabitants. Finding the village filthy and many of its people slothful, Mrs Mason sets about making comprehensive improvements all around her, from the moment she arrives. Mrs MacClarty steadfastly resists her cousin's efforts and while

improvements spread rapidly outwith her home, within it, everything carries on unchanged. Ignoring Mrs Mason's suggestion of fresh air and cooling drinks, Mrs MacClarty's husband dies in a stuffy room, attended by a charlatan apothecary. Her elder son is shot for deserting the Army; she quarrels with the younger one, resulting in making herself and her daughters homeless: they end up miserable, existing in very straitened circumstances.

Meanwhile, remaining in Glenburnie with the hospitable Morrisons, Mrs Mason's improvements continue apace: in the role of school mistress, she transforms the local children's manners, much to the delight of their parents and soon everyone is infected with the desire for improvement. People begin to take a pride in the appearance of their homes, clean windows shine brightly, carts are stored out of sight in sheds decorated with honeysuckle; a midden is transformed into a sweet-smelling flower garden and bee-keeping is introduced to Glenburnie.

Mrs Mason eventually retires to stay in a cottage on the Longlands estate, where her earlier career as a domestic had begun, leaving behind the now idyllic, industrious village of Glenburnie.

(2) Grace Kennedy, Father Clement: A Roman Catholic Story

This novel is set in the north of England in the early 1700s. The plot revolves around the actions of members of two families: the Clarenhams and the Montagues. The mothers of the two families, Mrs Clarenham and Lady Montague are first cousins, descended of staunchly Roman Catholic stock, but having married a Protestant, Lady Montague's mother brought her family up in the same faith. When the two women happen to settle in marriage not far from each other, and distant from other relations, their families are soon socialising frequently.

In the course of the novel, young Montagues and Clarenhams debate a host of religious issues, and Roman Catholic precepts are perpetually found wanting. Ernest Montague is at first beguiled and then repulsed by the grandeur of the Clarenham's private chapel, where the devout Catherine prays to the Virgin early every morning and is rewarded on occasion by seeing the expression of Mary in a painting turn into a smile; he later deprecates Catherine for undertaking what he views as self-seeking 'good works', caring for the sick in the parish in order to gain a place in heaven.

Meanwhile Catherine Clarenham's siblings, Basil and Maria acquire a Protestant bible from Ernest Montague and are soon delighting in praying to God in their everyday language, instead of the incomprehensible Latin of the Roman Catholic rituals performed by Father Clement and his

predecessor as chaplain to the Clarenhams. The Montagues also have a resident clergyman, one Dr Lowther, a Presbyterian minister and both he and Father Clement participate in the debates instigated by the young people, each attempting to convert members of the other's church.

The Presbyterian church prevails in the end, with only the fanatical Catherine Clarenham, whose religious visions Father Clement frowned upon, remaining an adherent to the Roman Catholic faith. The Calvinist Montagues never waver from their faith and are joined by Basil and Maria Clarenham. Finally, there is some doubt about Father Clement's own spiritual home, when on his deathbed he does not name the Roman Catholic church as his faith.

(3) Grace Kennedy, Dunallan; or Know What You Judge,  
A Story

Catharine, the daughter of Lord Dunallan, is persuaded as a child to agree to an arranged marriage to an unknown distant relative, in order to preserve her father's title: as the novel opens, she is trying to sleep, but anxious about meeting her husband-to-be the following day, for the first time as an adult. Catharine has heard various unpleasant rumours about his character, which she discusses with her cousin Elizabeth, but when Young Dunallan arrives, he appears to be above reproach, and Catharine finds herself very keen to please him. It is not

until the end of the novel that she learns the true stories which contradict the gossip and firmly establish his integrity. Soon after meeting, they are married, and the couple settle at Dunallan's Arnmore estate.

Hitherto Catharine had found her lifestyle rather tedious: she had overseen a few 'improvements' around her father's estate for her own amusement, but by the time of her prospective husband's arrival, she had run out of ideas by which to occupy herself. Dunallan gradually introduces her to the tenets of his Methodist faith, providing her with the religious backbone she requires in order to feel her life has a purpose. The religious ceremonies Dunallan conducts for his own household - including staff and family - at first seem ridiculous to Catharine, but later in the novel his religion wins her over completely and she herself deputises for her husband in the household ceremonies whenever he is absent. Theological issues are debated amongst Catharine, Dunallan and a variety of minor characters throughout the novel.

Underlying the ubiquitous religious theme in Dunallan is a thoroughly romantic narrative concerning the relationship between Dunallan and Catharine. She swings from her early dread of him to unabashed admiration; meanwhile he undertakes to marry her from a sense of duty, but comes to love her dearly. They take a long time to discover their true feelings for each other, due to various obstacles, not least because of an acquaintance tampering with their correspondence when Dunallan is away on business, leading

him to believe his wife does not care for him. Later Dunallan is shot by his former friend, St Clair, who had tricked him into attending an illegal duel and is subsequently arrested: he shoots himself while awaiting trial. Dunallan survives the injury and the novel closes with him thanking God, surrounded on his sickbed by various members of his family including his beloved wife, Catharine.

#### **Chapter Four:**

#### **Mary Brunton and the Courtesy Novel**

##### **(1) Self-Control: A Novel**

This novel concerns the events in the life of its young woman protagonist, Laura Montreville. Although it begins and ends in the Scottish Highlands, most of the narrative takes place in England. In the early pages, Laura's mother dies, leaving her with her elderly father; the pair take some solace from their friendship with a local matron, Mrs Douglas. While she is still in mourning for her mother, Laura is pursued by the reprobate Hargrave and much to her father's annoyance, refuses her suitor's marriage proposal, despite being in love with him, preferring to wait a time to see whether he is truly worthwhile. In the course of the following events he proves himself to be anything but worthwhile and Laura's reticence is found to be highly justified.

Mr Montreville discovers he is the victim of some bad business dealing in London and decides to go there to redress the matter. Having been told that her paintings may well be saleable, Laura travels to London with her father, planning to try her hand at earning money from her art work. Walking through the streets of London to painting sales rooms, she is accosted by strangers and then rescued by a gentleman, De Courcy, who falls in love with her. Unbeknownst to her, he buys her paintings, and makes up for a shortfall in the Montrevilles' rent when they move accommodation. When her father dies, she has no choice but to present herself to an unloving Aunt, Lady Pelham, who later plots against her niece with Hargrave. For some time, Laura is oblivious to De Courcy's feelings and continues to struggle with her own feelings towards Hargrave.

In the course of the novel, Laura has to overcome numerous obstacles, from holding off fraudulent debt-collectors to escaping from kidnappers. In a spectacular *finale* she ties herself into a canoe, before launching herself down rapids in Canada, in a successful bid to escape from abductors hired by Hargrave. Believing her dead, Hargrave commits suicide, but not before writing a letter to Mrs Douglas venerating the object of his passion and assuring her friend that the virtuous Laura was never sullied by him - thus allowing Laura to marry her true love, De Courcy.



## (2) Discipline

The heroine of this novel, Ellen Percy, loses her mother at a young age, and is thereafter brought up by her father, with the help of her mother's old friend, a prudent spinster, Elizabeth Mortimer. Miss Mortimer introduces Ellen to a Scottish gentleman by the name of Maitland, whom the young woman finds quite stuffy. The daughter of a successful businessman, Ellen is educated fashionably and despite the sensible ministrations of Miss Mortimer, enjoys a carefree, even decadent lifestyle. She is pleased to discover that Mr Maitland desires to marry her, and cares little when he announces his decision to travel away from her to the West Indies, despairing of her thoughtless behaviour. She is on the point of eloping with a reckless suitor, Lord Frederick de Burgh when her father is suddenly made bankrupt and commits suicide. Now penniless, Ellen is deserted by her rich friends, and goes to live with Miss Mortimer.

Miss Mortimer does not live long, and Ellen is soon on her own once more, this time however, she has more moral fibre and finds solace in her new faith in God. Although desperately in need of work in order to support herself, she finds she is equipped for very little in the employment stakes, and having moved up to Edinburgh on the suggestion of an acquaintance, can only find paid work as a governess to the rather unpleasant Boswell family. There, having nursed the child through a contagious fever, she is herself infected and whilst unconscious, committed to a lunatic

asylum by her jealous mistress, who suspects her of having an affair with Mr Boswell.

Ellen manages to discharge herself from the asylum, only to find herself lonely and penniless once more. She struggles along for a time, even taking in her former friend from her wealthy days, Juliet Arnold, now an unmarried mother: Ellen arranges for the father of Juliet's baby to take responsibility for his child when Juliet dies a consumptive.

Through acquaintances of the late Miss Mortimer, Ellen is introduced to one Charlotte Graham, who takes her for a visit to the family seat in the Highlands. There, Ellen is reunited with her former suitor Maitland, whose many fine qualities she has come to admire during her tribulations. It transpires that 'Maitland' is the assumed name of Charlotte's brother, the clan chieftain, Henry Graham. The novel closes with Ellen, now happily married to Graham and the mother of five hardy children, reflecting on her great good fortune.

### (3) Emmeline

[Emmeline was barely started when Mary Brunton died. The following comprises a plot summary of the novel fragment which was published posthumously.]

Emmeline, a married woman and mother of several children, falls in love with De Clifford. Her husband readily agrees to a divorce, and leaving her children behind, she marries her lover. Now settled at De Clifford's estate, Euston, Emmeline finds herself snubbed by one and all. She is not included in dinner invitations and is spurned at the local church. The tensions aroused by Emmeline's predicament lead to the couple drifting apart from one another soon after their marriage. At best pitied, at worst despised, Emmeline has a miserable existence, wandering around the estate alone. When the son of a local family falls from his horse at Euston, Emmeline takes him to the estate house and nurses him, but his mother, Mrs Villiers does not even thank her, being far too delicate to speak with a divorcée. Emmeline begins to despair.

## **Chapter Five:**

### **Susan Edmonstone Ferrier: *Anti-fashionable Novels* of Fashionable Life**

#### **(1) Marriage**

As the novel opens, a fashionable young woman, Lady Juliana elopes with her untitled lover, Douglas, against the wishes of her father, the Earl of Courtland. The couple go to live for a time at the Glenfern estate in the Highlands of Scotland, where Lady Juliana, cut off from her fashionable lifestyle, swiftly becomes thoroughly wretched. Her Scottish in-laws, including her husband's unworldly

spinster aunts, find Lady Juliana's attitude bewildering. Having given birth to twins, Lady Juliana returns to the metropolis with her husband, leaving one of her baby girls in the care of her childless sister-in-law. The timescale in the novel now leaps some nineteen years and in the remainder of the novel the central character is Mary Douglas, the daughter fostered by the Scottish branch of the family.

Mary travels to London as a young woman, full of high expectations about her reunion with her mother, but is severely disappointed in the event. Her mother remains as foolish a woman as she had been at the outset of the novel, and Mary is at a loss as to how to please her. Lady Juliana and Mary's twin sister, Adelaide take very little interest in their long lost relative, although she is fortunately befriended by her witty cousin Lady Emily. A Scottish acquaintance leads Mary to one Mrs Lennox, an elderly invalid, with whose son the heroine falls in love. Her feelings are reciprocated, but Mary wishes her mother to approve of their union, and before the couple may marry, she has to resist Lady Juliana's concerted efforts to make Mary marry without love, for money and status.

The couple move to Scotland upon their marriage, to live amongst the very people Mary's mother had previously found so exasperating. The fast and fashionable metropolitan life is rejected in favour of a much more honest, down to earth lifestyle.

## (2) The Inheritance

Gertrude, the heroine of The Inheritance, travels to Scotland with her mother, Mrs St Clair in the opening chapter of this novel. Gertrude's father has recently died, and the young woman is to be united with her grandfather, Lord Rossville, from whom her parents had been estranged since their marriage. Having grown up in France, largely in the care of another woman, while Mrs St Clair apparently took a long time to recover from her confinement, Gertrude has never before set foot in Scotland.

At the Rossville estate, Gertrude makes acquaintance with various friends and relatives, including Edward Lyndsay and Colonel Frederick Delmour. While her grandfather, Lord Rossville is consistently displeased with Gertrude's behaviour, relatives on her mother's side of the family, in particular old Uncle Adam Ramsay are rather charmed by her. A gossip visitor, one Miss Pratt, draws attention to the resemblance between Gertrude and Lord Rossville's portrait of Diana, for which one Lizzie Lundie, a local huntsman's daughter had modelled.

Gertrude falls in love with the frivolous Colonel Frederick Delmour, much to Sir Rossville's disgust: he had promised her hand to Delmour's elder brother, a Member of Parliament; the Delmours are Rossville's nephews. Frederick however disappears from the scene when he

believes Gertrude is to be disinherited, returning only when Rossville has died and Gertrude has come into her fortune. At different stages in the narrative, she and her mother are harrassed by a ruffian, who is obviously known to Mrs St Clair; however she refuses to speak of him to her daughter. Eventually Gertrude forces her mother to explain and learns the truth of her background: she is in fact related to this ruffian, Lewiston: her father is his cousin. Her mother, it transpires, is Marianne Lamotte, the woman she thought of as her nurse, who herself is the daughter of Lizzie Lundie. Gertrude refuses to become complicit in the fraud by which she became an heiress, and insists on making her new knowledge public. Having been renounced by Delmour, she turns to Edward Lyndsay for help.

Uncle Adam provides Gertrude with a home when she leaves Rossville to its rightful heir: ironically, this is Frederick Delmour, whose brother has unexpectedly died. In the very last paragraph of the novel, Gertrude however becomes the Lady of Rossville once again, when Frederick dies from a duelling injury, and the estate passes to his successor, who is none other than Edward Lyndsay, by now, as predicted by Miss Pratt early on in the novel, happily married to Gertrude.

### (3) Destiny; or The Chief's Daughter

The narrative begins with Sir Glenroy, a pompous Highland laird, proudly reflecting on his own lineage. He has

designs on the neighbouring Inch Orran estate, and hilariously attempts to ingratiate himself with its owner, in the hope of inheriting the land. Inch Orran, however, has other plans. Throughout the novel, Ferrier plays up the social comedy amongst Glenroy and his unattractive entourage, including his old friend Benbowie and the repellent minister, M'Dow. Glenroy has two children, Norman and Edith, the latter of whom he neglects mercilessly, taking no interest in her upbringing, which mainly falls to his old retainer, Mrs Macauley, and making no financial provision for her, his estate being entailed on male heirs. Norman dies unexpectedly, and Glenroy himself too, leaving Edith without any means of support.

Edith was betrothed to Reginald, Glenroy's inheritor, but she discovers he is in love with her step-sister Florinda and releases him from their engagement. For a short time she stays with the local Malcolm family, whose son Ronald left his home to seek his fortune on the sea, rather than give up his good name which he had been asked to do, in order to receive an inheritance from a family acquaintance. Although his family later believe him dead, he makes sporadic appearances in the narrative, purposely evading discovery in order to preserve his family's fortune. After a short time, Edith decides to travel to London, to seek out her maternal relatives; she is accompanied by Mrs Macauley.

In London, Edith stays with her own relatives and is reacquainted with Lady Elizabeth, her father's second wife, who is however, much too taken up with her own fashionable affairs to take an interest in her step-daughter. Mrs Macauley is instrumental in reuniting Edith and Ronald Malcolm, formerly childhood friends, and now eminently well suited to one another as marriage partners. Edith and Ronald marry and fulfil their destiny in the Scottish Highlands, far from the crowded streets and fashionable life of London.

## **Chapter Five:**

### **Christian Isobel Johnstone: Breaking the Bounds of Genre**

#### **(1) Clan-Albin: A National Tale**

The narrative begins in the 1780s, with the arrival in the Highland village of Glenalbin of a stranger, a sickly lady, who takes shelter in the home of one of the locals, shortly before giving birth to a son, when she dies. The baby is baptised Norman, after the last son of Macalbin and as an infant is brought up by a local woman who had lost her own child. Later, Norman's care is taken over by Lady Augusta Macalbin, the only known living descendant of the Albin clan, and her household, including the nursemaid Moome and the piper, Hugh.

When Norman is about 15 years of age, he is horrified to witness the Clearance of Glenalbin, when all the



inhabitants go to America, forced out of their dwellings by the new laird, Sir Archibald Gordon. The tenant of the Glenalbin estate castle, Montague, lives there with his widowed sister-in-law, the young and beautiful Monimia, with whom Norman falls in love. Montague is keen for Monimia to marry the reprobate Glenalbin laird and one strand of the narrative follows various intrigues undertaken in order to draw Monimia away from Norman.

Another narrative strand follows Norman when he leaves Glenalbin, having heard Lady Augusta's personal history, which includes an elopement with a French nobleman, followed by his desertion and the loss of their child, abducted by men in the pay of Lady Augusta's mother-in-law. Norman decides to make his own way in the world by joining the army and goes off to Ireland to join the Highland regiment garrisoned there. Seeing the terrible deprivations in the British army, he determines to carry out improvements, and introduces the dilatory soldiers to the pleasures of self-improvement through the appreciation of literature. Sir Archibald Gordon is also in the British Army and tries to thwart Norman's attempts to enlighten the men.

The fearsomely complicated plot is finally resolved after Norman returns to Glenalbin, following a tour of duty in Spain. It transpires that he is Lady Augusta's grandson and the true inheritor of the Glenalbin estate. The end of the novel finds Norman and Monimia happily married and

engaged in a series of improvements in Glenalbin village, now home to disparate friends from all over Britain.

(2) Elizabeth de Bruce

This novel takes place at the close of the eighteenth century, in various locations: an estate, not far from Edinburgh, belonging to the Monkshaugh family, in the city itself and in some small villages in Ireland, where one of the characters travels with the British Army, to put down the rebellion. The eponymous heroine, Elizabeth de Bruce is an orphan, who lives in the care of Mr Robert Grahame, also known as Monkshaugh. When the novel opens, she is the unacknowledged bride of Robert Grahame's nephew, Wolfe, who makes it his mission to unravel the strange mysteries connected with her birth, which are somehow connected with the burning of Cambuskenneth Lodge, an incident reported in the first pages of the narrative. On his way to Ireland, the mysteries deepen for him, when he first of all receives a letter from someone purporting to be Elizabeth's mother and then is confronted by a rebel Irishman masquerading as a female fortune-teller, who claims to be related to Elizabeth.

Meanwhile, Monkshaugh and his household are turned out of their homes by a new laird, Hutchen, and end up renting tenement apartments in Edinburgh. Here their next door neighbour is a lunatic. In fact, this mad neighbour turns out to be John de Bruce, Elizabeth's father. As a young

man, he had been driven to distraction by the love of an Irishwoman, Aileen O'Connor, to whom he was betrothed, but who married another. It transpires that Aileen O'Connor is Elizabeth's mother, who had sworn never to claim the child as her own, since this would apparently cause her brothers to forfeit the O'Connor estate. As Wolfe Grahame uncovers the truth about his wife's parentage, he himself is caught up in various intrigues, protecting Elizabeth's Irish family line from English marauders in the pay of the Army.

As well as these narrative strands concerning the major players, Elizabeth de Bruce contains a host of minor characters, in various walks of life - soldiers, servants, clergymen, business people, aristocrats and the *nouveaux riches* - and the novel positively bustles with the everyday goings on of such folk. Elizabeth eventually follows Wolfe to Ireland with her father where the couple are reunited and now happy to declare their marriage openly.

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