The Other Muir:
Willa Muir, Motherhood, and Writing

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Abstract

Research regarding Willa Muir (1890-1970) thus far has focused primarily on her relationship with her husband, Edwin Muir (1887-1959), and often values discussion of her novel *Imagined Corners* (1931) above critical analysis of her other writings. The 'myth' of absolute equality in her marriage is used to rationalise Muir's prioritization of Edwin's poetry over her own writing. Her contributions to Scottish literature are often downplayed. To address this gap, this thesis investigates Willa's decision to sacrifice her writing in order to be a mother and wife, and to support Edwin's poetry. The critical works of Kirsty Allen, Aileen Christianson, and Margery Palmer McCulloch have provided a crucial foundation upon which this thesis seeks to build. While this critical work remains pivotal for our understanding of Willa's contribution, as well as seeing her works within their literary, cultural, and social context, a more nuanced understanding of the Muirs as a couple and as literary partners remains elusive. In particular, the theme of motherhood provides a rich and constructive approach to re-examine Muir's life and work side by side.

This thesis begins with an investigation of 'Marmaduke', Willa's unpublished journal of her son Gavin's first years. This provides a useful starting point to address the anxieties and preoccupations of Muir's own experience as a mother, and establishes a framework for exploring the theme of motherhood in her other key literary texts. This analysis begins by exploring the essentialist viewpoint that informs her feminist polemic, *Women: An Inquiry* (1925). It then analyses her two published novels, *Imagined Corners* and *Mrs Ritchie* (1933). Special attention is paid to the absence of mothers in *Imagined Corners*, in contrast, to the 'monstrous mother' of *Mrs Ritchie*. Both analyses are grounded in biographical context relating to Muir's own experience as a mother, alongside the often difficult relationship with her own mother. These novels are seen as an escape from motherhood, allowing Muir a safe space to express her anxiety about the restrictions she faces in society as a woman and from the expectations of mothers. The thesis continues by exploring the autobiographical and historical elements of her unpublished third novel 'Mrs Muttoe and the Top Storey' (1940), which, in contrast to *Imagined Corners* and *Mrs*

Ritchie, presents the reality of Muir's life as a working mother. This chapter discusses the gendered imbalance of affective and emotional labour in the domestic setting. The thesis then moves on to investigate Muir's second feminist work, *Mrs Grundy in Scotland* (1936), which shows how the maternal figure of Mrs Grundy has been co-opted by the patriarchy to place women, and more specifically mothers, in a liminal space of being both feared and revered. The thesis concludes with a review of the role of supernatural and tragic mothers in Muir's final critical text *Living with Ballads* (1965). Throughout, her memoir *Belonging* and her journals inform analysis with autobiographical insight. Furthermore, close readings of the texts are supported with feminist literary analysis, the contextual background for which is provided by Winifred Holtby, Virginia Woolf, Harriet Hardy Taylor Mill, and Cicely Hamilton, and theories investigating women's labour and motherhood from Adrienne Rich, Arlie Russell Hochschild, and Helen McCarthy, to provide a deeper understanding of the image and role of mothers, and women generally, in Muir's lifetime.

By re-reading her work through the lens of motherhood, this thesis aims to reveal the continued relevance and significance of Muir as a feminist, Modernist, Euro-Scottish woman writer. This investigation of her work is situated within the currently increasing awareness of the invisibility that mothers' experiences have historically faced. It is this context that shows the necessity of studying writers like Willa Muir in the popular, public realm by voicing concerns around limiting gendered expectations that restrict women's access to the literary canon. This thesis studies a selection of Muir's published and unpublished works in order to highlight her range in artistic style and voice and in genre experimentation. By showcasing her use of observational journals, essay writing, fiction, satire, and autoethnographic non-fiction, this thesis aims to broaden an appreciation of Muir's abilities as a writer and to emphasise the multifaceted framework of the maternal.

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Appendix I: A Note on Willa Muir's Timeline

This document is the first comprehensive timeline of Willa Muir's life, writings, and historical context. It should be used to assist the reading of this thesis, showing connections between the extensive work that Willa completed while raising Gavin and supporting Edwin and the historical and literary events of her era. The author chose contemporary texts to include in this timeline to provide historical literary context. For instance, the inclusion of Woolf's *Orlando* suggests that discussions of gender and sexuality were 'in the air' in the literary circles with which Muir was familiar, providing a basis for the queer reading of *Imagined Corners* (1931) in chapter three of this thesis. Major historical events – including major battles and bombings of the World Wars – are included, alongside relevant changes in law and policy, many of which are nodded to in Muir's writing.

The timeline has been compiled using notes from various primary and secondary sources, including journals, letters, and Muir's own books. The archives at the University of St Andrews have been particularly helpful, though a more thorough investigation of these valuable manuscripts, journals, letters, and papers was hindered by the onset of the pandemic.

Where there is an asterisk (*) the date is uncertain.

Year	*Willa's Life*	*Willa's Work*	*Historical Context*
1848			Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*
1884			Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*
1886			Richard von Krafft-Ebing, *Psychopathia Sexualis*
1887	*15 May:* Edwin Muir born in Deerness, Orkney to Elizabeth (née Cormack) and James Muir	Narrative of *Mrs Ritchie* opens	
1889	*22 Feb.:* Elizabeth Gray, Edinburgh dressmaker, marries first cousin Peter Anderson, drapery shop owner in Montrose		Universities (Scotland) Act Henri Bergson, *Time and Free Will*
1890	*13 Mar.:* Wilhelmina Johnston Anderson born to Elizabeth Gray Anderson and Peter Anderson, 14 Chapel Place, Montrose		Mansfield House opens in association with Canning Town Women's Settlement, London James George Frazer, *The Golden Bough*
1892	*7 Jan.*: Basil Ramsay Anderson born		Women permitted to university degrees (Scotland) Sir James Donaldson, Principal of St Andrews University, admits women to classes and degrees
1893	Willa enrols at Miss Davnie's private school, Bridge Street, Montrose		
1894	*Jun.*: William (Willie) John Anderson born		
1896			Bergson, *Matter*

			and Memory
1898			T.F. Henderson, *Scottish Vernacular Literature; A Succinct History*
1899	Elizabeth Ramsay Gray Anderson born; dies of tuberculosis that year Peter Anderson dies of tuberculosis Basil and Willa enrol at Townhead Elementary School Board	*The Cheesedish*, script fragments, incomplete*	*11 Oct.*: Second Boer War begins
1900			Bergson, *Laughter*
1901	Muir family moves to Glasgow; Edwin leaves school		George Douglas Brown, *The House with the Green Shutters*
1902	Willa gains bursary to Montrose Academy		*31 May*: Second Boer War ends
1905-7	Willa wins English Medal, Angus Medal for Latin, Duke Medal for Greek		
1906	Willa passes Highers, receives Honours in English and Greek *29 Jun. 1907:* Willa graduates from Montrose Academy, ranks fourth in St Andrews University bursary contest		
1907-10	Willa studies Latin and Greek at St Andrews University; joins Classical Society and Students' Representative Council		*1907*: Bergson, *Creative Evolution* *1908*: Catherine Carswell wins annulment case for first marriage
1909	Best friend Emily's 'Mam', Mrs Stobo, slanders Willa; Emily and Willa fall out *Apr.*: Willa's grandmother dies *5 Nov.*: Willa argues 'strong principles conduce to narrow-mindedness' at Women Students' Debating Society	Willa's poem, 'Shadows', published in *College Echoes* under penname Pax; regular contributions to that publication thereafter	*Mar.*: First public meeting of the St Andrews University Women's Students Suffrage Society Cicely Hamilton, *Marriage as a Trade*
1910	Willa graduates with First		*10 Nov.*: Christabel

	Class Honours in Greek and the Humanities		Pankhurst discusses suffragette militancy at St Andrews' Town Hall
1910-11	Willa studies English Language and Literature and Modern History at St Andrews University; President of Women Students' Debating Society; co-founds Fabian Society; Awarded essay prize and Class Medal in English Literature	Willa serves on the *College Echoes* editing committee	National Insurance Act institutes maternity benefit
1911	*Jul.*: Willa graduates with First Class Honours in Classics; engaged to Cecil Wilmot Morrison; rejects summer scholarship in Rome *Autumn*: Willie Anderson enrols at St Andrews University (never completed)		*Nov.*: Dora Marsden coins term 'Freewomen' in her launch of *Freewomen* magazine
1911-12	Willa awarded Berry Scholarship, St Andrews University; Chair of Women's Debating Society *Jan. 1912*: Speaks at Fabian Society meeting	Returns to *College Echoes* editing committee *1912*: Narrative of *Imagined Corners* opens	*1912*: Henderson, *The Ballad in Literature*
1912-14	Willa works as Classics Mistress at Brancepeth Rectory Home School, County Durham		
1913	Cecil admits to affairs *Jul.*: Willa visits Montrose, attempts to reconcile with Cecil *Aug.*: Willie returns from army cadet camp; Willa and Cecil take Willie to James Murray Royal Asylum, Perth for 'hallucinations and delusions of persecution' (Knox, 184) *Autumn:* Willa ends engagement to Cecil		Dr Frederic Truby King, *Feeding and Care of Baby*

	24 Dec.: Willie discharges himself *27 Dec.*: Willie admitted to Sunnyside Royal Hospital, Montrose (compulsory) Edwin starts publishing in *New Age*		
1914	*Sept.*: Willie is released from Sunnyside		*28 Jul.*: Gavrilo Princip assassinates Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo; World War I declared
1914-15	Professor Wallace Martin Lindsay, St Andrews University, sends Willa urgent request upon losing male assistant professors to army; Willa becomes assistant lecturer in Latin, £40/year; undertakes research on educational psychology under supervision of Professor Edgar Edwin rejected from army		
1916-18	*Jul. 1916*: Willa awarded Carnegie Trust *Sept. 1916*: Begins research on child educational psychology at Bedford College under Miss Edgehill ('Mental association in children', and 'Analysis of the problems raised by sex education') *1917*: Visits St Andrews, reunited with Emily Stobo *May 1918*: Leaves Bedford (thesis incomplete)		*1 Jul.-18 Nov.*: Battle of the Somme
1917	Willa drafted to war work with Board of Agriculture		*Feb.*: February Rising (Russia) *2 Mar.*: Tsar Nicholas II abdicates throne (Russia) *13 Jun.*: 162 killed

			and 432 injured in German bomb raid (London) *Jul.*: National Baby Week, UK *24-25 Oct.*: October Revolution (Russia) *27 Oct.:* Vladimir Lenin takes power Virginia and Leonard Woolf found the Hogarth Press
1918	Edwin publishes *We Moderns* under penname Edward Moore Willa teaches Bryant and May Factory girls at Mansfield House University Settlement *Sept.*: Willa leaves Mansfield; starts as vice principal and lecturer in English, psychology, and education at Gypsy Hill Teacher Training College; meets Edwin at Mrs Stobo's House		Maternal and Infant Welfare Act passed *Feb.*: Women gain limited vote (UK) with Representation of the People Act *11 Nov.*: Armistice signed, WWI ends May Sinclair coins 'stream of consciousness' in reference to Dorothy Richardson's 1915 *Pointed Roofs* Marie Stopes, *Married Love*
1919	*24 Mar.*: Jean Leitch rejects Edwin Willa and Edwin become engaged; Willa resigns Gypsy Hill (end of summer term) due to *We Moderns* *7 Jun.*: Willa and Edwin marry at St Pancras Registry Office; three-day honeymoon in Sheringham; visit Willa's mother in Montrose; three-year lease at 13 Guilford Street, Bloomsbury; Willa teaches in cramming institution in Red Lion Square		The Treaty of Versailles signed; Germany loses colonies George Gregory Smith, *Scottish Literature: Character and Influence* Stopes, *Wise Parenthood* Sigmund Freud, *Totem and Taboo*
1920	*Jan.*: Willa appointed		Catherine Carswell,

	headmistress at Day Continuation School, £400/year *We Moderns* published in USA		*Open the Door!*
1921	Willa resigns Day Continuation School over curriculum disputes *The Freeman* (US weekly) commissions Edwin for 1-2 articles/month, $60 each *Jul./Aug.**: Visit Willa's mother in Montrose for a few weeks *31 Aug.:* Travel from Leith to Prague, reside there for eight months; meet Czech playwright Karel Čapek and his painter brother Josef	Willa trans. *Insects* by Karel Čapek	
1922	*Mar.*: Muirs visit and decide to move to Dresden, then to Hellerau; teach and work at A.S. Neill's school	Edwin discourages Willa from writing a verse drama about modern Noah Willa writes 'A Woman in Prague'	*Mar.:* Germans form secret treaty with Soviet Union; collaborate with USSR's military, rebuild defences, learn mobile armoured tactics *27-28 Oct.*: Benito Mussolini and Fascists march on Rome during general strike; Prime Minister Luigi Facta resigns; King Victor Emmanuel III appoints Mussolini British Empire at its largest, with more than 458m people over a quarter of the globe under its power Carswell, *The Camomile* James Joyce,

			Ulysses T.S. Eliot, 'The Waste Land' Hugh MacDiarmid coins the term 'Scottish Renaissance' *The Scottish Chapbook* founded
1923	*May*: Gerda admits her love for Edwin, who offers to return to Germany, she refuses him; Muirs move to Italy *Sept.*: Muirs move to Lucca *Oct.*: Muirs move to Salzburg *Dec.*: Muirs visit Badgastein, see feast of Saint Niklaus, move to Vienna's Jewish Quarter		Inflation in Germany; Neill's school closes *Oct.*: Adolf Hitler and Nazis attempt armed coupe, which fails; Hitler is sentenced to nine months in prison, writes *Mein Kampf* *The Scottish Nation* founded Mathilde and Mathias Vaerting, *The Dominant Sex*
1924	*5 Mar.*: Edwin reviews Sydney Schiff's *Prince Hempseed* (1923), begins long-term friendship *Freeman* stops publication, Edwin loses commission; Muirs move to Sonntagberg near Rosenau to work at Neill's new school *Jul.*: Neill's school moves to England; Muirs return to England, meet Schiffs in person; visit Montrose until Christmas, meet Christopher Murray Grieve/Hugh MacDiarmid Contact with Leonard and Virginia Woolf (Butter, 'Willa Muir: Writer', 64)	Martin Secker commissions Muirs to trans. *A Winter Ballad*, *The White Saviour*, *Poetic Dramas* by Gerhart Hauptmann, *Dramatic Works* Vol. III, $100USD each Willa writes 'The Brothers Čapek at Home'* 'The Bridge' (c. 1924) typescript short story 'Maggie Saunders' (c. 1924) short story manuscript	*21 Jan.*: Lenin dies, power struggle between Stalin and Trotsky ensues The British Empire Exhibition held at Wembley Stadium
1925	*Jan*: Muirs move to Penn, Buckinghamshire *Oct.*: Muirs move to	*Nov.*: *Women: An Inquiry* (Hogarth Press Essay Series)	Virginia Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway*

	Montrose *Dec.*: Willa, unaware of pregnancy, miscarries	Trans. *The Island of the Great Mother* by Hauptmann with Edwin	
1926	*Feb. to Oct.*: Muirs live in St Tropez *Oct.*: Muirs move to Menton	Willa starts writing *Imagined Corners* Begins trans. *Jew Süss* by Lion Feuchtwanger with Edwin 'Elizabeth', incomplete *Women: An Inquiry* released in USA	MacDiarmid, *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle*
1927	Gavin conceived at Menton Festival *May*: Muirs move to Surrey *29 Oct.*: Gavin Anderson Cormack Muir born at White House, Dormansland, Surrey	'Marmaduke' started Trans. *The Ugly Duchess: A Historical Romance* by Lion Feuchtwanger with Edwin	
1928	*Dec.*: Elizabeth Anderson has a heart attack, suffering from cancer	Edwin: 'My wife had finished her novel' (*An Autobiography*, 231)	Woolf, *Orlando* Radclyffe Hall, *The Well of Loneliness*
1929	*31 Jan.*: Willie Anderson dies of tuberculosis *Feb.*: Elizabeth Anderson dies *Mar.*: Muirs rent the Nook, Crowborough, Sussex	Trans. *Two Anglo-Saxon Plays: The Oil Islands and Warren Hastings* by Feuchtwanger, *Class 1902* by Ernst Glaeser, and *War* by Ludwig Renn with Edwin Willa trans. *A Roumanian Diary* by Hans Carossa as Agnes Neill Scott	*Oct.*: New York stock market crashes, Great Depression ensues Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*
1930	Willa and Edwin leave Gavin in Montessori School, go to French Riviera Satirical depiction of Muirs in Wyndham Lewis's *The Apes of God*	Trans. *Das Schloss*, *The Castle* by Franz Kafka (unsuccessful), *Success: Three Years in the Life of a Province* by Feuchtwanger, *The Life of Eleanora Duce* by Emil Alphons Rheinhardt with Edwin Willa trans. *A Childhood* by Carossa as Agnes Neill Scott	Carswell, *The Life of Robert Burns* Freud, 'Civilization and Its Discontents' Mahatma Gandhi begins civil disobedience (India) James Huntington Whyte opens art gallery and Abbey Book Shop, St Andrews; founds *The Modern Scot*
1930s	Muirs leave Labour Party to		Great Depression

	join SNP*		reaches UK and Europe
1931	*Aug.*: Willa hospitalised for three weeks for internal damage due to Gavin's birth	*Jun.*: *Imagined Corners* *5 Songs of Auvergnat done into Modern Scots* (Samson Press) Willa trans. *Boyhood and Youth* by Carossa as Agnes Neill Scott Trans. *The Romantic* and *The Anarchist* by Broch (*Sleepwalkers* trilogy), *After War* by Renn with Edwin	Nazis become mass movement, SA nearly 3 million in size *18 Sept.:* Japanese seize Chinese-controlled Manchurian capital, Mukden ('Mukden Incident')
1932	*May*: Muirs go to Budapest as Scottish delegates for PEN conference, meet Broch in Vienna *Dec.*: Muirs move to Hampstead	*Jun.*: Willa starts *Mrs Ritchie* *Oct.*: Chapter of *Mrs Ritchie* published in *The Modern Scot*; Trans. 'Aphorisms by Franz Kafka', published in *The Modern Scot* Writes 'Alas We Females! A Modest Proposal for the Solution of Many Problems by the Abolition of the Female Sex' with Flora Grierson (incomplete) 'The New Education', review of A.S. Neill's *The Problem Parent* (*The Modern Scot*) 'The Proposal. Chapter from a Novel by Hermann Broch' (*The Modern Scot*) Trans. *The Realist* by Broch (*Sleepwalkers Trilogy*), *Josephus* by Feuchtwanger, *The Inner Journey* by Kurt Heuser with Edwin	Carswell, *The Savage Pilgrimage* Nazis win majority in German parliament Hunger Marches (UK)
1933	*May*: Muirs go to PEN conference in Dubrovnik	*Jul.*: *Mrs Ritchie* Trans. *The Great Wall*	*30 Jan.*: President Hindenberg

	Aug.: Gavin hit by a car, breaks leg *Sept.*: Muirs move to Orkney for Gavin's recovery, hire Hilde Weissenseel as cook-housekeeper	*of China, and Other Pieces* by Kafka, *Little Friend* by Ernst Lothar, *Three Cities: A Trilogy* by Sholem Asch with Edwin Willa trans. *Doctor Gion* by Carossa as Agnes Neill Scott Marion Lochhead publishes bio. of Willa in 'Scottish Women Writers of Today' series, *The Bulletin and Scots Pictorial*	appoints Hitler chancellor of Reichstag *27-28 Feb.*: Reichstag burns down (arson); Hitler bans other political parties
1934	Muirs go to PEN conference in Edinburgh; move to Isbister House, Orkney for three months due to Gavin's nerves *Jan.*: Mary Litchfield (nee Robertson), Edwin's former lover, cares for Gavin, Willa and Edwin take country holiday	*Jun.*: 'Clock-a-doodle-doo' (*The Modern Scot*) Trans. *Salvation* by Asch, *The Hill of Lies* by Heinrich Mann with Edwin Willa trans. *The Child Manuela* by Christa Winsloe as Agnes Neill Scott, and 'A Passing Cloud by Hermann Broch', published in *The Modern Scot* and 'First Sorrow' by Kafka (*European Quarterly*)	*Aug.*: President Hindenberg dies; Hitler declares himself Führer Nazis in Austria attempt to seize power to unify with Germany Winifred Holtby, *Women*
1935	*August*: Muirs move to 'Castlelea', The Scores, St Andrews *30 September*: Gavin starts at Madras College Primary School	Willa trans. *Life Begins* by Winsloe as Agnes Neill Scott Trans. *Mottke, the Thief* by Asch, *The Unknown Quantity* by Broch, *The Jew of Rome: A Historical Romance* by Feuchtwanger, *The Loom of Justice* and *The Mills of God* by Lothar with Edwin	Hitler reoccupies Saarland in France (with their vote); Nuremberg laws strip German Jews of citizenship and bans marriages with 'German Aryans'
1936	*20 Mar.*: Willa finds out Gavin is strapped daily, pulls him from Madras and enrols him in New Park Prep School	'Mrs Grundy Comes to Scotland', chapter of *Mrs Grundy* (*The Modern Scot*)	German troops enter Rhineland Berlin hosts Olympics

	Edwin, *Scott and Scotland*; fallout with Hugh MacDiarmid follows	*Mrs Grundy in Scotland* (Lewis Grassic Gibbon's *The Voice of Scotland* series) 'Women in Scotland' (*Left Review*) Trans. *Night Over the East* by Erik von Kuehnelt-Leddihn, *The Calf of Paper* and *The War Goes On* by Asch, and *The Queen's Doctor: Being the Strange Story of the Rise and Fall of Struensee, Dictator, Lover, and Doctor of Medicine* by Robert Neumann with Edwin Willa trans. *Girl Alone* by Winsloe as Agnes Neill Scott	*25 Nov.*: Germany and Japan sign Anti-Comintern Pact, solidify alliance Civil War erupts in Spain, Nationalist Party vs. Left Wing Popular Front
1937		Trans. *The Trial* by Kafka, *The Pretender* (or *The False Nero*) by Feuchtwanger with Edwin	Japan further invades China, attack French and British naval ships; League of Nations fail to act Carswell, *The Tranquil Heart*
1938	*Aug. to Sept.*: Broch flees Austria, stays with Muirs (St Andrews) then moves in with Schiffs (London), then New York in December Hilde moves back to Germany Willa collapses, admitted to hospital, receives gynecological surgery by Professor Margaret Fairlie Barbara Niven, 'Willa and Edwin Muir (Caricature)' in Sept.-Nov. issue of *Voice of Scotland*, run by MacDiarmid *3 Apr.*: Willa represents	Willa begins 'Mrs Muttoe and the Top Storey'; 'Moving in Circles' (*Listener*) Trans. *Amerika* by Kafka, *The Enigmatic Czar. The Life of Alexander I of Russia* by Georges Maurice Paléologue, *A Woman Screamed* by Neumann with Edwin Muirs write open letter with Eric Linklater to government about the Munich Agreement	*12 Mar.*: Hitler invades Austria before the 13 Mar. referendum on peaceful union; Austrians unite willingly with Germany, no casualties; Germany takes Czechoslovakia

	Scotland in B.B.C's spelling bee	'Have you the "Whipper-Tooties"?', BBC Scotland Talk, (*Listener*) *12 Jul.*: Willa gives talk on the Scottish National programme about Dr John Jamieson for the centenary of his death	
1939	Muirs cannot get German translation work		Hitler and Mussolini encourage Spanish Fascists *Mar.*: Madrid surrenders; Franco takes power; hostilities cease by May *23 Aug.*: Stalin and Hitler sign non-aggression pact, split Poland; Russia gets Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania *1 Sept.*: Nazis invade Poland; WWII declared
1940	Muirs consider sending Gavin to Canada, but Gavin shows distress Edwin joins the Home Guard *Autumn*: Edwin strains his heart on duty in Dundee, assigned to bed rest for six weeks Willa teaches at New Park, earning £3/week and lunches	*May*: Willa finishes 'Mrs Muttoe and the Top Storey' (unpublished) Trans. *Through a Man's Eyes* by Zsolt Harsányi, *Richelieu: His Rise to Power* by Carl J. Burckhardt, and *Paris Gazette* by Feuchtwanger with Edwin	
1941	Muirs in financial trouble without translations, Edwin on bed rest; Willa's wages go to Gavin's school arrears *May*: Willa develops bowel ulcers from stress, admitted to	*29 Mar., 26 Jul.*: Muirs publish excerpts 'From Kafka's Diaries' in *New Statesman* XXI and *SRL* Trans. Rubens biography in French and	

	hospital *Sept.*: Gavin re-enrolled at Madras College	Hungarian, *Through the Eyes of a Woman* by Harsányi with Edwin	
1942	*Jan.*: Willa has an operation *Mar.*: British Council in Edinburgh employs Edwin to run programmes for Allied soldiers, lives there weekdays, weekends in St Andrews *Aug.*: Willa, Edwin, and Gavin move to 8 Blantyre Terrace, Edinburgh *Oct.:* Meet Flora and Morley Jamieson, who move in with them in Feb. 1943	Trans. *Lover of Life* by Harsányi, collaboration with Paul Tabor	
1944			*6 Jun.*: D-Day
1945	Edwin appointed Director of the British Institute, Prague; teaches at Charles University Willa takes her first flight to Prague Gavin enrols at St Andrews University	Trans. 'Selections from Diaries and Notebooks' in *Orion*	*6 Aug.*: USA drops atomic bomb on Hiroshima *9 Aug.*: USA drops A-bomb on Nagasaki *2 Sept.*: WWII ends
1946		Jane Austen essay, c. 1946, unpublished typescript	
1947	Edwin receives Honorary Doctorate, Charles University, Prague	Trans. *Parables in German and English* by Kafka with Edwin	
1948	*Aug. to Dec.*: Muirs move to Hermitage, Cambridge; Edwin suffers nervous breakdown, Willa suffers debilitating back pain	Trans. *In the Penal Settlement* by Kafka, *Failure of a Hero* by Neumann with Edwin	*Feb.*: Communist Party takes Czechoslovakia *5 Jul.*: National Health Service (Scotland) Act 1947 comes into effect
1949	*Jan.*: Edwin appointed Director of the British Institute, Rome; Muirs move to Rome Nigel McIsaac paints a portrait of Willa (National Gallery, Edinburgh)	'About Hilde', (unpublished?) biographical article, collection of Ethel Ross and Irene Abenheimer	
1950	*May*: Muirs take lecture trip to Sicily		*Lying Awake*, unfinished

	Jul.: British Institute closes; Muirs return to Scotland; Edwin becomes warden of Newbattle Abbey College; Willa teaches Latin and Greek unofficially		autobiography of Carswell, posthumously published by son John
1951-52		*Feb.-Feb.*: Writes 'The Usurpers'	
1952		Trans. *Selected Stories of Franz Kafka*, introduced by Philip Rahv*	
1953	Muirs have first conversation about Gerda incident since it occurred	Muir writes 'An Old Wife's Grumble' in Scots about accents on the radio	*5 Mar.:* Joseph Stalin dies
1954	*Feb. to Apr.*: Willa hospitalised for 'exploratory tests', undergoes two surgeries for benign lumps in her colon (*Moving in Circles*, 22)	*Nov.:* 'On Susan Ferrier', radio script, BBC Scotland	
1955	Muirs leave Newbattle Abbey *Aug.*: Edwin granted Charles Eliot Norton Professorship at Harvard University; Muirs move to Boston	Muir writes poems 'A song of hate' and 'I always said it wouldn't do'	
1956	*Apr.*: Willa receives medical treatment at Harvard *May:* Edwin receives the Bollingen Foundation Grant for $3000 per annum for a book on ballads; leave Boston; buy a house in Swaffam Prior, Cambridgeshire in the name of Edwin, Willa, and Gavin		
1958	*Feb. to Mar.*: Edwin appointed visiting professor at Bristol University *Jun.*: Cambridge University awards Honorary Doctorate to Edwin *Dec.*: Edwin admitted to Addenbrooke's Hospital for chest pains and shortness of	Muirs are awarded the first Johann-Heinrich-Voss Translation Award for their joint translations	Kurt Wittig, *The Scottish Tradition in Literature*

	breath, water on the lung		
1959	*3 Jan.*: Edwin dies at Addenbrooke's Hospital, buried in Cambridge *Oct.:* Willa pays off mortgage to stay in cottage until death	'Poems' published in *Bottehge Obscure* 24 (Rome) 'Translating from the German', part II published in *On Translation* Works on German proofs of Djuna Barnes' *Nightwood*	
1960	Gavin marries Dorothy Hargreaves; move in with Willa at Swaffham Prior		
1960-61		Two typescripts, 'This Lop-Sided World' (unpublished?) under pseudonym Anicula	
1961		Willa edits final section of Edwin's *Collected Poems, 1921-1958* Trans. *The Difficult Man* in *Selected Writings of Hugo von Hofmannsthal* by Hugo von Hofmannsthal*	Birth control legalised in the United Kingdom
1963	*Mar.*: Row with Dorothy and Gavin forces Willa out of cottage; Willa moves in with Kathleen Raine in Chelsea *Aug.:* Willa moves to 47a Paulson Square, London with cat, Popsy	*26 Feb.*: Radio interview, 'Mrs Muir's reminiscences' Broadcast: 'In Search of Edwin Muir' *Aug.*: Willa keeps Edwin's Bollingen Grant Trans. of *Metamorphosis and Other Stories* released	
1965		*Living with Ballads*	
1968		*Belonging*	
1969	*Feb.*: Willa's arthritis worsens; leaves Popsy with Raine, moves to British Red Cross Home, Meadowcroft, Cambridge Willa moves to private nursing home in Church	200 copies of *Laconics Jingles & Other Verses* privately published by Enitharmon Press	

	Farm, Over, Cambridgeshire *Autumn*: Moves in with F.G. Scott's daughter, Lilias Chisholm, in St Andrews; Lilias evicts Willa after nine days, Willa lives in hotels Willa moves to Dunoon with Edwin's niece Margaret, then with Edwin's nephew Jim and his wife, Ivy Leaves selection of books at University Library Cambridge; papers in St Andrews Library	
1970	*22 May*: Willa Muir dies of heart failure in Dunoon, Isle of Bute, Argyll, Scotland; cremated at Greenock Crematorium *25 May*: Gavin spreads Willa's ashes on Edwin's grave	
1991	Gavin dies of carcinoma of the liver in a residential home for cancer patients, Edinburgh; death records report occupation as college lecturer in Aberdeen (*Moving in Circles*, 30)	'Clock-a-doodle-doo' published posthumously in *Other Voice*, ed. M. Burgess New edition of *Imagined Corners* released
1992-93		'Elizabeth' and 'A Portrait of Emily Stobo' published in *Chapman* special edition dedicated to 'Peerie Willa Muir', ed. Joy Hendry *1993*: Peter Butter edits 'Some Poems by Willa Muir' for *Chapman* 74-75
1996		*Imagined Selves*, ed. Kirsty Allen, Canongate Classic (*Imagined Corners*, *Mrs Ritchie*, *Women: An Inquiry*, *Mrs Grundy in Scotland*, and *Women in Scotland*)

1997	Kirsty Allen, PhD thesis, 'The Life and Work of Willa Muir, 1890-1955', St Andrews University
2007	*Moving in Circles: Willa Muir's Writings* by Aileen Christianson, Word Power Books, incl. pages from 'Mrs Muttoe'
2008	*Belonging*, introduction by Aileen Christianson
Dates Un-known	Essays: 'A Visit' Trans. *Description of a Struggle, and Other Stories* by Kafka (later published by Harmondsworth Penguin, 1979)

Introduction

The Other Muir

> 'Without any doubt, Muir was the woman writer of the Scottish Renaissance period who most explicitly reacted against this single history written by men.'[1]

In 2004, Dr Margery Palmer McCulloch[2] wrote of the voices of the Scottish Renaissance: 'We have most to learn if we listen to these voices in the context of their own time.'[3] That line has offered a valuable framework for understanding the undervalued and, at times, controversial writings, feminism, and life of Willa Muir.

Wilhelmina Johnston Anderson was born on 13 March 1890 in Montrose to Shetlandic parents, Elizabeth Gray Anderson and Peter Anderson.[4] Known to her family as 'Minnie', she wrote plays and short stories throughout her childhood before growing up to become the translator and writer, Willa Muir. At home she spoke 'Shetland'[5] (Shetlandic Scots), at school 'proper' English, and on the streets the Scots dialect that was native to Montrose: 'By the time I was four I could speak Shetland, Montrose, and the kind of English used at the small private school in Bridge Street […] And that, I decided, was why I became good at Greek and Latin' (*Belonging*, 20).[6] Her grasp of language allowed her to become a prolific and talented translator who successfully brought difficult, lengthy German texts to a broader, popular Anglophone audience. Muir was, alongside her husband Edwin Muir (1887-1959; m. 1919), the first to introduce

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[1] Romero, Maria Dolores Armental, *Hand-in-hand with Hélène Cixous: A re-vision of the work of Scottish writers Willa Muir, Jessie Kesson and Janice Galloway* (Doctoral Thesis, Universidade da Coruña, 2015), 64.

[2] This dissertation owes much of its framework to Dr Margery Palmer McCulloch (1950-2019), whose pivotal work on the Scottish Renaissance and its writers, particularly in *Modernism and Nationalism: Literature and Society in Scotland 1918 – 1939* (2004) has been a great source for understanding the period. It is a great loss for this thesis, and the study of the Muirs generally, that Dr Palmer McCulloch's last work on the relationship between Edwin and Willa remained unfinished at time of her death in 2019. It is hoped that this work will be published posthumously. Conversations with those who have seen the manuscript have suggested that the work may include more detail regarding Muir's relationship with her son, Gavin.

[3] Palmer McCulloch, Margery (ed.), 'Introduction' in *Modernism and Nationalism: Literature and Society in Scotland 1918 – 1939, Source Documents for the Scottish Renaissance* (Glasgow: The Association for Scottish Literary Studies, 2004), xiii-xviii, xvii.

[4] See appendix I for a comprehensive timeline of Willa's life.

[5] Throughout her memoir, *Belonging*, Muir uses the terms 'Shetland' and 'Orkney' in place of the more broadly accepted 'Shetlandic' and 'Orcadian'.

[6] Muir, Willa, *Belonging* (London: Hogarth Press, 1965).

Franz Kafka to an English-speaking readership.[7] In so doing, she transgressed the guidelines passed down by the Mrs (Mac)Grundys of the British Isles to bring English language speakers the now household term, 'Kafka-esque'.[8] The Muirs travelled extensively around Europe, spending time in Germany, Czechoslovakia,[9] Italy, France, England,[10] a brief period in America, and various regions of Scotland, including Edwin's beloved Orkney (see appendix I). As such, they were intimately aware of the political circumstances that bred the Second World War and the ensuing Cold War.[11] Willa's unpublished novel 'Mrs Muttoe and the Top Storey' (1938-1940, discussed in chapter five), for instance, drops into relief the festering national divides that brought about the Second World War. These experiences informed her translations and her writings as much as her experiences of being a mother to Gavin (29 October 1927-1991) and an endlessly supportive wife to Edwin.[12] However, as the writings in this thesis show, it is her understanding of the maternal and her own role as mother that shaped her perspective on writing, the War, translation work, and the politics of her era.

As such, this thesis examines Muir's dual role as writer and mother, framed by feminist socialist theories to provide a more thorough analysis of both her published and her unpublished writings. Margaret Elphinstone argues that *Belonging* (1968) shows

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[7] Hereafter, 'Muir' or 'Willa' will be used to refer to Willa, while Edwin will be referred to by his first name.

[8] For an explanation of Mrs (Mac)Grundy, see chapter six.

[9] Travelling to Eastern Europe was not uncommon for this time. Naomi Mitchison, in her 'Pages from a Russian Diary' reflected on this practice: 'I wonder what we all think we shall get in Russia, apart from technical things; I talked to ---, the architect, for a time, and I think he hopes to find what I hope for—that people will look at one differently, that there will be real happiness and freedom—not, presumably, political freedom, but a real *liberté des moeurs*.' 'Naomi Mitchison, from "Pages from a Russian Diary" (*Modern Scot* Autumn 1932)' in *Modernism and Nationalism*, 209.

[10] Edwin and Willa appear to have followed in an old tradition in their move to London. As Sydney Goodsir Smith points out: 'The typical Scottish writer of the nineteenth century went down to London with great talents, sometimes even genius, attempted for a short time to work in the English tradition for an English public and then, having drifted through hack journalism, either starved to death in a garret or took his own life.' Goodsir Smith, Sydney, *A Short Introduction to Scottish Literature* (Edinburgh: Serif Books Ltd., 1951), 26. Fortunately, times had changed enough that, thanks to (albeit at times 'hack', or as Christianson notes, 'mechanical and pedestrian') translation work, Willa, Edwin, and Gavin never succumbed to starvation or suicide. Christianson, Aileen, *Moving in Circles: Willa Muir's Writings* (Edinburgh: Word Power Books, 2007), 15.

[11] The Muirs were living in Prague in 1922, and then again in 1945. As such, they witnessed pre-Hitler, pre-Putsch Eastern Europe until the Putsch itself ultimately caused the two to flee in 1948. See appendix I.

[12] For a more extensive biography, see Aileen Christianson *Moving in Circles: Willa Muir's Writings* (2007), Kirsty Allen's thesis *The Life and Work of Willa Muir, 1890-1955* (1997), Willa Muir's memoir *Belonging*, Edwin Muir's *An Autobiography* (1954), Margery Palmer McCulloch's *Edwin Muir* (1993), or P.H. Butter's *Edwin Muir: Man and Poet* (1962).

evidence that Muir 'resented and felt oppressed by the dual role that seemed always to be demanded of her, but in her own writing about women, it does seem that she was at least partly entrapped by her own essentialist code.'[13] Accordingly, this thesis looks at Muir's experiences of motherhood: how it complemented her writing, but more importantly, how this role was in combat with her ability to create and gain a reputation as a writer and translator throughout her lifetime. Palmer McCulloch suggests that *Imagined Corners* (1931) and *Mrs Ritchie* (1933) 'make important contributions to our understanding of the lives of women and of the obstacles in the way of fulfilled female lives, socially and psychologically, in the early years of the twentieth century as well as in some respects still existing in our own time.'[14] Similarly, Margaret Elphinstone writes that:

> The closer she comes to analysing her own social origins and assumptions, the more ironic her narrative, and the less oppressed her narrator, seem to be. In other words, when she presents limiting and constricting constructions of gender as cultural, and in her case, Scottish, rather than as biological, the sharper the focus of her writing.[15]

In agreement with Palmer McCulloch's and Elphinstone's expressions of the lasting importance of Muir's works, this thesis reveals how Muir employs a range of genres including unpublished journals and letters, polemical essays, novels, autobiographical fiction, satire, hybrid autoethnographic nonfiction, and poetry to provide diverse and nuanced depictions of the maternal. This enabled her to express a breadth of emotions and reactions to not just parenting, but parenting within a capitalist Calvinist patriarchy. It is this scope in form and expression that allows Muir's fiction to continue to resonate in the twenty-first century.

Moreover, this thesis, specifically the analysis of 'Mrs Muttoe', seeks to show the importance of Muir as a translator in her own right; the work taken on, as it was, to support her family and Edwin's writing career. Her significance was acknowledged at the time of her death in a 23 May 1970 obituary in the *Glasgow Herald*, which described Muir as a 'Scottish woman writer and translator […] widow of Edwin Muir and herself a

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[13] Elphinstone, Margaret, 'Willa Muir: Crossing the Genres' in *A History of Scottish Women's Writing*, ed. Douglas Gifford and Dorothy McMillan (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997), 400-15, 413.
[14] Palmer McCulloch, Margery, 'Willa Muir', *Dangerous Women Project*, http://dangerouswomenproject.org/2016/10/30/willa-muir/ [accessed 27.11.2020].
[15] Elphinstone, 413.

writer of distinction.'[16] However, Muir scholars have, in some respects, had to counter the overshadowing of her reputation by that of her husband, Edwin. Palmer McCulloch explains that:

> Although by 1930 Edwin Muir was the one with the growing literary reputation and contact with publishers, and was most often the one referred to as the translator of Kafka and the other German writers translated under their joint names, it is nowadays considered that Willa was the principal – and sometimes the sole – translator of this German-language work. […] This can be deduced, for example, from her correspondence – both literary and personal – with the Austrian writer Hermann Broch whose trilogy *Die Schlafwandler* (*The Sleepwalkers*) they translated in the early 1930s, as well as from the frequent comments in Edwin's letters about Willa being busy with her translations; and Willa's own comments about having to get a translation finished to meet a deadline.[17]

The reasons behind Muir's decision to take on the bulk of the translating are better understood when we explore this work as part of Muir's preoccupation with motherhood. Such an exploration seeks to better evaluate Muir as a writer and translator of exceptional cultural significance. This is made perhaps more difficult given the fact that 'even feminists have never been united as to the desirability of wage-earning by mothers.'[18] The term 'motherhood' or 'the maternal' can be broad and vague. In this context, that lack of clarity, or what will come to be seen as the multi-faceted aspect of these terms, is a benefit. This thesis will show how the definition of motherhood is unclear at times, ranging from biological reproduction to the maternal nature of creativity to sociological limitations to women's relationships with one another. The analysis of each text comes from an understanding of the ways that women, in this instance Muir and her characters, can accept or reject the psychological, physical, emotional, and societal roles of motherhood. It also seeks to show how Muir's ideas of the 'good' and 'bad' mother are in line with Helen McCarthy's analysis that these ideas relied on a woman's time and priorities: 'A marker was set down in the late nineteenth century between the "good"

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[16] Christianson, Aileen, 'Muir [*née* Anderson], Wilhelmina Johnston [Willa] [*pseud.* Agnes Neill Scott]', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, https://www-oxforddnb-com.ezproxy.lib.gla.ac.uk/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-49250?rskey=ZwXAkv&result=1 [accessed 27.11.2020].

[17] *Dangerous Women Project.*

[18] McCarthy, Helen, *Double Lives: A History of Working Motherhood* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2020), 6.

mother who earned only because she had to, and the "bad" mother who went out because she wanted to. This dichotomy proved enduring.'[19]

Chapter one discusses 'Marmaduke', Willa's journal of the early years of hers and Edwin's son Gavin. This journal, which has never been published, is academically important in that it provides an early example of a modern mother documenting her son's life. However, more significantly, it uncovers Muir's own anxieties and fears about her role as a mother. While recent texts have allowed for a more open discussion of these anxieties in contemporary times, Muir's text is unusual for its era in showing guilt and shame for her perceived failings.[20] The role of mother was, at this time, in rapid transition, as doctors like Sir Frederic Truby King offered guidance on the "correct" avenues of child rearing. These guidelines often focused purely on keeping the child alive, and neglected, as Muir discovered, their emotional growth. As such, this chapter analyses Muir's use of Truby King's methods, the anxiety these strict guidelines caused, and the creative output that resulted. Moreover, this chapter provides the first instance of direct and comprehensive engagement with 'Marmaduke' as a literary text, therefore breaking ground on revisiting women's journals and analysing these as valid literary output. Aileen Christianson noted in 2007 that Muir's unpublished papers reveal 'the extent to which her whole adult life was spent in writing and how narrow the gap between her life and her "imaginative" life is.'[21] Perhaps nowhere is this blurring between imaginative and real life more evident than in 'Marmaduke'.

The thesis then re-examines Willa Muir's first published text, *Women: An Inquiry* (1925). Chapter two argues that, while this text is critically important in that it provides one of the earliest instances of feminist theory to come out of Scotland, it is, at best, uneven in its reasoning.[22] Muir's essentialist, contradictory, and uncertain feminism in

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[19] McCarthy, 34-5.

[20] See, for instance, *Writing Motherhood: A Creative Anthology* (2007) edited by Carolyn Jess-Cooke and *Between Interruptions: 30 Women Tell the Truth About Motherhood* (2007) edited by Cori Howard.

[21] *Moving in Circles,* 1.

[22] In *Montrose & the Scottish Renaissance: Ideas O' Their Ain*, it is argued that 'Willa was one of the first writers to explore the role of women in contemporary society in Scotland.' Patricia Rowland Mudge, meanwhile, described Muir's feminist opinions as 'too inconsistent to be taken seriously.' Fraser, Linda J.; Benvie, Rachel H.F., *Montrose & the Scottish Renaissance: Ideas O' Their Ain* (Angus Council Museum and Galleries), 10. Mudge, Patricia Rowland, 'A Quorum of Willas: another look at Willa Muir', *Chapman: Peerie Willa Muir*, 71 (1993), 1-7, 3.

Women: An Inquiry contrasts greatly, for instance, with the relatively progressive, class- and culturally-aware analysis that comes from *Mrs Grundy in Scotland*, analysed in chapter six.[23] Written before the birth of her son, *Women: An Inquiry* expresses restrictive and out-dated views about the ability of women to create. This chapter will reference feminists contemporary to and preceding Muir, such as Winifred Holtby (1898-1935), Virginia Woolf (1882-1941), Cicely Hamilton (1872-1952), and Harriet Hardy Taylor Mill (1807-1858) to understand her position as a feminist writer. Alongside later chapters focusing on Muir's three novels, this chapter shows that, while not politically active per se, Muir's greatest contribution to Scottish feminism was not through *Women: An Inquiry*, but through her creative literary output, including the satirical *Mrs Grundy in Scotland*. This is in contrast to Mudge's insistence that '[while] she detested the male dominance she saw all around her, championing the feminist cause wasn't her primary concern.'[24] Chapter two sets out a base level from which to follow Muir's progression, arguing that it is her later experience as a mother that ultimately motivates the more radical feminism shown in her novels and in *Mrs Grundy*.

Chapter three moves on to an analysis of Muir's first novel *Imagined Corners*. This chapter expands upon the frequent analysis of the two Elizabeth Shands as mirror images of each other and explores how they represent the two sides of Muir. This analysis builds upon that of 'Marmaduke', showing the novel as an escape for Muir from motherhood, having been written just following her miscarriage and started prior to the birth of Gavin. She was unable to complete and publish the manuscript until four years after his birth. As Palmer McCulloch notes about the young Elizabeth Shand, Muir, 'creates a credible portrait of a young, university-educated woman' who has 'her true intellectual and emotional awakening […] only after marriage.'[25] But, this awakening only brings distress with 'her realisation of the extent to which she has subordinated her

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[23] Even at the time *Women: An Inquiry* was unpopular. Upon its release in America, the *New York Times Book Review* described the essay as a 'neat craftsmanlike but very slender volume [which] adds to the babble of controversy over the position of woman, a voice as small and thin and neat as itself.' 'Perambulatory Riddles: *Women: An Inquiry*. By Willa Muir', *The New York Times Book Review* (4 April 1926).

[24] Mudge, 3.

[25] Palmer McCulloch, Margery, 'Fictions of Development 1920-1970' in *A History of Scottish Women's Writing*, 360-72, 362.

intellectuality and sense of self to the role of dutiful wife demanded by society.'[26] At the end of the novel, Elizabeth escapes this subordination, and seemingly the requirement to become a mother – at least for the time being. The Elizabeths venture into Europe – without husbands, without children, and without financial constraint. Both have been married, and therefore resist the roles of 'old maid' or 'spinster'. But both are free to seek the future, and sexuality, of their choice. Suggestions that the older Elizabeth will be a kind of 'mother' to the younger is shaded by the subtle suggestion that the two may engage in a more intimate relationship. Here, female sexuality and motherhood are intertwined – Muir suggests the possibility of women striding out, confident in their childless sexuality. Yet, Muir's novel also shows how women are relegated to the role of mother even when they have not birthed a child: Aunt Janet to Mabel and Hector, Elizabeth to Hector, Elise to Elizabeth. Birth mothers are absent, even if maternal figures are not. Muir's novel shows the necessity of mothers to a fully functioning patriarchal society and suggests how women can subvert this necessity for progressive feminist means through the character of Elise.

The following chapter moves to Muir's second novel *Mrs Ritchie* and argues that it is a subversion of the Victorian 'Angel in the House' trope. Muir's representation of a John Gourlay/Robert Wringham devil is made feminist and progressive, a fierce commentary on the effects of Calvinism and class on gender in Scotland.[27] Indeed, Muir arguably creates, in the character of Annie Ritchie, the first maternal monster in Scottish literature.[28] In this novel, Muir depicts a father who is ineffective in protecting his children against that which can harm them – not from the outside world, but from their own mother. Muir's representation of the monstrous mother aligns with her critique of the role of the patriarchy and religion in the onslaught of the First World War. Mrs Ritchie is a child of the patriarchy, and because of this, she is viewed as both the product of sexism and the reproducer of it. Unlike the idyllic Virgin Mother/Protector, the image

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[26] Ibid.

[27] John Gourlay is the central figure of George Douglas Brown's 1901 book *The House with the Green Shutters*. This text is often regarded as the first modernist novel in Scotland. Robert Wringham is the central character of James Hogg's novel *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824).

[28] Sarah M. Dunnigan suggests that ballads also sometimes depict 'the archetype of the resentful or cruel mother,' sometimes also showing 'the emotional and psychological reasons for women who act violently and in hatred.' *The Scottish Ballads* (Glasgow: Association for Scottish Literary Studies, 2005), 50.

that Annie Ritchie strives for but can never achieve, she takes on a Lucifer/Imperial colonialist role as she attempts to impose her version of both religion and 'civilisation' on her family. Muir shows the similarities between the oppressed Annie Ritchie and colonial, patriarchal leaders of the fin de siècle who used their religion, their cultures, and their ideals as rationale for the deaths of millions leading up to and throughout World War I. Muir shows the extremes to which one could take the '[f]ears about the link between the quality of population and British power and prosperity at home and abroad [which] reconfigured mothering as a service to the State and a duty to the Empire.'[29] Mrs Ritchie corrupts the notion that to 'save' the nation, 'from physical degeneration, class revolution and moral decline, it was to the "nurturers of the race" that reformers' must turn their attention.[30]

Palmer McCulloch writes of these paradoxes in detail in her chapter 'Fictions of Development 1920-1970'. Discussing Scottish women writers, including Muir and her contemporary Catherine Carswell (1879-1946), she writes of mothers' relationships with their daughters. One contradiction she notes is particularly relevant to *Mrs Ritchie*:

> What is perhaps surprising is the representation of the attitudes of the mothers and substitute mothers of these fictional daughters. In almost every case depicted, the mother attempts to thwart her daughter's ambitions for education and emancipation and to shape her instead in her own mould. Like long-term prisoners these unsatisfied older women seem to have internalized their subjection and lost the capacity to imagine living another kind of life.[31]

In *Mrs Ritchie*, it is her mother who thwarts Annie's goal to be a teacher – a goal that was suggested to Annie by her male teacher. And it is this dismissal of her goals by her mother – the very person who should be empathetic about gendered oppression, rather than its perpetrator – that turns Annie into the monster she becomes. This thesis furthers Romero's argument that: 'in *Mrs Ritchie,* the title character attempts to combat phallogocentrism by inverting the concept to create a "Law of the Mother" through the established Law of the Father in Calvinism.'[32] Yet, in so doing, the unintentional result is that Annie's own daughter breaks the cycle of dominance by becoming a feminist,

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[29] McCarthy, 24.
[30] Ibid.
[31] 'Fictions of Development', 366-67.
[32] Romero, 29.

seemingly unconcerned with religion, and a teacher herself, who finally chooses to leave, not just her mother, but her Calvinist motherland. Ultimately, Annie's power is simply a façade: her hold over men begins to crumble with the death of her husband and son, and her higher status in the role of mother collapses completely with the escape of her daughter.

Chapter five regards the final work of fiction studied in this thesis, the unpublished manuscript 'Mrs Muttoe and the Top Storey'. This is Muir's most evidently autobiographical novel, drawing directly on real life events and figures. This novel, unlike *Imagined Corners* and *Mrs Ritchie*, does not use trope characters, but rather represents individuals from her life: Dmitri Mitrinović becomes Popovitch, Edwin becomes Dick Muttoe, her maid Julia stays Julia, and Gavin becomes Peter.[33] While she may have changed the names (bar her God-loving, Hellfire-fearing maid), even small details are taken directly from her life in Hampstead. Alongside 'Marmaduke', this novel is perhaps the most significant work for the purposes of this thesis. Where 'Marmaduke' provides a scientific analysis of her beginnings as a mother, 'Mrs Muttoe' depicts Muir's life as a mother who is more settled in her role. Muir's narrator describes Alison Muttoe's struggles to balance work with her marriage and her role as mother, battling constantly with domestic duties and her desire to write her own stories. She shows her unique perspective being a working mother in the mid-twentieth century within the context of a broader population of women dealing with similar struggles of work-life balance and fighting their way into the public world. McCarthy explains that: 'Those belonging to the modest but growing ranks of professional women […] were able to […] describe what paid work meant to them in letters, diaries, memoirs and autobiographies, which some published in later years.'[34] Glenda Norquay reminds us of Cicely Hamilton's 1909 book, *Marriage as a Trade* in defense of women's focus on relationships and motherhood in their novels: 'Cicely Hamilton […] suggests that women should not be blamed for seeing the world in terms of romance and personal relationships as for many this represented a

[33] Muir describes Mitrinović as 'a Serb […] who was trying to "influence" people in London, including Orage, and finally helped to sink the *New Age* by the dead weight of the columns he contributed under the pen-name of M.M. Cosmoi' (*Belonging*, 40).
[34] McCarthy, 9.

hard economic necessity which dominated and structured their view of the world.'[35] 'Mrs Muttoe and the Top Storey', in which seemingly nothing happens, offers a clear indication of Muir's priorities, her feelings, her perspective on the world, and suggests much to the reader about the experiences of other women in her class and of her time.[36] Though McCarthy's focus here is Victorian and Edwardian mothers, her assertion that 'only a fraction of this pioneer [professional women] generation found it possible to combine the professional work they loved with motherhood' is true for Muir's time, too.[37] This chapter draws on Bryony Randall's discussions of the Every Day to understand how the 'nothing' plot is critically significant in understanding women writers' relationship with motherhood and domesticity.[38]

Chapter six moves on to the final "Mrs" of Muir's work: *Mrs Grundy in Scotland.* This chapter contrasts Muir's later feminist text with *Women: An Inquiry*, showing *Mrs Grundy* as ultimately the more effective in its critique of the patriarchal structures at work in Scotland. This chapter suggests that Muir's experience as a mother contributed to her understanding of the liminal space that women occupy as both feared and revered in Scotland, and Britain more generally. In so doing, the chapter suggests that Muir uses the figure of Mrs Grundy to remove the blame from women for religious and class prudishness by showing how women take on the role of Mrs (Mac)Grundy in order to attain (minimal) power in a patriarchal society. Yet, this process strips women of respect and value by providing the patriarchy with justification to ridicule and fear women's influence on men and society, exemplified in writings about Mrs Grundy in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The chapter argues that *Mrs Grundy* is the satirical articulation of the feminist theory that Muir sets forth in *Mrs Ritchie,* allowing, nonetheless, for an understanding of the harmful nature of seemingly non-violent oppression in a way that the violence of *Mrs Ritchie* cannot achieve. Chapter six draws

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[35] Norquay, Glenda, 'Catherine Carswell: Open the Door!' in *A History of Scottish Women's Writing*, 389-399, 396.

[36] McCarthy reminds her readers that: 'women's relationship with paid work could be calibrated differently depending on class, educational background and, as Britain became an increasingly multicultural society, race and ethnicity too,' 6.

[37] McCarthy, 10.

[38] See Randall, '"Telling the day" in Beatrice Potter Webb and Dorothy Richardson: The Temporality of the Working Woman', *Modernist Cultures*, vol. 5, no. 2 (2010), 243-266; 'A Day's Time: The One-Day Novel and the Temporality of the Everyday', *New Literary History*, vol. 47 (2016), 591-610.

upon specific, narrow details of *Mrs Grundy* in order to re-evaluate Muir's generic range in direct reference to her focus on the maternal.

The final chapter of this thesis focuses on Muir's Bollingen commissioned book, *Living with Ballads* (1965). This text, originally commissioned to Edwin before his death, was a labour of love, but as Lumir Soukup suggested, one of dutiful love. She took the project on out of a sense of obligation to Edwin: 'the book was not even in its early stages, and Willa took it over.'[39] As in life, Willa continued to take on projects that she had not wanted in order to assist Edwin. However, it is not an unfounded speculation to assume that this book is not what Edwin would have written. Margaret Elphinstone notes that: 'A study of either Willa or Edwin Muir constantly uncovers evidence of a fruitful exchange of not only the ideas that belong in both Muirs' construct of the conscious world, but also the images that reflect the unconscious.'[40] Though this may be true, aligning as it does with the romantic myth of their relationship, there were nonetheless major differences in the way the two Muirs viewed the world. For instance, Edwin's focus on mythology and animals in *An Autobiography* (1954) and his focus on Nordic influences in Orkney suggest that those topics would also have been the centre of his book on ballads. And while Willa nods to both of these themes, her focus is, as this chapter shows, mothers – specifically mothers in grief. This is perhaps unsurprising, given her own estrangement from her son in 1963 that ended in her exile from the family home. This chapter analyses how Muir's pattern of using her books and a variety of fiction and non-fiction genres, including hybrid forms and satire, as cathartic outputs for gendered traumas in her own life continues in her later non-fiction hybrid text, *Living with Ballads*. For this reason, the chapter does not look at *Living with Ballads* in the round, but at specific aspects of reflective writing to showcase the range of her experimentation with genre, and to conclude the narrative of her experience with and representation of the maternal. This intimate reflection is in direct contrast with the wit and humour of *Mrs Grundy*. These final two texts of the thesis show the scope of genres and styles with which Muir worked and that, despite this variety, her preoccupation with the maternal remains. In *Living with Ballads* pain and feelings of grief at her separation

[39] Soukup, Lumir, 'Belonging', *Chapman: Peerie Willa Muir*, vol. 71 (1993), 29-33, 31.
[40] Elphinstone, 400.

from her son come through more so than her pain from Edwin's death, which she saves for her final published text, *Belonging.*

This thesis does not discuss *Belonging* as a text in its own right. There are several reasons for this decision. Firstly, *Belonging* barely mentions Gavin or Muir's experience of motherhood, and while throughout this thesis it will be argued that she was in many respects a mother to Edwin, her memoir of him is more appropriately used as a support tool to understand her other texts. As such, *Belonging* will be analysed in connection with the other works in this thesis. This memoir has provided biographical information, supplemented by her journals and letters, and, as argued more thoroughly in chapter five, is shown to be a work of romantic myth in many respects. *Belonging* perpetuates the myth of the equal couple – not altogether unfairly – but sanitises the reality that is represented in 'Mrs Muttoe' and in Muir's diaries.

Muir's oeuvre is complemented by a more thorough examination of her journals and diaries. She is not alone in this. Women's literature has consistently appeared in smaller quantities in the Scottish canon, hindered by the current boundaries imposed upon what academics view as literature.[41] Naomi Mitchison (1897-1999), for instance, an already prolific writer, becomes unbeatable if one considers her personal correspondence and journals.[42] As Jenni Calder points out: 'Every aspect of her intricate life has fuelled her stories. She has chronicled much of her life in diaries, volumes of autobiography and in articles, notably those published in the *New Statesman* during the 1950s and '60s.'[43] Like Muir, Mitchison used her life to inform her fiction. But more importantly, she published accounts of her life while alive. Though these texts are acknowledged and studied, they are not necessarily counted as part of her literary output. Similarly, Muir's life is well documented in her own journals and letters, but these remain unpublished. This thesis attempts to dismantle literary boundaries by using Willa's life inextricably in its analysis of her fiction, seeing the autobiographical aspects as its strength, rather than its weakness. It is this reworking of life experience that provides more accurate

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[41] Critics of life writing have started this re-investigation into the personal papers and autobiographical unpublished narratives of women.

[42] For example, Mitchison's wartime diaries from 1939-1945, *Among You Taking Notes: The Wartime Diary of Naomi Mitchison* (1985).

[43] Calder, Jenni, 'More Than Merely Ourselves: Naomi Mitchison' in *A History of Scottish Women's Writing*, 444-55, 453.

indications of Muir's perceptions of motherhood and how her role influenced her creativity. Like McCarthy's *Double Lives*, which 'takes women's feelings and desires as its central theme, […] because they became crucial to the reimagining of working motherhood as a social norm,' this thesis also seeks to understand how the 'transformation had […] standing at its heart […] women's changing conception of themselves and their growing determination to claim a life of their own.'[44]

Understanding Modernism and the Scottish Renaissance provides a context for the role of the mother in contemporary literature and Muir's work specifically. More important for this thesis, however, is an understanding of the women writers of this time, within or outwith the Renaissance. Often overlooked in the context of the Scottish Renaissance, these writers contributed much to the (re)making of Scotland's literary culture. Palmer McCulloch comments on the 'artificially limited nature of the early twentieth-century fiction revival as it has settled in our perspectives of the Scottish Renaissance' and goes on to argue that 'these women writers demonstrated an intelligent, modern, iconoclastic spirit which fulfilled the demands of the Renaissance manifesto, often in areas not tackled by the male writers.'[45] An excellent example of this is Lorna Moon's 1929 letter to David Laurance Chambers, disparaging certain comments on the jacket of her new book, *Dark Star*: 'I don't like the part which says she [Nancy] belongs to the Scottish heroines of literature and that Scott, Stevenson, Barrie would have understood her—because they *wouldn't*—(Thank God!).'[46] This written sigh of relief is followed by her assertion that 'a comment like that relegates the book to the musty old shelves where women wore rats in their hair and became "fallen"', noting how it is 'revolting' to her 'that in a civilized world a woman's virtue rests entirely upon her hymen.'[47] Justifiably scornful comments like Moon's, and women writers' abilities to address 'areas not tackled by male writers,' is perhaps the reason that interest in women

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[44] McCarthy, 8.

[45] 'Fictions of Development', 368.

[46] Moon, Lorna, *The Collected Works of Lorna Moon*, foreword by Richard de Mille, ed. Glenda Norquay (Edinburgh: Black & White Publishing Ltd., 2002), 267.

[47] Ibid, 267-8.

writers has increased in recent years.[48] This interest can be attributed in part to Douglas Gifford and Dorothy McMillan's 1997 essay collection *A History of Scottish Women's Writing*. Gifford and McMillan's 716-page anthology spans the start of women's writing in Scotland centuries ago through to the 1990s. Since then, many of the writers in it have fallen "out of fashion," like Muir herself, but evaluations of the Renaissance by women academics in particular have attempted to bring to light the immense work of female outliers.

One of the central themes of this 1997 collection is the growing focus on gender and sexuality during Muir's lifetime. Specifically, many contemporaneous women writers showed how their perspectives of sexuality and gender were shaped by their mothers as much as by their fathers – if not more so. Romero's summary of Cixous's theory of mothers' influences on their daughters seems apt here:

> This voice which speaks out in writing comes, in [Cixous's] view, from the repressed relationship between daughters and their mothers, and for this reason she examines the representation of the maternal in women's writing as she thinks that the mother, or the maternal body, remains present in the mind of the daughter, and becomes visible through the acts of writing.[49]

For example, Catherine Carswell's *Open the Door!*, published in 1920, appears to embody this theory. Joanna attempts to make sense of her mother after her death in a way with which her sister is at odds, showing that the identity of one woman could be understood in multiple contradictory terms. Glenda Norquay outlines this battle:

> even after her death Joanna refuses to join with her sister in a sentimentalising of her mother's happiness and good nature, believing that an admission of Juley's struggles, failures, and dissatisfactions shows more respect for the woman. For Joanna, to see Juley only in the role of mother, and to think of motherhood as an all-fulfilling promise for the future, is in itself reductive of human aspirations.[50]

Muir's novels, and 'Marmaduke', show quite clearly that Muir agrees with Joanna's interpretation of women's identities, and may also suggest that Muir feared that she too would be reduced to the role of mother after her death. Moreover, the novels of Nan

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[48] A notable example of this increased mainstream interest is the Royal Bank of Scotland's decision to place Nan Shepherd on the £5 note. This was followed by Charlotte Peacock's biography of the writer, *Into the Mountain: A Life of Nan Shepherd*, published by Galileo in October 2016.

[49] Romero, 36.

[50] Norquay, 394.

Shepherd 'clearly recognise the heavy price that is paid by many women in [Scottish] society, and [Shepherd] knows that that price can be exacted with equal harshness whether [women] seek to conform to, or to resist, the mores of the day.'[51] In his work on Nan Shepherd, (in a description that could just as easily have referred to *Imagined Corners* or *Mrs Ritchie*) Roderick Watson comments that: '[h]er fiction displays a very strong feeling for the experiences of women, both young and old, who have learned to strike a balance between challenging and accepting the roles allocated to them by society.'[52] Palmer McCulloch summarises this balance between Victorian mother and Modern daughter succinctly when she notes of the 1920s and 1930s: 'a consistent element has been the friction or lack of solidarity between mothers and daughters. Older women in these narratives are marginalised in a public sense, despite the domestic power they wield.'[53] In her fiction, Muir emphasises the fear of this marginalisation while women attempt to 'strike a balance' in each of her female protagonists – whether they are in the role of mother, as in *Mrs Ritchie* and 'Mrs Muttoe', or else they have refused to succumb to this role, as in *Imagined Corners*.

In that vein, this thesis seeks to understand Muir's work and the marginalisation of her female protagonists through a socialist feminist lens. This particular brand of feminism was chosen to align with Muir, who, Romero argued, 'reacted against a nationalism which did not provide a solution for an economically depressed Scotland, and instead […] embraced socialism.'[54] In order to do so, texts such as *A Room of One's Own* (1929) by Virginia Woolf, *The Problem That Has No Name* (1963) by Betty Friedan, and *The Second Shift* (1989) by Arlie Russell Hochschild are used in juxtaposition with the roots of socialist theories: Karl Marx's and Friedrich Engels' *The Communist Manifesto* (1848) and Friedrich Engels' *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (1884). Woolf, Friedan, and Hochschild's works provide contextual understanding of the way that women experienced the act of balancing work, family, and financial burdens in Muir's lifetime. While Hochschild's text is written

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51 Watson, Roderick, 'To know Being: Substance and Spirit in the Work of Nan Shepherd' in *A History of Scottish Women's Writing*, 416-427, 418.
52 Ibid., 416.
53 'Fictions of Development', 366.
54 Romero, 47.

nearly two decades after Muir's death, she underscores domestic balances in a way that is befitting an analysis of Muir's progressive family dynamic. This dynamic contrasted with the beliefs of the late Victorian era and early twentieth century that 'Women who earned, as [Clementina] Black put it, "not for their own or their children's bread, but rather for butter for it", undermined the male breadwinner ideal and dishonoured the sacred duties of motherhood.'[55] In Muir's case, she earned for both the bread and butter, providing the family with a means to an artistic, rather than utilitarian, lifestyle. Meanwhile, Marx's and Engels' texts offer context for the basis of these socialist feminist theorists. In particular, these theorists are used in conjunction with later theories of affective and emotional labour to show how Muir's responsibility as a mother both contributed to and hindered her ability to write. These obstacles took the form of both financial challenges and also the emotional work required of her as mother and wife. In this way, this thesis hopes to show how socialist feminist, rather than Marxist, theory is more relevant to understanding Muir's works, as these theorists understand women's oppression not just through an economic lens, but through their gendered, social, and national identities as well.

The works of other women writers of the time, including Nan Shepherd, Naomi Mitchison, and Catherine Carswell, show that the obstacles to Muir's work were not unusual. In this way, this thesis also hopes to show how national identity is both unavoidably significant for Muir even while nationalism holds a low priority in her works. In her 1997 chapter for *A History of Scottish Women's Writing*, Palmer McCulloch explains that among these women writers, nationalism 'is not a preoccupation [….] Shut out from public life as they were in the early decades of the century, identification with country is not their concern. Carswell's Ellen and the heroines of Allan, Muir and Gavin all leave Scotland.'[56] As a result, Muir, like the other women of her time, deal with greater issues of gender, sexuality, and labour that are unique to

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[55] McCarthy, 34.

[56] 'Fictions of Development', 369. Carswell's Ellen in *The Camomile* (1922) ends 'her engagement with Duncan, […] to leave Scotland for London' to pursue writing. In Dot Allan's (1886-1964) *Makeshift* (1928), the heroine Jacqueline receives an 'unexpected legacy' that allows her to leave Scotland for London with 'the determination to be a successful writer.' This is most similar to Elise and Elizabeth in *Imagined Corners*. In Catherine Gavin's (1907-2000) *Clyde Valley* (1938), the heroine Lennie 'has a difficult relationship with her dominant rural mother.' 'Fictions of Development', 362, 365, 364, 368, respectively.

women who were raised in Scotland, but Scottish nationality itself, while always present in the text, is not the primary concern.[57] In line with this, Muir outlined her concerns with gender and nationalism in a 1931 letter to F. Marian McNeill. With reference to McNeill's apparent desire to find Nationalism in *Imagined Corners*, Muir explained:

> it was supposed to be 1913, when there was little Nationalism: also, I was thinking more of Elise, when I followed her, than of national sentiment: and Elise would not have stayed in Calderwick, however it might have benefited from her presence—which I don't deny.[58]

Muir's ultimate concern is gender and with showing, accurately, what options were available for women in the early twentieth century. She chose to 'present an illumination of life in Scotland [rather] than a reformation of it,' insisting that 'Anyone who has really felt the thoughts I expressed in it will be all the fitter to reform Scotland, but it is indirect, not direct propaganda that literature provides.'[59]

Her 1913 setting for that novel has not been chosen at random. The onslaught of the First and Second World Wars would change life for women dramatically, offering further options to enter the public domain that had not previously been available. But Muir's desire to write this novel, and *Mrs Ritchie* after it, shows that these concerns with women's place within Scotland specifically remained. Muir also suggests that these big changes – to gender, to national identity, to the political and cultural landscape – were possible by using her books to remind her readers of a time prior to women's suffrage. Her works indicate where Scotland had been, and therefore reminded her readers of where it is now and where it could still go, at least in terms of gender. And, despite McNeill's seeming insistence on looking for Nationalism within her books, Muir disregarded the possibility, writing, 'you needn't look for nationalism with a big N in it.'[60] Yet, as literature is 'indirect propaganda,' she will have been '"doing [her] bit" for

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[57] This places Muir slightly outside the realm of 'modernism' in certain aspects, too. Paul Robichaud argues that 'an engagement with questions of national identity forms a crucial part of the modernist project.' 'MacDiarmid and Muir: Scottish Modernism and the Nation as Anthropological Site', *Journal of Modern Literature*, vol. 28, no. 4 (2005), 135-51, 135.

[58] Muir, Willa, 'Willa Muir, from letter to F. Marian McNeill (July 1931)' in *Modernism and Nationalism*, 208.

[59] Ibid., 209.

[60] Ibid.

Scotland' by addressing its gender gaps.[61] As such, it is not possible to neatly tie Willa into the Scottish Renaissance packaging that MacDiarmid so comfortably provides for male authors.

Likewise, Palmer McCulloch describes women writers of the period as challenging 'the man-made stereotypes of women, endorsed in Renaissance poetry and fiction in the symbolism of the woman as the poet's muse, the spirit of Scotland, the essentialist female spirit of goodness.'[62] For that reason, a study of Modernism and the Scottish Renaissance is a backdrop for this thesis, but is not its main concern. These important national movements help to understand the literary context for Muir, but this thesis seeks to show how mainstream male movements were not the only literary context for her. For instance, as Palmer McCulloch notes of Carswell's novels: 'Fresh, too, in the Scottish context, is the way in which women are the true subjects of her novels, as opposed to being seen from outside.'[63] This, too, is true of Muir's novels. These writers disregarded the bounds of male norms, which sought to 'Make it New!', and created their own literary forms in the absence of established 'female' norms.[64]

More suitably, this thesis makes use of feminist literary theory with Susan Gubar and Sandra Gilbert's groundbreaking 1979 *The Madwoman in the Attic,* alongside other theorists such as Elaine Showalter, Adrienne Rich, and current works such as *Writing Motherhood: A Creative Anthology* (2017). Each of these works notes the steady pattern among women of being uncertain of their own authority and examines the societal and literary constructs that create this uncertainty.[65] These texts and theorists point to the mother – the influence of, act of being or becoming or non-becoming, and experience of

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[61] Ibid.

[62] 'Fictions of Development', 369.

[63] Ibid., 361.

[64] 'The jaunty slogan that Ezra Pound introduced for his fellow rebels before the First World War, "Make it New!," tersely summed up the aspirations of more than one generation of modernists.' Gay, Peter, *Modernism: The Lure of Heresy* (London: Vintage Books, 2009), 4.

[65] This hails back to Medieval debates about *auctoritas* (authority) versus experience, evident even in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales,* 'The Wife of Bath's Tale'. For detail on authority versus experience in 'The Wife of Bath's Prologue', see Arnell, Carla, 'Chaucer's Wife of Bath and John Fowles's Quaker Maid: Tale-Telling and the Trial of Personal Experience and Written Authority', *The Modern Language Review* vol. 102, no. 4 (2007), 933-46; Rotkiewicz, Vincent, 'Reimagining revolt: 1381, feminine authority, and the Wife of Bath', *Postmedieval: A Journal of Medieval Cultural Studies* vol. 9, no. 1 (2018), 88-99.

birth – as supremely influential in women's creative processes. For example, of *Frankenstein* (1818), Gilbert and Gubar write:

> Because he [Victor Frankenstein] has conceived—or rather, misconceived—his monstrous offspring by brooding upon the *wrong* books, moreover, this Victor-Satan is paradigmatic, like the falsely creative fallen angel, of the female artist, whose anxiety about her own aesthetic activity is expressed, for instance, in Mary Shelley's deferential introductory phrase about 'her hideous progeny,' with its plain implication that in her alienated attic workshop of filthy creation she has given birth to a deformed book, a literary abortion or miscarriage.[66]

Muir's study may have been on the ground floor rather than in the attic, but one might argue that her books appear like accidental pregnancies that she may have wanted, but had not planned for financially to fit within her busy schedule. She goes so far as to embody the monstrous progeny in *Mrs Ritchie*, which shows another kind of Frankenstein's monster. Yet hers is a monster created not with chemical and mechanical mishaps and scientific unrealities, but by realistic, ongoing, and contrived patriarchal misdeeds against Annie Rattray. Both Annie's and Frankenstein's creations show the dangers that arise when men, and the patriarchy in general, influence the creation of human beings. Their authors, too, are similar – similar to many of the women to whom this thesis refers – in that they showed anxiety about their *right* to take on a creative role apart from that of childbirth. In that sense, Woolf's theory about the requirement of space and time that are allocated to women will contribute to the analysis of Muir's texts, which also draws on theories regarding affect and domestic labour. This thesis makes use of the methods of Gilbert and Gubar by examining the setting in which Muir was raised and the type of books she read, without adhering to their concept of a distinctly female voice. As such, an understanding of Muir's upbringing in patriarchal Montrose and of her struggle against the male-dominated literary canon is crucial to the analysis of her works throughout this thesis. However, while Muir's depiction of working motherhood and the maternal resembles the works of other women writers of her time, this does not suggest a shared feminine voice, but rather that similar experiences of oppression may breed similar modes of resistance.

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[66] Gilbert, Sandra M.; Gubar, Susan, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*, 2nd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 233.

In order to fully understand the context of Muir's life, as well as the analysis that has been completed thus far, Aileen Christianson, Margery Palmer McCulloch, Kirsty Allen, and the volume of Chapman, *Peerie Willa*, edited by Joy Hendry, have been crucial in their provision of an analytical and biographical foundation of Willa Muir. Christianson's *Moving in Circles: Willa Muir's Writings* (2007), in particular, is a pivotal and singular piece of scholarship that delves into Muir's writings and life. She offers readers a thorough explanation of Muir's texts, with criticism grounded in historical and theoretical context as well as biographical information. This thesis relies heavily on Christianson's preliminary investigations and detailed biography. Allen's work, though predating Christianson's, is an unpublished doctoral thesis and focuses more strongly on Muir's biographical information than on in-depth literary analysis. Regardless, Allen, too, has informed the analysis and understanding of Muir's works throughout this thesis. Similarly, Palmer McCulloch's various works about both Muirs, and Modernism generally, provides an invaluable critical framework for understanding Muir's texts alongside other women writers, both outwith and within the Scottish Renaissance. In particular, her edition, *Modernism and Nationalism*, which showcases significant texts from the Modernist period, has proven to be of paramount importance in grasping the nuanced literary landscape of the early to mid-twentieth century.

This thesis uses these critical foundations – both directly relating to Willa Muir and those that outline historical and theoretical context – to understand Muir's works through the lens of feminist literary critique as it frames the influence of the expected behaviours of mothers. There is strong evidence to suggest that Muir's role as mother, her relationship with her own mother, and her understanding of herself as a carer of both her husband and son heavily shaped her relationship with the act of literary creation and translation. To supplement this analysis, this thesis provides the first comprehensive timeline of Muir's life and writings in appendix I. The inclusion of this timeline is to avoid unnecessary repetition of biographical events, which can be found in more detail in the works of Christianson and Allen. Moreover, this timeline aligns Muir's works with major contemporary events to implicate the historical significance in critical understandings of Muir's texts and life. Finally, a lightly annotated reprint of Muir's journal, 'Marmaduke', is given at the end of this thesis. 'Marmaduke' has not been

printed, even in fragmented or partial form, elsewhere. This text is essential for the framework of motherhood on which this thesis rests, and therefore is an instrumental inclusion for the appreciation of Muir's works in this thesis. The rationale of this is similar to Palmer McCulloch's interpretation of the 'feminist perspective' and the 'quasi-autobiographical narrative' in Mitchison's *The Bull Calves*, which she describes as 'drawing on family papers and life-stories, [the narrative] is the kind of personal record usually treated with caution by professional historians, but one increasingly relevant in the representation of unrecorded women's experience.'[67] This thesis looks to personal records and papers to trace the unrecorded anxieties and experiences in Muir's life, and seeks to relate these to women's unrecorded experiences more generally. By analysing texts like 'Marmaduke' and 'Mrs Muttoe', and in the conclusion, *Five Songs from the Auvergnat* (1931), this thesis seeks to provide validation and a framework for understanding women's experience of being and interacting with the burden/honour of motherhood, which rests in the liminal space between privilege and oppressed outcast. Adrienne Rich notes in *Of Woman Born*: 'As mothers, women have been idealized and also exploited.'[68]

In her comprehensive 2020 study of working mothers from the Victorian era to the present, Helen McCarthy suggests that:

> The meaning of working motherhood has changed dramatically over the past century and a half. What was understood to be a social problem arising from economic pressure on families has become a social norm rooted in a more expansive set of needs, rights and preferences felt and asserted by mothers.[69]

From childhood, Muir experienced first-hand how images of working mothers transitioned from being viewed as a 'social problem' or economic necessity, raised as she was by a single mother following her father's death, to being accepted as women who aim to fulfil their preferences, needs, and rights. Studies like McCarthy's, and this thesis, provide a nuanced understanding of how gender binaries that are inherent in the institution of parenting as rooted in patriarchy have historically worked to complicate women's achievement of their career ambitions. In Muir's case, these binaries are

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[67] 'Fictions of Development', 369.

[68] Rich, Adrienne, *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1995), xxiv.

[69] McCarthy, 5.

complicated further by hers and her husband's creative talents. As a writer, the need to make money to support her husband's poetry and her son was often blurred with the act of cultural production and her love of her own craft. These tensions arise again and again in her works. Muir's oeuvre therefore encompasses the complex range of emotions and reactions to being, interacting with, experiencing, and creating mothers in both reality and literature. It plays a significant part in voicing the challenges faced by working mothers in the early twentieth century and continues to resonate in the twenty-first.

Chapter One

Learning to be Both: 'Marmaduke', or Gavin's First Years

'No woman is a perfect "born mother"—
she has to learn how (see page 102).'[1]

Willa Muir began writing 'Marmaduke'[2] in 1927 to document the first years of hers and Edwin's son, Gavin (nicknamed 'Marmaduke').[3] The journal maps her journey from anxious new mother to acceptance of her role. The forty-page journal focuses primarily on Gavin's first year, beginning at six weeks, with only four entries following: one in his second year, a final entry in his third, and notes on the reverse of page 18 in his third and fifth years. The entries are dotted here and there with literary intrusions or philosophical musings. This journal is currently situated in the Willa Muir Archive at St. Andrews University, which means that few academics have engaged with it. At most, it has provided only light supporting material for largely biographical discussion of Muir's role as a mother.[4] 'Marmaduke' is written in a school jotter, similar to that which Alison Muttoe uses for translations (see chapter five). In contrast to baby books with which those later in the century would be familiar, it does not celebrate Gavin's 'firsts': haircut, tooth, step, and other milestones.[5] As Fuentes-Vasquez points out: 'Gavin is the object of observation. Any baby, it seems, could have served the same purpose. There is no resemblance to the traditional baby book, full of sentiment and rejoicing for the baby in her/his uniqueness.'[6] Most of the entries focus on mundane activities, like bowel

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[1] King, Frederic Truby, *Feeding and Care of Baby* (London: Macmillan and co., ltd, 1913) https://archive.org/details/b21512115/page/n5/mode/2up?q=affection [16.03.21], 2.

[2] Archives & Special Collections, University of St Andrews Library; MS Willa Muir, ms38466/5/1: Journal, 'Marmaduke' (1927 – c.1931). See appendix II at the end of this thesis.

[3] Fuentes-Vasquez notes that: 'Marmaduke would not have seemed as outré to Muir as to us – Marmaduke Pickthall was a translator and scholar that the Muirs probably knew.' Fuentes-Vasquez, Carmen Luz, *The Construction of Personal Identity in Twentieth-Century Women's Life-Writing: The Autobiographies of Willa Muir, Margaret Laurence and Janet Frame* (Doctoral Thesis, University of Glasgow, 2007), 65.

[4] For instance, Kirsty Allen discusses 'Marmaduke' in brief detail to open her chapter on *Imagined Corners*, and reference is made to it in Aileen Christianson's chapter on Muir's life. She explains that Muir, in 1948, 'applied the same kind of analytic observation to Gavin's asthma attacks.' Fuentes-Vásquez discuss the work in order to analyse Muir's relationship with her son. Yet none of these authors regard this as a 'literary' text. *Moving in Circles*, 18.

[5] These rose in popularity throughout the later twentieth century, documenting a child's first years – height, weight, first words, and so on. These are also known as 'memory books', baby's first years, baby journals, and/or baby record books.

[6] Fuentes-Vasquez, 65.

movements and sleeping habits. The most striking aspect is Muir's attempt at objectivity. Kirsty Allen's description of the journal as one in which Willa records Gavin's 'every action' in order to conclude 'some psychological absolute' from 'his behavioural reactions to himself, his environment and his bodily functions' seems accurate.[7] However, as this chapter will illustrate, her analytical detachment emphasises Muir's anxiety at becoming a mother in an era when the rules of womanhood and motherhood were shifting. Namely, Sir Frederic Truby King (1858-1938; quoted above) maintained that any woman could 'learn' to be the perfect mother if only she follows his (male-authored) manual: page 102, for instance, will tell her all she needs. However, 'King's rules were complicated and unnatural. Screaming babies testified that mothering could not be ordered by the clock.'[8] These contradictions between Dr King's theories and the lived realities that Muir experienced as a mother raised further anxiety and self-doubt. Yet as Muir wrote in *Belonging* later about her decision to follow 'the regimen prescribed by a New Zealander, Dr Truby King', the doctor 'was then regarded as the best authority on baby-rearing' (*Belonging,* 145).

Despite its detached tone, 'Marmaduke' offers perhaps the greatest single source of information available about Gavin, who is relatively absent in many of Muir's writings.[9] It also provides a unique insight into Willa's relationship with her son, as well as her perspective on her maternal role. While Muir's journals, *Belonging,* and some correspondence mention Gavin in passing or with minimal detail, 'Marmaduke' is entirely devoted to documenting his early years. Furthermore, it is a unique, and slightly eccentric, example of a new mother using her educational background in child psychology to attain objectivity and distance from her new role. Willa was granted funding by Carnegie Trust from 1916-18 to research child educational psychology at Bedford College. Though she never completed her thesis, she went on to become lecturer in psychology, education, and English at Gypsy Hill Teacher Training College and her

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[7] Allen, Kirsty Anne, *The Life and Work of Willa Muir, 1890-1955* (Doctoral Thesis, University of St Andrews, 1997), 225.

[8] Smith, Philippa Mein, 'King, Sir (Frederic) Truby (1858-1938)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography,* https://doi-org.ezproxy.lib.gla.ac.uk/10.1093/ref:odnb/34320, [accessed 08.03.2021].

[9] Conversations with those working on the manuscript have suggested that Margery Palmer McCulloch's last work, to be published posthumously in 2021 or 2022, offers a rounder picture of Gavin the youth and adult.

passion for psychology remained throughout her life. This was perhaps spurred on by her brother Willie's collapsed mental state, for which he was committed to asylum. [10] Morley Jamieson recalls Willa's inclination to discuss people 'as a collection of neuroses'; 'Marmaduke' is no exception.[11] For instance, Muir writes as if observing a case study: 'Conversational habits well established' ('Marmaduke', 9). In contrast, the seemingly unconscious statements are those that show her emotions. For example, on page 8: 'what a kid!' Generally, however, she distances herself by avoiding personal pronouns, instead referring to 'the baby', 'the nipple', 'the breast', 'the arms', and 'the fist'. By writing 'the nipple', she can separate herself and her identity from the source of Gavin's milk. This also seems to mimic Truby King, who, throughout his manual, uses 'the breasts' in objective, detached terms. It is not until further into the notebook that Muir begins to write 'my breast', and on page 20 she uses Gavin's name for the first time. While personal pronouns appear infrequently from the second and third pages, her pseudo-scientific tone remains. For instance, she explains that he enacts '[an] assertion of his ego when he feels it slighted' ('Marmaduke', 17). Here she analyses her son as a subject of study while also impressing upon him mature emotions: 'slighted'.

This objective style generally provides evidence against the idea that motherhood is 'instinctual' or 'natural' (aligning with later gender constructivists like Adrienne Rich). This is in agreement with Marie Stopes, who argued a decade before Gavin's birth: 'a human mother does not know how to manage her baby unless she is trained.'[12] Muir's later writings support this. In her essay written with Flora Grierson, 'Alas We Females!' (1932) Muir argues:

> As a natural environment the mother might be expected to know by instinct at which point to supply her children with what they need: too often she is exhausted by ministering merely to their physical comforts and has neither knowledge nor energy enough to give them psychological understanding as well (6-7).[13]

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[10] See appendix I.

[11] Jamieson, Morley, 'Recollections of Edwin and Willa Muir', *Chapman: on Edwin Muir*, no. 49 (1987), 26-31, 30. Willa believed whole-heartedly in psychoanalysis: 'The psycho-analysis, as Edwin tells in his Autobiography, proved a very painful process; it both shocked and stimulated him so that he began to have vivid dreams. I had no misgivings about these' (*Belonging*, 43).

[12] Stopes, Marie, *Married Love*, ed. Ross McKibbin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1917; 2008), 10.

[13] This is another attempt at feminist theory, though it went unfinished.

Mother as environment arises in Muir's novels, but crucially here, Muir notes that not only is motherhood not instinctual, it is, quite simply, hard.[14] The 'emotional starvation' that 'the child' may experience while 'the mother' focuses on his physical needs seems to hint at her own guilt about Gavin's upbringing. But, given Truby King's method, she cannot be at fault. Dr King does not list cuddling or playtime as 'requirements' for 'baby'. These are only: Air; Water; Food; Clothing; Bathing; Muscular Exercise and Sensory Stimulation (namely changing position in cot and massage); Warmth; Regularity of All Habits; Cleanliness; Mother; Management; and Rest and Sleep. Muir follows this strictly, including 'massaging his tummy 2 or 3 times' and explaining the look of his stool as 'Good looking stuff' ('Marmaduke', 12). The reverse of page 34 shows that, even when she had begun to shift away from Truby King's methods (see below), she still maintained a version of this strict schedule: set times for sleep, feeding, and walking around. Here, she notes that Gavin gets a set 'Social hour!' but has maintained the four-hour feeding schedule and minimal playtime ('Marmaduke', verso 34). There are no unregulated hours of the day.[15] Significantly, when she does introduce play to his routine, this time is strictly monitored: 'I have instituted "play-minutes" after 10 + 6 pm feeds' ('Marmaduke', 13). Rather than the usual term 'playtime' which suggests unstructured play at random times in the day, 'play-minutes' connotes a strict adherence to the clock.

Notably, 'Management' strictly warns against 'Fond and foolish over-indulgence.'[16] Muir shows deep concern with this. She explains that their tea-time is 'the only time he makes any fuss' showing 'persistence + rage in crying when he is ignored' ('Marmaduke', 21). She considers this a 'Great danger of spoiling.' In contrast, one note asks: 'feeding to timetable - emotional starvation?' following a note inquiring: 'emotional needs. emotional starvation? cuddles + comforts?' ('Marmaduke', verso 33, 31). This appears to be a concern she had for years to come. In *Belonging* she writes: 'I doubt now whether I ought to have stuck so rigidly to his time-table, feeding my baby exactly every

[14] See chapters three, four, and five. This idea infiltrated all of Muir's works. In 'Women in Scotland' Muir writes: 'The mother as environment for her family is, so to speak, the basic diagram of womanhood' ('Women in Scotland', 2).

[15] See appendix, verso 34, for full schedule.

[16] King, 2.

four hours on the tick' (*Belonging*, 145).[17] In 'Alas We Females!' she concludes: 'Contact, actual contact, with a mother (or a mother-substitute) is the first necessity for any child's feeling of security in life' (2). Muir then reverts once more to detachment by referring to the child as 'it' to explain that mothers are not

> always encouraged to realise that tenderness is more important – after a minimum of food and warmth – than any other quality, personal or social. Modern theories of baby-rearing which discourage all caresses and limit the mother to picking up the baby, cleaning it, feeding it, and laying it down again, go too far in their reaction from indiscriminate pawning: it is essential for a child to feel emotionally that it is not quite cast out of its mother's arms ('Alas We Females!', 7).

Her reversion to detachment here, and the direct allusions to Truby King's dismissal of spoiling with affection, suggest guilt about her own attitudes towards her infant son. Freud, explaining guilt and conscience, noted that: 'anyone who has a conscience must feel within him [or her] the justification for the condemnation, must feel the self-reproach for the act that has been carried out.'[18] Accordingly, Muir's explanation above strikes a note of self-defence, or justification, as she explains that the emotional starvation she imposed upon Gavin in these early years is the fault of medical professionals who advise on how to keep a child alive but not how to keep them happy and psychologically well-balanced. A note opposite page 19 suggests she had started to reconsider these methods after just a few months: 'Man does not live by bread alone not even at 3 months.'

Motherhood, and the performance of motherhood, has always been a delicate and much debated topic for feminists. When Muir became a mother and breadwinner for the family, modern discussions around accommodating working mothers outside of working classes were still in their relative infancy, having gained traction, as McCarthy shows, in the mid- to late-nineteenth century. But what constitutes a mother, and a parent, was very much a topic for debate in the interwar period. Middle-class women had entered the workforce and had the vote.[19] Suddenly, arguments that women must be the primary

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[17] Note here she has distanced the older Gavin – and Edwin's influence – from this memory, calling Gavin 'my baby.'

[18] Freud, Sigmund, *Totem and Taboo*, trans. James Strachey (Oxford: Routledge, 1919; 2001), 79.

[19] Women over the age of 30 were granted a provisional vote in 1918 for their 'contributions' in WWI under the Representation of the People Act. This accounted for roughly two-thirds of women in the United Kingdom. In 1928, the Equal Franchise Act granted suffrage to women over the age of 21. 'Women get the vote', *UK Parliament* https://www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/transformingsociety/electionsvoting/womenvote/overview/thevote/ [accessed 15.01.18.].

caregiver could no longer be upheld as women increasingly proved that they could be not just useful, but efficient and successful outside the home. This, however, was not universally accepted and created new challenges for women who wanted the option to both leave the home and to remain caregivers for their children. The British government fought hard against encouraging mothers to join the workforce outwith war efforts, and hesitated to ratify maternity benefits in the fear that 'it would legitimise married women's employment and lead to a major redistribution of national income to mothers.'[20] For women like Willa Muir, this posed further complications and questions, which she dared to discuss only through depersonalization in fiction or in private journals. But it seems evident from Muir's 'Marmaduke' that distancing herself was a primary function of survival in a role that threatened to segregate her from the working world. The image of the successful working woman, Muir sought a way to marry this identity with that of loving mother and wife.

Following 'Marmaduke', there is a large gap of blank pages. Muir has then flipped the book upside down and continues anew on the reverse at what was previously the back of the book. The reverse notebook briefly mentions the Scrymgeours from *Imagined Corners*, the novel on which she was working when she fell pregnant with Gavin.[21] Muir also began essays on both Joan d'Arc and Jane Austen – two unwed, childless women who today are triumphed as pre-feminist icons. Her choice in writing about these women, however fleeting the impulse may have been, might be argued to be in line with her discomfort as a new mother. As will be seen in chapter three, Muir's focus at this time on childless women – Joan d'Arc, Jane Austen, the Elizabeth Shands – hints at her desire to maintain her identity as woman, rather than simply as mother. It upsets the 'fable' of an equal marriage that the Muirs, particularly Willa, promoted in public, but which did not necessarily match the 'story'.[22] Willa, regardless of the progressive nature of her marriage, was primarily responsible for Gavin and it was her work that was sacrificed for child rearing, rather than Edwin's. This is evidenced in the

[20] McCarthy, 132.
[21] See chapter three.
[22] See chapter five.

simple fact that she was not able to focus on either of the essays – about Austen or Joan d'Arc – and put aside *Imagined Corners* after the birth of Gavin until 1931.

Muir's preoccupation with motherhood, child-rearing methods, and her role as a parent is unsurprising given the climate into which she was born. Nineteenth-century society in Britain was focused, almost obsessively, on child-rearing methods to reduce infant mortality. Prior to Dr King, publications like *Mother's Magazine, Mother's Journal and Family Visitant*, and *Mrs. Whittelsey's Magazine for Mothers* all appeared in the mid-nineteenth century alongside books such as *Maidenhood and Motherhood; or, Ten Phases of Women's Life* (1887) by John D. West, Elisabeth Robinson Scovil's 1896 *Preparation for Motherhood,* and *Advice to the Mother on the Management of Her Children* (1898) by Pye Henry Chavasse, among others. Additionally, Muir was knowledgeable on Freud's theories about childhood and sexuality, which further encouraged interest in the raising of boys and girls.[23] In 1917, Jessie Murray wrote in the preface to Dr Marie Stopes' *Married Love*: 'the first seven years of life are regarded as the most critical. […] It is during these years that the deepest and most ineradicable impressions are made in the plastic constitution of the child.'[24] Concern with child-rearing was made more significant by legal cases that countered the automatic granting of child custody to a father after divorce (Catherine Carswell's, for instance).[25]

Helen McCarthy sums up the focus of the late nineteenth and early-twentieth century as the 'infant lifesaving initiative.' She contends that many of these focused on 'educating the working-class mother in her "proper" duties as full-time nurturer and homemaker' as they could not afford the domestic help that middle class women – including Muir – could.[26] Balancing work with domestic labour and child-rearing ensured that one of these necessary but physically and emotionally draining activities would fall

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[23] 'Muir takes a similarly broad view to the development of women's position, but in her case, she adds in the unconscious, the world of dreams, Freud and psychoanalysis.' *Moving in Circles*, 58.

[24] Murray, Jessie, 'Preface' in *Married Love*, ed. Ross McKibbin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1917; 2008), 6. The suggestion also aligns with the Jesuit mantra, which declares that a child in the hands of a Jesuit for the first seven years will remain a Jesuit for the rest of their lives. It is uncertain if this is specifically where Murray received this idea, as she merely states it is by 'common consent.' Thank you to Kirsteen McCue for noting the similarities with the Jesuit mantra.

[25] See Pilditch, Jan, *Catherine Carswell: A Biography* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 2007).

[26] McCarthy, 38. Chapter five evaluates Muir's representation of outsourced domestic labour in 'Mrs Muttoe and the Top Storey'.

by the wayside – there simply was not enough time in a day to manage all, alone. Consequently, these initiatives often concentrated the 'lady health visitors' in 'slums' to teach infant care and nutrition. World War I strengthened these national projects and encouraged attention on infant welfare across the population: 'the loss of British lives in the trenches lent a new urgency to infant preservation efforts. Baby clinics were, according to the Labour Party periodical *Labour Woman*, a form of "race-building" needed to counter the "race-suicide" of war.'[27] After all, 'every baby was a potential citizen, a fighting man, or a mother of a fighting man.'[28] Events like Baby Week of 1917 included 'mass public meetings, film screenings, church sermons and exhibitions of "mothercraft" aimed at educating women in good infant care.'[29]

Emma Gross explains that: 'To date, motherhood ideologies have typically required women to sacrifice themselves for their children and husbands and have viewed other alternatives as not viable or as morally reprehensible.'[30] Ultimately, 'Patriarchy depends on the mother to act as a conservative influence, imprinting future adults with patriarchal values.'[31] The advent of conscription and trench warfare, which significantly increased the number of bodies needed to fight a modern war, similarly increased the need for mothers to devote themselves to produce strong, healthy children, obedient to patriarchal values. After all, many of the children born just prior to or during the First World War would be soldiers who fought in the Second.[32] Rich suggests, however, that children and mothers suffer when the national anxiety about children's well-being is 'narrowly concerned with pregnancy and birth' and when the population 'does not ask questions and demand answers about the lives of children, [or] the priority of

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[27] Ibid., 120-21.

[28] Quoted speaker on infant care, June 1915 conference, McCarthy, 121. McCarthy notes that there was an increase in infant mortality during the First World War, which 'prompted a revival of emotive pro-natalist rhetoric,' 121. A letter published in *Married Love* to Marie Stopes from Professor E.H. Starling in November 1917 expresses the need for the upbringing of healthy babies for the war: 'At the present time it is of vital importance to the State that its marriages should be fruitful—in children, happiness, and efficiency (and all three are closely connected).' See chapter four. This appears to have been a fear of Muir's, however: 'a prescient friend warned us that if the baby were born in France and turned out to be a boy, he might find himself liable to military service in the French Army when he grew up. […] We took fright at little at this prospect and at the end of May 1927, left for England' (*Belonging*, 135).

[29] McCarthy, 121.

[30] Gross, Emma, 'Motherhood in Feminist Theory', *Affilia*, vol. 13, no. 3 (1998), 269-272, 271.

[31] Rich, 61. See chapter three.

[32] Fuentes-Vasquez suggests that King's methods were for raising soldiers for the war. 66.

government'; these 'children grow up in poverty' and in a country 'which places its highest priority on the technology of war.'[33] As a result, most mothers were unable to access help and 'lady health visitors' once their child grew beyond infant years and Truby King's manual does not advise beyond infant care. Certainly these manuals do not instruct women on how to balance work with childcare, running instead on the assumption that childcare is their only job. When Muir gave birth to Gavin, she was thrust into circumstances that increasingly demanded more of women in the working world, without reducing the demands required of her at home. It was a phase of transition; an uncertain period that saw women's roles as wives and mothers remain static, even with increasing opportunities for work.

While Edwin believed that parenting 'simplified' life, Willa expresses shock that parenting became her full-time job.[34] Allen writes that Gavin looked primarily to Willa for his 'comfort and company.'[35] On 19 March when Gavin is three and a half, the final entry in the diary states that this is an 'age of defiance' and explains that he has a 'strong need for being in the focus – home' ('Marmaduke', 40). Muir notes that, in his tirade of constant questions, 'Where's mummy?' is one, but not 'where's daddy?' ('Marmaduke', 39). Willa understands that her role comes with greater responsibility. This is repeated in 'Alas We Females!':

> A child's natural question when he enters the house is: where's mummy? A child's natural instinct when he wants anything […] is to turn to his mother, expecting her to provide for him as she did while he was in the womb (2).

Though Willa being the primary caregiver was not particularly uncommon for the time (or currently; see Hochschild), it does reveal an inequality. Elphinstone writes that: 'Muir makes clear in *Belonging* that she resented and felt oppressed by the dual role that seemed always to be demanded of her.'[36] However, Elphinstone argues that this was the result of Willa's own engrained essentialism, which limited her to the role of primary caregiver rather than encouraging Edwin to share parenting responsibilities equally. Muir's essentialist beliefs are evident in *Women: An Inquiry* in which she limits women's

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[33] Rich, xii.
[34] Allen, 221.
[35] Allen, 222.
[36] Elphinstone, 413. See chapter five.

creative powers within the framework of motherhood.[37] 'Marmaduke' echoes these sentiments as she theorises that the breast is linked to the 'Inexhaustibility of Nature,' which in turn '[evokes] faith, not reason' – emotion, not thought ('Marmaduke', verso 35). She continues by explaining that Gavin's clenched fists while feeding are a 'First instinctive movement repeated when praying – of infantile ecstasy at the mother's breast' and finishes by deciding this is 'the feminine principle again' ('Marmaduke', 20). This idea resurfaces in *Imagined Corners*, through the mouth of Dr Scrymgeour and is also found in 'Alas We Females!': 'In the last resort the child depends on her for his faith in life' (2).[38] She sees power in her role as mother, but her skepticism towards religion, seen in *Imagined Corners* and *Mrs Ritchie*, suggests that this power does not provide comfort.

Furthermore, in 'Alas We Females!', Muir and Grierson note: 'A mother, like other environments, is taken for granted. The child assumes that she exists primarily for his sake, and blames her first when anything fails him' ('Alas!', 2). Her preoccupation with woman as environment is evident in all three novels discussed in this thesis, but what is significant here is that she is aware of the fault resting on her. Her 'power' then is for Gavin's benefit, not her own. She goes further:

> Except among Roman Catholics no Christian religion has a mother-symbol in heaven, and the traditional mother of the human race is stigmatised as the cause of sin and suffering. Mothers know that their children blame them for everything, but it is discouraging to be expected to carry the blame for all human guilt ('Alas!', 6).

This is not an unsubstantiated concern. Knox contends that: 'Gavin was a difficult person to deal with, but much of this was the result of his accident when a young child, but it was also connected with his upbringing and the way that Willa never favoured him over Edwin.'[39]

Feminist theorists warn of this mother-blaming. Gross writes that a mother's 'sense of accomplishment in other spheres of their lives, such as work outside the home, is often undermined by chronic ambivalence about the morality of their choices and the

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[37] See chapter two.

[38] See chapter three.

[39] Knox, William W.J., 'Willa Muir: Living with Genius (2)' in *The Lives of Scottish Women: Women and Scottish Society 1800-1980* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, Ltd., 2006), 182-202, 196.

adequacy of their mothering.'[40] Similarly, DeGroot and Vik note that: 'performing motherhood well is not an option, and the mother must enjoy her experience of motherhood (or appear to) in order to be performing motherhood correctly.'[41] Adrienne Rich's critical text, *Of Woman Born,* maintains a similar thesis. She explains that if a woman is absent from the home, society declares 'the neglect of their children.'[42] Yet, as Hochschild shows, it is the gendered imbalance arising from a father's refusal to take part in child-rearing that results in harm to the child: 'the workplace, the culture, and the men have not adjusted themselves to this new reality—children can be the victims. Most working mothers are already doing all they can. It is men who can do more.'[43] She recounts studies that show children of actively involved fathers are less anxious and more confident, but that in general, 'curiously little attention has been paid to the effect of fathers on children.'[44]

In her 1953 journal, Muir recounts Gavin's hostility towards her, discussing his lectures regarding '[theories] about parents, about mothers, about complexes.'[45] Her frustration with this is ironic, given her own written theorising about his 'complexes' including the 'Mother God complex' (discussed below). Earlier in the 1953 journal, Willa describes an episode in which he asks her to stop being so possessive, and Christianson explains that just ten years following this, Willa is all but removed from her own house when Gavin's wife Dorothy (the couple were living with Willa) 'accused Willa of having been a bully all her life.'[46] This is another oddly cyclical moment – Willa describes Gavin's actions in 'Marmaduke' as 'cries which are simple bullying' (27). Her apparent suspicions of him pronounced in 'Marmaduke' arise in later journals describing Gavin the adult. Indeed, it appears a common belief even among scholars that Willa is the cause of Gavin growing up 'to suffer physically from deafness, some mental problems, and a

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[40] 270.

[41] DeGroot, Jocelyn M.; Vik, Tennley A., '"Fake Smile. Everything is under Control.": The Flawless Performance of Motherhood', *Western Journal of Communication,* vol. 85, no. 1 (2019: 2021), 42-60, 45.

[42] Rich, 49.

[43] Hochschild, Arlie, *The Second Shift: Working Families and the Revolution at Home*, 3rd ed. (London: Penguin Books, 1989; 2012), 231.

[44] Ibid., 232.

[45] Archives & Special Collections, University of St Andrews Library; MS Muir, ms38466/5/5: Journal (1951-53).

[46] *Moving in Circles,* 26. See chapter seven.

lack of direction' (even though it is now also believed he may have been autistic, which could have contributed some of these issues).[47] William Knox, following Kirsty Allen's lead,[48] is severe about Muir's 'failings' as a mother, believing that Muir's account of her and Gavin's relationship in *Belonging* is 'a dishonest and somewhat weak attempt at self-justification' (Knox 6); he assumes that the main responsibility for Gavin's upbringing and shortcomings as an adult rests only with Willa rather than with Edwin as well.[49] These fears resurface in her later journals, in which she says: 'I had some muddled flashes about the part played by a mother in helping to form the myths for her children's personalities, by encouragement or discouragement, by *expectation.*'[50] Muir is aware of the imbalance – that she is the one who receives the blame or praise for the way their child developed.

That Edwin played a diminutive parenting role is made clear by the fact that he is scarcely mentioned in 'Marmaduke' and Gavin is likewise rarely mentioned in *An Autobiography*. Edwin's minimal appearance suggests minimal involvement – entries referring to him are usually as the stereotypical role of the 'playful' parent. Willa notes that Gavin 'left the nipple this morning for a second to smile a greeting to Edwin' ('Marmaduke', 22). Another instance shows that he 'twice left the nipple to move his head so that he could see what Edwin was doing behind me' ('Marmaduke', 21). In the entry for 23 February, Gavin has a 'giggling match with Edwin' ('Marmaduke', 25). Muir describes how her interactions with Gavin often involve him 'weeping for milk' at the same time that he offers a 'coo to Edwin' ('Marmaduke', 19). Edwin receives affection but also a relief from parenting responsibilities, while Gavin constantly demands Willa's time and the use of her body. Muir's awareness of the way that gender roles have constricted her to the role of primary parent is evident; Edwin is not capable of feeding Gavin while he depends on breast milk, but changing and bath time are neutral ground for which she is, regardless, still responsible.

Like the women in *Imagined Corners* and 'Mrs Muttoe', Muir becomes the mother figure and caretaker of the entire family, including Edwin. Their pet names for

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[47] *Moving in Circles,* 20.

[48] It is important to note that Kirsty Allen is the niece of a friend of Gavin in his adult life.

[49] *Moving in Circles,* 20.

[50] MS Muir, ms38466/5/5.

one another suggest this: 'Edwin reverted to his mother's name for him, "peerie Breeks"' (*Belonging*, 34). Edwin has 'reverted' to childhood simplicity; rather than find a new pet name for his wife to use, she takes on the role of mother.[51] She writes of her emotional state when meeting Edwin: 'I was now twenty-eight and in my own opinion quite grown-up, an independent woman with a career ahead of me. And I thought I had been cured of falling in love' (*Belonging*, 12). Marrying Edwin, in part, derailed her conceptions of her future and Gavin gave her further responsibilities. Additionally, Allen explains that when Willa Muir was hospitalised for three weeks post-surgery in 1931, Edwin was far more distressed about her absence than Willa was: 'he found her absence from home utterly unbearable.'[52] Edwin's dependency on Willa excludes in this instance recognition of Willa's suffering and prioritizes his own distress: not unlike a child whose mother is ill.

The same occurred during Willa's pregnancy and labour. Hers was a difficult pregnancy, followed by an even more difficult birth that caused years of serious illness and pain for which she underwent surgery several times. Edwin himself noted that they were incredibly anxious throughout her pregnancy, yet he seemed to believe this anxiety was over with Gavin's birth: 'we are both free for the first time for months from anxiety.'[53] Despite his optimism, the birth itself showed signs of medical maltreatment. Willa was induced two to three weeks prior to her due date, resulting in a sixty-five hour labour, two doses of chloroform (which caused chloroform poisoning), two of twilight sleep, and as she said herself, tearing without repair.[54] Muir outlines in *Belonging* that the doctors involved failed to identify severe tearing until many weeks later; a fact that was responsible for her later illness. In a letter to F. Marian McNeill in July 1931, Willa explains:

> when Gavin was born I got so badly torn up that I should have been sewn together: but I wasn't, and so my inside has been going all squee-gee for the past 3 years and must now be sewn up as soon as possible. When we finish this translation therefore I am going into the Crowborough Hospital for a fortnight to be tacked together again and have my organs restored to their proper places.[55]

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[51] Chapter five will show how, years after Willa stopped writing 'Marmaduke', she continues to turn to writing to contemplate the second shift.

[52] Allen, 243.

[53] Muir, Edwin, *Selected Letters of Edwin Muir*, ed. P.H. Butter (London: The Hogarth Press, 1974), 65.

[54] Ibid.

[55] *Modernism and Nationalism*, 209.

This nightmare was the finale to a sickly pregnancy, and provided Muir with another insight into the dangers of listening to male physicians' 'reason' in why she should have the birth induced weeks before her due date:

> the doctors appeared rationally certain and I knew myself ignorant. Convinced that I must be 'reasonable', I agreed. The result was an unnaturally prolonged labour, since my baby did not want to be born before his time and my body did not want to bear him before his time (*Belonging*, 143-4).

Of her pregnancy, Edwin explains: 'She has had a very bad time of it for a month or so now, with sickness.'[56] He immediately follows this with: 'I shall be glad when her sickness is entirely over [….] However, she like a dear is cheerful, and only complains because she cannot do as much work as usual.'[57] Edwin thinks of his own desire for her sickness to be over – of the distress it causes him – and Willa thinks only of the work she must complete for the family. Improper medical care coupled with her tendency to place work in higher priority to her health, leading to overwork and strain, likely contributed to the negative birth outcome she experienced. A 2016 study noted the 'direct relationship between maternal stress and negative birth outcomes, including correlation between worries and fears about pregnancy and preterm birth.'[58] This was known even in Muir's time. Marie Stopes noted in 1917: 'the first and *most* vital condition of its [a child's] health is that the mother should be well and happy and free from anxiety while she bears it.'[59] Muir's journals reveal her disgust with her own pregnant body, commenting on the small size of her head comparatively, and the way in which it made her appear as though her mind lacked importance compared to her body – something she claims made her understand why women needed protection.[60] In *Belonging* she remembers: 'I looked like a bulging fruit and my head, […] seemed small and unimportant on top. No wonder, I thought, that women are often supposed to be mindless' (143). This suggests her anxiety about losing her identity as an intellectual woman.

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[56] *Selected Letters,* 63.

[57] *Selected Letters,* 63-4.

[58] Kozhimannil, Katy B., et al., 'Modeling the Cost-Effectiveness of Doula Care Associated with Reductions in Preterm Birth and Cesarean Delivery', *Birth: Issues in Prenatal Care*, vol. 43, no. 1 (2016), 20-27, 21.

[59] Stopes, 80-81.

[60] Willa Muir quoted in Allen, 218.

Muir's pseudo-scientific method reveals her desire to prove to herself that she is still the well-read student of literature, languages, and of modern psychology despite her position as 'mother'. What is most touching about this work, though, is the loneliness and despair that it reveals. Her writing edges on literary description at times as if hoping to prove herself a writer still (discussed below), but never loses the objective distance found throughout the journal. At others, however, she reverts to a concise statement of Gavin's actions, as if proving that her work researching child educational psychology has successfully produced a scientific observer: 'Hasn't discovered his feet. Pays no attention to his penis' ('Marmaduke', 15). The philosophical voice appears, as well, to emphasise her classical education combined with psychological knowledge: 'Earliest complex – Mother God. a Presence rather than a Power' ('Marmaduke', 19). Her education shows itself, whether consciously or not.

These literary intrusions may be all she had time for during Gavin's infancy, as Muir makes clear in her correspondence that pregnancy was not conducive to her work. In her letter to F. Marian McNeill in which she describes a 'bad miscarriage' that caused 'shock & surprise,' she also notes that her pregnancy (unbeknownst to her) had made her quite sick: 'I thought I had got a chill, & when I was sick I thought it was caused by lumbago.'[61] The miscarriage interrupted her writing further, as it 'upset me terribly […] I was nervy for a good time.'[62] This, again, shows some contradictions with Edwin, who wrote in December 1925, a month before Willa's letter, that: 'I am feeling very hopeful now about her and about us both, and we are really, in spite of her illness, very happy.'[63]

When she becomes pregnant with Gavin, Allen writes: '[there] is a peculiarly scientific and psychological objectivity in her perception of herself and her "interesting" condition; and a curious and almost unconscious detachment from her emotions.'[64] The same could be written of 'Marmaduke'. While her detachment may have been an automatic reaction to help herself bear the changes happening in her life and to her body, Muir appears not only aware of her detachment in 'Marmaduke', but also appears to

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[61] Muir, Willa, 'Willa Muir, from letter to F. Marian McNeill (January [1926])' in *Modernism and Nationalism*, 201.
[62] Ibid.
[63] *Selected Letters,* 53.
[64] Allen, 219.

consciously embrace it. Though it is evident from her other texts that her personal opinions and history often influence her writing, these also show that she is able to detach or add emotions as she pleases depending on the text, as with the intimate autoethnographic traits of *Living with Ballads* and the sentimentality of *Belonging* which sharply contrast the attempted objectivity of *Women: An Inquiry* or the casual wit and humour of *Mrs Grundy*. If anything could be written about Willa's inclusion of emotions in her writing, it would be that she adds them without meaning to and accepts their presence when they do appear. That her writings on Gavin and her pregnancy are the only two subjects in which she consciously remains detached makes these texts worthy of analysis, and hints towards her attempts to prove to herself that she remains an intellectual woman.

There is no doubt that becoming a first-time parent is an anxious experience and Willa's difficult pregnancy cannot have eased her concerns. Allen explains that Willa reflected on 'a certain fantastical and make-believe quality to that last childless summer,' suggesting a time that was brighter, happier, and a lifestyle that neither Edwin nor Willa wanted to leave behind.[65] Edwin's own descriptions evidence Allen's statement: 'We should both have preferred that it [pregnancy] should not have come at this present time; but if Willa is to have one it would be better that it should come sooner rather than later.'[66] He, too, is looking at the pregnancy objectively by understanding that, at Willa's age, 'sooner' is better than 'later' for a child. Willa's writing of her miscarriage throws further confusion onto the question of intent: 'I may live in hope that it may be all right next time. Why I have had no conceptions until now neither he [the doctor] nor anyone can tell me. It is so far good that it encourages me to believe in a "next time".'[67] This miscarriage, combined with her illness while pregnant with Gavin, may have further increased her desire to maintain strict scheduling and her concern with his health. Here, her fear for her own health manifests as fear for Gavin. She is attuned to his fears and physical needs: 'In third week jumped in my arm when a door was shut'; 'different kinds of crying already established' ('Marmaduke', 6). She notes in objective detail what these

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[65] Allen, 217.

[66] *Selected Letters,* 63.

[67] *Modernism and Nationalism,* 201.

cries mean to ensure she knows the solution: hunger, forlorn, temper, surprise. Muir separates herself from her subjective, emotional experiences of pregnancy and motherhood in order to maintain control and prevent harm.

This seems, aptly, in accordance with Freud's theory that: 'excessive solicitude […] is very common in neuroses, and especially obsessional neuroses.'[68] This obsessional neuroses is evident in her list-taking and close observance of Gavin's behaviour. Freud goes on to explain that: 'it appears wherever, in addition to a predominant feeling of affection, there is also a contrary, but unconscious, current of hostility.'[69] This may account for her own rigid methods, and also for an instance of apparent awareness of her ability to harm. She writes on page 21 that: 'Dr Walker says he is physically in perfect health – as nearly perfect as possible for a 3 months baby. Cheers!' Yet here again is another instance of one of her unexplained musings. She writes directly after quoting Dr Walker ('A strong baby'): 'forget me nots drowned in water' ('Marmaduke', 21). Her artistic preoccupation with water, evident in *Imagined Corners*, comes through here morbidly. Water, required to keep forget-me-nots alive, can also cause their death. Paired with her statement on page 19 that mother 'provides everything, good and bad: destiny or fate or whatever she is' suggests that Muir is aware she is not only capable of rearing a healthy baby, but also is able to dispense harm. Gavin's fragility is compared to that of the flowers.

But as stated above, her rigid methods were not her own. Dr King's methods were popular at the time, as they revolved around ideas of keeping an infant on a strict schedule. These ultimately improved childhood nutrition at a time when high infant mortality rates were an uncomfortable, but undeniable, global reality.[70] Truby King, and the associated Plunket Society clinics in his native New Zealand, were 'credited with giving this country the lowest infant mortality rate in the world.'[71] His methods

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[68] Freud, 57.

[69] Ibid.

[70] Dr King was born and raised in New Zealand, but studied at the University of Edinburgh, where he graduated with a first class MB CM in 1886 and a BSc in public health in 1888, before returning to New Zealand. He achieved fame in his lifetime, 'for his work in infant welfare, which grew from his preoccupation with racial betterment.' He has since been criticised for his eugenic beliefs. Smith, 'King, Sir (Frederic) Truby (1858-1938).'

[71] 'Plunket Society formed: 14 May 1907', *Ministry for Culture and Heritage: New Zealand History*, https://nzhistory.govt.nz/foundation-of-the-plunket-society, [accessed 22.12.20].

disregards the wants of the child, and encourages a strict feeding (every four hours) and sleep schedule that does not allow for night time feeding, discourages response to baby's tears, and outlines the number of bowel movements a child should have per day at any given age. The manual discourages the idea that 'maternal instinct' will 'tell the human mother how long or how often she should suckle her baby,' stating in no uncertain terms that overfeeding is nearly as dangerous as underfeeding.[72] Furthermore, detachment is key; cuddling is allowed ten minutes a day. Muir's strict adherence to these rules eventually led her to question if she had emotionally starved Gavin (above), with whom this routine did not encourage her to bond. It explains, also, her use of an enema when he fails to pass an appropriate number of bowel movements. Dr King asserts that a baby's bowels should be 'evacuated absolutely regularly at the same hour every day, regardless of whether there is any natural tendency or inclination for a motion at the appointed time or not.'[73]

While her use of Truby King's methods appear to have decreased as Gavin grew, perhaps because of her increased confidence and knowledge as a parent, there remains some level of detachment from him and a fear of his desire to play. On page 11 she explains that he '[goes] to bed more contentedly when he has been spoken to & laughed at first for a few minutes,' revealing a shift away from the Truby King routine in which she 'put [him] firmly in cot and left' ('Marmaduke', 6). She goes on to explain that she has 'instituted "play-minutes" after 10 & 6 pm feeds' ('Marmaduke', 13). After this she again notes that: 'he goes to sleep quietly' ('Marmaduke', 13). She begins to learn the need for a child to play and feel affection. That she had not attempted to play with Gavin up to this point is evident in her description that he 'Looked a trifle alarmed at first, but soon chuckled' ('Marmaduke', 13). But her fear never entirely fades. Later in the notebook, she explains that Gavin, upon seeing snow, 'giggled so much that I was afraid he would become hysterical, & turned him away from the snow. He stopped giggling at once' ('Marmaduke', 27). She is never able to fully remove herself from the anxiety that plagued her pregnancy, shown above, and her transition into motherhood.

[72] King, 11.
[73] King, 9.

Despite, and perhaps because of, her struggles to adapt to her new role, Muir's literary concerns intrude upon her concerns about mothering. These 'bookend' the notebook, beginning with a note on the back of page 1 reading 'Fantasy vs. Reality' and ending with a poem to Gavin showing decreased anxiety about motherhood and an increased ability to show affection:

> Since unto us a son is given
> How infinite is grown my worth!
> For the round of my breast is all his heaven
> And the spread of my knee his share of earth.
>
> And since our love engendered him
> How infinite his worth is grown
> Who now can stir each separate limb
> And sleep and wake and laugh alone ('Marmaduke', 37)[74]

Willa's sense of accomplishment in producing a child who can 'sleep and wake and laugh alone' allows her anxiety to subside. She writes without self-conscious theorising about her son or the nature of parenting. However, the poem also suggests that her feelings of self-worth rest on her ability to produce and raise a son. The suggestion, too, of gender leads to the question of whether a daughter would have increased her worth to the same extent. The focus on raising soldiers was 'in the air' after all. Ultimately, however, her ability to procreate is where her supreme worth comes from. This would be important later in the century, as Rich points out, when Nazism took this to the extreme. The Nazis saw women as 'mothers of men,' and 'glorified as no other twentieth-century system has done, the healthy body of the racially "pure" woman as incubator of sons and heroes.'[75] Women's self-worth resting on their ability to further the race, then, had dangerous outcomes in the early decades of that century. Rich notes that the opposite of fertile, 'barren', 'suggests a woman eternally empty and lacking' – unable to fulfil her duties to

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[74] 'Edwin and I were awed and happy at finding ourselves turned into these traditional figures, a father and a mother, all the more as the baby was a credit to us both. We now felt more deeply that we belonged to the human race, not only to each other' (*Belonging*, 144).

[75] Rich, 79.

patriarchal society, worthless.[76] As suggested by this poem, Willa, despite her feminism, has succumbed at least in part to these engrained patriarchal beliefs.[77]

Other instances of creative work appear in the reverse of the notebook, and in apparently random sections of 'Marmaduke'. Significantly, the most influential literary intrusions are at the beginning – after she has set *Imagined Corners* aside – and at the end, when she may have been looking to return to *Imagined Corners*. Notably, she says on page 5 that Gavin likes the sensation of warm water and it is in the bath that he begins movement with his 'trunk'. That he likes warm water seems a strange fact to note; most babies and adults enjoy the sensation of warm water. Its connections to the womb and to birth are significant in the context of this notebook, but she does not acknowledge these. However, her preoccupation with water at this stage may be a consequence of her work on *Imagined Corners*, in which water is the central motif. Page 6 contains a note on water again, when she describes his 'huge motion' as 'an ocean.' *Imagined Corners* remains on her mind and colours aspects of her child's life that she deems most noteworthy.

Other literary intrusions concern themes of the maternal, nature, and the unconscious versus the conscious that are present in all of her output. These are littered throughout 'Marmaduke', revealing her preoccupation with these themes even when forced to take leave of her creative work. For instance, on the back of page 35, she considers the reasoning and value of breast-feeding versus a bottle. She writes about the 'vital connection with life – Universe living link to everything' which makes the act of breast-feeding, therefore, 'strongly emotional' ('Marmaduke', verso 35). She goes on to say that the baby learns the 'Inexhaustibility of Nature' compared to the bottle, which 'can be seen, diminishing fatally' ('Marmaduke', verso 35). She concludes that the source of milk in the breast is 'unknown' to the baby, and therefore 'must evoke faith not reason' – an idea that presents itself once more in *Imagined Corners* through the speech

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[76] Rich, 29. See chapters three and four.

[77] This may have been due to her study of Freud, who claims that women want a male baby because a baby 'with a penis, satisfies a woman's penis envy insofar as the baby functions as a substitute for the organ she desires yet lacks.' Kristeva argues that: 'the baby is not a substitute penis but rather an antidote to what she calls feminine fatigue' from their 'strangeness to the symbolic order' and 'reverses the direction of desire from mother to baby.' Oliver, Kelly, 'Julia Kristeva's Maternal Passions', *Journal of French and Francophone Philosophy*, vol. XVIII, no. 1 (2008-2010), 1-8, 1, 3. See chapter three for an analysis about women's place in the symbolic order.

of Dr Scrymgeour ('Marmaduke', verso 35).[78] This short note in the journal is heavy with implications about her ideas on gender roles. If breast-feeding invokes faith rather than reason, it follows naturally that women invoke faith generally – an essentialist (and restrictive) belief that is evident in *Imagined Corners* and *Women: An Inquiry*.

Muir also views this connection between nature, emotions, and her breast milk as a connection with the universe. Despite the lower status women held in Muir's society, the connection of women to the universe has been a popular and powerful argument in feminism (Hélène Cixous's white ink theory for women writers, for instance) and in Muir's own version of feminism. Rich devotes a chapter outlining the various feminists, patriarchal anthropologists, and psychoanalysts (including Freud) who have searched for a matriarchal history and women's inherent connection to the spiritual realm. Uncovering women's 'inherent' value and strength has been an important method of empowering women and encouraging them to appreciate their value and abilities, even if it has come to be viewed as problematic. These essentialist arguments provided the foundation for women to insist on equality and to push further into the workplace. While essentialism ultimately limited the ways in which women could fight for their rights or show their abilities (as is evident in *Women: An Inquiry*) and social constructionism became the preferred theory, Muir's allusion to the inherent worth of women in reference to the universe is crucial. Its place at the end of the notebook suggests that she is gradually becoming more comfortable with the value and power she holds as a mother. Her fear early on of becoming mere source of milk begins to move into an understanding of her value as his primary caregiver. This is further emphasised in her poem to Gavin, which celebrates her worth because of his reliance on her as his 'heaven' and 'earth' (see above).

However, this is also a particularly fatalistic comment. Gavin will not always rely on her, and will soon wean off of breast milk. Yet, these are the points that Rich says we must stress and revisit if we are to collapse patriarchal institutions: '[t]he dependency of the male child on a woman in the first place' is something 'we must recognize in any attempt to change the institutions that have germinated from them.'[79] Muir, however,

[78] See chapter three.
[79] Rich, 54.

appears to see the potential "emasculation" of men by reminding them of their primary reliance on women as a way to produce resentment and further misogyny. Several points in her notebook reveal her anxiety about the thought that her maternal worth is fleeting. Muir appears troubled by her temporary importance. She theorises that: 'Men's earliest relations w. women are so undignified that some of them spend the rest of their lives trying to get even' ('Marmaduke', 18). This statement unveils much about her concept of feminism, and about the reason she pushed the public image of an equal marriage. Willa feared associating Edwin with the conclusion that men are all 'trying to get even,' while simultaneously providing a reason why the patriarchy violently oppresses women.

Furthermore, her expression in *Belonging* that Edwin is used to having women take care of him is her attempt to assert her worth in their relationship and distance him from the 'getting even' phase of maturity. If he always needs her, her worth cannot fade as it will with Gavin when he has moved on from his 'Earliest complex' (she believes) seeing her as 'Mother God' in which she is 'a presence rather than a power' ('Marmaduke', 19). Rich, also writing from a Freudian background, outlines a similar theory, prevalent in society as she sees it. That 'each woman and each man has once, in earliest infancy, lived under the power of the mother.'[80] Yet Edwin, like Hector with Aunt Janet and Elizabeth in *Imagined Corners*, has nonetheless remained dependent on Willa's presence. Like the episode mentioned above in which Edwin was more concerned with his sense of loss at her hospitalisation, Muir has the security she needs so long as he depends on her. Before Gavin, she was already a mother in demand and will continue to be so after he no longer relies on her. Muir wrote also about the 'mother complex' in 'Alas We Females!'. Unfortunately, the page on which she discusses this in detail has been torn in half, leaving only partial sentences. What does remain is: 'Too much, I think, has been said about the "mother complex", which seems to me a necessary and natural part of human evolution and only to be discouraged when it becomes morbid' ('Alas We Females!', 7). Here, she embraces the attachment of a son for his mother, hinting to her fear of lost value later in Gavin's life.

[80] Rich, 73. Rich suggests, however, that this has contributed to the 'recurrence of dreams, legends, myths, of an archetypal powerful Woman, or of a golden age ruled by women.' This can hardly be said about Gavin, but could account for Edwin's visions with angelic women described in *An Autobiography*.

Some of Muir's statements, even as she comes to better accept her role as presence rather than power, suggest that she feels exploited, and that this exploitation stems directly from the roles imposed upon her. She frequently mentions breast-feeding in such a way that suggests she feels more like a milk machine than a person. Here, we see an instance in which, 'the emotional bonds between a woman and her children make her vulnerable in ways which the forced labourer does not know.'[81] This ultimately is the goal of the patriarchy, however, as 'the womb,' and therefore women's procreative abilities, 'has historically been turned against us and itself made into a source of powerlessness.'[82] Then on page 17, Muir explains in more detail the conclusion she has come to on page 13 that there is a 'comfort-complex attached to sucking.' She is not providing the comfort, but her breast is, which relegates her worth as a person. Here, her desire to detach herself from becoming a milk machine denies her the inherent worth and power that would come with accepting her role as provider. In *Belonging,* she writes of the experience: 'My whole life, it was true, was governed by the baby's needs, for I was the milk, and the milk couldn't walk away in search of other amusement' (*Belonging,* 145). Furthermore, her lack of understanding about the comfort attached to thumb sucking until this point reveals her desire to assign Freudian significance to his actions, while also avoiding the thought that her worth is limited to her milk source. As early as page 2 she tries to understand the act of Gavin sucking on his fist instead of her breast and on the back of page 9, she mentions his 'interest in fist sucking.' Her preoccupation with this continues for several pages. She fears her identity is being subsumed by her role as milk source: '[he] seemed to recognise my voice as the voice of the milk' ('Marmaduke', 4). This is contrasted with her note that Gavin 'Definitely recognises Edwin' ('Marmaduke', 10). Here, she is not human, woman, or even mother: she is milk source, though Edwin remains himself. Her expression of this disassociation from her own identity and body combined with her theory about the 'Mother God' may be her attempt at regaining value. This is an instance of the 'power of the mother,' which is 'to give or withhold nourishment and warmth, to give or withhold survival itself,' like the

[81] Rich, 52.
[82] Rich, 68.

forget-me-nots in water.[83] After all, because women were not, at this time, soldiers, 'Nowhere else [...] does a woman possess such literal power over life and death.'[84]

Here lies the source of her feelings of exploitation, but also the source of her desire to detach her body from milk machine in order to regain control over this mother power. On the same page, Muir contemplates matriarchy and patriarchy in the life of baby. She states that: 'Mere size does not yet mean power to the infant […] No fear attached to man in comparison w. woman: sense no special propitiation of man God in infancy' ('Marmaduke', 19). Gavin is aware of needs and desires that are fulfilled mainly by Willa, but she does not take this as a position of power but rather as an affirmation of her worth. Willa 'was instinctively repelled by the doctrine of accumulating deliberate power, either power over oneself or power over others' which may have caused her to prefer the term 'presence' (*Belonging*, 43). While Gavin does not understand the 'power' of the patriarchy, Willa is also safe from the patriarchy. She is not competing for worth – it is inherent in her ability to withhold or grant food, to be 'heaven' and 'earth.' The power of man and of the patriarchy is irrelevant and worthless to the baby, and therefore, to the balance of their relationship.

In contrast, 'the man God' (quite noticeably avoiding Edwin's name) 'is so conscious of his magnanimity in not beating or eating the little creature that he constantly suggests it: & the creature accepts it as an axiom, that the man God is very gracious not to manhandle him' ('Marmaduke', 19). This passage is particularly unusual. It makes use of traditional beliefs that man is the natural aggressor and dominant force, the soldier, – beliefs that certainly were popular in Muir's time, but of which the infant Gavin would not have been aware. It is similar, too, to a passage in *Belonging*, in which Muir explores how Edwin is not 'typical' in that he does not physically "discipline" Willa. Yet again, this is a bizarre inclusion. While it is logical that she would feel the need, in a memoir about their marriage, to explain their uniqueness, this passage also suggests a discrepancy. This is certainly not to suggest that Edwin was violent with Willa or their son but the combination of passages does imply that she at least felt gratitude that Edwin was 'magnanimous' in his refusal to engage in corporal discipline with their family. It

[83] Ibid.
[84] Ibid.

implies a certain expectation that men held a traditional right to impose power over the family. Perhaps this is why she preferred to be 'presence' rather than 'power' while acting 'Mother God.' It is doubtful, given her fierce character and feminism, that she condoned or agreed with these beliefs, but it may have been an unfortunate consequence of her upbringing in a society in which male dominance was the norm.

She goes on to say that: 'Matriarchy belongs to first year of consciousness → Patriarchy to second year?' ('Marmaduke', 19). She predicts her own loss of authority. Muir well knew that patriarchy does not lose its power after the second year of consciousness. She watches out for it closely, writing on a verso leaf: 'third year – no sign of it yet' ('Marmaduke', verso 18). Directly below, evidently written at a much later date, she updates: 'fifth year – wants to be like Dadda, who is a Boy' ('Marmaduke', verso 18). The patriarchy has triumphed. Furthermore, this passage shows that she knows that patriarchy does not rely on the provision of needs and desires in order to retain authority, as matriarchy does, but rather the ability to take the source of fulfilment away. This links to Muir's reticence in defending her role in their translation, and her anger in later journals that Edwin felt it would be 'undignified' to correct the misconception that he was the primary translator.[85] He has the power to defend her credit, but, as the patriarch, is not required to, and doing so, while magnanimous, would offer her more power than he has – an unpopular move in a patriarchal society and not beneficial for himself.

Her paranoia about her son is perhaps, in part, a consequence of these factors. She appears at times suspicious of Gavin, who will one day take up his own position as more powerful than her in society.[86] Early in the notebook, there is an incident in which Gavin has not made a bowel movement that day. She uses an enema quickly and then asks, when the enema is not returned, 'Does he *hold* it back?' ('Marmaduke', 7). An infant's primary cause for existence is the fulfilment of needs and desires, and he therefore has no reason to hold back a pleasurable and natural activity like a bowel movement. Yet, she seems to see this as a power play by her infant son. She goes on to write: 'This morning stared at pram umbrella shading sun off his face. Persistently' ('Marmaduke', 7). For an

[85] See chapter five.

[86] See chapter four for an analysis of this hierarchy in *Mrs Ritchie*.

infant who can barely move and cannot speak, there is not much more to be done when awake than to observe his surroundings. It is possible the sun shining through the fabric simply created a delightful impression of light. It is an unusually mundane inclusion that is made stranger by emphasising the word 'Persistently'. It suggests an undue level of suspicion regarding his actions. She continues: 'The stare is quite silent + still: one would think he was asleep if his eyes were not wide open' ('Marmaduke', 8). She appears disturbed by the unknown state of his thoughts and feelings. But after this, she seems to become aware of her own paranoia: 'Discovered he had returned yesterday's enema partly on my apron, instead of on his nap, That's why I thought he had held it back' ('Marmaduke', 8). That final explanation of her suspicions seems unnecessary in a journal that, as far as she knew, would be for their family or just herself. It appears an embarrassed and self-defensive statement.

This is not the only time she adds undue significance to Gavin's actions; her descriptions frequently allude to Freudian theories. Christopher Grieve's (Hugh MacDiarmid) second wife, Valda Grieve, once wrote about Muir's passion for psychoanalysis in a scathing letter to Helen Cruickshank. She recalls a scene in St. Andrews where: 'Willa [was] sprawling on the beach in one of those modern bathing costumes – four sizes too small – just oozing with grossness & holding forth unnecessarily on her favourite topic – phallic symbolism.'[87] While this says much about the failed friendship between the Grieves and Muirs, it speaks also to a desire to belittle Willa, downplay her progressive attitudes as 'gross,' and take up the image of Willa's body as an unwitting victim to the hateful opinions directed towards her status as an outspoken woman. It makes sense, then, that she would feel insecure in reclaiming her body throughout 'Marmaduke'. Romero suggests: 'the textual representation of Muir's twin tensions of belonging and not belonging throughout her life, and she looks to psychoanalysis as a way to address the dualism of self.'[88] Yet, Valda also clearly expresses Muir's obsession with 'phallic symbolism.' This is present in 'Marmaduke' with descriptions of Gavin that state, almost bemusedly: 'Has had one or two erections: but apparently pays no attention to them at all' ('Marmaduke', 18). Muir's observations

[87] *Moving in Circles,* 31n.
[88] Romero, 106.

of her son often include his premature sexual inclinations. As discussed above, Muir explores Gavin's desire to suck her nipple and, when he cannot, his fist. On page 16, she describes the, 'Great respect in [the] way he eyes the breast,' as if questioning the development of an Oedipus complex. Her desire to see phallic symbolism produces unusual conclusions from the actions of an infant: 'Shoots out his legs a great deal. (masturbation?)' ('Marmaduke', 29). Masturbation implies an awareness of the action, and certainly an awareness of sexual pleasure taking place.[89] It is unlikely that at his young age he would be aware of his actions as sexual. Pleasure, perhaps, but a conscious effort or awareness cannot have been made when he is still struggling to move his body. Regardless, Muir is determined to see significance in his actions, if only to rationalise writing such a detailed journal.

This continued later in life, with many scholars saying that this was the cause of tension between Willa and Gavin. Knox explains that:

> he was subject to continued criticism and his mother's 'psychological theorizing.' Some of the college residents of the time spoke of Willa and Edwin's resentment of his presence, with Edwin particularly 'splenetic about it.' According to the poet Tom Scott, there was 'a definite and unpleasant tension between Gavin and his mother.'[90]

There is no greater indication of Muir's tendency to psychologise her son than 'Marmaduke'. What this thesis contends, however, is that Willa's success as a mother needs re-evaluation using current thinking on motherhood to reframe the perception of Muir in her own first wave feminist context. With these as a framework, Muir's life can be understood from a more sympathetic perspective, acknowledging the tough balance that she had to strike between wife, mother, and breadwinner. *Women: An Inquiry*, discussed in the next chapter, shows her struggle with this balance and her desire to understand her position as woman, both theoretically and practically, and the contradictions that arose through this process. A private journal, 'Marmaduke' is an example of writing that is not self-conscious. Willa grapples with complex topics without concern for their literary use or for finding a logical solution. Nor is she concerned with clearly articulating these issues to an audience. In contrast, *Women: An Inquiry* shows a

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[89] 'masturbation, n.', *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, www.oed.com/view/Entry/114848 [accessed 10.03.18].
[90] Knox, 196.

woman who yearns to understand her identity using a public mode in order to help others explore gendered issues. As such, these distinct texts reveal Muir's range and the importance of the maternal in reassessing her unpublished and published works in tandem.

Chapter Two

The Mother of Scottish Feminist Theory? The Problematic Feminism of Women: An Inquiry

'There will not be a free woman as long
as we lack an ethics of the maternal.'[1]

Willa Muir's first published work, *Women: An Inquiry* (1925), contrasts with the more hardened gender philosophy of *Imagined Corners*, *Mrs Ritchie*, and *Mrs Grundy*, providing insight into the mind of a complicated intellectual with stormy, contradictory political views. This essay borders on old-fashioned while attempting to appear, on the surface, harmonious and progressive. Though *Women: An Inquiry* ostensibly seeks to understand sexual difference between women and men in order to show the value of women's creative work, the dissent between its style and its argument make it difficult to read as a coherent example of feminist theory. Its 'hypothesis' that 'the essential difference between men and women […] makes them complementary to each other' borders too closely to the flawed "separate but equal" rationale used in systemic oppression since Reconstruction in America (*Women: An Inquiry*, 13).[2] Despite William Knox's assurance that the essay 'marked her out as a serious theorist of feminism,' this chapter will contend – as does this thesis generally – that Muir's 'serious feminism' is more evident in her fiction.[3] But while it must be acknowledged that 'it was one of the first to articulate a fully developed concept of separate spheres,' what is most valuable about the text is the framework it provides for reading the rest of her works.[4] While she argues that 'There can be no question of absolute domination of one sex by the other when the strength of each lies in a different direction,' her fiction calls into question

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[1] Kristeva, Julia, 'Reliance, or Maternal Eroticism', trans. Rachel Widawsky and Perry Zurn, *Journal of American Psychoanalytical Association*, vol. 62, no. 1 (2014), 69-85, 82-3.

[2] Knox, 187. It is very likely that Muir would have been aware of the 'separate but equal' argument as it arose most prominently in the 1896 U.S. Supreme Court case, *Plessy v. Ferguson.* The term was used after the decision of the court, in which 'Justice Brown stated that even though the Fourteenth Amendment intended to establish absolute equality for the races separate treatment did not imply the inferiority of African Americans.' Significantly, this phrase has been used in the UK in reference to gender, with one of the more recent investigations taking place in Britain's High Court in 2016, looking at 'sex separation in religious schools.' Gilkis, Krystyna Blokhina, 'Separate But Equal: *Plessy v. Ferguson*', *Cornell Law School: Legal Information Institute* (2018) https://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/separate_but_equal [accessed 25.04.2021]. Paz-Fuchs, Amir; Harel-Ben-Shahar, Tammy, 'Separate but Equal Reconsidered: Religious Education and Gender Separation', *Human Rights Law Review*, vol. 19 (2019), 369-386, 369.

[3] Knox, 187.

[4] Ibid. Arguably, *Mrs Ritchie* defines these separate spheres much more powerfully; see chapter four.

whether this is practical in a historically patriarchal civilisation (*Women: An Inquiry,* 13-14). In other words, her discovery of separate spheres insists on the 'strength' of these without in turn realising how these spheres prevent women from leaving the home. Instead of showing readers how 'most of the boy-and-girl stuff' is 'nonsense,' she further engrains women's place as carers (*Belonging*, 140). Yet, just as Edwin's first publication, *We Moderns* (1918), sets out a loose philosophical framework by which to read the progression of his work (though it is hardly his best), Willa's first published work also sets out her preoccupations with the maternal, the creative woman, and her path to uncovering the most effective method for questioning gender-based oppression.

Moreover, *Women: An Inquiry* shows early scrambling with essentialism versus social construction of gender – a theory that would not arrive until the mid-1960s with Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann's *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (1966). *Women: An Inquiry* shows early hints of a woman attempting to uncover the reason for women's oppression. The essay is in line with Hamilton and Holtby, and, like these theorists, Muir's essay relies upon her understanding of the differences between gendered expectations and the ways these unnaturally restrict women. Contemporary theorists focused on contemporary issues – especially the expectation to marry and mother, and with economic obstacles that limited women's options in their choice of partner. Muir's work contributes to these debates by adding her understanding of the ways that women are shaped artistically and intellectually, rather than focusing purely on economic need, as Hamilton does. Read within that context, the essay becomes a more useful text for analysing Muir's feminist contributions. Written two years prior to the birth of Gavin, the essay offers an anchor to ground and situate Muir's understanding of the maternal prior to the birth of her son and the corresponding journal, 'Marmaduke'. The essay shows how Muir problematises this double bind of being a working writer and a mother.

While *Imagined Corners, Mrs Ritchie, Living with Ballads*, and even *Belonging* speak to her adherence of progressive lifestyle choices by distancing herself and her marriage from traditional gender norms, in this polemic text Muir's theoretical ideas fall disappointingly short of her own standards. Only later in life, in *Belonging*, is she able to

fully articulate gender theory. Here she writes of her experiences of being a woman at the time, and her reasoning for speaking against gender norms:

> we females were strong natural forces deserving a status of our own as free citizens. The theory of female inferiority did not square with the actual strength and courage of women, and probably never had done so, I decided; as a theory it was flying in the face of common sense and experience (*Belonging*, 141).[5]

Similar ideas are also visible, with rather more artistic success than in *Woman: An Inquiry*, in 'Mrs Muttoe and the Top Storey'.[6] Unlike *Belonging* and 'Mrs Muttoe', *Women: An Inquiry* does not have the benefit of hindsight and experience, and the contradictions present in this essay have resulted in contradictory reviews. While William Knox argues that 'it would be difficult to think of any other woman in the last century who has made a greater contribution to feminist theory in Scotland' Margaret Elphinstone has called *Women: An Inquiry* 'an uncomfortable text' in its 'paradoxical definitions of gender difference as both essential, and socially constructed.'[7] She concludes that Muir's 'vehement objections to the inferior status of women in a male world seem to contradict her determinist argument.'[8] Muir's search for that '"parity of esteem" as between male and female in patriarchal structures' that she could not find in her youth hinders her ability to perceive the problem clearly: practice and theory do not always align (*Belonging*, 141). Rather than analyse the problem of gender in how maternity has restricted women, separating women's biological functions from their individual abilities, she looks for an ideal. She searches for a way to 'belong' in current structures, and, without changing the structures themselves, find a way to change men's perception of women, which, she argues, is 'tinged with vague contempt, and […] vague reverence' (*Women: An Inquiry*, 9). In other words, she gently shifts around perception, hoping to find a way to peacefully and quietly mould restrictive biological functions into a utopia of gender balance. Certainly, she seems to ignore the conversation around women's work

[5] 'Alas We Females!' is the title of an essay co-written with Flora Grierson. See chapter one.
[6] See chapter five.
[7] Knox, 182; Elphinstone, 405.
[8] Elphinstone, 406.

after the First World War, which McCarthy shows had 'an air of conditionality and temporariness […] because every woman was treated as a potential or actual mother.'[9]

Two reviews of *Women: An Inquiry* in 1925 and 1926 also feature a review of Austin Harrison's contemporaneous examination of the 'female condition,' *Pandora's Hope: A Study of Woman* (1925). The reviewers are considerably more scathing of his work, seeming to prefer Muir's more succinct, essentialist argument. In *The New Statesmen* review from January 1926, the reviewers declared that they 'are prepared, though not without hesitation and some repugnance, to concede that Woman is a possible subject for learned disquisition,' but question Harrison's use of biology to understand gender and sex differences, and the ways that equality will benefit society.[10] Significantly, they go on to include a passage from Harrison's book that celebrates women's restriction to motherhood, claiming it to be a 'genius of life' and that '[t]here is nothing derogatory in this limitation, for balance is the law of harmony.'[11] This is similar to Muir's premise, something the reviewers note: "Miss [sic] Willa Muir has discovered that woman's sphere is life, the concrete and the unconscious, and she announces this discovery in 40 inoffensive pages.'[12]

Basil de Selincourt of *The Times Literary Supplement* offered Muir much more print space in his review from November 1925. He writes that Muir's work shows how:

> women, just because they work in the unconscious, are a danger to society when ignorant and suppressed. When women are ignorant the laws of society are prescribed by men—that is, by the half of the race which has least knowledge of the ends to be served.[13]

However, de Selincourt's approval arises from Muir's acceptance of essentialism. He writes:

> There is some danger lest, in our reaction against the injustices and superstitions of the past, we may allow ourselves to confuse anew the true relations of men and

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[9] McCarthy, 103.

[10] '"Women: an Inquiry." Muir (Book Review)', *New Statesman*, vol. 26, no. 662 (Jan. 1926), http://ezproxy.lib.gla.ac.uk/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.ezproxy.lib.gla.ac.uk/magazines/women-inquiry-muir-book-review/docview/1306857270/se-2?accountid=14540 [accessed 25.04.21], 360-61, 360.

[11] '"Women: an Inquiry"', 361.

[12] '"Women: an Inquiry"', 361.

[13] de Selincourt, Basil, 'The Future of Women', *The Times Literary Supplement Historical Archive*, vol. 1245 (26 Nov. 1925), link.gale.com/apps/doc/EX1200214402/TLSH?u=tlsacc&sid=TLSH&xid=26a5c49c [accessed 25.04.21], 790.

> women and to count upon a kind of equality between them which, being unreal, would produce a crop of fresh injustices. We need not merely to uproot prejudice, but to take care that the ground it occupied is not left empty. […] by an accident of their physical constitution, life has been made easier for men, that will be a reason for doing whatever reason and chivalry may suggest, to redress the balance.[14]

Though Muir insists in *Belonging* that 'Male dominance had been my mother's creed and as a child I met it like a toad meeting the teeth of a harrow' (*Belonging*, 140), *Women: An Inquiry* seems to have given some – those who would look for it – reason to believe that their dominance (in the guise of 'chivalry') is indeed valid. Muir, in many ways, sides with the same biological essentialism that constricted women's opportunities for centuries.[15] Her arguments echo women's temperance movements, who argued for the 'complementary natures' of men and women, based on the 'supposed biological, mental, emotional and spiritual differences between the sexes' and in doing so, 'the sexual division of labour and women's social inferiority was justified.'[16] Essentialism, despite Muir's good intentions, ends up justifying the means by which women are oppressed.

Alison Smith argues that Muir 'hits out at the forced subserviency of women in a male-dominated world society, and comments very sharply on the traps of condition and role.'[17] Yet, Smith too points towards the paradox between what Muir writes and the essay's 'very analytical voice.'[18] This deliberate analytical style contradicts her statement within the essay that 'Women have none of the detachment which is equally prepared to prove that life is significant or that it is meaningless' (*Women: An Inquiry*, 23).

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[14] Ibid.

[15] See, for instance, Ruth Hubbard's 'Sexism and Sociobiology'; *The Malleus Malificarum*; and Carole Tavris, 'Brain: Dissecting the Differences'; and works by Anne Fausto-Sterling, including *Sexing the Body*, 'The Five Sexes', and 'The Five Sexes Revisted'. Science has been used also to justify racism, from early exhibitions of the black female body (the "Hottentot Venus", or Saarje Baartment, for one) to the eugenics period of the nineteenth century that led to the Holocaust but also to the genocide of indigenous populations in North America and to the Rwandan genocide. See, for instance, William Tucker's 'The Ideology of Racism: Misusing Science to Justify Racial Discrimination'. 'Black' is capitalised throughout this thesis in line with Black linguists, such as John Baugh and Geneva Smitherman. This is to recognise that the term is a cultural identifier, rather than the colonialist colour descriptor.

[16] Smitley, Megan K., *'Woman's Mission': The Temperance and Women's Suffrage Movements in Scotland,* c.*1870-1914* (Doctoral Thesis, University of Glasgow, 2002), 19-20.

[17] Smith, Alison, 'And Woman Created Woman: Carswell, Shepherd and Muir, and the Self-made Woman', *Gendering the Nation: Studies in Modern Scottish Literature*, ed. Chris Whyte (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995), 25-47, 43.

[18] Ibid.

Ironically, the detached voice she adopts in 'Marmaduke' and which she attempts in this essay allows her to prove the significance of mothers' work and the lives of those for whom they care. Muir's belief in women's inability to detach may stem, then, from cultural understandings of women at the time. Similarly, Muir's link between traditionally feminine attributes and that of the socially inferior sex borders on a loose and early understanding of social construction well before Berger and Luckmann articulated the concept:

> In a State where men are dominant, as in most of our civilized States for the past two thousand years, certain attributes are considered to be characteristic of women which are equally characteristic of men in a State where women are dominant (*Women: An Inquiry*, 7).

Whether Muir realised it or not, this statement disputes the scientific and religious doctrines of sex difference that she unwittingly espouses throughout the essay. She understands, however, that the greater disparity links predominantly to women's childbearing capabilities, connecting women's creative output directly to their reproductive possibilities. This, she says, is the reason that: 'In a masculine civilization the creative work of women may be belittled, misinterpreted, or denied: but if it is a reality, its existence will be proved at least by the emotional colour of the denial' (*Women: An Inquiry*, 8-9). The creative work of reproduction has, throughout patriarchal civilisation, certainly been triumphed in its own way: one need only look at the idolatry of the Virgin Mary. Muir argues that Eve and the Virgin – and the patriarchy's fear or reverence of both – shows the power of motherhood:

> motherhood was smirched with original sin. Later on it was still further belittled. Women were regarded as mere receptacles, passive receptive bodies which created nothing. Men must have felt that motherhood was important, or they would not have tried to explain it away altogether (*Women: An Inquiry*, 11).

Muir's treatment of female sexuality in *Imagined Corners*, *Mrs Ritchie*, and *Mrs Grundy* continues this argument, showing how reverence of motherhood using the Virgin is specifically ground in reproduction of the community without allowing women independent identities or sexuality. *Women: An Inquiry* is evidently Muir's attempt to revere all mothers, taking the Virgin down from her pedestal and raising Eve up from her pit. She is searching, then, not so much for equality between men and women, but for all

women to be treated and respected equally to one another. She attempts this by reminding men where they come from: 'At the lowest estimate of their powers all women are potential mothers. Men are born of women, and of women only' (*Women: An Inquiry*, 11).

Despite its already outdated essentialism and general unpopularity, both among contemporary and current critics, Muir's contradictions appear to stem from a lack of the right language. In that vein, writing of *Women: An Inquiry*, Romero notes how the 'powerful statement on the repression of motherhood connects her to the feminist debate of the 1960s and 1970s, when motherhood started to be considered a political institution in a social context as a vindication of the affirmation of women.'[19] Romero goes on to say that the essay 'proposes in post-Freudian terms a woman mother whose power can achieve reconciliation with her lost self and who claims recognition of the experience of motherhood as a gift one gives to the other.'[20] And if one follows the theory that motherhood is fundamentally linked to a woman's creative output, Muir is offering value to women's creativity – regardless of the limitations she imposes upon it – by arguing for the value of motherhood itself. This is not unlike Julia Kristeva, who looked for an 'ethics of the maternal.' Kelly Oliver argues:

> Kristeva imagines a 'cure' for feminine fatigue in motherhood. She maintains that a woman's extraneousness or strangeness to the symbolic order is manifested in a specific way during pregnancy and motherhood, particularly in mother's relation to the infant. And pregnancy and motherhood are ways of working through the passion that makes us speaking beings, the passion that makes us human rather than animals.[21]

Just as Muir argues that 'Every great man has been inspired by some woman' (*Women: An Inquiry*, 9) Oliver says 'it is from the side of the mother herself that Kristeva locates the essence of human passion.'[22]

While Muir did not have the language of 'feminine fatigue' to understand the creative blocks faced by women, she recognises, as chapter three shows, women's place outwith the symbolic order and uses motherhood to make sense of it. For the sake of

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[19] Romero, 85n.
[20] Romero, 83.
[21] Oliver, 3.
[22] Ibid.

Women: An Inquiry, Muir summarises her understanding of women and men's complementary abilities, and therefore women's connection to the maternal, to creation, and how this complementarity combats what Kristeva later calls 'feminine fatigue': 'Men create ideas, and women make use of them: women create human beings, and men make use of them: both men and women seize what they need for the service of their own purposes' (*Women: An Inquiry*, 40). In the process, women must 'carry their womanhood with them into all occupations' and in so doing, not attempt to 'do a man's work in a man's way' (*Women: An Inquiry*, 35). This would risk a woman's abandonment of 'the creative love for individual which is essential for womanhood,' which, in turn, kills her 'spiritually': 'a formal woman is twice as formal as any man, and her work is necessarily barren' (*Women: An Inquiry*, 35).[23] Muir sees this embrace of the abstract and unconscious as a path to maternal passion and creativity, and as a way to contribute to society without the actual act of bearing children.

It would be simple for progressive twenty-first century readers to dismiss her essay: like most writers of her time, Muir does not account for infertile individuals, individuals who cannot carry a fetus to term, transwomen, or transmen. Due to its historical context, and due to the nature of this thesis, this chapter will not delve into the problematic nature of her binary, trans-exclusionary gender ideology. However, it is worth addressing Muir's lack of awareness of childless women, which seems, given her own childlessness at the time, curious. Her assumption that all women are 'potential mothers' – something Elise echoes in *Imagined Corners* – may be another instance of her tendency to 'take for granted' aspects of life that seem, to her at least, self-evident. But she was unaware, at the time of writing the essay, that she herself was pregnant and would soon suffer a miscarriage: 'I proceeded to have a bad miscarriage—think of it! I had no idea that I was pregnant […] No wonder I was brooding over the bearing of children! I was, and am, disgusted.'[24] Seven years into her marriage with Edwin, and apparently practicing no contraceptive methods, she still did not consider that this could be due to infertility on either her part or Edwin's: 'Why I have had no conceptions until

[23] Annie Ritchie is arguably the embodiment of this theory; see chapter four.
[24] *Modernism and* Nationalism, 201.

now neither he [the doctor] nor anyone can tell me.'[25] Her ignorance, or will to ignore, the possibility of infertility seems, nevertheless, to always carry undertones of the 'barren' woman. *Women: An Inquiry*, Christianson writes, 'carries undercurrents of the barren woman being the unnatural woman.'[26] If woman's natural creative output is inherently linked to their maternity, any woman who cannot bear a child must not be naturally creative, and must therefore be outside the bounds of natural law. Importantly, Muir sees, as noted above, a woman who embraces a 'man's way' of doing work as 'barren' – perhaps she takes for granted that her readers will understand that to her, a 'barren' woman is not one without children, but one who does not invest in her own maternal passions, and therefore, her creativity.

Muir's concern with barren women in her novels combined with her implied dismissal of their creativity, perhaps stems from her own unstated concern with her inability to conceive at this point. It speaks to her own insecurities of being an inadequate writer, 'doubts she carried with her to the end.'[27] In this way, she is arguably more concerned with creative barrenness. This would explain, then, why the 'spinsters' in her novels are those who do not invest in any sort of creative function, procreative, artistic, or otherwise. Oliver suggests that: 'Kristeva argues that without motherhood, women remain extraneous and therefore most likely paranoid or hysterical or both.'[28] Like Kristeva, Muir shows that women require a kind of motherhood in order to avoid hysteria. However, Muir provides a different kind of motherhood – an ethics of the maternal that focuses solely on artistic or emotional reproduction – and gives value for the reportedly 'surplus' (or extraneous) women after the First World War. The motherless women Elise and Elizabeth are celebrated as they strive to engage other creative powers. The suggestion is not that Elise and Elizabeth are 'surplus', but rather New Women, aware of and embracing independence and, potentially, the new scientific advancements that would allow sex without children.[29] Yet, Muir had given birth to Gavin by the time she finished *Imagined Corners*. At the time of writing *Women: An Inquiry*, however,

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[25] Ibid.
[26] *Moving in Circles*, 66.
[27] Mudge, 7.
[28] Oliver, 5.
[29] See chapter three.

there remains an undercurrent of fear that, should she prove to be barren, her own artistic creativity and success would likewise prove impossible.

Further supporting the notion that the thesis of *Women: An Inquiry*'s stems from Muir's own insecurities is her argument that women's creativity is better suited to "loose forms":

> the tendency to elaborate form at the expense of content is a danger to which men are more susceptible in art than women. Women's greater vitality and comparative weakness in conscious life expose them rather to the opposite fault, a failure to achieve a strictness of form perfectly adequate to the intensity of the emotion expressed (*Women: An Inquiry,* 38).

In other words, she claims, 'The more elastic the form, the more shapeless it is, the more women are able to use it for sustained work' (*Women: An Inquiry,* 38). This hypothesis allows a woman who is a mother, wife, and manager of the domestic realm more freedom to ignore fine detail and style – the 'loose bulk of the novel makes it attractive to women' (*Women: An Inquiry,* 38-9). Woolf, in *A Room of One's Own* (1929), knew that this freedom to explore fine detail and refined style simply was not an option for women with domestic duties, and 'Mrs Muttoe' provides attention to Muir's own household and its accompanying limitations.[30] Yet, in *Women: An Inquiry,* Muir misses this important point: 'Certainly the greatest artists of historical times have been men, and there is no reason to think that the domination of men is even partly responsible for the lack of great women artists' (*Women: An Inquiry*, 38). Four years later, the publisher of *Women: An Inquiry*, Virginia Woolf, would argue the opposite. Woolf shows 'what effect poverty has on the mind' and the effects of being 'locked out.'[31] This enforced 'poverty and insecurity' of women, who must give up any money they earn to their husbands, directly contrasts with 'the safety and prosperity' of men, who are free to fund and become thinkers, who do not have the concerns of women, birthing child after child with no resources of her own.[32] And even Muir appears to be, at least slightly, aware of the imbalance in time and energy:

> Motherhood is also a greater tax on vital energy than fatherhood, […] The process of bearing a child culminates in a crisis which exhausts a woman's energy: to

[30] See chapter five.

[31] Woolf, Virginia, *A Room of One's Own* (London: Penguin Classics, 1929; 2000), 25.

[32] Woolf, 26.

> such an extent, indeed, that women often die of it. Moreover, it is a process which, once initiated, is not under conscious control, […] men have more energy to waste on their own individual purposes than women: that is to say, men have more energy at their conscious disposal. (*Women: An Inquiry*, 13).

Once more, she is close to the crux of the issue – an imbalance of who is allowed to waste energy – but cannot quite grasp it.[33]

In *Belonging* Muir reflects on her essay: 'I was thinking out the implications of my inability to detach myself from emotions, which I suspected might be not only a peculiarity of mine but a characteristic of most women' (114). This suggests her own feelings of "limitations" as a woman – her 'inability to detach' or consume disposable energy – are just below the surface of this essay. Yet, her 'inability to detach' comes not from inferiority, but from, as Muir herself shows, society's need for women to maintain the emotional wellbeing of the State. Certainly, Romero reads Muir's own 'very real anger and resentment' toward 'the ideal mother' in Muir's work:

> This ambivalent attitude toward her mother is reflected in her struggle not to become like her mother, a victim in the role of mother-housewife, the martyr of conventional motherhood, a repressive figure in a patriarchal family who wished to pass on her own pressure to conform to the degrading and passive role of 'Angel in the House.'[34]

These aspects of *Women: An Inquiry* – her inability to detach, her insecurity, her desire to provide value and worth to the maternal and to emotional labour, her desire to deflect the role of mother-housewife – arise again and again in her later works. Thus though *Women: An Inquiry* is an imperfect text, it offers a baseline understanding of the way to read Muir's novels and her non-fiction works. Its contradictory, essentialist nature plays on the boundaries of advanced theories of social construction. She attempts to write theory that values women's ability to procreate while unhinging their worth and creativity from maternal limitations. Yet, *Belonging*, in many instances, provides stronger feminist theory than *Women: An Inquiry*. In her memoir, Muir pinpoints her oppression as stemming from societal and familial expectations versus her essential, unique identity: 'As a schoolgirl I shrugged my shoulders at the gap between the self I knew and the female stereotyping expected of me' (*Belonging*, 140).

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[33] It would take giving birth to Gavin for Muir to understand this imbalance more fully. See chapter five.
[34] Romero, 81-2.

Imagined Corners, her first fictional text, offers a clearer representation of this divide between self and expectation by showing her readers the trap of patriarchy and its effects, rather than attempting to outline these. This is perhaps because, as Smith points out, Muir seems to have 'discovered that sometimes the gender balance, the harmony, couldn't be found.'[35] In *Imagined Corners*, Muir provides women a space of motherlessness and agency. This is particularly heightened when the novel is read through a queer lens, as shown in chapter three. While *Women: An Inquiry*, as a polemic, allows Muir to enter the feminist debate in an overt offensive, and arguably appeals only to those who choose to read feminist theory, *Imagined Corners*, as a novel, is open to a wider interpretation among a more varied audience. In so doing, the novel grants space to broader interpretations, such as the queer reading provided in this thesis, in order to push forward feminist literary critique of the text into new and ever-expanding realms.

[35] Smith, A. 43.

Chapter Three

'What you get married for if you don't want children?'[1]*: Queering* Imagined Corners

'There is love
Of woman unto woman, in its fibre
Stronger than knits a mother to her child.'[2]

Imagined Corners (1931), Willa Muir's first novel, expresses the maternal in a form that combines her differing preoccupations shown in 'Marmaduke' and *Women: An Inquiry* and which reappear in *Mrs Grundy*. The presence of child-rearing philosophy through the representation of Emily and Dr Scrymgeour anchors the novel in a practical, historical context. But her explorations of, what this chapter will argue, queerness and reproductive futurism ground the novel in her theoretical understandings of maternal creativity. *Imagined Corners* is a novel that interrogates gender roles, and in doing so, questions where the 'new place' for women in society and in (re)production fits in. Her conclusion, it would appear at the end of the novel, is that women's roles in reproduction, if they desire autonomy and freedom, are outwith the structural boundaries that tie them to biological productivity. In other words, Muir's practical knowledge of motherhood has, throughout the novel's 'long gestation,' shifted her theoretical understanding of women's creative powers, and brought her to the verdict that in order to attain autonomy, women cannot reach toward the symbolic Child within patriarchal society.[3]

Critics have often interpreted this novel through a modernist lens using psychoanalytic context to make sense of her use of dreams, a balance between interior and external selves, and the mirroring of Elise and Elizabeth (and Muir herself) within the confines of a strict, religious, patriarchal setting. Due to the already extensive scholarship on these aspects of the text, these will remain peripheral themes to support a queer maternal reading.[4] This chapter combines understandings of motherhood given the

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[1] 'The Waste Land', T.S. Elliot. Lee Edelman notes that this line is credited to Eliot's wife, Vivian. Edelman, Lee, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 12.

[2] Field, Michael, 'from *The Tragedy of Pardon*, Act III, scene iii, 1911' in *Nineteenth-Century Writings on Homosexuality*, ed. Chris White (Oxford: Routledge, 1999), 264.

[3] '*Imagined Corners*, Muir's first novel, had a long gestation.' Willa started writing *Imagined Corners* in 1926 in France, but it was not finished and published until 1931. Christianson's use of the term is indicative of the inevitable maternal allusions suggested by Muir's work. *Moving in Circles*, 85.

[4] See Aileen Christianson *Moving in Circles* and 'Willa Muir, Modernism and Gender'; Cheryl Maxwell's PhD thesis *The Formation and Development of Personal Identity in the Scottish Novel, 1920-1937*

context provided by 'Marmaduke' and *Women: An Inquiry*, and current queer scholarship to suggest the rejection of heteronormative societal structures within the text. Many critics agree that Elise and Elizabeth becoming romantically involved is a possible outcome. Discussing Elizabeth, Christianson notes that: 'The frankness of Muir's approach to sexuality here prepares us for the possibility of Elizabeth and Elise's future relationship.'[5] It is worth acknowledging that there will always be resistance to queer readings of women's love. Chris White notes that: 'It has become dogma of modern lesbian-feminist theory that these women meant nothing sexual by their passionate declarations of love and appreciation of one another's bodies' arguing that sexology and 'male prurience' has influenced modern readers to view these friendships as an 'expression of genital sexuality' where they are not.[6] In this, he believes that 'these critics seem to concur with the apocryphal tale of Queen Victoria refusing to sign any legislation outlawing sex between women because it was something she could not imagine.'[7]

Similar to the women of the nineteenth century to whom these critics refer, Muir uses coded language in reference to Elise and Elizabeth's relationship. In a well-discussed scene, Elizabeth has an orgasm while masturbating, thinking of how she had been 'despising Hector, envying Elise, abusing Mabel and belittling herself' (*Imagined Corners*, 226). Smith suggests that this may be in part because the character of Elizabeth does not have the words to describe her attraction: 'Because Elise is a woman, Elizabeth has no language with which to saddle herself with closed definitions of how to behave, or how to feel.'[8] Elizabeth cannot understand her envy for Elise as attraction, or her

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(University of Aberdeen, 1997); Maria Dolores Armental Romero's PhD thesis *Hand-in-hand with Hélène Cixous* (Universidade da Coruña, 2015); Kirsty Allen's *The Life and Work of Willa Muir* (Doctoral Thesis, University of St Andrews, 1997); Janet Caird's 'Cakes Not Turned: Willa Muir's Published Novels'; Margaret Elphinstone's 'Willa Muir: Crossing the Genres'; Margery Palmer McCulloch's 'Fictions of Development 1920-1970' and 'Interwar Literature'; 'Willa Muir: Living with Genius (2)' by William W. J. Knox; and 'Willa Muir: Writer' by P.H. Butter, to name a few. An early look at *Imagined Corners* through a queer lens can be found in Alison Smith's 'And Woman Created Woman'.

[5] *Moving in Circles*, 97.

[6] White, Chris (ed.), *Nineteenth-Century Writings on Homosexuality* (Oxford: Routledge, 1999), 237. Elaine Showalter, for instance, appears to be, at least in part, one of these critics. Writing of Mrs Humphry Ward's *Delia Blanchflower* (1914), an 'anti-suffrage novel,' that despite her answer to women's oppression being 'Bonds of loyalty, empathy, charity, and love between women,' that readers would be 'foolish to see the female friendships as perverted or unnatural.' Showalter, Elaine, *A Literature of Their Own* (London: Virago Press, 1977; 1999), 229.

[7] White, 237.

[8] Smith, A., 42.

despising Hector – not as a mild frustration at his flirtations with Mabel – but at the stirrings of rejection of the male figure. Elizabeth's feelings towards her own body while she contemplates Elise who shares her name, 'You are me,' suggests a fantasy of Elise while she physically feels her own form (*Imagined Corners,* 226). Muir then uses flower imagery and the universe to signal feminine sexuality and orgasm as she strokes her body:

> She herself, body and spirit, was also, like the daisy in the field, the meeting-point of an infinite number of cross-sections of the universe. But, unlike her, the daisy was folded up in a simple unconsciousness of its position. A daisy would never be ashamed of itself.… As she lay quietly alone in bed an image of herself grew before her, […] an overlapping of vibrations rather than a solid form, and the vibrations extended beyond the farthest stars. One end of this shadowy projection had long, slow, full waves; that was the body and its desires. At the other end were short, quick waves, these represented the mind. And the space in between, she asked herself, the thickened obscurity, what was that? (*Imagined Corners*, 226-27).

Her body and its desires represent her sexual relationship with Hector – her mind, that of the purely intellectual relationship with William Murray. And in between, that space she cannot define nor express in words, rests Elise. Her implication of shame about these fantasies while masturbating suggests one who does not understand her same-sex attraction. She turns to nature, the daisy, to rationalise and validate her sexual desires.[9] A queer reading of this novel combined with McCulloch's analysis that Elise, the memory of Lizzie, and Elizabeth create 'an interactive trio of subjectivities through which she [Muir] can explore female experience,' helps to analyse Muir's representation of these women's childlessness and their queer identities.[10] Muir depicts both women learning to accept their queer identities as they discover the self through their attraction to their mirror character. If Calderwick continues to follow the outdated idea that 'men should live for their own sake, women for the sake of men,' then for Muir's vision to be

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[9] Chaucer identified the daisy, according to Michael Ferber, with 'the most faithful of wives', though it has also been linked to 'unfaithfulness'. It has not, through literary history, had one specific connotation, but rather seems to carry several meanings depending on the context. Each, however, is linked to a woman and her sexuality. Ferber, Michael, *A Dictionary of Literary Symbols* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), *ProQuest Ebook Central*, https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/gla/detail.action?docID=326009 [accessed 30.05.21], 50-1.

[10] Palmer McCulloch, Margery, 'Interwar Literature' in *The Edinburgh Companion to Scottish Women's Writing*, ed. Glenda Norquay (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 107-8.

successful, Elise and Elizabeth must escape Calderwick and patriarchy more generally, just as Lizzie escaped in the past.[11]

Christianson notes that the departure of Elise and Elizabeth to southern France 'represents Muir's own solution to the repressions or difficulties of living in Scotland.'[12] And Knox notes that: 'When her brother, Willie, and her mother died in early 1930, Gavin, aged only thirty months, was left in a local Montessori school, while Willa and Edwin left for Mentone.'[13] During this time, Willa was able to work, childless, in France, mimicking Elizabeth and Elise in her retreat from Scotland and reproductive expectations. However, she eventually returned to Britain, to her son, and to translations, and also to Scotland. Moreover, Elizabeth and Hector's dinner with the Scrymgeours shows that Muir is not able to completely escape her role as mother. Dr Scrymgeour introduces child-rearing theories that are similar to Muir's in 'Marmaduke'.[14] Regarding breastfeeding, Dr Scrymgeour says:

> When Teddy sucks he puts all his energy into it— […] And that makes him clench his fists and bend his arms in and draw up his knees. Now the flexion of the arms brings the fists close together. Turn him up endways in that position and he would be kneeling in prayer. Sucking at the milk of the Word (*Imagined Corners*, 119).[15]

Muir likewise mirrors the theories about bottle-feeding set forth in 'Marmaduke':

> Bottle-feeding […] will probably mean the end of religion. […] your bottle-fed baby sees the milk going down in the bottle until there's none left, and he knows that it's empty. He can't have the same emotional satisfaction as a child sucking at the breast, which is an apparently inexhaustible source of comfort. Communion with nature, you know, and all that (*Imagined Corners*, 119).[16]

That she put these theories into the mouth of a male doctor lets her poke fun at the absurdity of men holding the highest knowledge on breastfeeding, while at the same time

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[11] Mill, Harriet Hardy Taylor, *Enfranchisement of Women* (Montana: Kessinger Legacy Reprints, 1851; 2010), 16.

[12] Christianson, Aileen, 'Willa Muir, Modernism and Gender' in *Scottish & International Modernisms: Relationships & Reconfigurations*, eds Emma Dylock and Margery Palmer McCulloch (Glasgow: Association for Scottish Literary Studies, 2011), 132-147, 144.

[13] Knox, 189.

[14] Muir was forming the Scrymgeours throughout her writing of 'Marmaduke': 'Dr Scrymgeour – nervous – shown off by wife – giggle result of Calderwick + wife The S's proud of husband – and – wife relation ~ has not distorted Emily so much.' Reverse journal, 1.

[15] See appendix II, [20].

[16] See appendix II, [verso; 61]: 'Psychology of breast v. bottle.'; 'Inexhaustibility of Nature apprehended.'

offering, given the historical context, more validity to her own theories – she takes on the power of the patriarchy in order to show her ideas about breastfeeding as intellectual and worthy.

Yet, she was, as it were, dividing her time between her four children: Gavin, translation, Edwin, and her fiction.[17] The circumstances of their finances required her to offer the least amount of attention to the latter.[18] Regardless of her attempted escape into her literature, being a mother – and the theories she formulated as a mother – followed her. Harriet Hardy Taylor Mill, half a century before, argued that: 'It is neither necessary nor just to make imperative on women that they shall be either mothers or nothing; or that if they had been mothers once, they shall be nothing else during the whole remainder of their lives.'[19] While Muir is certainly more than a mother, in spite of the patriarchal system that would have her be just that (as she shows in this novel and in *Mrs Ritchie*) the maternal role cannot and has not left her. Elizabeth, however, has not entered into maternal servitude, as Mill would have it. Her fascination with Dr Scrymgeour's theories, it seems, are purely intellectual, rather than that of a woman thinking of her own future child. Throughout the book, and upon her escape, Elizabeth thinks only of Hector and of Elise, and never considers a future or children. In conversation with Dr Scrymgeour, she puts herself in the role of the child, rather than considering her own ability to be that 'inexhaustible source': '"What a *lovely* idea!" Elizabeth forgot all about Hector. "Drawing comfort from Heaven like a child at the breast!"' (*Imagined Corners*, 119). She has forgotten her husband, and her "duty" to give him a child, and considers herself still as a child in need of comfort. Muir does not provide her reader an opportunity to see Elizabeth as a potential mother.

By allowing Elise and Elizabeth to escape at the end of the novel, without thought or desire for a child throughout the book and without any men in tow, Muir suggests a third option that is not 'mothers or nothing' – one she attempted to create for herself.[20] Muir offers a lifestyle to women, through literature, that does not show motherhood as an inevitable outcome of sex, in either sense of the word. Muir removes both of her

[17] See chapter five.
[18] See appendix I.
[19] Mill, 11.
[20] See chapters one and five.

characters from Scotland, showing women, in the process, an alternative to the patriarchy in which she grew up. Just as fatherhood is not inevitable for Hector, so too can women like Elise and Elizabeth experience their sexuality without being "burdened," as it were, with a child. Moreover, neither woman is confined to the inevitability of re-marriage. They have fulfilled their duty of marriage, and are free now to move on to other pursuits and other lovers. Though Muir expressed her belief that Elizabeth would be bound to return to Calderwick, she leaves it open about whether this would be as a wife and/or mother.[21]

This reading is loosely supported by Lee Edelman's theory of the death drive, though without his strict adherence to an absolute dismissal of futurity. For Edelman, the death drive counters the 'reproductive futurism' based around the symbolic Child, which is the 'fantasmatic beneficiary of every political intervention' and acts to preserve 'the absolute privilege of heteronormativity' which fundamentally disadvantages the queer individual – and, Muir shows in *Imagined Corners*, women.[22] The death drive, then, 'names what the queer, in order of the social, is called forth to figure: the negativity opposed to every form of social viability.'[23] Prior to women's emancipation, Elise and Elizabeth's departure becomes an embrace of the death drive in their opposition to the viability of Scottish Calvinist patriarchy. Elise and Elizabeth's rejection of Scottish society's strict prescription of spinster, married mother, or fallen woman and its constant reach for the Child that must always lead to war and adherence to capitalist industrialism, is their decision to accede 'to that figural position' of the 'undoing of civil society' and to reject 'the whole network of Symbolic relations and the future that serves as its prop.'[24] Yet, this opposition and embrace of negativity and rejection of the idea of the Child – the constant reaching towards a future society – requires the Elizabeth Shands to join, as neither can accomplish this in isolation.

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[21] *Modernism and Nationalism*, 209.

[22] Edelman, 2, 3.

[23] Ibid, 9.

[24] Ibid, 17, 29. In 'Women in Scotland,' Muir suggests that Presbyterian Scotland isolates its women by insisting that their 'place is still considered to be the actual home' ('Women in Scotland' in *Imagined Selves*, 1). She argues this isolation is their downfall: 'the ordinary women of Scotland, petty bourgeois and proletarian alike, in the rural districts and in the industrial towns, are untrained in public life, almost unrepresented, relatively unorganized and largely inarticulate outside the home' ('Women in Scotland', 1).

Elise, despite leaving Scotland at nineteen, was not then able to fully step outside heteronormative expectations, even as she defied them:

> To go back to Scotland was the right thing to do. One should have a standard by which to measure one's growth. In returning to the home of her childhood and stormy girlhood she would perhaps find out where she now stood (*Imagined Corners,* 191).

Elise is still measuring her own worth – her 'growth' – based on the standards of Calderwick, albeit by how far she has managed to disregard and surpass their expectations. But, by admitting that 'Karl had been her measure for so long that without him she was lost' and returning to the arms of her doting brother, John, Elise is continuing to measure her standards by that of the patriarchy (*Imagined Corners,* 191). It is only when she meets Elizabeth that she is able to step outside these and fully shed the expectations of "progress" as defined by that society. Upon departure she thinks: 'Well, *I* have changed' even while Mabel, John, Sarah Murray, and Aunt Janet all 'would go on much the same' (*Imagined Corners*, 359). This 'change' comes about with her love for Elizabeth. Despite her consideration of whether Elizabeth is a 'brand-new daughter, or sister, or wife, or whatever it was,' her friend Ilya's question, left as the penultimate line in the novel, 'Well, my dear, you have run away with her, you say? Have you then given up men?' suggests that there is something more than the maternal in her relationship with Elizabeth (*Imagined Corners,* 358, 361). Their relationship, as this chapter will show, mimics in many ways the relationship of Edith Cooper and Katherine Bradley – also known as Michael Field.[25] These women lived outside the bounds of a heteronormative society and their relationship blurred the definition between family, friend, and lover.[26] Playing with conventional boundaries was not abnormal for women at this time. Woolf's *Orlando* (1928) depicts a fluid representation of gender, and suggests that: 'it is only through exploiting both the feminine and masculine sides of our mind that we take

[25] Michael Field originally published under the name 'Arran Leigh'. Publications include *Bellerophôn* (1881) and *Whym Chow: Flame of Love* (1914), but original editions of their books are rare and often their works can only be found in editions such as Chris White's. Williams, Rhian, 'Michael Field', *Oxford Bibliographies*, 10.1093/OBO/9780199799558-0149 [accessed 30.05.21].

[26] Another high-publicity literary example would be the French author Colette, author of *Claudine at School* (1900), who married twice but enjoyed same-sex relationships throughout these marriages. Julia Kristeva published a biography of Colette titled *Colette: Un Génie Féminin* in 1999.

advantage of our full potential as human beings.'[27] The novel 'makes it clear that the role of social conventions in formation of gender is undeniable.'[28] Similarly, Frances Benjamin Johnston's 1896 photographic self portrait plays with gender as she depicts herself in traditionally female clothing, performing "masculine" acts, such as smoking and drinking in an "unladylike" position (legs crossed in a way that reveals petticoats and hunching forward).

The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries faced an unprecedented explosion of philosophical and cultural progress. Like all modernists, Willa Muir would have been aware of this work. As Christianson explains:

> [Modernists] delight in the cultural relativism which could find roots of their work in those who had been responsible for breaking down the religious and political certainties of the nineteenth century, Charles Darwin, Karl Marx and Freidrich Nietzsche, followed closely by Sigmund Freud, Albert Einstein, and J.G. Frazer.[29]

Yet, missing among this list are sexologists who radically changed thought (and law) regarding sexuality in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. White notes that in the early nineteenth century, homosexuality was not illegal in Germany, which followed the Napoleonic Code, thereby placing 'homosexuality on the same legal basis as heterosexuality.'[30] This changed in 1871 with the passing of Paragraph 175, 'making homosexual acts between men a criminal offence.'[31] This dramatic change is potentially why, as White points out, German thinkers were at the forefront of new, often scientific and psychoanalytical, theories to prove that queer individuals were 'as natural and normal as heterosexuals and should be treated so by the law': 'The fundamental tenet of this framework is that same sex desire is inborn, and thus neither acquired […] nor corrupting threat to the normal majority, who are as secure and natural in their sexual identities as homosexuals are in theirs.'[32] Given Muir's knowledge of German writers, and that her 'favourite subject' was phallic symbolism, it is highly plausible that Muir would have

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[27] Moslehi, M.; Niazi, N., 'A Study of Gender Performativity in Virginia Woolf's *Orlando: A Mocking Biography*', *k@ta*, vol. 18, no. 1 (2016) https://doi.org/10.9744/kata.18.1.1-7 [accessed 30.05.21], 1-7, 1.
[28] Ibid., 2.
[29] *Moving in Circles*, 33.
[30] White, 5.
[31] Ibid.
[32] Ibid, 3.

been aware of these theories.[33] Muir's own intellectual interest in psychoanalysis would likely have brought her into, at the very least, periphery contact and discussion of these 'sexologists'. Of these, Richard Von Krafft-Ebing (1840-1902),[34] Havelock Ellis (1859-1939),[35] and John Addington Symonds (1840-1893)[36] were some of the most influential and well known in Britain. Whether Willa knew of Symonds and Krafft-Ebing is unclear, but Edwin notes his own reading of Havelock Ellis twice in *An Autobiography*: 'the book which enchanted me most was a selection from the prose writings of Heine, with an introduction by Havelock Ellis'; 'We followed the literary and intellectual development of the time' in which he includes Havelock Ellis as well as E.M. Foster.[37]

There have been suggestions, however, that Muir was less than tolerant toward gay male communities. Fred Urquhart, for instance, suspected Willa of bigotry towards him:

> I think the truth is that Willa, despite her display of intellectual tolerance, her left-wing views and her bohemian behaviour, didn't really like young men she suspected of being homosexual. I was never at ease with her. She tried jocosely to

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[33] See chapter one.

[34] Krafft-Ebing's *Psychopathia Sexualis* (1886) 'appeared more than twenty years before Freud's *Three Contributions to the Theory of Sex*, and it helped to prepare the public for the open investigation of previously forbidden territory.' Despite what we now recognise as its problematic and at times harmful theories, *Psychopathia Sexualis* was 'our most informative scientific volume on sexual deviation for nearly a hundred years.' These 'deviations' include: 'fetichism [sic], nymphomania, satyriasis, sadism, and incest' and masochism, began a 'scientific discussion of homosexuality,' and even, decades prior to Marie Stopes, 'emphasized the importance of clitoral orgasm.' Klaf, Franklin S., 'Introduction' in Krafft-Ebing, Richard von, *Psychopathia Sexualis*, trans. Franklin S. Klaf (New York: Skyhorse Publishing, 1886; 1965; 2011), xv, xiv, xv.

[35] Educated at 'the French and German College'; author of the six volume *Studies in the Psychology of Sex* (1897-1910), for which a supplementary volume was published in 1928. The first volume, *Sexual Inversion*, was 'the first serious study of homosexuality published in Britain' and 'was conceived as a collaboration with the poet and critic John Addington Symonds, himself homosexual, […] to promote a more tolerate climate towards homosexuality.' Weeks, J., 'Ellis, (Henry) Havelock (1959-1939), writer and sexologist', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography,* https://doi-org.ezproxy.lib.gla.ac.uk/10.1093/ref:odnb/33009 [accessed 14.03.21].

[36] Symonds became an English 'writer and advocate of sexual reform.' He 'dated the birth of his real self from spring 1858, when he fell in love with Willie Dyer.' Symonds' father, a physician, thwarted that, and many other male relationships. This resulted in a nervous collapse, for which he was prescribed 'the "cure" of marriage.' He studied and wrote about the 'Greek Poets,' the popular term for homosexuality being 'Greek Love'. Norton, Richard, 'Symonds, John Addington (1840-1893)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, https://doi-org.ezproxy.lib.gla.ac.uk/10.1093/ref:odnb/26888, [accessed 14.03.21].

[37] *An Autobiography*, 116, 123. E.M. Forster (1879-1970) had numerous male lovers, and wrote about a gay man in his novel, *Maurice*, published posthumously in 1971, but written between 1910 and 1913. Whether Edwin knew about Forster's sexuality is unclear. Beauman, Nicola, 'Forster, Edward Morgan (1879-1970)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, https://doi-org.ezproxy.lib.gla.ac.uk/10.1093/ref:odnb/33208 [accessed 14.03.21].

> be one of the boys, and she would often leer and give me metaphorical digs in the ribs. After all, I had written a novel that some people thought rabelaisian, and she was not going to let me forget it.[38]

That may have been so, yet his specification of young *men* suggests that either she did not know any lesbians, or that her treatment of them was different. Significant to this is Muir's translation of *The Child Manuela* by Christa Winsloe (1934), which was first a film in 1931 by the name of *Mädchen in Uniform* and a play prior to this, which was staged in English to great success in London and Dublin. That the Muirs were frequent play-goers makes it more likely that they would have seen the original.[39] Mädchen is a word for which Elise takes issue as 'das Madchen' means 'girl', or, as she says, 'it' in German:

> Yes, a nation must be held guilty of its language. And they don't call only a girl 'it,' they call a woman 'it.' 'Das Weib' is a worse offence than 'das Madchen,' for it hasn't the excuse of being a diminutive. […] Is there another language in the world which makes a woman neuter? (*Imagined Corners*, 221).

But most important is the plot of *The Child Manuela*, or *Mädchen in Uniform*, which includes a 'sensitive, motherless, teenage girl,' Manuela, sparking a romance with her older female teacher, Fräulein Elisabeth von Bernburg.[40] Muir's use of Elizabeth/Elise for her own characters signals to those 'in the know' that her story shares a similar plot, which also blurs the distinctions between the maternal and lover, where a sensitive youth is entranced by a wiser, older woman in a maternal role. However, after declaring her love for von Bernburg in public, Manuela is put into isolation and eventually commits suicide.[41] Fortunately, Elise and Elizabeth do not face such a 'punishment'. Though Willa

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[38] Urquhart, Fred, 'Edwin and Willa', *Chapman: on Edwin Muir* no. 49 (1987), 11-14, 11.

[39] Though the direct translation is 'Girls in Uniform' the English adaptation changed the title to *Children in Uniform*. *Children in Uniform*, 'the English adaptation of Christa Winsloe's German play *Gestern und heute* [Yesterday and Today]' was so popular in Dublin in 1934 that its fortnight running schedule was extended by a week. This followed the immense success it had experienced in Leipzig in 1930, and was staged at London's Duchess Theatre in their 1932-1933 season with praise in the August 1932 issue of *Motley*. Ivory, Yvonne, 'Prussian Discipline and Lesbian Vulnerability: Christa Winsloe's *Children in Uniform* at the Gate' in *Cultural Convergence*, eds O. Pilný, R. van den Beuken, I.R. Walsh (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021) https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-57562-5_8 [accessed 27.03.21], 193-216, 193-5.

[40] Ivory, 194. Significantly, das mädchen can also mean 'girlfriend' or 'daughter'. Thank you to Kirsteen McCue for bringing this to the author's attention.

[41] Deeney, John F., 'Censoring the Uncensored: the Case of "Children in Uniform"', *New Theatre Quarterly*, vol. 16, no. 3 (2000), 219-226, 219.

did not translate this novel until three years following the publication of *Imagined Corners*, the film's release in 1931 suggests that ideas of older female mentors engaging in intimate relationships with younger women or girls was 'in the air'. Moreover, her decision to translate the novel suggests not only her awareness of women love, but also at least a minimal level of tolerance and support.

Certainly, the interpretation of Elise and Elizabeth as lovers at the conclusion of *Imagined Corners* is blanketed in closeted language: this context is made all the more plausible as Muir projects it through a suggestion by Elise's friend Ilya. Throughout the novel, there are distinct similarities between the language used by the narrator to describe Elizabeth's thoughts and the language used by queer women in the late nineteenth century. There was, at the time, less of a focus on the potential of lesbianism than on gay men. Queen Victoria 'declined to believe such things were possible' and it was only with the campaigning of those like Dr Krafft-Ebing and Dr Stopes that women's ability to take pleasure in sex was accepted.[42] In this vein, Cheryl Maxwell, fairly, argues that Muir does not place sexuality as central in girls' and women's development to the extent of Muir's contemporaries.[43] And there are only implications regarding Elise and Elizabeth; as Janet Caird critiques: '*Imagined Corners* is a teasing, irritating book, because one is aware of possibilities in it not realised.'[44] However, because of the general disregard of women's queer potential, the language used to describe lesbian love was often clouded. For instance, Amy Levy's poem 'At a Dinner Party' is just two stanzas of four lines each, but is highly suggestive of sex between women. The second stanza hints at women's

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[42] White, 3. Marie Stopes, born in Edinburgh in 1880, was one of the first birth control advocates in Britain. Like Muir, she took part in the Women's Debating Society at University College, London, became an assistant lecturer, was fluent in German (having studied for her PhD in Munich), lived in Hampstead, and was also cremated and had her ashes scattered upon death. Stopes met American birth control advocate, Margaret Sanger and began campaigning for contraception. Her controversial books *Married Love* (London: Fifield and Co., 1918) and *Wise Parenthood* (London: Rendell & Co., 1919) introduced mutual pleasure to mainstream discourse. Stopes thought that: 'given the chance to space their pregnancies, [women] would bear healthier children and rear them better.' In 1921, Stopes opened the first family planning clinic in Britain, A Society for Constructive Birth Control. She was part of the eugenics movement, which has called into question the racist and classist implications of her work. Hall, Lesley A., 'Stopes [married name Roe], Marie Charlotte Carmichael (1880-1958), sexologist and advocate of birth control', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, https://doi-org.ezproxy.lib.gla.ac.uk/10.1093/ref:odnb/36323, [accessed 8.03.2021].

[43] Maxwell, Cheryl, *The Formation and Development of Personal Identity in the Scottish Novel, 1920-1937* (Doctoral Thesis, University of Aberdeen, 1997), 117.

[44] Caird, Janet, 'Cakes Not Turned: Willa Muir's Published Novels', *Chapman: Peerie Willa Muir*, no. 71 (1993), 12-18, 12.

sexual organs by noting fruit and flowers, even while winking at the reader about the speaker's secret: 'You look across the fruit and flowers, / My glance your glances find. / It is our secret, only ours, / Since all the world is blind.'[45] The world refused to see lesbianism in that era, and it could go, therefore, almost entirely unnoticed. These glances are reminiscent of those between Elise and Elizabeth. Elise's speech about 'black sheep' the first time she meets Elizabeth nods to the 'inborn' arguments about sexuality:

> 'Elizabeth may not know what a bad lot *I* am,' said Elise wickedly, keeping her eye on the embarrassed girl. 'Some are born to be black sheep' – she indicated Hector—'some achieve it'—she rolled an eye at Mabel—'and some have it thrust upon them'—she looked at Elizabeth and John—'but I am the three in one, and the one in three!' (*Imagined Corners,* 218).

That this is a sexual description more than anything else is suggested by her decision to note Hector first – the known womaniser, like their father. Her eye roll at Mabel suggests her understanding of Mabel's hypocrisy, and Elizabeth's sexual outsider status as something that has been 'thrust' upon her suggests not that her queer leanings are unnatural, but rather that society has positioned her as a black sheep, thrusting her outside the centre. John's 'black sheep' status is, as examined below, because of his strong love for Elise herself. But this coded language, and her 'wicked' glance at Elizabeth implies sexual wisdom. Moreover, that Elise is 'the three in one, and the one in three' suggests her own sexual fluidity and inability to be defined by heteronormative binaries.

Elise's connections to sexual symbolism are evident in her name. Muir signals her readers to investigate the names of her characters, particularly Elise's names: 'Karl thought it better for me to take his name rather than my own, for, in German, Shand means disgrace' (*Imagined Corners*, 205). Additionally, Mütze means 'cap' in German. This may allude to the cervical cap, which was in use at this time for contraceptive purposes.[46] Additionally, in 1949, Marcus Grantham summarised Freud's suggestion of the sexual symbolism of hats: 'the symbolic meaning of the hat may possibly be derived from that of the head and its phallic significance, in so far as the hat can be considered a

[45] Levy, Amy, '"At a Dinner Party", *A London Plane Tree and Other Verse*, 1889' in *Nineteenth-Century Writings,* 280.

[46] Thank you to Gina Lyle for noting the use of this term for diaphragm-like devices at this time.

continuation or prolongation of the head.'[47] Muir's playfulness with her characters' names encourages her readers to analyse sexual meanings below the surface, particularly relating to Elise. At the end of the novel, Elise does not specify gender when she thinks that Elizabeth would fall 'in love with somebody the exact antithesis of Hector' (*Imagined Corners*, 360). This does suggest, however, with the similarities between Hector and Elise, that it will not be Elise with whom Elizabeth stays romantically involved. But Elise's goal is not to keep Elizabeth forever, but to break down the symbolic Child. This progress becomes a form of anarchy, breaking down reproductive futurism in Calderwickian society, but allows for more progress and creativity than that of the heterosexual couples in the book.

This would not be the first instance of a female relationship boasting greater creative products than heterosexual couples, without children. In 1911, the year before this book is set, Edith Ellis, wife of Havelock, argued: 'There are surely as many spiritual children in the world as physical ones, and there are as many miscarriages and still-births as in normal parenthood.'[48] Ellis makes clear that queer individuals do not threaten the Symbolic Child – that which Edelman shows heteronormative culture continues to fear from the queer community – but rather contributes to society with 'spiritual' children. A century later, Edelman showed how 'the battle against queers is a life-and-death struggle for the future of a Child' which is a symbolic figure 'enacting a logic of repetition that fixes identity through identification with the future of the social order.'[49] Unlike Ellis, however, Edelman maintains that combating homophobia and heteronormativity by 'denying our identification with the negativity of this drive' with assertions that gay couples fit into society comfortably only shifts 'the figural burden of queerness to someone else.'[50] While Edelman argued against this need for proof of reproduction – biological, artistic, or industrious – Muir's goal is a middle ground between the productivity desired by Ellis and the death drive of Edelman. In plain terms, Elise and

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[47] Grantham, Marcus, 'The Sexual Symbolism of Hats', *A Psychoanalytic Journal for the Arts and Sciences*, vol. 6, no. 4 (1949), 281-295, 281.

[48] Ellis, Edith, 'Mrs Havelock Ellis, from "Eugenics and spiritual parenthood"' in *Nineteenth-Century Writings*, 114. Eugenics was, regrettably, inextricable from sexology, feminism, and contraception campaigners at this time.

[49] Edelman, 21-22, 25.

[50] Ibid, 27.

Elizabeth must accept their queerness in their refusal to maintain the futuristic ideals of the Child in heteronormative society in order to avoid shifting the burden of queerness onto another. Rather than reach towards the ideal future, the Symbolic Child, they must work to improve society as it is at that moment in time by accepting their place outwith teleology.

If Elizabeth is able to do this, her return to Calderwick – if she must return – would be with acceptance of her identity as a truly free woman. But the reproduction that comes from this rejection of the Child destroys heteronormative boundaries. Elizabeth would show independence outside of the limits of the 'frustrated' spinster in Aunt Janet, Sarah, and the Watson sisters for whom 'Muir allows no escape' and assumes 'to be asexual beings,' clinging to nephews and brothers to mother. Nor is she the 'Fallen Woman,' but a different, liminal identity that does not require traditional productivity for fulfilment.[51] While Ellis argues that 'if they are not preoccupied with producing biological children, they can serve the greater good by creating "spiritual children", works of art and tasks of social benefit' it may be that Elise and Elizabeth should reject productivity and futurity, which must always seek an unachievable end.[52] As McCulloch notes in reference to Lorna Moon's *Dark Star*: 'the sexual theme becomes a theme of betrayal and the opposition is once again that between the public world of the man and female creativity domesticated through childbearing.'[53] By refusing the heteronormative society of Calderwick and accepting their queer identities, Elise and Elizabeth are open to explore female creativity outwith biological reproduction and rejecting that which the patriarchy would deem 'social benefit'.

Muir contrasts the childlessness of Elise and Elizabeth, accepting their places outside heteronormative society, with the sterile sex lives of Mabel and John, the Watson sisters, and William and Sarah Murray that leads to the stunting of their personal

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[51] Christianson reads Ann and Mary Watson as 'a sibling relationship that mimics marriage in their differentiated roles of breadwinner and housekeeper.' Once more, Muir blurs the lines between familial and intimate relationships. *Moving in Circles*, 94, 93. Bell Duncan is the counterpart fallen woman to Elise. Duncan also runs off with a married man – Hector – but in contrast to Elise, who fell for Fritz for his mind, Bell and Hector's relationship is purely sexual. Hector says to Bell upon their reunion: 'I'll see that you're not cold' (*Imagined Corners*, 274) and they run off to Singapore to find fortune. No indication is given that their relationship is intellectually stimulating. Likewise, their relationship thus far has not been fruitful. Muir shows the difference between a love of minds and that of a purely physical nature.

[52] Edith Ellis quoted in White, 69-70. This theme will also arise in *Mrs Ritchie*. See chapter four.

[53] 'Fictions of Development', 366.

development. Elise draws attention to the childlessness of Mabel and John Shand when she ponders: 'Why haven't you any children? Mabel had a beautiful body; her children should be shapely. John was strong and healthy; his children should be sound' (*Imagined Corners,* 277-278). She goes on to suggest that: 'they were nothing if they were not links in a chain…' (*Imagined Corners,* 278). John and Mabel would create perfect children ('links') within the 'repetition' of fixed identity required for the future of the social order ('the chain'). Mabel's father, Mains, draws further attention to their sterility: 'God kens how *you* manage to get awa' wi' it, Mabel; twa years married an' no sign o' a bairn yet' (*Imagined Corners,* 319). Mains himself is guilty of hiring 'a succession of housekeepers [who] came to the farm and went again, usually with alimony' (*Imagined Corners,* 319). The narrator describes Mabel and John's stagnant intimate life early in the novel:

> Their marital relationship had been well regulated during the first two years of their marriage. After John's first ardours were over she had escaped his embraces except on Sunday mornings when they lay longer in bed. These Sunday-morning embraces now had the sanction of tradition, and Mabel sometimes wondered if John kept them up because they were a tradition (*Imagined Corners,* 55).

'Regulation' suggests natural family planning. T.M. Devine notes that professional classes likely engaged in some form of natural family planning in order to restrict family sizes. He explains that: 'No costs were attached to "natural" methods, only the will to use them.'[54] Moreover, this contributed to falling birth rates between 'the late 1870s and the early 1930s' as couples, by the 1920s, 'must have been [practicing] some form of birth control within marriage.'[55] Alternatively, contraceptive 'appliances' were available in the larger towns. Devine suggests that these devices were expensive, and therefore only really available to upper middle class.[56] John owns the only gramophone in town and has bought Mabel a car, suggesting that the couple readily invest in new technology and can afford to do so. Combined with the 'much-publicized trial of Charles Bradlaugh and Annie Besant' in 1877 that broadcasted 'use of the rubber sheath,' Mabel had no shortage of conceptive methods.[57] Through the childlessness of Mabel and John, who are based at

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[54] Devine, T.M. *The Scottish Nation: 1700-2000* (London: Penguin Books, 1999), 528.
[55] Ibid, 526.
[56] Ibid., 527.
[57] Ibid.

the centre of Calderwick respectability, Muir shows the stagnancy of heteronormative society as a whole.

This is the stagnancy that Elizabeth must escape, as Elise escaped two decades prior. While John is nearly old enough to be Mabel's father, Hector views Elizabeth, who is four years his junior, like a mother. Aunt Janet relates Elizabeth's ability (or lack thereof) to 'mother' Hector to the ultimate good of Calderwick society and with the future of their family. Aunt Janet does not believe, though, that Elizabeth can mother Hector properly:

> Elizabeth, she felt, was not quite the right kind of wife. There was something about Elizabeth that made one uncertain….
> 'Four years younger than Hector, isn't she?'
> 'Yes, John; only twenty-two' (*Imagined Corners*, 38).

Her suggestion of there being 'something about Elizabeth' also suggests a closeted sexuality, as well as Aunt Janet's belief in Elizabeth's lack of maternal skill. Hector's need for a mother, and Janet's doting affection of him, is emphasised early: 'His mother, a delicate submissive woman, had died shortly after he was born, and he was brought up by Janet Shand, who expended upon him in double measure the affection she felt for his father' (*Imagined Corners*, 57). Janet speaks of his mother with 'contemptuous pity' and Hector's father, Charlie Shand's sexual promiscuity is frequently noted. The combination leaves Hector shameful about his parentage, particularly compared to his older half-brother, John: 'he had persuaded himself that John had escaped the curse only because he had a different kind of mother, and he resented his half-brother's robust superiority' (*Imagined Corners*, 58).

So when Elizabeth arrives, Aunt Janet expects her to take up the mantle of mother-wife: 'he's so conscious of Elizabeth's goodness in marrying him. "She'll keep me straight, Aunt Janet," he said' (*Imagined Corners*, 26.) But it is clear that Aunt Janet's idea of a good mother-wife is one that will tolerate Hector's many misdeeds and infidelity, while taking responsibility for it herself.[58] In the process, Hector can avoid

[58] This is another intersection with Muir, where her pain from Edwin's past misconduct may have unconsciously arisen. Edwin, 'just one week before he married Willa, […] had confessed his love to another woman, Jane Leitch, comparing them to Dante and Beatrice' and in 1923 almost left Willa for a young girl, Gerda. Knox, 186; see *Letters*, 19. Similarly, Jamieson recounts an episode while living with Willa and Edwin: 'Once, however, when Edwin was more pensive than usual and departed quickly from

responsibility. Cheryl Maxwell posits that: 'By blaming heredity for his weaknesses, he is able to absolve himself from responsibility for his own actions, and to avoid developing in any meaningful way.'[59] In other words, by blaming his dead mother, she, not Hector himself, takes the fault. In this warped logic, his mother's absence further removes any possibility of change – because she is not there to keep him 'in line,' and because her death is both the root and symptom of his misbehaviour, the solution – her moral presence – is unattainable. Aunt Janet and Elizabeth can only ever be substitutes, but cannot, in Hector's view, fix the ultimate problem.[60] Here, Muir 'introduces the question of nurture to the nature theme.'[61] In so doing, she reveals the absurdity of this logic, while her concerns with mother-blame manifest in the form of Hector.[62]

The figure of Aunt Janet shows that Hector's entitled behaviour stems from nurture; she encourages excuses and absolution. Speaking to John and Mabel after a dinner party with Elizabeth and Hector, Aunt Janet says: 'You have always misjudged Hector. […] He's too sensitive, John, that's all. Girls simply throw themselves at his head. He can't help being so attractive to women' (*Imagined Corners,* 37). The narrator reveals that Mabel is one of these women. She claims to have had 'Too much sense to marry Hector' but sexual desire spurs her rage towards him (*Imagined Corners,* 38). After she and John have gone to bed, she thinks of how 'She had fancied Hector,' and while lying next to his brother, her husband, she thinks: '"I wish I had him here; I'd *smack* him!" Her body quivered with the intensity of her feeling. Smack him, good and hard, she would' (*Imagined Corners,* 42). The sexual connotations of this are not left to

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the table, she turned to me plaintively and said, "Oh dear, what's wrong with Edwin? - I hope he's not falling in love *again*."' Jamieson, 29. Additionally, in *Belonging*, Willa outlines Edwin's various pre-marital affairs without moral judgment, going on to explain that their decision to marry was: 'if we had any children I shouldn't like them to be bastards.'[58] His pre-marital affairs were not only accepted but expected, while the assumptions of Willa's pre-marital life were that she remained chaste.

[59] Maxwell, 119.

[60] John Knox's issue with women is similarly insoluble. Knox's mother, Edwin says, 'had perhaps died when he was young' but he had known his stepmother – a surrogate maternal force like Aunt Janet – and as a result: 'His first taste of feminine discipline had reached him from an illegitimate source; he now felt that all feminine rule was illegitimate.' Muir, Edwin, *John Knox: Portrait of a Calvinist* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1929; 1930), 133.

[61] Maxwell, 117. Ned Murray's illness questions this. Muir shows the bullying that Ned faces at university, but also suggests a reversal of the nineteenth-century scriptural belief: 'woman as the "weaker vessel" were reinforced by new medical theories which held that intense cerebral activity interfered with the female reproductive organs, leading to physical and mental breakdown.' Here, Ned is the one who risked mental breakdown following intense cerebral activity as he is over-strained by mental activity. McCarthy, 75.

[62] See chapter one.

the imagination, as Hector and Mabel kiss many times thereafter. However, the dinner party conversation makes clear that Mabel chose the safer option. Hector chose a woman who he believed would keep him 'straight' – a maternal figure, unlike the sexually-charged Mabel who, despite her respectability and ability to fit within the tight bounds of Calderwick's moral and societal norms – ultimately chose a husband who already also fit within those bounds, and who does not require mothering. Mabel's sexually boring marriage allows her to be the child still, with no threat of biological children or husband-child.

Hector's search for a 'mother-confessor,' thinking he had found it in Elise, is what makes Mabel unfit for him in his eyes – Mabel does not absolve him and Elizabeth is happy to do so (*Imagined Corners*, 297). Elise understands this, and upon becoming his accidental mother-confessor, she is equipped to banish him and free Elizabeth. Hector does not, because he cannot, understand that Elise is not concerned with absolving him, but with ridding Elizabeth of him both for Elizabeth's own good and for Elise's desires. Without Elise, Elizabeth could not have been free. As Muir argues in *Women: An Inquiry*, a 'conventionally pure good woman is shocked at a great many things' and is unaware of sexual conduct, 'uncomfortable and timid when they are brought to her notice' (*Women: An Inquiry*, 18). She goes on: 'Apparently, women can be kept in a subordinate position if ignorance of human conduct is imposed upon them as a necessary condition of social approval' (*Women: An Inquiry*, 19). But, she finds the solution: 'It can be inferred that a fearless attitude towards human life is the first essential quality of a free woman' (*Women: An Inquiry*, 19). Elizabeth, the girl who fell in love with the first man who showed her attention and who blushes at implications of flirting with the minister, has been kept, despite her independent and intellectual mind, in a subordinate position. Had Elise, the fearless woman, not intervened, Elizabeth would have been trapped by rules of the Good Mother-Wife, and 'excluded from independent access to the sources of external power' (*Women: An Inquiry*, 18).[63] Muir invokes the Victorian 'oppositions of Madonna and Magdalen,' which, leading up to the First World War, 'still prevailed and women were conventionally expected to fulfil the roles of wives and mothers without

[63] See also Winifred Holtby, Cicely Hamilton, and Harriet Hardy Taylor Mill.

acknowledging sexual awakening.'[64] Instead of continuing on the path which so clearly ill-suits Elizabeth, Elise, the triumphant Magdalen, leads the would-be Madonna to freedom. This is a change from the Victorian novels that offer no hope for Fallen Women but shame and death.[65] Yet she does so through intense sacrifice – leaving her home, her family, and her personal history behind, cutting the umbilical cord with her motherland. Elise demonstrates, as the First World War had so clearly illustrated, that destruction, not stagnancy in continuous reproduction, promotes true creation in Edith Ellis's sense.

Moreover, Elise has managed multiple sexual partners, without children. Mothers, or lack thereof, become an underlying issue that threaten to break the surface. Elise's attitude toward motherhood shows in her internal monologue at Mabel's tea party: 'The physical capacity for motherhood was a common measure, perhaps the lowest common measure, of all present. But like the urge for power it was an attribute, not an explanation, of individual life' (*Imagined Corners,* 300). Elise examines the meaning of the lives of each of these women, noting, too, the sterility. Of the five women who are present at the tea party, only one has a child who is mentioned: 'Against the Cairn terriers Mrs Mackenzie set her son, who was to be a civil engineer; Mrs Gove extolled her own dog, a Shetland collie, who was as intelligent as a child' (*Imagined Corners,* 299). Elise concludes to herself: 'Teleology led to queer conclusions. […] to what end the pains and persistence of countless anonymous generations, the faith, the philosophy, the science of countless civilizations?' (*Imagined Corners,* 300).[66] She asks herself if motherhood really could be the answer and concludes that only a mother's children could think so (*Imagined Corners,* 301). Yet, she laments: 'Karl survived in these seven books, and she survived only in herself. She had nothing else to show. Was she, then, mere pasture on which an imaginative man could browse?' (*Imagined Corners*, 195). Elise's quandary is her lack of

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[64] 'Fictions of Development', 361.

[65] For example, *Ruth* by Elizabeth Gaskell, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* by Thomas Hardy, and *The Scarlet Letter* by Nathaniel Hawthorne, to name only the most well-known of this extensive genre.

[66] Elise seems to allude to Mathew Arnold's poem, 'Dover Beach'. Stanzas 2 and 3 of Arnold's poem note the 'the turbid ebb and flow / Of human misery,' swayed by philosophies and faiths. Similarly, McCulloch's PhD thesis compares some of Edwin's final poetry to Arnold's 'Dover Beach', and his criticism to Arnold 'in his concern with the moral aspects of art in its relationship to human existence.' McCulloch sees 'Dover Beach' as Arnold's best work, because: 'he allowed his personal response to the present to triumph over his didactic return to the past for theme.' The same may be said of *Imagined Corners* and certainly 'Mrs Muttoe'. McCulloch, Margery Greenshields, *Scottish and International Themes in the Work of Edwin Muir and Neil M. Gunn* (Doctoral Thesis, University of Glasgow, 1982), 196, 42.

creative output up until this period in her life, but knows a child is not the answer. Looking backwards, she sees no meaning. That perhaps explains why, at the conclusion of the novel, she is not quite sure if Elizabeth is 'daughter, or sister, or wife.' As daughter or sister, she is offered a chance to (re)produce and guide, but as wife and wife, rather than wife and husband, she never risks turning Elizabeth into 'mere pasture.' Her goal is not a flattening of Elizabeth into a two-dimensional muse, but an embrace of their autonomy to carve a new path: a burgeoning of their creative powers, for which Edith Ellis argued.

By taking a wife – not a husband – the two women disavow traditional roles of production. Elise survives by creating a free woman out of Elizabeth, by using her money to 'clear away stones of prejudice and superstition so that other girls might grow up in a more kindly soil' (*Imagined Corners*, 360). As Jan Pilditch describes in her biography about Muir's contemporary and friend, Catherine Carswell, rebellious women had become commonplace, popular figures in Victorian literature.[67] Elise fits into this strain of women who decided to break out of heteronormative society, which constricted not only their sexuality, but their opportunities for fulfilment outside of relations with men. But Pilditch explains: 'One could not compete with men and simultaneously retain that image of ideal womanhood.'[68] While Mabel seems determined to maintain her ideal image, Elise and Elizabeth struggle with this dissidence between the ideal woman and the New Woman, ultimately deciding it is impossible. In the end, they are not competing, but recreating.

In so doing, Elise and Elizabeth become a fictional version of Michael Field. Michael Field was the 'joint *nom de plume* of Katherine Bradley and Edith Cooper, who write in their poetry and their journals of their love, and who produced works which seem frankly sexual, if couched in somewhat coded or idiosyncratic language.'[69] Just as Bradley and Cooper share a name through which they traverse the literary world, so too do the Elizabeth Shands. What complicates a study of the relationship of Michael Field is their familial relationship: Katherine Bradley (1846-1914) had a large role in caring for

[67] Pilditch, 34.
[68] Pilditch, 31.
[69] White, 237.

her sister's daughter, Edith Cooper (1862-1913). While concerns of grooming are valid, there is no doubt that in their poetry, there is a deep affection, love, and mutual support.[70] But the sexual implications are more than present: 'how the sweetness & clench of love grow pain & joy as I look at her, touch her, & receive her little wreath of kisses in my withered hour.'[71] Here, the balance between lover and mother mirrors that in *Imagined Corners* (and *Mädchen in Uniform*). While in Elizabeth's relationship with Hector, this balance is oppressive, with Elise, as Bradley with Cooper, it is supportive and intellectually creative. But to be so, they must embrace their societal death drive. Elise is able to see the end point, without, as Elizabeth attempts, trying to offer teleological meaning to each event. In other words, there is no symbolic Child towards which she is always reaching. Elise can understand how she came to her current identity and position, without feeling a need to fit within the centre and she can guide Elizabeth in doing the same. In that way, Muir is keeping true to her express belief that this is a novel about what pre-war Scotland looked like in reality, rather than what it should become.[72] In the novel, Muir, through Elise, is not seeking a distant horizon nor is their success in carving a new path guaranteed, but they have accepted Scotland and their place outwith its centre.[73]

Incestuous links are scattered throughout *Imagined Corners*, often hidden within the heteronormative centre. Unlike Elise and Elizabeth, who are not related by blood, other instances in the novel are true incestuous desires, and remain unfruitful and

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[70] Grooming, as Anne-Marie McAlinden explores, is difficult to define. McAlinden notes how the public often views grooming as specifically related to pedophilia, however, 'there is no universally accepted understanding of the term which fully captures all aspects of the process.' Moreover, sexual grooming 'can also occur with older children and young adults.' While it would be easy to argue that Katherine Bradley has groomed Edith Cooper, the present author does not think, based on the evidence, that it is so straightforward and that it is their familial connections that make the audience more likely to see their relationship as grooming. McAlinden, Anne-Marie, *Grooming' and the Sexual Abuse of Children: Institutional, Internet, and Familial Dimensions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012) DOI:10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199583720.001.0001 [accessed 27.03.21], 22, 23.

[71] Field, Michael, 'From "Works and Days", the manuscript journals, 1913' in *Nineteenth-Century Writings*, 267.

[72] Muir described the novel's place as a realistic observation rather than an ideal, theoretical fantasy in letters to both Gunn and McNeill: 'I was not describing what *ought* to be in Scotland, but what actually would have happened there in 1913 to the characters in my book.' *Modernism and Nationalism*, 208-9.

[73] Muir wrote to F. Marian McNeill: 'I think I am right in conceiving that Elise & Hector were bound to leave' Scotland. Ibid., 209.

unhealthy. Janet's doting treatment of Hector like her own son hints towards her feelings towards her late brother and his promiscuity:

> Janet could never rid herself of the knowledge that the Shand men were sexually unbridled; even her own brother had given her a queer feeling; she could not look at him without remembering how often he was reported to lie with women in the town. It was indeed difficult to think of anything but bodily appetites when one met Charlie Shand (*Imagined Corners*, 57).

Her 'queer' feeling towards Charlie echoes that of John's towards Lizzie. John's powerful, and not altogether familial, affection for Elise shows in his feelings of betrayal at her departure:

> All through the evening the phantom of the other Elizabeth Shand, his sister, had haunted John, and now that he was safely under the bedclothes he allowed himself the indulgence of thinking about her. He had tried for so many years to forget her that even now, when anger had died away, he felt his persistent affection for her as a weakness to be indulged only when his head was under the blankets (*Imagined Corners*, 39).

Like Elizabeth, his consideration of Elise occurs in bed, and is linked to shame and an inability to fully define his affection. Reference to Freudian phallic symbolism like Elise's new last name, his 'head', further links his description to sexual desire. His desire explains his lack of interest in Mabel and their childless marriage. Moreover, his marriage to a 21-year-old while in his late thirties suggests that he sought a replacement for Elise. Supporting this is John's understanding that 'the respectable citizen of the daytime' merges under the blankets 'into the boy of five-and-twenty years ago' when Elise was still in Calderwick (*Imagined Corners*, 39). Furthermore, Mabel remembers that 'she had been surprised shortly after their marriage to hear John say lightly: "You remind me of my sister Lizzie; she was a gay young thing something like you"' (*Imagined Corners*, 41). Mabel's surprise underscores the sexual implications in John's return to youth in bed with the 'gay young thing' like his sister. The Shands' incestuous leanings perhaps explain why none of Charlie Shand's children or his sister have reproduced. Their close family ties prevent any 'proper' way to do so. Likewise, their devotion to convention is in itself an unconscious embrace of the death drive, rather than that of reproductive futurism. They are unable to focus on the symbolic Child, as progress

towards a constantly undefinable future would require a departure from patriarchal, religious tradition.

Heternormative, maternal expectations, or, as Holtby calls it 'the cult of the cradle' and as Edelman defines reproductive futurism, 'defeats its own ends by making women less capable of successful motherhood' due to 'its element of compulsion.'[74] She argues that the solution lies in the 'right to choose her own time for her achievement of maternity, the ability to plan her life and work, the freedom from that accidental element' – these things which 'scientific birth control' have given women in theory, but that the 'cult of the cradle cancels.'[75] This is the cult from which Elise and Elizabeth run at the conclusion of *Imagined Corners,* and to which Muir suggests Mabel must ultimately succumb if she is to maintain her face of respectability, but which John's feelings for Elise prevent. The novel presents both the dire inevitability of motherhood for women who wish to remain within Scottish society, as well as a way out – but an escape that is not without its heartache.

In *Mrs Ritchie,* Muir shows how this process works in practice; namely, the devastating effects this cult has upon women and their children, and how the patriarchy and religion are directly at fault. In other words, when women attempt to mould themselves to fit the heteronormative reproductive futurist structures they, instead, destroy the Child. Unlike the non-religious Elise, Heaven is the ultimate future towards which Mrs Ritchie seeks and, also unlike Elise, Muir leaves her readers in no doubt of Annie Ritchie's failure. *Mrs Ritchie* is a character study, following the life of Annie Rattray/Ritchie as she grows up within the patriarchal bounds of Calderwick. While *Imagined Corners* tracks Elizabeth's journey into maturity and dissects the Murray and Shand families in order to comment on patriarchal society, *Mrs Ritchie* narrows in on a single woman to reveal the negative consequences of unchecked anger towards that society. The opening section offers insight into the childish perspective of Annie's response to the obstacles she faces as a working-class girl in late nineteenth-century Scotland. Muir, however, quickly strips away her reader's empathy by removing all hints of hope or joy in the life of Annie and her family upon her marriage. In so doing, Muir

[74] Hotlby, 169.
[75] Ibid.

ensures her readers feel the same desperation and hopelessness that Elise and Elizabeth attempt to escape at the end of *Imagined Corners* and with which Alison Muttoe grapples in ‘Mrs Muttoe’.

Chapter Four

It is better to be feared than loved[1]*:* Mrs Ritchie, *the Monstrous Mother*

'The contradiction between principle and practice cannot be explained away.'[2]

Mrs Ritchie (1933), Willa Muir's second published novel, depicts a much deeper frustration with religion, class, and gender expectations than shown in either *Imagined Corners* or *Women: An Inquiry*. When read in order, *Imagined Corners, Mrs Ritchie,* and 'Mrs Muttoe and the Top Storey' read like a trilogy of imagined and realistic interpretations of Muir's experiences of motherhood, marriage, class, and gender in Scotland. In 1948, she states simply: 'I throw myself into characters, I live in them as much as possible; they are bound to be versions of myself. About other people, real people, I don't know so much.'[3] This statement supports autobiographical readings of her novels, even while encouraging imaginative readings of the outcomes and lives of these 'versions' of Muir and other people she has encountered. Butter asserts that, while still based on 'a particular person' in Montrose that Muir knew, Mrs Ritchie is based 'not at all on the author herself.'[4] While *Imagined Corners* presents an option for motherlessness outside the confines of heternormative patriarchy, *Mrs Ritchie* shows the impossibility of escaping such binds in northeast Scotland in the early twentieth century, and the consequences of this gendered prison for women.

Annie Ritchie, Muir's monstrous mother, allows Muir to express the 'very real anger and resentment' she felt towards these oppressive gender norms, while calling out how these norms create monsters.[5] Edwin points out that in his *The First Blast of the Trumpet against the Monstrous Regiment of Women*, Knox 'could only reiterate variously

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[1] The question Machiavelli puts forth is 'whether it be better to be loved than feared or feared than loved?' and answers it as: 'one should wish to be both, but, because it is difficult to unite them in one person, it is much safer to be feared than loved' because 'in general of men', 'they are ungrateful, fickle, false, cowardly, covetous, and as long as you succeed they are yours entirely; they will offer you their blood, property, life, and children.' Mrs Ritchie takes all from her family in return for her powerlessness in society. Machiavelli, Niccolò, *The Prince*, trans. W.K. Marriott (Minneapolis: The Lerner Publishing Group: 1532; 1908; 2019), https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/gla/detail.action?docID=544504 [accessed 31.03.21], 63.

[2] Mill, 4.

[3] January 1948, "The Putsch and After" MS 38466/5/4, Willa Muir Archives in St Andrew's University Special Collections.

[4] 'Willa Muir', 67.

[5] Allen, 30.

that the domination of woman was "a monster," that it was "monstrous," and that it was indeed "monstriferous."'[6] Though Knox did, at one time, approve of mothers, he did so in the express assertion that: 'they should have no power over their sons.'[7] Yet, Muir's focus on mothers sacrificing their sons in her pre-WWI setting suggests that Mrs Ritchie's monstrosity implies the violence and aggression present in that society generally – and therefore in everyone, not just, as Knox feared, in certain women. King points out: 'The word 'monster' comes from the Latin word *Monstrare*—to show. Monsters show us something about ourselves.'[8] Couched within this context, the figure of Mrs Ritchie shows how oppression creates oppression. Released fifteen years after the end of the Great War, and in the same year as Hitler's claim to dictatorship in Germany, the violence of *Mrs Ritchie* is a prophecy of the upcoming terrors. Colonialism, after all, 'is intrinsically interwoven with modernity.'[9] Annie is the embodiment of war itself, and her family, her shell-shocked victims. In the process, she shows readers the monstrosity of a religious and imperial patriarchy.

As in her other works, *Mrs Ritchie* is nourished by Muir's understanding of the pressure on women to become domesticated wives and mothers. The novel's central focus on Annie Rattray/Ritchie reveals the lengths to which a disempowered woman in a patriarchal Calvinist state may go in order to gain status. Moreover, it emphasises Muir's anxiety about the blame with which a mother is burdened when her child becomes a tyrant. After her mother rejects Annie's request to continue her education on bursary, Annie is driven into a state of tyranny and vengeance on the forces that she perceives have hindered her success: her family and godlessness. Moreover, had she become a teacher as desired, she may not have been forced into marriage. McCarthy notes that: 'most women teachers were unmarried and did not have children.'[10] She fails to understand that it is a class-based patriarchy that has oppressed her. Thus, while Annie's 'rejection of one kind of patriarchal law fails to protect her against the patriarchy of God

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[6] Muir, Edwin, *John Knox: Portrait of a Calvinist* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1929; 1930), 132.
[7] Ibid, 133.
[8] King, Robert, 'A Regiment of Monstrous Women: Female Horror Archetypes and Life History Theory', *Evolutionary Behavioral Sciences*, vol. 9, no. 3 (2015), 170-185, 179.
[9] Anderson, Carol, 'Writing Spaces' in *The Edinburgh Companion to Scottish Women's Writing*, ed. Glenda Norquay (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 113-121, 114.
[10] McCarthy, 85.

in Scotland,' she remains unaware of the further damage she is doing to her own and her family's freedom in maintaining harsh religious attitudes.[11] Annie sees only the symptoms of her oppression, not its roots. She sees her mother's denial as an instance where 'Her majesty had been insulted, her Annie Rattrayship had been spat on' (*Mrs Ritchie,* 35). As a result, 'she was going to assert herself as never before, not in the trivial world of school, but at the very centre of the world' (*Mrs Ritchie,* 35). Perhaps nodding again to John Knox, Muir uses Annie's relationship with God to achieve this.

While she adheres to the patriarchal social order by marrying to gain status in the Kirk, once within that marriage Annie takes absolute power in her family, thus enacting the 'intolerable subversion of the original order established by God' that Knox feared from the 'Monstrous Regiment of Women.'[12] After she locks up John Samuel as punishment for a note from Betsy Reid, Johnny Ritchie attempts to regain control: 'There's to be nothing locked up in this house unless I lock it. Did you hear that, Annie' (*Mrs Ritchie,* 203). She responds: 'I'm only trying to do what's best for a'body. I dinna want to see my bairns go to the bad. I only want to see them grow up good Christians, Johnny…' (*Mrs Ritchie,* 203). Johnny, whose profession it is to make coffins, thinks how: 'many a man, no doubt, had been driven before him into the same corner, with the walls narrowing and narrowing until there was no way out except through the narrow gate of a coffin' (*Mrs Ritchie,* 205). Indeed, he constructs his own coffin, as if willing death to come sooner. When Johnny Ritchie dies, his son John Samuel sees the house, which he has inherited, as a coffin, inextricably linking Annie to the bringer of death: 'All the coffins mine?' (*Mrs Ritchie*, 297). Mrs Ritchie literally becomes a 'man-eater,' a monstrous, too-powerful woman that men like Knox feared. Yet, Edwin's description of Knox's fury against English Catholics could similarly describe Annie Ritchie: 'These [Knox's] passions, envies, hatreds, cruelties, by the same transmutation became the passions, envies, hatreds, cruelties of God.'[13] Annie and Knox subvert biblical teachings to create a dogma 'Tied to the supreme authority of God' enabling Annie to 'always

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[11] *Moving in Circles,* 108.

[12] de Abreu, Maria, 'John Knox: Gynaecocracy, "The Monstrous Empire of Women"', *Reformation & Renaissance Review*, vol. 5, no. 2 (2003), 166-187, 173.

[13] *John Knox*, 60.

override all human laws and customs.'[14] In so doing, she shows that she believes human beings to be 'entirely corrupt,' and that she alone has contact with God, using this connection to threaten her enemies and her family, more concerned 'that they should tremble than that they should be saved.'[15]

To show this monstrosity, the narration, telling the story of Annie Rattray/Ritchie's delusions about God (her perception of herself as an earthly version of God) and the abuse she inflicts upon her family, is an act of violence on the reader. Michael Levenson suggests that modernist texts enact a kind of 'creative violence' to 'startle and disturb the public' while engaging with themes of 'tyranny and resistance'; *Mrs Ritchie* represents both.[16] Although Annie's tyranny comes from her outcast status, she, and later her daughter Sarah Annie, experience the futility of resistance in isolation.[17] Christianson notes that Annie's 'achievement of monstrosity is shown as stemming from her girlhood as Annie Rattray, carefully positioned as she is, within the narrow world of Calderwick.'[18] In response to her status as girl and outsider, Annie is 'shown as angrily but futilely rejecting her place in its class and gender structures.'[19] After all, her mother's decision to keep Annie from the academy reveals class and gender as the central issues underpinning her decision:

> The bursary wadna pay me for your keep. *You* at the Academy? It's no' even as if you were a laddie. Na, na, my leddy, the minute you're fourteen you gang to a job, or else you'll gi'e me a hand here wi' the washin' and the hoose (*Mrs Ritchie*, 32-33).

Jordan Pascoe explains that women (particularly those of working classes) were blamed for their children's deaths and malnourishment when entering the working world, but she

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[14] de Abreu, 175.

[15] *John Knox*, 27, 40.

[16] Levenson, Michael (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Modernism*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999; 2011), 2-3.

[17] The futility of resistance in isolation is a theme of many of Muir's texts. See chapter three, p. 88, and chapters six and seven.

[18] *Moving in Circles,* 106.

[19] Ibid.

goes on to discuss the inescapable nature of this "neglect" in an industrialized society.[20] She builds on Onora O'Neill's argument that:

> [r]eproductive labour within the household [is] structured in such a way that those who perform this labour have limited access to resources while at the same time having even more vulnerable others dependent on them (2000:165), and this makes them particularly vulnerable to coercion and domination.[21]

Her mother's rejection of Annie's dreams of further education stems from economic need: the Rattray's limited resources make both Annie and Mrs Rattray more vulnerable to domination by Jim, who can choose to work or waste money as he pleases, being a cog in the machine of patriarchal capitalism.

Had Annie been a boy, she would have been more likely to attain a higher paying career with further education. But as she was not, Mrs Rattray sees it as an economic necessity to push Annie into the workforce as soon as possible, rather than take a considerable financial risk in supporting her education. Annie blames her mother for the death of her dreams and sees this as a form of neglect, unable to see gender and class oppressions as the root cause. Moreover, her desire to regain the power that was lost when her career ambitions were denied pushes her into marriage to gain status in society. As Pascoe further suggests: 'a choice between marriage partners does not constitute consent to marriage if no other mode of existence if [sic] available to a woman.'[22] Annie's selection of Johnny Ritchie is choosing, as it were, the better of two evils. These repeated patterns of oppression amplify into rage, which in turn kills Annie's children. Sarah Annie, the only survivor in her mother's tyranny over her family, realises in the conclusion that she cannot fight off her mother's possessiveness alone: 'as if awakening from a sleep, [she] stared at her mother's black figure kneeling on the green grass. Then she turned and ran for dear life out of the cemetery' (*Mrs Ritchie*, 338). Sarah Annie becomes a deserter in this war, but we are left with no doubt as to the necessity of this action. The graves before her reveal that Sarah Annie's only other fate, had she remained dependent on her mother, would be death. She, like Muir's other heroines, flees the site of Calvinist oppression.

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[20] Pascoe, Jordan, 'Working Women and Monstrous Mothers: Kant, Marx, and the Valuation of Domestic Labour', *Kantian Review,* vol. 4, no. 22 (2017), 599-618. See also McCarthy's *Double Lives*.

[21] Pascoe, 615n.

[22] Pascoe, 615n.

Annie's violent tendencies sprout from this oppression, but are shown early to be tied to imperial domination. The game of 'Runaway Slaves,' in which she yells at the 'slaves,' 'I'll skin the hide off o' you when I get you!' first suggests the physically violent consequences of her subjection (*Mrs Ritchie,* 47).[23] Her peers laugh, but after a particularly violent game of 'mesmerizing,' her schoolmates no longer find her 'funny.' They compare her to her father, hinting early that she will take up the behaviour of a dominating patriarch: 'Och, she's juist like her faither when she has the blues' (*Mrs Ritchie,* 51). Significantly, this game also reveals her refusal to accept blame: 'her voice, when she "woke up" on the tussock, was weaker and gentler than ever, and she never forgot to disclaim all knowledge of her actions during the frenzy' (*Mrs Ritchie,* 50). David Robb notes that Annie released her emotions 'by detaching them from her conscious awareness,' thereby avoiding 'conscious responsibility for what they [her emotions] make her do: it is this inability to feel moral responsibility which makes her, a psychologically justified sinner, so destructive.'[24]

These same performances later infiltrate her relationship with her family. Just prior to the outbreak of World War I, John Samuel and Mrs Ritchie argue over his relationship with Bet Reid's daughter. She expresses to her husband that: 'it's mair than a thrashing he's needing now. I've told that boy, and better told him; I've thrashed him, and better thrashed him' (*Mrs Ritchie,* 225). It is clear that Mrs Ritchie believes physical control is the best way to 'teach' her children. But when they rebel against her violence, she once more performs as the victim to avoid blame. When John Samuel finally appears home after being with Betsy Reid, Mrs Ritchie's anger leads to John Samuel's exclamation that 'Mrs Reid's house is a lot mair Christian than this is!' (*Mrs Ritchie,* 228). This is one of the first instances in which a family member rejects Annie's vengeful Christianity. The 'invasion' of outsiders and the devil has begun.

The situation escalates to violence: 'Mrs Ritchie's self-control almost deserted her. She stepped forward with her hand raised as if to fell John Samuel to the ground, and he, fending her off like a cornered animal, flung her from him with all his force' (*Mrs*

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[23] A post-colonial reading of this text, noting particularly the depiction of the racialised Other, would be fruitful and highly useful for uncovering the limitations of *Mrs Ritchie*. However, given this thesis's focus on the maternal, there was not space to provide a detailed reading as such.

[24] Robb, 159.

Ritchie, 228). Here, Mrs Ritchie's tendency for performing the victim reappears. After John Samuel defends himself against her attack, Annie becomes the vulnerable woman: 'Mrs Ritchie lay as she had fallen, looking dazed, but when she was lifted into a sitting position she put her hand to her head. "Where am I?" she said, in a weak voice' (*Mrs Ritchie,* 228). This victim act directly mirrors her girlhood mesmerism frenzies:

> One by one she caught and conquered the creatures around her, and when the last of them was thrashed and floundering, lo! she floated serene and dominant, unquestioned, unrebuked, upon a submissive element. She sought her tussock of grass again, shut her eyes, and said in a weak, gentle voice: 'Where am I?' (*Mrs Ritchie,* 49).

As these tendencies solidify, Muir presents Mrs Ritchie as a different kind of 'Mother God' than the one she first conceived in her journal, 'Marmaduke'.[25] The novel condemns Mrs Ritchie's actions while explaining, to some extent, the roots of her 'monstrosity'.

It might be argued that, in explaining Annie's monstrosity, Muir criticises the depiction of 'winners' and 'losers' in the Great War, suggesting with the end of the novel that, with millions dead, there are no real winners. The final scene reveals that Mrs Ritchie loves her son better in death; to her, he was a necessary sacrifice: 'She was still patting the mounds, first one and then the other, saying, with tender possessiveness: "Poor Johnny… Poor John Samuel"' (*Mrs Ritchie,* 338). Muir's figure of a religious fanatic/monstrous mother is a malicious parody of the leaders of World War I, pointing to their inhumane justifications for loss of human life. Peter Gay writes:

> The official line on both sides [of the war] was chauvinism, encouraged and even enforced by censors, adorned by pious talk of divine missions and divine support. After the madness was over, Freud would sarcastically note that both the Allied and Central Powers had enlisted God for their side.[26]

Likewise, Mrs Ritchie claims God's allegiance to justify her abuse. After the death of her son, Mrs Ritchie believes that she 'knew quite well that God had accepted the sacrifice, for she had accepted it herself. John Samuel was now safe for ever; the good fight had been fought to a finish' (*Mrs Ritchie,* 328).

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[25] See chapter one, p. 67, and appendix II [19]. Here the Mother God is a provider, in contrast to the man who benevolently chooses not to eat the little child: 'man himself is so conscious of his magnanimity in not beating or eating the little creature that he constantly suggests it,' appendix II [19].

[26] Gay, 142.

Annie fractures her family into trench zones that split them into individual, competing factions. Through this, Muir puts 'under the microscope the damage done by repression to the human spirit, as well as the damage done by repressed anger to those surrounding the repressed.'[27] In this way, her novel 'is emblematic of the inter-war years' sense of fragility with a scarcely contained violence' and engages with signature interwar themes: psychological struggle and collapsing gender boundaries, while remaining 'ultimately unrelieved of any real hope or possibility of release.'[28] In so doing, both the character of Mrs Ritchie and the war itself 'establishes the fragility and impermanence of life in opposition to the frantic illusory certainties of Mrs Ritchie's attempt at control.'[29] It is in opposition, too, to the illusion of peace and democratic power that came at the end of the war. As Marshal Foch, the French general who served as the Supreme Allied Commander in the Great War, noted after Armistice: 'This is not a peace. It is an armistice for twenty years.'[30] By the publication of *Mrs Ritchie* the accuracy of his prediction would have been increasingly, and eerily, evident – the outbreak of the Second World War was just twenty-one years after the end of the First. By 1933, Adolf Hitler had begun inciting nationalism among the German people, who had experienced humiliation and economic depression after the Treaty of Versailles left them without territory, ammunitions, or other means of overcoming the losses of WWI.

Belonging shows the increasing uncertainties across Eastern Europe, as she and Edwin saw the anger of Czechs against Austrians, Germans' economic struggles and resentment against Western Europe for causing these troubles, and the increasing anti-Semitism in Austria by the middle of the 1920s.[31] Muir describes in *Belonging* that, initially, they 'did not appreciate that there was a dark side to the Austrian traditions' but remembers 'the anti-Semitic newspaper he [Edwin] picked up in a café, *The Iron Broom*, filled with crude insults that libelled by name actual Jews living in Salzburg' (*Belonging*, 95). Despite these anti-Semitic outbursts: 'this gutter rag amazed and shocked us but we did not think of taking it seriously' (*Belonging*, 95). Her recollections are coloured by her

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[27] *Moving in Circles*, 104.
[28] Ibid., 36.
[29] Ibid., 117.
[30] Reynolds, David, *Armistice*, dir. Russell Barnes (BBC2, 2008).
[31] Allen 149, 169-70, 180.

later understanding of the war, and she notes in the next sentence: 'it represented the kind of poisonous stuff that Hans Gmachl of Gnigl was probably fed on and that Hitler was fed on as he grew up' (*Belonging*, 95). In this atmosphere, the violence of *Mrs Ritchie* foretells what was to come in the war, but is, because of Muir's own inability to take the racialised violence of Europe seriously, ignorant of the racial implications of that violence.

While perhaps, like Kafka, Muir was an 'accidental modernist,' her intense interest in the 'psychological and sociological detail' of her characters, as well as the fragmentation of gender, make this novel undeniably modernist.[32] Her representation of the traditionally Scottish Devil as not only a woman, but also as a mother, fits in with other modernists who made 'a virtue of foregrounding the new, the disrupted, the fragmentary, both rejecting and challenging the "norms" of the preceding Victorian and Edwardian eras.'[33] Robb writes: 'in a literature renowned for its oppressive patriarchs, the figure of the terrible matriarch is a powerful contrast, with few antecedents.'[34] Muir puts a face to the 'nameless, faceless anxiety' that was war – Mrs Ritchie, the terrible matriarch.[35] Muir's novel represents all that there was to doubt: 'the foundations of religion and ethics, the integrity of governments and selves, the survival of a redemptive culture.'[36] The eruption of war had been in progress for decades before its outbreak, just as Annie's history provides the foundation for her anger. But Muir does not excuse Mrs Ritchie's actions as a mother and wife. Instead, she introduces a nuanced understanding of cruelty and trauma that then becomes, through the representation of mothers and parents in the novel, a microcosmic depiction of the 'instability of the new world.'[37] Annie's childhood and its references to colonialism, like the slave game, and Miss Julia Carnegie's tales of 'the black slave-gangs' (*Mrs Ritchie*, 16) hint at the disruption of European power.

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[32] Gay, 214; *Moving in Circles*, 107.

[33] *Moving in Circles*, 105-6, 33. See chapters three and six.

[34] Robb, David S., 'The Published Novels of Willa Muir' in *Studies in Scottish Fiction: Twentieth Century*, eds Joachim Schwend and Horst W. Drescher (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1990), 149-161, 160.

[35] Levenson, 5.

[36] Levenson, 5.

[37] *Moving in Circles*, 112.

Muir juxtaposes the "monstrous" motherhood of Mrs Ritchie, which causes her son's and husband's deaths, with the harmful, power-hungry leadership of European powers which led to the deaths of millions of sons and fathers in World War I. Sarah Annie calls attention to the senselessness of these deaths, implicating her mother unconsciously: 'Why should John Samuel, just because he was born a laddie, have to suffer in a senseless war?' and only a few lines later, she is, seemingly without cause, reminded of 'a sudden anxiety about her mother' (*Mrs Ritchie*, 296, 297). Christianson highlights the connection of Annie with European imperial leaders when she states that:

> Annie's ambition (thwarted both by her gender and class) is connected by this simile to the late, fierce fires of the 1887 jubilee celebrations of Victoria, empress of that empire which was moving inexorably through exploitation of its far flung land towards failure.[38]

Muir further alludes to the disruption of old European ways, by describing how 'ex-sixth standard was, as its name implied, a class that had abdicated the throne; a class ripe for revolution' (*Mrs Ritchie*, 25).[39] In Britain, this took the form of a slow deterioration of monarchical power and its Empire, starting with India's First War of Independence in 1857 and continuing with the Boer War between 1899 and 1902. The Suffragette movement, the Irish revolution, and worker's rights movements followed. Muir writes with the knowledge of what was to come after the novel's opening in 1887. She anachronistically imposes this knowledge in her rendering of the tyrant, Annie Rattray/Ritchie: 'She could not help believing that Labour and Suffragette and Irish insurrectionists should all be soundly thrashed and jailed' (*Mrs Ritchie*, 251). Mrs Ritchie attempts to regain power in a society that deprives her of it, but without access to resources and societal dominance, her weak imitation of these imperial leaders ends up disadvantaging herself and her daughter.

Rather than joining forces with suffrage movements to right the wrongs imposed on her, she isolates herself further and creates a self-identity of 'Queen'. Her fantasies at the start of the novel uncover her delusions of monarchical power: 'she saw herself as the queen of that far-off, savage land; […] Hers was no longer a mere power of resistance, but a power of life and death over her subjects' (*Mrs Ritchie*, 13). By placing Annie's

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[38] *Moving in Circles,* 112.

[39] See appendix I.

fantasies in Africa, Muir alludes to the Imperial powers that were slowly losing control on that continent, but also to their ability to violently define the lives of its peoples. Like these European countries, Mrs Ritchie's power is doomed, and as her 'subjects' resist, she becomes more and more violent in an attempt to maintain control.[40]

In her fantasies:

> The inaudible hiss of her rage and of the hail driven before it gave her a pleasure so keen that it suddenly inverted itself, so to speak, and she herself was exposed to the lashing hail. She walked erect, exulting in the sting of it, while the others were beaten to the ground, and it served them right (*Mrs Ritchie*, 12).

Her tyranny worsens as the novel continues, and in her pursuit of Johnny Ritchie, she attempts to find further victims, even while succumbing to the patriarchal ideals that oppress her: 'Annie sensed the deeper resistance to her advances, and she became so set on overcoming it that she forgot her lingering fear of gossip and her dread of the devil…. The man must, must, must be brought to a point…. Would she actually have to cuddle him?' (*Mrs Ritchie*, 141). The language suggests Annie is 'winning' Johnny over with colonial-like manipulation, but also that the realities of marriage – physical intimacy, 'cuddling' – are against her will.

After their marriage, she tries to regain her agency by attempting to remove that of her husband and children. After John Samuel becomes a reporter rather than the minister she wanted him to be, the narrator explains that:

> Mrs Ritchie regarded the law of the land as a projection of the law which she had set up in her own life, the control she had established over her own passions; the law was a sacred institution which existed to enforce upon other people the order to which she herself adhered, and to challenge it was heresy against Mrs Ritchie. […] One did not sit and argy-bargy with the Serpent; one crushed it under foot as God had commanded (*Mrs Ritchie*, 251).

The novel's historical context allows her readers a firmer understanding of the reality of Mrs Ritchie's maternal tyranny. Annie puts her victims into an inescapable straightjacket, and the narration shows that it was not by mistake. This strengthens sympathy for her victims, so when Sarah Annie 'defects,' it cannot be seen as treachery or base abandonment of her mother.

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[40] See chapter six for a discussion of the paternal/maternal nature of imperialism in *Mrs Grundy*.

Perhaps because of this, Christianson describes this 'darker and less autobiographical' novel as 'powerful.'[41] *Mrs Ritchie*'s contemporary critics were less admiring, despite one review of *Imagined Corners* ending with optimism: 'We shall look forward to her second novel.'[42] All four contemporary reviews comment on the monstrosity of *Mrs Ritchie* but surprisingly, their commentary does not only regard the tyranny of the titular character. In *The Scotsman* review of July 1933, the anonymous reviewer sympathises with Mrs Ritchie after Sarah Annie's defection, describing Annie as: 'left to face old age alone.'[43] Perhaps Sarah Annie's defection is too far broken from traditional beliefs of familial loyalty.[44] It suits that some readers would disagree with the end; both women's suffrage and global revolutions against Empire had loud and powerful opponents. The *Scotsman* reviewer goes on to criticise: 'though actions of disinterested kindness are not absent, the dominating influence of the central figure leaves insufficient scope for portrayal of the softer yet prevailing forces of ordinary sympathy in human relationships.'[45] Six decades later, David Robb agrees. However, *The Scotsman* reviewer rightly points out that: 'It was in Sarah Annie's case only that the poisonous influence could not prevail.'[46] Yet, the lack of human positivity in the novel brings the audience into the lives of the Ritchie family and is exactly what allows us to sympathise with Annie's daughter's escape – we experience what the world looks like through Annie's eyes, and how she forces her husband and children to see the world by limiting their exposure to other people. It is an uncomfortably realistic experience for those who have experienced parental abuse – this is not a novel to read for entertainment.

Like Annie, Knox was, according to Muir's husband's account, 'a choleric and violent man' who had 'an inconquerable desire to impose his will on others' and was 'in

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[41] Christianson, Aileen, 'MUIR, Wilhelmina Johnston (Willa), n. Anderson [Agnes Neill Scott]', *The Biographical Dictionary of Scottish Women*, eds Elizabeth Ewan, Sue Innes, and Siân Reynolds (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/gla/detail.action?docID=434290 [accessed 31.03.21], 274-275, 275.

[42] '"Mrs Muir's First Novel", unsigned review of *Imagined Corners* (*Modern Scot* Summer 1931)' in *Modernism and* Nationalism, 86.

[43] 'Review 7 – No Title', *The Scotsman (1921-1950)* (13 Jul. 1933) http://ezproxy.lib.gla.ac.uk/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.ezproxy.lib.gla.ac.uk/historical-newspapers/review-7-no-title/docview/480733504/se-2?accountid=14540 [accessed 14.04.21].

[44] Similar defections took place in the ballads, but often it was a daughter saved by her True Love, therefore restarting the cycle of familial loyalty; see chapter seven.

[45] 'Review 7'.

[46] Ibid.

no doubt that he was the instrument of God' who could enforce his God-given authority with the 'full scale of God's judgments' found in the plagues of the Old Testament.[47] *The Scotsman*'s reviewer's inability to see past Annie's gender and failure as a mother in order to understand Muir's comparison of Annie with Knox, and therefore patriarchal leaders generally, allows Muir to further implicate and show misogyny and tyranny – the monstrous natures of patriarchal society – within her readers.[48] Muir's ability to create supreme discomfort in her readers, to produce the same hopeless despair that Mrs Ritchie forces her husband and children to feel, ensures her readers are subjected to the same pain and desolation that Mrs Ritchie's family endures. The instability of human goodness was still a sensitive and fresh new reality after the horrors of the First World War. In the face of this, readers may not have wanted to engage with more violence in their imaginative lives.

Her novel presents a feminised version of George Douglas Brown's *House with the Green Shutters* (1901), which arguably signalled the start of the modernist period in Scotland.[49] Agnes Mure Mackenzie noted in *The Times Literary Supplement* that *Mrs Ritchie* is 'framed for the reader in a pair of green shutters, of the typical self-righteous domestic despot of literary tradition, who drives her family to desperation in an atmosphere of hatred and high tea.'[50] Mrs Ritchie, however, is hardly the type to sit for high tea with the local socialites. Read alongside the context of the First World War and shifting gender norms, the novel is a scathing commentary on the societal traditions that

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[47] *John Knox*, 117.

[48] Muir similarly implicates patriarchy as the root of the monstrous mother in 'Women in Scotland', as she shows women's only option for authority as being in the house, where the husband, too, takes on a childish figure: 'A Scotswoman who is too timid to utter a word in public may tongue-lash her family in private with great efficiency. […] A Scotswoman at home can be a formidable figure; she is essentially a mother rather than a wife and comrade; she provides meals, darned socks and other comforts to the whole family, and from her point of view a husband is often enough only a more exacting child among the other children' ('Women in Scotland', 1-2).

[49] *Moving in Circles*, 43-4. David S. Robb notes the similarities (and differences) between Annie and James Hogg's *Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824) Wringhim and Gourlay of *Green Shutters*. Robb describes the novel as 'telling of a family's descent into ever-deeper reaches of pain, cruelty, obsession and madness, driven by the manic single-mindedness of a parental monster' who ultimately has 'a sense of election' leading to a 'rejection of the natural, the human, and the spontaneous.' Robb, 151.

[50] Mackenzie, Agnes Mure, '*Mrs Ritchie*', *The Times Literary Supplement*, no. 1641 (13 Jul. 1933), 478. See also Morley Jamieson's comment that the book rests 'in the same class of realism that characterised *The House with the Green Shutters* and *Gillespie*,' 29.

led millions of sons and daughters to their deaths but prevented mothers from protesting the war.

It is this which may make Sarah Annie's supposition that her mother is a feminist figure accurate. Yet, it also allows Muir to criticise violence in the name of anything, even women's rights. Sarah Annie understands the oppression that led to her mother's tyranny, even if she is not forgiving of it:

> she [Annie] insisted on being not merely a female of the human species, a breeder of children, a house for men to occupy and own; she insisted on owning herself. And if in order to assert her selfhood she laid claim to being in private league with God against the devil, that, thought Sarah Annie, was the fault of her generation (*Mrs Ritchie* 290).

When Annie is denied ownership of the house upon Johnny's death, Sarah Annie thinks: 'That's like telling mother that her body has never been her own, thought Sarah Annie. For she's been tied to the house, and it was only in the house that she was somebody' (*Mrs Ritchie*, 287).[51] Sarah Annie 'introduces a complexity to reader response to Mrs Ritchie's construction of herself, ensuring that we cannot simply read her as a monstrous villain.'[52] Romero reads this as a 'psychological study of women's history' which 'shows the political implications of what is denied to women: their bodies.'[53] Mrs Ritchie's fight with her family and society about the ownership of herself is rebellion against invasion by others. Muir offers more sympathy for her character and a more nuanced understanding of the position of woman than other feminist writings of the time in a way that Douglas Brown could not do with his monstrous patriarch. Douglas Brown's monster was one of greed, resisting the modernist period. By contrast, Mrs Ritchie's monstrosity stems from bitterness and resentment from the same patriarchal and classist powers that John Gourlay represents.

First-wave feminism had not yet taken up the mantle of reclaiming monstrous women but because of the monstrous size of her foe, Mrs Ritchie must also be of monstrous proportions. Joanna Cannan's review in August 1933 derides the central

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[51] The association of women as a 'personification' of houses is not uncommon. See Hagemann, Susanne, 'Women and Nation' in *A History of Scottish Women's Writing*, 318-328.

[52] *Moving in Circles*, 112.

[53] Romero, 115. See Romero's thesis for a psychoanalytic approach to *Mrs Ritchie*, including an understanding of her place in relation to Lacan's 'Law of the Father.'

figure, and, perhaps accidentally, the author herself, calling her 'Miss' Willa Muir. Cannan instantly places Mrs Ritchie into the category of 'one of those "good" and "Christian" women who make a hell of life for those about them.'[54] This allows her to dismiss the complexity of the character and of the novel's themes while also deriding the trope of the watchful, nagging aging woman, which has clearly influenced her reading. She writes that:

> It is a disagreeable book—distorted Christianity and virtue run mad are not pleasant to look upon—but it loses power because the character of Annie Rattray is studied without one spark of sympathy; if she had loved the husband and the children whom she tortured, the tragedy would have moved us more. As it is, Miss Muir has drawn a monster; we feel that there is more good than this in the worst of us.[55]

Cannan strikes upon the same emotional response that the reviewer A.B. praises, yet without understanding the efficacy of it as A.B does. A.B. sees this as a 'very sure and successful novel': 'So loathsome and enraging is the righteous Anna [sic] Ritchie that one is inclined to feel malevolent towards the entire novel, forgetting that each spasm of contempt is fresh tribute to Willa Muir's craftsmanship.'[56] Muir's emphasis in creating such a detestable character points to the failed system in which women are bound as mothers and wives. A final point on Cannan's review: she describes Mrs Ritchie as 'a monster,' and expresses her belief that even the 'worst of us' have 'more good' than this. But Annie does believe she loves her children – that is why she tortures them. For her 'hatred is indistinguishable from love' (*Mrs Ritchie*, 49).

Cannan's judgement of Annie is hardly surprising given Annie's prejudiced beliefs that let her turn even on her beloved Carnegie women. While living with them as parlour-maid, she feels that: 'She was the only person in the house who was young enough to be of some use to God, it seemed to her; the others were no longer capable of serving Him' (*Mrs Ritchie*, 128). Her understanding of the importance of her age shows

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[54] Canna, Joanna, 'Novels of Character', *The Bookman*, vol. 84, no. 503 (Aug 1933), 260.

[55] 'Novels of Character'.

[56] The review discusses *Frost in May* by Antonia White. This novel is also a character study, showing the life of a girl starting at the age of nine as she traverses the Convent. As the reviewers point out: 'Nanda's mind is too analytical to be successfully confined in scrubbed corridors and everlasting ritualism; soon enough she has the uncomfortable sense that the technique of the convent makes religion "a monstrous and meaningless complication."' A.B., 'Frost in May', *Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science and Art*, vol. 156, no. 4054 (1933), 45.

that her 'service' to God is connected to her fertility. The Carnegie women are, as Sarah Annie calls herself and her mother after losing the house, the surplus women: 'Unmated women, barren houses' and in Mrs Ritchie's eyes, unable to serve God (*Mrs Ritchie*, 289). McCarthy notes that these '"redundant women" pined away in the parental home, found solace in alms-giving, or led a superficial existence of constant amusement.'[57] Women's worth is tied, as both Annie and Sarah Annie clearly understand, to their links to men. Had Annie been able to see the value of remaining childless, she could have embraced foreign missionary work, like the Carnegies, as a method of becoming a teacher of sorts and escaping the confines of Calderwick. Her own adherence to patriarchal power norms prevents this and she entraps herself.

Though Sarah Annie has one instance of sympathy for her mother, this quickly fades with the help of Bet Reid, and before the end of the novel, Sarah Annie says to her mother: 'I've stood more than I can stand from you. You give me no peace. You follow me about from morning till night yattering at me… I canna even get enough to eat from you' (*Mrs Ritchie,* 336-37). This is why Muir's depiction of Mrs Ritchie as a 'monster' is crucial. Her creation of a wholly 'evil' character is not out of line with the history of literary monsters, including those of *The House with the Green Shutters,* Robert Louis Stevenson's *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886), and James Hogg's *Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824), which allows dissociation from their humanity. This time, however, it is a woman, and a mother. But unlike these patriarchs, Muir's monster comes from political resistance against classed patriarchy in her own attempts to gain power. In so doing, she is distasteful to others who try to gain power in more subversive ways:

> the threat of German invasion was not so appalling, after all, as the lack of true patriotism at home, the shamelessness of the girls, the extravagance of the workers, the selfishness of profiteers, the immunity of spies and traitors. […] if only every bed were as well defended as hers, there would be less debauchery of man-power and the Germans would have no chance of invading the country (*Mrs Ritchie,* 225).

Annie's distaste for the New Woman is due to her decision to attempt to gain traditional status in a conventional patriarchal society rather than upend that society. Just as she

[57] McCarthy, 74.

believes she must defend her home/her body, the country must defend itself against 'invaders'.

Despite her intelligence, Annie is unable to see the systems of oppression that are working against her in a nuanced way. As a result, she imitates the power that has been used against her and isolates herself through 'her fixed idea that she alone is fighting against the Devil's malignant influence.'[58] In this way, Muir actively discourages the type of female empowerment that imitates masculine power.[59] Muir offers brief glimpses of what healthy female empowerment can look like through the motherly Bet Reid and the resilience of Sarah Annie. As Paul Kivel theorises, cycles of abuse stem from power dynamics, in which one person attempts to regain lost power through oppressing the group or individual they deem inferior. They do so by re-enacting the violence that they have been taught.[60] Indications of Mrs Ritchie as re-enacting Imperial and patriarchal violence initially arise in her imaginings of her family as: 'Worse than the blacks of Africa or America' (*Mrs Ritchie,* 11). She attempts to gain power by trying to oppress those she sees as inferior: faceless Africans and her family.

The novel's opening sets up these binaries – European vs. African, Black vs. white, drunk vs. sober and 'moral,' working class vs. 'civilized' upper class, man vs. woman. Jim Rattray's initial appearance introduces these binaries, while also showing the Eurocentric atmosphere of pre-war Calderwick: 'he was as unconscious of his broken shoes and sackcloth apron as if he had been naked in some primeval forest; he might have been listening to the faint, far-off drumming of happy fists upon ape-like bosoms' (*Mrs Ritchie,* 9). Here, Africa represents 'chaos' and 'savagery,' but also the 'black and bulky' rage inside both Annie and her father.[61] Muir's portrayal of Jim suggests that status of the Rattray family is in the lower echelons of society, but in order to portray this, she uses racialised imagery of 'primitive' African tribes. She is not alone in a comparison of class and race or nation. Marx and Engels suggested: 'In proportion as the exploitation of one

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[58] Caird, 15.

[59] See chapter two, p. 78, for a discussion of Muir's warning against women acting 'like men'.

[60] Paul Kivel has been an outspoken advocate of shifting the way abuse is discussed, focusing on social construction of men, which teaches them to physically abuse women. He has worked for the Oakland Men's Project, advocating for stopping violence at the root. See *Men's Work: How to Stop the Violence that Tears Our Lives Apart* (1992) by Paul Kivel.

[61] Elphinstone argues, too, that: 'Africa is here not only the dangerous unconscious, it is also death.' 409.

individual by another is put an end to, the exploitation of one nation by another will also be put an end to.'[62] In the context of *Mrs Ritchie*, these binaries cement Annie Rattray's own bigoted perception of her family. At the time *Mrs Ritchie* was released, *National Geographic* had been publishing for fifty-five years, showing images of 'primitive' African societies for white Western audiences to gaze upon with mildly interested detachment. Muir's allusions to 'ape-like bosoms,' 'drumming,' and 'primeval forests' in her description of Jim are reminiscent of this normalised white gaze upon these Othered, colonised cultures.

Though, as Mudge notes, 'Willa had as much regard for the inequalities of the British class system as for male chauvinism,' her life goal was not 'righting the inequality' of the system that she abhorred, least of all racial issues.[63] While in Austria, the Muirs saw the rise of anti-Semitism, but these ideas 'seemed so self-evidently ridiculous that the Muirs chose to ignore it' rather than speak against it.[64] In fact, they seemed not to understand it. Broch's own descriptions of the dangers in Germany and Eastern Europe went unheeded. Though his novels, which they translated, offered 'foreknowledge of coming disaster,' Broch felt, from his letters with the Muirs (mainly written by Willa), that 'they still did not comprehend what he was trying to tell them. Or perhaps they could not.'[65] Jim's ostracised status, therefore, is unlikely to be a commentary on racial injustice, particularly as he is depicted as a 'lazy' alcoholic, prone to violence – if anything, Muir's description of Jim adheres to racist stereotypes. These do, however, suggest Mrs Ritchie's alliance with Imperial powers.

This description also sets out Calderwick culture and racial stereotypes, and Annie's place within these. Annie cannot escape her family history, but she does not recognise this. Elphinstone argues that these images of 'primitive' African tribes show that Annie is scared of her own rage, her own natural feelings, which she cannot accept.[66] Ironically, she fails to see later that her internal ridicule of Mary getting out of everything 'by shouting other people down' describes what she herself becomes (*Mrs Ritchie*, 11).

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[62] Marx, Karl; Engels Friedrich, *The Communist Manifesto*, trans. Samuel Moore (London: Penguin Books, 1848; 2002), 241.
[63] Mudge, 3.
[64] Allen, 180.
[65] Huberman, 54.
[66] Elphinstone, 409.

She is scared, moreover, of society reading her in the same way they read her family, specifically her father. Her fear is racially charged, as she uses images of Black populations to describe her father and sister as 'blacks,' enraged that Jim had 'come to the school in that state, and then Mary to take his arm! […] Mary had little to lose; Mary was just a black' (*Mrs Ritchie,* 11). Because of this, 'She would never forgive him. Or Mary' (*Mrs Ritchie*, 11). Propaganda against those on the African continent must have infiltrated Muir's perspective on the world, and with the abolition of slavery less than a century before, the Jim Crow laws in the United States, and eugenics rising across Europe, the description of her family as 'worse' than Black individuals would have been a powerful, albeit problematic, one. Furthermore, Allen succinctly describes the atmosphere that led to Hitler's rise in Germany and to the Second World War – an atmosphere of which Willa was only too aware: 'The national sense of anger, injustice and humiliation was moreover disproportionately heightened by the "gross error in psychology" which the French committed in deploying "black" Algerian troops.'[67] Muir, travelling around Central and Eastern Europe in the 1920s, saw hints of this atmosphere. This 'inferiority complex' that she witnessed arguably contributed to what Annie personifies. This is suggested by Annie's use of 'black' to describe her 'lowly' family, who humiliate and anger her: 'To think that he [Jim Rattray] had come to the school and shamed her there before everybody!' (*Mrs Ritchie,* 10-11).

Later in the novel, Annie believes she has escaped the 'black and bulky oppression' by disowning her family (*Mrs Ritchie*, 12). At her wedding, 'Mrs Rattray found it difficult to assert her rights as the bride's mother, and Jim Rattray […] was even more severely snubbed' (*Mrs Ritchie*, 149). She wrongfully believes that her marriage has made her 'safe at last and beyond the reach of all of them': 'The ring was slipped on, the magic circle that fenced her off from humiliation' (*Mrs Ritchie*, 150). And after she has had her children, she believes: 'She had risen high in the world for a Rattray; indeed she barely remembered her Rattray connections, and her children hardly knew their cousins by sight' (*Mrs Ritchie*, 211). Hers was the 'cleanest and best-kept house in Calderwick' and even her children 'were free scholars at the Academy' (*Mrs Ritchie,* 211). Yet in her fierce resistance to her past, she proves that her familial connections

[67] Allen, 169; quoted A.S. Neill, *A Dominie Abroad*, 13.

remain an obsession. In becoming an abusive mother and wife she attempts to cleanse herself of her family's history, a kind of genocide of her ancestry that she hopes will lead to rebirth into a superior identity. In so doing, she further engrains herself within her family by repeating the abuse by her father, who, in the first chapter of the novel, 'clenche[s] on a fragment of his cutty and with all his force he threw it at' his wife (*Mrs Ritchie,* 15).

Because Jim's abuse appears, superficially, to stem from anger and alcoholism, Annie fails to identify oppression as the root of his abusive behaviour and drinking problem. This lets her distance her actions from her father's, and see her behaviour as righteous and justified. But in attempting to compensate for a lack of power, like her father, she continues the cycle that she tries to escape. While Jim's rage appears, to Annie, a stroke of immorality, her own abuse, in her perception, stems from 'love' and an ardent belief that she 'ought to be admired and respected by everybody' (*Mrs Ritchie,* 54). This is what makes her most oppressively imperialist: she expects her "subjects" to trust that her volatile behaviour is in their best interests. After all, John Samuel's and Sarah Annie's:

> mother's God frowned upon all other demonstrations of feeling, for to open one's heart in joy to the world was to invite the devil, but righteous indignation was an emotion to which no blame could possibly be attached; it was highly commendable as well as enjoyable (*Mrs Ritchie,* 214).

Her family sees Annie as torturing and traumatising them for her own enjoyment. But Annie's desire to marry Johnny hints early that this fear of emotional vulnerability was a fear of returning to the humiliation she experienced as a child and as a Rattray.

Similarly, Susan Zeiger explains that wartime propaganda championed '"patriotic" motherhood, defined by obedience to the state and the willing sacrifice of sons' even while condemning 'unpatriotic' mothering, 'which included feminist and pacifist activism and "selfish," overly emotional attachment to children.'[68] Pacifists, and by connection, mothers who were unwilling to sacrifice their sons, were 'disloyal and threatening.'[69] Films showed 'the feminist pacifist assertion of a maternal compulsion to

[68] Zeiger, Susan, 'She Didn't Raise Her Boy to Be a Slacker: Motherhood, Conscription, and the Culture of the First World War', *Feminist Studies,* vol. 22, no. 1 (1996), 6-39, 7-8.
[69] Zeiger, 20.

preserve life, suggesting instead that the overbearing mother would kill or destroy her son in her drive to keep him to herself.'[70] Thus, in distancing herself from her family, Mrs Ritchie is being a 'good,' 'patriotic' mother, yet her overbearing nature is indeed what kills her son.[71] After explaining her need to thrash her daughter for running away she reasons: 'A child that ran away as far as the workshop might run farther' (*Mrs Ritchie*, 180). Muir juxtaposes Bet Reid's protective and attached nature with Annie's to signal the dangers of detachment and willingness to sacrifice her family, despite her desire to imprison them in the house. John Samuel's involvement with Betsy Reid attaches him to the Reid family, and, experiencing Bet's warmer form of mothering, realises the severity of his mother's cruelty: 'Mrs Reid's voice, even in abuse, had a warm smile behind it, for the Reid children ran out fearless and smiling even when their mother called after them' (*Mrs Ritchie*, 216). The use of the word 'abuse' exposes the contrast: the Reid children have clearly never experienced the anger, maltreatment, and abuse that haunt the Ritchie children, despite Bet's (clearly empty) threats of 'I'll knock you into the middle of next week, you wee deevils!' (*Mrs Ritchie*, 216). The use of the word 'deevil' becomes playful, harmless compared to the fire and brimstone of the Ritchie household.

The difference is once more exemplified when, after hearing of Mrs Ritchie's abuse, Bet Reid arrives at the Ritchie household to scold her old co-worker: 'the bairns say that you lead the laddie a dog's life; and I heard him screaming mysel' yesterday, and the day before yesterday, and the day before that' (*Mrs Ritchie*, 181). She indicates that Annie's treatment of her children is even worse than that which Muir describes. Yet, Mrs Ritchie, as an embodiment of that Great War, believes Bet is too 'soft'. Her children's trauma is for the greater good. In response to Bet Reid's intervention, Annie believes that: 'Yes, the Ritchies were doing their duty, especially Mrs Ritchie. It was a pity she was so surrounded by enemies and had no Christian neighbours to encourage her' (*Mrs Ritchie*, 182). Mrs Ritchie believes she is enacting this violence upon her family in order to protect the sanctity of the home and her family. As European leaders invoked God for the sacrifice of men and women in World War I, so too is Mrs Ritchie protecting from

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[70] Ibid., 24.

[71] Despite Mrs Ritchie's distaste for the New Woman, her 'patriotism' aligns with Suffragists who 'were especially keen to encourage displays of dutiful citizenship during the war, conscious of their likely effect in bolstering arguments for women's enfranchisement.' McCarthy, 117.

perceived invaders in God's name: 'The whole population of Calderwick walked up and down beyond the bounds of the garden, and any one of them might be a vessel for devilish malice and hatred of the godly' (*Mrs Ritchie*, 180).

The invasion of which she is afraid began with her marriage. After all, 'a fortified house challenges attack' (*Mrs Ritchie*, 179). Though she sought out the marriage with Johnny Ritchie, the intimacy involved had not been her primary desire, but an attainment of status in the Kirk. She understood the marriage as a way to gain 'A house of her own, a decent Christian marriage, a triumph over Bet Reid' (*Mrs Ritchie*, 135). On their marriage night, Johnny laments the lack of affection that he had supposed belonged in a marriage bed:

> the warmth, the answering, absolving tenderness that he was entreating remained locked away and inaccessible, locked up like the prim, clean house, and to the door that guarded it Johnny Ritchie could not find the key. He was an intruder, a defiler, leaving unwanted filth behind him… He lay guilty and forlorn beside his rigid wife (*Mrs Ritchie*, 158).

Johnny's guilt and shame that defines his marriage has begun. That same night, 'Annie set her teeth' upon entering bed with her husband, feeling that:

> Now she must be vigilant; now she must keep unsleeping that wakeful eye which was open somewhere in the top of her head… Her heart was trembling and pounding. The devil was stirring in her bosom; but she must not give way to him, she must keep her head…. […] Oh, would it soon be over? (*Mrs Ritchie*, 157-8).

In classic Muir innuendo, Annie's language describes the invasion she feels on both her religious psyche and her body. The references to her 'head' allude to her spiritual connection to God and also to her maidenhead, which she will lose in a perceived act of sin. Had she given into the devil, she would risk enjoying apparently sinful pleasures. Her entry into motherhood, the conception of her children, is shameful, embarrassing, and an emotional torment to both parents. But it is unclear if the narrator's statement that 'The price was paid' is regarding Annie's loss of virginity, or Johnny's now inescapable marriage to her (*Mrs Ritchie*, 158).

This sets up Mrs Ritchie's alignment with King's third archetype of the horror female: Mothers. He describes: 'Unwanted children may be experienced as an invasion,

whereas wanted ones may prompt mothers to extreme forms of protection.'[72] Mrs Ritchie feels as though 'something in her own body had stolen a march on her' after realising that she is pregnant, because she sees 'such a queer mix-up of God and the devil in all this business' (*Mrs Ritchie,* 164, 165). She spends her children's life fighting off the devil she perceives in them because of their conception. King goes on to say that in the case of possessed mothers: '[post]-partum psychosis looks like an adaptive mechanism for breaking maternal bonds in situations where commitment to the baby would more likely result in the death of both.'[73] Contrarily, vengeful mothers follow themes and plots that 'include psychotic maternal revenge on those who threaten offspring.'[74] Mrs Ritchie embodies both the possessed and vengeful mother.

This is evident in her anger towards Andrew Reid's Socialism, and John Samuel's attachment to Andrew's daughter, Betsy. The 'threat' is nearing. She believes it to be 'now necessary to watch even more strictly over John Samuel and Sarah Annie' (*Mrs Ritchie,* 207). She is convinced that: 'the outward submissiveness of her family did not allay Mrs Ritchie's suspicions that the devil, no longer content to lie in ambush outside her front gate, was seeking foothold in her very house' (*Mrs Ritchie,* 199). This constant fear of threat and invasion on her children, who once invaded her own body, turns Mrs Ritchie into an agoraphobic. As Kirsten Jacobson explains, agoraphobics cannot make a home or be at home, but are 'bound to something': 'something that at some level never ceases to remind her of her alienation from the outside world. […] The familiar can never be settled or comfortable, because of the threat of the alien.'[75] Upon finding out that she does not own her house, the threat of the alien becomes realised, similar to those on the wartime 'home front,' who saw 'air raids over London and of invading forces landing in

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[72] King, 176.

[73] King, 176.

[74] King, 176-177.

[75] Jacobson, Kirsten, 'Embodied Domestics, Embodied Politics: Women, Home, and Agoraphobia', *Human Studies*, vol. 34, no. 1 (2011), 1-21, 7. Jacobson goes on to explain that agoraphobia became a common struggle in women after WWI because of the double edged expectations that both encouraged women to work and stay at home with the family, which not 'all women in the early 1900s were necessarily able to experience as libratory or welcome', 14.

Britain.'[76] Soon, women, like Mrs Ritchie in her own home, would have to step in to 'defend the country themselves.'[77]

After the war, German military leaders blamed socialists for ruining the war effort by focusing soldiers' energies on revolution.[78] At least one vocal soldier believed this propaganda: Adolf Hitler. The rage it stirred within their own country meant that, like Mrs Ritchie, the Nazi party and its supporters turned against the perceived invasions that threatened their country – both from within, and without. Here, as with Mrs Ritchie: 'hatred is indistinguishable from love, and fear from longing, and life is one with death' (*Mrs Ritchie*, 49). In other words, the horror mother must protect her own, and in Mrs Ritchie's case, her identity, from the invader through harsh means. As Kristeva theorises: 'in order to separate from the child and re-become an "I," I leave him by "abjecting" him.'[79] Yet, Annie misses the following transformation which would turn the abject into a object of care: her children remain abject figures. Annie's first perception of these harsh means to power appears in the headmaster:

> What hidden fear made him so strict? […] How could he assume—as he did—that the four-square structure of law and order, which he believed to be the very masonry of the universe, rested solely on the pillar of his will, and that if he failed to uphold his will even against one puny scholar the whole fabric would collapse? The answer lies perhaps in the fact that human life is transient and mortal, while the human spirit cries passionately that it is immortal and that its works endure for ever (*Mrs Ritchie*, 40-1).

Mrs Ritchie herself later embodies this, as did her historical mirror character Knox, and uses her own form of violence, like the headmaster's tawse, to uphold the pillar of her will. These same traits are mirrored once more in WWII, and in the propaganda that bullied mothers into sacrificing their sons. Seeing his mother's connection to these traits of tyranny, John Samuel believes while fighting in the war that Mrs Ritchie is 'the spider at the centre of the web' (*Mrs Ritchie*, 315).

Rather than protect her children from invasion, she becomes the force that invades them from the inside. John Samuel believes that: 'the farther he got away from her in the

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[76]Robert, Kirsztina, 'Constructions of "Home," "Front," and Women's Military Employment In First-World-War-Britain: A Spatial Interpretation', *History and Theory*, vol. 52, no. 3 (2013): 319-343, 330.
[77] Robert, 331.
[78] Reynolds.
[79] Kristeva, 76.

body the more formidable she became. She had obsessed him like a nightmare when he was over in France' (*Mrs Ritchie*, 315). Here, her monstrosity as the embodiment of the war is clearly articulated by John Samuel. He goes on to think that:

> there had been whole days when he felt that every soldier in the barrage, French or German or British, was suffering like him from his mother's anger—as if *she* were the earth that spewed out death at them, as if *she* had blasted the trees and darkened the sky and twisted the acres of wire—and he had been sorry for them all, every mother's son, outcast like himself (*Mrs Ritchie*, 315).

John Samuel's description – suffering from the inside – hints at mental anguish like that of shell shock. Muir does not differentiate between the 'invading' Germans and the British – Mrs Ritchie, the war, kills all. She is not critiquing any one imperial leader, but all Imperial efforts, the tyranny stemming from fear of invasion that leads to war.

Her critique was not in isolation. In a 1914 article for *Harper's Weekly*, Emmeline Pethick Lawrence wrote: 'We are witnessing in the present European War something that resembles a "twilight of the gods"—the passing away in blood and fire of an epoch. […] War is absolutely destructive.'[80] She continues:

> If the same people who by secret diplomacies brought war upon Europe, without the consent, without even the knowledge of their respective democracies, settle in this same way the conditions of peace, then the new peace will only be once again the prelude of a new war.[81]

Yet Pethick Lawrence believes that the 'solidarity of the world's motherhood, potential or otherwise, underlies all cleavages of nationality.'[82] Muir's representation of a mother who *is* the war, but who is isolated, proves Pethick Lawrence's belief that peace requires solidarity, but only in those who are not monstrous. Ultimately, however, Muir suggests that, as long as class divides and gendered expectations continue to reproduce trench zones among opposing forces, peace-seeking solidarity between mothers is impossible.

Muir's next novel, 'Mrs Muttoe and the Top Storey', written at the dawn of the Second World War, takes up the search for solidarity in the face of Capitalist greed and false morals. 'Mrs Muttoe' shows that Muir's ignorance at the racial disparities in the world was fading, but emphasises her belief that class and gender distinctions, created by

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80 Pethick Lawrence, Emmeline, 'Document 13: "Motherhood and War"', *Harper's Weekly*, 59 (Jul.-Dec. 1914), 542.
81 Ibid.
82 Ibid.

tyrants and their lack of loving-kindness, are killing the world. This novel, like *Mrs Ritchie*, underscores how a capitalist patriarchy – selfish and violent and greedy – can only lead to war. Like *Mrs Ritchie*, the novel ends in despair; this time, however, the mother, rather than embodying war, is tormented by her inability to protect her child from war and from the problems facing the twentieth century. 'Mrs Muttoe' is an example of Muir's ability to write autobiographical fiction. She presents one woman's perspective of these major issues facing interwar Britain and, in so doing, values and validates the often conflicting emotions felt by her central character, Alison Muttoe. Without becoming the 'Everywoman', the narration offers insight into shared experiences of hopelessness, fear, anxiety, and, unlike *Mrs Ritchie*, in small moments of joy or hope in the Everyday.

Chapter Five

No Room of Her Own: Translation, Space, and Labour in 'Mrs Muttoe and the Top Storey'

> 'There is always more work to be done than time in which to do it; this is what drives the temporality of the working day in a capitalist culture'[1]

Willa Muir's third novel is the unpublished manuscript 'Mrs Muttoe and the Top Storey'.[2] It differs vastly from her previous two novels in that its focus is on domestic and affective labour, rather than concentrating purely on gender, sexuality, and religion in Scotland. Written between 1938 and 1940 while the Muirs were living in St Andrews, the novel is based on their time in Hampstead in the mid-1930s.[3] It is riddled with allusions to the festering nationalism, fascism, and racism both within Britain and beyond, but Muir depicts these issues on the periphery compared to the daily toils of the writer, translator, and mother, Alison Muttoe. Alison lives with her barely-vocal husband, Dick, and their son, Peter, as well as various maids and cooks who are hired and inevitably let go throughout the novel. Alison is torn between her 'bread and butter' translation work, her desire to work on own creative output, the need and yearning to be a devoted mother and wife, and the domestic management duties expected of a middle-class woman at this time. Throughout, Muir shows how Alison Muttoe believes that 'civilisation honours the top storey far too much,' using tower imagery to criticise autocratic patriarchy and capitalism, particularly in its treatment of women and children ('Mrs Muttoe', 146). As Mrs Muttoe herself puts it: 'The autocrat in the top storey: that's my subject' ('Mrs Muttoe', 147).

These issues were 'in the air' in the interwar period. In 1934, Winifred Holtby noted: 'Husband and wife in a home may both be professional workers: but it is the wife who is expected to order the meals, superintend the nurseries, arrange the entertainments

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1 'Telling the Day', 262.

2 Archives & Special Collections, University of St Andrews Library; MS Willa Muir ms3/1/2: Typescript of 'Mrs Muttoe and the Top Storey' (1938-1940). As the novel is unpublished, it has not experienced much critical attention. Some foundational work has been completed by Christianson in *Moving in Circles,* Elphinstone's 'Crossing the Genres', and Allen in *The Life and Work of Willa Muir, 1890-1955.*

3 Willa and Edwin translated Kafka's *Amerika* in 1938.

and domestic staff.'[4] 'This tendency to consider everybody else's interests more important than their own,' Holtby continues, 'is one of the major expressions of women's inferiority complex.'[5] This chapter will show how, like other women writers of her era, Mrs Muttoe's maternal 'tendency to consider everybody else's interests' stunted her own creative work.

The novel ends purposely open-ended – Alison Muttoe is left feeling anxious, desperate, helpless, vulnerable. Despite this, Knox suggests that the novel, which is readable today only in the archives of St Andrews University, describes 'the happiest years that Edwin, Willa and Gavin spent together as a family.'[6] During the mid-1930s, Willa spent her inheritance from her mother to rent 'a house at 7 Downshire Place, Hampstead, London, for £120 a year, close to where the novelist Catherine Carswell and her husband lived. They felt once more at the cutting edge of literary affairs.'[7] This culture is evident throughout the novel, and its opening pages set the tone for a literary household. Regardless of Willa's responsibility for the rent, 'the physical space was unequally shared as Edwin had the study at the top of the house in Hampstead and Willa the kitchen.'[8] The use of space reveals most clearly that the 'household responsibilities, including supervision of servants, fell mainly on Willa.'[9]

Muir's manuscript opens with the viewpoint of an unnamed con-woman who describes the house and the bluebells in the garden, which leads her to decide the inhabitants are 'nature lovers' and sentimental ('Mrs Muttoe', 1). The con-woman introduces herself to the Muttoes as the widow Mrs Tully applying for the cook position in their household, and weaves a tale of her own devotion to her daughter after her 'brief term of matrimony' ('Mrs Muttoe', 4). She describes the Muttoes as a 'professional couple' with books, bills, sweets, 'a boy's cap,' and papers strewn around. She also describes them as: 'A pair of children […] Middle–aged kids who didn't know the world

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[4] Holtby, 104.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Knox, 193.

[7] Ibid. Muir explains this, too, in *Belonging*: '[we] could now afford the shift to London, because my mother had left me some money, we began hunting for a house in Hampstead, at that time a focus for literary people' (*Belonging*, 153). Christianson notes that the Carswells were 'Scottish friends of the Muirs' and invited them to parties and dinners in their Hampstead home. *Moving in Circles*, 14, 19.

[8] Knox, 198.

[9] Ibid.

they were living in' ('Mrs Muttoe', 9).[10] Muir herself admits this in her diaries in the 1950s: 'Edwin finally said: "I'm afraid, you know, that I haven't got much sense." – Which is true of both of us.'[11] Alison's optimism and naïveté is best shown in her statement that 'if people are right with each other, everything else will settle itself' ('Mrs Muttoe', 10). Yet, she is not without her cruel moments. Her description of the cook they are trying to replace is that she is dreamy and dull, and requires detailed orders to work (an issue she will later have with Alice), and this made it 'depressing to consider Violet as a human being' ('Mrs Muttoe', 16). Despite her motherly nature towards her domestic help, she distances herself from them using harsh internal critique, becoming more the 'cruel mother' than the warm maternal figure.

Despite her childish optimism, 'Muir presents Alison as responsible for organisation because of her own expectations, in the same way that Muir herself always assumes responsibility in the Muirs' lives.'[12] Her abilities to organise are present, but her lack of sense comes in her taking for granted that the world runs on 'loving-kindness.' She and Dick pay the con-woman three florins for the bus home and believe, without hesitation and with a 'tolerant smile' the con-woman's story of 'maternal devotion' and hire her on the spot ('Mrs Muttoe', 4, 5). Christianson argues that this was the con-woman's sole purpose – to introduce Dick and Alison, especially in their naïve optimism. In so doing, Christianson argues this is evidence of the 'failure of the novel to use successfully variant points of view.'[13] However, the con-woman's introduction of the Muttoes starts the arc of Alison's understanding of the brutality of the world. She realises, as do the readers of Muir's previous novel *Mrs Ritchie*, that not all women who claim to be mothers can be trusted.

This arc leads her to despair her inability to protect the children of the world from the 'autocrat in the top storey.' This path to realisation of the lack of loving-kindness and tyranny in the world is one that Muir herself took, thanks to Hermann Broch. Huberman notes:

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[10] After their time at the P.E.N. Conference in Hungary: 'From his tall height Broch looked down on us compassionately as on a pair of children who had just been learning the facts of European life' (*Belonging*, 157).

[11] ms38466/5/5 (1951-53).

[12] *Moving in Circles*, 144.

[13] *Moving in Circles*, 141.

> The disintegration of values he [Broch] had foreseen and portrayed in *The Sleepwalkers* [1931-32] was already political and social reality, at least in Germany. Because the Muirs had resisted learning that lesson from the book, shutting their minds, as Willa wrote in her memoir, *Belonging*, to 'Broch's ambience of bleak despair' (152), he now made it his task to teach them the same lesson through his letters. If they would not believe his fiction, they still might be convinced by facts, by reports of conditions he had witnessed.[14]

This suggests the similarities between Muir and Muttoe are not only in the representation of their workspaces and lives. Peter tells Alison about José, the Spanish refugee child in his class who never speaks, which is an indication of Muir's concern with children as fascism takes over. Alison admits later in the novel that she has shut her eyes to many things, as Huberman shows Muir herself admits in *Belonging*, and is fearful for what these events would mean for her own child who, at that point, 'took for granted that life would cherish him' ('Mrs Muttoe', 183). With José and the working-class children at the bottom of the money fabric, discussed below, Muir suggests that not all children or their mothers have the ability to take this for granted.

Once the con-woman leaves, Mrs Muttoe begins to organise their trip to the country. However, it quickly becomes clear that 'Mrs Tully' was simply trying to steal their money. Leaving Alison feeling betrayed, she sets out to find a replacement, but with a less trusting spirit. Muir shows the 'High-Class Registry' to which Alison travels first, looking for a cook-housekeeper, before moving down to middle class agencies. Alison thinks that asking a robot to run the house would be simpler, because 'at least [it would] be delivered on demand' ('Mrs Muttoe', 39). Her search for a "good servant" matches 1920s 'press coverage of "the servant problem" [which] was filled with nostalgic laments for the faithful Victorian maid.'[15] This introduces her concern with production that will be expanded in her vision of the tower, where she travels through looking desperately for a housemaid, without success. The answer to her question 'What was it, anyway, that made human behaviour superior to robots?' seems implicit in her own desire for loving-kindness, which robots cannot provide ('Mrs Muttoe', 40). She finally finds a cook-

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[14] Huberman, Elizabeth, 'Translating Broch's *The Sleepwalkers* – Ordeal and Reward' in *Edwin Muir Centenary Assessments*, eds C.J.M. Shields and D.S. Robb (Aberdeen: Association for Scottish Literary Studies, 1990), 47-57, 50-51.

[15] Todd, Selina, 'Domestic Service and Class Relations in Britain 1950', *Past and Present*, vol. 203, no. 203 (2009), 181-204, 181.

housemaid at the corner shop – Alice, the girl who recently lost her father, showing the ability of middle-class women to purchase domestic help as tradable services. The imagery of Mrs Muttoe 'cracking her gloves like a whip' has slave-owning undertones, which suggests that Alison is not innocent in the treatment of lower and working-class women ('Mrs Muttoe', 39). Pascoe explains the advantage of bourgeois women in outsourcing labour. She argues that when bourgeois women become professionals, 'domestic labour itself is not transformed, but merely outsourced, to others, who will labour within the household under the exploitative conditions that these emancipated women escape.'[16] Alison becomes the exploiter, a fact made more sinister by her cracking gloves. After this, Alison returns home to continue preparing for their country holiday, with various visitors interrupting and demanding attention.

In the country, Alison discovers that Alice is also a child in need of care, which forces another maternal role upon her. This ultimately results in their firing of Alice once back in London. They go through various maids and cooks who betray their trust in one way or another, including one such incident discussed in detail below, in which Julia the maid scares Peter with promises of Hell-fire. The Muttoes also visit their friend Popovitch, who has become master of a cult and preaches for 'Pan-Britain' – Britain first. The novel ends with Alison, whose domestic demands have prevented her from giving attention to the creative visions she has had of the top storey, finally succumbing to immersion in this fantasy. Here, she sees a tower with men inside and women surrounding on a platform. The tower's levels each depict a social class, through which she journeys, looking for a cook-housekeeper. She ends up on the lowest level. This is one large factory where men, women, and children work side by side: 'Yes, there were females among them! Why, in the middle of each section there were whole families! […] among them crawled, squatted, whimpered and squabbled small dirty children' ('Mrs Muttoe', 281). They are without access to the outside, which shows, tauntingly, through the large windows. In this scene, Alison's vision of a City-Tower in which only the upper classes are at the top with their needs and desires met leaves her feeling helpless.[17] The

[16] Pascoe, 610.

[17] Thank you to Kirsteen McCue for noting that this similarity matches, too, the old tenement housing in Edinburgh, in which the servants lived on the ground floor while the wealthier owners lived in the upper levels.

working-class mothers do not have the ability to outsource their childcare. Here, they must 'accept the terrible conditions of childcare collectives.'[18] The novel finishes with Alison returning to reality, and her exasperated cry, 'Is there no escape? Oh God, is there no escape?!' ('Mrs Muttoe', 284). Muir was translating Kafka at the time, which was perhaps responsible for her idea of Alison's Kafka-esque nightmare. Ultimately, however, she cannot see an escape from the 'money fabric' and its tyranny.

Muir suggests that these feelings are universal for working mothers in her era, particularly during a time of global turmoil. Decades later, after the wars, Betty Friedan suggested that these feelings could be found amongst housewives in her era, describing in 1963: 'a strange stirring, a sense of dissatisfaction [….] a strange feeling of desperation.'[19] Hochschild similarly recounts numerous stories of working mothers facing anxiety, illness, and severe fatigue from trying to balance full- or part-time work, housework, and their maternal roles with little help from the children's father. She argues that 'in either case women pay a cost' of a structure that 'was originally designed to suit a traditional man whose wife raised his children': 'The housewife pays a cost by remaining outside the mainstream of social life. The career woman pays a cost by entering a clockwork of careers that permits little time or emotional energy to raise a family.'[20] She further notes that: 'Studies show that working mothers have higher self-esteem and get less depressed than housewives, but compared to their husbands, they're more tired and get sick more often' and are 'more likely than any other group to be "anxious".'[21] Adrienne Rich, a mother and writer, likewise notes: 'For mothers, the privatization of the home has meant not only an increase in powerlessness, but a desperate loneliness.'[22]

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[18] Pascoe, 609.

[19] Friedan, Betty, *The Problem that Has No Name* (London: Penguin Random House, 1963; 2018), 1, 9. In 1942 in Edinburgh, Morley Jamieson recounts Willa living at home recovering from her operation: 'Willa was looked after and the home maintained.' Jamieson, 26. Notably, her depression appears to have worsened at this point, as her workload decreased: 'She had an intelligent doctor attending but very little seemed to alleviate the general misery. Among the things which could soothe the distress was a good malt whisky.' Jamieson, 28.

[20] Hochschild, xiv.

[21] Hochschild, 4.

[22] Rich, 53. Here, middle class mothers, starting in the interwar period, could no longer afford domestic servants and began to experience what working class mothers had always faced: working a job outside the home while caring for the home and children.

It is perhaps for this reason that Muir does not provide a "solution" but rather portrays the insoluble nature of such views, which are exacerbated by the uncertain and pessimistic atmosphere of 1940. The Muirs felt this strongly: 'It is in Scotland that the feelings of alienation in the social world strike agonising chords in the inner world too, for example at St Andrews in 1940.'[23] Instead of a solution or conclusion, the novel provides a release. Through 'Mrs Muttoe', Muir was telling her day, which as Allen notes, 'relieved the drudgery of translation' for Muir.[24] Translating Kafka and the networks they had established in Europe cannot have helped Muir's feelings of desperation. George Bruce notes that, for the Muirs, there was a growing darkness in St Andrews:

> On the continent they had been voices for European literary culture, […] helping to keep communications open with what was necessary to keep alive people's humanity. In St Andrews they were at work on Kafka's *The Trial;* its dark meanderings, the possibility of a concealed justice, the endless frustrations of K., might have appeared similar to what the Muirs had experienced, and to their location in St Andrews.[25]

The tower scene in 'Mrs Muttoe' loosely mimics the 'dark meanderings' of K, as Alison moves through the levels of people who accept without question the judgments of the autocrat, who has decided for them their place in society. Children trapped in the bottom, indentured and unhealthy, without dignity, are the ultimate consequence of this injustice. The 'pram-peeping addict' that Mrs Muttoe had become with the 'birth of her baby' (Peter) takes on a revolting and corrupt meaning. Her assertion earlier in the novel that the purity of babies show the Top-Storey has not entirely won out is proven to be a misjudgement of the world; these children have no prams and their parents do not have time or energy to cherish them ('Mrs Muttoe', 171).

For Kirsty Allen the novel's personal backdrop is problematic. Allen describes the 'alleged novel' as 'a thinly disguised documentation of her three happy Hampstead years

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[23] Elphinstone, 405. 1940 is the year in which 'Mrs Muttoe' was completed, perhaps contributing to its increasing tone of isolation and desperation, compared to the relatively mundane, content depictions of domestic life at the outset of the novel, which Muir started in 1938.

[24] Allen, 314. 'How do we live? Translating from the German. […] How do we want to live? On the proceeds of our own creative work.' Muir, Willa, 'from letter to Marion Lochhead (March 1933)' in *Modernism and Nationalism*, 212.

[25] Bruce, George, 'The Integrity of Edwin Muir' in *Edwin Muir: Centenary Assessments*, eds C.J.M. MacLachlan and D.S. Robb (Aberdeen: Association for Scottish Literary Studies, 1990), 1-18, 12.

and of the characters and crises which had coloured that epoch.'[26] She goes on to critique Muir's personal relation to the novel: 'It is too closely entangled with real places and people. Willa sacrificed her creative judgement to an emotional and psychological revisiting of the past: the work is merely a delineation and dissection of her hurts, resentments and joys.'[27] However, this 'dissection' is invaluable for understanding the double role that Willa played, and the affective labour that hindered her own literary success. Using Bryony Randall's framework from her article 'Telling the Day', Muir's literary exploration can be read as a strong indicator of gender politics of the time. Randall's analysis, shining light on women of the late nineteenth to early twentieth centuries, aligns with Hochschild's analysis of women later in the twentieth century. Randall asks 'what is lost in this editing process':

> many people, but perhaps women in particular, are often doing more than one thing at once, most obviously caring for children at the same time as doing numerous other things. This means that models of "telling the day" which rely on sequential or separable model of temporality are going to be inadequate, according to Bryson, to account for how women spend their time.[28]

Muir's depiction of Alison's life attempts to show these many things happening at once – anxiety of the world around her, caring for her son, translating, thinking of her own writing projects – and therefore provides a more accurate depiction of a working mother's day.

The manuscript consists of 284 typewritten pages with Willa's own handwritten edits throughout, including scoring out of full paragraphs and pages. Such annotation, alongside her address on the title page, suggests that Muir considered publishing the work. However, there is little extant evidence to show that she actually sent it to publishers.[29] This may have been because 'Mrs Muttoe' 'dramatises the conflict between the private and the public spheres, the tremendous emotional dependency of a woman on

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[26] Allen, 314.

[27] Ibid. Elphinstone provides a similar critique, writing: 'Muir seems to have identified herself so closely with Mrs Muttoe that the ironic perspective is dangerously lacking.' Elphinstone, 412.

[28] 'Telling the Day', 244.

[29] Christianson notes that it is unlikely that she attempted to have the manuscript published, citing P.H. Butter, who was unsure if Willa had sent it to publishers. Christianson points out: 'there is very little background information about its writing.' *Moving in Circles*, 141. However, Kirsty Allen appears to have found evidence that she had sent the novel to publishers, asserting that 'both British and American publishers universally rejected' the manuscript. Allen, 314.

her husband, and the public proclamation of female independence and denial of subservience.'[30] Though scholars like Allen and Christianson investigate the novel as an exploration of Muir's role as a translator, it arguably engages in a much more detailed expression of emotional turmoil, burden, and conflict involved in being a working wife and mother in the 1930s. For instance, in preparing for their holiday, Alison is overburdened with organising, including hiring an employee. While doing so, she has been brewing an idea for a novel that she simply does not have the time to write. Her husband Dick absent-mindedly encourages her to 'Tackle that idea of yours instead' but, in mild frustration, she explains she cannot – he does not understand the extent of managing a household ('Mrs Muttoe', 106).[31]

Following the con-woman's exit in the first scene of the novel, Alison says she needs a 'wife' of her own. In *The Second Shift*, Hochschild writes that she 'repeatedly heard career women in this study say, "What I really need is a wife." But maybe they don't need "wives"; maybe they need careers basically redesigned to suit workers who also care for families.'[32] In the case of Muir/Muttoe working from home, it might just be that she also needs a room of her own and a husband who takes up half the domestic duties. Though this certainly would be rare in the 1930s, it was not unheard of. In 1909-10, the Women's Industrial Council 'discovered a number of involuntarily domesticated husbands in its survey of married women's employment.'[33] McCarthy describes several instances in which the father takes up child-rearing and domestic duties. She notes that 'the childcare provided by fathers had real value in freeing wives for wage-earning' and 'released mothers from the burden of attending domestic chores on top of their waged

[30] Knox, 183.

[31] Helen Sutherland similarly shows how Margaret Oliphant (1828-1897), 'rarely had long stretches of undisturbed time for writing but worked within the midst of the household, fitting her writing around the claims of the family.' This has evidently been a common balance for the women writers for centuries – see *Writing Motherhood: A Creative Anthology*, edited by Carolyn Jess-Cooke. Sutherland, Helen, 'Margaret Oliphant and the Periodical Press' in *The Edinburgh Companion to Scottish Women's Writing*, ed. Glenda Norquay (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 85.

[32] Hochschild, xiv.

[33] McCarthy, 22.

work.'[34] But Hochschild explains that 'wives felt more *responsible* for the home' and that men felt they did not need to 'help' because 'she never asks.'[35]

While Dick complains that Alison's 'pottering' about the house 'Doesn't seem worthwhile,' the one time he asks if she needs help with the translation (but never the domestic or child-rearing duties) is half-hearted and only because her 'pottering' threatens the deadline ('Mrs Muttoe', 132). Until this point, he separates himself in his top-storey study. He makes clear that he sees translation as her responsibility. Before their holiday he asks, 'You'll manage it, won't you?' and internally: 'We shall need the money by then, Dick Muttoe was thinking' ('Mrs Muttoe', 108). His reliance on her to manage their child, domestic help, and even financial concerns is clear. Though Alison attempts to assert when speaking to Dick that 'You and me' are 'what really makes our home,' Dick quickly interjects, 'You, darling, not me' ('Mrs Muttoe', 57). Because they are middle-class artists in 1930s Britain, he can rest in the assumption that the women of the house – domestic help and his wife – will manage these duties without complaint to make their house a comfortable home.

This 'pottering,' however, is playing with their child in the garden and managing and helping Alice, their maid. Dick devalues childrearing and domestic duties while taking no part in these activities, and only offers to help when the translation may not be completed in time, which he is 'rueful' will receive more money than his poems ('Mrs Muttoe', 133). Mrs Muttoe herself, however, feels that this 'pottering' *is* worthwhile: 'The activities I get paid for don't seem to me nearly so important as those I don't get paid for' ('Mrs Muttoe', 133). Later in the novel, she describes the Centre of her tower vision, 'the agents in the basement,' as producing 'Life and induced the final surrender known as Death,' and asks, 'How, then, could they be negligible?' ('Mrs Muttoe', 151). These 'agents in the basement' have reproductive value, yet the autocrat has the power.[36] Furthermore, she is, like many other women, often doing 'two things at once': 'For women, two activities compete with their time with children, not just one.'[37] And because of this, 'women also devote *proportionately more* of their time at home to housework and

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[34] Ibid.

[35] Hochschild, 8, 221.

[36] See chapters four and seven for an analysis on women's role in their children's deaths.

[37] Hochschild, 9.

proportionately less of it to child care.'[38] In her case, managing Alice,[39] supporting Dick, and working on translations competes with what she feels is more important: playing with Peter. Evidently, like the women in Hochschild's study, this one-sided responsibility leaks from translations into child-rearing and the division of domestic labour.

Mrs Muttoe shows how, regardless of her love for him, being responsible for Peter requires a lot of effort. Over breakfast one morning, Peter asks her question after question: 'On this morning she had a sense of being harassed, as if a ball of wool which she usually held easily in one hand had suddenly unrolled itself and entangled her' ('Mrs Muttoe', 105). Alison's feeling of harassment aligns with those expressed in Hochschild's survey, showing the psychological turmoil that comes with being a mother: she *needs* to care for her son, but she *wants* to focus on her own writing. The questions from Peter, aimed at her rather than Dick, prohibit her ability to think through the ideas of the autocrat that have occupied her. Moreover, managing their maid takes up further emotional and psychological effort. Alison describes Alice as 'willing and trustful' but clearly relied on Mrs Muttoe to help her with her job: 'she trotted after Mrs. Muttoe all day asking what she should do next, and how,' leaving Dick alone to work ('Mrs Muttoe', 129).

Hochschild found that, because of childcare and domestic duties, women's work over a twelve-month span amounted to 'an *extra month of twenty-four-hour days*.'[40] This 'leisure gap,' as she calls it, is because 'Most women without children spend much more time than men on housework; with children, they devote more time caring for both house and children.'[41] Similarly, McCarthy's *Double Lives* offers ample evidence to the extra work that women in Muir's era undertook to support their family. If women are performing all of the childcare, but are dividing this with full time work and housework, it would follow that both child and mother are suffering.[42] As McCarthy points out: 'the assumptions that wives would see to domestic duties regardless of whether they also

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[38] Ibid.

[39] 'Left to herself she could not finish more than a fraction of any job.' Mrs Muttoe regarding Alice. 'Mrs Muttoe', 129.

[40] Hochschild, 4. Emphasis in original.

[41] Ibid.

[42] See chapter one for an analysis of this in Muir's life.

toiled for pay outside the home was firmly entrenched.'[43] In this sense, the Muirs were not so far ahead of their time.[44] Hochschild also explains the different ways in which men withheld contributions to childrearing and domestic duties:

> the majority of men did not share the load at home. Some refused outright. Others refused more passively, often offering a loving shoulder to lean on, an understanding ear as their working wife faced the conflict they both saw as hers.[45]

This is most significant for the Muttoes, and the Muirs. While Dick and Edwin have studies on the top floor,

> Her study was at once more accessible to intrusion and crowded. It communicated with the living-room by a pair of folding doors, gave on the back garden and besides a desk planted in the middle of the floor harboured a sewing-machine, an odd sofa, a shabby Morris chair, a couple of small book-cases and four deck chairs leaning against a wall ('Mrs Muttoe', 15).

This description makes evident that Alison's study is not just for work. It is a space for the supervision of the cook in the kitchen and Peter in the back garden, for regular visitors who take up the extra chairs. It does not offer endless stretches of intellectual 'quiet time'.

As with Willa, who was given a ground floor study, Alison struggles to find a room of her own. These descriptions match those of their Hampstead studies in *Belonging*: 'In his study at the top of the house which contained only a table, a chair, an ink-pot and a fine view over roofs and tree-tops, Edwin now and then produced a poem' (*Belonging*, 162).[46] Meanwhile,

> My study on the ground floor was neither so bare nor so secluded. Here I was intruded upon at all hours by household staff, the weekly washerwoman, any casual caller ready for a gossip, and Gavin whenever he came home from school. […] Toys, picture-books and hoards of Gavin's were in my study, an upright

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[43] McCarthy, 21.

[44] In fact, McCarthy notes several examples of factory workers (on whom Muir looks poorly upon in this novel) as having more egalitarian relationships than what Muir presents: 'One elderly ring-spinner from Preston remembered how her husband used to warm up the dinner, help get the children ready each morning and take charge of certain household tasks.' McCarthy, 21.

[45] Hochschild, 7.

[46] Muir's understanding of writing as a reproductive labour shows through in her description of Edwin's poetic process. Morley Jamieson recalls dinners with the couple: 'Whenever Edwin seemed more withdrawn than usual, Willa would say, "There's a poem coming, look out; I can see it, he's about to give birth."' Jamieson, 28. Butter had a similar notion: 'Muir waited for poems to knock on the door […] The pace must not be forced.' Willa had no such luxury. *Selected Letters*, 7.

> piano, a wicker wash-basket for laundry, a sewing machine, a small sofa for visitors and goodness knows what else (*Belonging*, 162-3).

Christianson argues that *Belonging* shows 'the contrasts between their two studies in ways that more than hint at gendered divisions, with Edwin as the austere, privileged poet whose study's peace and separation is sacrosanct while Willa's work space is constantly intruded on.'[47] She counters Willa in some regards with evidence about Edwin's work, noting that:

> Edwin was also working on novel reviewing for *The Listener* from January 1933 for several years […] as well as any contribution he made to their translating of Sholem Asch, Kafka's *The Great Wall of China* and 'another Broch' (*page 157*); Muir acknowledges all of this work immediately before the study passage, but still manages to imply in the passage itself that all that 'in solitude'. She, meanwhile, at the centre of their domestic / work space is 'intruded upon at all hours', […] She ensures that a reader's sympathy should be with her not Edwin.[48]

But, Willa does not, in either *Belonging* or 'Mrs Muttoe', suggest that Edwin is not busy with work. Throughout 'Mrs Muttoe', Alison mentions Dick's poetry and a book of 'critical essays.' Though it is clear from Edwin's assertion in 1933 that he does his 'best to keep Willa off' work that he was unaware of the weight of domestic labour.[49] Willa's need to balance domestic affairs on top of her hefty workload makes it so that, in an evaluation of divisions in the workplace and domestic spheres, our sympathies should be with her.

Elsewhere in *Belonging*, Willa describes going back to an old 'student habit' in their Hampstead days to deal with the constant interruptions and endless workload. She explains how she would work

> at furious speed late at night into the small hours, after the vibrations of the day had died down. During the summers I sat up all night once in a while, hearing the birds sing at dawn and tumbling into bed for a few hours' sleep after breakfast, but I did this only when a translation had to be finished in a hurry or proofs corrected against a deadline (*Belonging*, 163).

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[47] Christianson, Aileen, 'Introduction' in *Belonging* (Glasgow: Kennedy & Boyd, 1968; 2008), xi-xxi, xvii.
[48] Ibid., xviii.
[49] *Letters*, 82.

This matches two scenes in 'Mrs Muttoe', in which she works through the night to finish a translation. Significantly, Christianson writes that 'Mrs Muttoe' is 'probably too close to their life in Hampstead to succeed as fiction.'[50] What is important, then, is that Dick does not help with the translations. This suggests that Edwin also failed to do so in these later years, if the novel mirrors, as Christianson asserts, their Hampstead life. What is relevant here is not Edwin's workload compared to Willa's, but the space and time granted to complete that workload.

Women have always understood the importance of space for creative work. In *Writing Motherhood*, Carolyn Jess-Cooke interviews Rebecca Stonehill, who explains how lucky she is that her supportive husband takes the kids out of the house on Saturdays to give her time to write.[51] In the same anthology, Esther Morgan writes a rather romantic dream: 'if I were a male poet or a wealthy poet or a young poet I'd have the time and energy to write about my baby with all the enchantment of a new lover.'[52] While it arguably is not so simple, these passages show that women understand the imbalance of creative time between men and women. Nearly a century before, Virginia Woolf described a writer's need for time and space to produce quality literature. In *A Room of One's Own* (1929), Woolf argues that for women, 'interruptions there will always be.'[53] She imagines Austen writing her novels secretly in the sitting room with her family around and of less privileged Victorian women in dark, cramped rooms surrounded by children before the age of twenty-one.[54] And, in a later work, Woolf concludes that women must kill the angel in the house: 'she has still many ghosts to fight, many prejudices to overcome.'[55] Critics have since added to these theories. Christianson questions why some production – literary fiction – is prioritised over others – autobiographical – in relation to Holtby's similar theories:

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[50] *Moving in Circles*, 21.

[51] Stonehill, Rebecca, 'Writer and Mother: How Children Can Help (And Not Hinder) the Creative Process' in *Writing Motherhood: A Creative Anthology*, ed. Carolyn Jess-Cooke (Bridgend: Seren, 2017), 60-62, 61.

[52] Morgan, Esther, 'This Strange New Life' in *Writing Motherhood*, 21-25, 23.

[53] Woolf, 78.

[54] Woolf, 67, 59, 47.

[55] Woolf, Virginia, 'Professions for Women (Abbreviated Speech)', https://www.wheelersburg.net /Downloads/Woolf.pdf [accessed 21.03.21].

> Undoubtedly accurate in its analysis and implied criticism of the privileged position of the male, Holtby does not take account of the capacity of some writers (such as Jane Austen) to produce works of 'greatness' in the midst of domestic activity. It works best as an interesting trope in the history of feminist analysis of male / female relations, rather than as an explanation or excuse for the "success" or otherwise of particular kinds of literary production.[56]

Gifford and McMillan point out similar criticisms from Ezell, explaining that Woolf is 'also hampered in her approach to past writing by her assumption that the commercial success of print is what women writers should be aiming for.'[57] Muir/Muttoe face both inward and outward obstacles, but Muir, in writing 'Mrs Muttoe' also faces critique against her autobiographical writing. If 'a woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction'[58] then the studio set up in the Muttoe, and Muir, household evidently sets up Alison, and Willa, for failure and allows Dick, and Edwin, all of the advantage. It is no wonder, then, that Edwin was known as the 'man of letters' compared to his translating wife, Willa. Nor that Willa 'envied Edwin's power of sitting down immediately after breakfast to concentrate in solitude on what he wanted to do' (*Belonging,* 163). However, these obstacles allowed Muir to transcend conventional expectations of genre and produce a hybrid memoir-novel in a style that continued to gain traction among women and marginalised voices for the next century. She did not have time to polish her fiction and to fully remove herself from it, and therefore created her own form of autobiographical fiction in 'Mrs Muttoe'.

For decades, the myth of Willa and Edwin's progressive, equal relationship has surrounded the couple. Janet Caird cites P.H. Butter's classic assertion that, '[Willa's] greatest work, I think she would gladly agree, was to make possible the production of [Edwin's] poetry.'[59] Caird follows this statement with her own declaration that:

> the picture she herself gives in *Belonging* (pp 162-3) of the difference in their respective working conditions in Hampstead […] does not exactly strike a note of joy. One has the impression she had to struggle hard to find time and space for such work as she achieved.[60]

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[56] 'Introduction' in *Belonging,* xix.
[57] Gifford and McMillan, xvi.
[58] *A Room of One's Own,* 6.
[59] P.H. Butter cited Caird, 12.
[60] Caird, 12.

Similarly, Knox notes that: 'In spite of her ideals, her marriage was never completely one of equals, and in many ways it proved little different to the traditional division of labour between the sexes that she despised so much in her writings.'[61] Knox may be referring specifically to Muir's understanding of women's creative powers in *Women: An Inquiry*. In that text, as seen in chapter two, Muir argues that women's powerful maternal creativity has been denied a full rein under patriarchy. This, rather than helping the patriarchy, hinders it. She says: 'If she is a specialist in the needs of the growing human spirit, her peculiar knowledge must be of service to men and women of all ages who are still capable of growth' (*Women: An Inquiry*, 16). Evidently, while Muir has been allowed to practice her full creative power in her marriage, unlike, as she says, other women, she is finding out how this in itself – this 'service to men and women' to spark growth – produces inequality and disquiet as much as repression of these powers.

This inequality shows through in the act of translating combined with childrearing. In her short memoir about Willa, Catriona Soukup explains that: 'Increasingly, as the years passed, it was Willa alone who did the translations, leaving Edwin free for his own writing.'[62] She remembers when her husband, Lumir, asked Edwin to look over poems that he wanted to include in his Czech lectures for the British Council in Edinburgh. Edwin responded that 'he would show them to Willa' and, visiting the Muirs, Lumir was handed 'about twenty poems in all, and she [Willa] had translated them in two days.'[63] In his own article about the Muirs, 'Belonging' (sharing a title with Willa's memoir, even if more sceptical about the 'ideal' of their marriage), Lumir recounts a conversation with Willa in which he questioned if she had 'never, even for a moment, regretted the loss of her independent career?'[64] She laughed, but responded that, 'My career was Edwin. […] I knew what I meant to Edwin, and he knew what he meant to me.'[65] Knox's criticism of this attitude of 'service' to his growth is fair then: 'Belonging to Edwin, and caring for and nurturing his talent and well-being was, at the

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[61] Knox, 198.

[62] Soukup, Catriona, 'Willa in Wartime', *Chapman: Peerie Willa Muir,* vol. 71 (1993), 20-4, 24.

[63] C. Soukup, 23.

[64] L. Soukup, 32. William Knox points out, A.S. Neill also asks Willa if she sacrificed a part of herself to be 'Edwin's Frau.' Knox, 188.

[65] L. Soukup, 33.

end of the day, more important than the political struggles for women's rights.'[66] When Lumir insisted that she had not given her own writing a chance, she responded that it 'could never have been as important as Edwin's, and I'm glad I recognised that early on.'[67] Lumir responds: 'Edwin had told me many times, that she had "slaved" over translations of books she did not really like, in order to make it possible for him to devote *his* time to writing.'[68] Willa does not dispute this. Whether Muir is romanticising her own life or has accepted that, as a woman, her writing is generally less valued, the burden of translation work hindered her writing. Moreover, it shows the contradictions and flaws that arise when she follows her own theories set out in *Women: An Inquiry*.

In 1926 when writing *Imagined Corners*, Muir wrote to F. Marian McNeill that she had received £40 for 'another German book' while Edwin's book of essays is nearly finished: 'I must attack the translation & won't have much time for anything else till it is finished—it must be finished by May.'[69] In another letter to Marion Lochhead while writing *Mrs Ritchie*, Muir writes once again about her busyness: 'I am very busy and also very desperate, for I cannot, no I cannot get my novel finished, and until it is finished I shall be scarcely human.'[70] Significantly, several decades later, Hochschild found that 'Women who put their husbands through school may have resented the burden, but they didn't feel they had as much right to complain.'[71]

Willa herself is aware of Edwin's stripping of her role in the translations. She places this feeling in the realm of physical space, showing the importance of space in their relationship as 'Mrs Muttoe' shows. She wrote in 1953:

> even the translations I had done were no longer my own territory, for everyone assumes that Edwin did them. He is referred to as 'THE' translator. By this time he may even believe that he was. He has let my reputation sink, by default; so

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[66] Knox, 200. Roderick Watson, however, insists that: 'Willa Muir knew all too well what it was like to be condescended to by men who were her intellectual inferiors and had to resist being characterised as "the wife of the poet" for many years.' Watson, Roderick, *The Literature of Scotland: The Twentieth Century*, 2nd ed. (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 1984; 2007), 60.

[67] L. Soukup, 33.

[68] Ibid.

[69] *Modernism and Nationalism*, 201.

[70] *Modernism and Nationalism*, 212.

[71] Hochschild, 220. One journal entry shows that Muir often quieted her own discomforts to keep the peace: 'Edwin is really often a little bugger. I must not stifle too much my hunches of disagreement with him: which I am afraid I have done.' Archives & Special Collections, University of St Andrews Library; MS Muir, ms38466/5/4: Journal, 'The Putsch, and after' (1948).

> now I fear that if the Feuchtwanger publishers are told that I am prepared to do this beastly novel, they will refuse unless Edwin engages to do it, or to put his name to it.[72]

This entry shows who undertook most of the work.[73] There is no doubt that the Muirs were a progressive couple but as the above journal entry shows, Edwin's complicity allowed Willa's name to be forgotten. 'Mrs Muttoe' hints at Muir's resentment. Mid-way through the novel, Alison imagines the Top-Storey officials going on holiday. The 'louts' from the Centre enter the top storey to take over. However, upon their return, the Top-Storey autocrats boot the Centre workers out once more, and they are 'marshalled back to their lower quarters' ('Mrs Muttoe', 150). The Autocrats then set up a 'Propaganda Bureau' to 'discredit the Centre among other top-storey officials' ('Mrs Muttoe', 150). This description hints at fascism, but a line two pages later suggests that Alison feels also that her translation work is a form of this: 'the translation work she had to do was merely top-storey work' ('Mrs Muttoe', 152). This, compared to her 'pottering' – or her 'Centre work' – is just another part of the 'money fabric' and top-storey greed in which she is forced to take part. Yet, as she has aligned herself with the Centre there is a suggestion that she will also be discredited for her work.[74] This is in line with Hochschild's later findings in *The Second Shift*. Hochschild concludes women struggle to attain high status positions in work is because '*men do not share the raising of their children and the caring of their homes*.'[75] Similarly, Oksala shows that 'in an economic system in which resources are primarily distributed to individuals according to their ability to compete in the economic game' women, like Willa and Alison, 'who carry the burden of

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[72] ms38466/5/5 (1951-53).

[73] Similarly, in *Montrose & The Scottish Renaissance: Ideas O' Their Ain*, the writer agrees also that: 'Willa, the better linguist, also translated under a pseudonym and although she undoubtedly took on more of the translation work it is Edwin who is most associated with it,' 9.

[74] In a similar vein, a review of *Belonging* after its release shows how even in what is arguably Muir's most significant work, the focus remains on Edwin: '*Belonging* is, I believe, a really important book. It is not only a testament of a really indomitable woman and wife, but it also throws hitherto shadowy light on a poet who must surely now be regarded as of the first order. Willa Muir earns our gratitude for many things.' Jennings, Elizabeth, 'A poet's love', *The Times Digital Archive* (13 January 1968) link.gale.com/apps/doc/CS353201709/GDCS?u=glasuni&sid=GDCS&xid=a955decc [accessed 12.02.21].

[75] Hochschild, xv. Emphasis in original.

reproduction cannot participate in this game on equal terms.'[76] Edwin/Dick got the resources to compete – quiet time in the Top Storey.

Margery Palmer McCulloch explains: 'it is nowadays considered that Willa was the principal – and sometimes the sole – translator of this German-language work.'[77] McCulloch notes that her 'greater linguistic competence' is evident in her correspondence, and 'from the frequent comments in Edwin's letters about Willa being busy with her translations; and Willa's own comments about having to get a translation finished to meet a deadline.'[78] Additionally, Scott Lyall describes: 'Willa's comments on translation are altogether more negative than Edwin's. For her translation is "like breaking stones", which may imply her greater work load as well as confirming that the Muirs took up translating to earn a living.'[79] Yet, as late as 2009, Warner Berthoff, in his review of *Kafka Again*, insisted that: '*The Trial*, *The Castle*, and *Amerika*, […] [are] translations by the poet Edwin Muir, the first two in collaboration with Willa Muir.'[80] Moreover, Christianson suggests that 'Muir produced the basic translation and then they polished it together' though in her introduction to *Belonging*, notes that Willa 'indicates that sometimes most of the translation was done by her.'[81]

'Mrs Muttoe' dismantles this myth, not just with translations, but also the evident contrast in their roles in raising Gavin.[82] It shows Willa's 'emotional conflict between a need to belong, […] and the academic analysis of female subordination, which ensured that the message and the messenger were in contradiction' but also suggests 'Her desire to satisfy Edwin's emotional, intellectual and physical needs above her own wants' and even, it can be added, the needs of their son.[83] As a result, 'she suffered a […] form of social invisibility.'[84] This was far from unusual in the era. Cicely Hamilton argued in

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[76] Oksala, Johanna, 'Affective Labor and Feminist Politics', *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, vol. 41, no. 2 (2016), 281-303, 299.
[77] *Dangerous Women Project*.
[78] Ibid.
[79] Lyall, Scott, 'Minor Modernisms: The Scottish Renaissance and the Translation of German-language Modernism', *Modernist Cultures*, vol. 14, no. 2 (2019), 213-35, 222.
[80] Berthoff, Warner, 'Review: Kafka Again', *The Sewanee Review*, vol. 117, no. 3 (2009), 499-502, 499.
[81] *Moving in Circles*, 126; 'Introduction', xi.
[82] See chapter one.
[83] Knox, 182.
[84] Ibid.

1909 that 'this need of humouring the belief of the average man in his own essential intellectual superiority [….] puts a drag on her [woman's] natural capacities, and [she] attempts to appear less efficient than she really is.'[85] Alison Muttoe is aware of these obstacles. While working on translations, she acknowledges that she has no place in the top-storey: 'the top-storey official tried to shut out all consciousness of the child's [Peter's] movements; Mrs. Muttoe could not help being aware of them' ('Mrs Muttoe', 154). Peter, when in need of attention or help, goes to Alison, not Dick. And Dick is able to ignore this, as he ignores the war in Europe, in order to write poetry while Alison struggles through translations, childcare, and an increasing awareness of war.

The Muirs were storytellers. And it is these stories that show Muir's feminist agenda. Catriona MacLeod describes a letter Willa wrote about Edwin 'for public purposes, to the American publishers of his book *Latitudes*' as 'a kind of advertisement crafting her late husband's public persona.'[86] In a footnote, MacLeod points out that the description of ripping the book in two is a 'romanticized' version; Michelle Woods exposed this, noting that Muir 'represented the often unacknowledged drudgery of women's translation work in her fiction.'[87] *Belonging* puts forth this romanticised version; however Willa makes explicit that this technique was used only for their Kafka translations, and potentially Broch. Muir writes: 'what was our technique in our joint Kafka translations? […] We divided the book in two, Edwin translated one half and I the other, then we went over each other's translation as with a fine-tooth comb' (*Belonging*, 146). An accomplished linguist, Muir was careful with her language – she does not write simply 'our translations,' but specifies Kafka. She also described translating Broch together, but uses 'I' again to describe translating Feuchtwanger.[88] These descriptions suggest that Muir's representation of Alison Muttoe as the sole translator is closest to the truth in the way that Muir and Muttoe are also left alone to parent Gavin. The description of a 'fine-tooth comb' presents imagery of a mother brushing her child's hair. At the very least, this can be taken as an expression of Willa's perceptions of their translations: that

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[85] Hamilton, 166-67.

[86] MacLeod, Catriona, 'Displaced Vernaculars: Edwin and Willa Muir, Kafka, and the Languages of Modernism', *The Germanic Review: Literature, Culture, Theory*, vol. 93, no. 1 (2018), 48-57, 51.

[87] MacLeod, 55n.

[88] Huberman cites a letter from Willa to Broch where she apologises for the speed at which they translate: 'it is only because we are *both* [*sic*] doing it.' 'Translating Broch', 52.

she had to sacrifice her own creative work for the sake of their family, and therefore viewed this act as fundamentally within her maternal duties.

George Marshall warns against taking Edwin's *Autobiography* as fact:

> the autobiography has to be treated as a work of art – of artifice – not as a factual record. It is, moreover, important not to be tempted to see the autobiography and the [Edwin's] poems as totally separate genres which "explain" one another. They are both fictions.[89]

Certainly 'Mrs Muttoe' is not purely factual, but it does offer greater indications of Willa's personal perspective of balancing work and motherhood in a world of increasing turmoil. Christianson notes that Muir 'was not keeping a journal when she wrote *Mrs Muttoe.*'[90] In some ways, then, it might be argued that 'Mrs Muttoe' acts as Muir's journal for this period. This cannot prevent their marriage from acting as a 'model' for progressive couples the way that *Belonging* could be said to. Woods asserts: '[Muir] seemed convinced that the "patriarchal society" she inhabited would not accept her as a major influence in the translations anyway, and that she would therefore have more political effect as a feminist upholding the equality in her marriage.'[91]

And she may have calculated correctly; critics associate the preliminary translation to Willa and the polish and stylistic additions to Edwin.[92] In 'Mrs Muttoe', Alison complains about having to rush the 'Rheingold' (probably fictional Feuchtwanger) because it is a bad book. She spends her time 'polishing' it ('Mrs Muttoe', 133). The use of this word is probably deliberate, given that Edwin was seen as the polisher – she subverts this assumption through the character of Alison. She showed the truth of these translations even while insisting that an equal partnership was emotionally and financially beneficial. This is perhaps why, when the two were 'invited to the States to

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[89] George Marshall's comment could apply to *Belonging* as well. Marshall, George, 'Muir's Orkney: The Place and the Idea' in *Edwin Muir Centenary Assessments*, eds C.J.M. Shields and D.S. Robb (Aberdeen: Association for Scottish Literary Studies, 1990), 19-31, 23.

[90] *Moving in Circles,* 141.

[91] Woods, 62.

[92] Ibid. Woods goes on to show that other critics assume 'Edwin, the writer-translator, produces a text that is "original and 'masculine'", Willa, the linguist, produces a text that is "derivative and 'feminine'" (Chamberlain 1992, 57). One anecdote recounted by Huberman shows the sexist undertones of this. In it, Huberman explains that Broch had introduced verse into *The Sleepwalkers* while Willa was ill. Edwin could not maintain the original metrics so Broch agreed to blank verse for the English translation. Upon recovery, however, Willa was 'willing to try to approximate Broch's rhymes and metrics in English.' 'Translating Broch', 54.

give joint lectures on married life,' Willa was enthusiastic, believing 'they would have been a great success.'[93] However, despite Morley Jamieson's belief that 'Willa unquestionably knew a great deal about the subject,' Edwin 'could not possibly do that.'[94] So the script of their translation method fulfilled the role of continuing the myth, though their equal division made up only a small per cent. This allowed Willa's translations to be widely read, while also encouraging the perception of a progressive model for married professional couples. This is in line with Gerard Carruthers's argument that '"myths" often occupy a position somewhere between truth and falsity, in that the successful ones become, in a sense, reality. People believe such defining stories, act on them in the world and promulgate them in their expression.'[95] After all, Woods continues: 'Muir explicitly connected the "militant patriarchal feeling" (ibid. [*Belonging*], 136) in Britain in the interwar period with the fomenting of war; the equality in her marriage is presented as a means to challenge this society.'[96]

Though the Second World War appears on the periphery until the final chapters of 'Mrs Muttoe', it is that peripheral spectre that provides emotional context. Alison is required to 'keep the world at bay' by redirecting her family's – and ultimately the readers' – attention away from impending terror. This directly contrasts *Mrs Ritchie*, where these violent powers overwhelm the narrative. She is 'too busy' attempting to keep her family at peace. She believes that 'A well-endowed Ministry of Loving-kindness seemed an imperative necessity' which would take care of 'Mothers of all kinds: Mother Earth, Mother Church, Mother Country, what you will' ('Mrs Muttoe', 259). In other words, maternal presence in government would ensure mothers and children are taken care of, and prevent cruelty and war. Alison is seeking a solution to social problems, including isolation and neglect, expressed previously through Muir's other characters: Ned Murray and Annie Ritchie, particularly.

In a scene with 'The Master' (discussed below) Miss Duff in Frances's studio says: 'Look at Germany, Italy, Russia, all seeking an expression of the national soul, […] Look at the discord in Europe, the chaos of fear and hatreds…' ('Mrs Muttoe', 81). The

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[93] Jamieson, 29.
[94] Ibid.
[95] Carruthers, Gerard, *Scottish Literature* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 2.
[96] Woods, 61.

First World War shook the world's confidence. For Muir, this Ministry of Loving-Kindness is the answer. And that Ministry is located in the 'Centre': 'The Centre in human beings was well able to remind top-storey autocrats that they were interpreters and not dictators. […] An ally of the Centre, that's what I am' ('Mrs Muttoe', 101). The novel shows the 'realism and despair of later 1930s literature' that expressed fears of the upcoming war.[97] Like Mrs Muttoe, 'although the rise of Hitler and "his Nazi gangsters" deeply troubled the Muirs, Willa claimed that they became "not more politically-minded but less so", indeed, Edwin spent much of the 1930s analysing his dreams, rather than the international political situation.'[98] And his fictional twin, Dick, believes no one can stop Hitler from taking Austria ('Mrs Muttoe', 173). Ultimately, however, 'both Edwin and Willa had shifted from a pacifist position to outright opposition to Hitler and the Nazis.'[99] And Willa shows that fear catches up with Alison in the end. While 'in Germany National Socialists were openly repudiating loving-kindness and making a creed out of its denial' at home 'Peter screamed to her for the shelter she could not guarantee' ('Mrs Muttoe', 241). The threat of war induces panic in the final section of the novel.

'Mrs Muttoe' delves into this inability to express her own creative self: 'she performs her identity as a female translator and hints how this identity interacts with her identity as a writer who is explicitly influenced by the novel's Kafka figure, "Garta".'[100] Each level of the tower represents a salary bracket. Women are on a large outer terrace

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[97] Watson, Roderick, 'The Modern Scottish Literary Renaissance' in *The Edinburgh Companion to Twentieth-Century Scottish Literature*, eds Alan Riach and Ian Brown (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 75-87, 77.

[98] Knox, 193, quote from *Belonging*, 158. Butter suggests that the Muirs were more aware of the gravity of the situation in Europe than Knox admits: 'he [Edwin] saw in Europe in the twenties the aftermath of one world war and some of the premonitory symptoms of the next—the inflation, the anti-semistism. In the thirties he was keenly aware, through friends and relations, of the effects of unemployment at home and of rising tyrannies abroad.' *Letters*, 8. His poetry shows this more clearly than his prose. See, for instance, 'Reading in Wartime': 'the world has bled/For four and a half years,/And wives' and mothers' tears/Collected would be able/To water a little field.' Likewise, 'The Interrogation': 'We are on the very edge,/Endurance almost done,/And still the interrogation is going on.' Muir, Edwin, *Collected Poems of Edwin Muir*, ed. J.C. Hall (London: Faber & Faber, 1952), 119-20, 156.

[99] Knox, 194. This is evident in their letter written with Eric Linklater regarding the Munich Agreement: 'The crisis produced by Herr Hitler's threat to Czechoslovakia was made possible by the weakening of international law and the decay of justice, for which this government is largely responsible.' Linklater, Eric, Edwin Muir, and Willa Muir, 'Open Letter Concerning the Munich Agreement (1938)' in *Modernism and Nationalism*, 377.

[100] Woods, 64. Muir's choice of 'Garta' to represent Kafka 'is a reference to Max Brod's novel *The Kingdom of Love*, in which a fictionalized Kafka is named Garta.' Woods, 64.

wrapping around the inner circles, in which their husbands work. A lift brings goods and domestic labourers, consolidating representations of social hierarchy within British society. Like Alison's search for a cook-housemaid, Muir shows these domestic labourers again as services, outsourced labour, to be ordered on demand. Occasionally a van painted the colours of the Union Jack drives past with a loudspeaker: '"Eat More Fruit," roared the van. "Drink More Milk. Beer is Best. Buy British"'('Mrs Muttoe', 276). Until she reaches the bottom of the tower, Alison meets only women; the men remain on the inside.

At the bottom however, 'the vast arena was crammed with humans engaged in the most diverse activities. […] And there were females among them […] On the upper levels the females were nearly all outside the Money fabric, on the adjoining balconies. […]' ('Mrs Muttoe', 279-81).[101] This may allude to Marx's and Engel's assertion that the proletariat is, above all, an 'appendage of the machine' who is 'enslaved by the machine, by the overlooker, and, above all, by the individual bourgeois manufacturer himself.'[102] Alison and Willa are both the 'translation factories,' but in this moment, she is overlooking those who are properly enslaved by the machine – both men and women, as well as their children. She becomes aware of her privilege, but also of the burden that she must work hard to prevent her family from falling down a 'level' in the 'money fabric.' As J.B. Pick points out, 'She worked only to keep the wolf from the door.'[103] She sees what could happen to her own son if she should fail.[104] Elphinstone describes the tower as a scene that 'merely reiterates the pain and isolation of defeat.'[105] This, she writes, is not ultimate and dramatic, but 'repeated small defeats' showing 'that it is impossible to fulfil both the role required of woman and the intellectual role of writer at the same time.'[106] Muir expresses her innermost concerns with being a working mother. Mrs Muttoe feels her identity has become irretrievably intertwined with her role as mother: 'When I look

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[101] It could be argued that Willa's dramatic portrayal of the factory was in line with overly simplistic bourgeois views of this kind of work. Randall shows how 'affective interactions – both engendering and demonstrating what we might call "bonding" between the workers – are central to accurately telling this work-day.' 'Telling the Day', 255.

[102] Marx and Engels, 227.

[103] Pick, J.B, 'Introduction' in *Imagined Corners* (Edinburgh: Canongate Classics, 1931; 1987), vii-xi, viii.

[104] See chapter one for an analysis of her personal anxieties about her son.

[105] Elphinstone, 411.

[106] Ibid.

into myself, thought Alison, what I find is my family' ('Mrs Muttoe', 239). These resonate, the novel broadly suggests, with women in lower-income families struggling for their survival in a capitalist patriarchy, while attempting to maintain their own identity.

Elphinstone's analysis suggests the link between motherhood and community compared with the father and autocracy:

> Mrs Muttoe's struggle between the work of the intellect (her translating) and the work of the mother and all-provider is couched in terms of a laboured allegory of the Autocrat in the Top Storey and the nurturer and protector at the Centre (lower down), who seems usually to be the mother, but at one point is described as God.[107]

As seen above, Muttoe sees the Top-Storey as able to ignore the concerns of the child in order to focus on moneymaking. Muir constructs a similar argument through the monstrous figure of Mrs Ritchie and the patriarchal figures in charge of the World Wars. Woods describes this argument against autocracy:

> All the women in the novel seem to know the rules, except for Alison, who has been thrust into this dream-world of alternate and indecipherable boundaries, much like Josef K. in *The Trial* and K. in *The Castle*, where the women, too, are conduits and messengers.[108]

This is similar to Glen Pride's description of Willa in St Andrews: 'Everybody knew their place – except Willa. And she blotted her copybook further by being into labour politics.'[109] Alison embodies this anxiety produced by translation, motherhood, and being a political outsider who does not know her place: 'The resistance in the translation, though, leads directly to creativity: Garta has an impact on her, he "is making me fanciful".'[110] Muir is creating a space for herself to express these anxieties – a space that she does not have at home, where her son and visitors intrude upon her ground floor office.

It is this emotional expression of being a mother and a translator that many believe prevents the novel from being successful. In other words, the novel is not successful as a work of art because it is 'too close' to her own life. Yet, a reassessment of

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[107] Ibid.

[108] Woods, 66.

[109] Allen, 293. Interview with Glen Pride.

[110] Woods, 66.

the novel as a hybrid text shows its worth as a piece of literature. It blends memoir and fiction in order to represent the daily occurrences of interwar life and a middle-class working woman's perceptions of it. This is in line with Nicola Beauman's findings about the English middle-class interwar novel, where the war is a backdrop rather than a centrepiece. Beauman writes that the First World War 'was viewed as nothing more profound than casualty lists, relevant to everyday life only if their tragedies became personal ones.'[111] Beauman explains that the 'contrast between the life-and-death problems of wartime and the trivia of civilian life was a recurring theme', noting how Vera Brittain found in 1918 that 'maids and ration-cards' were more often spoken of among civilians than the great battles for which the war became known.[112] This would change with the air raids of World War II, but Muir's novel, which she started writing just prior to and finished immediately following the outbreak of the Second World War, shows her understanding of war before it was no longer a continental problem alone. Muir's novel, then, rests firmly within a tradition of women's writing that depicts the emotional and daily realities of rationing and being a mother and wife to potential soldiers. Her novel centres on a search for a maid and offers what can now be viewed as valuable historical (and emotional) insight into the most human of activities: finding resources for your family during shortages. The autobiographical aspects of 'Mrs Muttoe' are a credit to it for this reason.

As the novel is unpublished, a review of the critical discussion of 'Mrs Muttoe' is limited. Despite this, there appears to be far more critical engagement with this work than with Muir's second novel, *Mrs Ritchie*. In a 'Quorum of Willas' Mudge explains: 'the manuscript ends with the not-so-strong female clasping her husband's hand for support.'[113] This is an odd conclusion, given that throughout the novel, Alison is regularly responsible for supporting the entire family. Clearly, 'Motherhood is performed in ways in which mothers must be perfect at all of their roles: parent, spouse, employee, friend, daughter.'[114] Here, Alison is not 'perfect' because she shows that she, too, needs support. After Julia, the maid, scares Peter (see below), it takes Alison hours to calm him

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111 Beauman, Nicola, *A Very Great Profession* (London: Persephone Books, 2008), 28.
112 Ibid, 29.
113 Mudge, 3.
114 DeGroot and Vik, 54.

down, and Dick responds: 'we're a sensitive family. We need a peaceful atmosphere in the home' ('Mrs Muttoe', 266). Yet, he does not contribute to calming Peter or to the peace of the house. Alison alone is burdened with managing her family's emotions. But Mudge does not interpret Alison's ability to manage the triple burden of domestic labour, maternal duties, and translations (while subduing her own desire to write) as strengths. Hochschild comes to the conclusion that 'lower-earning husbands often saw their wives as intelligent, strong, "a rock."'[115] Certainly, Muir and Muttoe both face these assumptions. But, Alison's grasping her husband's hand at the end of the novel proves the weight of these tasks, in line with Hochschild's findings: 'women tend to talk more intently about being over-tired, sick, and "emotionally drained."'[116]

In contrast to Mudge, Woods uses 'Mrs Muttoe' to 'reassess' this double burden. For Woods, Willa 'performs her identity as a female translator and hints how this identity interacts with her identity as a writer.'[117] Woods sees this as effective in that it shows Alison,

> caught in the mundane realities of earning a living to enable her husband to write, looking after their child and the household, the only time – the female time – is night-time, dream, the unconscious. As reinterpreted in Muir's novel, Garta-Kafka's prose is a locus of female time.[118]

Woods' assertion accompanies Alison's musings: 'On a woman's breast children and men lost their day-time selves, descending softly into secure darkness. That might be why women had been associated so often with the idea of night' ('Mrs Muttoe', 97-8).[119] It is also at night – after the men and children are lulled to sleep – that women find peace: 'The house, sheltering its sleeping inhabitants like a many-chambered womb, was acting as her deputy; she was free of family responsibilities' ('Mrs Muttoe', 98). Woods sees the novel as reinterpreting female creativity within the constraints of affective labour and the lack of acknowledgement they receive for their sacrifices and strength. Johanna Oksala

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[115] Hochschild, 221.

[116] Ibid., 10. See appendix I for an overview of Muir's various operations due to illness and overstrain.

[117] Woods, 64.

[118] Ibid., 66.

[119] Muir's reference here is similar to Woolf's description of women sitting up at night to finish writing. This also may allude to the literary trope that relates women to the moon. These span back to Sappho, up to *The Emperor of the Moon* by Aphra Behn (1687), Louisa May Alcott's 'The Mother Moon' (1856), Emily Dickinson's 'The Moon was but a Chin of Gold' (c. 1863), and Carol Ann Duffy's *To The Moon: An Anthology of Lunar Poems* (2009), to name a few.

understands this as the 'double work day' – what Hochschild calls the second shift. Oksala notes that women are required to perform 'affective labor on call': 'Women's double workday is a powerful obstacle to greater education and access to better and better-paid work.'[120] For both Muir and Muttoe, this need to mother one's child, husband, and house is an obstacle to her own self-satisfaction.

Woods, too, sees Elphinstone and Christianson's dismissal of the novel as a 'judgment [that] underscores a belief that translation is a secondary activity, suggesting that a novel about Alison the writer might be judged as more valid.'[121] She writes:

> On a basic level, the novel gives a picture of the reality of being a female translator in the 1930s – struggling for money, trying to gain access to a patriarchal literary culture, trying to run a household dependent on the labour of other women; […] But perhaps as importantly, the novel gives us a glimpse into Willa Muir's workshop as she translates Kafka; her feminist agenda, her awareness of her agency as a translator, and her modernist attitude to translation as a generative writing practice.[122]

Woods reinterprets the novel through a feminist lens and shows that women's domestic, affective, and maternal work has not been included in a summing up of their workload.[123] She argues that 'Mrs Muttoe' is an early attempt to correct the perception of women's work.[124] As Woods suggests, the act of translation, being 'secondary,' has not seemed like an appropriate literary topic, but the centre is decided by those within it: the literary elite. A portrait of the artist is key, but translation, like life writing, has only recently been appreciated as an art in its own right.

Additionally, the topic of being a working mother supporting her husband and managing the household staff is one in which 'nothing' happens and therefore does not adhere to literary tradition. Edwin himself writes in *The Structure of the Novel* that the

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[120] Oksala, 285.

[121] Woods, 66.

[122] Ibid.

[123] Researchers found that students routinely asked (and expected) female academics to perform more service work and emotional support than their male counterparts. This type of work is not included in an assessment of academic and professional achievement, and hinders women from producing research and publications at the same rate as male academics, thus slowing professional progress. El-Alayli, A.; Hansen-Brown, A.A.; Ceynar, M., 'Dancing Backwards in High Heels: Female Professors Experience More Work Demands and Special Favor Requests, Particularly from Academically Entitled Students', *Sex Roles*, no. 79 (2018), 136-150.

[124] See chapter two.

laws of the novel are fixed, and 'in every novel things must happen and in a certain order.'[125] In recent decades, women's literary movements have shifted this idea that a novel requires detachment from one's own life, strict form and structure, and full active plots.[126] In short, they are questioning which stories should be told, and whether or not a soldier's story of World War II, for example, is more worthy than that of a housewife on the home front. Recent re-valuing of novels such as Jane Austen's *Emma* (1815), Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* (1925), and, arguably, 'Mrs Muttoe' have furthered this interrogation.

This novel's mimicry of Muir's life shows her strength, even while revealing her vulnerability to the judgement she faced as a mother. The most striking example of this involves their maid, Julia, who scares Gavin with promises of fire and brimstone if he misbehaves. Muir is enraged and distressed by the incident, going so far as to name the housekeeper in 'Mrs Muttoe' Julia. In her journals, Muir describes this episode as 'a ruined piece of my life,' blaming this for Gavin's 'nervous system' being 'ruined.'[127] In *Belonging* Muir writes: 'I should have heeded the heart-sinking message from my unconscious when I first saw her. […] I could not possibly keep her in my employment, now that I knew she was not to be trusted' (166). She goes on to explain her shocking discovery:

> Julia then told me that ours was a godless house and we were bringing Gavin up to be a little heathen. At last I understood, with certainty, that the boy had run in front of the tanker because he had been running away from Julia. She was sullen, enraged and unrepentant, reiterating that she had only been telling him things every child needed to be told (*Belonging*, 166).

As in the manuscript, Julia's aunt Mary, the cook, is heartbroken, teary, and sorry for her niece's behaviour, but elects to leave with her out of loyalty. Willa blames herself:

> Ultimately it was my fault, I decided, blaming myself, first for having engaged Julia, and then after I knew she was frightening Gavin for having let her take him out again. [….] 'If thu keeps on saying that,' he protested, 'thu'll make me believe

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[125] Muir, Edwin, *The Structure of the Novel* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1928; 1967), 16.

[126] Women writers have, arguably, been attempting to shift the narrative for centuries. For instance, one interpretation of Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* is to question whether the trauma of depressed, unhappily married housewives on the home front who have been oppressed by patriarchy since birth can be compared to the traumas of a WWI soldier. Critics have re-evaluated these novels to understand the lives of women and their valuable contributions to literature.

[127] ms38466/5/5 (1951-53).

> it.' I knew that this was true, Edwin being supremely suggestible in moments of heightened feeling. I kept my sense of guilt under cover after that, and so began preparing an inward sump of self-accusation and grief (*Belonging,* 172).

Muir's description of the event here shows a lack of support from Edwin, and a suggestion that Willa is responsible for not only outsourcing childcare but also the wellbeing of their child.[128] Though Gavin is also Edwin's child, Edwin refrains from accepting blame, and stops Willa from expressing her grief by threatening to blame her as well. In 'Mrs Muttoe', Peter is not hit by a car, but he begins to fear fire. Alison confronts Julia with similar results: '"It's not lies, then, Mrs. Muttoe, and you're his mother and you should bring him up in the right way, and if you don't do it, somewan has to do it," burst out Julia' ('Mrs Muttoe', 164). Mary leaves with Julia, though she is fond of the Muttoes and happy in their employment. Both Dick and Alison are distressed, and it is at this point that Alison falls into her nightmare of the autocrat in the top storey with a Central agent disparaging her emotions.

Willa used Mrs Muttoe to express these anxieties and feelings of inequality even as she attempted to hide them beneath a façade of equality. Similarly, she uses events from her life to show her fears of the war and of nationalist ideologies springing up across Europe. In *Belonging* Muir is quick to link the growing violence and nationalism post-WWI with gender:

> I noted that the increase of violence in the air was paralleled by an increase of female intransigence, and that the gap between the fiction of women's inferiority and their actual strength was widening fast. […] I was lucky, and I knew it, in having married a man who was not striving for dominance, either in-fighting at home or out-fighting in the world (137).

Edwin, as Willa acknowledges and as their letters and diaries prove, had no interest in dominating Willa. Certainly, not all men maintained a peaceful 'loving-kindness.' His power in the top-storey was an act of complicity and ignorance to the hard work of domestic and affective labour. Similarly, in her book on the legal and social condition of women in the early twentieth century, Holtby writes: 'now that they are in public life, at least some women protest against the disproportion between our solicitude for the forces

[128] See chapter one for a discussion about the division of parenting labour.

of destruction and our care for the constructive and civilized activities of the state.'[129] The contradictions of some women's reproduction of destruction – soldiers, autocrats, Popovitches – in contrast with women's roles as caretakers were aspects of a destroyed post-war society of which Muir and her contemporaries were only too aware.

For instance, Muir recounts a party in London while living in Hampstead, which appears in fictional form in 'Mrs Muttoe'. In it, she describes Mitrinović who had established himself 'as the centre of a cult' but who 'sent a message to Edwin begging him to be the editor of a magazine' that would 'deal with the function of Albion in Europe and the world' (*Belonging*, 162). When the couple visit Mitrinović they found a room 'fluttering with devotees also waiting to see The Master' (*Belonging*, 163). Here they speak to a few of Mitrinović/The Master's devotees: 'One young man told us happily that he had sold his only pair of gold cuff-links for The Master, and two little old ladies had sold a country cottage, they said, for The Master' (*Belonging*, 163).[130] The description of Mitrinović matches that in 'Mrs Muttoe':

> There was a gross roll of fat round the back of the neck I saw […] his mouth looked much the same, but his eyes did not, and his voice was portentous with self-importance. We non-joined his bogus cult. Edwin refused to edit the new magazine, which came out grandiose in size and expensive in makeup. Some part of London, it appeared, was indeed Looney-bin (*Belonging*, 163).

The Looney-bin links directly to the alternative titles on the title page of 'Mrs Muttoe': 'Top Storeys and Looney Bins', 'London's Looney Bin A Tale of the Thirties', and 'A Tale of London Family Life in the Thirties'. These suggest that Muir believed that family life, the top storey autocrat, and the looney bin of bogus cults were intricately connected in their anxieties and relevance to one another.

Her description of 'Popovitch/The Master' almost directly mirrors that in *Belonging*, as if she returned to the manuscript for it. The character of the young man and elderly ladies again are present in the manuscript, as too is The Master's desire for Dick Muttoe to be editor for his 'Pan-Britain' journal. But unlike Muir's account in *Belonging*,

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[129] Holtby, 135.

[130] Moneyed 'spinsters' funding cult leaders seems to have been a trend. Richard Seymour explains that John Spargo believed that supporters of Bolsheviks 'were given to thinking like religious zealots' and 'hysterical hyperesthesia'. In particular, he believed, 'rich women who allegedly funded Bolshevism also suffered from "hyperesthesia".' Seymour, Richard, 'John Spargo and American Socialism', *Historical Materialism* vol. 17, no. 2 (2009), 272-285, 280.

'Mrs Muttoe' offers insight into the feelings of Dick/Edwin and Alison/Willa regarding the night. She shows parts of his speech that reflect insular attitudes:

> All these make mystical body of Britain, which is Strength and again Strength. Mystical body of Europe not yet born; mystical body of Britain exists now. So not Europe must we influence, but British Empire. Pan-Europe must wait. Pan-Britain is here now ('Mrs Muttoe', 87).

Alison links these ramblings to maternity as well as nonsense, calling Frances – a follower of The Master – 'more like a modernised peasant Madonna than ever' ('Mrs Muttoe', 89) and speculating on the rebirth of Popovitch as a deranged Christ-figure turned Pope, to whom these cult followers are happily giving birth. Mrs Muttoe's internal comment that 'Popovitch himself had become a Pope' suggests corruption in the form of an overriding ideological system into which money is poured and criticism of the main authority is unwelcome ('Mrs Muttoe', 88).[131] This is evidenced further with Mrs Muttoe's understanding of the scene: 'Their nonsense is a corruption of sense rather than a negation of it' ('Mrs Muttoe', 89).

Alison continues by noting that: 'Instead of a new world they were producing only an enlarged Popovitch. But what was wrong with all these elderly women and young men, that they needed to participate in this parody of gestation?' ('Mrs Muttoe', 87). Popovitch becomes Frankenstein's creation. This further hints at Alison's discomfort with modern manufacturing and production, showing how, like Frankenstein's creation who turned to murder in his own sense of loss, Popovitch's followers must also. The reader knows this behaviour leads to war and fascism, and Alison knows what is coming: 'In and around other parts of Europe, meanwhile, human life was being machine-gunned, bombed, shelled and torpedoed out of existence' ('Mrs Muttoe', 241). Her focus on mothers and children in this text reminds the reader that the 'human life' being 'machine-gunned' started with women's labour, and is ended by the wars of men like Popovitch. Popovitch appears to be arguing for a ruling class – or at the very least, a ruling nation. Muir suggests that when birth and reproduction are given over to anyone other than young women, it produces 'nonsense [that] is a corruption of sense rather than a negation of it' ('Mrs Muttoe', 89). These concerns caused Alison's anxiety about the type of world

[131] See chapters three, four, and six for an analysis of Muir's disillusionment with religion.

children were raised in. Her criticisms of Popovitch's 'Pan-Britain' align with Marx and Engels, who argued that the rise of the proletariat would allow 'National differences and antagonisms' to 'vanish still faster.'[132] Yet, her final vision of the tower shows that the Popovitches, the autocrats, of the world are those who have power.

Alison describes the Top Storey officials: 'How easy for the official in the top storey, the head official, to imagine himself an independent autocrat!' ('Mrs Muttoe', 99). The Top Storey official sends down orders and directions to the Central Agent. Then, 'The routine work of the building was looked after by the Centre, a mysterious invisible agency housed somewhere in the windowless part of the structure' ('Mrs Muttoe', 99). This windowless part is reminiscent of a womb, where the central reproductive work of the human species takes place. While in the money fabric, the autocrat – the patriarch – has power; he exploits the Central worker by disregarding the critical significance of the Central work to the continuation of civilisation. Alison understands that without the Centre, there would be no top-storey and believes that: 'The Centre in human beings was well able to remind the top-storey autocrats that they were interpreters and not dictators' ('Mrs Muttoe', 101). Once again, as in *Imagined Corners*, women – the centre – are meant to keep men in check.[133] Her description of the autocrat at the top storey hints at Dick's top storey study, where he experiences peace from reproductive labour in the centre. But Alison wants to dismantle this and 'centralize all instruments of production.'[134] This speaks to Foucault's interpretation of biopower, of the patriarchy's 'power to manage life' while women reproduce life.[135] In Muir's imagining of the Centre, reproductive labour, biopower, needs to be centralised, including the emotional responsibility that is required to reproduce functioning humans; in other words, Gavin/Peter must be also Edwin's/Dick's responsibility if 'loving-kindness' can triumph.

After thinking of the Top Storey, and of the 'parody of gestation' of Popovitch, Alison thinks: 'The lowest common denominator of femininity, which she shared with other females in the world, was the ability to play nanny-goat to the baby rhinoceros'

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[132] Marx and Engels, 241.

[133] See chapter three.

[134] Marx and Engels, 245.

[135] Hardt, Michael, 'Affective Labor', *boundary*, vol. 26, no. 2 (1999), 89-100, 98, 99.

('Mrs Muttoe', 96). She goes on to reflect her own feelings of struggle: 'But where, Alison Muttoe asked herself, do females get the assurance that life is worth living?' ('Mrs Muttoe', 96). When leaving for the country, Mrs Muttoe finds herself attempting to calm Alice, the urbanite, who sees an 'imagined horror' in nature. Simultaneously, she is keeping track of Peter's playfulness, their dog Bartholomew's rambunctiousness, and Dick's bitterness at sharing attention with a helpless maid:

> He had to sit opposite a hiccupping female simply because he had to pay for the toast she was choking on, confound her. And he would have to pay for it with part of a small cheque he had cashed that morning, the price of a poem he had written. […] confound and blast it ('Mrs Muttoe', 117).

In traditional gender norms – what Dick Muttoe is enforcing by refusing to contribute to domestic labour – his role is to be the 'breadwinner'. He evidently feels this, also, is simply too burdensome, despite Alison's translations making up a large portion of their income. Dick's emotions worsen, and Mrs Muttoe thinks to herself: 'How could he be so childish!' ('Mrs Muttoe', 117). She becomes irritable and slaps the dog away from her and snaps at Peter while trying to make a grocery list for Alice. She internally grieves this action: 'I didn't mean that you [Peter] were a nuisance; I didn't even mean that Bartholomew was a nuisance. It was Alice I wanted to slap' ('Mrs Muttoe', 125) After this, she decides to stay in the car while Dick, Alice, and Peter venture to buy groceries. Here, her earlier musings about a lack of reassurance are amplified:

> Mrs. Muttoe's eyes prickled with sudden tears. Her family had deserted her, leaving her alone in the car, and it served her right. What had gone wrong with her? The viciousness with which she had wanted to slap Alice appalled her. She was deeply ashamed to remember the anxiety in Peter's voice as he had asked what a nuisance he was. And Dick – her fractiousness had made him fractious too ('Mrs Muttoe', 127).

The affective and emotional labour expected of her is overwhelming, but she takes responsibility for Dick's childishness: 'her fractiousness had made him fractious too' ('Mrs Muttoe', 127).

This feeling of lack of support, self-accusation, and desolation while constantly supporting others aligns with feminist understandings of affective labour. Hochschild noted in her 1989 study that women who had found 'balance' in their relationship with work and domestic duties felt 'too powerful': 'Sensing when their husbands got touchy,

sensing the fragility of their husbands' ego, not wanting them to get discouraged or depressed, such women restored their men's lost power by waiting on them at home.'[136] Marx and Engels wrote of the 'community of women' which 'has existed almost from time immemorial' but this community is one in which women are being prostituted as 'mere instruments of production' in 'both public and private' spheres.[137] This begins small in 'Mrs Muttoe', with Alison thinking how 'Dick had to be cherished and encouraged to finish his book' ('Mrs Muttoe', 133). She is 'a home for Peter' and must 'cherish' him also ('Mrs Muttoe', 240). Muir's representation of the nanny-goats around the outside of the tower, and the labouring women at the bottom, shows women as instruments of production. So too, does her description of 'children transformed into simple articles of commerce and instruments of labour' with their tiny tools alongside their parents.[138] Yet, Muir shows also the affective labour which is immaterial – in other words, it is reproductive, rather than productive.[139] Johanna Oksala comments:

> Domestic labor is a paradigmatic example of affective labor [that] requires repetitive material tasks such as cleaning and cooking, but it also involves producing affects, relationships, and forms of communication and cooperation among children, in the family, and in the community.[140]

This is the double workday, the dual role, the second shift that Muir faced. But, Mrs Muttoe says, 'there is no larger, living environment to cherish and encourage me' ('Mrs Muttoe', 240).

These anxieties – of Julia and Popovitch/Mitrinović/The Master – convey an understanding that women's work, especially maternal affective labour, was disregarded as non-valuable while at the same time, remained responsible for society's foundations: the doting, elderly spinsters who funded The Master and boosted his ego; Alison, who takes care of home, translations, and Peter while Dick writes poems that would not pay the bills. Once more, Holtby shows her awareness of the topic in a way that aligns with Muir's: 'whatever other functions a woman may fulfil […] she will naturally hold herself responsible for the catering, cleaning, laundry work and care of children in the household

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136 Hochschild, 218.
137 Marx and Engels, 240.
138 Ibid.
139 See Hardt.
140 Oksala, 285.

where she lives.'[141] She goes on to write: 'Even to-day when she may be providing the major part of the family income, it is still her business to see that meals are prepared, invalids nursed, hospitality arranged, nurseries organised and comfort secured.'[142] Hochschild notes a similar phenomenon, suggesting this is a power play: 'if men lose power over women in one way [economic], they make up for it in another way—for example, by avoiding the second shift.'[143] This describes the plot of Muir's novel, though there is no evidence that Muir read Holtby's work. In this sense, Muir's use of autobiography exemplifies the theory that Holtby articulated, but in a fictionalized, relatable form.

'Mrs Muttoe and the Top Storey' points to deep-seated anxieties that were – according to writers like Woolf, Holtby, and Hamilton – common concerns among working and professional women of the time. The novel's focus on the division of labour uncovers concerns about the balance of power between men and women. Like *Imagined Corners* and *Mrs Ritchie*, Muir shows yet again that the patriarchy's denial of maternal power makes for a cruel world. *Mrs Grundy in Scotland* and *Living with Ballads* – written two years prior and nearly three decades after 'Mrs Muttoe', respectively – reflect once more upon these power (im)balances, particularly for mothers. These final texts are further examples of Muir's range. Both are polemical in genre, but in *Mrs Grundy* Muir expresses her individual style of wit and humour with which those closest to her in life were familiar. Muir critiques the patriarchy in satirical fashion, offering a different type of blast against the monstrous regiment of patriarchy for a wider audience than what *Women: An Inquiry* could provide, and in a more comedic style than *Mrs Ritchie*. In *Living with Ballads*, Muir provides a highly gendered expression of grief and loss in a return to serious non-fiction. These would be familiar themes for her audience, haunted as they were by the not-so-distant world wars and an increasing awareness of the plight of women as the Second Wave of feminism grew. In *Mrs Grundy*, Muir takes on that immortal figure in order to redress the intersecting oppressions faced by women in Scotland and England. In *Living with Ballads*, Muir's decision to prioritise ballads that

[141] Holtby, 147.
[142] Ibid.
[143] Hochschild, 218.

depict the lengths mothers will take to gain power suggests a continuing preoccupation with women's vulnerability and tentative authority in these roles. It is also, as chapter seven shows, a final example of Muir's feeling of obligation to Edwin.

Chapter Six

Annie Ritchie's Delightful Twin: Mrs Grundy in Scotland

'many of the worst among the moral cancers
which eat into the very heart and life of England […]
may be directly traced to the influence of our women'[1]

Willa Muir's second published non-fiction book, *Mrs Grundy in Scotland* (1936), is her 'biography' of that great dame, Mrs Grundy. The book outlines many of the issues that Muir struggles with in her other texts: religion, gender, class, maternity, and women's sexuality. In this text, she directly names the source of these systemic issues: Mrs Grundy, who acts on behalf of the patriarchal capitalist and religious institutions to better enforce obedience of her 'children'. Most importantly, unlike men like Grant Allen, who fervently places the responsibility of 'moral cancers' on those middle-class Mrs Grundies that he claims is Every Woman, Muir shows how the real root of this problem is not 'the influence of our women' but the patriarchal institutions of the Kirk and class hierarchies. Up until this point, the immortal 'bogey' of Mrs Grundy that Thomas Morton unwittingly created in his 1798 play *Speed the Plough* has been used to argue against the rights of women, as in J.B. Morton's 1934 article for *Nash's Pall Mall Magazine*, 'Is This Mrs. Grundy—or this?' In that article, Morton uses the voice of Mrs Grundy to decry the New Woman: 'she says roundly that any healthy girl is freer at home with her own family than working fixed hours in an office for a stranger.'[2] One can read Morton's implication that girls should travel directly from the homes of their families (read their fathers) and into the homes of their husbands, to whom they will give children. Muir, on the other hand, uses the figure of Mrs Grundy to evaluate the influence of internalised misogyny, well before that concept was articulated. In so doing, Muir refuses to fault women – or, more specifically, mothers – by showing how Grundy's tyrannical

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[1] Allen, Grant, 'Fiction and Mrs. Grundy', *Novel Review*, vol. 1, no. 4 (1892), http://ezproxy.lib.gla.ac.uk/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.ezproxy.lib.gla.ac.uk/historical-periodicals/fiction-mrs-grundy/docview/6248511/se-2?accountid=14540 [accessed 26.04.21], 294-315, 312.

[2] Morton, J.B., 'Is This Mrs. Grundy—or this?', *Nash's Pall Mall Magazine*, vol. 92, no. 490 (1934) http://ezproxy.lib.gla.ac.uk/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.ezproxy.lib.gla.ac.uk/historical-periodicals/is-this-mrs-grundy/docview/6394026/se-2?accountid=14540 [accessed 26.04.21], 18-19, 80-81, 80.

censorship stems from male sources, and is in turn, granted to women as a pretend power through motherhood and social propriety even while that power is feared, mocked, abused, and generally turned against them.

The *Scotsman*'s review of *Mrs Grundy* claims that this figure had long since been relegated to the shadows by 1936: 'Mrs Muir is possibly breaking down an open door in this book, for attacks on "Mrs Grundy" have long lost their novelty, and now she is a bogey haunting the minds of comparatively few.'[3] A smattering of news articles and artistic forays into conversation with Mrs Grundy at the time, however, shows that this formidable figure still held some status in the mid-1930s.[4] But as the book jacket of the first edition notes, Muir's concern is not with describing Mrs (Mac)Grundy as she existed in 1936, but with a history of the bogey and her influence:

> How Mrs. Grundy was born and grew up, […] how many serious dangers she brought along with her; how she is slowly dying in the modern world of money-values. This is the first, and only, biography of an estimable woman so far printed.

Muir acknowledges that Mrs Grundy no longer holds the supreme influence she once did, but treats her as worthy of biography just as any other legendary figure. She uses the book to outline a history of certain aspects of patriarchal influence and power in England and Scotland but this approach was not commended. McCulloch quotes Carswell as claiming: 'Mrs Muir rumbles on' and writes that: 'despite its angry hitting out in all directions, there is little in Muir's satirical account to yield either entertainment or productive insight.'[5] McCulloch suggests that: 'For all her intelligence and education, discursive or analytical essay-writing would not appear to have been one of Muir's strengths. […] The personal pressures she was under in the mid-1930s could only have

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[3] 'Mrs MacGrundy', *The Scotsman (1921-1950)* (30 Apr. 1936), ProQuest Historical Newspapers [accessed 26.04.21], 15.

[4] Mrs Grundy was used as a point of reference for censorship until at least 2013. For instance, *Mrs Grundy: Studies in English Prudery* (1963) by Peter Fryer; 'Joel Chandler Harris's "Boogerman" frightens Mrs Grundy' (1985) published in *English Language Notes*, vol. 23, no. 1, by R. Bruce Bickley Jr.; 'What will Mrs Grundy say? Women and Comedy' (1996) by Annette Wheeler Cafarelli published in *Criticism (Detroit)*, vol. 38, no. 1.; 'Mrs Grundy's Rebellion: Margaret Oliphant Between Orthodoxy and the New Woman' (1999) by Ann Heilmann published in *Women's Writing*, vol. 6, no. 2; 'Making Mrs Grundy's Flesh Creep: George Egerton's Assault on Late-Victorian Censorship' (2013) in *Victoriographies*, vol. 3, no. 1 by Anthony Patterson. Faber & Faber included the poem 'Mrs Grundy' in their 1979 edition of Walter de la Mare's (1873-1956) *Collected Works*. Admittedly, 'Mrs Grundy' is no longer a household name, but seems most well-known among scholars of the Victorian era.

[5] 'Interwar Literature', 109.

further undermined her objectivity.'[6] Christianson is more forgiving: 'Awareness of the specific repressions of the patriarchy underpin the work and it deals explicitly with issues of gender and nation' as well as providing 'attacks on capitalism […], religion (particularly its Scots Presbyterian manifestation) and sustained attacks on the Victorian age.'[7]

Muir's quirky, satirical narrative voice calls attention to Dame Grundy's English background. Muir shows Mrs Grundy's influence on Scotland before Muir's own invention, Mrs MacGrundy, takes the scene. Mrs MacGrundy is a device Muir uses to show cultural and national differences between Scotland and England, recognising that English propriety and gender norms are not the same as those in Scotland. This figure also allows her to use wit and humour in a way that her other texts discussed in this thesis do not. While 'Mrs Grundy in England was going all "womanly," representing an exaggerated domestic and family sentiment,' Mrs MacGrundy in Scotland, like Annie Ritchie, was imitating the patriarchy: 'she was the heir of the masculine Kirk Sessions' (*Mrs Grundy*, 79). Muir's biography of this pawn of the patriarchy was written, she states, to prevent a comeback: 'She can take on a new face and adapt herself to any new environment. It is Mrs MacGrundy who is to be dreaded, because she may persuade people that she is the national spirit of Scotland' (*Mrs Grundy*, 187).[8] By providing a history of Mrs (Mac)Grundy, Muir argues against the gendered oppression that takes place in her home country, and warns of the dangers presented by a maternal figure who acts on behalf of the patriarchy. She does this in a more straightforward way than in *Mrs Ritchie*, leaving no room for misunderstanding that Mrs Grundy is the figurehead, not of women, but of masculine institutions. Passages in which she describes the influence over women's sexuality and its contribution to infanticide, discussed below, clarify these dangers. In the process, she provides space for cultural differences and, unlike in *Women: An Inquiry*, progresses away from universalizing commentary on gender norms.

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[6] Ibid. See appendix I.

[7] *Moving in Circles*, 72. For a sustained analysis of the questions of gender and nation in *Mrs Grundy*, see *Moving in Circles*, 71-82.

[8] The rise of social media in our own time suggests that Muir's prediction of Mrs Grundy's adaptability was accurate, particularly her concern about Grundy's influence in marketing and advertising: 'finance has increasingly exerted itself to exploit our inferiority complexes, to persuade us that we lack more, much more, and can be supplied with more […] Popularity, beauty, fitness, success, all are yours if you only open your purse' (*Mrs Grundy*, 182-3).

Mrs MacGrundy is the less overtly violent twin of Mrs Ritchie, who takes Mrs MacGrundy and twists her into a grotesque exaggeration of what she once was. Just as Mrs Ritchie is arguably a feminist figure (see chapter four), proving the monstrous effects of gendered oppression and enforced motherhood, here Muir depicts another imitation of the patriarchy, showing in great detail how these sordid limitations prevent women from being autonomous individuals. For apparently the first time, Mrs Grundy's direct effect on women – her contribution to infanticide, their unhappiness, their trap of being both revered and depended upon as mother even while they are despised, feared, and mistrusted – is outlined and chastised. Similarly, it is seemingly the first time that the difference between English and Scottish gendered propriety – what Muir calls Mrs Grundy *versus* Mrs MacGrundy – is explored, a characteristic much praised in *The Scotsman* review: 'Mrs Muir's distinction between "Mrs Grundy" and "Mrs MacGrundy" is ingenious, and her account of their repressive, blighting effects is vigorously done, especially in her exposure of the absurdity and horrors of "Sabbatarianism."'[9]

Yet, Muir makes clear in *Belonging* that she did not choose her subject. While describing Leslie Mitchell's idea for the *Voice of Scotland* series and the various books he had planned for it, she writes: 'he wanted me to write about *Mrs Grundy in Scotland*' (*Belonging*, 194). This idea, in turn, seems to have come from MacDiarmid.[10] This follows her explanation that Mitchell: 'kept dwelling on the boorishness with which his Aberdeen host had been treating the hostess, his wife, the kind of behaviour that raised all Leslie's hackles' (*Belonging*, 193). Evidently, Mitchell desired a book that would tear down this type of distasteful treatment of women, and Muir obliged: 'It all sounded like great fun to me. In that spirit I wrote my Grundy book, more or less to entertain Leslie Mitchell' (*Belonging*, 194). Though she says the book was a 'slap-dash performance,' it offers a more nuanced argument for women's emancipation complemented by biting wit, including an investigation of what twenty-first century feminists call interlocking systems of oppression, than her previous (and more conscious) attempt at feminist theory, *Women: An Inquiry*. David S. Robb points out that this is perhaps because within *Mrs*

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[9] 'Mrs MacGrundy', 15.

[10] Christianson quotes MacDiarmid as writing: '"the Whisky one for Gunn, the Sex one for Willa Muir, and the Lenin one for myself were my own suggestion" (Bold, 1984 537).' *Moving in Circles*, 71, quoted from Bold, Alan (ed.), *The Letters of Hugh MacDiarmid* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1984).

Grundy, there 'lies the experience of more visits to Montrose and the first adjustments in their unhappy life in St Andrews.'[11] And, one could argue, *Mrs Grundy* is also informed by nine years of being a working mother in the early half of the twentieth century and nearly two decades of being overshadowed by Edwin's literary reputation and disregarded as a formidable woman.[12]

Muir evidently wanted to shift the labels granted to women. As noted, Mrs Grundy had been used at this point to further restrict women's autonomy. 'Fiction and Mrs. Grundy' by Grant Allen, for instance, written in 1892, borders on a feminist argument regarding Mrs Grundy, but quickly twists that into an argument against women's freedom. The article provides context for the Mrs Grundy with which Muir grew up, and therefore during which time she would be most in contact with that figure. Discussing the Mrs Grundies of middle and upper class England, Allen writes: 'Thus, the ultimate blame lies, of course, with the men, who have chosen to make their women slaves.'[13] His argument then, appears similar to Muir's, but alas Allen goes on to explain that as a result, men 'have to put up accordingly, when once the first flush of youth is passed, with uninteresting and servile-minded women companions.'[14] Following this, he thinks Mrs Grundy should at least be able to say to herself:

> 'After all, I'm only a foolish, half-educated woman (if even that); […] Isn't it possible that men whom I frankly acknowledge in the abstract to be cleverer and better-informed and more experienced than myself might be able in some ways to teach me something; or, if that's out of the question, if I'm too dull to learn, at least mightn't they be able to teach my daughter something—my daughter, who is yet plastic and not wholly bound up'[15]

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[11] Robb, 157.

[12] Fred Urquhart's contribution to Edwin's centenary, 'Edwin and Willa: A Memoir' is an excellent example of this. He writes: 'I have to admit I always found Willa Muir intimidating. Although she was ill at the time, waiting to have an operation, she exuded a kind of aggressive energy that nearly always upset me.' Yet, his image of Willa seems to have been skewed towards the negative. Urquhart noted: 'Mary Litchfield and the Muirs had been close friends for a long time. Mary knew Edwin in his youth in Glasgow, before he met Willa in 1919, and so there was probably some possessive jealousy in the relationship between the two women. In a note at the beginning of *Mrs Grundy in Scotland* Willa acknowledged that she was indebted to Mary for some of the material in the book, but she did not dedicate it to her.' He does not acknowledge that Muir dedicated the book instead to Leslie Mitchell, who asked Muir to write *Mrs Grundy* and who Muir was trying to entertain with its content, but who died before its publication – a seemingly more apt dedication than one to Mary Litchfield. His assumptions of 'possessive jealousy' are not evidenced. Urquhart, 11.

[13] Allen, 305.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Ibid.

Furthermore, according to Allen: 'The real man of letters, I take it, has, as a rule, truer and broader views about the world and the universe than the mass of his contemporaries—certainly than the average mother of a family.'[16] His specific attack on mothers shows fear of their power – their ability to influence the next generation – and argues for a dismantling of that power. At the very least, his argument colours mothers as frivolous and empty-minded.

Unlike Allen, Muir reads Mrs Grundy as an ideal – an abstract concept – that finds roots in oppressive systems, but does not represent any one person or group of people. She is an idea that controls the actions of others; she is a tradition, not a person or group of people: 'that cramped stiffness was perpetuated in the tradition which I have called Mrs Grundy' (*Mrs Grundy*, 165). Mrs Grundy is, in Muir's view, representative of patriarchal tradition, and her influence over women is what feminists now call internalised misogyny. In this process, she becomes, like Mrs Ritchie, the mother who is feared, with far too much control over her sons – a similar fear to Allen's, but with a more nuanced understanding of the problem. In the process, Grundy becomes the pawn of the patriarchy as she proves their assumptions that women should not be allowed power. But, Muir uses this to show the danger in repressing women's freethinking and then expecting those same women to raise children. When the patriarchy's understanding of women is that they are 'these lesser individuals, [who] needed a man to direct them' (*Mrs Grundy*, 125), it creates women who are unable to break out of traditions that harm, not just themselves, but their children (including those men who enact oppression). Ultimately, then, these traditions cannot be the fault of mothers, but the men who are directing mothers' actions.

Consequently, Mrs (Mac)Grundy produces immature, sneaky bairns, specifically her sons:

> If he has a wife he will expect her to be his conscience, and he will be apologetically facetious about her in the club-house. He may impersonate the figure of a responsible citizen, but, however likeable he may be, he cannot be

[16] Ibid, 310.

> called emotionally adult. […] Mrs MacGrundy has helped to cheat *him* of his manhood (*Mrs Grundy*, 75-6).[17]

For the second time, Muir presents her readers with the man-child – similar to that found in Hector in *Imagined Corners* – and a concern with women taking up the mantle of burden as found in that novel and in 'Mrs Muttoe'.[18] Additionally, she focuses once more on woman-as-environment as presented in her three novels, but here Muir outlines her topic in no uncertain terms in *Mrs Grundy*:

> The women enveloped their men. They were environments for their families. The men had no occasion to remember that women too might be individuals with a turn for adventurous enterprise. Women, they supposed, existed to feed and foster boys and men (*Mrs Grundy*, 98).

Women's value, then, relies on their ability to give birth and keep a home, and this is often at the expense of their own happiness: 'the men, like selfish children, tried rather hard the racial patience of the women who mothered them, but the women, so long as they remained at the centre of home life, had the recognized prestige of mothers' (*Mrs Grundy*, 99). Rather than espouse the 'woman-as-environment' rule, Muir shows the problematic and trying nature of this double-bind: women are revered so long as they follow strict protocol, and adhere to the job of enforcing such protocol on others, thereby providing a reason for societal hatred. It becomes a vicious cycle that is difficult to escape. Or, as Muir puts it, women are trapped into being either the 'puir auld mither' or 'formidable' Scotswomen.[19]

This 'puir auld mither' is likely what Leslie Mitchell (aka Lewis Grassic Gibbon) encountered, and, as Muir notes, Keats pitied upon his visit in 1818, which she says is 'distressingly prevalent in Scotland to this day' (*Mrs Grundy*, 113). She quotes Keats:

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[17] 'Women in Scotland', published the same year as *Mrs Grundy*, offers insight into her view as women-as-environment and the lack of authority that women experience in the public realm, which shows up in oppressive forms in the private realm. For instance: 'The monetary system by this time has encroached upon every corner of the home, and the simple human nucleus that makes a mother's world has shrunk almost to a pin-point. […] That is what makes the position of working-class women in Scotland so ambiguous today; they are confined to the home, and the home is shrinking visibly around them. They are still living by a tradition which modern economic life is hammering to pieces' ('Women in Scotland', 3). This directly mirrors the final section of *Mrs Grundy*.

[18] See chapters three and five.

[19] In 'Women in Scotland', Muir notes: 'Scotland as a nation has been for so long a "puir auld mither" that Scottish mothers are likely to have a fellow-feeling for her' ('Women in Scotland', 4).

> 'They will scarcely laugh—they are greatly to be pitied and the Kirk is greatly to be damn'd….These Kirkmen have done Scotland harm—they have banished puns and laughing and Kissing….I would sooner be a wild deer than a Girl under the dominion of the Kirk' (*Mrs Grundy,* 113).

Importantly, Keats notes that Kirk*men* – not Mrs Grundy – have imposed this oppression. These women, 'in their enduring patience, have feared a brood of aggressive egotistical children who despise them even while they are dependent on them' (*Mrs Grundy,* 115). Muir herself had experience with this growing up in Scotland, and further experience with John Holms, to whom she never took kindly: 'Where women were concerned, Holms was living entirely within the conventions of his upbringing; women were sock-darners, yes, bedfellows, yes, intelligent companions, no' (*Belonging,* 129).[20] In the word 'bedfellows' one can also read 'mothers' – women were made for men's pleasure, and to produce heirs. Like Holms: 'The Scotsman, in relation both to his country and to his women, was entirely like a child demanding service from a mother and giving her no credit for waiting on his needs' (*Mrs Grundy,* 110). Where this cycle did not produce 'puir auld mithers,' it created 'formidable' women, and these women, 'lurked in the anonymous ballads. They troubled the Kirk, which was kept busy denouncing them as witches' (*Mrs Grundy,* 111).[21] And, as shown below, these women were sometimes pilloried for their sexual "misbehaviour."

Consequently, Mrs Grundy's children were ignorant and unaware of their effect on others. This allows Muir to comment on imperialism: 'She [Mrs Grundy] was not, of course, Imperial: she was merely sentimental about the Empire' (*Mrs Grundy,* 176). After all, 'The Colonials were her "sons across the seas"' (*Mrs Grundy,* 175). Informed, as she was, by Rudyard Kipling, Grundy and her 'children' could hardly contemplate the effects of imperialism on the natives of those countries: 'she exhorted Britons not only to keep up appearances before their neighbours and their servants, but also before "the natives"' (*Mrs Grundy*, 176), but 'She understood so little of what was happening in the Colonies

[20] Upon first meeting Dorothy, John's wife, in London: 'she was then a pretty girl, like a Botticelli angel' and later in St Tropez: 'She was now looking the worse for wear; her face was both peaked and flabby, her ankles had swollen and her hair had lost its radiance' (*Belonging,* 126). Muir 'began to resent, more and more, the insulting way Holms parked Dorothy as if she were an inconvenient umbrella and expected Edwin to do the same by me' (*Belonging,* 129).

[21] See chapter seven for Muir's analysis of these ballad women.

that the Boer War took her completely by surprise' (*Mrs Grundy*, 176).[22] This builds upon Muir's commentary about patriarchal imperialism provided in *Mrs Ritchie*. In so doing, Muir is able to implicate the complicity of British attitudinarians in the violence of war and colonialism. Her 'sons' are those that are enacting this violence, and in the process, Mrs Grundy becomes the imperial authoritarian and is just as deadly. Or, as Muir explains earlier in Grundy's life:

> if it is beneath the dignity of a Britannia to shake her trident at the nasty foreigners, she can at least assume the *alias* of Mrs Grundy and shake a gamp. […] Mrs Grundy is no longer denouncing her neighbours in the parish, or in the midlands, she is denouncing her neighbours in the concert of Europe (*Mrs Grundy*, 11-12).

As a result, foreigners and outsiders are a threat, and Mrs Grundy, like Annie Ritchie, becomes insular: 'In short, having identified herself with "the home," Mrs Grundy suspected licentiousness in everything outside the home' (*Mrs Grundy*, 105). Both Ritchie and Grundy become agoraphobic in their xenophobia and fear of the corrupting influence of alternate moralities, jealously protecting their children within the 'home' in order to maintain control and power. As in *Mrs Ritchie*, Muir implies that women with equal power and an equal share in knowledge would not resort to these measures.

Importantly, though, Muir shows that Grundy had never had any patience for women having political views: 'she could safely leave high politics to her more august sisters […] Mrs Grundy becomes aware that she is a Woman, and that a woman's place in life is to be Womanly' (*Mrs Grundy*, 13). Womanly, in other words, is to have children and influence them morally, without necessarily understanding the wider world. In pointing this out, she implicates the patriarchy – the 'more august sisters' being Britannia, which is the figurehead of patriarchal imperialism – in creating a controlling mother who clings to any possibility of power. While this mother may appear on surface to be less monstrous than Mrs Ritchie, her reference to the Boer War suggests violence and death. An 1886 pamphlet shows that this is a logical connection. Titled *'Britannia': the Empire, Great Britain & Ireland, Home Rule*, it claims to be the 'Unwritten

[22] Kipling was, after all, hardly a beacon of anti-colonial sentiment. Narayan argues that Kipling's depictions of Indian characters as 'comedic distractions' is a 'marginalizing tendency' which helps 'to deflect attention from such fraught issues as imperial ownership and nationalist resistance.' Narayan, Guara Shankar, 'Hybridity, History, and Empire in Rudyard Kipling's *Kim*', *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, vol. 60, no. 1 (2018), 56-78, 57.

Constitution--& Law of Home Rule—Of the United Kingdoms and Empire' and includes a letter in which the writer asserts:

> The years I have lived abroad, have taught me that; my countrymen, who brave foreign foes and dangers, for their country's sake, have a *faith*. A faith, that maintains our prestige, and enables us to die for our country's sake, as heroes—*nothing less, will do*. The emblem, of that heroic faith, is *the Union Jack*.[23]

This son of Mrs Grundy shows the connection between Britannia (Grundy), colonialism, death, and its ultimate links back to the patriarchy and religion – the Union Jack and faith. Like Annie Ritchie, Mrs Grundy is more than willing to sacrifice her sons for the needs of Empire.[24]

Mrs (Mac)Grundy had also shown that she was willing to "turn the other cheek" to violent oppression on her own soil, to her own sons and daughters – with her daughters at the unquestionable disadvantage. Muir takes this opportunity to show how women did not benefit from Mrs Grundy or from Empire. To do so, she contextualises Mrs MacGrundy as a figure of the Kirk. While women should be the 'bedfellows' of men, this is only under strict rules. Muir argues that sex out of wedlock was common in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland until the reign of Mrs MacGrundy began, which left, after her inauguration, a tradition of pregnancies outside of wedlock in the lurch. 'According to this tradition,' she argues, 'young men and women only married if a child was born to them, or expected […] No stigma was attached to illegitimate children, no monopoly value was attached to virginity' (*Mrs Grundy,* 118).

After Mrs MacGrundy took power, however, instances of 'illegitimacy' were seen as the fault of the woman. This, Muir shows, meant that the higher numbers of pregnancy outside wedlock in Scotland compared to England 'was not because Scotswomen were naturally more lewd than Englishwomen' but because of an older convention (*Mrs Grundy*, 117). This was necessary for Mrs (Mac)Grundy to abolish, and as a result, 'the Kirk Sessions' were 'busy in their time haling "fornicators" to the pillory and wringing their hands over the consequent prevalence of child-murder' (*Mrs Grundy*, 117). Muir puts the blame of infanticide on the Kirk: 'Girls murdered their illegitimate children

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[23] Ivyleaflet, *'Britannia': the Empire, Great Britain & Ireland, Home Rule, JSTOR Primary Sources* (London, 1886) https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/60244089 [accessed 05.05.21], 22.
[24] See chapter four.

rather than face the ordeal of being pilloried' (*Mrs Grundy*, 49). The old traditions of courtship and sex outside marriage had not died out with the worsened societal consequences, but birth control did not yet exist. Thus the Kirk, and its pawn Mrs MacGrundy, rather than looking on with sympathy, attempted to further ostracize these women:

> As late as 1751 the General Assembly, owing to the terrible prevalence of child-murder in country districts, where old customs of courtship persisted, had to order the Act against the concealment of pregnancy to be read from every pulpit. This awful authority of the Kirk Session endured (*Mrs Grundy*, 49-50).

Muir is able to disguise her criticism of the Kirk and the patriarchy as a biography of Mrs (Mac)Grundy. In so doing, she reprieves women of the fault for events and actions of which they have been punished for centuries: pregnancy outside wedlock, the accusation of being 'formidable' or 'witches,' or taking responsibility for censorship, repressive propriety, and Empire. She implies women's desire to seek pleasure without dishonour, and in the process, that women's acceptance of motherhood is keener when the Kirk stays out of it.

Certainly, Mrs Grundy is a large bogey for Muir to have tackled. At her height, Mrs Grundy traversed the world, 'extending her mirror over the Empire' and even stretching her influence to America, with a magazine titled *Mrs Grundy* appearing in New York City.[25] Muir takes on this ghastly maternal figure to argue for women's emancipation, just as she did in *Mrs Ritchie*. Three decades later, *Living with Ballads* offers a quieter, more reflective analysis. It provides a stark contrast to the philosophical whimsy of *Imagined Corners*, the violent feminism of *Mrs Ritchie* and her satirical counterpart *Mrs Grundy*, or the desperate frustration of 'Mrs Muttoe'. *Living with Ballads* is a beautifully written, reflective book, combining the central themes of these previous works with many more years of experience and a Second World War. Coming after her estrangement with Gavin, the book offers a lonelier perception of motherhood.

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[25] The magazine lasted only twelve weeks in 1865, but contained pieces by such influential writers as Walt Whitman and Thomas Nast, and its founders Edward F. Mullen, C.D. Shanley, and Henry L. Stephens. In later years, the character of Mrs Grundy inspired Mrs Mimi Grundy and Miss Grundy in the *Archie* comic series. Linneman, William R., '*Mrs Grundy* and Walt Whitman', *Walt Whitman Quarterly Review*, vol. 7, no. 4 (1990), http://ezproxy.lib.gla.ac.uk/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.ezproxy.lib.gla.ac.uk/scholarly-journals/mrs-grundy-walt-whitman/docview/1301706657/se-2?accountid=14540 [accessed 26.04.21], 191-92.

She shows once again that the powers of mothers are fleeting, granted only grudgingly by a society that fears women. *Living with Ballads* offers a strong indication of a woman who is attuned to the gaps inherent in so-called objective knowledge, and who is willing to break genre norms in order to fill that gap. She makes use of autoethnography to provide a personal, intimate, but relatable history of ballads in Scotland that is inseparable from an investigation of the maternal, showing for the first time an engagement with how gender, class, nation, and religion directly influenced Scotland's living oral culture.

Chapter Seven

In Search of the Unquestioned Matriarch in Living with Ballads

> 'If history, as Ernst Toller said, is the propaganda of the victors, balladry is very often the propaganda of the defeated.'[1]

Living with Ballads (1965), Willa Muir's tribute to Scotland's ballad culture, was written while she was in the throes of grief. Published two years after her tempestuous relationship with Gavin and his wife Dorothy drove Willa from their family home in Swaffham Prior, and six years after the death of Edwin, her final reflections on motherhood are absorbed by loss and vulnerability.[2] Many of the ballads on which she concentrates explore gender, religion, and the powerlessness that mothers feel as their children age and marry, or when a loved one dies. Overall, the main themes – of the oppressive nature of patriarchy and religion, of women's and girls' uses of space and creativity to capture moments of freedom, of the thankless work of mothers – arguably round out her oeuvre and tie together the threads of her literary life. Each has been examined in detail in the other works analysed in this thesis, but they all come together in a single text in *Living with Ballads*. This book reveals how ballads – or Muir's study on ballads – can act as a lament for the defeated. It also expresses and releases her grief for Gavin, while allowing her to practice memoir-style before writing *Belonging*. She is able to hone her ability to express personal pain in a more explicit way than her previous published works. *Living with Ballads* and the ballads Muir chose to write about provoke empathy for these deep losses and defeats, looking for, in the process, a 'shared communal solution to the problems of isolation and marginality.'[3] This empathy is strengthened by the personal narrative style at the start of the text as readers can connect an individual – Muir – with the pain experienced by the mothers and women in the ballads she discusses.

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[1] Henderson, Hamish, 'Come Gie's A Sang', *The Spectator*, vol. 196, no. 6674 (25 May 1956), http://ezproxy.lib.gla.ac.uk/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.ezproxy.lib.gla.ac.uk/magazines/come-gies-sang/docview/1295700295/se-2?accountid=14540 [accessed 11.05.21] 723-24, 723.

[2] 'Largely because of their troubled relationship, and exacerbated by the difficulties of sharing the house with him and Dorothy Hargreaves after their marriage in September 1960, Willa became peripatetic once more.' *Moving in Circles*, 25-6.

[3] 'Crossing the Genres', 403.

First, before engaging in its overarching focus on motherhood and the loss of children, it is important to note that this book was a labour of love and apparent obligation to Edwin, who was commissioned by the Bollingen grant in 1956 to write a book on ballads.[4] Lumir Soukup describes Willa as feeling 'morally obliged', but certainly the money must have been a draw – she was, at this point, a woman of nearly seventy and her work as a translator had long since dwindled, though she was forced to take it up again upon Edwin's death.[5] And, as P.H. Butter points out, the Bollingen grant had supported them for two years before Edwin's death.[6] Despite the fact that Edwin 'had written nothing', the text is 'a solid academic work.'[7] It shows especial influence from Alexander Keith's introduction to Gavin Greig's *Last Leaves of Traditional Ballads and Ballad Airs* combined with Willa's own experience of ballad culture both as a youth and as an adult. The text is, as Soukup says, one 'which could have been written only by someone with a complete grasp of the subject in all its diverse aspects.'[8] Leslie Shepard, reviewing the book at the time, appears to have agreed: 'Mrs Muir's unusual and valuable study is nearer to the older world of balladry than the extremes of scholarship or revival.'[9] This contributes, Shepard argues, to its unity of form: 'The opening suggests the association of dance and ballad,' going on to suggest that: 'If the section on archaic backgrounds is sometimes a little vague and shadowy this only reflects the way in which the underworld of imagination shaped itself into ballad form.'[10] Shepard argues that Muir's style continuously adapts alongside the content of her book, allowing her to combine 'scholarship with deep insight and feeling.'[11]

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[4] *Moving in Circles*, 170.

[5] L. Soukup, 31. 'In August 1963, relieved of financial worries by the continuation of the Bollingen grant until December 1964, Willa and her cat Popsy moved to 47a Paulson Square London.' *Moving in Circles*, 26. See appendix I.

[6] 'Willa Muir', 69.

[7] Ibid; L. Soukup, 31.

[8] L. Soukup, 31. Muir mentions Jeannie Robertson throughout *Living with Ballads*, describing her singing as 'in high traditional style, having learned them from her mother, a travelling tinker' (*Living with Ballads*, 234). Hamish Henderson similarly describes Robertson this way, and notes that: 'Edwin Muir, towards the end of his life, used to come to The School of Scottish Studies to hear Jeannie's ballad recordings'; Willa evidently joined him, as she thanks the School in her acknowledgements. Henderson, Hamish, 'Scots Folk-Song Today', *Folklore*, vol. 75, no. 1 (1964), 48-58, 51.

[9] Shepard, Leslie, 'Living with Ballads by Willa Muir', *Folk Music Journal*, vol. 1, no. 1 (1965), 48-9, 48.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Ibid.

The book's focus on death and grief, however, suggests that her thoughts were not primarily focused on ballads. Lumir explains that Willa had already 'conceived the idea of writing about her life with Edwin' and was writing down details and notes for *Belonging* even while she was attempting to organise research and ideas for *Living with Ballads*: 'she was forcing herself to concentrate on writing against the dictates of her heart, allowing herself only short intervals for the planning and writing of the work she considered – rightly – the more important.'[12] This preoccupation with *Belonging* is evident in *Living with Ballads*. Peppered through the text are instances of her understanding that 'belonging' to the universe is a crucial human need, but one that sometimes adopts tragic forms:

> The tyranny of Family Authority, radiating downwards like all authority in the long history of oral poetry, could survive because, like all authority, it evoked in its recipients a sense of 'belonging' to a secure and powerful group; or, more accurately, it helped to satisfy a basic human need to 'belong' to a secure and powerful group. The Family was, in a way, immortal: it continued to exist although individual members died (*Living with Ballads*, 167).

It would not be a far leap to conclude that Willa was comforting herself in this understanding of family authority after the death of Edwin. There is further evidence for this when considering the events leading up to her eviction from her home by her son and daughter-in-law:

> Willa was able to pay off the mortgage on the cottage in October 1959, 'so now I can live here until I die' (Raine; 7 Oct. 1959; NLS). The money came from the transfer of Edwin's Bollingen grant for Willa to write *Living with Ballads,* £200 from the Royal Literary Fund, and £150, a share of the Guinness Poetry Award that had gone to Edwin. The original mortgage had been between Edwin, Willa and Gavin and she now shared ownership with Gavin.[13]

That Willa and Gavin had, as Christianson calls it, 'a troubled relationship' is well-known.[14] Willa had searched for a sense of Belonging throughout her life – finding it, as her memoir suggests, in Edwin. At the end of *Belonging*, after Edwin's death, she writes:

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[12] Ibid. Whether or not *Belonging* is more important is, arguably, debatable and subjective, and depends upon the perspective one takes on the Muirs' respective literary contributions. For instance, see chapter five.

[13] *Moving in Circles,* 25. The author has not found proof that Gavin contributed financially to the cottage.

[14] Ibid, 25-6. In conversations with those who knew Gavin, or were familiar with the social circles in which he moved in later life, the author has heard several tales about Gavin's resentment towards Willa.

'That was the end of our Story. It was not the end of the Fable, which never stops, so it was not the end of Edwin's poetry or of my belief in True Love. […] We belonged together' (*Belonging*, 316).[15] Her payment of the cottage, though, suggests that she had some sense of belonging within that house – Edwin's final home – and had decided to give up her 'peripatetic' life, which the estrangement with Gavin once more brought on.[16]

It is unsurprising, then, that in *Living with Ballads*, she struggles for a way to find a secure structure in the family, even while she has none in her life. Throughout the book, as will be seen below, Muir's analysis of mothers' powers (especially towards sons who marry 'the wrong wife') further emphasises the conclusion that Willa sought comfort and security in the world of Ballads and desired to find power and status as a mother in a world that had not granted her any (*Living with Ballads*, 146). Muir often took on the responsibility for any problems Gavin had in his life, while Edwin, who invested considerably less time and energy in raising Gavin, did not face similar blame.[17] Less is known about Gavin's relationship with his father. This in itself hints towards the double standards of parenting in their relationship, coinciding with the patriarchal double standards of the time, and the heavier burden that fell on Willa to sacrifice her literary career in order to take care of their son and support Edwin's writing. Despite Edwin's assertion that these were 'willing sacrifices' on Willa's part, so that life could be 'far better', this double standard of parenting and of literary reputation took its toll on Willa, culminating in Gavin's final rejection of his relationship with his mother after Edwin's death.[18]

However, while Edwin's death and Gavin's estrangement appear to have reopened artistic and creative powers that had quietened for a time, it is perhaps unrealistic to state, as Knox does, that: 'With Edwin's demise Willa gradually experienced a renewed desire to resume her literary career and in that sense death was

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[15] See *An Autobiography* for Edwin's understanding of the Story and the Fable.

[16] Ibid, 26.

[17] See chapters one and five. Willa seems to have taken the blame for causing many 'rifts' and for being a 'dangerous woman'. In her diary of 1947-48, she explains that 'Reg' has accused her of causing 'rifts'. Her argument is one of maternal concern: 'people brought their unhappiness to me + I did what I could for them.' Archives & Special Collections, University of St Andrews Library; MS Muir, ms38466/5/3: Journal, Prague (1947-48).

[18] *Selected Letters*, 36. See chapter five.

artistically liberating.'[19] Certainly, Edwin's death provided new material for Willa and a new lease of time, but Willa *had* been writing in the years leading up to his death, even if she had not published. Moreover, her increased creative output was partially due to financial concerns, as shown above. Her career, rightly or wrongly, had been Edwin, as she explained to Lumir, and it was not just Edwin she had lost, but Gavin as well. *Belonging*, *Living with Ballads*, and the poems in *Laconics Jingles & Other Verses* show that, for a woman who was constantly recycling her life, this experience provided new stories to tell and the looming reminder that she, like Edwin, would also die, must have increased the urgency with which she wrote. In that sense, Peter Butter's explanation that 'it was to be the death and absence of Edwin that released her flow of creativity' is probably a fairer statement.[20] She was granted the time to reflect on her life, and on those major aspects that shaped it.

All of this was combined with the fact that '*Living with Ballads* had far too complicated and vast a range for one person to encompass alone, the more so since Willa was hurt, ill, in constant pain and of advanced age.'[21] This makes Willa's completion of a solid work exploring folk culture in Scotland an impressive feat. Addressing *Living with Ballads* then, particularly the maternal aspects of this work, requires a focus on these adverse aspects of her life which deeply hindered its writing. Nevertheless, Willa evidently undertook the necessary work, having included Child and Grieg as well as Hamish Henderson in her research, and having investigated song culture in other nations. She supports her discussion of child singing games with Leslie Daiken's 1949 book *Children's Games Throughout the Year*, showing that, even four and a half decades after she finished her academic education, she understood the need to support her personal conclusions and experiences with the authority of research. Where the book is lacking – inclusion of a bibliography, an index, consistent referencing – it makes up for in what it

[19] Knox, 199.

[20] 'Willa Muir', 69.

[21] Ibid. 'She bravely took up the task [of *Living with Ballads*]. "After several hours of good work", she wrote to Kathleen Raine in 1960, "I have to have about a half-hour of crying and howling for Edwin, and then I feel serene. Like that I can keep going.' Quoted in Butter, P.H., 'Willa Muir: Writer' in *Edwin Muir Centenary Assessments*, eds C.J.M. Shields and D.S. Robb (Aberdeen: Association for Scottish Literary Studies, 1990), 58-74, 69.

gives back to ballad scholarship: personal, intimate investigations into feminist themes within folk culture.[22]

Despite her academic support of the first half of the book, this inclusion of intimate connections with living folk song was not popular among some reviewers: 'If Mrs. Muir had written only the first half, it could be dismissed easily; if only the second half were in print it could be accepted as an interesting and informative study.'[23] However, she may have received inspiration from John Allan, who opens *North-East Lowlands of Scotland* (1952) with the statement: 'I am forced back to the days when I was a small boy in a country school here.'[24] This form of proto-autoethnography grants her readers permission to read her personal story (and therefore connect their own) into the first chapter of *Living with Ballads*.[25] In the process, Muir becomes both insider and outsider. Elphinstone argues that Muir 'brings in her self-in-the-past only to efface her. The experience described is that of merging of self into other, of truly belonging in a shared imaginative experience.'[26] Elphinstone goes on to explain that Muir shows her place as no longer within that culture because she separates the child's experience from the adult's:

> we are specifically told that the game is 'not for grown-ups'. The adult narrator creates a self-in-the-past that is now beyond her own reach. The self-conscious

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[22] 'However, too often there is not any reliance upon demonstrable data, no attempt to prove what is stated, and little awareness of the scholarly courtesy—and necessity—for using footnotes.' Winkelman, Donald M., 'Ballads and Folksongs', *The Journal of American Folklore*, vol. 81, no. 319 (1968), 77-78, 77.

[23] Winkelman, 77.

[24] Allan's first chapter is an intimate account of his own experiences of the northeast lowlands, with descriptions such as: 'We were out of the world, yet we were not lonely. […] I would not say that people liked each other more than they do in the villages or towns; but, when we were so few, we had to be tolerant for the sake of company.' Perhaps this was the inspiration for Muir's own return to her schooldays in the first chapter of *Living with Ballads*, as John Allan's book was the source of her turnip discussion: 'we may be startled by the assertion of a Scotsman, John Allan, that the farming people of North-Eastern Scotland were led out of the Middle Ages as late as 1713, when Alexander Grant of Monymusk introduced from Holland the use of turnips as a field crop for feeding cattle' (*Belonging*, 77). Allan, John R., *North-East Lowlands of Scotland*, intr. Charlie Allan and Jack Webster (Edinburgh: Yeadon's, 1952; 2009), 1, 6.

[25] Autoethnography is an anthropological methodology that has moved into other fields of research, including literary scholarship. Autoethnographic stories 'are stories of/about the self told through the lens of culture. Autoethnographic stories are artistic and analytic demonstrations of how we come to know, name, and interpret personal and cultural experience.' Adams, Tony E.; Holman Jones, Stacy; Ellis, Carolyn, *Autoethnography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/gla/detail.action?docID=1784095 [accessed 15.05.21], 1.

[26] 'Crossing the Genres', 403.

> author, who names her own work, is engaged in a different act of creation. She belongs in the solitary, fallen world of the isolated individual.[27]

Even while she returns to an analysis of this past self, bringing her readers with her, Muir is likewise evaluating how she could no longer belong – the game of mimicking the pursuit of a sweetheart no longer fits, she has found and lost her True Love, and she has been a mother and lost her son too.

Additionally, without having had a daughter, one could argue she was unable to stop the cycle of rivalry between mother and daughter. This seems to be something Muir regretted later in life, as evidenced in a poem found in her 1946 journal that Muir kept while she and Edwin lived in Prague:

> Where have you come from,
> shred of a daughter
> the daughter I wished for and never bore?
> Here you came into my dream,
> a shred blown on the wind,
> crying: 'don't leave me behind.'[28]

Even in her dreams of a daughter, there is a sense of vulnerability and powerlessness. She was not able to find an adequate sense of conclusion for her childhood singing games. Her sense of isolation is shown in this poem, combating another identity she did not have – that of a mother to a daughter, perhaps contributing (even subconsciously) to her decision to include the theme of the mother-daughter rivalry in the first chapter of *Living with Ballads*.

Moreover, of the book's critics, Peter Butter quietly dismisses the harsher criticisms with a simple: 'It was well received by competent judges as a soundly-based as well as a lively work.'[29] And Butter is right in that Willa bases her arguments on the existing literature. At times, she uses the same arguments of Alexander Keith, contesting the role of the 'poetaster' for instance: 'In the north there are fewer poets and proportionately more poetasters.'[30] This compared to Willa's statement that: 'One must put *M* [of 'Young Beichan'] down as a poetaster, and a bad one at that' (*Living with*

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[27] Ibid.
[28] MS Muir, ms38466/5/2: Journal, 'Prague' (1946). Compare to her poem to Gavin in chapter one.
[29] 'Willa Muir', 69.
[30] Keith, xxxiv.

Ballads, 125). In others, she shows how the Norse influence in the ballads of Aberdeenshire are likely due to its close commercial connections to Scandinavia. Keith notes the 'resemblance—episodic, etymological, or in manner of expression—with the Norse ballads': 'For centuries the political, and later the commercial, intercourse between Scotland and the countries of Scandinavia was constant and intimate.'[31] Willa later wrote: 'there was an intimate commerce between Scandinavia and Aberdeenshire and Norse folk-tales were plentiful in the North of Scotland' (*Living with Ballads*, 120). Moreover, her comparison of several versions of each ballad, a description of their common stock traits, and the use of trope characters such as the Billy Blin', coincides with studies by Child and Greig. Her general understanding of ballad history and descriptions of its origins in mainly illiterate folk culture and rural areas seems in line with other scholars including Sydney Goodsir Smith, who notes that the ballads were 'preserved by an illiterate population.'[32] Finally, Muir, like her husband before her, Goodsir Smith, and Wittig all agree that the ballads' beauty arises in their simplicity: 'In no poetry, probably, in the world is there less imagery than in the ballads. But this, once more, is not the sign of poetic debility, but of a terrific simplicity and intensity'; 'The poetry is as it were purified by the fire of emotion; it is the bare bones of poetry; […] It is the least "poetic" of poetry; it is poetry itself, naked and burning'; 'Out of these "primitive" conventions (or simplifications) there arose a stylised but apparently artless poetic form which allowed all the more intensity and set free the individual imagination.'[33] It is difficult, also, not to make the connection between this simplicity and the simple forms Muir argues suits women in her first published work, *Women: An Inquiry*.[34]

With this basis of ballad study before her, Willa expounded upon themes that she clearly believed required emphasis. Perhaps because she was waiting to write *Belonging*, the heavy focus on death in *Living with Ballads* is suggestive of her own grief of Edwin's death, but matches, too, statements he made in 'A Note on the Scottish Ballads' in *Latitudes* (1924) as well as those in a short article he wrote for *The New Statesman and*

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[31] Keith, xxv.

[32] Smith, 9.

[33] 'A Note on the Ballads', 18; Smith, 9; Wittig, Kurt, *The Scottish Tradition in Literature* (Edinburgh and London: Oliver and Boyd, 1958), 132.

[34] See chapter two.

Nation in 1957: 'The world of the ballads is a world of pure passion and absolute will and action, where love survives death and the lover cannot rest in the grave.'[35] Willa, in showing how increasingly romantic True Love overcomes Family Authority in 'The Maid Freed from the Gallows', explains: 'The form it takes is that of symbol—the symbol of plants growing on true lovers' graves and twining together as they grow, to intimate that True Love is stronger than Death' (*Living with Ballads,* 173). However, Edwin could not have shown this from a maternal perspective. In that respect, Willa provides a unique, rich investigation of the different kinds of love that attempt to overcome death, as her analysis of 'The Wife of Usher's Well', discussed below, reveals.

Significantly, her attention to mothers begins in her discussion of child singing games in the first chapter. This is what Butter calls 'the most interesting chapter' for 'the non-specialist' (in direct contrast with Winkelman), showing 'her own experience of singing games' and 'her own close kinship in mind to Edwin.'[36] But her focus on mothers is not inherently surprising – not simply given her own literary tendencies, but the fact that ballads were often passed from mother to daughter across Scotland. Alexander Keith suggests this, pointing out that Bell Robertson – a critical source for Greig's collection – received her ballads from her mother, who in turn learned them from her mother.[37] Similarly, Anna Gordon Brown of Falkland learned her vast repertoire of songs from her mother, aunt, and the maid in her mother's family.[38] Willa suggests, however, that, unlike ballads, these singing games were not passed from mother to child, but from the older girls in her school to the younger:

> These singing games, transmitted orally from generation to generation of schoolgirls, were an inheritance from the same kind of people who made and sang Scottish Ballads. The Ballads were made and sung by grown-ups, while our

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[35] Muir, Edwin, 'The Ballads', *The New Statesman and Nation,* vol. 53, no. 1352 (9 Feb. 1957), 174-5, 174. Robert Calder described this as a 'remarkable essay.' Interestingly, while it introduces some of the same concerns raised by Muir in *Living with Ballads,* it is arguably also bogged down by many of the same criticisms raised in reviews of Willa's book, including improper scholarship plagued by subjective arguments. This is not a critique on Edwin, or a disagreement with Calder's statement, but rather the different levels of leeway granted to Edwin compared to Willa. Notably, these reviewers seemed most uncomfortable with her evident focus on feminist issues, discussed in the body of this chapter. Calder, Robert, 'Muir and the Problem of Exclusion', *Chapman: on Edwin Muir,* no. 49 (1987), 15-20.

[36] 'Willa Muir', 69.

[37] Keith, xxxiii.

[38] Ibid, xvii. 'Greig found that, generally, the ballads were handed down within families.' Keith, xxxviii. This matches what has been noted about Jeannie Robertson.

> games, whoever made them up, were sung and passed on only by children (*Living with Ballads,* 13).

The first chapter of the book offers validity to these singing games, linking them to the Ballad world, and granting worth to 'living experience not drawn from books', which Muir explains offers 'valuable insights' (*Living with Ballads,* 13). In 1956, Hamish Henderson similarly compares singing games to ballads: 'Edinburgh itself, the great Calvinist capital, whose adult citizens do not always look as if they regard life as a singing matter, has a children's folk-song rich and strange beyond measure, a kind of childish bulwark against harshness and rigidity of the old theocracy.'[39] Muir similarly shows how these games were a 'childish bulwark' that had been lost among the adult populations of Montrose, who had faced Mrs (Mac)Grundy for long enough to have lost the urge to sing.[40] In the process, she shows how motherhood in this region of Scotland, at least in part, played a role in women's succumbing to gossip in lieu of singing.

The ballads are, after all, a living form, and showing remnants of living oral culture and its relation to women and girls – particularly of the working and rural classes – does much to set up Muir's understanding of the Ballad world. The boys had a separate playground and were busier with physical activities like football: 'The climate of expectation in which these boys were reared permitted no dancing or singing games [….] Only war-like combat, emulation, beating the other fellow or the other "side"' (*Living with Ballads,* 30). And as Muir says of her transfer from the public school to the Academy: 'In the new playground of the Academy I found no singing games; I was lucky to have learned them when I did. Only the working-class girls in our town kept that tradition alive, and only in the school playtime' (*Living with Ballads,* 14). After their schooldays, however, these girls lost the chance to sing or tell stories: 'Their mothers may have learned these songs as children, but they did not sing them at home' (*Living with Ballads*, 14). Furthermore, 'These girls did not sit enthralled with their noses in story-books, nor had their mothers and grandmothers done so' (*Living with Ballads,* 28). There is no room, in other words, for artistic (re)creation. But the ballads provided an escape from the daily reality, prompted by 'an emotional need, an urge of feeling, the

[39] 'Come Gie's A Sang', 723.

[40] See chapter six.

desire to be loved and chosen' in contrast to the 'blow on the palm of the hand from a hard leather tawse' in school and the knowledge that they, like their parents, 'were due to leave school at the age of fourteen' to be 'labourers, washerwomen, mill-workers or small tradesmen' (*Living with Ballads*, 17, 14). Muir shows how romance, freedom, and workings of the imagination are momentarily found in these singing games, hiding the reality that these girls will face as working-class mothers in a small Scottish town.

Muir also offers insight into how these songs are directly related to girls' resentment towards their mothers, who they see as forcing chores upon them, but also, as Muir's psychoanalytical training no doubt influenced, the quest for the father. These feelings of 'rebellion' were suppressed and narrowed, left unarticulated and silenced outside of these games. Muir explained this as: 'the prejudice was still perceptible which felt that a female should not waste time in reading books when she might be sewing or knitting' (*Living with Ballads*, 28). She writes that: 'In our games we did not enter into a world of passions such as jealousy or revenge; if we had any rebellious ambitions we kept them vague and private, like the possibility of passionate love' (*Living with Ballads*, 28). This, she says, is perhaps due to 'lack of scope and experience' but also that the girls' 'feelings did not reach outside the common biological urges towards puberty and motherhood' (*Living with Ballads*, 28). She further notes that: 'Our most articulate defiance, a feeling of rivalry with our mothers, skirted only very delicately round one of its prime causes, the cross-pull that draws girls towards their fathers, as boys are drawn to their mothers' (*Living with Ballads*, 28). Given her own experience of motherhood, and rifts with her son, this is an interesting insight for Muir to share. But it certainly shows that she understands the misdirected fault that mothers take for the day-to-day battles of their children. Furthermore, it impresses upon the reader the narrowness of these girls' possibilities: their feelings reach toward motherhood, as they are not allowed and therefore not trained to have occupations outside of homemaking, including necessary breadwinning but low-paid labour, such as becoming a 'washerwoman'.[41]

[41] McCarthy discusses this type of 'homeworking' in detail. She notes: 'mothers had to make calculated choices about how to earn when employment opportunities were limited and the constraints on their time and physical and emotional energies were great.' This was balanced with finding childcare, which was not easily acquired at this time. *Double Lives*, 65-6.

It is no wonder, then, that Butter defends Muir's scholarship. Muir is building on existing ballad discussions by addressing and expounding upon specific themes. Her concern with women is apparent, devoting the chapters on magic and authority to an examination of gender roles and their direct effects on women and mothers. This makes sense for the era. As Moira Burgess states in her examination of Naomi Mitchison's historical novels: 'History is connected with magic, and magic is connected with women.'[42] Accordingly, Muir argues for a magical matriarchy that was extant in seventeenth century ballads in chapter eight, 'Story Material: Magic. Tam Lin' which is contrasted with the increased influence of patriarchal family authority in chapter nine, 'Story Material: Magic and Family Authority'. Yet, Muir is not alone in her desire to find a matriarchal past. Adrienne Rich shows how feminist scholars have often sought a matriarchal history: 'the search for a tradition of female power, also springs from an intense need for validation.'[43] She further explains: 'If women were powerful once, a precedent exists; if female biology was ever once a source of power, it need not remain what it has since become: a root of powerlessness.'[44] These chapters offer evidence of Muir searching for validation of female power, and more specifically, maternal power. Seeing that women rest somewhere between revered and feared and that this liminal state is the position of powerlessness, Muir seeks a compromise, or an alternative past, where fear and reverence towards mothers were sources of authority rather than reasons for marginalised status.[45]

In chapter nine, Muir shows how the patriarchy resulted in the control, restraint, and ultimate death of daughters at the hands of families, and, more often, their brothers. Here, Muir shows the ballad form of the 'poor little Susannas' described in *Mrs Grundy*:

> A girl—not a Lady Maisry or Lady Margaret, simply a girl, Everygirl as it were—is going to be hanged for losing a golden ball, or a golden key, or, in some versions, for no given reason. She pleads with her father, her mother, her brother,

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[42] Burgess, Moira, 'The Modern Historical Tradition' in *A History of Scottish Women's Writing*, 456-67, 462.
[43] Rich, 85.
[44] Ibid.
[45] See chapter six.

> her sister, to bring silver or gold to set her free and is spurned by all of them (*Living with Ballads*, 171).[46]

Muir's account of ballads, unlike those before her, was used to explicitly critique the patriarchal structures within this folk culture. What is so significant, however, is not that she does this in order to downgrade ballads from national and cultural significance, but to offer a critical lens through which to appreciate the 'best folk literature in Europe.'[47] Moreover, she shows the particularly female voice that is present in the ballads. The Everygirl in 'The Maid Freed From the Gallows' (Child, 95) *is* saved – but not by her family. Muir shows how 'The Family is a solid block here' and, therefore, the mother does not have any power as she is not an individual (*Living with Ballads,* 171). Instead, her lover swoops in to save her, and True Love becomes 'in concrete terms as finally stronger than the Family block' (*Living with Ballads,* 172). Listeners of this ballad sympathise with the girl and experience relief when her True Love saves her. The implication is that this woman will, in turn, become a mother and a new kind of family block will be born.

This aligns with Henderson's understanding of the resistant nature of ballads: 'Scottish folksong, in fact, is part of the submerged resistance movement which reacted against the tyranny of John Knox's Kirk at a time when the Kirk was making a bid for absolute rule in Scotland.'[48] In fact, he goes on, 'In a world which divided mankind with a clean cut into the elect and the damned—a division which not infrequently coincided with socially privileged and underprivileged—a folk-song became uncompromisingly the cult of the damned.'[49] Muir takes this one step further, implicating, through her choice of ballads, women as the underprivileged and damned in Scottish society. These ballads become, arguably, their voice and resistance. Similarly, Muir's choice in these ballads suggests that her use of autoethnographic form and her choice in themes is a personal resistance against the patriarchal structures within which she is working and against the powerlessness she feels as a mother. Her decision to implicate her own personal history

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[46] Quoting Keats: 'A Scotch Girl stands in terrible awe of the Elders—poor little Susannas.—They will scarcely laugh—they are greatly to be pitied and the Kirk is greatly to be damn'd' (*Mrs Grundy,* 113). See chapter six.

[47] Goodsir Smith, 8.

[48] 'Come Gie's A Sang', 723.

[49] Ibid.

into this study using the autoethnographic introductory chapter nods to a kinship with ballad women. Just as she argues that the childhood singing games allowed her as a young girl to enact the 'vague, as yet unrealized, heaven of a love-affair' or 'annoy the mothers', so too does this suggest that she is able to step within the world of ballads in order to resist patriarchal societal and enter an imaginary world in which she has some power (*Living with Ballads,* 17*,* 22).

In that vein, chapter eight uncovers mothers' magic. Muir shows the ways that their magic could be used for cruelty, or, as in the 'The Wife of Usher's Well', in an attempt to conquer death. Muir shows how these ballads offer a space for women to regain power even as the patriarchy tries to strip them of it. Muir's understanding of power and authority as it 'radiates downwards' opens up discussion for power hierarchies and the ways in which those in the lower strata can resist their powerlessness. In 'The Wife of Usher's Well', the powerful and commanding mother is able to – temporarily – bring her sons back from the dead after they have gone journeying at sea. Following Muir's explanation that 'war-like' and active ventures were expected of men, one can assume that these men desired to prove their manhood and undertake a thrilling adventure, dying in the process. Muir calls the Wife the 'most impressive matriarch of them all,' believing that the Wife 'retains some of the attributes of a priestess, which all the others have lost' (*Living with Ballads,* 153). Muir argues that: 'Elsewhere in the Ballads family authority has receded from the skies and become a closed circuit, related to daily life but not to the cosmos. One belongs to the Family, not to the gods' (*Living with Ballads,* 153). In contrast, the Wife and her authority 'reaches up to the gods, or the Fates, as it also derives from them' which allows the Wife to challenge 'not rebellious children but Death itself' (*Living with Ballads*, 153). Muir notes that the Wife's relation to a well could signify her 'priestess' power as 'wells often belong to water-goddesses and spirits' (*Living with Ballads*, 153). Muir directly links mothers' power to the universe, therefore bypassing the earthly patriarchal structures that would limit their value and authority.

This analysis is not altogether unjust. After her three sons go off to sea, the Wife receives news that all three have drowned. Muir explains: 'She wastes no time in lamentation. A woman whose magic can perturb the sea, she announces at once that she

means to draw her dead sons from the Otherworld by the passion of her maternal will' (*Living with Ballads*, 154). Here, Willa makes explicit that it is 'maternal will' specifically that can achieve this – the father, she points out, 'has no part to play in the story and so is left out' (*Living with Ballads*, 153). The Wife's sons return home, and she makes them a bed and watches over them all night: 'It is a tender as well as grim figure that sits cloaked beside the bed, willing her sons to stay where they are, since she is going to conquer Death if she can' (*Living with Ballads*, 155). But, belonging now to another world, they cannot stay on Earth. Her authority is disrupted by Earthly laws: 'just here, where her powers are most concentrated, she fades out of the ballad altogether' (*Living with Ballads*, 155). Even a mother who can – however fleetingly – reverse death cannot maintain power on Earth. Her sons return to the Otherworld, and 'the failure of her bold challenge to Death begins' (*Living with Ballads*, 156). The mother, and by consequence all those who mourn, are defeated by Death.

While 'The Wife of Usher's Well' reveals Muir's feelings of vulnerability and loss in the face of death, her analysis of other ballads hint towards bitterness and frustration at her lack of authority over her son. Muir explores the ways that 'everyday, domestic magic' is 'practised by the mothers of families in the exercise of family authority' (*Living with Ballads*, 142). 'Magic,' she writes, 'seems to be a feminine prerogative, and a mother who uses it is never called to account, however ruthless her actions' (*Living with Ballads*, 142).[50] And the ballads have no shortage of mothers who are ruthless, particularly, as Muir points out, towards sons who have 'married the wrong wife' (*Living with Ballads*, 146). Muir writes that: 'to this very day in parts of Scotland there is a strong matriarchal bias in family life. A mother's authority in her family is an ancient and enduring habit' (*Living with Ballads*, 144). Yet, each of the mothers she considers does not manage to succeed in their pursuit of power. One example is found in the ballad 'Willie's Lady', which 'shows a mother putting spells upon her son's wife, whom she mislikes, to prevent the first child from being born' (*Living with Ballads*, 142). Here is another example of mothers behaving 'like unquestioned matriarchs' (*Living with Ballads*, 142). The daughter-in-law is quite far along in her pregnancy, and cannot give

[50] Once more this seems to be a particularly sensitive topic for Willa, as Dorothy's accusation to Willa in their final fight was that she had been a bully her whole life. *Moving in Circles*, 26.

birth while her mother-in-law continues to cast charms over her. The daughter-in-law 'sends her mother-in-law an appealing message' but still she refuses to lift the charms (*Living with Ballads*, 142). It is only the Billy Blin' who helps her son find out how to break these spells, and 'the matriarch is slily outwitted' (*Living with Ballads*, 144).

In only one ballad in this book does a mother triumph. Notably, she is not yet a mother, but heavily pregnant. In that ballad, 'Tam Lin', Janet is able to save Tam Lin from the fairies. Here, 'the young woman […] has a more than ordinary share of spirit and courage' (*Living with Ballads*, 129). The suggestion arises, moreover, that she is questioning whether or not to keep the baby, through an early reference to abortifacient plants. Willa's inclusion of this is noteworthy, as it shows her awareness of contraceptive and abortive methods, while also allowing her to nod to the ancient knowledge of women that had been passed around the community in order to help them retain some power over their bodies. Muir suggests that magic is not the only method of rebelling against patriarchal structures. In this ballad, Janet is 'heavy with child' and returns to the greenwood to see Tam Lin. 'This time,' Willa explains, 'he accuses her of being in the greenwood to pick some herb that would kill "the bonny bairn that we got us between"' (*Living with Ballads*, 130). And, she notes, 'Janet does not trouble to deny' this (*Living with Ballads*, 130). Muir shows also how Janet's main concern is a religious one: 'What preoccupies Janet is the old fear about not being christened' (*Living with Ballads*, 131). Her desire to seek 'expedients either to further or to prevent child-birth' is linked to a concern with patriarchal institutions (*Living with Ballads*, 131). But Tam Lin has been christened, and Janet chooses to help save him from the fairies in order to bring her 'bairn's father' home (*Living with Ballads*, 131). She undergoes and beats the trials set forward by the fairies, facing a bear, a lion, an esk, an adder, and finally 'the burning gleed', at which point she must throw him into the well – a symbol of woman's power, as shown in 'The Wife of Usher's Well'. Muir's choice of Tam Lin shows a soon-to-be mother's resistance to the patriarchal structures that would have otherwise doused Janet's pregnancy in shame, or else made her the 'passive victim' (*Living with Ballads*, 129).

Muir's concern in her penultimate published work is with showing how mothers resisted patriarchal power structures in ballads, and in the process, Muir offers new ways through old means to grant women worth and authority in her present day. She uses a

hybrid form in order to reimagine these ballads through a feminist lens. The resulting voice is personal and intimate, one which invites her readers to empathise with the ballads' characters in order to re-evaluate maternal and feminine power and resistance within traditional institutional structures. While her final published work, *Belonging*, devotes considerably less space to the theme of motherhood, Butter notes that 'she thought of going back again to her early life, intending to write a book about her mother and beginning a play about the family of a small-town draper; but neither of these projects came to fruition.'[51] Evidently, motherhood and family preoccupied her to the very end – *Living with Ballads* is by no means the final work in which to explore this theme. As the conclusion will examine, Muir's other works, not discussed in the main body of this thesis, provide a rich mine of themes relating to the maternal.

[51] 'Willa Muir', 68.

Conclusion

Final Notes: Motherhood in Muir's Neglected Papers

'literature is not written in a vacuum, but grows out of the life of the community'[1]

Willa Muir's writing consistently, though sometimes unconsciously, disentangles motherhood from society's restrictive and conventional perceptions. Her intimate and, at times, passionate, at times distanced, engagement with the topic reveals a woman who was aware of the ability to love one's child while despising the societal standards for mothers. This shines through in her works, even in instances she had perhaps not intended for this theme to take focus, and in those unconscious portrayals Muir offers up insight as valuable as those, such as 'Mrs Muttoe', that are deliberate. Muir's contemporary Kurt Wittig understands Scotland's writers as having risen from, not just their individual plights, but collective cultural histories. So Muir's work, and the examination of her work in this thesis, rises from a cultural need to reframe motherhood and our conception of what genres or modes of literary and creative expression are 'acceptable' for the literary critic and academic. For that reason, this thesis acknowledges and seeks to understand the *entire* life of the community – rather than just that which is public and masculine – when defining both literature and mothers. Muir's work reveals the ways in which women have struggled to voice their discomfort in this apparently 'natural' role.[2]

This thesis, above all, is an attempt to give voice to the various roles, discomforts, aggravations, joys, stereotypes, and realities of Muir's experience of motherhood, the ignorance surrounding the occupation of motherhood including the value of affect and immaterial labour (discussed in chapter five), and its associated pressures. Willa exposes these with uncomfortable clarity, turning usual notions of what it means to be a mother upside down. Impressively, Muir's published and unpublished works offer a voice for each of these expressions of the maternal. This thesis points to a consistent stream of anxiety throughout her journals, unpublished and published manuscripts, and her poetry. Whether they are absent or invasively present, mothers (and the silence of fathers) control

[1] Wittig, 3.

[2] See chapters one and two.

the direction of her writing. Each of her texts feeds a need within the reading population that is often ignored – a voice for women to express the pressures of womanhood and motherhood simultaneously in angry, desolate, isolated, joyous, frustrated, pleasurable forms. This thesis questions how narrowing in on Muir's focus on the maternal can increase our appreciation of her writing. In so doing, this thesis contributes to the criticism of Muir thus far by opening up discourse that centralises her experiences of motherhood and the maternal, affect labour, and autoethnographical writing while aligning her with women, like Catherine Carswell, who felt similar obstacles throughout their lives.

The first chapter of this thesis analyses 'Marmaduke' in order to examine how Muir's need to regain control manifested itself in her journals in the early days of her son's life. Importantly, this chapter reveals how the experience of motherhood fuelled a new kind of creativity in Muir: scientific detachment informed by contemporary childrearing theories (namely, Dr Truby King), but littered with outbursts of literary imaginings in the margins. The second chapter reimagines *Women: An Inquiry* (1925) as shrouded in anxiety about her place as female writer, and suggests that, despite this text's seemingly overt feminist leanings, it is actually her novels that are clearer indications of her progressive feminist ideals. Muir's so-called 'feminist' theory, when read in isolation, appears rigidly essentialist and subdued.[3]

The main body of this thesis is what is proposed as Muir's "trilogy": *Imagined Corners* (1931), *Mrs Ritchie* (1933), and 'Mrs Muttoe and the Top Storey' (1938-40). These novels assert her lived feminist ideals in direct contrast with the feminist polemic examined in chapter two. Chapter three's discussion of *Imagined Corners* shows how Muir confronts the oppressive nature of Calvinist patriarchal Scotland, and, in so doing, she is able to re-enact a life in which her mirrored heroines ultimately live childless and single, able to pursue self-fulfilment.[4] In contrast, chapter four similarly looks at the oppressive nature of patriarchal Calvinism, but how it affects not just girls but ultimately

[3] Sojourner Truth's speech several decades prior had dismantled the concept of gender and race (though mainstream acceptance of this would not appear for more than a century), while nineteenth century "dandies" and other queer "degenerates" offered exception to rigid gender and sexual norms with their disregard of what beauty standards and behaviours – inside and outside the bedroom – "make a man." See chapter three.

[4] See chapter three for a detailed discussion of the biographical overlap with Muir's first novel.

women who become mothers. Muir shows the self-perpetuating nature of patriarchy in which women uphold the values of a male-dominant society to their own detriment. This study goes on to provide the first in-depth review of Muir's third, and yet to be published, novel 'Mrs Muttoe and the Top Storey'. This chapter posits that 'Mrs Muttoe' completes a trilogy that started with *Imagined Corners*, with each novel focusing on the lived reality of women and mothers in Scotland in the early twentieth century.[5] As such, these novels provide proof of her preoccupation with motherhood and further suggest that her feminist theory was founded upon her insecurity as a female writer who was overshadowed by her more famous literary husband.

Chapter five, in particular, considers whether 'writers have remained oblivious to the role of women, or have cursorily dismissed it in broad generalizations.'[6] In that vein, this chapter examines the 'Everyday' and the 'mundane' as useful concepts in re-validating women's lived experiences. The novel is an example of Randall's argument that: 'Where individuals' agency is limited, repetition and habit may in fact be a particularly significant way of affirming identity; […] these actions, […] are much more profoundly the loci of identity than the dramatic, disruptive event.'[7] Using Randall's argument, this thesis refutes the critical view that Muir's unpublished novel is one in which 'nothing happens.'[8] This builds also on Christianson's assertions that, despite her agreement with Elphinstone and Allen that it 'fails' as a novel because of its 'not-very-interesting story,' it also shows how Muir was 'trying to introduce something new into her domestic narrative, replacing the intense social and psychological analyses […] with everyday realism interwoven with social satire and indications of nightmare worlds.'[9] Because 'little has been documented about the kind of ordinary, unremarkable dailiness that is the norm for the great majority,' this thesis follows feminist literary critique in

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[5] Margaret Elphinstone also compares the Elizabeth Shands with Alison Muttoe, but does so unfavourably, particularly in reference to the conclusion of their stories: 'Shand's struggle, it seems now, has ended in her narrator's surrender to the notion of the biologically determined role of woman as nourisher of all who inhabit her home.' Elphinstone, 410. See chapter five.

[6] Breitenbach, Esther; Brown, Alice; Myers, Fiona, 'Understanding Women in Scotland', *Feminist Review* no. 58 (1998), 44-65, 47.

[7] 'A Day's Time', 604.

[8] Kirsty Allen, for instance, makes the claim that 'It is a fascinating piece of autobiography; but a flawed work of fiction which both British and American publishers universally rejected.' Allen, 314.

[9] *Moving in Circles,* 144, 145.

refiguring that 'not-very-interesting' story as one that is of great interest to the great majority, as it documents the ordinary.[10] This analysis of Muir's trilogy is supported by Nicola Beauman's description of interwar women's novels having 'an unmistakably female tone of voice' which includes, in her words, 'little action and less histrionics,' looking instead at 'the steadfast dailiness of a life that brings its own rewards, the intensity of the emotions and, above all, the importance of human relationships.'[11] While Beauman presents several authors who portray the life and minds of middle-class women in England, this chapter shows Muir's trilogy – and 'Marmaduke' – as uniquely European-Scottish examples of interwar domestic fiction.

Chapter six re-evaluates *Mrs Grundy in Scotland* as a worthwhile feminist text that re-examines the bogey of Mrs Grundy using an understanding of separate spheres, and the minimal power women are able to achieve as etiquette policing agents. This chapter sets up the framework through which to analyse Muir's engagement with power and mothers' influence in *Living with Ballads* (1965), which is the focus of the final chapter. Chapter seven explores Willa's prioritisation of ballads that centre on motherhood. In so doing, this chapter shows the full spectrum of creative inspiration that Muir took from motherhood. This theme stretched outside the scope of literary generic boundaries and into her non-fiction critical work, from her earliest until her final texts. While 'Marmaduke' shows her scientific detachment from her son, and *Mrs Grundy* provides an example of her wit and humour, *Living with Ballads* reveals how life as a mother allowed her to interpret ballads in unique ways, focusing on specific themes that were relevant to her: loss, grief, motherhood, and power. A predecessor to Beauman's autoethnographic opening to her scholarly literary history, Muir opens *Living with Ballads* in memoir style. This similarity evidences a century-long stylistic convention in women's writing, which grounds both their perception and their production of literature within their experiences of it – experiences which are, as Beauman and Muir both suggest, often defined by exclusion from the upper echelons of cultural formation and from being unable to find representations of everyday women in history books. Muir goes on to reshape ballad analysis using her personal understanding of everyday grief and

[10] Beauman, 3.
[11] Beauman, 7.

power struggles between women (specifically mothers), their families, and the patriarchy more generally.

Throughout this thesis, Muir's journals and her memoir, *Belonging* (1968), have provided historical and biographical evidence for this analysis. As Elphinstone notes,

> Willa Muir's autobiography is an elusive text; ostensibly it was never actually written, but that need be no deterrent to making it the starting point of this examination of self, gender and society in her work. On the contrary, the location of autobiography as a hidden subtext, both in the novels and in the late works *Belonging* and *Living with Ballads*, is exemplary of Muir's analysis of marginality and identity.[12]

As such, this thesis knits together something of an autobiography for Muir, using her novels, non-fiction texts, and her letters and diaries. Its running focus is, as Elphinstone suggests, that of marginality and identity, but, as this thesis suggests, these focal points are narrowed further by a centralisation of the maternal.

Muir faced the battle that many women of her era – and indeed of women before and after her – faced; the battle between ideals and practicality, theory and reality. Muir's life appears contradictory as she strove towards achieving equality for women, even while she set aside her own career. As William W.J. Knox argues, belonging to Edwin, and their life, appears to have been more important to Willa than political movements and strategies. Knox explains that:

> Willa Muir, like Jane Welsh Carlyle before her, stood in the shadow of her celebrated husband, Edwin, and as a result she suffered a similar form of social invisibility [….] Although talented in their own right, both women lived their lives in the service of genius.[13]

Yet, as this thesis has shown, Muir advanced her political cause in her own way. She embraced others' belief of their equal partnership in order to prove – even superficially – the benefits of equality in marriage. For instance, rather than correct the public in their crediting of Edwin as her equal partner in translating, she allowed this myth to continue and, in so doing, showed that when a man and woman are equal, they can be doubly

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[12] Elphinstone, 400.

[13] Knox, 182. Feminist literary critics have revisited women in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries by showing how their relationships with their husbands either helped or hindered their own talents, ambitions, and careers. Significantly, Christianson also focused her research on Carlyle. For instance, see Phyllis Rose's *Parallel Lives: Five Victorian Marriages* (Alfred A. Knopf, 1983).

successful and culturally significant together. In this way, her feminist agenda did succeed. The belief in the near bliss of the Muir marriage, the equality, the support and encouragement, the epitome of a couple with lasting love consistently frames studies of the two writers and translators.[14]

This thesis has sought to avoid the trap of studying Muir for the sole reason that she has been largely ignored. After all, as Breitenbach, Brown, and Myers note, most women writers have been largely ignored: 'Women's role in Scottish society was paid scant attention in the past, as exemplified by Hugh MacDiarmid's notorious line "Scottish women of any historical interest are curiously rare".'[15] There's a rich and potent body of work embodying the voice of the too-long silenced yet rambunctious, passionate, caring woman behind the novels. This analysis attempts to dig deeper beneath the surface of Muir's oeuvre by showing how motherhood both enabled and hindered her literary output. Unstudied in this thesis, but equally worthy of consideration, is her other unpublished novel about hers and Edwin's time in the Putsch, 'The Usurpers', and her collection of smaller works, some unpublished, some published, including *Songs from the Auvergnat Done into Modern Scots* (1931), *Laconics Jingles & Other Verses* (1969),[16] and her amalgamation of essays, poems, and thoughts found throughout her archives, including 'Clock-a-Doodle-Doo' which briefly shows a woman 'mothering' a room full of clocks.[17] A scholar in the field of translation will surely find a closer examination of her translation work, particularly compared to later translations of the texts on which she worked, of value.[18] Her radio broadcasts, difficult to find in writing, more difficult to access in recording, may offer insight to both her views on her historical context and her

[14] *Ideas O' Their Ain* asserts that *Belonging* is an honest portrayal of their life, 10. Edwin's biographer, P.H. Butter, wrote that Willa's 'greatest work, I think she would gladly agree, was to make possible the production of his [Edwin's] poetry.' 'Willa Muir', 59. Chapter five of this thesis questions that analysis.

[15] Breitenbach, Brown, and Myers, 44-45, referencing Brain, 1980: 9.

[16] P.H. Butter quotes a letter Willa wrote to him about this pamphlet. '"They were written," she wrote to me, "before Christmas, and meant to be a kind of farewell to my friends, since I thought a nice little funeral was on the way for me. Well, here I am, and I am alive, and will have to stand the consequences of printing these verses. Some are good, most of them are so-so".' 'Willa Muir', 71.

[17] Space did not permit an investigation of this short piece of fiction, which can be found in *Moving in Circles*. The story critiques the men of the Scottish Renaissance, most explicitly Hugh MacDiarmid.

[18] This thesis chose not to examine translations. The author believes that proper attention can only be given with a fuller expertise in translation theory, as well as an academic background in the authors and languages Muir translated.

own skill in writing for a variety of genres.[19] Similarly of value would be a more thorough examination of her letters and journals. We have a collection of Edwin Muir's letters – it is time to have a tome of Willa's. As P.H. Butter suggests in his introduction to Edwin's letters, correspondence can 'add something by their sense of immediacy; we see him in the process of discovering things, not just telling us about them long after.'[20] Butter also explains the importance of the letters as being able to: 'add something to the published works by showing [Edwin] Muir's views in process of formation.'[21] This is in line with women like Catherine Trotter Cockburn, who, while 'raising her family […] wrote little besides letters to family and friends.'[22] Like Catherine Trotter, Muir often relied on letters for literary output. As such, a renewed Scottish literary canon can acknowledge this as a literary genre to account for the time spent by women honing the craft of correspondence in lieu of prose or poetry.

Moreover, Muir's own experimentation with a self-conscious project with *Living with Ballads* suggests that we too should re-examine our methodology for analysing her oeuvre. In so doing, her work would help to carve out a space for women's voices in academia and publishing. Muir's experiences more than half a century ago speak to those of many current working women and mothers, and reveal the need to read beyond their published works. That Muir's forms are fragmentary, experimental, radical, examining the resistant and tyrannical, is logical – she embodied these traits in her lived experience as a woman writer in a patriarchal society. Within Muir we see living proof of the 'anxiety of authorship' theorized by Gilbert and Gubar, something that men of the Modernist 'Make it New!' period arguably found more difficult to comprehend. Arguably, that same sentiment, the 'anxiety of authorship,' continues to this day as women still face the anxiety of creating in response to a canon that resists their contrasting voices, form, and style.[23] Anderson writes of the twentieth century: 'The

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[19] In response to Murray's point that: 'specialist literary critics need at least to become conscious of the omissions [of radio broadcasts] in their study of well known writers,' this thesis acknowledges the neglect of Muir's regular contributions to radio. Murray, Isobel, '*DNB* to *New DNB*: Good News for Dead Scottish Writers, Especially Women', *Scottish Affairs* no. 29 (1999), 157-66, 162.

[20] *Letters*, 9.

[21] *Letters*, 8.

[22] Gifford & McMillan, xi.

[23] See *Writing Motherhood*, for instance.

problem, then, was that to get into the canon, a woman had to write like a man. Or please a man. Or write about men. Or do something no man had ever done. Or pretend to be a man, at least until she got published.'[24] Women writers continue to feel this bias today, and it is this notion that 'Mrs Muttoe' and *Living with Ballads*, and indeed Muir's works generally, reject. The growing attention to hybrid and experimental forms (primarily within trans, racialised, gendered, classed, and other marginalised voices) attests to this disparity.[25] Yet, Muir was writing before these forms were more widely acknowledged or practiced and in doing so, she found her own radical style.[26]

Scholars Gifford and McMillan were aware of this bias in the 1990s, writing of the need for a counter-canon in order to make space for women: 'And so we hope in this way to acknowledge, even in part to promote, the construction of counter-canons in the very act of adumbrating the canon itself.'[27] They point to the fact their contributors, too, were aware of it: 'the contributors to this volume have from time to time had the chastening experience of realising that if they speak of unjust neglect the accusing finger is pointing not at their literary forebears but at themselves.'[28] And as Isobel Murray suggests: 'some reassessment [must] be made of writers male or female, but particularly female, who in their time cleared any such hurdles' in getting their work published in the first place.[29] Certainly, as this thesis has demonstrated, Muir had a fair share of hurdles that she managed to clear, as her letters and diaries, 'Marmaduke', and 'Mrs Muttoe'

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[24] Anderson, Alison, 'Of Gatekeepers and Bedtime Stories: The Ongoing Struggle to Make Women's Voices Heard', *World Literature Today, Puterbaugh Essay Series*, (November 2016) https://www.worldliteraturetoday.org/2016/november/gatekeepers-and-bedtime-stories-ongoing-struggle-make-womens-voices-heard [access 21.03.21]. Michael Field is one notable example discussed in this thesis.

[25] For instance, Tawnya Selene Renelle recently completed her doctoral thesis, *Experiencing the Experiment of Creative Writing: A Hybrid Workbook* (Doctoral Thesis, University of Glasgow, 2020), for a comprehensive guide on the history of and how to write hybrid and experimental forms. For examples, see *The Argonauts* by Maggie Nelson (2015), Janice Galloway's *The Trick is to Keep Breathing* (1989), *Sexing the Cherry* by Jeanette Winterson (1989), and *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments: Intimate Histories of Riotous Black Girls, Troublesome Women and Queer Radicals* by Saidiya Hartman (2019), to name a few.

[26] These forms have existed in various forms over the centuries, often by marginalised individuals. One notable example of a fragmented form is the 'round robin' approach to writing in which multiple writers contributed their own chapter or section to create a single novel or text. This is the method that produced the queer pornographic novel *Teleny* (London: Leonard Smithers, 1893), for instance, to which Oscar Wilde likely contributed.

[27] Gifford & McMillan, xiii.

[28] Ibid., xiv.

[29] Ibid.

reveal. These unpublished works form a piece of Scotland's 'counter-canon' and contribute to a reassessment of Muir's total output.

In Muir's time, Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* argued against the male canon. Woolf hinted that a realisation of the value of unpublished writings, and seeing them with the same dignity as published texts, had entered women's consciousness. In that work, Woolf writes:

> since no woman of sense and modesty could write books, Dorothy [Osborne], who was sensitive and melancholy, […] wrote nothing. Letters did not count. A woman might write letters while she was sitting by her father's sick-bed. She could write them by the fire whilst the men talked without disturbing them. The strange thing is, I thought, turning over the pages of Dorothy's letters, what a gift that untaught and solitary girl had for the framing of a sentence, for the fashioning of a scene.[30]

Woolf's musings here strongly suggest the value of women's letters, and of the value of evaluating them in their own right as a form of literary output simply because of the fact that, in many cases, letters and diaries were all women had the chance to write. Our unwillingness to interpret women's unpublished and unfinished writings as complete works in their own right has hindered proper evaluation of women in a way that it has not for men.[31] Women often did not have the time to "perfect" or "polish" their notes, and for that reason a different framework for analysis is required. A new context for criticism offers methods to re-value and credit these women writers against a backdrop of enforced domesticity, childcare, and support for men's art, rather than condemn their writings for not providing the mirror to male works. Chapters one and five of this thesis open up that criticism for a re-evaluation of Muir's unpublished works. 'Marmaduke' and 'Mrs Muttoe' are "unpolished" works that offer insight into the Everyday and reveal 'life as it is perceived in the minds of people living in a particular period.'[32]

In accepting that literary criticism has followed manmade conventions, we can then also accept that these can be altered and adapted to fit women's voices and women's genres. As Gifford and McMillan suggest, a lack of canon may be perceived as a great strength: 'We are aware that what this volume does is to present a series of possibilities,

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[30] *A Room of One's Own*, 63.

[31] For instance, Kafka's unfinished works.

[32] Beauman, 2.

to envisage a kind of fluid paradigm.'[33] Feminist scholars are continuing to explore these possibilities, and the gates have not yet been shut on including unpublished letters and writings in a women's canon. Murray best uncovers the fallacy of a canon without women by stressing the 'importance of all the names, major and minor. In most cases it is too soon to attempt to make that last assessment with impunity. It will go on being too soon until they have a chance to be reconsidered, re-read.'[34] This reconsideration must be applied, too, to the major and minor works of writers. It is for this reason that this thesis includes 'Marmaduke' and 'Mrs Muttoe' as examples of Muir's literary output. These texts, alongside the varied narrative voices present in her novels and non-fiction works, evidence the importance of creating a counter-canon in order to rediscover texts that speak to a range of audiences but have hitherto been neglected.

As Romero points out:

> Psychoanalysis has shown how effective the study of autobiographical writing can be, especially for women, and French feminism, […] proposes the feminine as that which is repressed, misrepresented in the discourses of western culture and thought. Indeed, the logical ordering of reality into hierarchies, dualisms, and binary systems implies a prior gender dichotomy of man/woman.[35]

Added to this is the dualism published/unpublished, private/public. In the case of Muir specifically, Romero notes that one must add the search 'for an autonomous self, freed from the double contradictions of on the one hand being a woman with a voice of her own, and on the other being Edwin Muir's wife,' a woman who 'struggled against the dichotomy of "being acknowledged" and "belonging" to Edwin, one of the leading figures of the Scottish Renaissance, which created in her a lack of confidence that she could not discard.'[36] These dualisms show in her writing. Romero's analysis of Cixous in reference to Muir is in line with what Ellis, Adams, and Bochner write about autoethnography: 'different kinds of people possess different assumptions about the world—a multitude of ways of speaking, writing, valuing and believing—and that conventional ways of doing and thinking about research were narrow, limiting, and

[33] Gifford & McMillan, xix.
[34] Murray, 161.
[35] Romero, 30.
[36] Romero, 75.

parochial.'[37] As such, this validates the need for scholars – feminist or otherwise – to examine instances of women writing themselves in private moments, and to use these as legitimate texts in their own right, rather than simply as supplements for analysing more well-known or published works. Breitenbach, Brown, and Myers acknowledge the oppressive nature of an academy still entrenched in patriarchal literary conventions: 'the intellectual climate acts as a marginalizing force, and a barrier to social and political change. The current state of research on women in Scotland suggests an environment that is arid, if not actively hostile.'[38] While certain academic progress is being made this disparity remains.[39] In her article describing her work as Associate Editor in charge of subjects 1870-2000 for the *New DNB,* Isobel Murray explains that in the previous *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 'some 3% of the original subjects were women' but her editor, 'specified that he would encourage especially the selection of women, of "non-metropolitan figures of note", and of twentieth-century subjects.'[40]

One such instance of 'writing herself' can be found in a translation Muir undertook of the songs of the Auvergne. Muir's modern Scots translation of *Five Songs from the Auvergnat* (1931) offers a strong indication of her preoccupation with motherhood, particularly in the interwar years, and her anxiety about what this identity (and its accompanying anxiety) entails. It is also evidence of the strength, passion, and usefulness of the 'untapped' portions of her oeuvre. With more than two dozen *Chants d'Auvergne* available, Willa's choice of just five to translate would have been deliberate. And given the small release (just 100 copies were printed by J.M. Shelmerdine at the Samson Press),[41] her selection process would not have focused on what would appeal to the masses, as with her choice to translate Feuchtwanger.[42] Instead, she must have chosen

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[37] Ellis, Carolyn; Tony E. Adams; Arthur P. Bochner, 'Autoethnography: An Overview', *Forum Qualitative Social Research* vol. 12, no. 1 (2011), https://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/1589/3095 [accessed 21.03.21].

[38] Breitenbach, Brown, and Myers, 49.

[39] Even Gifford and McMillan acknowledge that giving space to women writers is seen as a 'generosity', noting that the 1987-8 edition of *A History of Scottish Literature* had 'more women' in it because it 'had more space to be generous with,' ix.

[40] Murray, 159.

[41] P.H. Butter notes that this book was published by Flora Grierson and Joan Shelmerdine, but credits Shelmerdine alone. 'Willa Muir', 63. Muir mentions this press in *Belonging* but only in reference to their print of Edwin's *Six Poems* (1932).

[42] See the discussion in chapter five on Mrs Muttoe's translations.

songs that held meaning for her, or spoke to her and the concerns of her close community. Minding this, Muir chose two songs about motherhood and having a child – 'Regret' and 'The Wee Man [Lou Pitchiout Omé]' – and three songs about marriage, love, and infidelity – 'The Farmer's Wee Lassie [Lo Filho del Poyson]', 'The Other Day [L'autre Dzour]', and 'Tell Me, Jeanie [Digué, Dzonéto]'. Thus, this chapbook of French lyrics translated into Scots offers further evidence of Muir's psychological absorption with motherhood and love.

'Regret' and 'The Wee Man', in particular, provide examples of anxiety and desire. 'Regret', the penultimate poem in the book, is the only song without a French title in square brackets next to her English translation. The author has been unable to find the original and Muir did not provide the original versions alongside her translations. Given this, it is possible that this poem was written by Muir herself, and included in the chapbook as a means of camouflaging her own original work – in which she had little confidence – among translations. The poem is just three stanzas:

> I dinna want to herd the kye,
> I want to get a man,
> I want to ha'e a wee son,
> As every lassie can**.**
>
> But, lassie, if you got a son,
> What wad you feed him on?
> I'd nurse him at my ain breast,
> As every lassie can.
>
> But, lassie, if you got a man,
> What would you live upon?
> I ha'e nae tocher, but I can spin,
> As every lassie can.

Her speaker's desire to leave a rural community in order to find love and bear a child, a son especially, is contrasted with an unidentified counter voice expressing anxieties. This voice could be read as the pressures of her community to contribute and work, not unlike those faced by little Annie Rattray in *Mrs Ritchie*. These show contradicting gender expectations: to work and contribute to the farming community matched by the need for women to have children and marry in order to proliferate that community. The implication is that the heroine, the lassie, wants to find romantic love and leave her rural

tradition behind. This is more in line with what Muir herself did, and at odds with the communities that both Edwin and Willa come from in Orkney and Montrose.

Published in 1931, this poem coincides with the appearance of *Imagined Corners*, in which another woman – Elizabeth Ramsay/Shand – also faces community pressures but this time to find a man, have a baby (preferably a son), and take care of both by darning their socks and keeping them on the virtuous path. And while Elizabeth wants love, it is these community pressures and Hector's disloyalty (a theme found in 'The Other Day') that overshadows this desire. Held together, these two works show the anxiety that outside pressures cause and the need for the woman to choose her own path. However, the unidentified voice can also be read as Muir's own anxiety. Its inquiry, 'What wad you feed him on?' shows her own concerns at birthing, nursing, and raising a son while tasked with taking care of her husband and the household generally. When paired with 'Marmaduke', 'Regret' fictionalises and idealises the anxieties that are ever-present in the journal of her son's early years and in 'Mrs Muttoe'.

Similarly, 'The Wee Man' shows intense anxiety and fear about raising a son specifically. The only daughters present in this chapbook are those that are already grown up and married, or soon to be. Muir is connected with the speaker – she is the adult daughter protesting working with the kye, being taken by her new husband to dance on the green ('The Farmer's Wee Lassie'), and arguing with her mother against working in the inn so she can find her 'ain man' ('Tell Me, Jeanie'). Meanwhile, the children in these works mirror her relationship with her son. 'The Wee Man'[43] consists of six, two-line stanzas:

> *I dinna want a wee man, a wee man, a wee man,*
> *I winna ha'e a wee man, he wadna dae ava'!*
>
> If I set him at the table, the table, the table,
> The cock wad come and peck at him, and peck him clean awa'.

[43] Friend to both the Muirs and MacDiarmid, the Renaissance composer, F.G. Scott, set this poem, among others, to music in *Songs: Thirty-Five Scottish Lyrics and other Poems set to music by Francis George Scott* (Glasgow: Bayley & Ferguson, 1949). Thank you to Kirsteen McCue for noting this.

If I set him in the garden, the garden, the garden,
The pig wad come and grumph at him, and grumph him clean awa'.

If I set him on the hillside, the hillside, the hillside,
The stanes wad fa' upon him, & knock him clean awa'.

If I set him at the waterside, the waterside, the waterside,
The tide wad rise and catch at him, and wash him clean awa' ….

O, I dinna want a wee man, a wee man, a wee man,
I winna ha'e a wee man, he wadna dae ava'!

The poem may be gesturing to her immense fear of not keeping Gavin safe.[44] Sadly, these fears would later be realised with his car accident, the fire-and-brimstone threatening nanny, the onslaught of the Second World War, and his selective deafness. Muir could not have known the accidents that would befall Gavin, yet her selection of this poem for her translation is evidence that there always loomed a dark tide waiting to 'wash him clean awa'.' Unlike the power of beauty in her husband's works, Willa, after the birth of their son, sees not just the beauty of nature but also its ability to both take and give life. The poem begins with unlikely events like chickens and pigs pecking or 'grumphing' her son away – indications that these are a new mother's anxiety, seeing everything as a threat to the tiny body she has brought into the world. However, these anxieties grow increasingly more realistic, with stones falling down the mountainside like an avalanche and the threat of drowning proving that a mother's fears are far from irrational, but based on real-life risk in nature. Here again is Muir's fascination with water, shown in her use of water as a motif throughout *Imagined Corners* to represent a peaceful surface under which unknown life whirls. In that novel, William Murray falls to his death in turbulent waters.

And yet, despite the evident connection of these works with her own writings, her translations of *Songs from the Auvergnat* have been all but forgotten. Their rarity may be the cause, with only 100 in original circulation and an unknown fraction of that original run surviving to this day. But with far fewer copies of writings like Edwin's letters –

[44] There are, of course, many other, non-biographical readings of this poem. When sung alongside F.G. Scott's setting, the song takes on a comic tone. Comedy, however, can have tragic undertones.

which have enjoyed much more focused attention – this explanation seems weak at best.[45] This points to a need for a new framework of evaluation that acknowledges the forgotten foundations of our literary canon. This thesis has not had the space to evaluate all of Muir's forgotten works, but hopefully has shown the potential present in her published and unpublished essays, diaries, letters, poems, journals, and manuscripts.

Unpublished writings tell us much about the history of women: about their struggles to find time and the brief moments when they stole time for themselves; about their thoughts, uncensored, unpolished, unhindered by a fear of being called 'vulgar' or 'unladylike'; about what sounded or felt beautiful, artful, and significant to these women without considering the conventions of a literary tradition from which they were excluded. Or, in the case of many women before, during, and after WWI and WWII:

> Women wrote not only as part of the "work of mourning,"[46] but also to take advantage of the opportunity to gain personal identities. Over five hundred women were published during the WWI period, and nearly all of them forgotten. There is no doubt that a literary genocide of sorts did occur in the post WWI years.[47]

The effects of this continue to be felt so long as we ghettoize women's writing. Romero summarises Hélène Cixous's 'conception that by writing herself, the woman writer is taking a step forward socially and culturally, in such a way that her writing engages with a political debate in which women assert their individuality in a world dominated by men.'[48] Yet as Geiger notes, some scholars argue that this neglect of WWI women writers is due to the quality of their writing.

However, feminist literary critics may argue instead that the standard of 'quality' has always been skewed against qualities that may be available to women: intimate, raw, mundane, everyday, 'unfinished', 'unpolished'. When those in power – those with resources and time – set the standards, it can be nigh impossible for those below – without resources or time – to reach those standards. Tellingly of Muir's own time, Jess-

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[45] The chapbook is rarely mentioned. The author chanced upon the book in a final scan of library databases. Thank you to Kirsteen McCue for suggesting the comedic tones of Scott's setting.

[46] Willa Muir's depiction of John Samuel in *Mrs Ritchie*, and anticipating the Second World War in 'Mrs Muttoe' can be read as works of mourning.

[47] Geiger, Maria, 'No Trench Required: Validating the Voices of Female Poets of WWI', *War, Literature and the Arts*, vol. 27 (2015), 1-13, 3.

[48] Romero, 35.

Cooke notes: 'Cyril Connolly wrote about the "pram in the hall" in his 1938 book *Enemies of Promise*, yet his caveat is directed at men (he took it as a given that women create babies, not art).'[49] Fittingly, 1938 is the same year that Willa began writing 'Mrs Muttoe', the book that explores, in detail, the obstacles that constantly hindered her central character's ability to focus on her writing, as she was forced to prioritise breadwinning over focusing on her own prose. What Willa Muir wrote when no one was looking, when her writing was not to pay bills, or support Gavin or Edwin, or schedule appointments and events, is what shows who she was – not just as an individual, but as part of a silent yet crucial underbody of the literary world. These show us an 'underworld of feeling'; a way of being and existing in a literary world where she could not help but to write and to feel and to think individually because, unlike the men around her, she was not expected to 'Make it new!'.

Muir's essays, poems, and unpublished works are worth exploring for what they can tell us about an individual woman's uncensored voice, and therefore, contribute to the theoretical framework of life writing to reclaim marginalised voices more generally. Aileen Christianson's praise of Muir in the *Dictionary of National Biography* is worth noting in full:

> the reprinting of *Imagined Corners* (1987) and *Mrs Ritchie, Women: an Enquiry* […] [and] other non-fiction pieces (1996) have enabled an assessment of Willa Muir as a writer in a way that she did not achieve in her lifetime. Passionate, intellectually confident, assertive, emotionally insecure, and, latterly, indomitable in the face of pain from arthritis, with a lifelong feminist awareness apparent in her novels, letters, and journals, she never stopped writing, one of her last letters hoping 'I *might* get a small book done' (5 April 1970, NL Scot., MS 19703, fol. 219).[50]

As Dr Palmer McCulloch noted, 'Willa Muir […] is one of these "dangerous women" whose courage, intelligence and imagination helped redefine women's place in a changing society.'[51] Following in her footsteps, a new analysis of Scottish women writers who sought to balance their creative inclinations with maternal responsibilities requires

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[49] Ibid, 9.

[50] Christianson, Aileen, 'Muir [*née* Anderson], Wilhelmina Johnston [Willa] [*pseud*. Agnes Neill Scott]', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, https://doi-org.ezproxy.lib.gla.ac.uk/10.1093/ref:odnb/49250, [accessed 27.11.2020].

[51] *Dangerous Women Project*.

courage to move beyond the bounds of conventional literary criticism and into the realm of the unknown, unusual, private, intimate, and uncomfortable.

Appendix II: 'Marmaduke'

Below is a diplomatic transcription of Willa Muir's journal of her son Gavin's infancy, titled 'Marmaduke'. There are few editorial intrusions, as chapter one of this thesis provides the context and analysis for this text. The journal is unpublished and is now situated in the Willa Muir Archive in the University of St Andrews Special Collections. Muir started the journal in December 1927, six weeks after Gavin's birth. It covers the daily events of his infancy, particularly bowel movements, feeding habits, and new skills as he acquires these, such as sounds, grasping objects, and perceiving colours and movements.

The journal is forty pages, single-sided. This transcription includes only those entries that make up the 'Marmaduke' journal, and excludes those entries that begin at the back of the notebook. The entries and the corresponding dates are left-aligned on the recto leaf of the notebook, with pagination in the top right corner of each page. As such, the pagination can be found in square brackets in the right margins of this transcription. Large gaps between lines represent similar gaps in the original manuscript. The verso pages of the notebook carry occasional notes by Muir, often written outwith the horizontal lining of the page or slantwise across the page. These are usually undated, and the pagination is on the bottom left, upside down. The transcription attempts to reproduce the text as it appears on the page, with the exception of infrequent small doodles in margins. The journal provides proof of Muir's adherence to Dr Frederic Truby King's childrearing methods as outlined in *Feeding and Care of Baby* (1913). Take note of her strict feeding schedule and enforcement of Gavin's bowel movements, as discussed in further detail in chapter one. 'Marmaduke' provides insight into the daily life of Willa Muir as a mother, her belief in psychoanalytic methods, and her innermost thought processes as a writer.

[1]

Marmaduke

[pencil starts] aged six weeks

notes on thumb-sucking (or rather, fist-sucking)
sucking pleasantly toned, because of inflow of warm milk.
baby does not differentiate among stimuli – anything put into mouth provokes reaction of sucking.
A certain tension in sucking, His fists almost automatically clench themselves tightly – when he sucks, + the arms are flexed in. This brings the fists near the mouth. At first there is no power of direction: the fists are kept close together in front of the body. But by the fourth week they are carried up towards the mouth, and if the teat or nipple is removed the fist moves towards the vacant mouth; or if hunger makes him conscious of his mouth. In the

[2]

fifth week the fist is sucked before feeding quite definitely as a stop gap.

[verso; 95] Fantasy vs reality?

N.B. the baby's first attempt to be independent and minister to himself.
But the fist does not lie passively in the mouth. Or rather, the mouth does not enjoy the sensation of mere sucking for its own sake. Milk is looked for. It is a functional use of sucking the fist.
The enjoyment of mere sucking arises while the nipple is in the mouth. When the pleasurable associations are strongest. The sucking takes on the full colour of this pleasure, + when he is tired a little he mouths + mumbles the nipple, or holds it firmly in his mouth without sucking. This is probably the point at which mere sucking becomes pleasant apart from its function of providing milk. To prevent this voluptuous relaxation, pull the nipple away whenever there is

[3]

a suspiciously long pause – not merely a pause to take breath, to belch up wind or the pause which marks his attention to the movements in his bowels.
For his attention is concentrated on his bodily sensations.
When his bowels move, either in earnest or to expel wind, he grunts in a satisfied manner. But the grunt, + its accompanying smile, are probably reflex actions – a sympathetic expulsion of wind up as well as down – a tension balancing the tension in the abdomen.
Query, the same complex of muscles?
The muscles seem to be co-ordinated in groups.

1) sucking, fists clenched, arms flexed, legs bent up;
2) farting + grunting (mouth + rectum K.M.A)
3) screaming + kicking
4) lifting up of head + thrusting with feet.

[verso; 94] N.B. in 3d week, anyhow, objected to having hands bound up in shawl while sucking. Interference with hands interfered with suck.

[4]

When the nipple is difficult to catch, or when the milk is running so easily that very little sucking is needed, he kisses the nipple, only. Smacking lips on it, just like a kiss.
Fourth, fifth, + sixth weeks.
Gradually increasing interest in surroundings. Looks at all lights – turns head round looking at everything, looks at people beside cot.
Does not yet differentiate between right + left – e.g. does not know when I hold him to one breast that the nipple is on the side where I am – turns his head right round on both sides.
Before fourth week seemed to recognise my voice as the voice of the milk. Recognises it definitely now. Whenever he hears it he looks for milk – sometimes gaping with his mouth, sometimes merely pursing

[5]

his lips + looking up hopefully.

Pursing of lips first preparation for sucking: i.e. definite anticipation, but not caused by actual deed; (as gaping); rather merely a suggestion of the deed – a sketch of it.
Listens to footsteps approaching or dying away, when he is awake in his cot + cries to be taken up.

Sunday, Dec 11th Listened with attention to the trickle of the water running out of the bath.
For the first time made voluntary free movements with his trunk in the bath. Hitherto has only kicked + waved one arm. Today he turned right over from one side to the other with obvious enjoyment.
(Has always loved the sensation of lying in the warm water.)

[6]

In third week jumped in my arm when a door was shut.
Although he does not recognise the breast with his eye – turning his head away from it even while gaping for it – yet he recognises it instantly if it touches his face on either cheek, + slides his mouth round to it at once.
Different kinds of crying already established –

1 hunger or thirst or discomfort
2 temper, rage.
3 surprised displeasure
(when teat of bottle gives no water)
4 forlorn – when put firmly in cot and left. This always dies away in a sleepy wait + quite suddenly stops.

15 Dec. Huge motion – an ocean.
16 Dec. watched with interest Edwin moving his head to + fro.

[7]

17th Dec.
7 weeks old. First crow – unmistakably a crow, although I never heard one before.
Laughs + smiles more freely.

[verso; 90] N.B. connection between smiles + wind.

18th. seems to carry on conversation – responds to kindly tones by a little coo.
sucks fist when second nipple is not immediately forthcoming.
sucks fist after feed, when help up on my shoulder.
No motion yet (6 p.m)
given catheter earlier, enema salt + water at 6, + a little magnesia.
If that fails!
Note – enema had not come back when laid in his cot – at least half an hour after giving it.
Has he a very great tension of sphincter in rectum? Does he hold it back?
This morning stared at pram umbrella shading sun off his face. Persistently. As far as I can tell, awake from 10 to 2.

[8]

In the afternoon stared again at setting sun on horizon seen through window. Slept when it had gone. Stared about 15 or 20 minutes. The stare is quite silent + still: one would think he was asleep if his eyes were not wide open.
19th Dec at 10 o'clock no motion.
Exercise in bath, + massage of tummy.
1 tablesp. very weak solution of magnesia
2 o'clock no motion. massage with olive oil + enema of soap + water.
A little stain with return of enema. Discovered he had returned yesterday's enema partly on my apron, instead of on his nap. That's why I thought he held it back.
6 o'clock: a satisfactory motion.
But what a kid!
Has learned to associate sounds of moving in a room with people who will attend to him. When I was trying to thaw out w.c. pipes he heard me, + wailed at once although he had been quiet.
Stops wailing when I begin to untuck him, + looks expectantly up.

[9]

Still not sure about which side nipple is to be found at.

bubbles water at the mouth nowadays.

[verso; 88] 8 weeks Motion: Big one. Fractious afterwards in the morning + at 2.

Sat 24th Dec. apparently well established in his habit of holding all his food for 2, 3, or 4 days without a motion, + then having a beezer.
Conversation habits well established: smiles, gurgles + laughs when spoken to in a soft, kind voice.
Took him to call on Mrs + D^{r} Walker. He was attracted by D^{r} W's gentle voice, + laughed + cooed. Eyes very big all round to see the new house, sense the strangeness of the room. Focusses his eyes slowly, but focusses definitely on one person. (Persons + light rather than smaller objects.) When Edwin shakes his head he moves his head with his eyes to + fro to follow him.

[verso; 88] Earlier in the day he turned from Ella J. because she poked him hard + had a rather loud voice.

On this day he showed definite distaste for the bottle with water. Is this a) because the teat is slower in yield than the nipple? b) because he is cheated with water when expecting milk? C) because he dislikes taste

[10]

of water with magnesia, or taste of teat?
Anyhow, I began to train him to take water from a teaspoon. Choked on it once, obviously surprised to find so much water coming in; dribbles half of it on his bib, but half of it goes clucking down.
Xmas day ~~8 weeks old.~~ Teaspoon continued. Getting easier.
N.B. Fist-sucking slackening off.
And when he is really hungry, between 1st + 2nd breast, sucks fist + then cries impatiently with disappointment. Still sucks fist when settling to sleep, but not so persistently. There is no thought of fist sucking while his attention is taken by being

carried into another room, or spoken to by a kind friend. Plenty of interest, + the fist is not sucked.

Boxing Day Teaspoon progressing. He now definitely takes the water off it with a kind of small suck.

Definitely recognises Edwin. No doubt about it. Focussed on shining rattle, definitely.

[verso; 87] Interest in fist sucking

[11]

Still objects to changing of napkins. Still rejects teat – screwing up face with recognisable expression of distaste, pushing it to one side and out with his tongue.

Beginning to look for milk always on the correct side – next to me, instead of turning his head both ways.

(Very near recognising nipple + breast)

Knows that after bib comes food – gets expectant + stops squalling when bib is fixed on.

Goes to bed more contentedly when he has been spoken to + laughed at first for a few minutes.

Range of noises increased. A coo – like pursing lips for milk of earlier days.

An open 'ah' with his mouth curled in a smile.

His eyes smile when his mouth does.

He waves his fists when he is pleased and smiling, like an orator.

[12]

Tuesday, 27th – enema in morning.

Thursday – only wee stains on his napkin. Gave magnesia.

I am massaging his tummy 2 or 3 times daily w. warm olive oil.

Weight has increased terribly – 11oz. in last week.

2 oclock A beezer of a motion – 5 nappies gone west, + a frock + a petticoat.

Good looking stuff – not much curd – orange colour + smells like narcissi!

Marmaduke very pleased with himself. It arrived on my knee, just when I was gently pressing his tummy with olive oil. At least 2 oz. of his weight this morning must have been faeces. Probably 3.

Thursday 5. Jan. (Yesterday sat on pot successfully)

Motions have been regular since Monday. Weight increasing too much. Today + yesterday cried more + slept less than usual: today ∴[1] I cut him down + gave water. He can now use his fingers independently.

[verso; 84] Thumb lies in palm all the time nearly

[13]

That is, he can separate first two from second two quite easily, spreads them out. Previously he kept fist clenched, or waved hand, nearly always with crooked fingers. Separates forefinger too.

Recognises breast – looks for it always on side next to me. Punches it with fist while sucking. Today, when troubled by wind + over feeding, took to sucking fist again. Attempt to comfort himself?

Jan. 8. Has improved rapidly on less food regime. I have instituted "play-minutes" after 10 + 6 pm feeds – on his little quilt on my bed, where he lies on his back + kicks + waves his arms. Smiles + laughs to himself very happily. Greatly interested in new coordination of his arms when I opened + shut them rhythmically, clapping the fists together. Looked a trifle alarmed at first, but soon chuckled. After this play he goes to sleep quietly. Sits on pot now successfully.

Fist sucking hardly at all. When he is

[14]

uncomfortable with wind – very occasionally even then.

Takes water from the teaspoon with varying success: but recognises it. Sometimes screws up his face + pushes it away with a waved fist – twisting his head R. + L. away from it. Usually takes it with smiles as if it were a joke. No use offering it before milk: he twists + upsets + pushes it away. After milk + changing napkin he takes it well.

Sense of hearing very acute. Has all along been more acute + definitely (apparently) than sense of sight. Recognises my voice and Edwin's voice.

[1] This is the mathematical symbol for 'therefore'.

Most of his contented smiling arises from ‘euphoria’ – feeling well + happy. But when we speak kindly to him + laugh his contentment rises to a crow + widely gaping laughs. Still stares at pram umbrella over him

[15]

but not so persistently. Very interested in sliding of walls as he is carried up + down stairs + in new pattern of universe in another room.

Today he looked at the rattle as if he saw it quite precisely.

He sees the breast now + recognises it as he is lying on my knee. When I pull it out he begins to whimper eagerly towards it.

Hasn’t yet discovered his feet. Pays no attention to his penis. Cries a little sometimes before making water – as if sense of discomfort suddenly smote him. Chuckles fatly after having a motion – feeling of relief + bien-être.

It would be much too late <u>now</u> to start him on habits of sleeping alone in a dark room if he hadn’t been used to the regular succession of sleeping times. Now he knows that being packed in a cot means left alone to sleep. Also all-night sleep established.

[16]

No attempt yet to grasp things + take them to his mouth. But sometimes when he feels the teaspoon at his mouth he brings both his fists up to his mouth too.

Jan 12. Last night he took 8oz. in 20 mins. Cut down ∴ to 15 mins 6 am + 10 pm + 14 mins other times.

No new developments this week. Laughs, crows, smiles, giggles, screams, roars, coos and whimpers as before. Great respect in way he eyes the breast.

Regular habit on pot now established. Teaspoon well going too: sometimes he takes it badly, sometimes well.

<u>Jan 24</u> On Jan 22nd we took him out in the pram. He had been out with Phyllis twice or thrice already. He screwed his neck + lifted his head off the pillow to stare at the trees whenever we passed any which spread between him + his view of the sky. Moving through the fresh air in the pram gives him a colour, interests + pleases him.

His <u>thumb</u> is not yet used to opposition to the

[17]

fingers. When he grips, it is with the curled fingers: the thumb usually lies flat on the palm. It can be separated, but requires a little force: he doesn't separate it himself.
Fist-sucking is now finger-sucking, + has broken out again more violently. Clearly done to comfort himself i.e. – when he has wind, when he is hungry (sometimes between breasts. But he roars with disappointment then, + always gives up the finger for the nipple when presented.) The comfort-complex attached to sucking makes him suck (and noisily) at his fingers when he is put into his cot sometimes. Usually when he is not very sleepy: he seems to use it as a hypnogogic act: or when he doesn't want to be left, if he has been enjoying a conversation.
An assertion of his ego when he feels it slighted.
Kicked so lustily in his bath this morning that he slipped from my hand + swallowed water.
Makes no attempt yet to grasp objects, although

[18]

he sees them clearly (i.e. – nipple, rattle, trees, us)
Crows more frequently – a most peculiar noise. Very hilarious when spoken to in a soft voice. Sounds – gay, wah, ngah. Self-will showing itself: screams with rage when set on pot if he has nothing to produce: turns his head away abruptly from spoon when he doesn't want water and yells the roof off if I am late in picking him out of his cot at meal-times, or if I tuck the inside blanket over his hand when he wants to suck it.
Has had one or two erections: but apparently pays no attention to them at all.
Likes the motion of the pram, + objects to have it stopped, or to have the hood put up.
Obviously considers that we can do anything – make pram move again, provide food, warmth, healing for pain +c. First idea of God. [pencil ends]
[black ink starts] Men's earliest relations w. women are so undignified that some of them spend the rest of their lives trying to get even.

[19]

Earliest complex – Mother God.
a ~~gra~~ Presence rather than a Power.
Provides everything, good and bad: destiny or fate or whatever she is.

Mere size does not yet mean power to the infant. Male voice apparently does not terrify him at all. No fear attached to man ~~no man~~ in comparison w. woman: sense no special propitiation of man God. in infancy.
? But man himself is so conscious of his magnanimity in not beating or eating the little creature that he constantly suggests it :+ the creature accepts it as an axiom, that the man God is very gracious not to manhandle him. This suggestion is vaguely in the air, + is impressed on the baby when it is coming out of infancy into childhood.
Matriarchy belongs to first year of consciousness. Patriarchy to second year?

[verso, arrow linking to 'Patriarchy to second year?'; 78] third year – no sign of it yet.
fifth year – wants to be like Dadda, who is a Boy

Jan. 25. First time seized my finger + carried it to his mouth. Partly casual, this, because his fists go to his mouth anyhow, empty or full. Partly search for nipple.
While weeping for milk, + with the tears still in his eyes, he gallantly struggled to coo to Edwin. It was a quavering coo, but it came off, + was very touching.

[verso; 78] Man does not live by bread alone
not even at 3 months

[20]

<u>Feb. 10.</u> Clenched fists laid piously together on breast while sucking at nipple. First instinct movement repeated when praying – hands joined. sucking the milk of the Word! A reproduction of infantile ecstasy at the mother's breast. The feminine principle again.

Gavin now plays with butterfly fingertips over my breast while sucking, every now + then. First perception of solid shapes?
He closes his fist on things he meets with. Not, as before, only closes on things put there. Conation increasing. Also waves his fist: hit the ball of the rattle every time with a waved fist in an apparently casual manner.

Wakens + cries every afternoon. Wants to be carried into drawingroom + laid on sofa, where he lies + gurgles + looks at the light. Answers our voices when they sound caressing, even when we are speaking to each

[21]

other. We sit removed from him a bit, at the tea-table. His persistence + rage in crying when he is ignored is incredible for such a youngster. Great danger of spoiling. It's the only time he makes any fuss – between 4 + 6 in the afternoon.
Yesterday twice left the nipple to move his head so that he could see what Edwin was doing behind me. Pure, frank inquisitiveness.

Dr Walker says he is physically in perfect health – as nearly perfect as possible for a 3 months baby. Cheers! "A strong baby"

forget me nots drowned in water.

Fist sucking not so rampant again, except when he has windy pains. Goes to sleep now often without fist suck.
14th February. Yesterday + today taken to lying in the pram talking to himself for a quarter of an hour at a time. This afternoon slept till 5.30

[22]

+ then awoke talkatively. Same this morning between 9.30 + 9.45: he was lying gazing at the sky + simply talking – gay, goo, ah – +c.
Apparently when he cries in afternoon its [sic] because he wants to lie on his back for a change + take notice.
Left the nipple this morning for a second to smile a greeting to Edwin.
His hair is beginning to come off above the ears.
He smiled to himself + me in the looking glass today.
Feb 16. Determined to be awake in afternoon. Looks at trees waving + talks: then gets tired by 4.30 + yells. I gave him orange juice then + induced him to sleep – but only for half an hour: + then at 5.30 he started screaming for his milk. Rage increasing, all the sounds of exasperation + defiance + despair while his clothes were changed. Climax of pure exasperation when put on the pot. After about 3 minutes of milk smiled

[23]

blissfully + said ‘gay’. Determination shown in his persistent waking + screaming is very great.

Began to make a sound resembling l today. So far only g, ng among his vowels. Takes a pleasure in practising his sounds.

Look at a bird flying yesterday.

Fist sucking less again: waves them about more.

Kicks out very strongly in his bath.

When he’s tired out just before six + fractious he jumps easily at loud noises such as door banging.

He has become actually very pretty. Looks in glowing health – especially at 10 a.m after his long spells of steady sleep. [black ink ends]

[pencil starts] A queer thing that life at his age should be so intense + yet leave no traces in memory. He has a conscious – a personality – and an individual unconscious (he makes habits of sleep + rest + food, recognises times + people + things) he remembers his milk + yet that is all wiped out – even the milk, the

[24]

most important event of all to him.

What is it which is not yet awake?

Probably the faculty of fixing things in a definite + recognisable shape – i.e. language. A kind of blood memory he has already, but not a systematic memory, not <u>thought</u>.

<u>Monday</u> February 20.

Today his thumb has really been used as an opposable tool. He grasped the end of my finger with thumb well round, + a good grip between thumb + fingers.

He smiles at me when I smile at him without a word said.

He has, on three separate occasions, smiled on catching sight of himself in the looking glass

He talks now with more prolonged vowels a-a-ah ngoo-ooo

Wakes in afternoon, but screams very little:

[25]

lies + talks. Moves his eyes now without moving his head.

Spreads his fingers out + follows the curve of my breast with his hand while sucking.

23d February giggling match with Edwin. Made a new high giggling sound. Then joined in heartily when E. laughed at it, + then did it again, twice, giggling joyfully each time, along with Edwin.

24th Feb. seized a finger of mine with each hand and tried to take them to his mouth. The grip was made with fingers and thumbs.

Walks from one of my knees on to the other, + nearly off into the air, while supported by my hands.

27th February Clutches + punches my breast now while sucking.

Smiles at himself in the looking glass every time. Most surprising – an air of recognition. How does he know to smile to it? [pencil ends]

[26]

[black ink starts] 8th March In past week has started sucking his gums with smacking noise. Teeth?

Also giggles when I wash his hands, both outside + inside fingers. Not a chuckle, a real giggle – helpless-like.

Has begun to clutch more. Clutches my frock. Seizes rattle when presented. But not much trying to carry to mouth.

Fist sucking never done now as hypnagogue. Only when he has wind, apparently.

Concentrating just now on kh + a strong gh – goes on repeating with signs of pleasure, + if Edwin or I repeat it after him he bursts out giggling.

Looks at definite objects more. Branch of rose bush: rattle: flame in fire. Twists to see what people are doing behind him.

Can turn himself over on his own back now in pram.

Kicks mightily in bath, pushing side of it + splashes a fair distance. Spasmodic kicks,

[27]

like the kick in back swimming – both legs + arms fly out all at once.

Buries his nose in pillow petulantly as a sign of dissatisfaction.

Cries which are simple bullying cries are very near to smiles and laughter. Sometimes he seems to laugh at himself when I do???

10th March. saw snow coming down before his face + gave a queer yelp of astonishment, then giggles loudly as if astonished himself at the noise he made. Edwin giggled too, + then G. tried to make the queer noise again + giggled so much that I was afraid he would become hysterical, + turned him away from the snow. He stopped giggling at once. Strachans + Miss Reid came in, all talking rather loudly. G. on the sofa gave a small bleat of fear, but was reassured immediately + began to smile + talk to Elizabeth who was sitting nearest him. He is not so distracted as he used to be by several people surrounding him.

[28]

He liked a daffodil very much, which I set up beside his pillow. Lay + looked at it, smiled at it, + made a few soft noises to it. That was just before the visitors came in.
The day before he had lain on my knee and made affectionate + cajoling noises to a Gold Flake tin, on which the firelight was gleaming – it had its paper torn off.
A small rash has come out on his face: teeth? or cold wind?
15th March Taken to wakening at 8.30: lay this morning + played with his rattle – looked at coloured ball with great appreciation. Clutched my orange overall sleeve + talked to it. Doesn't yet carry things to his mouth.
Colic yesterday: stuffs his fists into his mouth at the onset of the pain, then waves them + screams. Instinctive attempt at comfort – the shoving of fists to mouth.
Sits saying A-ah, + ghi-ghi- kchch – when on

[29]

the pot: each ejaculation accompanies some sensation in the intestines as his bowels prepare to move.
I think it was a cold chill which gave him that rash – sudden change of temperature we've had.
Yesterday morning I took 2 snaps of him. [black ink ends]
[pencil starts] Thursday. March . He notices everything that is being done around him. Clutches + pulls at my dress. Fingers the chair + the wicker rods of the cot. Can nearly sit up. Shoots out his legs a great deal. (masturbation?)
Shouted with joy to E. after he had been away all day.
Smiled at a tulip. Gazed long at a swaying branch above him.

Ejo – gieu –
looks at blue tube of cream when I hold it.
Fri started when E. turned over in bed this morning. His new game at G tonight – burying nose

[30]

in my breast, looking up with a giggle, + burying his nose again!
When his hand strays over an object he feels it, clutches it, turns it over.

April 5 – to April 24 – at Leiston.
straying hand fingering my breast + overall. Turned next to tablecloth, to surfaces – wooden tables chair arms – spoons – bowl – everything shining or within reach. Banged them on table: (His vision perhaps like ours when eyes half screwed up? Seems to see high lights or tube +c like that)
waves his hands to catch things – clasps them (when he thinks he has them in his grasp?)
dancing on knee – knees bend + up again. (This also helps to expel wind.)
April 13 – First sat + looked at his toes. Very absorbed.
Excited + interested by crowd of people in lounge from 5 – 5.45 daily. Very

[31]

pleased to be smiled at + spoken to shouts with laughter at small games of keek-bo – waving hair, approach + receding of heads – dangling watch +c.
Fascinated by bright colours, light shining on walls or through stuff.
emotional needs. emotional starvation? cuddles + comforts?
talks to himself with great open vowels. bu-bu- still going strong. Thought I heard mm. and p.
He liked being in room with us.
He liked the big cot, + big window.
Easily distracted by people moving, especially when sucking breast. Stretched his neck to see what was happening.
liked piano.
Mary's flat – orange light.
Lone – turning head all round – as if strange – as if not like previous vague memory?

tired – crying – cuddles – finally reconstructed usual

[32]

scene with light on. That calmed him.
Is wind = to boredom or mental upset? Or vice versa?
Carries everything sooner or later to mouth (to test it?)
Not open surfaces only; definite objects also.
Fist sucking now thumb-sucking. going strong. Perhaps thumb sucking as hypnagogue instead of contact with mother? [pencil ends]

[33]

[verso; 64; black ink starts] Feeding to timetable – emotional starvation?

April 29. Has begun to examine his fingers + thumb – holding one + pulling it open; staring at it.
looks with interest at woolly lamb. [black ink ends]

[verso; 64; pencil starts] weight 17lbs 7oz.

[verso; 64] Sometimes when T.S. pulls rhythmically at blanket or shawl with the other hand – as he does when at the breast.

May 3. revelling in heat – bare arms. sweats easily after his bath.
Thumbsucking very rampant. Yesterday tried to keep thumb in his mouth + take nipple as well – cried at the failure. Eventually slid thumb out. Thumbsucking is nearly always a sign of wind – the most frantic + sudden sucks caused by wind in the bowel – when it is passed the thumb comes out again.
Thumbsucks himself to sleep when left in pram at night.
Wool Grange a great favourite.
Tries to seize everything bright + glittering or gaily coloured. Feels it, bangs it, drops it.

Two days ago clutched at Squeako – first by the ear, then the whiskers. Interest, + no fears. Squeako stood it well.

[34]

Puts out his hand to touch green leaves whenever he can, + plucks them off with a clutch twist. Discovered the front door yesterday as he was taken to his pram: banging with his fist on the green wood + on the glass. Also spread his fingers to feel their surfaces.
Smiles in his sleep sometimes. Dreams?
No sign of teeth yet.
Had an erection tonight while sucking. He was hot + sweating after his bath – wrapped in shawl. Pays no attention to his penis so far.
Laughs when played with .i.e. clapping his hands gently together.
Laughs when peeped at through bars, or behind shawl or round a corner.
Laughs when Edwin wags his head – or bends his head down + prods him in tummy with his nose. Laughed when G. yawned.
Meditation – contemplation of one's navel = contemplation of bowel sensations when sitting on pot. At any rate, he looks absorbed, thoughtful, happy train of thought

[verso; 63] Day at present.
milk – about 6.a.m. Sometimes earlier. Motion. Sleep from 6.45 or 7 to 9. Sometimes 9.30. Wakening, a drink of water: kicking till 10 dressed; milk at 10 a.m. (circa)
sleeps from 11 or 11.30 to 1, 1.30, or nearly 2.
milk at 2. a little walk round, Then into pram for a walk.
Sleeps 3 – 5 (circa)
At 5 – orange juice + water.
5 – 6. Sits up with me – social hour!
6 – bath, dress, milk.
Bed – 6.45. Sleeps soon after.
Sleep till 10.30. then milk: sleeps again till morning.
Out of doors, if poss: all the time, except from 10.30 p.m till 6.30 am

[35]

4th May, M. has discovered my hair – pulls it hard, smiling gleefully.
wanted to feel everything on his way downstairs – the walls – the little window in the bathroom – pulled the curtain – fiddled with W.C. latch +c.
Oldhams to tea – great job because he was in "company" again. He certainly has a taste for society.
5th May. hands clutching at everything
brass handles, flowers, leaves, shining china, +c. Swings his orange ball round + round on its string. Investigates canopy rods
(ego – first sounds? e-go…)

May 13 – noticed his toes
absorbed in things on table
begins to sit up quite strongly.
pulls hair + goggles at E's face
with good direct aim

[36]

June 7 [pencil ends; black ink starts] swan [swam?] in bath. Interest in umwelt[2] more + more. My buttons, e.g., E's tie, fire irons.
June 22. Has begun to make noises a little like singing. Certainly variations in pitch.
Has learned to squeak high with delight.
Listens to piano, + dances. Difficult to tell whether he dances in time or not. Clutches at cats, + makes love to them with coos + gurgles. Follows them with his eyes.
Vulgar noises much appreciated.
Still inward turning escstatic eye when sucking, but more easily diverted by noise + movement – and often studies arm of chair or pattern of my overall. Has begun to see pictures on cloth +c. tried to pick up pictures on his quilt.
Not a tooth yet. But bites his hand sideways now instead of sucking, 50-50.

[verso; 61] Psychology of breast v. bottle.
vital connection with life – Universe

[2] The literal translation of 'umwelt' in German is 'environment'.

living link to everything, of course: mystical ∴, strongly emotional. Then finishing milk, not because it's exhausted – as bottle – but because time's up, or satisfied. Inexhaustibility of Nature apprehended. Also, (for older baby) bottle can be seen, diminishing fatally: milk breast is unknown – must evoke faith not reason.

[37]

Since unto us a son is given
How infinite is grown my worth!
For the round of my breast is all his heaven
And the spread of my knee his share of earth.

And since our love engendered him
How infinite his worth is grown,
Who now can stir each separate limb
And sleep and wake and laugh alone.

22nd June elephant – wow-wow! ba-ba-ba!
biting fist. [black ink ends]
[pencil starts] contemplating navel on pot is the parent of meditation
bites on fingers
a-a-ah- o-o-oh-
rrrrrr. eyes move without turning head
August 3. feverish – restless – cried a little
face very hot – Teeth finally pushing? [pencil ends]

[38]

[black ink starts] age 2 years nearly 2 months.
still not speaking: says – hein? Or something like it: not – mm – but huh? hein?
asking names of everything. says. aha! When s. successful: mam-mam, da-da, ta-ta. s. like O-dja. (O dear?) bwa-bwa-boo.

This morning I heard him talking a long time to himself again, trying over sounds as he used to do – da-da- ma-ma- na-na- ba-ba- va-va-va- (very loud)
sings long songs to himself, long wandering airs for minutes at a time.
boo = wickedness (bubbling in glass origin of it)
stamping in puddles = boo.

[39]

3½ age of defiance. Devotion to Sammy, the woolly dog.
No no no! Stamps feet and yells.
March 19 saw first me then Edwin in bath this morning. Mammy, get out! Slightly scared on my behalf, or disliked seeing me in unfamiliar circumstances. When I put on my combinations ran to me and turned his head in my tummy with a chuckle. Recognised me in a garment? Mammy in her skin is unfamiliar.
Two weeks ago first signs of pretend – imagination. The blue blocks = a car, with us all in it.
Make a garage – long train with different beads for different people. "I've lost M^{r} Barratt!'
Time + Space – progressing equally.
(Space had it at first?) Rotherfield, Crowborough.
school: Days of week. At first, where? Where's Crowborough? Where's mammy? Where's this, that + other? Delight of finding, of recognition – (earlier threw his things into flower beds for sake of losing-and-finding.) Time – breakfast, dinner, tea, landmarks of the day. Yesterday, today, tomorrow. Now days of week.

[40]

Has roads and directions mapped in his head. You can't fool him in the car: he knows when we turn home.
Learning names of everything. "Who's that?"
Nanny mustn't have Mrs Tweddle's cup.
Nanny mustn't put on her hat to go out into the yard, +c +c. Die-hard Tory!

(makes roads on our bed – up hill down dale home to Crowborough behind the pillow.)
Strong need for being in the focus – home.

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