The Heaven-Taught Ploughman and the Caledonian Boar: A Comparison of Robert Burns and James Hogg in Relation to the Concept of 'Natural Genius'

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Abstract

This thesis seeks to understand why Robert Burns was more successful in retaining the label of ‘natural genius’ than James Hogg, despite similarities in their writing, background and personalities. Chapter one establishes the definitions of the term ‘natural genius’, by referring to the work of a number of key Enlightenment figures including Thomas Blackwell, Alexander Gerard, James Beattie and David Hume. In chapter two the first notable poetry collections of

Burns and Hogg are examined, illustrating how each could fairly claim the title of ‘natural genius’. The comparison of the early reviews of their work, by Henry Mackenzie and John Wilson respectively, given in chapter three illustrates that Hogg seems to have been less successful in retaining the label. Chapter four explores how their reputations as natural geniuses were damaged and subsequently defended by themselves and their allies. This thesis concludes that it was the varying extent of this defence, combined with changes in the meaning of the term ‘natural genius’ in the Romantic period, which caused this disparity between the receptions of Burns and Hogg.

Contents

Introduction

The label of 'natural genius' has often been applied to Robert Burns (1759-1796) since his career began in the late 1780s. James Hogg (1770-1835) liked to style himself as Burns's successor, but this label was less consistently applied to him. This thesis will establish what it meant to be a natural genius during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and why both Burns and Hogg could fairly be described as such. Through an examination and comparison of their writings and their contemporary reception, the thesis will explore why both writers were regarded differently, and why, ultimately, Hogg found it more difficult than his predecessor to retain the title of natural genius.

The central themes of this thesis are established in chapter one, wherein several key Enlightenment writers and their criteria for genius are discussed. These themes focus on the education of genius, their individual characters and their place in wider society. Then each poet will be evaluated under these criteria to show that both could reasonably claim the title. Their contemporary receptions and discussions of their life in the immediate aftermath of their deaths will be reviewed to show the extent to which each were considered a natural genius. The differences in the time periods they wrote in, both politically and in relation to genius theory, will also be discussed to provide context for the differences in their reception.

The link between Hogg and Burns has been discussed previously by Kirsteen McCue, Douglas Mack and, to a lesser extent, David Groves. This link is important to describe at the beginning of this thesis because the stronger the link, the more striking the difference in their receptions. Additionally, an understanding of how they have been studied in relation to each other thus far will clarify the areas of new research in this thesis, such as the influence of the periodical press on each of the poets' reputations, and the extent to which each of their personalities fitted with the perceived ideal character for a genius.

McCue and Mack both discuss Hogg's aspiration to be seen as Burns's successor. McCue refers to Hogg's 1832 'Memoir of the Author's Life' from *Altrive Tales,* which Hogg claims took place in 1797, when he was seventeen:

> His fellow shepherd John Scott gave an inspirational recitation of 'Tam o'Shanter' and also told Hogg of Burns's life and death. Emotionally charged by the experience, Hogg writes that Scott described Burns as 'the sweetest poet that ever was born', but that he was 'now dead, and his place would never be supplied'. Hogg clearly regards this event

> as instrumental in his decision to become a writer and he states that his aim, at once, is to be Burns's successor.[1]

Douglas Mack describes this passage as "important for any assessment of Hogg's own understanding of his literary career"[2] and shows how it contributes to the image of Hogg as Burns's successor: "The ploughman Robert Burns, 'the sweetest poet that ever was born' had died 'last harvest;' and now John Scott passes on the flame to the young shepherd, James Hogg."[3] By mentioning Burns's then recent death, Hogg increases the sense of urgency around finding a successor, emphasising his passion to take up this position. This passion also emphasises his own heightened emotions, which was one of the components considered necessary for a natural genius. It was often ascribed to Burns, as will be shown in this thesis.

The link between the poets is also clear in their work, for example in the similarities between 'Tam o' Shanter' and Hogg's long narrative poem *The Queen's Wake*, for example their focus on rusticity. Burns contrasts Scottish music with newly arriving music from France:

> Nae cotillion brent new frae *France*,
> But hornpipes, jigs, strathspeys, and reels,
> Put life and mettle in their heels,[4]

This comparison associates Scottishness with the old, as described by Gerard Lee McKeever as "yoking his projection of the rustic (or a state of 'unimprovement') onto the idea of Scotland. He secures for Scottishness a robust aesthetic politics of the unimproved", in contrast to "dominant British culture" which sought to eliminate "Scotticisms". [5] Similarly, Hogg shows his explicit preference for music of the past:

> Then list, ye maidens, to my lay,
> Though old the tale, and past the day;
> Those wakes, now played by minstrels poor,
> At midnight's darkest, chilliest hour,
> Those humble wakes, now scorned by all,

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[1] Kirsteen McCue, "Singing 'more old songs than ever ploughman could': The Songs of James Hogg and Robert Burns in the Musical Marketplace", in *James Hogg and the Literary Marketplace: Scottish Romanticism and the Working-Class Author*, ed. Sharon Alker and Holly Faith Nelson (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2009), pp. 123-137, p. 123.
[2] Douglas Mack, 'James Hogg's First Encounter with Burns's Poetry', *Studies in Scottish Literature*, 37:1, 2012, pp. 122-130, p. 122.
[3] Ibid., p. 126.
[4] Robert Burns, 'Tam o' Shanter' in *The Poems and Songs of Robert Burns, Vol. 2,* ed. James Kinsley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968), pp. 557-564, pp. 560-561.
[5] Gerard Lee McKeever, 'Tam o' Shanter and Aesthetic Cultural Nationalism', *Studies in Scottish Literature,* 42:1, pp. 31-48, p. 36.

> Were first begun in courtly hall,
> When royal MARY, blithe of mood,
> Kept holiday at Holyrood.[6]

Again with more indignation than is ever present in 'Tam o' Shanter', the narrator makes clear that old music, performed now only by humble singers, is superior. As will be shown in chapter one, a preference for the past was common among genius theorists, so close alignment with Burns on this topic ought to have helped Hogg be perceived as Burns's successor as a natural genius.

Both McCue and Mack show that this image of Hogg as Burns's successor was purposefully constructed by Hogg. The first way Hogg attempted this construction was through analysis of the current literary marketplace to understand which metrics critics valued. One of his findings was the significance of Burns' legacy. Mack suggests that the passage in Hogg's memoir about his first hearing of Burns is of "great potential interest with regard to the extraordinary impact of Burns among younger Scots in the closing years of the eighteenth century."[7] As noted by Corey Andrews, young poets in the wake of Burns's death produced many elegies and homages to him.[8] Hogg likely noticed this phenomenon within the literary marketplace and sought to capitalise on it.

The second way in which Hogg sought to construct this image was by emphasising the similarities between himself and Burns. McCue notes Hogg understanding the advantages of his similarities to Burns: "By 1832 Hogg was aware of Burns's developing role within Scottish culture and that there was much to be gained by positioning himself, the Ettrick Shepherd, alongside the Ploughman Poet."[9] Hogg identifies the importance of Burns's rural background in his popularity and understands the opportunity this presented to emphasise his own rural background as a shepherd. McCue also shows how, by this time, Hogg was being associated with Burns: "On 25 January (Burns night) 1832, Hogg had been special guest at 'The Scotch Dinner' in the Freemason's Tavern in London."[10] Also in early 1832, the publisher Archibald Fullerton invited him to edit a new edition of Burns's works,[11] which shows that the image of

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[6] Ibid, p. 9.
[7] Ibid., p. 122.
[8] Corey Andrews, *The Genius of Scotland: The Cultural Production of Robert Burns, 1785-1834* (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill, 2015), Chapter Five: 'Great Shadow! Hide Thy Face': Scottish Poetry after Burns, 1797-1819, pp. 191-231. This chapter discusses the large shadow left by Burns's reputation that saw aspiring poets attempt to prove their worth by showing their intense appreciation of, or connection to, the late Robert Burns.
[9] McCue, p. 124.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Ibid., pp. 124-125.

Hogg at this time is closely associated with the study and appreciation of Burns. If Hogg's intention was to promote his own image, it would be sensible to solidify this association with another successful poet. Hogg's marketplace analysis and awareness that he is associated with Burns suggest that his claim to the position of Burns's successor is at least in part careful construction on Hogg's part.

Additionally, Mack frequently questions the reliability of one of the main components of Hogg's image construction, namely his moment of first hearing Burns's poetry. Mack refers to Donald Carswell's analysis to explain that everyone of Hogg's background would have heard of Burns by this time, and Hogg's employer would have known of him.[12] Additionally, Mack also states that in an earlier memoir[13] Hogg describes his first writing attempts and that it is therefore "hard to see how Hogg could resolve to become a poet in 1797, if he was already writing poetry in 1794."[14] For these logistical reasons, Hogg's account in the *Altrive Tales* memoir is difficult to credit as reliable. This increases the extent to which Hogg was undertaking a project of intentional image construction, as it could not have been a straightforward, honest relation of the event.

Furthermore, both McCue and Mack show that Hogg's presentation of himself as Burns's successor mostly took place at the end of his career, when he could be reflective. McCue writes: "Hogg was in a fine position to be able to set his own repertory alongside that of Burns and to show how successful he had been over his thirty years as a professional writer."[15] Similarly, Mack writes: "The story about the meeting with the 'half-daft' John Scott was written about thirty-five years after the event it purports to describe, at a time when Hogg was looking back over his long career as a writer while preparing a new version of his autobiographical 'Memoir'."[16] Hindsight would have helped Hogg to present his life and work in the optimal way to appear as Burns's successor.

Understanding that Hogg was engineering this image is important when justifying a comparative study of the two writers. On one hand, a high level of engineered image construction reduces the extent to which Hogg should be considered Burns's natural successor.

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[12] Mack, p. 123.
[13] In the 'Memoir' to the 1807 version of The Mountain Bard, Hogg writes: "The first time that I attempted to write verses, was in the spring of the year 1793." – James Hogg, *The Mountain Bard*, ed. Suzanne Gilbert (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), p. 11.
[14] Mack, p. 125.
[15] Ibid., p. 125.
[16] Mack, pp. 125-126.

On the other, Hogg's clear intent to position himself as Burns's successor should arguably have led to greater success. Doing so deliberately would have given him the opportunity to identify the key aspects of Burns's legacy and emphasise these in himself, as he did with their rural backgrounds. This intention increases the extent to which he could be seen as Burns's successor, in particular as a similar kind of natural genius and makes their differing receptions more significant. The clearer it is to the critics that Hogg and Burns satisfy the criteria of 'natural genius' in similar ways, the more likely it should be that they are both considered as such. If Burns is a natural genius for traits such as his rural background and emotional sensitivity – then these conditions being satisfied by Hogg should qualify him for the same status.

Both McCue and Mack also discuss whether Hogg was attempting to outdo Burns. McCue notes:

> Hogg continues that he has 'always been grieved' to see that so many of Burns's best songs are 'close imitations' […] What such comparisons certainly endorse, as suggested by the quotation at the beginning of this essay, is that Hogg saw himself as competing directly with Burns.[17]

Additionally, "beside Burns's note for 'The Waulkin' o' the Fauld' Hogg states that he knows of 'a far older set of this song than Burns speaks of […]'",[18] suggesting that in terms of knowledge of song, Hogg believes himself equipped to best Burns. Additionally, Mack quotes from the 1832 'Memoir': "though I might never equal him in some things, I thought I might excel him in others."[19] McCue notes Hogg's belief in his own knowledge of old song as possibly greater than that of Burns; Mack suggests that Hogg considered himself able to outdo Burns in at least the field of folk song collecting.

However, both Mack and McCue conclude that Hogg did not believe himself superior to Burns. Mack states:

> Audacious as it is, however, this claim does not amount to evidence of an ambition to replace Burns as the pre-eminent bard and spokesman of the non-elite people of Scotland. Instead, as he looks back over his literary career in his revised autobiographical "Memoir" of 1832, the author of *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824) is simply asserting that it had been his ambition

[17] McCue, p. 135.
[18] Ibid., p. 134.
[19] Mack, pp. 128-129.

> to try to continue Burns's project, and that he had attempted to do so, not as an imitator, but in his own distinctive way.[20]

While Hogg did not wish to be a follower, he did not necessarily have to present himself as superior either. Mack further argues this point: "Nevertheless, it also seems clear that he did not wish to be a mere imitator of his 'great and matchless predecessor.' Instead, he aspired to make his own distinctive contribution as he followed in Burns's footsteps."[21] Hogg could be Burns's equal, rather than a follower or a superior, by achieving success on a slightly different path. Meanwhile, McCue argues that "Hogg's 1832 'Memoir', in which he challenges Burns for the crown of national songster, suggests that by then he felt as though he may well have succeeded, but one suspects Hogg knew better."[22] McCue then cites Hogg's song written for the 1832 Burns Supper in which Hogg references that Burns really is "the blithest loon" that "ever sang aneath the moon".[23] Hogg's genuine respect and admiration of Burns is clear, and is evidence that Hogg understood he was not Burns's superior.

Mack and David Groves both agree that Hogg sincerely admired Burns. Mack notes: "Hogg's sincere regard for Burns is given eloquent expression in his poem "Robin's Awa!," with which he concludes his *Memoir of Burns*. "[…]Poor Jamie he blunders an' sings as he can;"[24] Given that several other Scottish poets of the time are also referenced here, Hogg is likely referencing himself, specifically detracting from his own talent in comparison to that of Burns, which shows that even in comparison to himself he holds Burns in extremely high regard. David Groves also notes a moment when Hogg directly praised Burns, in discussion of Burns's 'Elegy on Captain Henderson': "bring[ing] the scenes, the birds and flowers quite before the eyes of our imagination".[25] These references further increase the likelihood that Hogg was a great admirer of Burns, and that he was attempting to position himself as a successor.

It is certain that Hogg is playful with the representations of himself that he shares in his 'Memoir', showing inconsistency, which could undermine his perception as a natural genius. This is evidenced simply by the misuse of dates mentioned above. This inconsistency of Hogg's writing about himself is a common theme throughout his career. However, Burns's image was also frequently inconsistent. For example, he was often portrayed as an uneducated ploughboy,

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[20] Ibid., p. 129.
[21] Mack, p. 128
[22] McCue, p. 137. The title of the song referenced is 'Robin's Awa'. See McCue's footnote for details.
[23] Ibid.
[24] Mack, p. 129.
[25] David Groves, 'John Burrell, Robert Burns and James Hogg's Confessions', *Notes and Queries*, 49:1, 2002, pp. 44-46, p. 45.

despite his high-quality home-schooling. The first chapter of this thesis will show that inconsistency in theories of natural genius allowed Burns to maintain this image despite such contradictions. However, it is possible that by Hogg's time, the image of a natural genius was changing, and the criteria were becoming more rigid, meaning it was harder for Hogg to stay within its limits, especially with his tendency to be playful with his own biography.

Additionally, Hogg's own views align with some of the most agreed upon opinions on natural genius that will be discussed in chapter one. In his 2002 article on 'John Burrell, Robert Burns and James Hogg's Confessions', David Groves comments:

> Hogg's interest in Burrell, and other early writers, would be in keeping with his view that authors should 'step back to an early age' to gain 'fire and vigour' from writers 'of an early period of society, when a nation is verging from barbarism into civilisation'.
> […]
> Assuming they avoid direct imitation, such authors will, according to Hogg, 'imbibe the force of genius from its original source'.[26]

There are a number of theories of 'genius' which will be discussed in the first chapter of this thesis, but several writers agree that the past produced a greater number of natural geniuses. Hogg's similar interest in taking inspiration from poets of the past should suggest that he would fit easily into the image of 'natural genius', further increasing the need to examine why he was less able to do so than Burns.

In order to examine this difference, this thesis begins with an account of the characteristics deemed necessary in creating a natural genius in eighteenth-century Scotland. The second chapter will then outline how each of Burns and Hogg possess these characteristics, thus evidencing how each might be regarded as a natural genius. By focusing notably on the periodical press and responses to both writers, the third chapter will show the reality of how each were actually perceived. Many modern scholars have shown how Burns achieved this image, and how it stayed with him even when he no longer wanted it. Thus, this thesis will discuss in great depth one of the most important reviews of Burns, Henry Mackenzie's piece in *The Lounger*, rather than providing a wider overview. Less has been written about Hogg's reception as natural genius. Therefore, at times, Hogg receives more detailed examination in this thesis than Burns. Initially Hogg was perceived broadly as such, but later his reputation soured and the popular image of Hogg as 'The Caledonian Boar' rather obscured these earlier reviews of his natural genius. With such strong similarities between Burns and Hogg, the final chapter will explore why they were viewed and treated so differently. Was it due to changes to

[26] Ibid., p. 46

the meaning of ‘natural genius’ from the Enlightenment to the Romantic period, or differences between the poets themselves.

Chapter 1 – 'Natural Genius': Defining the Term

Eighteenth-century writers who discussed 'natural genius' often noted difficulties in defining the concept. 'Natural genius' was a concept discussed in many different cultures, but the eighteenth-century Scottish context is particularly important because this is the place and time period in which Burns was writing. The meaning of the term had developed new dimensions by Hogg's time, a discussion particularly guided by periodicals like *Blackwoods*. This later context will be discussed, but since Hogg was attempting to emulate Burns specifically, the context in which Burns was writing is particularly important.

The history of writers contending with such difficulties is extensively described by Alexander Gerard (1728-1795) at the opening of *An Essay on Genius* (1774):

> Far from taking a complete survey of this curious region [human nature], men have satisfied themselves with some random incursions, visiting only a few tracts which happened to engage their curiosity, and penetrating into these, only so far as some present view required.[1]

Gerard describes writers presenting low quality work on the topic of genius, using only examples proving their own view. Many of the writers in question were involved with Marischal College, Aberdeen, including James Beattie (1735-1803), Gerard himself and earlier Thomas Blackwell (1701-1757). Ronnie Young describes this as a "nexus [that] created a complex yet surprisingly localised context for the development of critical discourses on poetic genius."[2] A "nexus" would suggest an element of continuity, especially since, as Young notes, Beattie was taught by Gerard in his final year, and Gerard and Blackwell also studied together.[3] However, the truth of Gerard's evaluation is demonstrated by the unfocused nature of genius studies as a discipline. There is little agreement about the qualities of a genius, and often two theories will directly contradict each other, without one view ever prevailing. A writer could retain a perception as a 'natural genius' despite failing to adhere to one or more key qualities. This chapter will survey these qualities, then show how such conflicts arise. In doing so it will discuss the work of eighteenth-century writers and the contemporary scholarship of, amongst others, Corey Andrews and Ronnie Young.

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[1] Alexander Gerard, *An Essay on Genius* (London: W Strathan, 1774), p. 2, https://archive.org/details/essayongenius00gera/mode/2up, [accessed 4.4.20].
[2] Ronnie Young, 'James Beattie and the Progress of Genius in the Aberdeen Enlightenment', *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 36:2 (2013), pp. 245-261, p. 246.
[3] Ibid., pp. 248-249.

The most striking area of disagreement among eighteenth-century commentators is on the subject of education. Scottish philosopher David Hume (1711-1776) presents the most emphatic argument in favour of education. In *Essays, Moral, Political, and Literary* (1758), he argues: "The richest genius, like the most fertile soil, when uncultivated shoots up into the rankest of weeds."[4] Gerard agrees with Hume on the consequences of genius untamed by education: "Mere imagination, it is true, will not constitute genius. If fancy were left entirely to itself, it would run into wild caprice and extravagance, unworthy to be called invention."[5] The consistent theme here is that natural talent is important, but will be its own downfall if left unchecked. Hume and Gerard clearly considered education crucial to the natural genius, whose talent will otherwise be in danger of corruption. Corey Andrews provides additional information on Hume's position: "Hume ultimately values artworks that conform to 'rules of art' (which emphasise the 'consistence and uniformity of the whole'). Only through such conformity can an artwork be evaluated and founded 'more or less perfect'."[6] For geniuses to produce great works, they need to meet general standards of taste, so that their contribution can be meaningfully assessed, further emphasising the need for a genius to be educated about those standards. A genius must therefore be educated about both historical and contemporary literature, so that they have an awareness of the literary history they are aligning themselves with.

Education as a means of acquiring the necessary taste to be a successful genius is well supported. Gerard does not discuss education frequently, but does argue:

> A GOOD deal of previous knowledge is likewise necessary for a person's executing in any of the arts. Knowledge, for instance, of the words of a language, of its structure, of the measures which suit it, is prerequisite to the poet.[7]

"Structure" and "measures which suit it" are similar to the prescriptive rules of art which Hume requires a genius to be aware of. Understanding the standards recognised by critics and readers as a prerequisite for a poet is noted by Andrews, who explains: "the production of 'literature' depends upon the nature of an already constituted literary object/text that is recognised and 'decoded' by knowledgeable readers and writers."[8] Writers must understand the 'code' agreed

[4] David Hume, *Essays, Moral, Political, and Literary* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1875), p. 204.
[5] Gerard, p. 36.
[6] Andrews, p. 52.
[7] Gerard, p. 421.
[8] Andrews, p. 17.

upon by the critics who construct the literary marketplace, as this is the manner in which they expect literature to be produced. Education is therefore necessary for interpreting these codes.

However, several writers argue directly opposing views. In *An enquiry into the life and writings of Homer* (1735), Thomas Blackwell mostly discusses ancient geniuses, describing their relationships to education:

> I do not say that *Homer* or *Heliod* had no Learning of this sort [learned by Books]: But perhaps the less of it the better. *Scholastick* Turn, *Technical* Terms, imaginary Relations, and wire-drawn Sciences, spoil the natural Faculties, and marr the Expression.[9]

Blackwell clearly believes that education spoils a natural genius's talents, a belief contradicting the view that education prevents genius from spoiling itself.

Contemporary criticism has provided other examples of views opposed to education. Andrews cites genius theorist William Duff[10] (1732-1815): "Duff strenuously argues against the need for 'an original poetic genius' to be educated, arguing that an 'effect of learning is, to ENCUMBER and OVERLOAD the mind of an original Poetic Genius'."[11] Additionally, Valentina Bold mentions an anecdote of "The English Chartist Thomas Cooper [who] claimed that a careful reading of rhetorician and theorist Hugh Blair's (1718-1800) *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* (1783) destroyed his creative impulses, ending 'the desire of composing poetry of my own'."[12] Cooper's experience suggests that immersion in contemporary standards of taste and polite letters was not always considered creatively productive, and thus could be harmful to genius.

Not all thinkers considered education either necessary or harmful. Poet and philosopher James Beattie argues: "to be a great poet, painter, musician, historian, or philosopher, one must have

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[9] Thomas Blackwell, *An enquiry into the life and writings of Homer* (London: 1735), https://archive.org/details/enquiryintolifew00blac/mode/2up/search/technical [accessed 2.4.20], p. 125.

[10] Andrews discusses two works on genius by Duff: *Critical Observations on the Writings of the Most Celebrated Original Geniuses in Poetry* (London: T. Becket and P. A. De Hondt, 1770) which focused on the character of geniuses and *Essay on Original Genius* (London: 1767) in which he focused on the nature of genius itself.

[11] Andrews, pp. 62-63.

[12] Valentina Bold, *James Hogg: A Bard of Nature's Making* (Bern: Peter Lang AG, 2007), p. 19. This book covers a similar topic to this thesis, but there is a key difference worth noting. Bold's book talks about the "autodidact" rather than the "natural genius". Hogg's position as an autodidact is evident from his biography alone, so as a label its use for him does not require justification in the way that "natural genius" does. Thus, this thesis differs significantly from this book, as more of this thesis is dedicated to defining "natural genius" and showing Hogg ought to have been considered as such. Additionally, as will be shown in the rest of this chapter, there is more to "natural genius" than autodidacticism, so they can be considered two distinct terms.

not only that capacity which is common to all men of sense, but also a particular and distinguishing Genius, which learning may improve, but cannot bestow."[13] Beattie suggests that natural ability is more important than education. It is not actively harmful, but not as crucial as Hume and Gerard suggest.

Ronnie Young's reading of Beattie's work, focusing on his long narrative poem *The Minstrel* (Book 1: 1771, Book 2: 1774),[14] also draws attention to Beattie's views on education and genius: "Book I, published in 1771, deals with Edwin's childhood and the flights of his untutored fancy during his solitary wanderings and as he reacts to the natural world around him."[15] This positive image of creativity unrestricted by education could suggest that Beattie believed a genius ought not to be educated. However, Young also notes:

> Beattie presents the reader with not so much of a fable as a philosophical exploration of poetic development according to the factors used at the time in the analysis of genius. Such factors included natural ability, the right kinds of education, environment and the period in which the individual lives.[16]

This allusion to "the right kinds of education" implies that education neither inherently helps nor hinders genius, but that particular forms can be useful. Young shows how the poem promotes education which prepares geniuses for participation in society, and describes this as "In line with the reformist views of Beattie's colleagues at Marischal.", where a debate about the importance of education for a genius had been taking place.[17]

These writings thus present three different ideas of how education might interact with genius: firstly, that education is crucial for a genius, so that their talent does not become unruly; secondly, that education smothers creativity and ruins genius; and thirdly, that genius relies more on natural ability and that, while education might be beneficial, it is not necessary.[18] This is a demonstration of contradictions and inconsistencies that could arise within genius theory. Neither side effectively proved the other wrong, as there is little direct engagement with the reasons given by each side. One possible line of rebuttal can be seen in Beattie's writing: "why

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[13] James Beattie, *Dissertations Moral and Critical* (London: W. Strathan, 1783), p. 153.
[14] James Beattie, *The minstrel; or, the progress of genius: and other poems ... To which is prefixed, a life of the author.* (Edinburgh: Thomas Oliver, 1804).
[15] Young, p. 246.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Ibid., p. 252.
[18] This does not mean that valuing education means one cannot value natural ability. Hume himself promoted the need for natural ability: "How poor are those songs, where a happy flow of fancy has not furnished materials for art to embellish and refine!" (p. 197).

have not all children the same turn of genius, who have had the same education?"[19] However, this only argues that, whilst neither harmful nor crucial, education is not in itself enough. For the most part, neither extreme is proved more than the other.

In terms of education, therefore, writers in the 1780s are left with two separate, mutually exclusive methods of being validated as a natural genius. The genius can either be educated or not, without their image being undermined. For example, Burns can have received reasonable education without this undermining the image of the heaven-taught ploughman, as the following chapter of this thesis will show.

There is also disagreement about whether a genius ought to participate in wider society. Young notes: "Beattie goes further in outlining 'Good Sense' as Horace's recommendation for 'the man of genius' to mingle in society and observe human nature directly. Judgement entails not only imaginative self-regulation but also direct social engagement."[20] The dangers of isolation are also described by Beattie. He argues that some poets of the past:

> shut themselves up in cells, avoiding the senses of observation and business, and when they showed themselves in publick, affected a total disregard to the customs of the world: as if ignorance, rusticity and madness could qualify them for instructing or entertaining mankind.[21]

Beattie's vision of a mentally ill hermit with no understanding of society is striking, and likely to greatly strengthen the argument in favour of societal participation. As noted above by Young, education that prepared a genius for a role in society was favoured by Beattie and other educational reformists at Marischal college at the time.

Hume argues that not only should a genius participate in society, they should be useful: "To be successful in the former way [in a Republic], it is necessary for a man to make himself *useful*, by his industry, capacity or knowledge […] A strong genius succeeds best in republics".[22] Hume's argument suggests that a genius must have another occupation alongside writing. Young notes another instance in which Beattie agrees with this aspect of societal participation: "one early letter by Beattie did suggest that Edwin's future utility might involve resisting invading Danes. Such a sentence hints at an underlying civic humanist outlook as it stresses an

[19] Beattie, p. 156.
[20] Young, p. 256. The 'judgement' here refers to Gerard's argument that judgement was required to refine imaginative talents.
[21] Beattie, p. 147.
[22] Hume, p. 186-187.

active, patriotic role for the poet."[23] Beattie's Edwin is an examination of what it is that makes a natural genius.[24] Thus, casting him as someone whose writing worked towards a specific goal suggests that Beattie agrees that a genius should participate usefully in wider society.

To some extent, Blackwell agrees with Beattie. He examines Homer in depth and describes his societal participation as follows: "[Homer] was not engaged in Affairs himself, to draw off his Attention; but he wander'd through the various Scenes, and observed them at leisure."[25] Blackwell argues that Homer succeeded not necessarily by partaking in industry as Hume suggests, but still by observing society. He thereby avoided the dangerous isolation that Beattie describes. Blackwell therefore does not see Homer's genius as having originated from participation in society, but supports it at least to the extent of being immersed enough to understand society well.

The closest that a writer comes to opposing societal participation directly is Gerard, when he argues that a poet does not require personal experience of a subject:

> When the painter draws a figure or a landscape, when the poet conceives a description, a character, or an event, it may be such as he has really observed and remembers, and many only be by fancy drawn out of the repository of memory, and applied in the proper place. But it is not of importance whether it be or not; its being attested by memory, its being exactly like to something observed, are not the circumstances to which the artist principally attends: though it has never been observed, it may be productive of *beauty*, and this is all that is required in the arts.[26]

As with most of Gerard's arguments, he contends that genius is an internal psychological process that has little to do with outside influence. However, this argument does not consider societal participation as harmful, only unnecessary.

However, implicit in the widespread critique of modern life are arguments which oppose societal participation. Hume argues firstly that a modern environment is too reserved for the strong emotions poetry requires: "our modern customs, or our superior good sense, if you will, should make our orators more cautious and reserved than the ancient, in attempting to inflame

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[23] Young, p. 257.

[24] Young notes that Beattie described his aim this way: "My design was, to trace the progress of a Poetical Genius, born in a rude and illiterate age, from the first dawnings of fancy and reason, till that period of which he may be supposed capable of supporting the character of A MINSTREL, that is, of an itinerant poet and musician." (p. 251).

[25] Blackwell, p. 23.

[26] Gerard, p. 362.

the passions, or to elevate the imaginations of their audience."[27] Secondly, he argues that participation in modern society leaves little time for poets to seek inspiration: "But how shall a modern lawyer have leisure to quit his toilsome occupations, in order to gather the flowers of PARNASSUS?"[28]

These arguments might suggest a natural genius can never arise in a society like that of eighteenth-century Scotland. However, the qualities of modern society blamed for this decay in creativity are not universal to all of Scotland in the 1780s. Blackwell writes:

> Moderns admire nothing but Pomp, and can think nothing *Great* or *Beautiful*, but what is the Produce of Wealth, they exclude themselves from the pleasantest and most natural Images that adorned the old Poetry. *State* and *Form* disguise Man; and Wealth and Luxury disguise Nature.[29]

The components of modern society which Blackwell takes issue with are the strict hierarchy and the focus on acquisition of wealth.[30] Young also notes agreement from Hugh Blair and William Duff, who "argued that modern society communicates with a commercial and rational language unfavourable to natural or passionate expression."[31] Here too it is the seeking of wealth ("commercial") and the ordering of society ("rational") that the deterioration of modern creativity is ascribed to. This is significant because a writer unaffected by these two factors cannot be seen to have been corrupted by modern rigidity, as they have not encountered it, for example, writers who come from a rural or agrarian background. Scott R. MacKenzie describes the concept of viewing contemporary writers as part of the past as 'Pastoral Modernity':

> What I am calling pastoral modernity takes shape over the course of the eighteenth century and requires an unspoken conflation of vernacular culture with neo-classical representations of the rustic: the rural laboring class (especially in the Celtic periphery) come to be seen as actual existing Arcadians.[32]

By occupying this space, it would therefore have been possible for a poet existing physically in the present to have avoided the harms which that usually entailed.

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[27] Hume, p. 169.
[28] Ibid., p. 168.
[29] Blackwell, p. 25.
[30] Also relevant here is: Adam Smith, *An inquiry into the nature and causes of the wealth of nations* (London: W. Strahan and T. Cadell, 1776). As one of the most influential texts of the time, its definition of restriction as regulations on the free market would have had a large impact on what writers meant by "free" in this time.
[31] Young, p. 249.
[32] Scott R. MacKenzie, 'Pastoral against Pastoral Modernity: Voices of Shepherds and Sheep in James Hogg's Scotland', *European Romantic Review*, 26:5, 2015, pp. 527-549, p. 529.

Andrews describes the increase in validation of the rural poet: "Unlike Theocritean idylls with their cast of lounging and loving shepherds and shepherdesses, the eighteenth-century variant strongly accented the labour that defined the poet's core identity."[33] Not only was it viable to be a poet from a rural background, increasingly such poets could be seriously considered as a credible genius. Rather than a pastoral caricature, they now satisfied the criteria of hailing from a pastoral idyll as well as from a labouring class.[34] Hume does object to this validation: "poverty and hard labour debase the minds of the common people, and render them unfit for any science and ingenious profession".[35] However, Beattie argues: "Genius is not confined to particular professions, or to any one rank of life."[36] This is where the conflict in terms of societal participation arises, as even interaction in a rural, labouring environment is harmful to genius, by Hume's analysis.

In contrast to the debate about education, this conflict includes tensions within writers' own arguments. For example, Hume argues simultaneously that a genius must make themselves useful, but that a modern lawyer would have no time to seek inspiration. How could a writer be expected to participate in society if that participation prevented them from accessing the source of their creativity? Writers who argue for societal participation are critical of the modern society that writers would engage in. This could suggest that they specifically meant participation in rural life, but it is not clear from Beattie's criticism of "rusticity" or Hume's favour towards "industry" that this was the intent. It is therefore not entirely clear from these arguments to what extent a genius should participate in society, though a rural background was likely to help in shielding them from the damaging effects of modern, urban life.

As Katie Trumpener has noted, there is another way in which contemporaries assessed the issue of genius and societal participation. She defines two different types of bardic figure. The first is an isolated rural figure, the other a national voice, which is similar to the contrast between isolated rural genius and the genius who is part of wider society. It is important to note that there are several ways in which "bards" are discussed in literary scholarship. For example, Andrews sets up a contrast between the "bard" and the "minstrel":

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[33] Andrews, p. 35.
[34] A relevant text is *Class and the Canon: Constructing Labouring-Class Poetry and Poetics, 1780-1900*, ed. Kirstie Blair and Mina Gorji (Chippenham and Eastbourne: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013). This book examines the growing understanding of the concept of a labouring-class poet in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.
[35] Hume, p. 245.
[36] Beattie, p. 153.

> The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines 'minstrel' generically as 'a person employed by a patron to provide entertainment by singing, playing music, storytelling, juggling, etc'. On the other hand, 'bard' is defined with specific reference to history and nationality as 'an ancient Celtic order of minstrel-poets, whose primary function appears to have been to compose and sing (usually to the harp) verses celebrating the achievement of chiefs and warriors'. Thus, although both minstrels and bards are invested with great communal significance, they perform for very different purposes, the minstrel for the pleasure of a specific audience and the bard for the preservation of national lore and legend.[37]

While Trumpener's thesis opens up a much wider discussion here, the differences between the roles of isolated and national bard are of particular interest to the discussion in this thesis. Additionally, both Burns and Hogg at similar points in their careers tried to style themselves as bards in self-written prefaces for their early volumes of work.[38] For both these reasons, it is important to examine specifically these two types of "bard", the isolated romantic and the national voice, and discuss their interaction with the idea of natural genius.

Trumpener describes her first bard as speaking or singing for their nation: "For nationalist antiquaries, the bard is the mouthpiece for a whole society, articulating its values, chronicling its history, and mourning the inconsolable tragedy of its collapse."[39] This activity is not only societal participation, but a way for a poet to be useful, for which Hume advocated. Trumpener describes her second bard by noting that: "English poets, in contrast, imagine the bard (and the minstrel after him) as an inspired, isolated and peripatetic figure."[40] This idea of a poet aligns much more with the image of the rural genius safely isolated from modern society's corrupting influences.

A focus on nation is present in several of the writers discussed in this chapter, but does not always link directly into a sense of bardic figure, or align perfectly with either type. As Young notes, Blackwell discusses the influence of nation on the figure of the poet:

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[37] Andrews, p. 38.

[38] Burns's preface to the Kilmarnock edition will be discussed in greater detail in subsequent chapters, and Hogg's positioning of himself as a national bard in the preface to *The Mountain Bard* has been mentioned in the introduction to this thesis.

[39] Katie Trumpener, *Bardic Nationalism: The Romantic Novel and the British Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), p. 6. A similar bardic technique can be seen in James Macpherson's *Ossian*, which James Mulholland notes as: "The multiple forms of direct address that Macpherson employs throughout his Ossian poems create a participatory mode of reading." (James Mulholland, 'James Macpherson's Ossian Poems, Oral Traditions, and the Invention of Voice', *Oral Tradition*, 24:2, 2009, pp. 393-414, p. 407). *Ossian* engages in society not only by speaking for it, but also by creating a sense of dialogue between the speaker and the audience or reader.

[40] Ibid., p. 6.

> Furthermore, the 'State of the Country' in which the individual is bred and the manners and constitution of that country act as accidental causes which have a constitutive effect on individual character: 'they make us *what we are* in so far as they reach our sentiments, and give us a peculiar turn and appearance.'[41]

Blackwell seems to have considered the cultural customs of a nation to have a noticeable effect on a writer. Furthermore, the land itself is considered to have an influence, at least on Homer:[42]

> I incline rather to observe, That he is generally reputed to have been a Native of *Asia the less*; a Tract of Ground that for the Temperature of the *Climate*, and Qualities of the *Soil*, may vye with any in Europe. It is not so far and fruitful as the Plains of Babylon or Banks of the *Nile*, to effeminate the Inhabitants, and beget Laziness and Inactivity: But the Purity and Benignity of the Air, the Varieties of the Fruits and Fields, the Beauty and the Number of the Rivers, and the constant Gales from the happy Isles of the western Sea, *all conspire* to bring its Productions of every kind to the highest Perfection.[43]

Blackwell argues the physical land in which Homer wrote was not plentiful enough to corrupt him, but rather pure, windy and full of rivers. This image of hardy land is similar to the perception of rural Scotland (and rural locations in general) as integral in producing geniuses. The extent to which Blackwell considered a nation to influence a writer is important to note in this section because the more a writer is considered a product of nation, the more effectively they will be a mouthpiece for it. Andrews explains: "The idea that such genius best expresses the nation's essential character became a rallying cry for nationalists early in the eighteenth century, particularly in Scotland."[44] There was therefore a link between a poet being formed by the nation, and the resulting sense of nationality in that poet's voice. Blackwell does not seem to consider this a crucial role for Homer, but his idea of a poet's role has been shown to be the observation and description of life. If the poet is influenced so crucially by nation, and their purpose is to describe the lives they see, that suggests they will frequently depict life specific to their nation, turning theirs into a national voice.

Hume agrees to some extent about nation forming character, but stops short of agreeing with the influence of physical landscape. He refers to the existence of national characters[45] but argues:

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[41] Young, p. 5.

[42] Blackwell considers Homer a perfect example of natural genius, so his analysis of what made Homer great is important in understanding what the term 'natural genius' meant to Blackwell.

[43] Blackwell, p. 5.

[44] Andrews, p. 13.

[45] Hume, p. 248. He discusses the formation of 'national character' as depending on the manners of men in the beginning of a society. On p. 249 he argues "all national characters, where they depend not on fixed

> though nature produces all kinds of temper and understanding in great abundance, it does not follow, that she always produces them in like proportions, and that in every society the ingredients of industry and indolence, valour and cowardice, humanity and brutality, wisdom and folly, will be mixed after the same manner.[46]

Hume seems to believe that while there can be some things which influence everyone within a nation, nature is not one of them. This partial agreement with Blackwell starts to show that the discussion is not as simple as promoting one type of bard or the other.[47] Acting as a national voice could be one way for a genius to participate in society, but as with other avenues, there is not clear agreement on its validity.

Further lack of clarity arises in discussion of the use of Scots, particularly in relation to Beattie. Andrews describes how language usage was affected by national identity: "as in Forbes's *True Scots Genius,* Watson sees the task of poets (and editors) as reviving the 'spirit' of Scotland, while Beattie envisions a future when Scots can no longer be recognised as such because of their linguistic 'improvement'."[48] Beattie's aspiration would suggest that he supports the isolated genius/bard, but, as already mentioned, Young has pointed to Beattie's wish to create Edwin as a participative and patriotic bard. Actively altering one's vocabulary to better fit English culture could be described as participation, which could partially explain Beattie promoting participation for a genius. Nevertheless, generally the bardic model that promotes participative patriotism also promotes Scottishness, which complicates Beattie's position, and makes the distinction between the two kinds of bard less clear.

Blackwell also engages with the Scots language, albeit indirectly, describing ideal language use as follows:

> While a Nation continues simple and sincere, whatever they say receives a *Weight* from *Truth:* Their Sentiments are strong and honest; which always produce fit *Words* to express them: Their Passions are sound and genuine, not unadulterated or disguised, and break out in their own artless Phrase and unaffected Stile.
> […]
> A LANGUAGE thoroughly polished in the modern Sense, will not descend to the *Simplicity* of Manners absolutely necessary in *Epic-Poetry*[49]

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moral causes, proceed from such accidents as these". It is clear he subscribes to the concept of a national character in general.

[46] Ibid, p.248.

[47] Hume is also internally contradictory on the matter of participation, arguing that a poet should make themselves useful, but also arguing that a poet with regular employment will have no time to seek inspiration. Arguably Hume has difficulties in fully supporting either type of bard/genius.

[48] Andrews, p. 25.

[49] Blackwell, p. 56, p. 60.

Given the language debate that was ongoing,[50] this is most likely a reference to the 'polishing' away of Scotticisms. Blackwell therefore adds language to the list of things restricted by modern society, introducing a Scottish national characteristic, namely a longing for the past.

Gerard says little about nation, focusing mainly on the poet's internal psychology, which aligns well with the distinction between the kinds of bard. Gerard has already been shown to argue that outside influence is not necessary for a poet, aligning him more with the isolated bard/genius, who writes more personally than their patriotic counterpart. Gerard's focus on internal psychology is crucial for the appreciation of a genius's individual personality, which is something engaged in by most critics in some way. Firstly, Gerard discusses genius as an internal imaginative process:

> GENIUS is properly the faculty of *invention* […] We may ascribe taste, judgement, or knowledge, to a man who is incapable of invention; but we cannot reckon him a man of genius. […] whether he has discovered any new principle in science, or invented any new art, or carried those arts which are already practiced, to a higher degree of perfection, than former masters?[51]

Thus invention, as opposed to knowledge, is an imaginative process, relying on individual creativity. Most of Gerard's writing focuses on how invention operates within the mind, and co-operates with other internal processes like judgement.[52] This focus on the mind suggests there is an inherent superiority in a genius's imaginative powers. Andrews argues that Gerard "focused on the necessary mental powers displayed by poetic genius rather than scrutinising its possessor's character or personality."[53] Nevertheless, the creativity necessary for invention is a personality trait which originates in the writer's nature.

A genius is also considered to have powerful emotions, and the ability to inspire those emotions in audiences. Blackwell writes:

> Few are capable of Pleasures purely intellectual; and every Creature is capable of being pleased or disquieted in some degree by the Fancy. Hence, plain naked Truth is either not perceived, or soon disrelished. But the Man that can give his Ideas *Life* and *Colouring,* and render the subtile Relations and mutual Influences of natural Causes sensible and striking; that can bestow upon them a *human Appearance,* and then weave

[50] As has been referred to by McKeever in the introduction of this thesis when he described the elimination of 'Scotticisms'.
[51] Gerard, p. 8.
[52] Gerard does discuss 'habit' at length, which has a component of outside influence as its origin, but it is discussed in relation to how the mind forms habit and how habit influences the rest of the mind.
[53] Andrews, p. 60.

> them into a strange and passionate Story; to *Him* we listen with Wonder, and greedily learn his soothing Tale.[54]

By contrasting 'Fancy' and the 'Passions' in writing against intellectual capability, Blackwell crystallises the powers to inspire emotion that a genius must possess. Gerard also argues that the genius must have a particularly emotional personality, in order to best express passion to others: "No man can be an accomplished orator, who is not possessed of such sensibility of heart, as to be actuated at pleasure by the passions which he would excite in others."[55] Beattie agrees that personality affects writing, discussing the personalities of Swift and Addison,[56] though he does not specify which personality type a genius should have. Young also writes about Blair, who believed Ossian, framed as a natural genius,[57] had "an exquisite sensibility of heart".[58] Sensibility here seems to mean extreme emotional sensitivity, the kind that can inspire strong emotions in others through their words; therefore emotional sensitivity is a clear requirement for genius.[59] 'Sensibility' is also important in Wordsworth's later refinement of the definition in the preface to *Lyrical Ballads*:

> What is a Poet? He is a man speaking to men: a man, it is true, endued with more lively sensibility, more enthusiasm and tenderness, who has a greater knowledge of human nature, and a more comprehensive soul, than are supposed to be common among mankind.[60]

Wordsworth and the developments of the definition are discussed further in chapter four of this thesis, but it is clear that exceptional strength of emotion is a common thread amongst many definitions of genius.

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[54] Blackwell, p. 149.

[55] Gerard, p. 66.

[56] Beattie: "Wit and humour, when united, as in Swift, with misanthropy, pride and indignation, will vent itself in such virulent ridicule, as makes men despise and hate one another: but if accompanied with mildness and benevolence, may give rise to that good-natured jocularity, which we admire in Addison" (p. 157).

[57] This thesis will not examine Ossian in great detail, because MacPherson's project is not directly comparable with the careers of Hogg and Burns, but a relevant source for this is: Fiona Stafford, *The sublime savage : a study of James MacPherson and the poems of Ossian* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1988).

[58] Young, p. 24.

[59] Further understandings of the concept of 'sensibility' can be found in: Janet Todd, *Sensibility : an introduction* (London: Methuen, 1986). For example, having discussed Mackenzie's claim that his writing should be understood as moral instruction (pp. 91-92), she notes of the time period in which he wrote: "In these later works of the 1760s and 1770s, sentiments are clearly outflowings of emotion, rather than emotion combined with moral reflections, and characters teach response more than virtuous action. The hero is not a pattern for life, although authors still make the ritual claim." (p. 92).

[60] William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Lyrical Ballads*, ed. R. L. Brett and A. R. Jones (London and New York: Routledge, 1968), p. 300.

Hume also believed a genius's personality was so striking that they easily gained respect wherever they went: "whenever the true genius arises, *he* draws to him the attention of every one, and immediately appears superior to his rival."[61] To gain such respect, a genius must possess compelling charisma. This aspect does not occur much in the works of the other writers discussed, but is not disagreed with either.

These qualities – imagination, emotional sensitivity and charisma – argue in favour of genius originating from within, rather than developing under the influence of external factors. To some extent, this supports the theory that outside influence is harmful to genius, as these are the natural qualities which would be suppressed by an orderly, restrictive societal structure. However, in order for a genius to gain the automatic respect that their superior personality demands, as Hume argues, it would be necessary to participate in society. Only by interacting with other writers and citizens can a genius be recognised for these traits. Gerard's focus on a genius's internal psychology does not therefore answer the question of whether a genius should be participatory, leaving both participation and isolation as viable options.

This chapter's survey has found that the theories of what made a genius were often mutually exclusive, or at least unrelated to each other. Education could be harmful or helpful, or neither. Societal participation could help writers understand the world, or expose them to oppressive, overly ordered societal structures. Additionally, if the way in which a genius participates in society is by becoming a national mouthpiece, then the debate can be reframed to include discussion of the "bard" as described by Trumpener. As with societal participation, there is disagreement amongst Enlightenment thinkers about the extent to which a bard should take up such a national role. There is however agreement that geniuses have a particular character, i.e. emotional sensitivity, charisma and imagination, but this agreement does not interact much with the rest of the debate.

A writer intending to be viewed as a natural genius could be educated or uneducated, participatory or isolated, national voice or individual speaker. Burns, therefore, could easily be a considered a natural genius as he displayed several of the qualities favoured by a wide range of contemporary thinkers. Once he acquired the image, it stayed with him whether he wanted it to or not, regardless of his levels of education or subsequent participation in society. Coming

[61] Hume, p. 172.

to public attention several years after Burns's death, Hogg, despite also satisfying many of these criteria, found it more difficult to retain the label of 'natural genius'.

The following chapters of this thesis will show how both Burns and Hogg satisfy the criteria presented above. Their varying success and failures in this regard will be examined and reasons posited for why this epithet was ultimately more successful for Burns than Hogg. Conflicts in genius theory have been shown in order to argue that Burns had less strict criteria to adhere to, but also that the definitions of natural genius evolved differently before and during Hogg's career. The examination of the poets begins in the next chapter with a comparison of their first key publications. The chapter will explore how each writer situated themselves within this framework of genius in these early, pivotal published collections.

Chapter 2 – First Collections

Having established in chapter one the criteria for what was considered to make a 'natural genius', chapter two will review the poetry of Burns and Hogg to show how well they align with these criteria. The chapter will focus on Burns's *Poems, Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect* (1786) and Hogg's *The Mountain Bard* (1807), as these were similar moments in the respective careers of each. *The Mountain Bard* was not Hogg's first collection of poetry, but by his own admission in his 'Memoir' attached to the volume, it is his first of any note. Thus, the two collections were similar moments of arrival for both poets as they announced themselves on the literary scene. Moreover, both collections had long-lasting consequences for each writer's career, thus enabling a fruitful comparison. By the end of this chapter, it will be clear that both poets showed great versatility and were able to satisfy several different criteria of what it meant to be a natural genius.

Poems, Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect (1786)

Chapter one showed how education was seen simultaneously as crucial and dangerous in genius theory. 'The Vision' by Burns shows how this contradiction existed within one poet. He repeatedly displays his education, while simultaneously the Coila character describes this talent as 'heaven sent', suggesting he was more untamed. Nigel Leask notes Burns's use of traditional form: "The autobiographical elements and descriptive realism of the poem's opening stanzas set the stage for Coila's sudden visionary apparition, according to the narrative conditions of medieval dream poetry."[1] By adhering to such an ancient poetic form, Burns illustrates his own education, showing that he is well-read and nuanced in his knowledge of poetic techniques. Burns is also more explicit about his levels of education when he has Coila refer to the work of James Beattie, who has been discussed extensively in chapter one of this thesis:

> Hence, sweet harmonious Beattie sung
> His "Minstrel lays";[2]

It should be clear to a reader by this point that Burns is widely read.

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[1] Nigel Leask, *Robert Burns and Pastoral* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 99.
[2] Robert Burns, 'The Vision' (Kinsley, Vol. 1, pp. 103-113), p. 110. Hereafter K62.

However, within the poem Burns's talent is also portrayed as instilled from birth by a higher power:

> 'I mark'd thy embryo-tuneful flame,
> 'Thy natal hour.
>
> 'With future hope, I oft would gaze,
> 'Fond, on thy little, early ways,
> 'Thy rudely-caroll'd, chiming phrase,
> 'In uncouth rhymes,
> 'Fir'd at the simple, artless lays
> 'Of other times.[3]

In these lines not only does Coila claim to be responsible for his talent, as she marks him from birth, she also aligns Burns with the poets of the past. Those poets are described as "artless", suggesting untrained talent, uncomplicated by formal tuition. This description is contradictory with the poem's essence, as Burns's dream vision and his use of the Habbie Simpson stanza form are established literary conventions. While natural talent and education are not mutually exclusive, by framing the old geniuses like this, these lines introduce conflict. It is no longer clear whether readers would have seen Burns as educated from this poem. However, this conflict would not necessarily prevent Burns from being seen as a natural genius, as either option was considered valid. Additionally, the association of Burns with poets of the past, combined with Coila's position as "Muse", aligns closely with the preferences of the Enlightenment writers for the poetry of the classical ancients, like Homer.

Emotional sensitivity is also a theme in 'The Vision'. Coila describes Burns's behaviour:

> 'When ripen'd fields, and azure skies,
> 'Call'd forth the *Reaper*'s rustling noise,
> 'I saw thee leave their ev'ning joys,
> 'And lonely stalk,
> 'To vent thy bosom's swelling rise,
> 'In pensive walk.[4]

The reader is presented with an image of the isolated, emotional personality. However, a perceived problem with this kind of personality is also alluded to by this poem. In the first Duan, Burns describes himself as:

> All in this mottie, misty clime,
> I backward mus'd on wasted time,
> How I had spent my *youthfu' prime*,

[3] Ibid., p. 111.
[4] Ibid., p. 112.

An' done nae-thing,
But stringing blethers up in rhyme For
fools to sing.

Had I to guid advice but harket,
I might, by this, hae led a market,
Or strutted in a Bank and clarket
My *Cash-Account*;
While here, half-mad, half-fed, half-sarket,
Is a' th' amount.[5]

Here Burns is critical of his own time spent writing poetry, suggesting that it has left him poorer than he otherwise might have been, and damaged his mind. This assessment agrees with a perception of the poet figure that was common among the literati, that eventually emotional sensitivity would lead to fancy and cause their ruin.[6] Burns's presentation of himself is suited to his readers' expectations of an untamed, emotionally sensitive poet. Leask agrees that 'The Vision' demonstrates Burns participating in his own image construction.[7]

However, Coila contradicts this image later in the poem:

'I saw thy pulse's maddening play,
'Wild-send thee Pleasure's devious way,
'Misled by Fancy's *meteor-ray*,
'By Passion driven;
'But yet the *light* that led astray,
'Was *light* from Heaven.[8]

She does repeat the narrative about fancy leading a poet astray, but she suggests these urges were heaven-sent. If it was divine will that Burns's passions led him astray, then this surely cannot be condemned. As Coila is teaching Burns her wisdom, it is her view that the poem

[5] Ibid., p. 103.

[6] This concept is described at length by Andrews in the first section of his fourth chapter "'Impaired by Excess': Burns's First Obituary" (pp. 145-149). He explains: "in the prose commentary on Burns's death starting in 1796 (and continuing throughout the early nineteenth century), the poet's character becomes increasingly assailed by critics and editors who find his 'immoral' and 'irreligious' lifestyle a regrettable by-product of his *genius.*" (pp. 145-146) and cites an early obituary by George Thomson as one of the earliest examples of this view.

[7] The first paragraph of Leasks' discussion of 'The Vision' in *Robert Burns and Pastoral* mentions David Daiches' uneasiness with the mixture of forms (p. 98), related to the view at the time of Scottish poets as having a 'split personality' known as the 'Caledonian Antisyzygy'. This preoccupation is understandably influential on Daiches' reading, as there is such a distinct split between the two voices Burns uses. Leask later references McIlvanney's suggestion that this is Burns constructing his image as how he "knows his genteel public would wish him to be" (p. 99). This is a distinct criticism that calls into question Burns's authenticity in this poem. The Daiches text referenced here is: David Daiches, *Robert Burns,* (London: G. Bell and Sons, 1952); the McIlvanny text is: Liam McIlvanney, 'Hugh Blair, Robert Burns, and the Invention of Scottish Literature', *18th-Century Life*, 29/2, (2005), pp. 25-46.

[8] K62, p. 112.

promotes, as opposed to Burns's musing in the first duan.[9] Thus the poem acknowledges the flaws of an emotional character, but emphasises the positive aspects.

This poem also ventures towards societal participation with some political messaging:

> 'To lower Orders are assign'd,
> 'The humbler ranks of human-kind,
> 'The rustic Bard, the lab'ring Hind,
> 'The Artisan;
> 'All chuse as various they're inclin'd,
> 'The various man[10]

As noted, it was increasingly viable for labouring-class people to become poets. Often, the poet's low class itself was praised, which solidified rather than undermined the existing hierarchy. Burns's notion of "chusing" does suggest some level of autonomy and social mobility, but this is not an obvious, explicit criticism of class boundaries in British society. Still, contributing to the conversation around such a topic does demonstrate societal participation.

There does seem to be particular praise for the lower classes, suggesting an imbalance not in keeping with this social structure:

> 'Then never murmur nor repine;
> 'Strive in thy *humble sphere* to shine;
> 'And trust me, not *Potosi's mine,*
> 'Nor King's regard.
> 'Can give a bliss o'ermatching thine,
> 'A rustic Bard.[11]

While the social hierarchy is to remain in place, Coila urges the labouring-class poet to take pride in his status as such, which could be seen as a subtle argument that the lower classes are of equal value to royalty,[12] but the poem is saved from being too explicit by the previous insistence that the social hierarchy is just. The reader is likely left with only a vague feeling of class sentiment, but would not associate radical politics with Burns. Burns is able to retain the image of an isolated figure who does not participate in society, another component of natural genius.

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[9] And given that the entire poem is a production of Burns, it is clear that this is his own view of himself.
[10] K62, p. 110.
[11] Ibid., p. 113.
[12] A sentiment which Burns asserts much more forcefully in 'Is There for Honest Poverty' (Kinsley, Vol. 2, pp. 762-763). This song was originally published anonymously, but chapter four will discuss other examples of his political poetry which were not.

There are also several references throughout the poem to Scotland as a nation. These include "Scottish Muse", "tartan sheen", "well-fed Irwine stately thuds", "Some rouse the Patriot up to bare/ Corruption's heart:" among several others. This infusion of national consciousness throughout the poem suggests that Coila has anointed Burns as a national bard. Andrews shows Burns's desire to claim this particular label for himself: "As his novelty waned, Burns sought to dispense with the persona of the 'heaven-taught ploughman' in favour of the 'Scotch Bard'."[13] Trumpener's description of the two different ways of being a bard shows that the distinction here is not necessarily as clear as Andrews describes it, but it is clear that Burns had an interest in being seen as a "national bard".

Burns as the national voice is even clearer in 'The Cotter's Saturday Night'.[14] Here he straddles both images of the bard/genius. He speaks most clearly as a national mouthpiece towards the poem's conclusion, addressing 'Scotia', and referencing the "patriotic tide" that was instilled in William Wallace. He even crowns himself a 'Patriot Bard':

> O never, never SCOTIA's realm desert,
> But still the *Patriot,* and the *Patriot-bard,*
>
> In bright succession raise, her *Ornament* and *Guard*![15]

These lines suggest that the bard as a national voice is crucial for Scotland's protection,[16] which would seem to place Burns firmly as a national voice, especially with reference to an unambiguously patriotic figure like Wallace.[17]

However, the poem aligns more with the concept of a genius isolated from oppressive modern society, by presenting the family as living in a rural idyll. The second stanza evokes nature's harshness: "November chill blaws loud wi' angry sugh;/ The short'ning winter-day is near a close;". However, this is followed by a lengthy warm, friendly scene in the family home.

> The *lisping infant,* prattling on his knee,
> Does a' his weary kiaugh and care beguile,

[13] Andrews, p. 65.
[14] Robert Burns, 'The Cottar's Saturday Night (Kinsley, Vol. 1, pp. 145-152). Hereafter K72.
[15] K72, p. 152.
[16] This contrasts sharply with reference to the "mercenary Bard" in the first stanza (p. 100) but as will be shown this contrast can be found throughout this poem.
[17] Wallace is an important figure for Burns, appearing also in 'Robert Bruce's March to Bannockburn' (Kinsley Vol. 2, pp. 707-708), further evidence of his patriotic aims in depicting his own image.

> And makes him quite forget his labor and his toil.[18]

Burns briefly acknowledges nature's harshness, but shows familial warmth outweighing it, since warmth is the overwhelming impression left on the reader. Rural, isolated genius is promoted, but the poem is also emphatically patriotic. Burns is once again able to satisfy simultaneously several criteria of natural genius, increasing the likelihood he will be perceived as such.

This versatility is partly explained by Burns's awareness of his audience's expectations. Peter Zeniger argues: "Burns, who experienced hard work, poverty and degradation as a farmer, does not speak in his own voice in this poem, but, for all his imagination, adopts the leisured classes' view of rural happiness."[19] He also notes that Robert Aitken, to whom the poem is inscribed, was a solicitor, not a cotter.[20] This awareness explains Burns's emphasis on rural familial happiness in this poem. However, that would suggest he ought to have refrained from patriotic sentiments altogether, since by Trumpener's model the audience targeted here are either English or influenced by English traditions. Nigel Leask suggests Burns's flexibility in seeking patronage may explain this choice:

> Burns's predicament as a well educated but undercapitalised tenant farmer instigated a compensatory quest for poetic 'credit' as a means of transcending the social and economic impasse of his agricultural occupation, although this obliged him to master the practical and rhetorical imperatives of poetic patronage in his own inimitable fashion.[21]

Burns was adept at encouraging favour from potential patrons in general, not just from one audience. For example, he intertwines pastoralism with national sentiment:

> O Scotia! my dear, my native soil!
> For whom my warmest wish to Heaven is sent!
> Long may thy hardy sons of *rustic toil*
> Be blest with health, and peace, and sweet content![22]

Thus, Burns could write poetry to satisfy proponents of both the bardic genius and the rural, isolated genius, as long as he did so skilfully.

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[18] K72, p. 146.
[19] Peter Zeniger, 'Low Life, Primitivism and Honest Poverty: A Socio-Cultural Reading of Ramsay and Burns', *Studies in Scottish Literature*, 30:1, 1998, pp. 43-58, P. 52.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Leask, p. 4.
[22] K72, p. 151.

Burns's ability to please different audiences is also evident if 'The Cotter's Saturday Night' is compared to 'To a Mouse'. In the latter, Burns is much less willing to play into the image of pastoral idyll, but he compensates by portraying himself as emotionally sensitive. Burns presents himself as the isolated, rural genius in this poem by showing how he is part of nature:

> At me, thy poor, earth-born companion,
> An' *fellow* mortal![23]

Burns puts himself in the same category as the mouse, as living creatures in the world. David Perkins writes: "Burns takes for granted that animals and humans are […] alike exposed to accident, less, old age, and death."[24] Yet, the cause of the mouse's trepidation is "Man's dominion", separating humanity and the animal kingdom. By aligning himself with animals, Burns is distanced from the modern society objected to by Enlightenment writers.

However, this poem's representation of rural life is not idyllic. Several moments highlight nature's harshness. For example:

> Thou saw the fields laid bare an' wast,
> An' weary *Winter* comin fast,[25]

Emphasising this harshness could undermine Enlightenment literary idealisations of the rural past. In 'The Cotter's Saturday Night', harsh pathetic fallacy is contrasted with the warmth of the family home, promoting the pastoral idyll. In 'To a Mouse', by contrast, no sooner than Burns mentions the mouse's desire to be "cozie",[26] he startles the reader with:

> Till crash! the cruel *coulter* past
> Out thro' thy cell.[27]

This brutal alliteration robs the reader of time to experience the warmth of home.

Despite this tension, Burns is presented as a natural genius, since nature's harshness highlights his comparative tenderness. Perkins writes:

> As the speaker suggests in 'To a Mouse,' most ploughmen would have smashed the small creature 'Wi' murd'ring pattle' (1, 127, line 6). The attitudes of Burns's speaker to animals

[23] Robert Burns, 'To a Mouse' (Kinsley, Vol. 1, pp. 127-128). Hereafter K69.
[24] David Perkins, 'Human Mouseness: Burns and Compassion for Animals', *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, 42:1 (2000), pp. 1-15, P. 3.
[25] K69, p. 127. Additional examples can be found in lines 23-24: "An' bleak December's winds ensuin,/ Baith snell an' keen!" and lines 35-36 (p. 128) : "To thole the Winter's sleety dribble,/ An' *cranreuch* cauld!".
[26] K69, p. 127.
[27] Ibid.

> were not at all typical of small tenant farmers but of poets. And, as Carol McGuirk emphasizes, they were also typical of the protagonists in sentimental novels of which Burns was an avid reader.[28]

It is not impossible for a ploughman to have reacted with remorse, but Perkins notes that most ploughmen would have been preoccupied with their work. Burns presents his reaction to highlight his acute emotional sensibilities. Therefore, even though such a stark depiction of nature's harshness could undermine Burns's alignment with the Enlightenment's perception of a primitive natural genius, it is the warmth of his heart that provides contrast to the cold winds.

This association with rural life, and similarity to poets of the past, would indicate that this poem showed Burns as isolated. However, there is potentially political messaging in the second stanza:

> I'm truly sorry Man's dominion
> Has broken Nature's social union,
> An' justifies that ill opinion,
> Which makes thee startle,[29]

As mentioned, "Man's dominion" suggests a rigid social order, like that criticised by Enlightenment philosophers in their discussion of oppressive urban life. This may not seem like an emphatic statement of Burns's political position, but Colin Kidd provides context:

> To parse Burns's complicated political allegiances, up to the time of the French Revolution at least, requires not only an awareness of the relative absence of clear and consistent ideological contestation in the politics of the 1780s, but also an appreciation of the politics of sentiment, which included a quixotic identification with the underdog, whether a mouse, a louse or a Jacobite.[30]

Given the time at which Burns wrote, it is perhaps unrealistic to expect explicit political opinions, and involvement in intense debates in periodicals.[31] However, if an equivalence is drawn between the powerless animal and the powerless political faction, this stanza makes a more scathing point. This is rightly read as a criticism of landowners and their lack of empathy for tenants. Still, the relatively hidden nature of this message reduces the extent of Burns's societal participation, even if participation was his intent. He, and people reviewing him, at

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[28] Perkins, p. 5.
[29] K69, p. 127.
[30] Colin Kidd, 'Burns and Politics', in *The Edinburgh Companion to Robert Burns,* ed. Gerard Carruthers, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), pp. 61-73, p. 71.
[31] 'Is There For Honest Poverty' is much more explicitly political, but Burns published it anonymously and its authorship was not known within his lifetime. Nigel Leask discusses the publishing process of this song in: ''The Pith o' Sense, and Pride o' Worth': Robert Burns and the *Glasgow Magazine* (1795)', in *Before Blackwoods* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2015), pp. 75-89.

least have plausible deniability that he wished to offend those of higher rank, which will be shown in chapter three to be more than could be said for Hogg.[32] The overall impression is of emotional sensitivity, which, along with his isolated rural existence, greatly increases the extent to which Burns can be seen as a natural genius.

Discussion of Burns's education is also facilitated by this poem. In the penultimate stanza, Burns muses on the value of foresight:

> But Mousie, thou art no thy-lane,
> In proving *foresight* may be vain:
> The best laid schemes o' *Mice* an' *Men,* Gang
> aft agley,
> An' lea'e us nought but grief an' pain,
> For promis'd joy![33]

He opens a philosophical discussion about the extent to which life should be planned in advance. The poem deploys Adam Smith's moral philosophy, which Burns had read, and Smith's concept of 'sympathy.'[34] Inserted into a poem that takes place in natural, rural environment, this strengthens the image of the uneducated genius, who can naturally discuss enlightened themes.

Of course, the extent of Burns's education has been well noted, for example by Robert Crawford, who shows the method of education set out by Burns's teacher John Murdoch:

> make them thoroughly acquainted with the meaning of every word in each sentence that was to be committed to memory. By the bye, this may be easier done and at an earlier period, than is generally thought. As soon as they were capable of it, I taught them to turn verse into its natural prose order, sometimes to substitute synonimous expressions for poetical words and to supply all the ellipses. These, you know, are the means of knowing that the pupil understands his author[35]

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[32] Burns did write more direct poems, like 'The Author's Earnest Cry and Prayer*, to the Right Honorable and Honorable, the Scotch Representatives in the House of Commons' (Kinsley, Vol. 1, pp. 185-191). Hereafter K81. However, chapter four will examine how Burns and his allies were able to limit the damage caused by even his more explicit political poems to his reputation, in a way that was not achievable by Hogg.

[33] K69, p. 128. The final stanza continues on this theme, expressing fear about the future and the extent to which humans are conscious of time, as opposed to the mouse who is oblivious.

[34] See Adam Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (London, Edinburgh: Millar, Kincaid and Bell, 1759) and also Murray Pittock's essay 'Nibbling at Adam Smith: a mouse's "sma request" and the limits of social justice' in *Fickle Man: Robert Burns in the 21st Century*, ed. J. Rodger and G. Carruthers (Dingwall: Sandstone Press, 2009) on Burns's engagement with Smithean sympathy.

[35] Robert Crawford, *The Bard: Robert Burns, a Biography* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2009), p. 38. The influence of John Murdoch's education on Burns is also described in: William Will, 'John Murdoch, Tutor of Robert Burns', *Burns Chronicle and Club Directory*, 2nd series: volume IV, pp. 60-70.

This innovative method is an example of the high-quality teaching which Burns received, and would have engaged his mind in critical thinking from an early age. Crawford does note how his education was not necessarily to the standards of many Enlightenment figures,[36] but his critical thinking skills clearly came from more than genetics. This poem could therefore leave readers with an impression contradictory to who Burns really was. However, as the view that education is important for a natural genius is never disproven by its opponents, this does not immediately undermine the image of Burns as a natural genius.

Within just three of Burns's early poems, there is clear contradiction in his presentation of himself in terms of education and societal participation. He also plays into the image of the pastoral idyll while emphasising nature's harshness, but this inconsistency is not too problematic; instead, he highlights his emotional sensitivity. Overall, he displays qualities in line with both types of bard as described by Trumpener, with his ability to be both a national voice and an isolated figure. This versatility is enhanced by contradictions and inconsistencies in the Enlightenment's construction of the 'natural genius', since no matter what Burns did, he was likely to fit at least one aspect of the image, and continue to be seen as such.

[36] Ibid., p. 58: "If a Classical education distinguished an eighteenth-century gentleman, Burns never attained that distinction; sometimes he felt the lack of it."

The Mountain Bard (1807)

In Hogg's 1807 collection *The Mountain Bard*, he demonstrates a variety of traits that Burns also possessed, such as emotional sensitivity and a desire to be seen as a national bard. An examination of Hogg's self-presentation in his first major poetic collection allows us to establish how Hogg aspired to the same epithet of 'natural genius' as his much-admired predecessor.

The collection opens with ballad imitations, to which Hogg provides detailed notes. In the notes on 'Sir David Graeme' he is somewhat critical of Walter Scott's (1771-1832) *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* (1802),[1] though he frames his words as praise. He describes 'The Twa Corbies'

> rather increased than diminished by the unfinished state in which the story is left. It appears as if the bard had found his powers of description inadequate to a detail of the circumstances attending the fatal catastrophe, without suffering the interest, already roused, to subside, and had artfully consigned it over to the fancy of every reader to paint it what way he chose[2]

Hogg notionally commends Scott for a skilful artistic decision, but also calls his work "unfinished" and Scott himself "inadequate". Given that Hogg writes in this collection's opening memoir that he "was not satisfied with many of the imitations of the ancients",[3] his criticism of Scott's collection is unsurprising. It is clear from this direct comparison that he wishes to better it. In her introduction to this collection, Suzanne Gilbert describes Hogg's relationship to the process of song collecting:

> Hogg grew up in a time when, after the 1707 Treaty of Union between Scotland and England, major efforts were being made to preserve Scottish culture. Like other Scottish collectors of tradition, Hogg had a culturally nationalist agenda: he was concerned with faithfully and sympathetically preserving what remained of an oral culture that seemed to be slipping away. But he was profoundly ambivalent about the motives governing the antiquarian grand narrative, which treated traditional ballads as relics of 'primitive' expression that must be preserved, contained, and explained in Enlightenment terms.[4]

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[1] Walter Scott, *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border consisting of Historical and Romantic Ballads, collected in the southern counties of Scotland; with a few of modern date, founded upon local tradition,* (London: Cadell and Davies, 1802). This was a recently published text when Hogg published The Mountain Bard, and is in large part what brought Hogg and Scott together. Hogg and his family's involvement with Scott's Minstrelsy is described by Hughes in *James Hogg: A Life* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), pp. 43-48.
[2] *The Mountain Bard*, p. 21.
[3] Ibid., p. 15.
[4] Ibid., p. xxiv.

Contemporary antiquarianism's focus on Scottish identity as a relic rather than something to be participated in fits well with genius theorists' desire to celebrate and preserve the past, so Hogg is likely breaking with the kind of collecting they would have supported. However, Gilbert also notes Hogg's similarity to Burns: "Hogg positions *himself* as bard, the successor to Burns, closer to the interpreter of a living tradition than to the erudite antiquary, an attitude reinforced in the tone of his annotations".[5] Burns's position as national bard did not disrupt his position as natural genius.[6] Therefore, in trying to achieve a similar perception to him, it would be reasonable for Hogg to highlight his similarity to Burns, and his superiority to Scott, in this respect.

This desire to participate in a living tradition can be seen clearly in the text of his imitation itself, especially when compared to 'The Twa Corbies' from Scott's collection. In 'The Twa Corbies', the events leading to the man's death have already occurred and, as Hogg alludes to, are not much expanded on.[7] Whereas Hogg gives his characters background and shows their emotions:

> An' ay she said, "My love is hid,
> And dare na come the castle nigh;
> But him I'll find, an' him I'll chide,
> For leaving his poor maid to sigh;
>
> "But ae press to his manly breast,
> An' ae kiss o' his bonny mou',
> Will weel atone for a' the past,
> An' a' the pain I suffer now."[8]

These lines present a young woman so in love that she is willing to endure great pain to hold onto the possibility of a reunion with her beloved. Hogg's narrative is emotionally charged and the focal point of the story is clearly intended to be the living people, rather than the crows looking at the dead man in 'The Twa Corbies'.

The ballad is also kept alive by Hogg's original invention at its end, in which the fallen man rises from the dead and approaches his maiden:

> Wi' horror, an' wi' dread aghast,

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[5] Ibid., p. xxvii.
[6] For example, he took up collecting for both Johnson's *Scots Musical Museum* and later for George Thomson's *Select Collection*, and was still known as a natural genius in literary criticism by Hogg's time. Burns's involvement in these projects is discussed by Andrews (p. 124).
[7] *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border,* pp. 415-418.
[8] *The Mountain Bard,* p. 24.

That lady turned, an' thought o' hame; An'
there she saw, approaching fast,
The likeness o' her noble Graeme!

His grim, grim eyelids didna move;
His thin, thin cheek was deadly pale;
His mouth was black, and sair he strove
T' impart to her some dreadfu' tale.[9]

This description is not like anything in either 'The Twa Corbies' or the old rhyme Hogg references his mother having sung to him.[10] Hogg is therefore not presenting the ballad as a relic of the past, but inserts himself in the creative process of the story and adds his own invention. While this is not a national narrative, in his active development of Scottish ballad tradition, rather than speak about the nation as a relic, he speaks for it as a national bard.

In the collection's latter half, 'Songs: Adapted to the Times', Hogg displays further versatility and satisfies several criteria of what it means to be a natural genius, including emotional sensitivity and his place in an idyllic pastoral world. Valentina Bold describes the mournful tone of some songs:

> Suggesting a wilder persona than the tamed, Ramsayan shepherd of *Scottish Pastorals*, Hogg includes many bleak, melancholic items in *The Mountain Bard* [references the imitations, 'Sir David Graeme' in particular] 'Farewell to Ettrick', too, exemplifies the mournful tone of Macpherson's Ossian (as well as recalling Burns's poetic farewell to Scotland).[11]

Strength of emotion and importance of place are clear in 'A Farewell to Ettrick', which opens with the speaker proclaiming his love of home:

FAREWEEL, my Ettrick! fare-ye-weel!
I own I'm unco laith to leave ye;
Nane kens the half o' what I feel,
Nor half the cause I ha'e to grieve me![12]

Hogg suggests his emotion is incomprehensibly strong, a tone which continues throughout, for example in discussion of his death:

But if I kend my dyin' day,
Though distant, weary, pale, an' wan,

[9] Ibid., p. 25.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Valentina Bold, 'The Mountain Bard: James Hogg and MacPherson's Ossian', *Studies in Hogg and his World*, 9, 1998, pp. 32-44, pp. 33-34.
[12] *The Mountain Bard*, p. 100.

I'd tak my staff an' post away
To yield my life where it began.[13]

As with 'Sir David Graeme', death is used to emphasise the song's emotional stakes, in this case a yearning for the land of the speaker's home. In both examples, vivid emotion towards home imbues his attempts to speak as a national bardic genius with the emotional sensitivity of an isolated, rural genius, a combination also to be found in Burns's presentation of himself. As these two images become harder to disentangle, due in part at least to Burns's own blurring of the lines, the distinction begins to matter less. Like Burns, Hogg displays traits considered by various different metrics to be those of a natural genius, even if the origins of the archetypes he fulfils are at odds with each other.

Another example of emotional sensitivity in *The Mountain Bard* is 'The Author's Address to his Auld Dog Hector'. The emotional connection between speaker and dog is framed in opposition to the toxicity of human society:

Yes, my puir beast! though friends me scorn,
Whom mair than life I valued dear;
An' throw me out to fight forlorn,
Wi' ills my heart dow hardly bear,

While I have thee to bear a part-
My plaid, my health, an' heezle-rung-
I'll scorn the silly haughty heart,
The saucy look, and slanderous tongue,[14]

As will be discussed in chapters 3 and 4, Hogg often had to navigate the tricky societal politics of the modern, urban periodical press. There are clear echoes of Burns here: both 'To a Mouse' and 'The Author's Address to his Auld Dog Hector' use the speaker's close proximity to the animal kingdom to position themselves outwith restrictive modern society. It is perhaps little surprise that Hogg's references to Burns's work, direct and indirect, should be so easy to recognise in this first collection.

Additionally, by framing his connection to an animal in direct opposition to the stress of human society, Hogg presents an image of himself similar to the idea of the untainted natural genius of ancient times. Gilbert describes Hogg's relationship to these two different environments:

> Hogg's 'transitional' cultural context meant that he belonged simultaneously to two worlds: to the ancient work of Ettrick oral tradition in which he grew up, and also to the

[13] Ibid., p. 103.
[14] Ibid., p. 111.

> world of post-Enlightenment Edinburgh modernity in which his book was published and read. This is why *The Mountain Bard* differs from other antiquarian projects. It is not ancient but contemporary, though based on a continuous tradition which began in ancient times. Hogg's project is Romantic; his focus is on the self.[15]

Hogg's focus on the self is certainly evident in this poem, and most songs in this section. However, Gilbert's explanation shows how he balances that with the framework of something more ancient. In 'The Author's Address to his Auld Dog Hector', he is very much the isolated, rural genius. But by blending this impression with the imitations and the more patriotic songs, he performs the role of natural genius based on several different metrics over the course of the whole collection.

The two most notably patriotic songs in the collection are 'Scotia's Glens' and 'Donald Mcdonald'. In 'Scotia's Glens', Scotland is presented as a place that is strong, proud and free:

> 'MONG Scotia's glens, and mountains blue,
> Where Gallia's lilies never grew,
> Where Roman eagles never flew,
> Nor Danish lion rallied;[16]

This list of invading forces shows that no matter who attacked Scotland, it stayed free of foreign rule. This might seem odd considering this was just over half a century since the last Jacobite uprising, but some context from 'Donald Mcdonald' may help explain Hogg's intention:

> What though we befriendit young Charlie?
> To tell it I dinna think shame;
> Poor lad! he came to us but barely,
> An' reckoned our mountains his hame:
> 'Tis true that our reason forbade us,
> But tenderness carried the day;
> Had Geordie come friendless amang us,
> Wi' him we had a' gane away. –
> Sword an' buckler an' a',
> Buckler an' sword an' a';
> For George we'll encounter the devil,
> Wi' sword an' buckler an' a'.[17]

Hogg seems to harness the power of Jacobite spirit and turn it in favour of the current monarch. This chapter has already noted how Burns was forced by economic status to write for the

[15] Gilbert, p. xxvi.
[16] Ibid, p. 107.
[17] Ibid, p. 108.

purpose of gaining patronage; with his similar economic status it is likely Hogg would have had to act similarly, which could explain this angle.[18]

In 'Scotia's Glens', the final verse suggests an expansionist enemy:

> Though nations join yon tyrant's arm,
> While Scotland's noble blood runs warm, Our
> good old man we'll guard from harm,
> Or fall in heaps around him.[19]

Given the date of this collection's production, the 'tyrant' is Napoleon, which means Hogg is harnessing Scottish patriotic spirit to uplift the British king against a foreign enemy. By choosing a palatable cause, Hogg can speak as specifically a Scottish national voice[20] yet in a way that aligns with British imperial interests.

Use of Scots in 'Donald Macdonald' also positions its speaker as a specifically Scottish voice, for example at the end of the first verse:

> Brogs an' brochen an' a',
> Brochen an' brogs an' a',
> An' isna the laddie weel aff
> Wha has brogs an' brochen an' a'.[21]

Some of the Scots is easily understandable, like 'weel' and 'wha', but 'brogs' and 'brochen' have strong Highland connotations. The Stirling/South Carolina edition glosses 'brogs' as "shoes typically made of untanned hide and stitched together with leather thongs"[22] and the Dictionary of the Scots Language describes this as specifically "a rough Highland shoe".[23] This page also notes that the Scottish Gaelic and Irish word "bròg" for "shoe". Between the Highland connotations of the object and the Gaelic connotations of the word, the repetition of this word

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[18] Hogg did receive patronage from the Buccleuchs and tenanted on their land, as noted by Gillian Hughes: "Most welcome of all these tokens of his poetical standing, however, was the news of a permanent home for Hogg in his native district. Towards the end of January 1815 Hogg received a call from the Duke of Buccleuch's factor, who delivered a letter granting Hogg a small farm of about forty acres near the river Yarrow known as Eltreive Moss, the same one that he had requested almost two years previously. The previous tenant, Thomas Wilson, had died on 1 July 1814, and the Duke remembered his late Duchess's wish to assist Hogg. The farm would be free at the Whitsunday term, and Hogg's rent was to be 'nominal'." (Hughes, p. 134.)

[19] *The Mountain Bard,* p. 107.

[20] The next two lines explicitly describe the Irish and the English as separate to the Scottish, and both having already fallen.

[21] *The Mountain Bard,* p. 108.

[22] Ibid., p. 509.

[23] Dictionary of the Scots Language, entry for 'Brogue, Brog, Broag', https://dsl.ac.uk/entry/snd/brogue_n1, [accessed 23.7.20].

contributes to the speaker's decidedly Scottish voice. The same is true for "brochen", glossed by the Stirling/South Carolina edition as "gruel, porridge"[24] and translated by the DSL as "Most commonly used to denote gruel, either of a thick or thin consistency, and cooked with various additions to the oatmeal, such as butter, honey, etc",[25] with reference to the Scottish Gaelic/Irish word "brochan/brochán" of the same meaning. Hogg therefore uses some of the Scots words with clearest Gaelic origins, almost speaking in Scottish Gaelic itself. This use of Gaelic-influenced language would have been unlikely in the time after the last Jacobite uprising, when Gaelic culture was suppressed. By being explicitly loyal to British rule in his Scottish patriotism, Hogg makes this culture far more palatable to his audience. Taken together with 'The Author's Address to his Auld Dog Hector', these two patriotic poems help to create a balance, in the collection as a whole, between bardic focus on location and emotionally sensitive individuality. These two qualities of natural genius are blended within 'A Farewell to Ettrick', both of which demonstrate a similar versatility to Burns.

Hogg also shows versatility in balancing his position as a poet of the past and extreme emotional engagement. 'Sandy Tod' contrasts an idyllic pastoral opening against a story of sexual attraction that goes badly wrong. Sandy is introduced as a classic pastoral figure:

> Sandy was a lad o' vigour,
> Clean an' tight o' lith an' lim',
> For a decent, manly figure,
> Few could ding or equal him.[26]

He is depicted as a hardy, energetic young man, superior to those around him, which heightens the tragedy of his death, and that tragedy helps to exalt this idealised image of a rural labourer.

He is also shown as a devout Christian:

> Wardly walth an' grandeur scornin',
> Peace adorned his little bield;
> Ilka e'enin', ilka mornin',
> Sandy to his Maker kneeled.[27]

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[24] *The Mountain Bard,* p. 509.
[25] DSL, entry for 'Brochan, brochen, brachen, brachan, brochin', https://dsl.ac.uk/entry/snd/brochan_n1, [accessed 23.7.20].
[26] *The Mountain Bard,* p. 95.
[27] Ibid., p. 96.

This emphasis on Sandy's dedication to prayer underlines the 'purity' of his pastoral upbringing.

This pastoral idyll is challenged one day in church when Sandy sees a pretty woman:

> Sally, dressed i' hat an' feather,
> Placed her in a neibrin' pew, Sandy
> sat – he kendna whether!
> Sandy felt – he wistna how!
>
> Though the priest alarmed the audience,
> An' drew tears frae mony een, Sandy
> heard a noise like baudrons Murrin' i'
> the bed at e'en!
>
> Aince or twice his sin alarmed him,
> Down he looked, an' wished a prayer;
> Sally had o' sense disarmed him,
> Heart an' mind an' a' was there![28]

Given the relatively harmless effects of Sandy's attraction thus far, this passage is likely to be read humorously, conjuring the vivid image of a poor, confused young man haplessly trying to control his impulses.

Soon Sandy and Sally meet and have a sexual encounter. The description of this event is very crude, in sharp contrast with earlier pastoral bliss:

> Lockit to his bosom duntin'
> Listless a' the night she lay,
> Orion's belt had bored the mountain,
> Loud the cock had crawed the day.[29]

Oddly, this encounter is introduced by the speaker saying that he won't explicitly describe it.[30] Given how this chapter has shown Hogg and Burns having to construct a palatable image of rural life that the reading public would accept, the audience may not have expected such a crude description of sex.[31] The initial more subtle allusion could have lulled the audience into the security of a sanitised pastoral, making this description even more shocking in a formal publication.

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[28] Ibid., p. 97.
[29] Ibid., p. 98.
[30] Ibid., p.97 (lines 97-100).
[31] Burns did write similarly bawdy poetry in *The Merry Muses of Caledonia* (1799) but this was not published for wide public consumption during his lifetime.

While this description may have started the deconstruction of pastoral bliss, Sandy Tod's elation is expressed in significantly pastoral ways:

> Never did his native nation,
> Sun or sky, wear sic a hue;
> In his een the hale creation
> Wore a face entirely new.
>
> Weel he lo'ed his faithfu' Ruffler,
> Weel the bird sang on the tree;
> Meanest creatures doomed to suffer,
> Brought the tear into his ee.[32]

These verses reference nature, animals and Sandy's intense emotions, which empathise with every facet of the former two. It would seem that Sandy's sexual encounter has had no adverse consequences, despite how this would have been considered contradictory to his original devoutness. So far, this song still seems both light-hearted and deeply pastoral.

However, the story turns when he goes to see Sally. It is revealed to the reader that Sally is soon no longer single:

> Sally's blossom soon was blighted
> By untimely winter prest;
> Sally had been wooed and slighted
> By a farmer in the west
>
> Sandy daily lo'ed her dearer,
> Kendna she afore was won,
> Aince, when he gaed down to see her,
> Sally had a dainty son![33]

By revealing this to the reader before Sandy, Hogg manufactures a heightened sense of tragedy, as the reader can watch with dread as Sandy unknowingly approaches heartbreak. The result is violent and gory:

> Shun'd an' pitied by the world,
> Long a humblin' sight was he,
> Till that fatal moment hurled
>
> Him to long eternity.
>
> Sittin' on yon cliff sae rocky,
> Fearless as the boding crow, -

[32] *The Mountain Bard*, p. 98.
[33] Ibid., p. 98-99.

No, my dear, I winna shock ye
Wi' the bloody scene below.

By yon aek decayed an' rottin',
Where the hardy woodbin twines,
Now, in peace, he sleeps forgotten;
Owr his head these simple lines: -[34]

Despite claiming to protect the addressee's delicate sensibilities, Hogg describing Sandy as "decayed an' rottin'" is a vivid, gruesome image. The consequence of Sandy's love gone wrong is powerful, and far from light-hearted. The destruction of Sandy's pastoral idyll could have undermined association of Hogg with rural poets of the past, but this is balanced by intense emotional engagement throughout, similar to the versatility shown in his balance of national sentiment and strong emotions likely to be evoked by 'Donald Mcdonald' and 'Scotia's Glens'.

There is overall little reference to education in this collection. There is some mention of reading in 'Sandy Tod', but this is used more as another example of Sandy's sensitive heart:

He was learned, and every tittle
E'er he read believed it true;
Savin' chapters cross an' kittle,
He cou'd read his bible through.

Of the read the acts o' Joseph,
How wi' a' his friends he met;
Ay the hair his noddle rose off,
Ay his cheeks wi' tears were wet.[35]

Like many members of the Scottish peasantry in this period who attended parish schools, Sandy is well versed in the text of the bible. However, his intelligence is undermined by the suggestion that he lacks the critical faculties to evaluate a text's veracity. He is not the type to engage in intellectual religious debate; instead his reaction is depicted as acutely emotional, highlighting the warm heart of the learned Scottish peasant.

The closest the collection comes to discussing education is near the beginning of 'Farewell to Ettrick'.

There first I saw the rising morn;
There first my infant mind unfurl'd,
To judge that spot where I was born
The very centre of the world!

[34] Ibid., p. 100.
[35] Ibid., p. 95.

I thought the hills were sharp as knives,
An' the braed lift lay whomel'd on them,
An' glowr'd wi' wonder at the wives
That spak o' ither hills ayon' them.

When ilka year ga'e something new,
Addition to my mind or stature,
As fast my love for Ettrick grew,
Implanted in my very nature.[36]

These verses see the speaker born with little knowledge of the world. This is clearly not concerning formal poetical education, which some Enlightenment writers believed was necessary to prevent genius from spoiling itself, but it still shows the acquisition of knowledge after a state of ignorance at birth. While Burns also spent little time on the topic of education, in 'The Vision' he uses allusions and traditional forms, whereas Hogg makes much less of his own education. Consequently, evident level of education is probably the biggest difference between Hogg's and Burns's first collections. Still, a writer's education should not inherently influence their legitimacy as a natural genius, so while this is a clear difference, it should not cause a notable difference in perception of each as a natural genius.

Hogg is simultaneously a national voice and an isolated, rural genius. He also undermines the favourable image of rural idyll, while emphasising his keen emotional personality. He satisfies several of the conditions set out by chapter one: participation as a national voice, isolation as a rural poet, and emotional sensitivity. Like Burns, he shows versatility as he demonstrates his suitability for the role of natural genius in this early collection. However, chapter three will now reveal a number of differences in the receptions of each writer. Burns was perceived early as a momentous example of natural genius, and retained this label even as he retreated from public life. But for Hogg, often considered a skilled rural poet, and sometimes a genius, this label did not stick when he entered the complex and often brutal world of the periodical press.

[36] Ibid., p. 100.

Chapter 3 – Reception

This chapter will focus on the receptions of Burns and Hogg in relation to their positions as natural geniuses. It will show the extent to which each was perceived as such, and which qualities of their work and personalities contributed to these perceptions. For Burns, there will be an in-depth analysis of the famous 1786 review by Henry Mackenzie (1745-1831). This review repeatedly emphasised some aspects of Burns's life and writing at the expense of others, and actively misled the reader about Burns's education. This chapter will show exactly how doing so enabled Mackenzie, aided by Burns's contribution in the preface to *Poems, Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect*, to cement the idea of Burns as a natural genius. For Hogg, the comparable moment is the pivotal review of Hogg and Burns by Hogg's *Blackwood's* colleague John Wilson (1785-1854) in 1819. This review attempted a similar goal to Mackenzie, presenting Hogg as a natural genius. Initially this endeavour was relatively successful. However, this impression did not endure as it did for Burns. Thus this chapter also examines some later periodical reviews, along with Hogg's new 1821 'Memoir', where Hogg opens himself to damaging comments about his behaviour.

The 'Heaven-Taught Ploughman' – A detailed analysis of Henry Mackenzie's lasting epithet, and Burns's contribution to it.

The greatest contemporary influence on Burns's reception was one particular review by Henry Mackenzie. Mackenzie was the author of *The Man of Feeling* (1771),[1] a well-known 'sentimental' novel. Ian Campbell describes the aims of the sentimentalists: "To move, and to improve the moral sentiments of the reader simultaneously, was the avowed intention of the sentimental novelists."[2] In keeping with this, *The Man of Feeling* "raised the passions, in a calculated way, and for a right moral end".[3] Burns's awareness and enthusiasm for the novel is noted by Campbell as well as Maureen Harkin.[4]

[1] Henry Mackenzie, *The Man of Feeling* (London: F. Newberry, 1771).
[2] Ian Campbell, 'Burns, Henry MacKenzie and *The Man of Feeling*' in *International review of Scottish studies*, 3:1, 1973, p. 6.
[3] Ibid.
[4] Maureen Harkin also describes Burns's reaction to the book: "Though an admirer of Mackenzie's writings, Burns nonetheless testified to an unease about *The Man of Feeling*'s possible effects on readers." (Maureen Harkin, 'Mackenzie's *Man of Feeling*: embalming sensibility', *ELH*, 61:2, 1994). While Burns did clearly have some reservations, suggesting in the letter Harkin quotes that such strong emotions could interrupt a young man's progress in life, he also describes the powerful emotional effect. Given the emotional content

Mackenzie wrote in *The Lounger*, which was an influential periodical. G. A. Sinclair describes the periodical culture at the time:

> Before the end of the century Edinburgh had become the chief centre of culture in Britain. […] As early as 1777 Henry Mackenzie and his acquaintances, principally Edinburgh advocates, founded the Mirror Club, and assembled once a week […] It was customary on these occasions for those who were present to produce their essays and read them aloud for the edification of the company. When any of the papers, either owing to defects of style or from the nature of the subject, was condemned, the author was compelled to put it in his pocket and drink a bumper to its *manes.*[5]

Mackenzie was closely involved with a journal born out of this culture, *The Mirror* (Jan 1779 – May 1780)[6] before starting his own journal, *The Lounger* in 1785.[7] Mackenzie was an influential figure writing in a space where important cultural criticism takes place, which raised Burns's profile into respected literary circles.

Mackenzie was not the first reviewer of Burns. Andrews discusses the October 1786 issue of *Edinburgh Magazine*, which contained a review of *Poems, Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect.*[8] However, Mackenzie's review was the first to label Burns as a 'heaven-taught ploughman'. This presentation by Mackenzie and Burns was endorsed, as Andrews illustrates, by numerous other reviewers, from the outset of Burns's public persona as a published poet, and it was impossible to shake off as the nineteenth century progressed. It is useful, therefore, to examine this early construction in more depth.

Mackenzie opens his discussion of genius with the topic of emotional sensitivity: "To the feeling and the susceptible there is something wonderfully pleasing in the contemplation of genius, of that supereminent reach of mind by which some men are distinguished".[9] This statement is unsurprising coming from the author of *The Man of Feeling*, but is worth

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in his own writing, it is clear that he valued this power enough to be worth the risk. See also Carol McGuirk's *Burns and the Sentimental Era* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1985).

[5] G. A. Sinclair, 'Periodical Literature of the Eighteenth Century', *The Scottish Historical Review*, 2:6, 1905, pp. 136-149, p. 140.

[6] Ibid., p. 141.

[7] Ibid., p. 143.

[8] Andrews, pp. 71-74.

[9] Henry Mackenzie, writing in *The Lounger*, Issue 97, Dec 9th 1786, pp.385-388, https://link-galehttps://link-gale-com.ezproxy.lib.gla.ac.uk/apps/doc/Z2000764493/BBCN?u=glasuni&sid=BBCN&xid=38ea8091com.ezproxy.lib.gla.ac.uk/apps/doc/Z2000764493/BBCN?u=glasuni&sid=BBCN&xid=38ea8091, [accessed 30.8.20], p. 385.

mentioning because it shows Mackenzie joining ongoing discussions about natural genius, helping to position Burns within existing frameworks.

Mackenzie also agrees with Enlightenment thinkers who believed the simplicity of the past was more conducive to genius. He writes:

> This divinity of genius, however, which admiration is fond to worship, is best arrayed in the darkness of distant and remote periods, and is not easily acknowledged in the present times, or in places with which we are perfectly acquainted.[10]

He agrees genius is easier to find by looking to the past, but his reasoning is different from many of the writers previously discussed. He explains genius is harder to acknowledge in the present because:

> there is a familiarity in the near approach of person around us, not very consistent with the lofty ideas which we wish to form of him who has led captive our imagination in the triumph of his fancy […] our posterity may find names which they will dignify, though we neglected, and pay to their memory those honours which their contemporaries had denied them.[11]

He posits that we find genius easier if we look to the past because it is easier to admire someone you see as separate from yourself, than someone you may have personally met, or at least whose life is recognisable to you.

The reason for this difference may be his desire to make space for Burns, which required the acknowledgement that genius *can* arise in the present. Andrews explains how Mackenzie's reasoning applies to Burns:

> Mackenzie observes, however, that while 'it may be true, that "in the olden time" genius had some advantages which tended to its vigour and growth', nevertheless 'even in these degenerate days, it rises much oftener than it is observed' (385). Such is the case with Burns, who has 'risen' from the 'distant and remote' past to express his 'divinity of genius'.[12]

Mackenzie frames Burns as essentially part of the past. He is the descendent of the great oral bards, like Homer who is revered by Blackwell, and can occupy the position of an ancient come again, without his physical presence in the present undermining this impression. Scott R. Mackenzie's description of 'pastoral modernity', the conflation of contemporary vernacular

[10] Mackenzie in *The Lounger*, p. 385.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Andrews, p. 76.

Scots with pastoral idylls, showed precedent for considering living poets as figures of the past, increasing the likelihood that this is what Henry Mackenzie was attempting for Burns.

Mackenzie then introduces Burns himself, slotting him into the position he has created. He describes Burns's poems as:

> some time ago published in a country-town in the west of Scotland, with no other ambition, it would seem, than to circulate among the inhabitants of the county where he was born, to obtain a little fame from those who had heard of his talents.[13]

By limiting Burns's ambitions to the scope of the small town of his birth, Mackenzie separates him from the rest of the Edinburgh literary scene. He ostensibly comes from an insular rural world, unharmed by the restrictions of modern society which prevent genius from reaching its full potential. Andrews explains how framing Burns as distinct from other poets was also useful for gaining recognition: "Mackenzie finds that Burns's 'distinction' resides in his difference from mainstream literary practitioners, as well as his difference from those in his own class and place."[14] It is possible that Mackenzie only highlighted Burns's rural background to distinguish him from other poets seeking recognition at the time. Still, emphasising this difference would have helped qualify him as a natural genius, and Mackenzie's opening suggests he wished to establish Burns as such.

However, in order to maintain this distinction, Mackenzie frequently misleads the reader about Burns's education and presents narrow interpretations of his poems. He says of Burns's education:

> In mentioning the circumstance of his humble station, I mean not to rest his pretensions solely on that title, or to urge the merits of his poetry when considered in relation the lowness of his birth, and the little opportunity of improvement which his education could afford.[15]

This is an important caveat, but by drawing attention in this way, Mackenzie ensures Burns's low level of education is implicitly taken for granted and less likely to be questioned. If he is providing extra explanation to clarify that he does not think Burns's lack of education should be the sole reason for enjoying his poetry, this suggests to the reader that he is being reasonable and logical. Since he offers no further explanation about Burns's education, this presentation is more likely to be taken at face value. However, as this thesis has shown through Burns's

[13] Mackenzie in *The Lounger,* p. 385.
[14] Andrews, p. 78.
[15] Mackenzie in *The Lounger,* p. 385.

biography and work, particularly 'The Vision', he was well educated for his social class. Perhaps surprisingly, 'The Vision' is the first poem from which Mackenzie presents a direct quotation. He says the reader will "discover a high tone of feeling, a power and energy of expression, particularly and strongly characteristic of the mind and the voice of a poet".[16] This poem is definitely powerful and ambitious, but having just misled the reader about Burns's education, his failure to note the poetical knowledge Burns displays in 'The Vision' cements this misconception even further.

Mackenzie also highlights the strength of emotion in 'The Vision' and offers examples of similarly emotional poems in *Poems*:

> Of the tender and the moral, specimens equally advantageous might be drawn from the elegiac verses, intitled *Man was made to mourn,* from *The Cotter's Saturday Night,* the Stanzas *To a Mouse,* or those *To a Mountain-Daisy,* on turning it down with the plough in April 1786.[17]

While both 'The Cotter's Saturday Night' and 'To a Mouse' do evoke emotional responses, they also differ significantly in their treatments of pastoral life. This contrast is not directly what Mackenzie is discussing here, but he does quote the entirety of 'To a Mountain Daisy' in order to argue that:

> I have seldom met with an image more truly pastoral than that of the lark, in the second stanza. Such strokes as these mark the pencil of the poet, which delineates Nature with the precision of intimacy, yet with the delicate colouring of beauty and taste.[18]

The stanza to which Mackenzie refers is indeed a detailed and engrossing description of a lark, but this poem develops into much more than pleasing imagery of nature. The final verse warns the reader of their eventual fate:

> Ev'n thou who mourn'st the *Daisy's* fate,
> *That fate is thine* – no distant date;
> Stern Ruin's *plough-share* drives, elate,
> Full on thy bloom,
> Till crush'd beneath the *furrows* weight,
> Shall be thy doom![19]

Although Mackenzie quotes this poem in its entirety, he immediately celebrates the initial emotional description of nature. The end of this poem references that opening, and warns those

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[16] Ibid., p. 386.
[17] Ibid., pp. 386-387.
[18] Ibid., p. 388.
[19] Robert Burns, 'To a Mountain-Daisy, *On turning one down with the Plough in April – 1786'* (Kinsley, Vol. 1, pp. 228-229), p. 229.

who were strongly affected by the daisy's fate that this fate will befall them too. It seems clear that the description was intended to emotionally engage the reader so that they would be affected more strongly by the conclusion, yet Mackenzie glosses over this sombre warning and highlights only Burns's "intimacy" with nature. It is therefore significant that Mackenzie does not discuss the distinction between the treatment of nature in 'The Cotter's Saturday Night' and in 'To a Mouse'. By listing all these poems in this way, he blurs them together under the umbrella of acute emotions and proximity to nature. He omits the harshness of the mouse's fate and Burns's political metaphor in 'To A Mouse'. As this is such an influential review, Burns's political views are further obscured and he is firmly placed in the role of isolated genius, a voice of nature and the past.

The 'heaven-taught ploughman' label endured long after this review. Mackenzie uses this phrase in a comparison of Burns and Shakespeare, after a list of poems that highlight Burns's insight: "with what uncommon penetration and sagacity this Heaven-taught ploughman, from his humble and unlettered station, has looked upon men and manners."[20] Andrews explains the possible origins of this label and its staying power:

> Mackenzie's reference may have been indebted to James Beattie's *The Minstrel*, where Edwin the minstrel is described as having a 'heaven-taught soul' (1.7). Regardless, Mackenzie's phrase stuck, becoming the *de facto* title that Burns endured throughout his career.[21]

If this label has its roots in Beattie's *The Minstrel*, then applied to Burns it would carry connotations of the idealised version of natural genius that Beattie examines in that work. Additionally, the label is introduced by referring to Burns's supposed lack of education. This continued playing down of Burns's education is again difficult to question, and therefore likely accepted without thought. The quotation also describes him as observing society, rather than necessarily participating, which is similar to Blackwell's description of Homer travelling through "various scenes" and observing them. In chapter one this level of participation was described in contrast to Beattie's warning about isolated hermits, so seemed participatory in comparison. However, given the review positioning Burns as outwith the boundaries of literary society, positioning Burns as an observer is most likely to strengthen the image of Burns as coming from a separate world that resembles the past more than the present.

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[20] Mackenzie in *The Lounger,* p. 388.

[21] Andrews, p. 77. The appellation could also have been a direct reference to 'The Vision', in which Coila describes Burns as being influenced by a "light from heaven". (K62, p. 112).

Mackenzie is critical of Burns's use of Scots, and claims to promote poems in which he speaks in "almost English".[22] He describes Burns's use of Scots as:

> One bar, indeed, his birth and education have opposed to his fame, the language in which most of his poems are written. Even in Scotland, the provincial dialect which Ramsay and he have used is now read with difficulty which greatly damps the pleasure of the reader: in England it cannot be read at all, without such a constant reference to a glossary, as nearly to destroy that pleasure.[23]

By implying that Burns's success relies on his appeal to English readers, and Scottish readers who speak only English, Mackenzie undermines Burns's ability to fulfil the role of national bard. It would be difficult to speak on behalf of a culture while not speaking that culture's language. How could Burns represent rural farm labourers if he spoke only with the diction of an Edinburgh lawyer? It may be true that Scots was rarely read at this time, but this does not account for its continued oral use. Andrews argues that Burns did indeed wish to be a national voice for Scotland: "[he] tried to furnish a different title – the 'Scotch Bard' – that would be more liberating and fulfilling for his poetic ambitions."[24] Andrews notes that Burns saw the benefit in playing into the image of himself that Mackenzie presents, but suggests he would have preferred to perform the national voice model of natural genius. This desire is also evident from his particular mention of 'the Scots dialect' in the title of his collection.[25] Andrews notes the difficulty he had in positioning himself as Scotch bard rather than heaven-taught ploughman:

> In order to fulfil his ambition to be remembered as a 'Scotch Bard', he wrote or revised songs origination in Scottish folk culture and famously refused payment for his work. However, to a reader from the period, it must have seemed that Burns had vanished from the literary scene altogether. The poems which made him famous were no longer forthcoming from the 'heaven-taught ploughman'. In John Logan's caustic assessment, it appeared that Burns had 'strut his hour upon the stage' and disappeared with other novelties such as 'learned pigs' and 'rhyming milkwomen'. After his death, however, his celebrity as a 'poetic genius' resurfaced, leading to a torrent of elegies from fond apologists who sought to derive a fitting moral from his life story.[26]

As this thesis has shown, the distinction between national bard and natural genius is not as clear as Andrews' contrast might suggest. If Burns meant to disentangle them, that would not be

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[22] Mackenzie in *The Lounger,* p. 386. This is questionable, though, because he later praises 'To a Mouse', the opening stanza of which contains the words "sleeket", "brattle" and "pattle".
[23] Ibid.
[24] Andrews, p. 77.
[25] The influence of his focus on dialect can be seen in Wordsworth's similar preoccupation with 'the real language of men', showing how easily observable this desire was.
[26] Andrews, pp. 124-125.

easy. Firstly, because the line between national bard and natural genius has been so blurred by his own work, making it difficult to be perceived as one and not the other. And secondly, Mackenzie's review of him was clearly so influential that echoes of it survived through a period of what seemed like inactivity. It was applied even after his death, showing how difficult it would have been to be perceived only as a national bard, not a natural genius. If Burns himself was struggling to redefine his own position, as is shown by the lack of recognition for his song editing and collecting work,[27] then this shows the extent to which his name was melded to the concept of the rural, isolated natural genius.

If Burns did have reservations about Mackenzie's 'heaven-taught ploughman' label, he did not initially protest, and instead was willing to promote this further. Before Mackenzie even published his review, Burns's preface to *Poems, Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect* describes himself in similar terms. Rhona Brown argues: "Burns's preface demonstrates that Henry Mackenzie's depiction of him as 'heaven-taught ploughman' came, as Fiona Stafford has argued, from Burns as much as from his critics."[28] Burns quickly plays down his education: "Unacquainted with the necessary requisites for commencing Poet by rule, he sings the sentiments and manners he felt and saw in himself and his rustic compeers around him, in his and their native language."[29] This claim that Burns did not know the rules of poetry is undermined by his use of the well-established dream vision form in 'The Vision'. However, given this is the reader's introduction to Burns and his poetry, and it comes from Burns himself, they have no reason to doubt this claim. Burns downplays his own education in 'The Vision', even while displaying it implicitly, so this impression likely stays with the reader.

Additionally, Burns separates himself from literary society in several ways. Firstly, when he describes the aim of his poetry:

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[27] Andrews discusses a complaint made about Burns in the 1790s "as he moved away from producing the types of poetry for which he had become famous and turned his attention to song-collecting […] by those readers who expected their 'brother of my heart' to pick up his 'sounding lyre' once more." (p. 121).
[28] Rhona Brown, 'Self-Curation, Self-Editing and Audience Construction by Eighteenth-Century Scots Vernacular Poets', *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 42:2, 2019, pp. 157-174, p. 167.
[29] Robert Burns, *Poems, Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect* (Kilmarnock: John Wilson, 1786), accessed via National Library of Scotland digitisation https://digital.nls.uk/poems-chiefly-in-the-scottish-dialect/archive/74464614#?c=0&m=0&s=0&cv=9&xywh=-1343%2C-1%2C5185%2C3844, [accessed 30.8.20], p. iii.

> none of the following works were ever composed with a view to the press. To amuse himself with creations of his own fancy, amid the toil and fatigues of a laborious life; to transcribe the various feelings, the loves, the griefs, the hopes, the fears, in his own breast; to find some kind of counterpoise to the struggles of a world, always an alien scene, a talk uncouth to the poetical mind; these were his motives for courting the Muses, and in these he found Poetry to be its own reward.[30]

Burns frames his emotional sensitivity in opposition to participation in the publishing industry, one of the restrictions of modern society. He also reaffirms elements of the pastoral by referring to hard labour, further separating himself from urban life.

Secondly, social class becomes important when explaining some of the qualities of his poetry:

> The following trifles are not the production of the Poet, who, with all the advantages of learned art, and perhaps amid the elegancies and idlenesses of upper life, looks down for a rural theme, with an eye to Theocrites or Virgil.[31]

Burns does slightly criticise the upper classes he is separating himself from, but this seems to be to promote his credentials as a rural and uneducated poet, rather than a political argument. He shows his education in his allusions, but this quotation is immediately followed by a claim that he does not have poetical knowledge. He therefore appears separate from the modern, urban society that some Enlightenment writers believed to be oppressive to genius, reinforcing the 'pastoral modernity' perception that he is a living poet of the past.

Emphasis on his social class is also important when considering how it is used to explain any offence Burns might have caused.[32] Both Burns and Mackenzie implore the reader to forgive Burns any indiscretion by emphasising his ignorance of taste in polite society. Near the close of his preface, Burns writes: "He begs his readers, particularly the Learned and the Polite who may honor him with a perusal that they will make every allowance for Education and Circumstances of Life."[33] Similarly, Mackenzie acknowledges the potential of Burns's poems to offend a particular readership:

> Against some passages of those last mentioned poems it has been objected that they breathe a spirit of libertinism and irrilegion. […] consider the ignorance and fanaticism of the lower class of people in the country where the poems were written, a fanaticism of that pernicious sort which sets *faith* in opposition to good works […] we shall look upon

[30] Ibid, p. iv.
[31] Ibid., p. iii.
[32] Additionally, the increased support for labouring-class poets from writers like Beattie would have made this a viable route to gain favour.
[33] Burns, *Poems, Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect*, pp. v-vi.

> his lighter Muse not as the enemy of religion (of which in several places he expresses the justest sentiments), but as the champion of morality and the friend of virtue.[34]

Burns's social class and claimed lack of education act as mitigation against the offence caused by some of the content of his collection, helping to defend against potential accusations of coarseness, which could have undermined his emotionally sensitive reputation.

This mitigation is important because Burns sought patronage for his poetry as a way of supporting himself after difficult financial and personal times. Poor harvests and rejection by the family of Jean Armour nearly prompted his emigration to work on a Jamaican slave plantation, but this was prevented by the success of *Poems.*[35] Andrews explains that "Mackenzie announces the need for patrons to support poor but 'worthy' poets such as such as Burns".[36] Mackenzie's attempt to secure patronage for Burns is emphatic:

> I do my country no more than justice, when I suppose her ready to stretch out her hand to cherish and retain this native Poet, whose "wood-notes wild" posses so much excellence. To repair the wrongs of suffering or neglected merit; to call forth genius from obscurity in which it had pined indignant, and place it where it may profit or delight the world; these are exertions which give to wealth an enviable superiority, to greatness and to patronage a laudable pride.[37]

Given his disapproval of Scots as a language for poetry, Mackenzie's emphasis on "my country" and "native Poet" are somewhat incongruous, but likely act as emotive encouragement to support Burns's career, especially combined with the suggestion that Burns had been let down thus far. It is very clear that patronage is a crucial aim for both Burns and Mackenzie, so it makes sense to go to such lengths to mitigate against offence.

There are several clear similarities between Burns's presentation of himself in the preface to *Poems* and Mackenzie's review of the collection. The qualities that both highlight are closely in line with some of the qualities of natural genius: idyllic rural origins and emotional sensitivity. However, overall these qualities align more with the isolated, rural genius, especially as the image of Burns as a national bard was undermined. Therefore, although Burns's poetry is frequently patriotic, his image as he announced himself onto the literary scene

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[34] Mackenzie in *The Lounger,* p. 388.
[35] 'A Brief Biography of Robert Burns' in *The Edinburgh Companion to Robert Burns,* ed. Gerard Carruthers (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), pp. viii-ix.
[36] Andrews, p. 79.
[37] Mackenzie in *The Lounger,* p. 388.

was most closely aligned with the isolated, rural genius, as a result of this review and his own preface.

‘The best poetry of the Ettrick Shepherd rather steals into our souls like music’ – the influence of John Wilson and the periodical press on the perception of James Hogg as a natural genius

Like Burns, Hogg had a reviewer present him to the reading public, similarly encouraging readers’ support. However, this review came at a different time in Hogg’s career than Burns’s, and while the reviews are similar, the reviewer, John Wilson, is a very different character from Henry Mackenzie. Wilson was a periodical writer, of whom Douglas Gifford notes: “modern critics increasingly identify [him] as an embodiment of unhealthy and pre-Kailyard developments of Scottish literature in the period, with his warped genius, his double-dealing, and his sentimental verse and politically biased and melodramatic fiction.”[1] While Gifford’s summary does suggest a tendency in Wilson towards the sentimental, which would be similar to Mackenzie, this chapter and the concluding chapter will make clear how his ruthlessness and his “double-dealings” mean he could never have been viewed as possessing a similar level of sensitivity.

The reviews of Hogg’s *The Mountain Bard* in the time before this 1819 review of Wilson’s[2] were mixed, but mostly helpful for Hogg’s ambition to be seen as a natural genius, though few presented Hogg as a significant literary force the way Wilson did. Reviews in the years following were generally more negative, especially in response to the 1821 edition of *The Mountain Bard* and the accompanying memoir. Building on the work of Suzanne Gilbert, most recent editor of the scholarly edition of Hogg’s *The Mountain Bard*, this section will revisit the contemporary response to Hogg’s first significant text. It will then compare Wilson’s introduction of Hogg to Mackenzie’s presentation of Burns. Finally, several reviews in the years following the 1821 edition of *The Mountain Bard* will be examined to show how Hogg gained and lost his reputation as a natural genius in the eyes of the periodical press.

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[1] Douglas Gifford, introduction to Hogg’s *Three Perils of Man* (Edinburgh: Canongate, 1996), pp. vii-xl, p. x.

[2] ‘Some Observations on the Poetry of the Agricultural and that of the Pastoral Districts of Scotland, Illustrated by a Comparative View of the Genius of Burns and the Ettrick Shepherd.’, *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine*, ed. William Blackwood, 4:23 (1819), pp. 521-529, accessed via ProQuest from database ‘British Periodicals’. This article does not state the author’s name, but its author is widely referred to as John Wilson, for example by Andrews, who discusses the article on pages 237-241 and refers to a 1974 edition.

In her introduction to the Stirling/South Carolina edition of *The Mountain Bard,* Suzanne Gilbert presents an overview of the reviews of the first edition from 1807, which were mostly positive:

> Reviews of the 1807 *Mountain Bard* might be characterised generally as positive and encouraging of Hogg, usually depicted as a rustic genius […] From the most positive to the most negative, however, published responses clustered around a few common themes.[3]

She quotes a review from London's *Poetical Register*[4] to demonstrate his self-education and his rural background, similar to 'primitive' civilisations, a similar background to that of Burns highlighted by Mackenzie. Additionally, the focus on shepherds as a primitive people helps Hogg seem like a poet from the past.

Gilbert then quotes a review from the *Annual Review and History of Literature,* which, while more negative, is centred on several of the same qualities.[5] She notes this review's remarks about Hogg's self-education, how it associates self-educated poets with stories from the past and considers such poets to focus on "imitation rather than originality". The review concludes that Hogg's work will not be "sophisticated" enough for an English audience.[6] The reviewer's criticism of Hogg's lack of education does not necessarily harm his potential to be seen as a natural genius, since education was considered crucial by some, but harmful by others. Similarly, while this review criticises Hogg's subject matter, that does not necessarily undermine Hogg's image as a natural genius. For those who appreciate the isolated rural genius descended from the ancient bardic heroes, this review would still strengthen Hogg's association with this image. Gilbert continues by quoting reviews from the *Literary Panorama, The Cabinet,* the *Critical Review,* the *Eclectic Review* and the *Oxford Review*, all following similar themes and reaching broadly positive conclusions.

This positive press, however, does not seem to have impacted Hogg as permanently as Burns. In the 1821 version of his memoir, Hogg extensively describes his difficulty in finding a publisher for various works. For example, his attempts to publish *The Queen's Wake* are

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[3] Gilbert, p. xlii.
[4] Ibid. This review highlights Hogg's place as a shepherd and emphasises his adherence to the true style of ballad writing.
[5] Gilbert, p. xliii. This review claims too many self-taught poets have been emerging in recent times. Hogg's skill is complimented, but his subject choice is criticised, as according to this reviewer ballad imitations do not appeal to modern readers, even the ancient versions are worth retaining.
[6] Ibid, pp. xliii-xliv.

continuously thwarted by both the literary public and those he considers friends. For example, he asks James Gray, a schoolmaster known to Hogg in Edinburgh,[7] to hear some of his poetry. Gray's wife "objected to a word", which caused some "high disputes" and resulted in Hogg unable to "procure a hearing for another line of [his] new poem."[8] Additionally, Hogg's personal relationship with Constable, the publisher of *The Mountain Bard* was not enough to secure him publication of *The Queen's Wake*. Constable "received [him] coldly"[9] and after some argument could only be convinced to print a limited run if Hogg could first "procure him 200 subscribers, to insure him from loss". After the success of *The Mountain Bard*, Hogg might have expected Constable's trust. However, this is clearly not reason enough for Constable to publish Hogg's next work, though Hogg obstinately refusing to let him read it likely did not influence him to be generous. The ambivalence of the literary public shows that positive reception to *The Mountain Bard* did not necessary establish Hogg as a natural genius and Burns's worthy successor, suggesting that despite positive reviews, there was not the groundswell of enthusiasm around him that there was around Burns.[10]

Therefore, when John Wilson wrote his review comparing Hogg to Burns in 1819, to some extent it was as if he performed the same function Mackenzie did for Burns. He would not be introducing Hogg to the literary scene, but would have to make a fresh case for considering him a natural genius. The introduction to this thesis noted Hogg's attempts to position himself as Burns's successor in 1832, but this review seems to have intended to do so much earlier. Wilson begins by discussing peasant poets in the abstract, linking them to qualities associated with natural geniuses:

> SCOTLAND has better reason to be proud of her peasant poets than any other country in the world. [...] If we knew nothing of the forefathers of our Scottish hamlets, but the pure and affectionate songs and ballads, the wild and pathetic airs of music which they loved, we should know enough to convince us that they were a race of men strong, healthful, happy and dignified in the genial spirit of nature. The lower orders of the

[7] Hughes, p. 108.
[8] Hogg, *The Mountain Bard* (1821 version) in Stirling/South Carolina edition referenced previously for the 1807 version, p. 211.
[9] Ibid., pp. 211-212. It is worth nothing this memoir's credibility is frequently questioned by its reviewers, similar to the logistical issues in the 1832 memoir noted in this thesis's introduction. An interaction like this probably did happen, but it is always difficult to trust details provided by Hogg.
[10] Burns also experienced some difficulty in the publishing industry, as noted in a letter to Gavin Hamilton, which described censure of two of his songs by "a jury of Literati". (*The Letters of Robert Burns*, ed. J. De Lancy Ferguson and G. Ross Roy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 98). Still, Burns discusses the censure of individual poems, rather than difficulty publishing an entire collection, so overall Hogg seems to have received less adulation than Burns.

> Scotch seem always to have had deeper, calmer, purer, and more reflecting affections than those of any other people[11]

By combining so many qualities associated by Enlightenment writers with natural genius and assigning them to peasant poets, Wilson lays the groundwork for labelling Hogg a natural genius, via his position as a peasant poet. He refers to peasant poets' emotional sensitivity; their "wildness" suggests the isolated and rural; their hardiness suggests a life of hard manual toil. He even associates sensitivity with national songs, and argues that Scottish peasant poets in particular possess these traits, which allows him to frame genius as a national voice as well. Wilson therefore covers almost every base set out in chapter one, strongly linking the Scottish peasantry with the Enlightenment image of natural genius.[12] The definition of natural genius continued to develop over the course of the early nineteenth century. However, Wilson compared Hogg specifically to Burns, whose status as a genius was established in the 1780s. As shown in the introduction, Hogg sought to step into Burns's shoes in order to be seen as a natural genius. Therefore, Wilson used many of the same criteria to elevate Hogg as Mackenzie did for Burns. This thesis discusses the development of the definition in greater detail in the concluding chapter.

He then introduces a quality possessed by the Scottish peasantry not immediately associated with natural genius. He claims religious devotion is what achieves the qualities described above:

> Whatever may have been the causes of this fine character in more remote times, it seems certain, that, since the Reformation, it is to be attributed to chiefly to the spirit of their Religion. That spirit is pervading and profound: it blends intimately with all the relations of life, - and gives a quiet and settled permanency to feelings[13]

Like Hogg's construction of Sandy Tod, Wilson builds a picture of the Scottish peasantry. He depicts a people who are happy, stable and warm of heart, and embeds a dutiful Presbyterian devotion in their community, enhanced by widespread parish school education. It is true that Presbyterianism was an important part of rural peasant life at this time, but by generalising this image, Wilson forms a sense of character for a whole social class. Hogg, like Sandy, arises

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[11] Wilson (1819), p. 521. Andrews discusses this depiction of the Scottish peasantry and notes it is "a subject first addressed in the posthumous assessment of Burns by James Currie, his first editor" (p. 237). Wilson has most likely chosen to focus on this area because he knows, from extant reviews, that it is already associated with Burns. Currie's assessment is one of the central texts of chapter four, which examines discussions of each poet in the immediate aftermaths of their deaths.

[12] Additionally, John Goodridge describes the growing interest in working-class authors in the early 19th century, particularly Robert Bloomfield, John Clare and Hogg himself. (*Nineteenth-Century English Labouring-Class Poets* (London: Pickering & Chatto), 2006, P. xvii).

[13] Wilson (1819), p.521.

from this class, and is imbued with all the emotional warmth and religious devotion of that community. Like Mackenzie's construction of Burns as a heaven-taught ploughman, and Burns's advancement of this via his own preface, Wilson's review aligns well with Hogg's own work. Together, they advance a clear image of the Scottish peasantry, and with it a strong narrative about Hogg's origins.

Wilson then discusses education, which had been omitted from the opening description of the Scottish peasantry. He notes the "inestimable benefits" of education afforded by the spread of Parish-Schools in Scotland, but considers the Scottish peasantry's "moral feeling and affectation" and powerful imagination to be more important.[14] Thus Wilson, while noting the 'inestimable benefits' of education, still argues that education alone is by no means the process of generating genius. This aligns with the view from chapter one that education is unnecessary for a natural genius, but by showing that the Scottish peasantry is indeed educated to some extent, he protects them from views that believed more strongly in the importance of education for natural geniuses. He therefore increases the extent to which a peasant poet, like Burns or Hogg, can be seen as a natural genius.

After describing the overall character of the Scottish peasantry, Wilson describes the conditions under which such individuals can thrive, namely under a "free government", as opposed to "less happy lands".[15] Having already constructed the character of the rural Scottish peasantry, Wilson refines the Enlightenment idea of a rural idyll, focusing specifically on the prosperous Protestant liberty of rural Scots. He provides a clear image of the unrestrictive rural life in which Hogg's genius has been able to thrive.

This theoretical preamble leads Wilson into his introduction of Burns, an example of exactly such free and natural genius. Wilson links Burns's poetry to pastoral scenes of religious devotion: "The fireside of the English cottager is often a scene of happiness and virtue; but unquestionably, in reading the 'Cotter's Saturday Night' of Burns, we feel, that we are reading the records of a purer, simpler, more pious race".[16] Wilson chooses a Burns poem which emphasises the devoutness of the Scottish peasantry,[17] linking directly to his previous

[14] Ibid.
[15] Ibid., p. 522.
[16] Ibid., p. 523.
[17] Wilson does criticise Burns for too frequently "painting the corruptions of religion" (p. 526) but he is also harsh on Burns's critics who think this makes him immoral and irreligious.

discussion of the Scottish peasantry's religious devotion. He soon claims that Hogg is Burns's "only worthy successor, the Ettrick Shepherd",[18] a claim which is therefore strengthened, as Hogg too has emphasised the devoutness of the Scottish peasantry.

Wilson also shows Burns's emotional sensitivity, but frames this strength as limiting his ability in other areas. He notes Burns's strength of feeling originating in his life's hardships:

> The hardships and privations that Burns early felt himself born to endure […] made his whole heart leap within him when joy, and pleasure, and happiness, opened their arms to receive him. Bliss bursts upon him like a rush of waters - and his soul is at once swept down the flood. [...] It was thus that nothing seemed worthy to engross his attention, but the feelings and the passions of the heart of man.[19]

This is the start of Wilson carving out a space for Hogg to fill, as he then describes potential areas of Burns's poetry where fault can be found. These are areas in which Hogg excels, helping him to escape Burns's shadow, and be considered a natural genius in his own right.

The first of these areas is landscape poetry. Wilson claims that when Burns writes about nature, his emotional tenderness causes him to focus too much on human feeling and response, rather than physical description:

> […] external nature seems never to have elevated his imagination, or for any length of time to have win him from the dominion of the living world. [...] When he has attempted to generalize, to delineate associations by which nature is connected with the universal feelings of our kind, he sinks to the level of an ordinary versifier.[20]

This bold claim implicitly criticises the quality of many of Burns's poems, including 'To a Mouse', in which an animal is directly compared to the speaker's emotions, and 'To a Mountain Daisy', which was highly praised by Henry Mackenzie. The criticism is softened by its combination with high praise of Burns's ability to write about human emotion, but suggesting Burns could have possibly written poetry of "ordinary" quality would likely not have gone

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[18] Ibid.

[19] Ibid., p. 524. Burns was widely considered to have powerful emotions at the time, particularly in the field of phrenology, which was then considered a legitimate science that could understand the emotional makeup of a person via study of their skull. Megan Coyer notes: "This initial evaluation [of a cast of Burns's skull] is characteristic of the numerous evaluations that follow, as the brain of the bard is posited as a site of intense psychological warfare – his powerful animal propensities and moral sentiments struggling for dominance in well-documented and poetically rendered battles." ('The Literary Empiricism of the Phrenologists: Reading the Burnsian Bumps', *The Drouth,* Volume 30, 2009, Pp. 69-77, p. 72).

[20] Wilson, p. 524.

down well.[21] Still, the alternative would be to present Hogg as exceeding Burns in an area in which Burns was most skilled, so Wilson was likely trying to create a space which Hogg could occupy. This seems to have been his aim, as he was promoting Hogg as a natural genius in a marketplace still overshadowed by Burns, the embodiment of natural genius.[22]

Wilson also criticises Burns's supernatural poetry in a similar way to his criticism of Burns's nature poetry. He claims, "in the poetry of Burns, there is not much of that wild spirit of fear and mystery which is to be found in the traditions of the south of Scotland" [23] and that the primary appeal of 'Tam o' Shanter' is the character of its hero. This analysis could use more nuance, since the pacing of the chase is expertly timed to ignite adrenaline, and therefore fear, in the reader. Additionally, it is perhaps simplistic to say that a human focus reduces the fear instilled, since when a reader sees themselves reflected by a character, it is as if they themselves are being chased, even if the monsters are perhaps less horrific. Still, as with the physical descriptions of nature, this is an understandable area for Wilson to have attempted to criticise Burns, since it is not the genre Burns spent most time on, but is one of Hogg's specialities. Wilson describes Hogg as: "the poet laureate of the Court of Faëry".[24]

After establishing these gaps in Burns's ability, Wilson introduces Hogg as a similar but distinct poet:

> We should be afraid of turning from so great a national poet as Burns, to a living genius, also born like him in the lower ranks of life, were we not assured that there is a freshness and originality in the mind of the Ettrick Shepherd […] the respective characters of their poetry are altogether separate and distinct; - and there can be nothing more delightful than to see these two genuine children of Nature following the voice of her inspiration into such different haunts, each happy in his own native dominions, and powerful in his own legitimate rule.[25]

Wilson's directness in labelling Hogg as a genius, as well as his comparison to Burns, is a bold, emphatic claim, likely to make a strong impression on the reader.

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[21] Andrews' fifth chapter deals with the shadow of Burns, which he claims "loomed large in early nineteenth-century Scotland" (p. 230). Throughout the chapter he shows that Burns was celebrated all over Britain long after his death. Any poet would pale in direct comparison.

[22] Andrews discusses the effect that Burns's memory had on the literary marketplace in the decades after his death: "For Scottish poets in particular, writing in the 'great shadow' of Burns was both exigent and unavoidable in the years immediately after his death." (p. 192).

[23] Wilson, p. 525.

[24] Ibid., p. 529.

[25] Ibid., p. 527.

It is also helpful to note their differences, as doing so allows Hogg to excel as a natural genius, without necessarily having to compete with the long shadow of Burns. The first difference between the two that Wilson highlights is Hogg's superior ability with descriptions of natural landscape, a space he has previously opened up for Hogg by criticising Burns's ability.

> He too passed a youth of poverty and hardship - but it was the youth of a lonely shepherd among the most beautiful pastoral vallies in the world [...] And living for years in the solitude, he unconsciously formed friendships with the springs - the brooks - the caves - the hills - and with all the more fleeting and faithless pageantry of the sky, that to him came in the place of those human affections from whose indulgence he was debarred by the necessities that kept him aloof from the cottage fire, and up among the mists on the mountain-top.[26]

Wilson shows that Hogg's position as a shepherd helped him form a strong bond with nature, since he was less able to access the fireside comforts described in 'The Cotter's Saturday Night'. He frames Hogg's ability with physical descriptions of nature as related to the greater amount of time spent in solitude as a shepherd, which reinforces the distinction between the two poets, as their different occupations is a tangible difference between their lives. Hogg becomes, in one respect, an even better example than Burns of the isolated rural genius described by Katie Trumpener, and similar to the representation of Edwin in Book 1 of *The Minstrel*, which fits with several writers' views that modern society was too restrictive for natural genius to prosper, such as Hume questioning how a full-time profession can leave time to seek inspiration and Blackwell's argument that modern society admires nothing but status and wealth.

The second difference that Wilson shows is their different abilities in dealing with the supernatural:

> It is here, where Burns was weakest, that he [Hogg] is most strong. The airy beings that to the impassioned soul of Burns seemed cold - bloodless - and unattractive - rise up in irresistible loveliness in their own silent domains, before the dreamy fancy of the gentlehearted Shepherd.[27]

Wilson continues to frame Burns as struggling with the supernatural because supernatural creatures did not fit how Burns wrote about human emotion, which allows Wilson to position Hogg as greatly superior to Burns in a second respect. Supernatural writing is not automatically

[26] Ibid.
[27] Ibid., p. 528.

an element of what makes a natural genius, but the way that Wilson depicts Hogg at having mastered the genre provides the link:

> The still green beauty of the pastoral hills and vales where he passed his youth, inspired him with ever-brooding visions of fairy-land - till, as he lay musing in his lonely sheiling, the world of phantasy seemed, in the clear depths of his imagination, a lovelier reflection of that of nature - like the hills and heavens more softly shining in the water of his native lake.[28]

Wilson claims that, like his ability to write physical descriptions of nature, it is Hogg's time spent in nature that gives him his love of, and skill with, writing about the supernatural. He thus positions Hogg's ability with supernatural writing as part of what demonstrates his natural genius, as it is also part of his position as a rural isolated poet.

The other area of difference that Wilson highlights between the two writers is not set up by criticism of Burns's abilities. In terms of their effects on a reader's emotions, Wilson instead shows them both excelling in different ways:

> [Burns] spoke of things familiar to all, in language familiar to all - and hence his poetry is like "the casing air," breathed and enjoyed by all. [...] we doubt if, from the whole range of the Ettrick Shepherd's writings, one such triumphant and irresistible passage could be produced - one strain appealing, without possibility of failure, to the universal feelings of men's hearts. But it is equally certain that many strains [...] might be produced [...] which in the hearts and souls of all men of imagination and fancy [...] would awaken emotions, if not so strong, certainly finer and more ethereal than any that are inspired by the very happiest compositions of the Bard of Coila.[29]

It is not clear exactly what Wilson means by "finer" or "ethereal" emotional responses, but broadly he seems to argue that Burns's poetry has universal emotional appeal, while, to a minority of people, Hogg's poetry will elicit an even more piercing response. This is important in positioning Hogg as Burns's successor as a natural genius, because it means Wilson can highlight the emotional appeal of Hogg's writing without having to claim that Hogg's poetry can be as universally appreciated as Burns's.

Thus Wilson has set the two writers up neatly in comparison: Burns and Hogg have many similarities and both are deserving of the title of natural genius, yet both are also in possession of their own unique qualities. Wilson then implores the reading public to value Hogg as highly as they do Burns. He argues that if they hold numerous festivals to commemorate "their great dead poet", then they ought to support Hogg too, especially since he "[assists] at the honours

[28] Ibid.
[29] Ibid.

paid to the memory of his illustrious predecessor."[30] As Mackenzie did for Burns, Wilson frames support of Hogg as a national duty. Mackenzie noted Burns's financial despair, which almost caused him to emigrate, to contend that the reading public had been remiss in allowing this situation to arise. Similarly, Wilson implies that if the reading public can hold ceremonies every year for a poet who cannot even receive praise anymore, then they would be hypocrites to not give respect to Hogg, whom he has carefully framed as Burns's successor. Thus both poets had a champion who was able and willing to declare them a natural genius.

However, unlike Burns, subsequent critical response was far from unanimous in agreeing with this assessment of Hogg. For example, an incident highlighted by the *Edinburgh Literary Journal*[31] shows emotional insensitivity from Hogg. The incident concerned the poet David Tweedil, who had been assumed as the author of a controversial poetical work that the journal had previously published. The journal had since discovered that Hogg was the true author. Hogg had allowed the misunderstanding to continue, despite the distress it caused Tweedil. The magazine describes Tweedil's anger as "most just", showing that in this incident Hogg is rightly perceived as the party at fault. Tweedil expresses his indignation in verse:

> […] I charged him with it,
> And, like an honest man, he did confess
> The perverse deed. He wanted some home-thrusts At
> certain poets, and he chose to place
> Old David of the Lin 'twixt them and him.

This is problematic for his perception as a natural genius, since callous disregard for Tweedil's feelings shows unfeeling coarseness. Attempts to depict him as a genius of tender emotions are therefore undermined by other aspects of his reputation.

Several other reviews have similar issues with Hogg. In an 1822 review of *The Mountain Bard*, the reviewer is disgusted by the extended 'Memoir', and questions Hogg's moral character, claiming it "must either have never existed, or been effectually destroyed".[32] Part of what angered this reviewer was Hogg's tendency to slander those who are supposed to be his friends,[33] increasing harm to his reputation as emotionally sensitive. A review in *The Newcastle*

[30] Ibid., p. 529.
[31] David Tweedil, 'Lines for the Eye of Mr James Hogg, Sometimes Termed the Ettrick Shepherd.', *The Edinburgh literary journal, or, Weekly register of criticism and belles lettres*, Issue 74, 1830, p. 221.
[32] 'Hogg's Mountain Bard', *The Calcutta journal of politics and general literature*, 1:4, 1822, p. 39
[33] Ibid. This is in reference to the 'Memoir' from the 1821 version of *The Mountain Bard*.

Magazine criticises Hogg's drinking,[34] noting an incident from the 1821 'Memoir' which does result in serious illness for Hogg,[35] contrasted against the "wisdom" of the mountains. Given Hogg's overall warmth towards the incident,[36] the depiction of Hogg in 1807 as wise, and coming from nature, seems no longer to suit him. This review also takes issue with Hogg's frequent use of the supernatural,[37] which would not have been a problem but for Wilson's emphasis on this as a trait of natural genius in his 1819 presentation of Hogg. Both of these reviews also distance Burns and Hogg,[38] further undermining Hogg's claim to the title of natural genius, since this was so closely associated with Burns.

Not every review condemned Hogg. In an 1828 review in *The Athenaeum,* a defence of Hogg is set out, often praising specific traits other reviewers had condemned. For example, the reviewer argues for the positive qualities of Hogg's decision to write about the legends of his own people,[39] rebuilding the image of Hogg that Wilson had constructed to at least some extent. This reviewer also shows Hogg's warmth[40] and accuses his critics of "envy or malice", reversing who should be perceived as insensitive. The review also explains that Hogg's reputation was essentially sacrificed for the good of *Blackwoods*,[41] which acknowledges Hogg's bad press but frames his willingness to sacrifice himself as generous and gallant. Additionally, by centring Hogg's desire to be considered a genius in his motivations for submitting to such abuse, that desire seems pure, removed from the mudslinging of the periodical press, because he was willing to go through so much if he could only have that title.

Lastly, this review echoes Wilson's 1819 review when comparing the emotional impact of Hogg and Burns:

> Burns's ideas are more glittering, [Hogg's] have greater intensity. Hogg's verses combine sublimity with mellowness; Burns's picquancy with polish. The sweetness of the latter is like that of crystalized sugar, whose minutest particles are pointed; that of the former is like the smoothness of honey, whose every rounded atom is a luscious

[34] 'James Hogg', *The Newcastle magazine*, 1:2 (1820), pp. 122-136, p. 122.
[35] *The Mountain Bard*, pp. 227-228.
[36] Ibid., p. 228.
[37] *The Newcastle Magazine*, p. 134.
[38] Ibid., p. 135 and *The Calcutta Journal*…
[39] 'James Hogg, the Ettrick Shepherd', *The Athenaeum*, Iss. 10, 1828, pp. 145-147, p. 145.
[40] Ibid., p. 146.
[41] Ibid., p. 145. Hogg claims similar ambivalence towards how he is represented in the 1821 'Memoir'. He describes his attitude towards Wilson's critique of him: "My friends in general, have been of opinion, that he has amused himself and the public too often at my expense; but, except in one instance, which terminated very ill for me, and in which I had no more concern than the man in the moon, I never designed any evil design on his part, and thought it all excellent sport." (*The Mountain Bard*, p. 229).

> globule. Hogg's poetry possesses the dim richness of a cairngorm; Burns's the lively sparkle of a topaz or a diamond.[42]

The depiction of Burns's poetry as more delicate and Hogg's poetry as warmer is similar to a claim made by Wilson: "The best poetry of Burns goes, sudden as electricity, to the heart. Every nerve in our frame is a conductor to the fluid, the best poetry of the Ettrick Shepherd rather steals into our souls like music".[43] Wilson suggests that Burns's poetry is more immediately striking, similar to this reviewer's description of it as "pointed". Their depictions of Hogg's poetry are less directly comparable, but regardless, both reviews attach no value judgements to the different characteristics they assign to each writer's poetry, meaning that a place can be created for Hogg without the two writers in direct competition.

This review comes almost ten years after Wilson's 1819 piece, suggesting Wilson's depiction of Hogg as a natural genius was strong enough to withstand the attacks of the 1820s, and was now bolstered. However, vicious criticism from Wilson himself undermined this possibility. In 1823, Wilson wrote another review of Hogg in *Blackwoods,* this time about Hogg's novel *The Three Perils of Woman.*[44] He starts by seeming to praise Hogg in a way conducive to the image of natural genius: "It is indeed this rare union of high imagination with homely truth that constitutes the peculiar character of his writings."[45] This praise aligns well with Gerard's belief in the powerful imagination of individual geniuses. Combining this with "homely" suggests Hogg's humble station as a shepherd, which was also part of his claim to the title of natural genius in Wilson's 1819 review. However, the next sentence rather changes in tone: "In one page, we listen to the song of the nightingale, and in another, to the grunt of the boar".[46] With the latter more coarse example, "homely" has a much less positive association than the pastoral comforts of previous reviews. This coarseness is harshly emphasised towards the end of the review: "You think you are shewing your knowledge of human nature, in these your coarse daubings; and that you are another Shakespeare. But consider that a writer may be indelicate, coarse, gross, even beastly, and yet not at all natural."[47] Here Wilson attacks Hogg's perception

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[42] *The Athenaeum*…, p. 146.
[43] Wilson (1819), p. 528.
[44] Attributed to Wilson in Footnote 29 of Gillian Hughes's chapter 'The Edinburgh of Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine and James Hogg's Fiction' in *Romanticism and Blackwood's Magazine,* ed. Robert Morrison and Daniel S. Roberts (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), pp. 175-185.
[45] 'Hogg's Three Perils of Woman.', *Blackwood's Edinburgh magazine,* 14:81, 1823, pp. 427-437, p. 427. This review discusses a work of a different genre, and that the work was not widely well-received, so Wilson is not alone in his criticism. However, the contrast in his attitude towards Hogg is still notably abrupt.
[46] Wilson (1823), p. 427.
[47] Ibid., p. 437.

of human emotion, which in 1819 he had compared favourably to Burns, arguing that he would appeal intensely to a minority of readers. Now, he not only undermines Hogg's ability to understand human nature, but attacks his very humanity. He also adds: "if you go on at this rate, you will be called before the Kirk session",[48] undermining Hogg's devoutness, which he had highlighted in 1819 by focusing on the piety of the Scottish peasantry.

Like the reviewer in *The Calcutta Journal…,* Wilson increases the credibility of his attacks by claiming friendship with Hogg, and seeming to give him the benefit of the doubt:

> You have no intention to be an immoral writer, and we acquit you of that; but you have an intention to be a most unmannerly writer, and of that you are found and declared guilty […] It is impossible to know you, James, and not love and admire you; and we frankly tell you of your errors, before your books are sent to Coventry.[49]

By showing that he has no motivation to hurt his friend, Wilson presents his criticisms as important truths that must be heard, even if they will upset Hogg. He also acknowledges Hogg's intentions were not necessarily dishonourable, which suggests he is being considered and fair in his criticism. There was also controversy around the text outside of this review. For example, David Groves notes a review in the *Literary Gazette* from the same year, which describes the novel as indecent and disrespectful.[50] Groves explains the outrage:

> It was this letter of Gatty's, with its "allusions to women of ill-fame," which seemed so offensive to the critic in London's *Literary Gazette.* […] During an age in which even pregnancy was seldom mentioned in fiction, James Hogg went further than any other novelist in presenting a realistic image of contemporary urban life for women.[51]

Clearly, Wilson was not alone in his condemnation of Hogg's work, so his harshness may not have seemed so sudden and unreasonable, although his personal attacks are still particularly vicious. All of this reduces the extent to which Wilson's review could easily have been read as cruel slander that should be disregarded.

Wilson was also known to emphasise Hogg's coarseness in the *Noctes Ambrosianae.* Gilbert notes: "Wilson's characterisation of the Shepherd as a naturally poetic buffoon certainly distorted Hogg's brand. In a burlesque of Romantic theories of inspired composition, Wilson

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[48] Ibid.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Anonymous, 'The three Perils of woman; or Love, Leasing, and Jealousy.', *The Literary gazette : A weekly journal of literature, science, and the fine arts,* Issue 345, 1823, pp. 546-548.
[51] David Groves, 'James Hogg's "Confessions and Three Perils of Woman" and the Edinburgh Prostitution Scandal of 1823', *The Wordsworth Circle,* 18:3, 1987, pp. 127-131, p. 128. Groves also explains the parallels between the novel and a high profile 1823 execution of a brothel madam, Mary Mackinnon, which would have been apparent to contemporary readers.

represents Hogg as barely able to recall having written his own song".[52] For example, Wilson has the 'Shepherd' focus on the sexual element of Mr North's relationship: "And ae flesh. Hurraw! hurraw! hurraw! Gies your haun' on that my auld hearty! What a gran' echo's in yon corner o' the roof! hear till't smackin' loofs after us, as if Cupid himsel' were in the cornice!"[53] Overall, Wilson's influence on Hogg's image often increased the extent to which he was seen as coarse, rather than as a natural genius.

While the 1828 review in *The Athenaeum* might have attempted to salvage Hogg's reputation to some extent, this would have been made much harder by one of Hogg's attackers being the closest person he had to a Henry Mackenzie-like champion. Gilbert notes that after the 1823 review Hogg "was mortified to learn that the author was his supposed friend John Wilson wearing a new and unfriendly face."[54] It would seem that Wilson's authorship of the piece was not kept secret for long. So the attempt by *The Athenaeum* reviewer to defend Hogg from accusations of profusion, wit, ribald and exuberant excess is dramatically undermined by Wilson's description of his behaviour:

> This may be thought vigour by many of your friends in the Auld Town, and originality, and genius, and so forth; deal it out to them in full messure over the gin-jug, or even the tea-cup; but it will not do at a Public Entertainment.[55]

Given that *The Athenaeum* reviewer is rehabilitating Hogg's reputation as a natural genius after attacks from the very man who constructed it, this attempt was unlikely to be successful.

In Hogg's early career, therefore, he attained the image of natural genius. This was achieved partially through Wilson's introduction of him as Burns's successor on this basis, and aided by generally positive reviews, noting his rural background and similarity to poets of the past. However, Wilson then attacked Hogg in a later review of a more controversial work, his novel *The Three Perils of Woman*, undermining the crucial support he had provided. If even Hogg's good friend felt compelled to viciously attack his writing and his person, why should anyone still respect him? The review in *The Athenaeum* would therefore have been unlikely to reaffirm Hogg as a natural genius.

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[52] Suzanne Gilbert, 'Hogg's Reception and Reputation', *The Edinburgh Companion to James Hogg,* ed. Ian Duncan and Douglas S. Mack (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), pp. 37-45, p. 41.
[53] 'Noctes Ambrosianae', *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine,* 26:160, 1829, pp. 845-878, p. 847.
[54] Gilbert, 'Hogg's Reception and Reputation', p. lv.
[55] *Blackwoods…* (1823), p. 437.

However, it is unclear why reviews of Hogg turned quite so strongly against him in comparison to Burns. Burns was also sometimes criticised for his personal conduct and political opinions. But as shown, he retained the label of natural genius, and heaven-taught ploughman, long after his death. The final chapter of this thesis will attempt to explain the discrepancy in these otherwise very similar trajectories.

To understand the difficulties each poet faced in fulfilling the image of a natural genius, it is important to examine the political landscapes in their respective lifetimes. Both poets were dragged into political conversations because of their class,[1] complicating their continued perception as isolated and rural. This chapter will illustrate how Burns and his supporters minimised the damage done by this political involvement, whereas Hogg struggled on alone in maintaining his reputation.

While civil unrest was less violent in Britain than in France during Burns's time, the development of events there greatly influenced the mood of British society. Discussing Burns's private expression of radical sentiments, Crawford describes such talk as: "increasingly dangerous" and notes that "Revolutionary France was viewed as threatening the British state, and home-grown democrats were suppressed."[2]

Burns's political engagement is widely documented. Philip Butcher notes his radicalism despite potential danger:

> seldom reticent about expressing radical political views no matter how inconvenient such expressions might be in the light of his financial insecurity or, during the Excise years, in view of the fact that he was criticizing the very government from which he derived his scanty living.[3]

Burns himself describes an example of a public political blunder, in a letter the next morning. He claims he made the following toast: "May our success in the present war be equal to the "justice of our cause""[4] and that a Captain Dods was so outspoken in his offence that "had I had nobody's welfare to care for but my own, we should certainly have come, according to the

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[1] Gilbert describes political feeling around the time of the 1821 edition of the 'Mountain Bard' and how this affected Hogg:
During the period before publication of the 1807 Mountain Bard, there had been a united front against the Napoleonic threat, but by 1821 the political climate had changed. It was a time of agitation for radical reform; the working classes were perceived as challenging a system which had always been dominated by the interests of the aristocracy and gentry.
[…]
If Hogg's 1807 'Memoir' had been received with condescension, often of a gentle variety, the expanded 'Memoir' in the 1821 Mountain Bard provoked extremely hostile reactions. The attacks on the 'Memoir' reflect anxieties among the classes who worried over challenges to the older order; and a shepherd-poet who dared to mingle in affairs above his class became the subject of personal abuse and ridicule. (*The Mountain Bard* (pp. lii-liii)).

[2] Crawford, p. 3.

[3] Philip Butcher, 'Robert Burns and the Democratic Spirit', *Phylon,* 10:3 (1949), pp. 265-272, p. 267.

[4] Robert Burns to Samuel Clarke, in *The Letters of Robert Burns,* p. 301.

manners of the world, to the necessity of murdering one another about the business." This vehement political disagreement happening in public is significant because unlike coarseness in letters or close interpersonal relationships, the story could have spread widely in the town.

Additionally, in 1792, "he had to confess to Graham of Fintry there had been 'a Riot' in Dumfries theatre" in which "[reports] later asserted Burns had either joined in this singing [of a French revolutionary song], or kept his hat on through the National Anthem, a mark of disrespect to the King."[5] Crawford argues that the details are once again unclear, but that Burns clearly "did nothing to discourage disloyalty."[6]

Colin Kidd shows that Burns's political involvement did become an important part of his personality and career:

> Whether as a satirist, a song-writer or antiquarian restorer of old verses, Burns turned to political themes again and again throughout his career. The apolitical Burns of the Burns Supper involves misconstruing a profoundly political poet; but, equally, to unmask the Burns of the old bardolators as a committed but frightened underground Jacobin is to omit the poet's immersion in the messy, perversely divided politics of the 1780s.[7]

This emphatic statement places Burns's politics at the centre of his poetry, as examples above have shown. It is clear that Burns was not simply the detached rural genius.

In poems such as 'The Twa Dogs', Burns's explicit criticism of the aristocracy was likely to become a more sensitive subject for an increasingly insecure upper class than when it was initially published. The dog belonging to an aristocratic owner describes titled men and women as follows:

> But Gentlemen, an' Ladies warst, Wi'
> ev'n down *want o' wark* are curst.
> They loiter, lounging, lank an' lazy;
> Tho' deil-haet ails them, yet uneasy;
> Their days, insipid, dull an' tasteless,
> Their nights, unquiet, lang an' restless.[8]

[5] Crawford, pp. 358-359.
[6] Ibid., p. 359.
[7] Kidd, 'Burns and Politics', p. 65.
[8] Robert Burns, 'The Twa Dogs. A Tale' (Kinsley, Vol. 1, pp. 137-145), p. 144.

These insults to aristocrats who have never partaken in any profession are direct and vicious.[9] When it was published, the targets of these insults had relatively little to fear. But as the realities of revolution unfolded in France, these lines likely took on a more threatening tone.

There is also direct attack on contemporary politicians in other works. The opening of 'Address of Beelzebub' describes the Earl of Breadalbane, "President of the Right Honorable Highland Society" which thwarted the attempts of "five hundred Highlanders" to achieve "Liberty" via emigration.[10] Burns's satire is directed at the Earl in particular, who is for the rest of the poem congratulated on his harsh political measures by the devil. Similarly, in 'The Author's Earnest Cry and Prayer[…]', he directly insults Whig politician Charles James Fox: "You ill-tongu'd tickler, Charlie Fox,/ May taunt you wi' his jeers an' mocks".[11] In both examples, Burns shows willingness to be involved in the politics of the day, and speak plainly to those in positions of power.

However, Kidd's observation also highlights the extent to which Burns's reputation was protected after his death. Similarly, Christopher Whatley first refers to the establishment's adoption of Burns:

> It may be that Burns's influence in Radical circles in the first half of the nineteenth century has been underestimated, as too much emphasis has been attached to the fact that Burns was promoted as a role model by advocates of laissez-faire liberalism, a hegemonic "paradigm of Scottish bourgeois virtue." He was certainly adopted in this manner by Scotland's manufacturing and commercial elite. Burns, however, was revered across the classes.[12]

While noting that Burns's appeal was not limited to labouring-class radicals, Whatley shows how the liberal establishment used Burns's legacy to promote their own ideology. By Hogg's time, Burns's radical views were already somewhat overshadowed by the influence of this large scale-apparatus. Whatley shows the extent to which Burns escaped censure from an increasingly conservative periodical press to demonstrate this adoption:

> at least some of Burns's work was received unmediated by Tory commentators and censorious editors […] Indeed, while the committees of some subscription libraries

[9] Similar direct attacks can be found in the poems: '[My Father Was a Farmer]' (Kinsley, Vol. 1, pp. 2628), 'Epistle to Davie, A Brother Poet' (Kinsley, Vol. 1, pp. 65-69), 'To the Same' (Kinsley, Vol. 1, pp. 89-93) (a follow-up epistle to John Lapraik), and 'Man Was Made to Mourn' (Kinsley, Vol. 1, pp. 116119).
[10] Robert Burns, '[Address of Beelzebub]' (Kinsley edition volume 1, pp. 254-255), p. 254.
[11] K81, p.188.
[12] Christopher A. Whatley, '"It Is Said That Burns Was a Radical": Contest, Concession, and the Political Legacy of Robert Burns, ca. 1796-1859, *Journal of British Studies*, 50:3 (2011), pp. 639-666, pp. 643-644.

> deliberately excluded from their stocks authors considered inflammatory – Paine and Goodwin, for example – Burns's poetry seems to have slipped under the wire. Where information on book borrowing is available, Burns appears to have attracted many readers.[13]

For whatever reason, perhaps his popularity amongst the lower classes,[14] Burns's image was important enough to the publishing industry establishment that he was generally less condemned for political content in his poetry.

Burns also did his best to protect his own reputation from accusations of disloyalty. Crawford describes a report made to the Excise about Burns's alleged opposition to the government.[15] Fearing ruin, Burns attempted to persuade his bosses of his loyalist positions. As Crawford notes, "It just about worked. He received an informal dressing-down rather than a formal reproach."[16] Crawford even describes him as sly when observing his tendency to emphasise his loyalty while subtly hinting at his radicalism.[17] This attempt may not have been as polished as his presentation of himself as a natural genius at the beginning of his career, and was for the purpose of his survival rather than his literary image, but it is clear that Burns was still capable of protecting his own image from accusations of active participation in radical politics.

Additionally, the development of Romanticism affected the perceptions of labouring-class poets. While contemporary depictions of the labouring classes did not promote direct political engagement, they provided a way for labouring-class poets to be viewed favourably. One of the most influential texts of the Romantic period, William Wordsworth (1770-1850) and Samuel Taylor Coleridge's (1772-1834) *Lyrical Ballads* (1798) famously prioritised the language of real, ordinary labouring-class people. Wordsworth's preface phrased this as:

> Low and rustic life was generally chosen, because in that condition, the essential passions of the heart find a better soil in which they can attain their maturity, are less under restraint, and speak a plainer and more emphatic language; because in that condition of life our elementary feelings co-exist in a state of greater simplicity […] and because, from their rank in society and the sameness and narrow circle of their intercourse, being less under the influence of social vanity, they convey their feelings and notions in simple

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[13] Ibid, pp. 658-659.

[14] Ibid., pp. 659-660: "Burns gave voice to the poor, hungry, and hitherto powerless […] also articulated, often in the vernacular, the rumbling resentments that may have lain beneath the sullen and eerie silene that accompanied the process of rural commercialization, with its corollary a rural proletariat, and clearance." Had the industry condemned such a popular figure, they could have faced outrage along class lines. As there was some fear of the lower classes by this point, this would likely have only contributed to the unrest they were trying to keep control over.

[15] Crawford., p. 361.

[16] Ibid., p. 362.

[17] Ibid., p. 359.

> and unelaborated expressions. Accordingly, such a language, arising out of repeated experience and regular feelings, is a more permanent, and a far more philosophical language.[18]

Wordsworth associates all labouring-class people with heightened emotional expression, even those who are not poets. Additionally, he claims this is the case because they are shielded from the "restraint" of urban, middle and upper-class society, in which one must perform artificially constructed social duties.[19] Therefore, Wordsworth's agenda celebrates the labouring classes, suggesting labouring-class poets could have a way to write poetry in early nineteenth-century society without their existence automatically read as political.

In the *Oxford Romanticism Handbook*, Simon Bainbridge notes that the popularity of the *Lyrical Ballads* is overstated compared to the work of an actual labouring-class poet, Robert Bloomfield, who vastly outsold *Lyrical Ballads* in 1802.[20] Wordsworth's plain language does not necessarily have to come from an actual labouring class poet. If plain language is used by a poet from the educated literati, then his theory suggests they are able to access the same freedom from social constraints. But the popularity of Bloomfield in conjunction with the nonetheless important influence of Wordsworth emphasises how open the market was to labouring-class poets, and their natural language, at this time.

In addition to space being created for labouring-class poets, Burns's own politics are often downplayed, for example by Walter Scott:

> The political predilections, for they could hardly be termed principles, of Burns, were entirely determined by his feelings. At first appearance, he felt, or affected, a propensity to jacobitism. Indeed a youth of his warm imagination and ardent patriotism, brought up in Scotland thirty years ago, could hardly escape this bias. The side of Charles Edward was the party, not surely of sound sense and sober reason, but of romantic gallantry and high achievement.[21]

Not only does Scott decrease the strength of Burns's political engagement here, he frames Burns's politics as a facet of his emotional heart. Combined with unwillingness to be too critical

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[18] Wordsworth and Coleridge, p. 290.

[19] This is similar to discussion in chapter one of how a labouring-class poet could exist outwith restrictive modern society, providing a connection between Romantic thinking and Enlightenment theory on natural genius. Associating the labouring classes with emotional sensitivity strengthens this link.

[20] Simon Bainbridge, 'The New Century: 1800-1815' in *The Oxford Handbook of British Romanticism*, ed. David Duff (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), pp. 44-57, p. 45.

[21] 'Art. II. Reliques of Robert Burns, consisting chiefly of original Letters, Poems, and Critical Observations on Scottish Songs.', *The Quarterly Review*, 1:1, 1809, pp. 19-36, pp. 28-29. Scott's authorship is noted by Andrews (p. 173).

of him, this focus on emotion greatly decreases the potential damage that could be done to his reputation as an isolated, rural genius.

Burns is also skilled in protecting himself from the inherent politicisation of his social class. Whatley notes the image of the respectable working class that had been developing by this time:

> It was in the "frugal life and noble labour" of the peasantry, that the "virtues of goodness, humility, loyalty, piety, and natural wisdom" were to be found and which were toasted when members of Scotland's upper and middling classes – including lawyers, lairds, and the leading state officials – met in the early nineteenth century to honour Burns's birthday.[22]

It is clear that Burns was part of the developing image of the respectable peasant, whom Whatley also notes his affinity with:

> there is evidence to suggest that he was held in especially high regard by the mainly skilled and literate, independent, usually protestant and largely sober segments of the respectable working class in town and country. It was men of this stamp, in alliance with the petty bourgeoisie and sometimes also members of the solid middle class, who formed the bedrock of support of Scottish Radicalism in the first half of the nineteenth century[23]

This respectability counteracts the threat of radical politics, helping to soften the threat Burns could have posed. Bold notes Burns's adeptness in using this image to his advantage:

> Autodidacts entered into complex negotiations to establish relationships with their supposed social superiors. Burns was skilful at befriending the *Literati* and their acolytes. His correspondence with Mrs Dunlop of Dunlop shows that the autodidact had to tread a fine line, with behaviour neither too subservient nor too friendly. [Bold provides an example in which Burns uses his own coarseness as an explanation to deflect suspicion from his employment of this tactic][24]

This is a particularly significant tactic of Burns's because it required a level of education Hogg did not have access to. Crawford notes: "Burns strove to bring to light his better self through intensive reading"[25] and Philip Butcher describes Burns's role in maintaining a circulating library, which included democratic decision-making and a turn-based system for borrowing books.[26]

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[22] Whatley, p. 647.
[23] Ibid., p. 644.
[24] Bold, pp. 43-44.
[25] Crawford, p. 43.
[26] Butcher, pp. 266-267.

This endeavour is closely in line with the image of the respectable peasant, constantly self-improving, but does require access to continued literary education, of the kind Burns received. In contrast, Hogg's early education and potential for respectability are interrupted by his father's sudden bankruptcy: "From being a farmer's son, stravaigning the countryside in summer with his elder brother, he had become a herd-boy, the lowest category of rural worker."[27] Bold notes that Hogg received extensive oral education,[28] but formal, written teaching was much more conducive to the image of the respectable peasant, as this was the similar to the education received by the middle class to which they were perceived to aspire. Therefore, though Burns and Hogg were both solidly labouring class, Burns's comparative advantage in formal education enabled him to present himself as the least threatening type of labouring-class poet. Between his canniness, and the help he received posthumously from the publishing industry and major figures like Walter Scott,[29] Burns's very active political engagement did not ultimately cause too much harm to his reputation as an isolated, rural genius.[30]

Burns's personal life also had the potential to undermine his reputation as a natural genius. Towards the end of his life, Burns moved to the urban centre of Dumfries. Crawford describes Burns's life in the town: "Though not of the gentry, and hardly an admirer of hereditary wealth and privilege, Exciseman Burns was well connected in Dumfries. Among his friends John Syme, appointed Distributor of Stamps in Dumfries in 1791, had his office right underneath the Burnses' apartment. Burns's employment afforded access to men like the influential, improving Tory Provost David Staig, and local Tory newspaper editor Baillie Robert Jackson".[31] After moving from the farmhouse in Ellisland, Burns was clearly no longer an

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[27] Hughes, p. 10.

[28] "Coming from a family of multi-talented tradition bearers Hogg learnt oral forms of creativity from an early age. Will o' Phaup, the writer's grandfather, was a skilled singer and tale-teller, and much of Will's extensive repertoire was transmitted to his daughter, Margaret Laidlaw, and to Hogg's uncle, William Laidlaw. Hogg's paternal relatives included accomplished singers, such as his cousins Thomas and Frank Hogg." (Bold, pp. 63-64).

[29] It is not clear if Walter Scott was intentionally protecting Burns's reputation, or simply being dismissive of his politics, but either way his influence did help.

[30] In fact, Burns as a radical poet was a relatively recent understanding, through key texts in the 1990s such as Liam McIlvanney's *Burns the Radical: poetry and politics in late eighteenth-century Scotland* (Edinburgh: Tuckwell Press, 2002) and the controversial Canongate edition of Burns's poems (Edinburgh: Canongate, 2001). This further evidences the claim that Burns was not viewed as overtly political in the decades after his death.

[31] Crawford, p. 341.

isolated rural labourer, despite the continued perception of him as the 'heaven-taught ploughman'.

Additionally, Crawford describes an incident with the Riddells which could have undermined Burns's reputation as emotionally sensitive: "late in 1793 Burns seems to have taken part in a drunken romp which led to his assaulting Maria's sister-in-law, Elizabeth Riddell, wife of Robert."[32] Whatever the specifics of the incident, it is clear from the continued estrangement, which lasted until late 1794, that Robert's behaviour was enough to alienate his close friends.[33] This is a similar coarseness Hogg was accused of and sometimes displayed, for example the Tweedil incident.

However, his personal reputation is defended by others after his death. One of the earliest and most significant memoirs of Burns was written by Maria Riddell and published in the *Dumfries Journal* in 1796. From the beginning, her intention to rehabilitate Burns's image is clear, and several of the ways in which she does so are conducive to the concept of natural genius. She first states her aims:

> I should have continued wholly silent, had misrepresentation and calumny been less industrious; but a regard to truth, no less affection for the memory of a friend, must now justify my offering to the public a few at least of those observations which an intimate acquaintance with Burns, and the frequent opportunities I have had of observing equally his happy qualities and his failings for several years past, have enabled me to communicate.[34]

By referring to the criticism of Burns's character, Riddell frames her character sketch explicitly as a rebuttal. Then, by highlighting her position as someone close to Burns, she undermines the characterisations she argues against, as unlike her those critics had imperfect information. Andrews does argue that her approach is actually counterproductive to the aim of defending Burns. He criticises Riddell's claims that Burns's strength was not as a poet, but as a person:

> Her asides to those 'who had had the advantage of being personally acquainted with [Burns]' form the basis of a retort to those who sought to impugn Burns's character and posthumous reputation. However, such an approach diminishes the poet's

[32] Ibid., p. 370: here Crawford refers to the incident known in Burns scholarship as the re-enactment of the 'Rape of the Sabine Women'.

[33] Crawford tracks the rift, noting that Burns remained estranged from the Riddells even after the death of his "former staunch supporter Robert Riddell" (p. 376) and that Burns and Maria Riddell did not have a "*rapprochement"* until "late 1794" (p. 380).

[34] Maria Riddell, ''Candidor', character sketch in *Dumfries Journal*' in *The Critical Heritage* by Donald A. Low (Oxfordshire: Routledge, 1974), pp. 101-107, p. 102.

> accomplishments beyond the temporal realm, where personal remembrance of his character is necessarily limited.[35]

Andrews is clearly correct to note that Riddell sacrificed any attempt to defend Burns's work from criticism in favour of defending his personality, and that doing so was ill-advised in the long-term, as well as potentially self-serving as she emphasises her own superior credibility. However, personal character was an important part of the reputation of a natural genius, whether through tender emotional sensibilities as promoted by Blackwell and Gerard or superior charisma as promoted by Hume. In order for Burns to retain the image of natural genius, it was important for others to reaffirm his personality as such. Andrews also takes issue with Riddell focusing so much on Burns's faults.[36] However, doing so is arguably important because Riddell's rebuttal tackles some of the criticism about Burns's character most antithetical to natural genius, for example his supposed coarseness:

> devoid in great measure perhaps of those graces, of that polish, acquired only in the refinement of societies where in early life he could have no opportunities of mixing; but where, such was the irresistible power of attraction that encircled him, though his appearance and manners were always peculiar, he never failed to delight, and to excel.[37]

She does not deny his frequent blunders, as that would have been difficult to ignore for many readers. Instead, by highlighting his rural, labouring-class upbringing, she frames coarseness as part of what makes him a natural genius, along with his natural charisma.

She also frames Burns's political blunders similarly as an element of natural genius, in this case emotional sensitivity:

> The keenness of his satire was, I am almost at a loss whether to say his forte or his foible; for though nature had endowed him with a portion of the most pointed excellence in that dangerous talent, he suffered it to often be the vehicle of personal, and sometimes unfounded animosities.
> […]
> the darts of ridicule were frequently directed as the caprice of the instant suggested, or as the altercations of parties and of persons happened to kindle the restlessness of spirit into interest or aversion.[38]

Riddell notes Burns's direct and often messy political involvement, ignoring which would have decreased her credibility. However, she frames these instances as originating from moments of intense emotion, as Walter Scott did. Burns may not be the perfect isolated genius, but his

[35] Andrews, p. 152.
[36] Ibid., p. 150.
[37] Riddell, p. 102.
[38] Ibid., p. 103.

involvement is a result of another marker of genius: powerful emotions. Riddell is thereby able to reaffirm the image of Burns as a natural genius, despite his flaws. Additionally, as she and her family have been the victim of Burns's impropriety; her forgiveness carries credibility. If she can forgive Burns, then ought not everyone else? Compared to John Wilson's abandonment of Hogg, Riddell's defence is an instance of Burns receiving much more help than Hogg in his attempt to maintain the image of natural genius.

Burns's reputation was also defended by his first formal biographer and editor, Dr James Currie (1756-1805), in his 'Criticism on the writings of Burns'[39] (1800) and his 'Life of Robert Burns'[40] (1800) Like Riddell and Scott, Currie undermines the conviction behind Burns's political opinions by framing them as originating from his emotional sensitivity. In his 'Criticism on the writings of Burns', he discusses the emotional sensitivity in 'To a Mouse':

> the poem is one of the happiest, and most finished of his productions. If we smile at the 'bickering brattle' of this little flying animal, it is a smile of tenderness and pity. The descriptive part is admirable; the moral reflections beautiful, and arising directly out of the occasion; and in the conclusion there is a deep melancholy, a sentiment of doubt and dread, that rises to the sublime.[41]

This analysis does not deny the potential political metaphor in the poem, but focuses on the sadness arising from political insecurity, rather than the injustice of that insecurity itself. Gerard Carruthers and Pauline Mackay note: "we can see in [Currie's] approach to Burns, an identification of a wild, exotic, indeed revolutionary energy to be savoured, but not completely trusted".[42] Currie was seemingly willing to acknowledge Burns's radical political leanings, but presented them more as an interesting exhibit than ideas to be taken seriously, thus decreasing the threat they would hold. Therefore, by focusing on Burns's emotional sensitivity rather than his critique of landlords, Currie presents this poem as an example of Burns's fiery independence, to be celebrated rather than feared as a potential spur to radical action.

He also defends Burns from accusations of coarseness. Initially, he agrees with some of the ways in which Burns could be seen this way. He says of Burns's poetical technique:

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[39] James Currie, 'Criticism on the writings of Burns', *The Works of Robert Burns, with an Account of his Life* (Liverpool, 1800), I, Pp. 267-366, in *The Critical Heritage*, pp. 132-153.
[40] James Currie, 'Life of Robert Burns', *The Life of Robert Burns; with a Criticism on his Writings. To Which are Prefixed, some Observations on the Scottish Peasantry* (Liverpool, 1800), pp. 27-79
[41] 'Criticism on the writings of Burns', p. 140.
[42] Gerard Carruthers and Pauline Mackay, 'Re-reading James Currie: Robert Burns's first editor', *John Clare Society Journal*, (32), 2013, pp. 72-84.

> rudeness and inattention appears in the formation of his rhymes, which are frequently incorrect, while the measure in which many of his poems are written has little of the pomp or harmony of modern versification, and is indeed, to an English ear, strange and uncouth.[43]

He then further explains the view of Burns as "uncouth" as resulting from his language. He notes that due to the upper-class's preoccupation with eliminating Scots from their language, Burns's use of Scots in poetry "naturally therefore calls up ideas of vulgarity to the mind".[44] He also combines these qualities of his poetry with his character:

> These singularities are encreased by the character of the poet, who delights to express himself with a simplicity that approaches to nakedness, and with an unmeasured energy that often alarms delicacy, and sometimes offends taste. Hence in approaching him, the first impression is perhaps repulsive: there is an air of coarseness about him, which is difficultly reconciled with our established notions of poetical excellence.[45]

These strong words show Currie is willing to acknowledge the worst of Burns's reputation.

Additionally, as Carruthers and Mackay note, he sometimes exaggerates Burns's flaws: "It was Currie, however, who first extensively inscribed the hot-headed figure of Burns, especially under the frequent effect of alcohol – something that the good Scottish doctor exaggerated."[46] In his 'Life of Burns', Currie depicts alcohol as a crucial cause of Burns's death. He describes his lifelong physical difficulties caused by mental ill health, and argues that alcohol made these problems worse:

> Endowed by nature with great sensibility of nerves, Burns was, in his corporeal, as well as in his mental system, liable to inordinate impressions; to fever of body as well as of mind. This predisposition to disease, which strict temperance in diet, regular exercise, and sound sleep, might have subdued, habits of a different nature strengthened and inflamed. Perpetually stimulated by alcohol in one or other of its various forms, the inordinate actions of the circulating system became at length habitual; the process of nutrition was unable to supply the waste, and the powers of life began to fail.[47]

This detailed description of the effect of alcohol on Burns's death is graphic enough to have easily repulsed the reader and tarnished Burns's memory. However, Currie's depiction of Burns's alcoholism fits well with the sensitivity of a genius, since a man less driven by emotional impulse would theoretically exercise more restraint. He shows the conflict in Burns

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[43] 'Criticism on the writings of Burns', p. 133.
[44] Ibid.
[45] Ibid.
[46] Carruthers and Mackay, pp. 74-75.
[47] 'Life of Burns', pp. 68-69.

as he attempts to contain his impulses[48] and ultimately describes his life as one in which "virtue and passion had been at perpetual variance."[49] By framing Burns's flaw as "passion", he forms an association between impulsivity and strong emotions, such as those possessed by a natural genius. He reinforces this association explicitly:

> It is the more necessary for men of genius to be on their guard against the habitual use of wine, because it is apt to steal on them insensibly; and because the temptation to excess usually presents itself to them in their social hours, when they are alive only to warm and generous emotions, and when prudence and moderation are often condemned as selfishness and timidity.[50]

Currie is thereby able to associate Burns's well-known flaw with an aspect of natural genius, even if he does exaggerate its extent. Noting and even over-emphasising Burns's flaws helps to bolster the defence that Currie undertakes in his 'Criticism on the writings of Burns':

> As the reader becomes better acquainted with the poet, the effects of his peculiarities lessen. The scenery he describes is evidently taken form real life; the characters he introduces, and the incidents he relates, have the impression of nature and truth. His humour, though wild and unbridled, is irresistibly amusing, and is sometimes heightened in its effects by the introduction of emotions of tenderness, with which genuine humour so happily unites.[51]

Currie emphasises Burns's emotional warmth as enhancing his "unbridled humour", thereby compensating for coarseness with a quality much more associated with natural genius.

Additionally, by admitting so freely to Burns's flaws, Currie is able to argue for forgiveness of them more credibly. By the end, Currie is claiming the label of "genius" for Burns,[52] suggesting that the purpose of noting these flaws was indeed to provide a comprehensive defence, a defence intended to be successful enough to raise money for Burns's widow and family. Nigel Leask observed that "damage limitation" was important for literary biography, including Currie's edition of Burns's works.[53] As Burns's reputation at his peak was that of a natural genius, Currie can be said to strengthen Burns's reputation as such in the immediate aftermath of his death. Combined with Maria Riddell's defence, it is clear that Burns's reputation was

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[48] Currie, 'Life of Burns', p. 65.
[49] Currie, 'Life of Burns', p. 70.
[50] Currie, 'Life of Burns', p. 75.
[51] 'Criticism on the writings of Burns', p. 133.
[52] Ibid., p. 153.
[53] Nigel Leask, '"His Hero's Story": Currie's *Burns*, Moore's *Byron* and the Problem of Romantic Biography', *The Centre For The Study of Byron and Romanticism: The Byron Foundation Lecture,* 2006. Carruthers and Mackay also note similarly: "Currie was intent on alleviating the penury – the extent of which has recently been revealed by the research of Clark McGinn – suffered by Burns's widow Jean Armour and his five surviving children with her." (p. 73).

greatly shielded from accusations of coarseness or radicalism that his political involvement and personal blunders could have fairly attracted. Although neither of Riddell's or Currie's works were obituaries, they have been selected for study because they appeared so soon after Burns's death (Riddell's in particular written only a month later), but as the rest of this chapter will discuss obituaries of Hogg, it is also worth referring to Andrews' comprehensive survey of the immediate response to Burns's death. Andrews describes "a torrent of elegies from fond apologists who sought to derive a fitting moral from his life story".[54] These apologies came after criticism of Burns for failing in his poetic duties to focus on song-collecting,[55] and show that there was widespread will to rehabilitate Burns's image. Even when Burns is criticised, for example by an anonymous elegy in the *Aberdeen Magazine* (October 1796),[56] Andrews notes that the 'heaven-taught ploughman' persona is still focused on.[57]

While elegies are not necessarily themselves obituaries, an obituary by George Thomson operates similarly to the elegies Andrews explores. The obituary describes Burns's flaws:

> Such, we believe, is the character of a man, who in his compositions had discovered the force of native humour, the warmth and tenderness of passion, and the glowing touches of a descriptive pencil – a man who was the pupil of nature, the poet of inspiration, and who possessed in an extraordinary degree the powers and failings of genius."[58]

By describing Burns's flaws specifically as the failings of genius, Thomson is able to decrease the extent to which Burns's coarseness damages his reputation. This technique is similar to obituaries which highlight his moral failings, while still emphasising his position as a 'heaven-taught ploughman', in that his flaws do not prevent him from being a natural genius.

In contrast, treatment of Hogg's reputation immediately after his death is much less comprehensive,[59] and not sufficient to defend against Wilson's scathing review in 1823. While several notices of his death were favourable towards him, even terming him explicitly as a 'genius', they tended to be short, and lacking in the kind of detailed argument that Maria

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[54] Andrews, p. 125.
[55] Ibid., pp. 124-125.
[56] Ibid., p. 131.
[57] Ibid., p. 132.
[58] George Thomson, an unsigned obituary notice in *London Chronicle*, 28-30 July 1796, from The Critical Heritage, pp. 99-101, p. 100. Note: Thomson's authorship is contested by Kirsteen McCue in Robert Burns's Songs for George Thomson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), pp. lxiv-lxviii.
[59] All sources for Hogg's death notices and obituaries were provided by Hannah Pyle, who compiled them as part of her PhD (currently in completion): *"It was merely the appearance of flesh without the substance": How the Victorians received James Hogg (1770-1835)*.

Riddell and James Currie provided to counter Burns's critics. The most detailed piece on Hogg is in *The Dumfries Journal*, which is quoted by several other papers, most extensively in the *Royal Cornwall Gazette.*[60] It begins with a strongly favourable depiction of Hogg, notably as a natural genius:

> It is with the deepest regret we announce on the authority of a private letter, dated from Altrive Lake, and posted to a relative in the county, the death of by far the most remarkable man that ever wore professionally a shepherd's plaid. This sad event, in which every son of genius and reader of taste, in broad Scotland, and far beyond its bounds, must feel a melancholy interest, occurred at his residence on the banks of the Yarrow, on Saturday last, the 21st current, at the hour of noon.

The initial impression conveyed to the reader by this opening is that of an isolated, rural genius, through its explicit use of the word "genius" and its reference to Hogg's position as a rural labourer.

The strength of emotion in the piece is also useful for conveying Hogg's sensitivity, which he struggled to retain a reputation for. The obituary describes his friends gathering nervously around him:

> for a week or more his friends and medical attendants had begun to fear the worst, particularly after the accession of jaundice. And their fears, we regret to say, have been realized; for it is but too true that one of the sweetest poets that ever framed a lay [had passed away]

By emphasising his friendships and describing him as "sweet", the obituary heightens the reader's emotional response to Hogg's death. While not an explicit rebuttal of the image of Hogg as coarse, this obituary at least attempts to direct the tone of his remembrance towards warm feeling.

The obituary also highlights the connection between Hogg and Burns when referring to Hogg's class: "and by far the first man of his class, with the single exception of Robert Burns". Hogg is associated with Burns, an established natural genius, through their shared labouring-class backgrounds. The obituary has already described Hogg as a genius, and established his labouring-class roots, so this connection becomes an affirmation of Hogg as a rural natural genius. By setting him apart from other labouring-class poets, it also emphasises that there is more to him than his background. He is notable for his individual genius, not just his ability to speak for rural people.

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[60] 'Death of Mr. James Hogg, "The Ettrick Shepherd"', *Royal Cornwall Gazette*, Issue 1692, Nov 27th 1835.

To further distinguish Hogg, the obituary also references his close friendship with Walter Scott: "[Hogg will] follow to the grave his illustrious friend Sir Walter Scott". This is not detailed, but does remind the reader of his personal connections to a well-known upper-class figure. Though it was possible to earn a living as a labouring-class author, Hogg's friendship with Scott would reduce the extent to which he could be seen as threatening to upper-class society, as Scott was a respected, trustworthy figure. This makes it somewhat easier to consider him a detached rural genius, though does not compensate for his active participation in periodical culture.

However, in comparison to the lengthy obituaries written on Burns's death by Riddell and Currie, this is a brief piece with limited potential to absolve Hogg's flaws. Most of the other notices are either much shorter, do not attempt to compensate for his flaws, or focus more on the Duke of Buccleuch's patronage. For example, while *The Scotsman* (quoted by the *York Herald*),[61] praises Hogg, it pointedly avoids repairing the damage done to his personal reputation. Like the *Dumfries Courier* author, this reviewer praises him as a labouring-class poet: "It is our melancholy duty to announce the death of Mr. James Hogg, the most distinguished peasant that Scotland has ever produced, with the single exception of his great prototype, Burns." Describing Burns as a "prototype" possibly suggests Hogg exceeding Burns's achievements, which is unlikely to be convincing to many readers, as Burns still cast a long, beloved shadow. Still, this praise at least associates the labouring-class Hogg with the labouring-class natural genius Burns. However, Hogg's personal character is glossed over: "He had peculiarities of character as a public writer, of which, perhaps, different opinions are formed by his biographers, but they must all agree as to the native force of his genius." It is useful to reaffirm Hogg's genius, but in contrast to Maria Riddell this is not a comprehensive rebuilding of the subject's character. Riddell admitted Burns's flaws, but framed them as part of his background, part of what made him a natural genius. This piece admits Hogg's flaws, then attempts to reassert his genius without explaining why his flaws do not undermine it.

The London-based *Morning Chronicle*[62] does attempt a similar rehabilitation of Hogg's character to the Riddell memoir of Burns, but is somewhat undermined by confusing claims

[61] 'Multiple News Items', in *York Herald*, Issue 3298, Nov 28th 1835. (Hogg's death is the fourth item).

[62] 'Death of Mr James [ill] The Ettrick Shepherd' in *Morning Chronicle* (London), Issue 20631, Nov 27th 1835. The right-hand side of the digital edition of this text was illegible, and it was unclear if this was a problem with digitisation or the original, so a lengthy trip to see the original was decided against. The meaning is broadly clear, so any reference to it in this thesis will quote small segments and paraphrase the rest.

elsewhere in the piece. Hogg is described as "a kind-hearted man"; if he ever hurt anyone this could not be ascribed to "ill-nature". Like Riddell's memoir, this defence accounts for his known flaws and attempts to frame them as part of his simple nature,[63] rather than insensitivity. This piece is less comprehensive than Riddell, but does the necessary, basic work of framing Hogg's blunders as something that sets him apart from more refined, upper-class poets. However, preceding this defence is a discussion of Hogg in comparison to Burns which claims Burns was "misplaced in society" and that he was a poet due to being "shut out from more ambitious careers" rather than a natural affinity for "the Muse". The claim that Burns was not inspired by the Muse[64] contradicts how he was framed by Henry Mackenzie's influential *Lounger* piece, as well as the depiction of himself as blessed by Coila in 'The Vision', and his presentation of himself in his introduction to the Kilmarnock edition. Attempting to undermine Burns's connection to such a crucial element of natural genius is unlikely to be convincing, which undermines the piece's overall credibility, and decreases the extent to which its defence of Hogg should be believed.

Like Wilson in 1819, the piece also attempts to separate Hogg from Burns's shadow, contrasting Burns's "energy" with Hogg's "simplicity", faithfulness, knowledge of "fancy" and "sly humour". Just as Wilson attempts to praise Hogg's descriptive nature poetry over Burns's, this piece chooses to focus on the same when contrasting the two. This piece likewise agrees with Wilson's assessment about the intensity of emotion that Burns inspires, in comparison to Hogg's simple good nature, and powerful imagination. This comparison could be seen as emphasising the different aspects of natural genius in which each writer excelled, as Hogg tried to do when he set himself up as Burns's successor. However, the combination of the arguments that Burns was not inspired by the Muse and not gifted in descriptive nature poetry undermine the credibility of this piece and potentially confuse the reader by introducing such incongruous claims.

The obituary in the *London Morning Post*[65] does describe Hogg as a genius, but it is also focussed on his close connections with the Duke of Buccleuch and party politics, a discussion

[63] Simplicity, or simple nature, seems like a reasonable assumption from context and what was readable.
[64] A concept favoured by several Enlightenment writers who considered geniuses to be similar to the Ancients, as shown in Blackwell's focus on Homer as the model for natural genius.
[65] 'Whig Patronage' in *Morning Post*, Dec 1st 1835

which is in danger of overshadowing the material on Hogg himself.[66] The piece opens with a favourable description:

> The fame of James Hogg, the "Ettrick Shepherd," has been so widely spread of late years that we need not particularly describe his claims upon the consideration of the honest patron of genius. He was a man of an independent soul, and he rose (if indeed it may be called rising) from the situation of an humble shepherd on the hills to be an author of no small popularity. His songs, and his descriptions of pastoral life in Scotland, its awful dangers and its simple piety, are full of genius, pure and vigorous as the breeze upon the hill side where it was fostered. It is enough to say that Hogg was a man of whom Sir Walter Scott did not disdain to make a companion.

This piece clearly considers Hogg a genius, and depicts him as a rural, labouring-class, pastoral poet, linking his genius directly to the nature of rural Scotland. It also notes Walter Scott's support of Hogg, which helps reduce the threat he posed as a labouring-class poet, underlining the views presented in the *Morning Chronicle*.

This defence is good, but is somewhat overshadowed by the remainder of the piece, which focuses on the role played in Hogg's life by the Duke of Buccleuch's patronage:

> But genius does not always bring bread to a family, and Hogg was, perhaps, all the worse off in the world that he wooed the Muse. Under these circumstances the Duke of Buccleuch, who, from all we have ever heard of him, must have a heart as princely as are his possessions, gave the Shepherd bard a farm, not for his own life merely, but for a term of ninety-nine years.

Again the author highlights the link with Scott, emphasising that those of higher social standing admired and trusted Hogg. But the intense focus on the Duke rather than on the recently deceased Ettrick Shepherd undermines potential celebration of Hogg's life.

The piece then describes contemporary politics, including the overturning by the current government of a proposal by Robert Peel to award Hogg with a considerable pension. The piece is scathing towards this new government, arguing their motives are driven by party politics. This discussion is linked to Hogg, as the piece discusses his inability to receive favour due to being restricted from nepotistic relationships:

> Mr Hogg was known to have been befriended by eminent men of the Conservative Party – to have been a writer in Conservative publications – and, therefore, the boon was withheld from him, to be trebled upon a person more conversant with drawing-rooms,

[66] 'News of the Week' in *Essex Standard*, Dec 4th 1835 focuses even more exclusively on the Duke's patronage.

> and more habituated to the use of such flatteries as certain *soi disant* Liberal Ministers love to hear.

This background shows the political bias that made it difficult for Hogg to play into the system of patronage in the way Burns attempted to. Hogg was part of the "inner circle"[67] of William Blackwood, whose "politics were Tory – supportive of the Monarchy, institutional Protestantism, and Parliament as then constituted."[68] While the piece does draw attention to Hogg's political involvement, which reduces the extent to which he can be seen as isolated, it is at least a detailed explanation for Hogg's turbulent relationship with wider society. This argument is important, because without this context the clearest reason for that difficulty is his own personal coarseness, which is antithetical to any image of natural genius.

Overall, several of these obituaries and death notices are favourable to Hogg, even describing him as a natural genius, or ascribing to him qualities that are often associated with natural genius. For example, several pieces note his labouring-class, rural background, and his imagination. However, given the damage done to his reputation by John Wilson, the attempts to salvage the image of him as emotionally sensitive are not comprehensive enough. Taken together, these obituaries and early posthumous biographies make some useful points and their writers' intentions may well have been to rehabilitate Hogg's image, but compared to Burns's obituaries they are weaker in their lines of argument, are not as focused or nuanced in turning Hogg's flaws into characteristics of genius, and do not come from highly respected sources like Riddell or Currie. While Riddell's piece is a character sketch rather than an obituary, the fact that she provided such an extensive work so quickly can itself be considered proof of the greater extent to which Burns's reputation was defended. The result of these differences is that though Burns was deeply involved in politics, this participation and his occasional blunders did not overshadow other qualities more closely aligned with natural genius. In contrast, Hogg's reputation remained tied to his close involvement with the periodical press and his personal coarseness.

An additional obstacle faced more by Hogg than by Burns in maintaining his reputation was the rising interest in celebrity. Tom Mole describes the increased volume of material focused on writers as individuals:

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[67] Phillip Flynn, 'Blackwood's Maga, Lockhart's Peter's Letters, and the Politics of Publishing', *Studies in Romanticism*, 45:1, 2006, pp. 117-131, p. 125.
[68] Ibid., p. 126.

> This torrid partnership of confessional author and curious reader was supplemented and mediated by a third term an industry of 'booksellers, printers, and stationers' whose primary motive was pecuniary.
>
> Availing themselves of technological developments […] this industry promulgated 'the traffic to which the exhibition gives rise'. It produced celebrity texts in unprecedented numbers by industrial means and distributed them rapidly around the country, the continent and – before long – the world.[69]

This growth would have increased the focus on individuals on its own, but Mole also explains how the response to such a volume of information cemented interest in authors' personal lives:

> The audience became anonymous and unknowable, creating a new alienation between writer and reader […] The apparatus of celebrity was among the structures that Romantic culture developed to mitigate this sense of information overload and alienation. It responded to the surfeit of public personality by branding an individual's identity in order to make it amenable to commercial promotion. It palliated the feeling of alienation between cultural producers and consumers by constructing a sense of intimacy.[70]

An increase in the volume of texts produced resulted in writers having vastly wider audiences than before. The reaction to this development was to retain a sense of intimacy by focusing on the writer as a person, in order to have an individual to relate to. Additionally, the intensity of this scrutiny is described:

> In each of these cases, the circulation of poems by Byron, Robinson, Landon and Yearsley was accompanied by information (or speculation) about their authors, fostering celebrity culture's fascination with personalities who became the subjects of discourse once their identities were branded through a variety of mutually supporting texts.[71]

A selection of celebrities became topics of discussion outwith their works, a level of scrutiny that could be distressing, and in which flaws could be amplified. While Burns's personal life was also the subject of close observation, this intensity of readers' scrutiny is tied to changes in the publishing industry that took place in the time between Burns's and Hogg's careers.[72] This scrutiny was particularly problematic for Hogg, as it was increasingly hard to separate him from the highly fictionalised image of the coarse old shepherd in the *Noctes Ambrosianae* Hogg entered a different culture from Burns, one in which his personal flaws received even more attention. Burns's reputation after death would have likely been examined similarly, so

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[69] Tom Mole, *Byron's Romantic Celebrity: Industrial Culture and the Hermeneutic of Intimacy* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 2.
[70] Ibid., p. 16.
[71] Ibid., p. 18.
[72] "I argue that we've had celebrities since the late eighteenth century and a celebrity culture since the beginning of the nineteenth." (Mole, p. 1).

the extent of this difference may be limited. Still, Hogg's living presence during this time is important because he had the potential to cause compelling, sustained controversy which could enthral present-day readers.

Destabilisation of identity was also a general trend outwith the *Noctes,* though *Blackwood's* itself was one of the clearest contributors to the effect. Christopher J. Scalia gives an overview of a particular hoax involving a fictional philosopher Jacob Dousterswivel, the purpose of which is theoretically to provide "exercises that require and develop valuable intellectual skills. The ability to recognize distinct forms in a joke trains people to recognise imposture".[73] However, even if this is an intended and accomplished aim, the piece also contributes to the sort of confusion it could train its readers to navigate:

> In short, the review frustrates attempts to locate a stable identity behind it (not even Strout was certain that Lockhart was the author – and again, he believed it was a legitimate book review), which in turn complicates the reader's ability to comprehend the article's meaning.[74]

Additionally, Scalia notes *Blackwood's* destabilising identity more regularly through extensive use of pseudonyms: "a name in *Blackwood's* may not mark an identity at all; instead a name may only operate as an abstract mark of authenticity, a sign of a text's credibility regardless of whether the person named is actually the author."[75] This review is therefore a good example of a wider phenomenon in which *Blackwood's* played with the notion of authorship and undermined the coherence of individual writers. Mole notes how this destabilisation could actually contribute to the feeling of intimacy that celebrity culture provided:

> Anonymity or pseudonymity could, in fact, produce an especially intense version of the hermeneutic of intimacy, because the uncertainty surrounding the author's identity set up
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> – either in reality or in imagination – an 'in group' of readers who could penetrate the mask and know the true identity of the author.[76]

This explanation suggests the level of scrutiny that could fall on the personal life of Byron could also fall on the personality of the Ettrick Shepherd, and Hogg himself. The Ettrick Shepherd persona would have been much harder to keep control of, since he was a fictional

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[73] Christopher J. Scalia, 'Transcendental Buffoonery: Jacob Dousterswivel and the Romantic Irony of Blackwood's', *Studies in Romanticism,* 51:3 (2012), pp. 375-398, p. 385.
[74] Ibid., p. 391.
[75] Ibid., pp. 390-391.
[76] Tom Mole, 'Celebrity and Anonymity', in *The Oxford Handbook of British Romanticism,* pp. 464-476, p. 474.

character any *Blackwood's* contributor could write about, meaning it was even harder for Hogg to maintain an image as an emotionally sensitive natural genius. Combined with an increased interest in celebrities overall, there was intense scrutiny on Hogg's public persona, a persona which it was difficult for him to keep closely aligned with the image of natural genius. Changes in the literary marketplace therefore affected Hogg's ability to retain his image, as well as the comparative inefficacy of defences of his character.

There are two ways in which Wordsworth’s image of the ideal poet, noted above when discussing the increased credibility for labouring-class poets, is similar to the image of rural, isolated natural genius: firstly, he claims the best poetry is highly emotionally charged; secondly, that rural life is best for creating poetry because rural people are free from the constraints of urban life. While Wordsworth does not mention the specific concept of “genius” here, both qualities can be found in the Enlightenment idea of the rural genius.

Therefore, even if Wordsworth did not mention “genius” by name, he helped maintain the previously established ideas. In his *Biographica Literaria* (1817), Coleridge too argues that the “prime merit of genius” is to “represent familiar objects” so as to inspire “freshness of sensation” in the reader, giving Burns’s description of snow falling on a river as an example of “sensual pleasure”.[1] Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822) is more open to the idea of the participatory genius, noting: “Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the World”.[2] But overall he resembles his fellow Romantics enough to contribute to the focus on emotional sensitivity. He argues that “melancholy pleasure” is “inseparable from the sweetest melody”.[3] Shelley is strongly linked to the “joy of grief” developed by Burke[4] (1729-1797). Larry L. Stewart describes as Burke’s argument as “that the sublime arises not from positive pleasure but from ideas of pain and danger” and Macpherson’s usage of the concept in *Ossian* as “the specific kind of pleasure which results from recalling and reliving the pleasures of the irretrievable past.”[5] Overall, key Romantic poets therefore continued the Enlightenment focus on emotion in the work of geniuses from the previous century.

However, emotional sensitivity was instead criticised by some periodical critics. John Gibson Lockhart (1794-1854), writing in *Blackwood’s* in 1825, described ‘The Moping School’, who were a group of poets characterised by isolation in rural environments, and an unwillingness to engage in society. Matt Salyer notes Lockhart believes these conditions will have “a series of

[1] Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria; or Biographical Sketches of my Literary Life and Opinions*, Edited, with an introduction, by George Watson *St. John’s College, Cambridge,* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd, 1975), p. 49.
[2] Percy Bysshe Shelley, *A Defence of Poetry* (Boston: Ginn & Company,1891), p.46.
[3] Ibid., P. 35.
[4] Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (London: R. and J. Dodsley, 1757).
[5] Larry L. Stewart, ‘Ossian, Burke, and the 'joy of grief'’, *English Language Notes,* 15:1, 1977, pp. 29-32, P. 30.

adverse effects on the serious writer's work".[6] In his review of Sir Egerton Brydges' book of recollections, Lockhart argues that "what [Brydges] calls *genius*" will "[incapacitate] a man for mixing in the ordinary society and business of the world".[7] He is scornful as he describes this idea's appeal to "young persons who prefer lounging in a green lane over […] the ignoble fatigue of copying briefs or pounding medicines".[8] He accuses Brydges and his allies of "[assuring] them that they will play false to God and Nature if they do not set their faces decidedly against the shop".[9] He does cite Coleridge here as an example of participation, and as shown, Shelley also supported geniuses' involvement in society. Nonetheless, Lockhart's association of emotional sensitivity with isolation means that both of these writers' similarly enthusiastic support for strong emotions could be read as support for the 'Moping School'. It is not a definite divide, but in framing it so harshly as one, Lockhart makes it harder for a poet to satisfy multiple different criteria of genius.

Lockhart is not alone in this opinion within *Blackwood's.* Edmund Burke has been noted above as a proponent of the "joy of grief". A *Blackwood's* writer called David Robinson (under the pseudonym Y. Y. Y.) wrote a critical depiction of Burke's life. Salyer describes the aim of the piece as:

> As a political specter, these "traditionary" figures seek to shatter rational Whig ideas about the progress of history into thousands of pieces that can only be understood through recourse to the past. As poetic identities, they attempt to dismember the Romantic lyric speaker, who served, as often as not, as a metonym for an idea of the poet as a kind of uniquely privileged "personality" and individual genius.[10]

This explanation demonstrates the general scepticism of *Blackwood's* towards the isolated individuality of Romantic lyrics, preferring to praise societal participation. This preference is easily noted in Robinson's *Life of Burke*.[11] He introduces his praise of Burke by noting the importance of his works for wide society:

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[6] Matt Salyer, '"Nae Mortal man should be entrusted wi' sic an ingine": "Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine" and the Tory Problem of Romantic Genius, *Victorian Periodicals Review,* 46:1, 2013, pp. 92-115, p. 101. Lockhart's belief is reminiscent of Beattie's claim that too much isolation will turn a genius into a hermit.

[7] John Gibson Lockhart, 'Sir Egerton Brydges's Recollections', *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine,* 100:17, 1825, pp. 505-517, p. 506.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Salyer, p. 108.

[11] Y. Y. Y. [David Robinson], 'Life of Burke', *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine,* 96:17, 1825, pp. 1-15.

> the history of Europe for the last seven years has been of a description to compel the nation to study the topics on which he wrote, and to drive it to the stores of instruction which he provided[12]

This impression is much more similar to the participatory bardic genius who would act as the voice of the nation than it is to the isolated rural genius.

This divide was exacerbated by the harshness of *Blackwood's.* In Lockhart's review of Brydges, he emphasises the divide between isolated writers such as Brydges and the periodical press:

> The eternal *cant,* in other words, of Sir Egerton and his associates, is, that the public voice affords no rule whatever as to the real character of *new* works of literature – that criticism is nothing but mockery and malignity – that every one must rely entirely upon himself.[13]

The emphasis on antagonism between isolated poets and the press widens the gap further. He also explicitly objects to use of the term 'genius', which he claims "has done more harm than anything in the vocabulary".[14] While Lockhart objects more to the misuse of the term rather than its original coining, he implicitly does not associate genius with the societal participation he praises. Rather than attempting to redefine the meaning of the word to a previous meaning, he frames the debate as isolated, rural 'genius' *against* participatory poets. He narrows the definition of genius to only isolated, rural poets, making it harder to present oneself as both isolated and participatory.

The divide was also intensified by John Wilson's invasive depiction of Wordsworth in his 'Letters from the Lakes' written under the guise of the fictional Philip Kempferhausen.[15] David Higgins notes *Blackwood's* was an early supporter of Wordsworth, though suggests that the purpose of their support was at least in part to promote the magazine itself.[16] The letter even praises Wordsworth for his isolation. It describes a "small lake or tarn of deepest solitude", where Wordsworth wrote, noting how well it fit Wordsworth's "intensity of passion".[17] This

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[12] Ibid., p. 2.
[13] Lockhart, p. 505. Lockhart is not wrong to note this complaint from Egerton; he quotes it extensively on the next page and it does amount to Egerton depicting himself as the victim of meanness.
[14] Ibid., p. 506.
[15] Philip Kempferhausen [John Wilson], 'Letters from the Lakes, Written During the Summer of 1818' (Letter III), *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine,* 4, 1819, pp. 735-744. This thesis will focus on the third letter.
[16] David Higgins, 'Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine and the Construction of Wordsworth's Genius', *Prose Studies,* 25:1, pp. 122-136, pp. 126-127.
[17] 'Letters from the Lakes', p. 741.

description aligns perfectly with the image of Wordsworth in isolated contemplation in his rural home.

However, the invasiveness of this piece undermines its support for Wordsworth and the archetype of genius he represents. The narrator describes approaching Wordsworth's home, picturing himself as Wordsworth's "illustrious brother bard", assured of "ancient friendship", despite his "aversion to intrude on the privacy of a great poet."[18] The presumption of friendship on behalf of the fictional Kempferhausen is made even more ironic by the pretence of hesitancy as Wilson has his narrator consider the possibility that his presence could be an intrusion. Higgins describes how the letter crosses boundaries: "by breaching the boundaries between public and private in such a way the article represents a deliberate insult to Wordsworth and reveals Wilson's ambivalent feelings about his former friend."[19] Therefore, even if Wilson's defence of Wordsworth begins by rebutting claims from other periodical writers (Higgins refers to Hazlitt and Jeffrey in particular),[20] the letter drags Wordsworth's private life into the public sphere without his consent, showing that these words of support are clearly ironic. This is a clear example of the insensitivity of *Blackwood's*. It contrasts sharply with the contemplative, solitary figure of Wordsworth and other members of the 'Moping School', further emphasising the tension between these two literary circles.

The periodical press's reputation for coarseness was frequently observed, as noted by William Christie's discussion of Shelley's *Adonais* (1821), which utilises "the myth of the vulnerable poetic sensibility damaged or destroyed by an indifferent, if not openly hostile, world."[21] Christie does note that the writer whose emotional sensitivity Shelley is defending, John Keats (1795-1821), was not as delicate as suggested, but overall the narrative was clearly powerful,

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[18] 'Letters from the Lakes', p. 739. Additional egregious examples can be found on this page: Wilson describes the location of Wordsworth's house in extreme detail, an affront to his privacy. He then describes the actions of Wordsworth's family members, who are overwhelmingly positive towards him. This is an overly familiar liberty to take even if he had likely met and interacted with the people being fictionalised.

[19] Higgins, p. 129. He also explains the rift that had opened between Wilson and Wordsworth after Wordsworth had described Wilson's work as derivative of his own. (pp. 128-129), increasing the hostility Wordsworth would have felt upon reading this letter.

[20] Ibid.

[21] William Christie, 'Critical Judgement and the Reviewing Profession', in *The Oxford Handbook of British Romanticism*, pp. 279-293, pp. 279-280. The poem Christie is discussing is *Adonais* (1821), which Christie describes as "rhapsodic pastoral elegy he wrote for John Keats, which was also an historical elegy for poetry itself and a eulogy for fellow poets, real and imagined." (p. 279).

and likely contributed to the perceived divide between the periodical press and those who sought emotional sensitivity in geniuses.

Wilson aggravates this divide when he has his fictionalised version of Wordsworth express disgust towards the periodical press:

> Of the periodical criticism of Britain he spoke with almost unqualified contempt. That it often displayed acuteness, talent, and even sensibility, he well knew […] for his own part, he had never seen any important principles laid down there, nor did he see how a poet could become wiser in his own art by aid of the instructions, however kindly meant, of such critics.[22]

As well as dragging Wordsworth into discourse about the periodical press, Wilson affirms the idea that poets and the press are at odds, a claim Lockhart noted his subject, Sir Egerton, to have made. Within Hogg's lifetime, there was therefore a pronounced divide, or at least the perception of one, between the participatory, useful genius and the isolated rural genius. The development of the term 'natural genius' therefore undermined Hogg's ability to perform the role with as much versatility as Burns. He was often insensitive, just as Burns was often political, but where Burns was able to retain the image despite contradictions in his presentation of himself, this task was more difficult for Hogg, because the two schools of thought were directly competing with each other.

In conclusion, both Burns and Hogg participated in wider society, while also relying on their rural backgrounds to validate their positions as labouring-class poets. Participation manifested for Burns as political involvement and personal blunders, and for Hogg as enthusiastic participation in the periodical press. Both authors also demonstrated emotional insensitivity. Hogg's insensitivity was clear in his interactions in the periodical press, for example the Tweedil incident. However, Burns's reputation was aided after his death by the writings of Riddell, as well as Currie,[23] whereas Hogg's obituaries, though mostly positive, were not comprehensive enough to achieve the same level of rehabilitation. Both authors attempted to aid their own reputations in memoirs attached to their works, matched by praise from their most ardent promoters (Mackenzie's *Lounger* article and Wilson's 1819 review), but frequently Hogg's memoir itself was what prompted accusations of insensitivity. Additionally, while clearly a labouring-class poet, Burns's education was closer to what would have been

[22] 'Letters from the Lakes', p. 742.

[23] Robert D. Thornton explores how the Currie saw Burns's closest friends aiming to collaboratively to ensure they were presenting the 'best' of the poet for subscription purposes: Robert D. Thornton, *James Currie: The Entire Stranger and Robert Burns* (Edinburgh and London: Oliver & Boyd, 1963) .

recognisable for the middle-class literati, whereas Hogg's was more oral and traditional, more common for boys of his social standing. This preparation allowed Burns greater ease when navigating the social circles of Edinburgh literary life. These differences were further emphasised by changes in the periodical press: in working opportunities for writers (such as close affiliation with the periodical press) and with the vogue for celebrity and personal lives, both of which led to greater scrutiny of Hogg as writer. Combined with the widening divide between the periodical press and isolated, Romantic poets, or at least the perception of such, it was difficult for Hogg to exist as both an isolated rural genius and a participatory bardic genius, whereas the same contradiction in Burns was not exaggerated in the same way during his short life. As a result, Hogg would have required *more* help than Burns in the rehabilitation of his image, but between his smaller obituaries and Wilson's attacks in his 1823 review of *The Three Perils of Woman*, he in fact received much less. For all these reasons, Burns remained the 'heaven-taught ploughman' while Hogg was unable to distance himself from the image of the 'Caledonian Boar.'

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