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BURNS AND THE CRITICS: 1786 - 1832

by

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TO MY MOTHER AND FATHER

You would think it strange if I called Burns the most gifted British soul we had in all that century of his: and yet I believe the day is coming when there will be little danger in saying so.

Carlyle
INTRODUCTION

In 1878 William Rossetti, in his *Lives of Famous Poets*, listed three general commonplaces in Burns criticism: ecstatic astonishment that a ploughman was a poet, the wringing of hands that the ploughman-poet was a drunkard and "miscellaneous" lover, and the bitter denunciations of those who admired native genius and yet could find nothing better than an excise job for the greatest native genius to appear in the British Isles. Such were indeed the commonplaces and when viewed so neatly and summarized so concisely, one can only marvel that so much ink has been spilled in either defending or denouncing them. But a great deal of ink has stained a great deal of paper and the reasons are not so simple as Rossetti would lead the casual reader to believe by his calm dovetailing of Burns criticism into three such precise categories.

The Burns life and legend has been a sore spot to scholars since the day Burns died. Perhaps no poet has inspired more romantic tales or spread more of a romantic aura over English literature than the Ayrshire bard. But aside from his life the critics have had to face a body of poetry that ranges from often incomprehensible Scottish dialect to maudlin neo-classic elegies. Odes to despondency run side by side with Holy Fairs and Holy Willies;
odes to Ruin glare uncompromisingly at Tam O'Shanter's and Jolly Beggars. Neo-classic poetic standards and taste clash almost violently with their romantic counterparts and both clash with the Scottish vernacular tradition. Burns, in a sense, is then a unique example of each of these "schools," and any criticism of the poetry must take all of this complexity of poetic standards and taste into account.

This thesis does not pretend to offer any solutions to the many problems of Burns's biography. The reader who wishes to delve into the mass of legend, myth, and fact will find no better start than by consulting the monumental work of Franklin Snyder and the sympathetic biography by J. De Lancey Ferguson. What has been attempted in this thesis, however, is a systematic presentation of the writings and opinions of those critics, who, writing from 1786 to 1832, founded and established the most persistent, if often erroneous, critical judgments on Burns's poetry. If one merely glances at the dates involved the objective can be seen to become twofold: first, one is attempting to follow and trace the trends in Burns criticism; secondly, and in a sense more importantly, one is attempting to discover just how and why literary tastes and poetic standards change. In this sense Burns becomes a point of departure for disentangling, as far as possible, the ambiguous standards that represented
the English literary world in transition from severe neo-classic to romantic criticism.

This work could not have proceeded without the kind assistance of many friends. To the staff of the Fondren Library of The Rice Institute I am particularly indebted and especially to Miss Sarah Lane and Mrs. Margaret Gresham for their untiring patience in tracing many volumes for me. To Miss Elta Kay Waltermire and Mr. Dick Forino of the inter-library loan department I owe obligations which I realize can never be repaid.

My most sincere thanks and appreciation I gratefully give to Dr. Alan D. McKillop, whose advice, encouragement, and enthusiasm for the work have made it a pleasure and a joy.
The history of Burns criticism is perhaps more intimately tied up with the prevailing literary opinions of each generation than that of any other poet. It has never really been a matter of making Burns popular or of forcing each new generation to read the poetry of Burns; the great train of editions of his poetry extending from the Kilmarnock volume down to the present proves the contrary only too vividly. The great mass of Burns literature, both literary and non-literary, demonstrates clearly the interest of the critics in Burns and in his poetry; much of this criticism has been mawkish sentimentality poured forth to the "Immortal Memory" each January 25th by Burns Clubs, Scottish nationalists, and Masonic lodges; but an even greater proportion of it comes from the pens of leading critics, scholars, and poets such as Scott, Lord Jeffrey, Wordsworth, Carlyle, and Arnold of past generations and Henley, Craigie, Ferguson, and Daiches of more recent times. Burns then has never sunk into the musty pages of never-opened anthologies to await his revival by some later age -- the fate of so many poets and writers.\(^1\)

If, however, Burns's poetry has been read and commented
upon since the publication of the Kilmarnock volume in 1786, it has not always been read for the same reasons or appreciated for the same poetic virtues. It was Burns's fortune, for good or ill, to make the best of both worlds, the neo-classic world of the eighteenth century and the Romantic-Victorian world of the nineteenth century. Thus, a study of the history of Burns criticism is not merely a sketch of the rise, decline, and revival of a writer, but more truly a study in the history of taste as it develops, subtly changes, and finally takes on a new form, often the direct antithesis of that of the preceding generation. Many writers defy a minute tracing of the changes in literary taste by the study of their works, because they so often follow the rise-decline-revival pattern; such a pattern certainly presents the overall view of developments in literary taste, but rarely demonstrates exactly the gradual and subtle movement from one set of standards to another. Literary historians, for convenience, like to divide literature into such categories as neo-classic, Romantic, Victorian, etc., but one must remember that this is only a convention of convenience. The chasm between Pope and Shelley was not the result of a thunderbolt from on high. The world of literature did not suddenly awake one morning and decide to repudiate the eighteenth century writers. The process of change is continuous and gradual, rather
than spontaneous and violent, although at first glance the latter often seems to be the case. When a literary eruption takes place, such as the triumph of romanticism over neo-classicism, one can generally trace seething undercurrents that were gathering force and momentum and finally culminated in the eruption. One need only recall the recent stress on pre-romanticism in the eighteenth century to be convinced of this fact. It is because Burns wrote poetry acceptable to the literary theories of his own and succeeding generations that he has been preserved from the general decline suffered by many of the great Augustans; and it is precisely because he never underwent this poetic decline that we are able to trace so minutely the changes in literary criticism from 1786 on. Such a statement does not mean to imply that one cannot trace trends by reading the criticisms of one age upon a previous age. But such an attempt at discerning changes in taste would seem to emphasize the cleavage between two literary generations, rather than the continuum of thought that remains the same, while simultaneously grafting on to it the new ideas and principles. One can also follow the development of taste and criticism by merely reading the standard writers of critical theory of each age; but the true test of what the taste of any age was rests, not only in the books of theory, or indeed in the works chosen as worthy of praise or rejection, but more particularly
in the reasons for the choices and rejections, for it is these latter which provide an index to the practical applications of the theories, and hence to the true taste of the age.

II

Burns's literary history properly begins in October, 1786, when James Sibbald reviewed the Kilmarnock volume in his new *Edinburgh Magazine*, rival to the venerated *Scots Magazine*. This review not only expresses the typical late eighteenth century literary opinions, but also begins the inspired ploughboy legend, taken up and firmly implanted by Henry Mackenzie at a later date.

The author is indeed a striking example of native genius bursting through the obscurity of poverty and the obstructions of laborious life, and when we consider him in this light, we cannot help regretting that wayward fate has not placed him in a more favored situation. The critic harps on the idea that Burns's genius is not the result of study and intellectual endeavors, but of native genius, innate or inspired:

Who are you, Mr. Burns? will some critic surely say; at what university have you been educated? What languages do you understand? What authors have you particularly studied? Whether has Aristotle or Horace directed your taste? Who has praised your poems, and under whose patronage are they published? In short, what qualifications entitle you to instruct or entertain us?
Sibbald's generosity supplies Burns's answer:

My good sir,...I am a poor country man. I was bred up at the School of Kilmarnock, I understand no languages but my own. I have studied Allan Ramsay and Fergusson. My poems have been praised at many a fireside, and I ask no patronage for them if they deserve none. I have not looked at mankind through the spectacle of books! 'An ounce of mother wit you know, is worth a pound of clergy,' and Homer and Ossian for anything that I have heard, could neither read nor write.

Such statements are more revealing, perhaps, than a multitude of minute criticisms. One sees plainly the contempt for learning and education in the writing of poetry and also the contempt for the study of the rules of the ancients. A new literary theory is raising its head on the scene and is attempting to rival the established order of literary theory and criticism. The man of natural sentiment and feeling, the untutored "Ossians" are seeking the ascendant and finding, ironically enough, support from the most learned quarters: Hugh Blair, Mackenzie, Lord Monboddo, and Adam Fergusson.

The sentiments of the reviewer are summed up in a manner strange today, but certainly in keeping with the changing critical attitudes of the late eighteenth century:

Those who view him with the severity of lettered criticism, and judge him by the fastidious rules of art, will discover that he has not the doric simplicity of Ramsay, or the brilliant imagination of Fergusson, but those who admire the exertions of untutored fancy, and are blind
to many faults for the sake of numberless beauties, his poems will afford singular gratification.  

It is an interesting turn of events that Ramsay and Fergusson can be judged by the "fastidious rules of art" when in reality Fergusson was in literary oblivion and Ramsay remembered vaguely as the editor-author of The Tea-Table Miscellany and The Ever-green. The emphasis, however, it must be noticed, is on "untutored fancy" and the fact that Burns is not to be judged by artistic rules. The step from "untutored fancy" to what Irving Babbitt calls the poetic theory of spontaneity, the legacy of the romantics and the bane of modern criticism, is certainly not a difficult one to take.

Sibbald, however, did make two observations that raise his critical taste in a modern estimation: "He seems to be a boon companion, and often startles us with a dash of libertinism which will keep some readers at a distance. Some of his subjects are serious, but those of the humorous kind are the best." When one considers that the most libertine poems of the Kilmarnock volume were "The Twa Dogs," "Scotch Drink," "The Holy Fair," "Address to the Deil," and the postscript to the "Epistle to William Simpson," one is not surprised at the later hue and cry over "Holy Willie," "The Twa Herds," and "The Kirk's Alarm." Sibbald suspected the danger of the satires, and he was not mistaken. But Sibbald recognized
Burns's great talent for humorous subjects immediately and quoted entire the "Address to the Deil" and at length from "The Holy Fair" and "Hallowe'en" to prove it.  

This first review of Burns's poems is to a great extent indicative of the attitude towards him throughout his life. He was accepted as the unlettered ploughman singing inspired songs from his heart. The two reviews which followed Sibbald's firmly established this "legend" and set the stage for a type of criticism that only a literary taste in transition could imagine, a type of criticism both ambiguous and contradictory.

In December the Monthly Review opened its criticism with the famous dictum Poeta nascitur non fit and launched into an attack of those poets of the "file" who are not poets at all, but mere versifiers. However, 

The humble bard, whose work now demands our attention, cannot claim a place among those polished versifiers. His simple strains, artless and unadorned, seem to flow without effort, from the native feelings of the heart.

Though the bard is humble, yet the reviewer feels that "his verses are sometimes struck off with a delicacy and artless simplicity that charms like the bewitching though irregular touches of a Shakespeare."

Such high praise, however, is modified by two considerations: dialect and measures:

We much regret that these poems are written in some measure in an unknown tongue, which must
deprive most of our readers of the pleasure they would otherwise naturally create;... 13

Of the Scottish measures the reviewer cannot show enough contempt:

The modern ear will be somewhat disgusted with the measure of many of these pieces, which is faithfully copied from that which was most in fashion among the ancient Scottish bards, but hath been, we think with good reason, laid aside by later poets. 14

Within these two adverse criticisms lies the seeds of the ambiguity and contradiction in late eighteenth century taste; the problem was even more acute in Scotland than in England, for at the same time that Scotland was trying to acclimate itself and indeed define the rising theory of taste and literature, it was trying to rid itself of its national language and its "Scoticisms" (a problem that will be treated later). Thus, the reviewer admits that few good poems are being published when he says, "How many splendid volumes of poems come under our review, in which, though the mere chaff be carefully separated, not a single atom of perfect grain can be found, all being light and insipid!" 15 But if he further admits that "The few Songs, Odes, Dirges, &c., in this collection are very poor in comparison with the other pieces," 16 all of which songs, odes, etc., are written in English and in the standard neo-classic tradition of measure, just what is the reviewer praising? The answer is subtle, but
not complicated. He wants the sentiment of Burns, which he feels is real and natural, but he wants it in the eighteenth century, neo-classic mold. The chaff which the reviewer bewails is nothing but "tiresome uniformity, with neither fault to rouse nor beauty to animate the jaded spirits!"  

Remove the dialect, the stanzaic forms, and the rusticity from Burns's best pieces, keep the sentiment, and one will achieve the critic's idea of good poetry. The critic, in a sense, speaks for his generation; he wants the best of both worlds: the world of sentimentality and tender feelings spiced with Burns's humor as represented in the Kilmarnock volume, but he wants it fitted into the poetic mold expressed by the neo-classic world.

This ambiguous frame of mind can be seen more plainly by the poems the critic chooses to comment upon: "To a Mouse" and "To a Mountain Daisy" in which "we meet with a strain of that delicate tenderness which renders the Idylls of Madame Deshouliers so peculiarly interesting;" and "The Cotter's Saturday Night," which he quotes completely with copious notes, though he says that it is a specimen of Burns's "serious" poems which "contain fewer words that are not pure English." These poems, and especially such odes and dirges as "Winter," "To Ruin," etc., are certainly no more than benevolent sentimentalism joined with neo-classic form, not much superior to the
worst of Shenstone or Thomson. If one considers benevolent sentimentalism as that form of late eighteenth century sentimentality which delighted in the emotions for the emotions' sake, one sees only one side of the ambiguous sentimental coin. Erik Erämetää convincingly shows in his study of the word "sentimental" that after Sterne sentimentality often meant an epicurianism in feelings, as opposed to the earlier Richardsonian use of the idea of moral instruction in the term. It is obvious, however, in Burns's poems that the quality of moral instruction is not absent. To be sure the moral purpose stems from the heart and not from the intellect and seems to come very near being feelings running rampant over insignificant causes. But it is difficult to ignore in most cases Burns's moral instruction or at the least his wishing-well to all mankind, so that to impute Erämetää's definition of late eighteenth century sentimentalism to Burns seems an over-simplification. By retaining the adjective "benevolent," as opposed to "moral," one comes closer to Burns's use of sentiment. Lois Whitney speaks to the point when she comments:

It may be observed by even a casual reader of primitivistic literature in the eighteenth century that there was a transition during the century from a rationalistic primitivism at the beginning, which tended to derive the qualities of goodness and sagacity in the savage from the unobstructed operation of the 'light of reason,' to a more emotional, sentimental, and antinomian primitivism which became increasingly the favored type as the century progressed.
Miss Whitney has neatly combined the two major problems in the study of Burns: sentimentalism and primitivism. By making late eighteenth century primitivism the result of over-emphasizing the natural goodness of the heart, man's natural affections, as opposed to the earlier over-emphasis of the natural goodness of man's reason, she shows that benevolence, when carried to its logical extreme, becomes not only primitivism but the indiscriminate wishing well to all creatures, which, if reduced to absurdity, certainly ends as Erâmeşă's "epicures of feeling." Burns himself, however, rarely succumbs to Erâmeşă's rather narrow conception of Sternean sentimentality; his morality stems from the heart certainly, but it is hardly ever absent.

If these reviews set the stage for Burns, reflected the poetic desires of the times and the sentiment of the age, it was the Lounger review which bore the authority of the literati and opened the doors of Auld Reekie to the poet, for it came from the elegant pen of "The Man of Feeling" himself, Henry Mackenzie.

After a fitting prologue expressing his admiration for genius, Mackenzie begs the reader to forget Burns's humble birth and worship the divinely inspired genius of the "Ayrshire Ploughman":

The power of [Burns's] genius is not less admirable in tracing the manners, than in painting the passions, or in drawing the scenery of nature....Though I am very far from meaning to
compare our rustic bard to Shakespeare, yet whoever will read his lighter and more humorous poems,...will perceive with what uncommon penetration and sagacity this heaven-taught ploughman, from his humble and unlettered station, has looked upon men and manners. 25

Though delighted with his sentiments and humor, Mackenzie makes no less a noise about the dialect than the Monthly reviewer, and like him feels obliged to quote from those poems "of the grave style, [which] are almost English." 26

The use of the dialect was one of the chief complaints against Burns and hounded him all his life. The literati never understood that those feelings and sentiments which they liked in Burns were only best expressed when he used the dialect or a mixture of it. But besides the fact that the literati felt that great poetry could be written only in English, there is an historical problem which must be correctly understood in order to appreciate this insistence on writing "pure English." From the time of the union of the two parliaments in 1707 the Scotch felt the necessity of writing and speaking pure English if they were ever to take their place as equals beside the English.

The growth of literature, in which was required the art of writing English, - for authors addressed an English public - and the more frequent communication between England and Scotland, made both the lettered and the fashionable classes painfully conscious that their vernacular had sunk from a national language of which to be proud, into a provincial dialect of which to be ashamed. Of old every one spoke Scots; and from
the lips of well-bred ladies it fell pleasingly, if not quite intelligibly, on southern ears. Now, however, it was awkward for a man of letters to lapse into solecisms, and for a man of fashion to flounder hopelessly in Scotticisms. The member for a Scottish county felt himself uncouth in London society, and when he rose in the House of Commons he dreaded the supercilious smile at the sound of an unknown tongue. Advocates pleading before the Lords saw that they created amazement by the strange pronunciation of Latin, and still stranger pronunciation of the king's English.27

How seriously the Scottish gentry and literati took their task of learning "pure English" can be seen by the members of the Select Society, founded to discuss literary topics, changing its name to the "Society for Promoting the Reading and Speaking of the English Language,"28 or more humorously from the visit of Thomas Sheridan to Edinburgh:

In 1761 it happened that Mr. Thomas Sheridan, actor, stage-manager, and elocutionist, came to lecture on rhetoric and the art of speaking, and delivered twelve lectures in St. Paul's Episcopal Chapel. To that consecrated but not solemnizing building in the dismal Carrubber's Wynd resorted about three hundred gentlemen, nobles, judges, divines, advocates, and men of fashion. With the docility of children they gave ear to these pretentious discourses, in which the selfconfident orator, in rich Irish brogue, taught pure English pronunciation to a broad-Scots-speaking assembly.29

Such a determination on the part of the Scots to rid themselves of their Scotticisms must always be kept in mind when one reads the strictures on Burns's poetry and considers the ambiguity that necessarily arose with the changing tides of criticism.
If one considers Mackenzie the leading light of sentiment, it can be easily seen that he spoke for his literary peers who agreed with his tastes, and in literary matters sought to be "men of feeling." It is not then difficult to imagine those poems in the Kilmarnock volume about which Mackenzie and the Edinburgh literati would grow ecstatic. "The Vision" becomes for them "solemn and sublime, with that rapt and inspired melancholy in which the poet lifts his eye 'above this visible diurnal sphere'," while "Despondency," "The Lament," "Winter, a Dirge," and the "Invocation to Ruin," all neo-classic in language and measure and sentimental in feeling "afford no less striking examples." "Man was made to mourn," "The Cotter's Saturday Night," "To A Mouse," and "To a Daisy" are specimens of "the tender and moral" and Mackenzie tells us that he has "seldom met with an image more truly pastoral than that of the lark in the second stanza [of "To a Daisy"]." 

Although Mackenzie attempts to justify the libertinism hinted at by Sibbald, he too feels unwary when it comes to religious criticism:

Against some passages of these last-mentioned poems ["The Twa Dogs," "Dedication to G. H. Esq.," "Epistle to a Young Friend," and "To William Simpson"] it has been objected that they breathe a spirit of libertinism and irreligion. But, if we consider the ignorance and fanaticism of the lower class of the people in the country where these poems were written, a fanaticism of that pernicious sort which sets faith in opposition to good works, the fallacy and danger of which a mind so enlightened as our poet's could not
but conceive, we shall not look upon his lighter 
muse as the enemy of religion...though she has 
been somewhat unguarded in her ridicule of hypo-
crisy.33

It would seem fairly obvious, even if one knew nothing 
else of Mackenzie's religious views but what is expressed 
here, that his criticism is merely a tour de force piece 
of writing by a member of the moderate religious party 
or New Lights, and not a justification of Burns's liber-
tinism at all. For when Burns expresses doctrines compa-
tible with the Edinburgh moderates Mackenzie smiles, but 
the smile turns sour when it is a question of hearty 
satire ("The Holy Fair") on religion itself, which a Man 
of Feeling, though a moderate, could certainly not condone. 
He might, however, excuse it as the result of a poet's 
typical lack of caution and the lack of delicate friends 
to correct him, which is, of course, exactly what Mackenzie 
does.34

Magazine echo Mackenzie and the first reviewers, both admir-
ing his genius, his humor, and his sentiment (the "pathetic") 
and begging more poems in English. The former magazine, 
lamenting the dialect, suggests that Burns has received 
the patronage of a "great lady in Scotland" (Jane, Duchess 
of Gordon, or Lady Glencairn?) and of a "celebrated profes-
sor" (Dugald Stewart?), who, he hopes will interest them-
selves in the cultivation of Burns's talents, so that "his
distinguished genius may yet be exerted in such a manner as to afford more generous delight."\textsuperscript{35} The reviewer had unwittingly suggested a type of assistance that the Edinburgh literati were only too happy to give and which was to plague Burns for the rest of his life, whenever he heard from them on literary matters. The latter review only exemplifies more distinctly the literary taste of the time. The reviewer, also mentioning Burns's mistake in using the dialect, concedes that the poet has given "good specimens of his skill in English,"\textsuperscript{36} and proceeds to quote as "very elegant....and highly poetical"\textsuperscript{37} the ninth stanza of "The Cotter's Saturday Night," beginning, "Oh happy love! where love like this is found." Perhaps no other lines in Burns are as artificial and imitation neo-classic as these!

In February, 1787 The English Review gave its opinion of Burns in a manner which combined all criticisms of the earlier reviews and in a sense presented the united front of the late eighteenth century tastes in poetry. The ambiguity and contradictions of the poetic tastes and literary criticism of the period are here again displayed perhaps more strikingly and clearly than in the Monthly Review.

Although the reviewer, probably Dr. John Moore, later a friend and correspondent of Burns's, sees that the poet is not one of those who "strut their hour upon the stage"\textsuperscript{38}
and then fade, and even condemns those friends of Burns as malicious, who represent him as a prodigy;\(^3\) he concludes that Burns has a "genuine title to the attention and approbation of the public, as a natural, though not a legitimate son of the muses."\(^4\) Whatever line the doctor is drawing between "prodigy" and "natural son of the muses" must be so fine that he himself could possibly not define it. Prodigies would seem to remind the reviewer too much of people like Stephen Duck,\(^5\) while "natural sons" would carry the connotation of Mackenzie's "heaven-taught ploughman." More specifically, poetic prodigies would seem to be those uneducated writers who had an unusual talent for rhyming, but lacked all poetic inspiration; a "natural son" would, of course, also be an uneducated writer, but in addition to his talent for rhyming would be endowed with divine inspiration, or perhaps Plato's divine frenzy. The reviewer, however, forgets that Duck and the other rustic poets never claimed to be either "prodigies," "heaven-taught," or "legitimate sons of the muses;" they presented to the world merely their attempts at verse; it was the polite world that made them prodigies. The only conclusion, of course, that one can arrive at, is that the literati were now skating on thin ice with their natural geniuses, most of whom were complete fakes like "Ossian" Macpherson or self-taught, un-poetic peasants like Duck. The contradiction and ambiguity
of terms is the direct result of attempting to maintain the sentimental thesis of natural geniuses in the face of overwhelming opposition of facts to the contrary. Thus, Burns is accepted as the unlettered ploughboy, divinely inspired, by the majority of critics, while the more discriminating critics, who saw the echoes of Ramsay, Fergusson, Shenstone, Thomson, and the whole host of eighteenth century poets in his poems, could not admit him as an unlettered prodigy, and yet because he was merely a farmer could not deny he was a natural genius. By quibbling with terms Moore hoped to clear the air, but because he could never really abandon the "natural genius" thesis, he accomplished nothing and Burns remained the "heaven-taught ploughman" throughout his life, and even long after his death.

All of the critics mentioned that Burns's forte was in humor and satire and yet all but Sibbald found their chief delight in either the sentimental or neo-classic pieces. Moore is indeed no exception, for after stating that in the humorous and satirical pieces Burns is "most at home," he goes on to decide that "The Vision" is "perhaps the most poetical of all his performances," and quotes several stanzas, all neo-classic in form and diction, to prove his point. While "Hallowe'en" is an excellent account of peasant superstitions, it is not happily executed because "A mixture of the solemn and
burlesque can never be agreeable." It is thus the neo-classic and sentimental poems which all prefer, though, like Mackenzie, even Moore pays lip service to the "Address to the Deil," "The Holy Fair," and the "Epistle to G. H.," which are happy because the humor is "neither local nor transient, for the devil, the world, and the flesh will always keep their ground."

Moore's conclusion takes the poet to task for his dialect and his measures, but what is more important, highlights the literary contradictions of the age, a fact no doubt labored in this paper, but one that is all important in grasping the movement from severe neo-classicism through benevolent sensibility to what the historians call romanticism.

The stanza of Mr. Burns is generally ill-chosen, and his provincial dialect confines his beauties to one half of the island. But he possesses the genuine characteristics of a poet; a vigorous mind, a lively fancy, a surprising knowledge of human nature, and an expression rich, various, and abundant. In the plaintive or pathetic he does not excel; his love-poems (though he confesses, or rather professes, a penchant to the belle passion) are execrable; but in the midst of vulgarity and commonplace, which occupy one half of the volume, we meet with many striking beauties that make ample compensation. One happy touch of the Eolian harp from fairy fingers awakes emotions in the soul that make us forget the antecedent mediocrity or harshness of the natural music.

By "ill-chosen" stanzas Moore undoubtedly means the ancient Scottish stanzas employed in such pieces as "The Holy Fair;"
if we consider this dislike in addition to that of the dialect, which has already been discussed at length, one sees how far Anglomania had penetrated the character of the Scots.

The detestation of the love-songs is truly amazing, since in the Kilmarnock volume Burns published but three, two of which have been long favorites, "It was upon a Lammas Night" and "Now westlin' winds." The last sentence, however, of Moore's criticism is as strange as it is contradictory. Several lines above he rejected the pathetic poems, which he had previously praised unstintingly, and now he rejects natural music as harsh and mediocre, when he had before praised Burns as a "natural son of the muses." It seems difficult to reconcile such contradictions unless one accepts the answer that the literati and gentry wanted the sentiment, the homely simplicity of rural nature and rural people of Burns, but cast in the form of the Augustans; in other words, they wanted the heart of Burns but the diction of Pope.
Chapter II
BURNS AND THE LITERATI

On November 13, 1786, a notice appeared in the Edinburgh Evening Courant (signed by "Allan Ramsay") which took to task the nobility of Scotland for not stepping forward to aid Burns:

The county of Ayr is perhaps superior to any in Scotland in the number of its Peers, Nabobs, and wealthy Commoners, and yet not one of them has upon this occasion stepped forth as a patron to this man, nor has any attempt been made to interest the public in his favour. His poems are read, his genius applauded, and he is left to his fate. It is a reflection on the county and a disgrace to humanity.

By the end of November Ramsay's letter was no longer justified in any sense of the word, for Burns had become the literary lion of the season, smiled and fawned on from the elite of the nobility and the literati to the lowest man in the Crochallan Fencibles. Burns's first real intimation, however, that he would be favorably received by the Edinburgh literary lights came from a letter from the blind poet and man of letters, Dr. Thomas Blacklock, to the Rev. Mr. George Lawrie of Kilmarnock. Contrary to the general opinion and Burns's own words, Blacklock did not advise Burns to come to Edinburgh. After praising the poems warmly, Blacklock suggests an immediate second edition that "might give...a more universal circulation.
than any thing of the kind which has been published within [his] memory, 3 but he nowhere indicates that Burns would have assured success in the capitol. Such encouragement from one of the most respected literary men of the day, however, might persuade any hopeful young poet that his fame lay in making his way as quickly as possible to Edinburgh. Burns was not deceived; his reception is one of the most phenomenal events in literary history. To the Edinburgh literati he was the primitive personified, 4 but in the flux of their own literary tastes they were determined to see that he did not remain a primitive for long.

Burns was perhaps as astonished by his popularity as Carlyle was when recollecting it for his essay on Burns. 5 In a letter to Gavin Hamilton of December 1786 the poet records his excitement and his surprise:

...I am in a fair way of becoming as eminent as Thomas a Kempis or John Bunyan; and you may expect henceforth to see my birthday inserted among the wonderful events in Poor Robin's and Aberdeen Almanacks, along with the black Monday, & the battle of Bothwell bridge. - My Lord Glencairn & the Dean of Faculty, Mr. H. Erskine have taken me under their wing; and by all probability I shall soon be the tenth Worthy, and the eighth Wise Man, of the world. 6

From a letter of Burns to John Ballantine in the same month one can get a glimpse of some of the great names that received the poet:

I have been introduced to a good many of the noblesse, but my avowed Patrons & Patronesses
are, the Duchess of Gordon - the Countess of Glencairn, with my lord & lady Betty - the Dean of Faculty - Sir John Whiteford. — I have likewise warm friends among the Literati, Professors Stewart, Blair, Greenfield, and Mr. McKenzie the Man of Feeling....

I was, Sir, when I was first honoured with your notice, too obscure, now I tremble lest I should be ruined by being dragged to [sic] suddenly into the glare of polite & learned observation. 7

If Burns was delighted with his reception, it is also obvious that he realized his dangers, the dangers of novelty which can at any moment wear off. That Burns, however, knew the literati and how to play up to them will soon be evident.

Burns was far from exaggerating his position among the wealthy and learned; witness the letter of Mrs. Alison Cockburn of "flowers of the Forest" fame to one of her friends:

The town is at present agog with the ploughman poet, who receives adulation with native dignity, and is the very figure of his profession, strong and coarse, but has a most enthusiastic heart of love. He has seen Duchess Gordon and all the gay world: his favorite for looks and manners is Bess Burnet [daughter of Lord Monboddo] — no bad judge, indeed.... The man will be spoiled, if he can spoil; but he keeps his simple manners, and is quite sober. 8

Dr. Carlyle, the venerable biographer of the eighteenth century Edinburgh literati, is more critical but no less enthusiastic than Mrs. Cockburn in painting Burns's Edinburgh success in a letter to the Duchess of Buccleugh:

Nothing in the literary way has occupied Edinburgh for some weeks past so much as the poems
of Robert Burns, an illiterate ploughman of Ayrshire. His poems are many of them extremely good, both those in Scots dialect and in the English. He is thought to be equal, if not superior to Ramsay in original genius and humour. I am not certain of that. But he surpasses him in sensibility. We, you may believe, with the prejudices of the Scotch, are ready to believe that the productions of the milkwoman of Bristol are mere whey compared to Burns; and that the poems of Stephen Duck, the thresher, are but chaff in comparison. Lord Glencairn is his patron. A new edition of his poems is printing. But I hear he has not been so advisable as to suppress some things that he was advised to suppress. 9

Perhaps nothing is so revealing of the feeling towards Burns as this letter.10 One sees the whole world of late eighteenth century literary taste displayed. It is Burns's sensibility that is preferred to his humour; it is the fact that he is supposedly illiterate that makes his fame, for he is ranked in the same class as Duck and the Bristol milkwoman, only he is a better poet, and that perhaps not by poetic merit, but maybe because of Scottish national sentiment! Thus one sees the two literary forces at work: the acceptance of the poems for their sensibility and the acceptance of the poet because of his natural genius, or what literary historians term, primitivism. The last sentence alludes to that criticism which came from the literati and which was aimed at destroying, though unwittingly, the precise thing they liked in Burns, his primitivism or untutored genius.

It has been seen that the literati and nobility of
Edinburgh received Burns so extravagantly because he represented their idea of the "natural genius," the untutored poet, the primitivist par excellence; the complexity of the situation, however, appears when these same literati did all in their power to sublimate the natural genius they admired and impose the English and neo-classic ideas and forms on Burns. This dichotomy between their Rousseauist theory and their actual practices is explainable from two different viewpoints. The first, and most obvious, does not really concern us and lies in the simple fact that all Britain did not grovel at the feet of the natural man. But that this does not explain the actions of the Edinburgh literati is clear from the fact that all the reviews of Burns's poems emphasized the primitivistic, and that the poet was received in Edinburgh simply because he was a Stephen Duck who was a real poet.

The explanation has a peculiarly Scottish twist that has its roots in the union of the crowns in 1603 and is based on a particular patriotic outlook. One sees in essence three Scottish literary traditions or forces at work at one time. The first, and the one to which Burns belonged, was the local or nationalistic tradition tracing from the Makars through Watson to Ramsay and Fergusson, and culminating in Burns. This approach was strictly inner directed, concentrating on Scotland and the Scots and emphasizing Scottish dialects, traditions, and beliefs.
The Edinburgh literati, though equally patriotic, represent the second tradition, which is outer directed and has an European outlook. Their intention was to make Scotland a peer among the European nations; their eyes were on the continent and not Scotland. Hume, Adam Ferguson, Adam Smith, Blair, etc. wrote in English not just to be read in England, but to be read throughout the continent. If one considers for a moment the European tour of Hume, how lionized he was on the continent, and the assistance he gave, though unappreciated, to Rousseau, the picture of the purpose of the literati comes sharply into focus. The third tradition, which does not enter the discussion here, is the Gaelic tradition of the Highlands. Thus, though they appreciated Burns's "natural genius" and saw it as a confirmation of the glory of natural man, they thought that it was too national and local to be appreciated outside the Kingdom; their chief desire then was to make Burns another Thomson, who could be read in England and on the continent and be still hailed as an ornament of Scotland. The rather extravagant praise accorded to Burns's neo-classic-sentimental poems is both a reflection of the literary tastes of the times and of literary tastes reinforced by patriotism.

At the time that Burns stepped onto the stage of Edinburgh society the chief light of the Edinburgh literati was the learned and gentle Hugh Blair, preacher in the
High Church of St. Giles. The very fact that this distinguished man of letters took time not only to entertain Burns but also to correct and criticize the poems for the new edition demonstrates the interest of the literati in the ploughman poet. Blair's criticisms are an epitome of the attitudes of literary taste described above and should be examined to obtain a closer insight into the workings of the late eighteenth century Scottish literary mind. Most of the adverse criticisms center around Burns's libertinism, and one of the criticisms, that of "The Jolly Beggars," will ever degrade Blair in the eyes of Burns students.

In the "Dedication to Gavin Hamilton" Blair objected to the paragraph beginning "0 ye wha leave the springs o' C-la-v-n" as giving offence by the "ludicrous views of the punishments of Hell." The humor of his criticism of "To John Rankine" is apparent in the double standards the refined professor sets up:

The description of shooting the hen is understood, I find, [From Moore's review] to convey an indecent meaning: tho' in reading the poem, I confess, I took it literally, and the indecency did not strike me. But if the Author meant to allude to an affair with a Woman, as is supposed, the whole poem ought undoubtedly to be left out of the new edition.

The "Address to the Deil" suffered in his opinion from stanza 11, "There mystic knots made great abuse," because it was "indecent" and the stanza of "A Dream," beginning
"Young Royal Tarry Breeks" (Stanza 13) is "coarse." Of the new proposed additions to the Edinburgh edition it is surprising that Blair selected "John Barleycorn" and "Death and Dr. Hornbook" as the best, although he tempered his judgment by ranking "The Winter Night" along with them. Several verses which he condemned never appeared and are now lost; but by their criticisms we know what type of poems they were and why Blair cringed:

The two Stanzas to the tune of Gilliecrankie, which refer to the death of Zimri and Cozbi as related in the book of Numbers, are beyond doubt quite inadmissible.

The Verses also entitled The Prophet and God's Complaint from the 15th Ch. of Jeremiah, are also inadmissible. They would be considered burlesquing the Scriptures.

Robust satire did not appeal to the refined "Men of Feeling" of Burns's generation, and religious satire was especially obnoxious. The loss of these two poems might, however, have been forgiven Blair if he had not damned "The Jolly Beggars," which consequently did not appear until 1807.

The Whole of What is called the Cantata, the Songs of the Beggars & their Doxies, with the Grace at the end of them, are altogether unfit in my opinion for publication. They are by much too licentious; and fall below the dignity which Mr. Burns possesses in the rest of his poems & would rather degrade them.

Blair concluded his observations by stating his intent and what he felt to be the purpose of Burns's poems:

"These observations are submitted by one who is a great friend to Mr. Burns's Poems and wishes him to preserve
the fame of Virtuous Sensibility, \[\text{italics mine}\] & of humorous fun, without offence.\[\text{20}\] It is to Burns's credit that he rejected nearly all the criticisms of Blair and the literati; but it is unfortunate that he submitted to Blair in the matter of the religious satires, for we have recovered only the "Jolly Beggars," and that quite by accident.\[\text{21}\]

Of all the literati who offered advice to Burns, none was more interested and perhaps more representative than Dr. John Moore, then resident in London. In April of 1787 he sent Burns a criticism of the new edition.\[\text{22}\] The doctor did not realize the extent to which his advice was to be carried when he suggested Burns devote himself to songs: "By the way, I imagine you have a peculiar talent for such compositions, which you ought to indulge. No kind of poetry demands more delicacy or higher polishing."\[\text{23}\] But his true feelings are apparent when he adds: "But nothing now added is equal to your 'Vision' and 'Cotter's Saturday Night.' In these are united fine imagery, natural and pathetic description, with sublimity of language and thought."\[\text{24}\]

Moore then outlined a plan of work that shows the definite attempt of the literati to impose neo-classic-sentimental standards on their "natural genius." First Burns was to rid himself of the dialect; then steep himself in Greek and Roman history, mythology and modern
history, the purpose of which was to produce some great and epic work. If the literati believed in their theory of primitivism, such advice was hardly consistent with their beliefs. Moore however was persistent in his advice. One cannot help marvelling that the doctor and his literati friends did not see their contradictions; for if Burns had followed their behests he would probably have become the very type of poet they were tired of.

In 1789 and 1793 Moore was still preaching the same dicta to Burns and begging him to drop the Scottish measures and dialect which he felt were "fatiguing to English ears...[and] not very agreeable to Scottish." In 1793 Moore wrote to Mrs. Dunlop: "What is become of Burns? He is the first poet in our island. There is an infinity of genius in his 'Tam o' Shanter,' but I wish he would write English, that the whole nation might admire him." One admires Moore's friendship and confidence in the poet, even if one can't accept his advice. It is, however, pleasing to note in all of Moore's correspondence that he admires Burns's best poems, including the satires, even if he feels that Burns should occupy his time with something "more fitting" his great genius.

Some of the criticism, however, went farther than the general strictures of the reviewers and literati and show precisely how pedantic and "engllished" the Edinburgh literary lights were. The rhetorical and pedantic letter
of David Erskine, 11th earl of Buchan, is worthless as advice, except for the note that he too wishes the poet to try a work of "greater magnitude, variety, and importance."29 But the letter of Dr. Gregory to Burns on "The Wounded Hare" is a typical example of the extreme form of criticism that Burns was subjected to.30 The criticism is a grammarians delight. "Murder-aiming" in stanza 1 and "Bloodstained" in stanza 3 are "bad compound epithet(s) and not very intelligible (He suggests "bleeding for "blood-stained")."31 The reasons the professor gives are ironically sound neo-classic ones:

You have accustomed yourself to such epithets and have no notion how stiff and quaint they appear to others and how incongruous with poetic fancy and tender sentiments. Suppose Pope had written 'Why that blood-stained bosom gored,' how would you have liked it?32

"Form", the professor thinks, "is neither a poetic nor a dignified nor a plain common word: it is a mere sportsman's word; unsuitable to pathetic or serious poetry."33 "Mangled" for him becomes coarse, and "Innocent," in the sense Burns's used it, merely a nursery word.34 From stanza 4 on the professor waxes eloquent in his indignation:

"Who will provide that life a mother only can bestow' will not do at all: it is not grammar -- it is not intelligible. Do you mean 'provide for that life which the mother had bestowed and used to provide for?'

...'fellow' would be wrong (in the title): it is but a colloquial and vulgar word, unsuitable to your sentiments. 'Shot' is improper too.
On seeing a person (or a sportsman) wound a hare: it is needless to add with what weapon; but if you think otherwise, you should say with a _fowling-piece_.

If Burns decided to ignore most of the criticisms of the literati, he did not do it openly until after the Edinburgh edition was published. Until then he pretended to play into their hands; if they wanted an inspired ploughman, he was only too willing to play the role. In the preface to the Kilmarnock edition Burns shows that he was aware of the literary feelings of the time and was publishing with one eye on the literati. Here he presented himself as a poor rhymer writing little verses for his own amusement after the fatigues of a day on the farm. Daiches comments that in the preface to the Kilmarnock volume Burns definitely had one eye on the Edinburgh literati. To move from admiration of Shenstone to Ramsay and Ferguson in one statement, Daiches feels, is a clear demonstration that Burns was playing a double role, and a very confused double role at that. The role was certainly confused, but not because Burns was merely pretending. To play the inspired ploughman was certainly playing a role; to move from Shenstone to Ramsay and Ferguson was simply an indication of the literary tastes of the time, an indication of the confusion and contradiction that existed. There are too many proofs that Burns truly admired the neo-classics and the sentimentalists; his
taste followed the literary tradition represented by the literati, the outer directed tradition; his best writing followed the inner directed tradition, the tradition of Ramsay and Ferguson.

The dedication to the Edinburgh edition indicates the role Burns played when he says, "The Poetic Genius of my Country found me as the prophetic bard Elijah did Elisha -- at the plough, and threw her inspiring mantle over me." Burns was merely the instrument of the goddess; "I tuned my wild, artless notes, as she inspired." In 1799 Dr. Anderson writes to Currie confirming Burns's knowledge of poetry and damning the ploughboy legend:

Burns, I know, was familiarly acquainted with all the popular poetry in the English, as well as in the Scottish, language. I was astonished at the extent of his poetical reading, and the extraordinary retentiveness of his memory. I have heard him repeat whole poems of considerable length. Cunningham and Shenstone were favourites with him, and of the Scottish poets, Ferguson, probably on account of some similarity in the circumstances of their lives.

Dr. Anderson completely confirms the belief that Burns was pretending to be the inspired ploughman and pretending to take the advice of the literati:

It was, I know, a part of the machinery, as he called it, of his poetical character to pass for an illiterate ploughman who wrote from pure inspiration. When I pointed out some evident traces of poetical imitation in his verses, privately, he readily acknowledged his obligations, and even admitted the advantages he enjoyed in poetical composition from the conia verborum, the command of phraseology, which
the knowledge and use of the English and Scottish dialects afforded him; but in company he did not suffer his pretensions to pure inspiration to be challenged, and it was seldom done where it might be supposed to affect the success of the subscription for his Poems. 42

Burns lost no opportunity to popularize himself as an inspired wonder:

Mr. Ransay once, in his presence, shewed me a copy of Verses addressed to Burns, transmitted to him for publication. I objected to his printing them, as they were bad, and proceeded upon a mistaken idea of the Poet's character as to learning. [italics mine] Burns admitted the mistake, and acknowledged the verses were mean, but thought the printing them might do him service, by spreading the 'wonder' and increasing his popularity. 43

Perhaps the most difficult role, however, was the added one of keeping the literati happy. Burns had probably not counted on this role. He knew he had to be an inspired ploughman, but he did not know that the verses of the ploughman were going to be subjected to the corrections of the literati, a dubious honor indeed. Dr. Anderson remarks:

Being decidedly of opinion that an author is the best judge of his own writings, he steadily resisted the attempts of emendatory criticism. While the subscription was going on he suffered Dr. Blair and Mr. Mackenzie to believe that his poems should be altered and corrected according to their suggestions; but he secretly resolved to preserve the exceptionable passages, and finally rejected their suggestions, the result, he thought, of fastidious delicacy. 44

Perhaps the best defense of Burns's attitude is his own
words to Ramsay of Qchtertyre when the latter asked him what help the Edinburgh literati had given him on his poetry: "Sir, these gentlemen remind me of some spinsters in my county, who spin the thread so fine that it is neither fit for weft or woof." 45

One may perhaps object that the assumption of the natural genius role and the double-dealing with the literati are unpardonable deceits. Perhaps objectively they are, but under the circumstances they become not only pardonable, but even worldly virtues. Burns knew the audience for whom he was playing, and he also knew that sooner or later the stage lights would dim and the curtain would go down; when it would rise again Burns was certain that a new play with a new cast would take the stage. He therefore had to make the most of the few nights he had the theatre to himself. He couldn't play the role forever, for the literati were certain to discover soon that he was far from being the "natural genius" they credited him as being, and the makers of literary taste do not particularly like to see their theories smashed before their eyes. Even when Ossian, for example, was completely discredited by the rest of the world, the Edinburgh literati tenaciously clung to him in public as genuine, though in private many had their doubts. 46 There were few Dr. Moores who felt Burns was the "best poet in the island." For the majority of the literati he was a literary novelty,
a glorified milkmaid of Bristol, a greater than Duck but
a less than Ossian.

Burns was acutely aware of his delicate position.
In May, 1787 he wrote to Hugh Blair: "I have made up my
mind that abuse, or almost even neglect, will not surprise
me in my quarters." Blair's reply, though couched in
the nicest terms, shows that the literati were tired of
their toy. He advises Burns to cultivate his genius when
he retires to his private life and work on more produc-
tions. But he adds:

At the same time, be not in too great a haste
to come forward. Take time and leisure to im-
prove and mature your talents. For on any
second production you give the world, your fate
as a poet will very much depend. There is no
doubt a gloss of novelty, which time wears off.
As you very properly hint yourself, you are not
to be surprised if in your rural retreat you do
not find yourself surrounded with that glare of
notice and applause which here shone upon you.

To sweeten the advice Blair reminds Burns that every poet
must also be a philosopher and "court retreat" at times
so that when he reappears at "proper seasons" he will
"come forth with more advantage and energy. He will not
think himself neglected if he be not always praised."

To Dr. Moore Burns was more precise in his estimate
of the literati:

I shall return to my rural shades, in all like-
lihood never more to quit them. I have formed
many intimacies and friendships here, but I am
afraid they are all of too tender a construction
to bear carriage a hundred and fifty miles. To
the rich, the great, the fashionable, the polite, I have no equivalent to offer; and I am afraid my meteor appearance will by no means entitle me to a settled correspondence with any of you, who are the permanent lights of genius and literature. 51

These letters were written just as Burns was preparing to leave Edinburgh for his trip with Ainslie and were the result of his winter in the capital. But Burns was aware very early of his position, long before his light began to dim. In December, 1787 he writes to Aiken:

You will very probably think, my honored friend, that a hint about the mischievous nature of intoxicated vanity may not be unseasonable, but alas! you are wide of the mark. — Various concurring circumstances have raised my fame as a Poet to a height which I am absolutely certain I have not merits to support; and I look down on the future as I would into the bottomless pit. 52

A letter to the Rev. Mr. Greenfield written in the same month is even more revealing of the poet's mind concerning his fame.

Never did Saul's armour sit so heavy on David when going to encounter Goliath, as does the encumbering robe of public notice which the friendship and patronage of some names 'dear to fame' have invested me....I am willing to believe that my abilities deserved a better fate than the veriest shades of life; but to be dragged forth, with all my imperfections on my head, to the full glare of learned and polite observation, is what, I am afraid, I shall have bitter reason to repent. 53

Burns, afraid of his imperfections, hid under the title of inspired genius, fearing that the polite and learned
would soon discover him to be a country bumpkin. His fear was misplaced, however, for it was not the country bumpkin that the literati disliked to find -- in fact this is what they wanted to find -- it was the fact that Burns was indeed an educated man and a literate poet. Burns foresaw the consequences, but mistook the reason:

I mention this to you, once for all, merely, in the Confessor style, to disburthen my conscience, and that -- 'When proud fortunes's ebbing tide recedes' -- you may bear me witness, when my bubble of fame was at the highest, I stood, unintoxicated, with the inebriating cup in my hand, looking forward, with rueful resolve, to the hastening time when the stroke of envious Calumny, with all the eagerness of vengeful triumph, should dash it to the ground. - 54

Calumny was indeed to dog the poet all his life and long afterwards when his biographers began their unctuous work. But the calumny in general never struck at Burns's poetry, only at his life. To be sure the religious satires caused many a polite blush and raised the wrath of the rigidly righteous, but it was only the few political satires that raised the cry of the censors. And here they were not damning the poetry as such, but only the man who expressed such politically heretical sentiments. In his autobiographical letter to Dr. Moore Burns himself tells that the Kirk was quickly roused by his satires:

The first of my poetic offspring that saw the light was a burlesque lamentation on a quarrel between two revd [sic] Calvinists, both of them dramatis person [sic] in my Holy Fair ["The Twa Herds"). - ... With a certain side of both clergy
and laity [The New Lichts] it met with a roar of applause. - Holy Willie's Prayer next made its appearance, and alarmed the Kirk-Session so much that they held three several meetings to look over their holy artillery, if any of it was pointed against profane Rhymers.

Certainly many of the people deplored the religious satires and held Burns in contempt as irreverent and immoral, as the following from a letter of Mrs. Dunlop in 1788 indicates; but it was really only his reputation as a man that suffered and not his reputation as a poet, for a third edition of the poems was again requested in 1793, this time from Davies in London; and the fastidious George Thomson did not hesitate to request Burns's poetic assistance as the best poet in the country.

I could almost say as you do - 'This is business of the Devil's making,' [That Burns and Mrs. Dunlop would miss meeting each other again] but these reprobate phrases don't suit a lady. As to you, the world call [sic] you one so loudly that I am sometimes ashamed to attempt your defence. A gentleman told me with a grave face the other day that you certainly were a wretch, that your works were immoral and infamous; you lampooned the clergy, and laught at the ridiculous parts of religion, and he was told were a sandalous [sic] free liver in every sense of the word. I said I was certain he must be misinformed, and asked if he knew you. He told me he had been in your company and knew it was the case. 'I beg pardon,' said I, 'I could not have guessed you had ever seen him, or read his book, by the character you give of either.' Another of the company asked me if I knew you. I said I thought so, and would be exceedingly sorry to be convinced I did not. What did I think of your religion? That it was too exalted and sublime to have any ridiculous parts capable of being laughed at. What of that illiberal mind that could fall foul of so respectable a
body of men as the clergy of Scotland? That the Scots Bard was far above it, that no man more regarded the pastors of his people when worthy of their calling, but that those he exposed were wolves in sheep's clothing, the bane of the community, and too black for his ink, low beneath his pen. But I begged to appeal to the lines left in Mr. Laurie's manse as proof positive the clergy were not attacked in a collective body.  

Burns's political satire during his lifetime, however, lost him more face in the eyes of the public than ever did his religious; at least his political utterances forced him to defend himself to the board of Excise. Since people soon forget political affinities after one's death, and since most of his political satires are quite poor in comparison with his religious, it was the latter that caused later generations to blush for Burns. To be sure the biographers for a long time traced Burns's supposed final disgrace to drink and bad politics, but in general he was not a "bad character" in their eyes because of his politics. The reply of the Rev. Mr. Hamilton of East Lothian to Burns's unfortunate verses defaming the House of Hanover may be taken as general public feeling of Burns's political sins:

Thus wretches rail whom sordid gain
Drags in Faction's gilded chain;
But can a mind which Fame inspires,
Where genius lights her brightest fires -
Can BURNS, disdaining truth and law,
Faction's venomed dagger draw;
And, skulking with a villain's aim,
Basely stab his monarch's fame?
Yes, Burns, 'tis o'er, thy race is run
And shades receive thy setting sun:
With pain thy wayward fate I see,
And mourn the lot that's doomed for thee:
These few rash lines will damn thy name,
And blast thy hopes of future fame. 59

It is important to note that this "ingenious" clergyman, while damning Burns for his political sins, admits Burns's genius in his opening lines and by the very fact that he thought Burns powerful and influential enough through his poetic fame to merit an open rebuke testifies to Burns's renown. Fortunately Hamilton predicted the poet's future fame only partially correctly. The poet suffered only as a man; as a poet the great numbers of editions from 1800 on prove this seer of East Lothian false. 60

Happily for the poet during his lifetime, his fame did not rest only on his religious and political satires, which so upset the rigidly righteous. There were such things as the kindness of Kerr, who willingly defrauded the post to frank for Burns because he felt "that to favour him [Burns] could never be defrauding the publick, who were all his debtors." 61 And again letters from people of importance like Alexander Fraser Tytler, Lord Woodhouselee brought praise and reassurance. When Lord Woodhouselee read "Tam o' Shanter" he felt he owed Burns a debt of gratitude and could not resist enclosing a letter to Burns in a packet sent to him from the bookseller, Peter Hill. The gracious lord delivered an opinion on the poem with which all later generations have wholeheartedly agreed.
I have seldom in my life tasted of higher enjoyment from any work of genius than I have received from this composition; and I am much mistaken if this poem alone, had you never written another syllable, would not have been sufficient to have transmitted your name down to posterity with high reputation.

The lord's praise and criticism were highly appreciated by Burns. Lord Woodhouselee analyzes each portion of the poem almost to perfection and even suggests an alteration, the wisdom of which Burns saw and accepted. The introductory part in the tavern Woodhouselee felt was delineated "with a humour and naïveté that would do honour to Matthew Prior," but when the poet comes to the part in which the witches' sabbath is described, the lord was certain that Burns displayed "a power of imagination that Shakespeare himself could not have exceeded." The one objection was the lines

Three lawyers' tongues, turn'd inside out,
Wi' lies seam'd like a beggar's clout:
Three priests' hearts, rotten, black as muck,
Lay stinking, vile, in every neuk.

which followed the lines, "Wi' mair of horrible and aweful," and which Woodhouselee felt were good in themselves, but were misplaced "among the circumstances of pure horror." The poet deleted the lines. The main objection, however, was that the conclusion was not "commensurate to the interest which is excited by the descriptive and characteristic painting of the preceding parts." But Woodhouselee him-
self offered the best excuse: "But for this, perhaps, you have a good apology - you stick to the popular tale."

It is truly unfortunate that Burns did not follow Woodhouselee's parting advice:

You have proved your talent for a species of composition in which but a very few of our own poets have succeeded. Go on - write more tales in the same style - you will eclipse Prior and La Fontaine; for, with equal wit, equal power of numbers and equal naivete of expression, you have a bolder and more vigorous imagination. 67

The correspondence between George Thomson and Burns has been adequately searched for any biographical and critical data that exist there. The famous strictures of Thomson on Burns's songs and the notorious stricture on "Scots Wha Hae" have been adequately presented many times. More recently De Lancey Ferguson has presented to the public for the first time the passages in Burns's letters to Thomson which the latter cancelled in order to preserve his fame as a critic and to obtain the copyright on Burns's poems. 68 The only thing that must be pointed out here is the actual purpose and intent of Thomson's Select Scottish Airs, which adequately reflects the thinking of the literary men of the time as well as it supports our thesis that though the reason for Burns's immediate fame was his supposed primitivism, his well-wishers and critics wanted to wish him into a genteel poet, which his sentimental and neo-classic pieces gave
them full hopes of doing. Thomson's idea of the true song was expressed to Burns in 1792:

One thing only I beg, which is, that however gay and sportive the muse may be, she will always be decent. Let her not write what beauty would blush to speak, nor wound that charming delicacy which forms the most precious dowry of our daughters. I do not conceive the song to be the most proper vehicle for witty and brilliant conceits; but in some of our songs, the writers have confounded simplicity with coarseness and vulgarity; ... The humorous ballad, or pathetic complaint, is best suited to our artless melodies; ....

Thomson was appealing to Burns not as the author of "Holy Willie" or even "The Holy Fair," but as the author of "Death and Dr. Hornbook" and "To Ruin." He was making it perfectly clear that indelicate songs had no place in his book. In 1793 Thomson again writes: "Some bacchanals I would wish to discard. 'Fy, let us a' to the bridal,' for instance, is so coarse and vulgar, that I think it fit only to be sung in a company of drunken colliers; ...."

Burns's reply was characteristic: "What pleases me, as simple and naive, disgusts you as ludicrous and low. You cannot, I think, insert 'Fy, let us a' to the bridal,' to any other words than its own." 

The problem of language was also on Thomson's mind. He dared not downright insult the poet, but he made it as clear as possible that the more English the better:

Although a dash of our native tongue and manners is doubtless peculiarly congenial and appropriate to our melodies, yet I shall be able
to present a considerable number of the very flowers of English song, well adapted to those melodies which, in England at least, will be the means of recommending them to still greater attention than they have procured there. 72

Thomson immediately qualifies his statement, lest Burns feel hurt or back out: "But you will observe my plan is that every air shall in the first place have verses wholly by Scottish poets; and that those of English writers shall follow as additional songs for the choice of the singer." 73

The literary world in which Burns was writing and for whom he was writing, was then a changing and confused world. Obsessed with the English language and English ideas, the literati wanted in Burns an English writer whom they, like Mrs. Dunlop, 74 could show off to the world. Accepting the thesis of primitivism they wanted Burns to be the untutored ploughman; but at the same time that their feelings were in the school of sentiment, precursing romanticism, their intellects were in the school of the diction and measure of Pope, and more particularly of Shenstone and Thomson, who used the diction and measure of the neoclassics, but introduced those sentiments which prophesied the romantic era. Professor Snyder is partially correct when he says that Burns was a forerunner of romanticism by instinct but not by profession. 75 Professor Daiches, however, shrewdly sees the real romanticism of Burns: "Burns is pre-romantic when he follows eighteenth-century poetry most closely; when he works in the Scottish tradi-
When Burns is a neo-classic, he is so in the same sense as Thomson and Shenstone. He uses the neo-classic diction, but his sentiments belong to Rousseau and Mackenzie. In this latter sense he is a pre-romantic as much as Thomson, Shenstone, and Cowper. In his truly Scottish verse, his enduring work, he is however, the last of the Makars. Thus, Burns truly made the best of both worlds in his poetry. But from the literary confusion which marked the gradual change from neo-classicism to romanticism, in addition to the Scottish-English problem, it is clear that Burns could not completely succeed in the eyes of the literati. The contradictions were too much for any one poet to assume and yet be successful.
INTERLUDE

THE BIOGRAPHERS BEGIN

It is not the problem of this work to interpret and correct the biographies of Burns which have appeared since 1796. Only where the biographers become literary critics must they be introduced. It is now a well-known fact that the lives of Burns had been one continuous travesty until the late nineteenth century when conscientious biographers attempted to sift the fact and fiction that had made up the Burns legend. The success of such modern writers as Synder and Ferguson is astounding; but the facts they have found and the fancies they have thrown out must eliminate almost two centuries of vicious legend.

The first real obituary of Burns appeared in a Dumfries paper several days after Burns's death and was written by Maria Riddell. The picture she painted of the poet was sympathetic and without malice - from one who had every reason to be the contrary. Mrs. Riddell emphasizes the conversational abilities of Burns which she feels were even more his forte than poetry. Her only condemnation of his poetry was of his satires, which she says were excessive and personal at times, as she knew from experience.

The obituary in the July, 1796 Scots Magazine praises his warmth, humor, and tenderness and again brings before
the public eye the fact that Burns was a "natural genius": he possessed "a mind guided only by the lights of nature and the inspiration of genius." The ironic humor of this remark is that it was written by one of the men who knew the real truth, George Thomson. Thomson could not resist the temptation to place the poet in a very compromising light when he remarked that Burns's "ordinary endowments, however, were accompanied with frailties which rendered them useless to himself and his family." Through a lie to save face Thomson began the Burns legend of drunkenness and debauchery.

The Gentleman's Magazine bases its whole discussion of the poet's life on his "natural genius" and his lack of education. Burns becomes "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;" but "he had the common education of a Scotch peasant, perhaps something more" and "probably was not qualified to fill a superior situation to that which was assigned him."

The Universal Magazine in the next year took up the same attitude towards Burns - the ignorant debauchee, although the reason for his inability to fill a superior station in life directly contradicts Maria Riddell: "his manners were not such as to secure the permanent friendship of the respectable part of society." The true blast to Burns's character, which formed the
foundation of all future biographers, came from Robert Heron of Heron, who posed as biographer and literary critic of the poet in 1797. But as early as 1799 Dr. Anderson could speak of Heron to Currie, who unfortunately read Heron closer than Anderson: "The Memoir is reckoned an injudicious and extravagant performance, written to display the author's talents in panegyric, inventive, and criticism."¹²

Heron's criticism of the poetry is for the most part bombast, but he took it upon himself to take the first step in correcting the false notions of Burns's lack of education, which does him true credit.¹³ Heron stressed the superior education of the Scottish parish school system, which Burns studied under for several years, as the first stone to be removed from the natural genius structure erected during the poet's life-time.¹⁴ Currie in 1800 was to stress this same point in his essay on the Scottish peasantry, the prime purpose of which was to dispel the notion that the Scottish peasants were an uneducated and ignorant lot.

Heron's acceptance of the Scottish measure and dialect marked the first attempt at a defense and justification of them in Burns's poetry:

They [the poems] were written in a phraseology, of which all the powers were universally felt; and which being at once antique, familiar, and now rarely written, was hence fitted to serve all the dignified and picturesque uses of poetry, without making it unintelligible.¹⁵
Heron gives Burns's poetry four distinct qualities: conscious comprehension of mind, ardor with delicacy of feelings, discernment between right and wrong or truth and falsehood, and a lofty minded consciousness of his own talents and merits. The second and third qualities are typical of the criticism given in his life-time, sentimentality and morality. The third is obvious to anyone who takes time to read "The Vision." But the first is Heron's trump card and the second blow at "natural genius." This quality meant to Heron that Burns could grasp any subject and discuss it intelligently, going straight to the heart of the problem and producing a happy conclusion or picture for the imagination. Heron cites such poems as "The Twa Dogs," the "Address to the Deil," "The Holy Fair," "Hallowe'en," "Cotter's Saturday Night," "To A Haggis," and "To a Louse" as examples of his "fertile invention" and to prove that:

Shoemakers, footmen, threshers, milk-maids, peers, stay-makers, have all written verses, such as deservedly attracted the notice of the world; but in the poetry of these people, while there was commonly some genuine effusion of the sentiments of agitated nature, some exhibition of such imagery as at once impressed itself upon the heart; there was also much to be ever excused in consideration of their ignorance, their want of taste, their extravagance of fancy, their want or abuse of the advantages of a liberal education. BURNS has no pardon to demand for defects of this sort. He might scorn every concession which we are ready to grant to his peculiar circumstances, without being, on this account, reduced to relinquish any part of his claims to the praise of poetical excellence....He demands to be ranked, not
with the WOODHOUSES, the DUCKS, the RAMSEYS, but with the MILTONS, the POPES, the GRAYS. 18

Allowing all due discount to Scottish prejudice, the line of attack remains the same: Burns was not an untutored ploughman and if we put him anywhere, it is not with the natural geniuses and not even with Shenstone and Thomson (although Gray maybe intended to cover this group), but with Milton and the leading neo-classicist, Pope. 19

The anonymous article in the Scots Magazine for January, 1797, however, pretty closely sums up the general feelings about Burns's poetry at the close of the century, 20 since it was Heron alone who struck out in a new course which was only taken up in 1800 by Currie and later by his successors. The best poems, according to this account, are the accepted "Tam" and "The Vision"; 21 the first "is almost an epitome of all his powers; it is such as a great poet only could write." 22 The second, "The Vision" displays true poetic flights, while the standard piece for ecstasy, "The Cotter's Saturday Night," shows the poet's chief virtues, descriptive talent and a feeling for nature, most beautifully. 23 The satires are criticized in carefully chosen words, so that offense is given to no one, but so that the general timidity to approach them is apparent:

The most energetic language and the most powerful ridicule were....employed in exposing what he considered as errors. It is to be regretted
that these should sometimes be directed against subjects of a sacred nature; in ridiculing the abuse of religion, and exposing superstition, fanaticism, and hypocrisy, he is often in danger of ridiculing religion itself, and of speaking too lightly of things the most sacred.
One has now seen two transitions: the late eighteenth century transition from neo-classicism to pre-romanticism, with Augustan and Romantic theories existing more or less side by side and rivaling each other, and now pre-romanticism blossoming into romanticism. The first transition was one of content, i.e., the so-called pre-Romantics (and Burns when he followed the eighteenth century tradition) kept neo-classic form and diction, but the content and emotional attitude changed. The chief Romantics turned more and more to nature as subject matter and at the same time, especially the "Lake School," repudiated neo-classic form and diction.

The period extending from Dr. Currie's edition of Burns in 1800 to Cromek's Reliques of Robert Burns in 1809 represents this second transition in literary taste. Currie timidly attempted to show that Burns was no illiterate ploughman; he further attempted to justify Burns's use of Scottish dialect and measures, although he himself felt them both to be rude and vulgar. But one must keep in mind that the literary scene was changing: in 1800 Wordsworth published the "Preface" to the Lyrical Ballads
and in a sense a new era was dawning in English Literature.

Currie's "Life of Burns" was a distorted and pathological mess. He represented the poet as a man gradually sinking under his own dissipations and finally dying from chronic alcoholism. Nearly all the lives of the poet until 1850 were written under Currie's guidance, except for the brief, but violent reaction extending from 1814 to 1820.

In 1809 the Romantic period was moving towards its zenith and Burns was receiving the expected adulation for having been one of the first poets to return to nature. The great Romantics, if one may use this term, were forced to accept Currie's picture of Burns's life, as they had no facts to the contrary. But while Currie set Burns up as an example and a warning to all drunkards, the Romantics set him up as an example and warning to all geniuses. The difference is important, for the Romantics admired Burns's poems, for many reasons, not all of which are justified, and by emphasizing his genius, blossoming amidst the miserable conditions and surroundings in which he lived, they were able to idealize, to romanticize (using the popular meaning of the word) and idolize him. They accepted his dissipations and lamented them; their laments were short, however, for they preferred to look towards the nearest mountaintop and bid the world lift its eyes to see the Ayrshire Bard following his plough and chanting "Cotter's
Saturday Nights" and "Visions."

This Romantic period saw the final acceptance of the dialect and the Scottish measures; the first appreciation of Burns's work on Scottish song; the discovery of "The Jolly Beggars," and the timid, though ambiguous, recognition that Burns was no prodigy, no ignorant, untutored ploughman, divinely inspired. Burns's satires, however, once causes for blushing and cloak-room reading, were deplored in the most uncompromising and grandiloquent terms. If one might be permitted to limit the history of Burns's criticism to one problem, it would be the gradual acceptance of Burns's satires as great literature.

While the Romantics lamented Burns's life as presented by Currie, the Rev. William Peebles was preparing a vicious attack on both Burns and his writings. When his Burnomania appeared in 1811 it was the spark that ignited a brave, but in the main unsuccessful, attempt to vindicate Burns's life and works, even the most abhorred of the satires. But that is the story of another chapter.
II
THE TRANSITION PERIOD - Dr. Currie

Even if one duly discounts the exuberance and hyperbole of Maria Riddell's letters to Dr. Currie, one can see that the polite world was anxiously awaiting the publication of Burns's life and works by the teetotalling doctor from Liverpool. In June, 1798, Mrs. Riddell writes Currie that "one-half the world is annoying me with incessant enquiries when Burns's volume is to appear" and in January of the next year, still having no definite word from Currie, Mrs. Riddell again prods him: "One of the subscribers has this instant left me...who enquired anxiously after them of me: the Marquess of Abercorn, he is an enthusiast about Burns." The doctor, however, had a great deal of work to do on his volumes: a scissors and paste job that perhaps the literary world has never seen before or since. But the world of letters was growing impatient so that in August of the same year (1799) Maria was forced to write a letter expressing her pique and exasperation: "Believe me, I have reined in my impatience as long as I possibly could, but enquiries pour in upon me from all quarters which I am unable to satisfy. So favor me with one line, one single line, telling me in what state of forwardness this work of yours is." When Currie's edition finally appeared in the summer
of 1800 its reception was close to phenomenal, and by November a second edition was nearly completed by Cadell and Davies. In July Maria Riddell wrote a long letter criticizing the work fairly closely, but more in the spirit of panegyric than criticism. How many Burns manuscripts have been lost because of Currie, one will probably never know for certain, since Currie's fastidiousness even bothered Maria Riddell, who was all for keeping things injurious to Burns's fame (at least what she and polite society thought would be injurious) from the public eye: "Some omissions of the Editor's that I recognize in various places are, I doubt not, justifiable on the score of severe propriety, but I think they rather dephlogisticate the Poet notwithstanding." One of the mysteries to the Burns's biographers of the present day, all of whom attempt to eradicate the Burns legend, is Maria's appreciation of Currie's biography. It is noticeable that none of the recent biographers who had access to these letters of Maria Riddell mention the glowing tribute to Currie's veracity in depicting Burns's life:

You have retraced my poor, lost friend so naturally, and in a point of view so thoroughly ressemblant, that I felt a tear glide down my cheek at several passages where you only intended to be a faithful narrator, and probably never dreampt of writing pathetically.

In September of 1800 Mrs. Riddell concludes a letter to Currie which amply shows how well received his work was:
Before I conclude, I must tell you that no book, that has been discussed in my hearing at least, for a long while has been so generally admired and approved as this of yours. Some persons are pleased with one part, and some with another—but as a whole it takes singularly, and I find people very clamorous and as impatient about a second edition as they were for the first...

Dr. Anderson, who had been corresponding with Currie, like Maria Riddell, from almost the first moment of the inception of the work, was just as enthusiastic as Maria Riddell when the book was published, telling Currie that all received the volumes with great fervor and that the country owed him a debt of gratitude. In July, 1800, Coleridge wrote to Thomas Poole: "I would have you by all means order the late Edition in four Volumes of Burns's Works—the Life is written by Currie, and a masterly specimen of philosophical Biography it is." Coleridge must have been abashed when in August Lamb wrote to him:

Have you seen the new edition of Burns? his post-humous works and letters? I have only been able to procure the first volume, which contains his life—very confusedly and badly written, and interspersed with dull pathological and medical discussions. It is written by a Dr. Currie. Do you know the well-meaning doctor? Alas, ne suitor ultra crepidam!

Currie had a very heavy cross indeed to bear when he undertook the editing of Burns's works and the writing of the poet's life. The cross was made all the heavier by the fact that Currie greatly admired and loved Burns, but despised the peasant class. While he could not eradi-
cate Burns's pedigree, he could at least attempt to show that Burns was not an ignorant peasant, and in this he performed a creditable service to the poet. The confusion in the doctor's mind, however, is apparent in his discussion of the cultivation of taste in the peasant class: "...to the thousands who share the original condition of Burns, and who are doomed to pass their lives in the station in which they were born, delicacy of taste, were it even of easy attainment, would, if not a positive evil, be at least a doubtful blessing." The problem with Burns, according to Currie, is that after he rose from the condition of a peasant, he didn't have a delicacy of taste equal to his sensibilities of passion. The apparent contradiction here is due to Currie's assumption that Burns's rise from the peasant class should never have happened; it was a freak of nature. This is evident from what Currie next says. He feels that the peasants would do better to study penmanship than Shakespeare because "it is of more consequence they should be made happy in their original condition, than furnished with the means, or with the desire, of rising above it."

Currie liked and enjoyed Burns's poetry, but despised the class from which Burns rose; since, however, Burns was a peasant he felt obliged to vindicate in some manner the peasant class, in order to justify his appreciation of Burns. He therefore writes a long prefatory discussion
of the history and worth of the Scottish parish school system, doubtlessly, like Heron, magnifying its worth and effectiveness. Since this is the first thing the reader opens to in approaching the Currie edition, if he reads it he must be favorably impressed, and conclude that Burns, though a peasant, had received a very fine rudimentary education.

But Currie's chief service to Burns as a poet was in his discussion of Scottish poetry and the poetry of Burns. Critics and biographers of the late nineteenth and the twentieth centuries have pilloried Currie for his life of Burns and merely commented superciliously on his superficial discussion of Scottish poetry. No one can deny that the discussion is superficial; no one can even deny that Currie disliked Scottish folk and traditional poetry; but the fact remains, and has been completely overlooked, that Currie denied Burns's claim to primitivism, took him out of the late eighteenth century neo-classic and sentimental tradition, and what is more important attempted to establish Burns as a direct descendant of the Scottish national (inner-directed) tradition. Currie himself preferred the sentimental and neo-classic, but he recognized Burns's role in Scottish literature, when apparently no one else did.

Currie tells his readers that it is difficult to approach Burns since he uses peasant life as his subjects;
frequently uses incorrect rhymes; and writes in measures which have "little of the pomp or harmony of modern versification, and is indeed to an English ear, strange and uncouth." The greater part of his early poems are written in this dialect which "though it still adheres more or less to the speech of every Scotchman, all the polite and ambitious are now endeavouring to banish [it] from their tongues as well as their writings." Since all of this is true, Currie feels it necessary to give a history of Scottish verse, showing the break in the old Scottish tradition, when under the union of the crowns, poets began writing in English, starting a new tradition, which never completely superseded the old, but was rather grafted on to it. The immediate reasons for giving this history Currie sums up when he says:

With the English classics he became well acquainted in the course of his life and the effects of this acquaintance are observable in his later productions; but the character and style of his poetry were formed very early, and the model which he followed, in so far as he can be said to have had one, is to be sought for in the works of the poets who have written in the Scottish dialect - in the works of such of them more especially, as are familiar to the peasantry of Scotland.

Thus Currie has seen what others, if they saw, refused to acknowledge: Burns was not an ignorant ploughman writing by divine or natural inspiration, but rather a conscious literary writer, working in the ancient and most noble of Scottish literary traditions.
Currie's selection and discussion of Burns's poems, however, displays the typical sentimental and moral attitude in general. "To A Mouse" he thinks has admirable description while "the moral reflections [are] beautiful, ... arising directly out of the occasion; and in the conclusion there is a deep melancholy, a sentiment of doubt and dread, that arises to the sublime." The difficulty with Currie and his contemporaries is that none of them differentiated between the true sentiment and pathos and the affected and forced. At the same time, for example, that Currie can rhapsodize over "To A Mouse," "The Auld Farmer's Salutation," and "The Death and dying Words of poor Maillie," he can feel that the so-called "depression poems" ("The Lament," "Ode To Ruin," "A Dirge," "Winter," "Man Was Made To Mourn," and "The Winter Night") are filled with exquisite beauty, passion, and pathos.

Currie's discussion of Burns's humor is limited to "The Twa Dogs," which he justly appreciates, "The Address to the Deil," of which he says that "Humour and tenderness are.... so happily intermixed, that it is impossible to say which preponderates," and "Hallowe'en," one of the few satirical poems which he feels is free from every objection of the personal satire, which appears in such poems as is in "The Holy Fair." Currie, along with polite society, was not disposed to laugh heartily at Burns's satires, although he recognized their worth.
Unfortunately the correctness of his taste did not always correspond with the strength of his genius; and hence some of the most exquisite of his comic productions are rendered unfit for the light. (Notably, "Holy Willie's Prayer," "Rob the Rhymer's Welcome to his bastard child," "Epistle to J. Gowdie," and "The Holy Tulzie" or "The Twa Herds." 25

Although Currie admired "The Cotter's Saturday Night" no less than his contemporaries, — indeed his praise is grandiloquent, — he treats it in a manner that must be especially noted. For "The Cotter" and "The Brigs of Ayr" Currie uses a comparative method in his discussion. For the first time in print a critic has actually compared and discussed "The Cotter" in relation to Fergusson's "Farmer's Ingle" 26 and "The Brigs" to his "Plainstanes and Causeway." 27 Currie has thus consciously attempted to show in some definite manner the connection between Burns and other writers of the national tradition, which, at the beginning of his essay, he had said existed. Certainly others in their reviews, as has been already seen, mentioned Burns in relation to Ramsay and Fergusson, but for the first time the connection is taken seriously. Early reviewers and the literati were not anxious to see any relationship between Burns and the ancient Scottish tradition. Indeed what little of it they saw, they tried to remove immediately, trying to push Burns into the neoclassic, sentimental tradition which they represented.

Currie's appreciation of Burns's songs is a great
deal better than his choice of examples. He correctly notes that Burns always associates a place with a person in either his rural or amatory songs, (this fact has never been clearly and thoroughly analyzed) and that in his amatory and patriotic songs is never merely describing or observing a passion, but always experiencing it. He then notes the peculiar dramatic structure of Burns's songs, "which prevails so much in the Scottish songs, while it contributes greatly to the interest they excite, also shews that they have originated among a people in the earlier stages of society." Currie then adds a note to his assertion to substantiate it, for it is important to his conclusion: "Where this form of composition appears in songs of a modern date, it indicates that they have been written after the ancient model." Currie is again forging his thesis: even in songs Burns had a model -- ancient Scottish songs of the national tradition. Currie confirms his defense of the Scottish tradition and dialect by pointing out that the famous "Tam o' Shanter" is exquisite simply because Burns can move from the scenes of lowest humor to "situations of the most awful and terrible kind." And the reason that Burns can do this is that "He is a musician that runs from the lowest to the highest of his keys; and the use of the Scottish dialect enables him to add two additional notes to the bottom of the scale."
Currie's acceptance of the debauched and drunkard Burns and his insinuation that there were even worse matters that he refrained from mentioning stamped the legend with the mark of authority and was the bane of pious and orthodox editors and critics from 1800 to the twentieth century. How could one explain the "Saturday Night" in the light of a debauched and irreligious poet? The only answer was to blush, roll the eyes to heaven, and remind readers that his genius in poetry, especially in poems with a good moral to point, like "The Cotter," more than compensates for his impiety. It is not, however, a part of this paper to trace the Burns legend and therefore only brief indications will be pointed out in the notes.

The British Critic, true to its promise to Maria Riddell, gave Currie an excellent review, opening with a sentence that, though pompous and bombastic, pretty well summarizes the feelings towards Currie's edition of Burns:

It is indeed a composition, of which the merit is so great, that it must have extorted praise, even if the motive had been bad; and of which the intention is so excellent (to relieve the widow), that it must have commanded respect, even if the execution had been imperfect.

It is interesting to note that the reviewer allows himself a two-page preamble in which to make the old point that many ploughmen and milkmaids have appeared on the scene lately with poetic aspirations, but only Burns had real
poetic genius. In spite of Currie's two essays, which the reviewer had read, and indeed quotes at length, he is not disposed to give up so readily the idea that Burns was an inspired genius. But in reality, though Currie's total work destroys the thesis, he still left the back door open when he considered Burns a sort of freak of nature, a peasant who rose against all odds. It must be also admitted that although Currie recognized and explained Burns's education and intelligence, he was still wont to speak of Burns as a genius, thus confusing the issue, for one is never sure whether he meant to imply "natural genius," which his own thesis denies, or genius with the addition of education. In either case the doctor left the door open for a continuation of the old belief while at the same time he salved his conscience in admiring Burns though he was a peasant.

Currie completely repudiated the theory advanced by the early obituaries that Burns did not have the intelligence to be placed in a higher station in life. The awkward fact that Burns did not achieve a higher position, however, remained. The answer to this problem was ingenious (and supplied unwittingly by Currie himself); "...if he had been placed in any more elaborate station, his indiscretion would have rendered his misfortunes more conspicuous, and his fall more striking." Even if the reviewer had not completely rid himself of the untutored
poet notion, the facts brought forward by Currie about
Burns's probable and his known formal education and his
prodigious reading, commended warmly by the reviewer,
militated against assigning ignorance as the reason for
Burns's lack of promotion in the world.

The polite world, and especially the English world,
were not completely convinced by Currie's defense of
Scottish dialect and measures. In his praise of "Lament
of Mary, Queen of Scots," the critic sees no reason for
retaining the Scotch words, since they are merely English
words spelled in Scot. The truth of this assertion
cannot be denied, but the intent is more important, for
the critic assumes that for serious poetry it is then
obvious that English is the more suitable language. It
follows then that Scotch should be used only in the more
humorous pieces and when the dialect can boast expressions
"more significant, more tender, or more elegant than the
English (which happens sometimes, though less frequently
than provincial partiality may suppose)."

The critic's choice of poems for commentary and high
excellence, though dictated to a great extent by politics,
shows well enough those poems of Burns in great favor in
England. Basing his argument on the idea that the ode's
noblest excellence is passion, the critic cites "Bannock-
burn" as one in no way inferior to anything since "Alexan-
der's Feast." The critic is indignant at Burns's French
sympathies, especially when he considers that the French, and not Bruce inspired "Bannockburn," but all is forgiven for "Does haughty Gaul" and the "almost sublime war-song," "Farewell thou fair day." 45

By 1802, however, one would guess that Currie was completely forgotten. Literary theories are not abandoned overnight. The Scots Magazine with great casualness sets forth a study of Burns that almost completely reverts to the primitivistic idea of the Edinburgh literati: "His works exhibit the sudden glowlngs of fancy, but nothing of the painful touches of art." 46 This assumption is based on the notion that "The Cotter's Saturday Night," "The Vision," and "To a Daisy" are "among his masterpieces" and they were written early, before he had the advantages of Edinburgh and the literati. His later pieces, however, are better versified and less inspired says the critic. His argument then is that versification, as he contends, is the result of art or practice, and as Burns increased in art he decreased in inspiration. Hence natural genius produces great poetry; art does not. 47 This is a striking commentary on literary taste, and if not a momentary reversion to the primitivistic ideal, at least a clear expression of the primitivistic doctrine. 48
I have read (the poems of Burns) twice; and, though they be written in a language that is new to me, and many of them on subjects much inferior to the author's ability, I think them, on the whole, a very extraordinary production. He is, I believe, the only poet these kingdoms have produced in the lower ranks of life since Shakspeare, I should rather say since Prior, who need not be indebted for any part of his praise to a charitable consideration of his origin, and the disadvantages under which he has laboured. It will be a pity if he should not hereafter divest himself of Barbarism, and content himself with writing pure English, in which he appears perfectly qualified to excel. He who can command admiration, dishonours himself if he aims no higher than to raise a laugh.

In this manner did Cowper speak of Burns shortly before the latter's death. Cowper anticipated the best of the Romantic critics by some few years in his insistence on considering Burns as a poet and not as a plowman. Indeed Cowper made a very necessary distinction, the distinction between the poetry and the poet, which was not made by the Edinburgh literati and the so-called pre-Romantics, and which was to confuse Lord Jeffrey in spite of his good intentions. The real problem of Burns criticism is now coming into the light: Was Burns's poetry deserving of attention as poetry; was his poetry, in other words, intrinsically valuable and worth reading and commenting on; or was the poetry really rather poor, but the best that
any peasant had produced so far? The whole problem is based, of course, on the assumption that humble birth in general precludes lack of education; or more simply, the corollary of humble birth is ignorance. By associating Burns with Shakespeare and Prior, Cowper is pointing out clearly that to impute ignorance and lack of education to the humbler classes in general is a grave error. By implication, of course, Cowper is denying that formal education and living in fashionable literary society are the prerequisites for writing good poetry. On the other hand, he is also challenging the whole theory of spontaneous poetry, for the intimation in his statement is that though Burns was not a formally educated man, he was certainly not a happy primitivist à la Rousseau. Cowper, on the other hand, is a staunch Englishman when it comes to the language; in another passage he despairs of any Englishmen ever truly appreciating Burns as he does because Burns's "uncouth dialect" will drive him away.

The romantic attitude towards Burns took almost as many shapes as there were romantics; in general however two camps formed: the one idolizing his poetry and lamenting his dissipation; the other appreciatively criticizing his poetry by set standards and damning his dissipation. But one thing is common to both camps: whatever was said was said with the greatest extravagance and flourish of language possible. Thus in 1796 Lamb, representing the
first camp, writes to Coleridge: "Burns was the god of my idolotry, as Bowles is yours. I am jealous of your fraternizing with Bowles, when I think you relish him more than Burns...."52

The greatest Burns event of the early Romantic period was Cromek's publication, in 1808, of the Reliques of Robert Burns. Whatever value it has now to Burns biographers and historians, to the early nineteenth century Cromek's volume was merely the occasion for the new critics to express their views on Burns. Almost unanimously they thanked Cromek for his "gleanings" but felt that there was not really very much to glean. Their greatest thanks to him, and some even said so,53 was that he afforded them an opportunity to criticize Burns's life and writings.

If the sentimentalists created the Burns of primitivism, it was no difficult task for the Romantics to transform this primitivism of "natural genius" into a weird mythical god, which is precisely the approach taken by the Eclectic reviewer, James Montgomery. Montgomery, one-time editor of the "Sheffield Iris," noted supporter of the abolition of the slave trade (published his poem, "The West Indies" in 1809), and now active contributor to the new Eclectic Review, would not find it difficult to deify the genius of a "brother poet," especially one who had sprung from the common people and who sang of the
man who's a man for "a' that":

If ever there were an example, of paramount genius, - like the first-created Lion, bursting from the earth,

.............pawing to get free
His hinder parts,.............
then rampant, and bounding abroad, and shaking 'his brinded mane' in all the joy of newfound life, - calculated to quicken souls as sordid as the clod, and make them start from the furrow into poets, the story of Burns affords that inspiring example: and if ever there were a warning, of the degradation and destruction of powers of the highest order, calculated to scare the boldest, and even the vainest adventurer in the fields of poesy, the story of Burns too presents that terrific warning, that "flaming sword turning every way;" to forbid entrance into the Paradise, wherein he flourished, and fell.54

Such flourish and rhetoric almost make degradation enviable; but if we part the rhetoric from the meaning, we can see a new view of Burns being born: the transformation of "natural genius" to a god-like awesome genius, enveloped in enchantment, moral reflections and warnings.

Currie's emphasis on Burns's dissipation was intended to discourage drinking, and as such had a moral purpose. The Romantic camp of idolaters retained the moral purpose, but removed the harshness of Currie; they idealized Burns so that he became a Samson in his agony, rather than an uncouth ploughman in his cups. One may object that the purpose is the same, an example and a warning. True, one can answer, but the man is not the same. It is no longer Burns the plowman in all his rustic simplicity and uncouth-
ness. Burns no longer plows plain black earth; the earth is sprinkled with stardust. He no longer stoops over his plow; he walks in majesty through the clouds. He is no longer Currie's drunkard stumbling home from the tavern; he is Oedipus blinded and stumbling to find forgiveness. He is Wordsworth's idealization "Of him who walked in glory and in joy/Following his plough, along the mountain-side."55

To support this romanticized view of Burns the critics called in religion, making Burns as orthodox as his contemporaries made him unorthodox. The problem of Burns's satires, for all practical purposes supporting his own assertion that he lost his "ideot piety," is dismissed by saying that Burns lost some of the childhood piety that made him happy as a boy, but retained enough to make him wretched with remorse the rest of his days.56 "One who had always been a total stranger to the dying love of the Redeemer could never have penned the following lines, humble yet exquisite as they are."57 ("Perhaps the Christian Volume," etc. from "Cotter"). The dilemma offered the reader if he does not accept the romantic theory as supported by these lines is delightful: whoever does not feel his heart burn within him during a reading of the passage quoted lacks either taste or grace: let him determine which.58 Thus, the poet's great sexual love and passion, concludes the reviewer, stem from an antecedant
sublimity and grandeur: Sacred Scripture

One can see now the subtle distinction between the romantic view of "natural" or primitivistic genius and the sentimental view. The latter stresses divine or natural inspiration in an uneducated rustic; the former accepts the divine inspiration but rejects the uneducated rustic. Or one can view the problem and its development from a different angle. According to the primitivists, using Rousseau, or what they thought was Rousseau, as their chief expositor of doctrine, the man of nature, unaffected by the disease of civilization is the true man; the closest one could come to this, if one did not have a few Africans or Indians about, was the uneducated rustic: he would lack the effects of civilization most and his education would be just what he had learned from nature. Now the logical, though rarely, if ever, admitted, assumption behind the argument is that if one could do away with society and civilization one would attain the true nature of man which would be a state of complete happiness and bliss. The Romantics then, ignoring the crudeness and uncouthness that must necessarily accompany such a rustic, and somehow believing that education would come intuitively, glorify the happiness of such an existence and idealize the rusticity in the same manner that pastoral poetry does. They have simply carried the formal logic of the Rousseauian argument to its ultimate conclusion.
Hence, the romantic critic can truly write the following lines, and yet not mean the same thing by them that the primitivists would, that is, both talk about natural genius and inspiration; the primitivists, however, see a peasant; the romanticists see a demi-god.

Burns wrote not so much from memory as from perception; not after slow deliberation, but from instantaneous impulse; the fire that burns through his compositions was not elaborated spark by spark, from mechanical friction, in the closet; no, it was in the open field, under the cope of heaven; this poetical Franklin caught his lightnings from the cloud while it passed over his head, and he communicated them, too, by a touch, with electrical swiftness and effect.61

On the matter of Scottish dialect and Scottish measures, the Eclectic reviewer represents the turning of the tide following Currie. While he admits that the dialect and the measures are vulgar to the "suthron" ear, he goes far out of his way to defend and explain Burns's use of the dialect, and far surpasses Currie in understanding and analysis.62 The reviewer insists that Burns's best poems are a combination of the triple make-up of the Scottish tongue: the natural or pure Scots (of which little is left), vulgar (in the sense of common people) idioms, and pure English.63 The dialect that results from the combination of these strains gives Burns three advantages: the measure of the verse can be computed quantitatively as well as by the number of syllables; a great latitude in the use of rhyme, jingling, or only
alliterative vowel-sounds in dissonant words (which the English ear can't appreciate) is allowed; and it gives "exquisite quaintness to humourous, and a simple grace to ordinary, forms of speech; while it renders sublime and terrific imagery yet more striking and dreadful." This is the first time that an English reviewer attempts to understand and appreciate Burns's dialect and measures. Lord Jeffrey notwithstanding, the pendulum has swung the full arc with the Romantics.

If the Romantics idealized the ploughman and his genius and appreciated his Scots, they abhorred his satires and used stronger denunciations than even the respectable literati. The Eclectic reviewer, obviously in all other matters a Burns idolater, cannot wash his hands enough times of the satires:

His ordinary and his satirical productions, though the worst are stamped with originality and boldness of conception, are so debased and defiled with ribaldry and profaneness, that they cannot be perused without shuddering, by anyone whose mind is not utterly perverted and polluted. There is a blasphemous boldness in some of his effusions of spleen and malignity against graver persons than himself, which deserves unqualified reprobation; he stabs at the very heart of religion through the sides of hypocrisy; yet the enmity itself which he manifests against her in his frantic moods, proves the power which she held over his mind, even when he was blindfolding, and buffeting, and spitting on her. As in the praise, so in the denunciations, no amount of rhetoric is spared; but one must notice that even in the
midst of reprobation the main thesis of the reviewer shines through, when he uses that subtle argument that silences many a schoolman: "Methinks thou dost protest too much." 66

If the Eclectic Review represented the camp of Burns idolaters the Edinburgh Review, strangely enough, represented the critical camp of the harshest kind. Regrettably the scathing denunciation of Burns's supposed dissipation is all that Burns admirers remember of Lord Jeffrey's review. 67 This is unfortunate because Jeffrey is the only reviewer who really tries to view the whole Burns problem critically. He stands at the crossroads truly perplexed: he is not so romantic as to idealize Burns, nor is he so sentimental as to believe that Burns was an ignorant ploughman divinely inspired. But the problem still remains: Burns was a ploughman, though far from untutored. Jeffrey's problem is the same as Currie's: aristocratic prejudice; only Jeffrey does not evade the issue: he simply does not recognize it. Therefore he becomes confused and necessarily blatantly contradictory, for while he calls all readers to forget Burns as a prodigy divinely inspired, he is forced to see that Burns was a farmer, and since farmers are ignorant and untutored, just how does one explain the emergence of a true poet from that class, unless one admits he was inspired. Jeffrey opens his essay courageously enough: "...[we] are convinced
that he [Burns] will never be rightly estimated as a poet, till that vulgar wonder [that Burns is a prodigy] be entirely repressed which was raised at his having been a ploughman." Thus he begins and launches into an admirable defense of Burns's education:

But he was not himself either uneducated or illiterate and was placed perhaps in a situation more favourable to the development of great poetical talents, than any other which could have been assigned him. ... Before he had ever composed a single stanza, he was not only familiar with many prose writers, but far more intimately acquainted with Pope, Shakespeare, and Thomson than nine-tenths of the youths that leave school for the university.

With all this eloquent defense the problem of Burns's origin and lack of formal education haunted him into contradictions and harshness, even in the midst of the apology:

... we can see no propriety in regarding the poetry of Burns chiefly as the wonderful work of a peasant, and thus admiring it much the same way as if it had been written with his toes; yet there are peculiarities in his works which remind us of the lowness of his origin, and faults for which the defects of his education afford an obvious cause, if not a legitimate apology. In forming a correct estimate of these works, it is necessary to take into account those peculiarities. (Which are undisciplined harshness and acrimony of invective; lack of gallantry in the love poems; and contempt for prudence, decency, and regularity - his cardinal sin.)

Jeffrey's vicious attack on Burns's contempt for prudence, decency, and regularity, his apparent belief in the "dispensing power of genius," and his constant
parade of his independence (all signs of the poet's vulgarity and rusticity) echoed through the years by Jeffrey sympathizers and non-sympathizers alike, and are not under discussion here. The other two "peculiarities" are, however, and will be considered in reverse order. Burns, Jeffrey says

has written with more passion, perhaps, and more variety of natural feeling, on the subject of love, than any other poet whatsoever, - but with a fervour that is sometimes indelicate, and seldom accommodated to the timidity and 'sweet austere composure' of women of refinement.

Burns has no gallantry with women. He constantly writes the

feelings of an enamoured peasant, who, however refined or eloquent he may be, always approaches his mistress on a footing of equality; but has never caught that tone of chivalrous gallantry which uniformly abases itself in the presence of the object of devotion.

Thus Burns's forte for the elegant Jeffrey was "in humour and in pathos - or rather in tenderness of feeling." He rarely succeeded where "mere wit and sprightliness, or where great energy and weight of sentiment were requisite."

Jeffrey's choice of poems then will rest on this consideration of gentle humor and tenderness. "The Cotter," "To A Mouse," and "To a Daisy" are emphasized as exhibiting tender and delicate feelings. The songs it will be noticed are the least amatory: "I look to the West," "Drumossie Moor," "And ay she wrought her Mammie's Work,"
"O stay, sweet warbling woodlark, stay,\" "Ye flowery banks o' bonnie Doon,\" and "The Merry ploughboy cheers his team." In each of these selections, humor, sadness, or melancholy are the dominant feelings expressed and fit Jeffrey's tastes: "The sensibility which is thus associated with simple imagery and gentle melancholy, is to us the most winning and attractive." It is interesting to note that for Jeffrey the fragment, "A Vision," has great "power of description; and the vigour of the whole composition," if Burns had written nothing else, "would have entitled him to the remembrance of posterity." Jeffrey's patriotism forces him to admit that "The finest piece, of the strong and nervous sort,\dots is undoubtedly the address of Robert Bruce to his army at Bannockburn.\dots" Burns's humorous pieces do not include many of the satires in Jeffrey's estimation. "Tam" of course, is completely acceptable, but "Scotch Drink," "Holy Fair," "Hallowe'en" and several of the songs have "traits of infinite merit." The satire is much too harsh and lacks polish and wit, especially the epigrams, which "seem to have been written, not out of playful malice or virtuous indignation, but out of fierce and ungovernable anger." The more general satires have much humor and vivacity, but unfortunately, for Jeffrey at least, lack the most important thing: gentlemanly polish. Jeffrey's criticism is certainly based on snobbery, but it is interesting
to note that this snobbery did not extend to the Scottish poems or the measures, one of the first places one would expect it. On the contrary, Jeffrey disagrees with Currie on the rudeness of Burns's versification and insists that Burns is at his best in the Scottish dialect and measures. Strangely enough Jeffrey does not consider it a "provincial" dialect. Jeffrey's conclusion is almost prophetic in its veracity and shows that if he could not descend to shake the hand of the peasant-poet, he at least understood, though he could not explain, his genius: "...his poetry is far superior to his prose;...his Scottish compositions are greatly to be preferred to his English ones; and... his Songs will probably outlive all his other productions."

Perhaps the most famous literary man of the period (at least from our modern point of view) who reviewed Cromek and expressed his thoughts on Burns, was Sir Walter Scott. If Scott's review was marred by what Snyder, perhaps more indignantly than correctly, called his "inveterate Toryism," the credit goes to Scott alone for bringing the magnificent "Jolly Beggars" to the public notice. If Scott could not forget Burns's politics, he at least graciously excused them. Burns's too open sympathy for the House of Stuart Scott readily attributes to Burns's own statement that it was more sentiment and "Vive la bagatelle." And as for Burns's Jacobinism, it is roundly damned; but even Scott is generous enough to
say that his superiors in the Excise should have attempted to soothe Burns and not irritate him for the simple reason that this "partisan was Burns!" One always hesitates to speak of Scott and romanticism in the same breath because of the many qualifications that should and must be stated. But since the term is being used in its most general literary sense, these qualifications will be ignored in the discussion, with the understanding that Scott's romanticism must always be balanced in the reader's mind by his realism. Scott's attitude towards Burns's supposed dissipation is the general attitude of the romantics as expressed by the Eclectic reviewer, not Lord Jeffrey. Scott too feels that Burns was the "child of impulse and feeling," but no matter how far he was carried by the torrent of his passions, he never "lost sight of the beacon which ought to have guided him to land, yet never profited by its light." Scott is also appealing to religion; the sight of a Burns beating his breast with remorse and crying the bitter tears of sorrow is a much better picture to dwell upon, especially if one wants to idealize, than the drunken Burns stumbling home after a night with the Fenelbies. Both pictures are to a certain extent true and can be justified by the poet's writings; but the exaggeration of one over the other makes either a caricature. It is the caricature of the first which was the justification of the Romantic idealization.
Scott was no friend to Burns's satire and indeed regrets those satirical sallies of the poet which were hastily written for some particular person or event and condones Currie's rejection of them. There is one, however, which Scott feels should have been included by Currie and would have been Cromek's greatest achievement had he included it in his *Reliques*: "The Jolly Beggars." This cantata is according to Scott "for humorous description and nice discrimination of character....inferior to no poem of the same length in the whole range of English poetry." Indeed "It is certainly far superior to anything in the Beggar's Opera, where alone we could expect to find its parallel." What is particularly ironic about Scott's choice of this poem, is that of all Burns's satires this is certainly the most socially chaotic, for most of his more brilliant satires were levelled at the Kirk; this poem undermines society itself. Scott noticed part of the problem himself, however, and sought to justify it:

Something, however, must be allowed to the nature of the subject, and something to the education of the poet; and if from veneration to the names of Swift and Dryden, we tolerate the grossness of the one, and the indelicacy of the other, the respect due to that of Burns may surely claim indulgence for a few light strokes of broad humour.

Scott is apologizing for the few doxies and the sexual suggestions in the cantata; he does not, however, seem
to catch the social revolution inherent in the poem as a whole. This limited view of satire becomes quite apparent when one considers Scott's attitude to "Holy Willie": it is "...a piece of satire more exquisitely severe than any which Burns afterwards wrote, but unfortunately cast in a form too daringly profane to be received into Dr. Currie's Collection." Obviously Scott is thinking only of the religious and sexual elements of Burns's satire, and since that is at a minimum in "The Jolly Beggars," he misses the theme of the poem as expressed in capsule form in the conclusion:

A fig for those by law protected!
Liberty's a glorious feast,
Courts for cowards were erected,
Churches built to please the priest.

If Scott could not understand why Burns spent so much time collecting and writing songs, instead of undertaking some great work, like a drama, he did appreciate and laud Burns's industry in salvaging nearly all the best songs of Scotland and was the first to correctly analyze Burns's work on the songs. Scott, no laggard in song collecting and retouching himself, knew that many of the ancient songs had lost much of their original flavor, and indeed words and phrases, through the passage of time and through the obvious changes that accompany oral tradition. Thus Scott saw that "few (songs), whether serious or humorous, passed through his hands without receiving some of those
magic touches, which, without greatly altering the song, restored its original spirit, or gave it more than it previously possessed. Scott completely understood the work of the poet:

So dexterously are those touches combined with the ancient structure, that the rifacimento, in many instances, could scarcely have been detected, without the avowal of the bard himself. Neither would it be easy to mark his share in the individual ditties. Some he appears to have entirely re-written; to others he added supplementary stanzas; in some he retained only the leading lines and the chorus; and others he merely arranged and ornamented.

If, however, Scott understood Burns's enthusiasm and genius in song collecting and song-writing, he still felt that Burns wasted too much time in this field, when there were so many other things his genius was fitted for, like Burns's proposed drama on Bruce, which Scott felt would have failed on the stage, because of Burns's "lack of chivalry," but the mixture of the humble, the horrible, and the humorous would have entirely made up for its stage failure, excelling probably "Tam" and "Dr. Hornbook."

Like Jeffrey, Scott did not see much in the songs collected by Cromek except the stanza he lauded so highly (which is probably one of the main reasons that the public noticed it and took it to their hearts, never to relinquish it): "The following exquisitely affecting stanza contains the essence of a thousand love tales:"

Had we never loved sae kindly,
Had we never loved sae blindly,
Never met or never parted,
We had ne'er been broken-hearted.  \[105\]

While Scott does not discuss the dialect of Burns, he makes a remark that clearly reveals that neo-classicism had not yet lost its hold on the literary tastes of the new Romanticism and that the public had not yet succumbed to Wordsworth's "Preface."

There are a few attempts at English verse, in which, as usual, Burns falls beneath himself. This is the more remarkable, as the sublimer passages of his 'Saturday Night,' 'Vision,' and other poems of celebrity, always swell into the language of classic English poetry. \[106\]

Unaware of the contradiction implied in his own remark, Scott can still marvel that Burns was a poor poet when writing in classic English. Later generations, however, have rejected those "sublimer passages" for which Burns was once celebrated and have agreed that in his attempts at English verse he "falls beneath himself." \[107\]

Nearly all the great romantic poets have expressed their opinions of Burns; but none entered the lists so openly and daringly as Wordsworth, first with poems and then with his famous, or infamous, letter to Gray, which will be considered in another context. Wordsworth admired Burns's supposed return to nature and thought that Burns's poetry was perhaps the best example of the simple diction and direct observation advocated in the well-known "Preface" to the *Lyrical Ballads*. Hallam reports Wordsworth's opinions
thus: "The same day I met Wordsworth, he had talked earlier to Tennyson, and mentioned Burns to him. Wordsworth praised him, even more vehemently than Tennyson had done, as the great genius who had brought Poetry back to Nature." 108

Unlike Tennyson, however, Wordsworth was not referring to Burns's songs, for he tells Hallam: "Of course I refer to his serious efforts, such as the 'Cotter's Saturday Night'; those foolish little amatory songs of his one has to forget." 109 Wordsworth was uncomfortable when it came to remembering Burns's dissipations; it was easier to pass over them quickly and think of Burns's moments of glory:

Enough of sorrow, wreck, and blight;
Think rather of those moments bright
When to the consciousness of right
His course was true,
When Wisdom prospered in his sight
And virtue grew. 110

This was the Romantic idealization in the face of what then seemed only too evident facts to the contrary. It was more inspiring to forget that Burns was "Too frail to keep the lofty vow/That must have followed when his brow/Was wreathed..../With holly spray....," 111 and think of him

Fresh as the flower, whose modest worth
He sang, his genius 'glinted' forth,
Rose like a star that touching earth,
For so it seems,
Doth glorify its humble birth
With matchless beams.

The piercing eye, the thoughtful brow,
The struggling heart,...
Full soon the Aspirant of the plough,
The prompt, the brave,
Slept, with the obscurest, in the low
And silent grave.  

Thus, Burns, the dissipated, could be friends with
Wordsworth, the philosopher, because of their mutual
loves of nature:

True friends though diversely inclined;
But heart with heart and mind with mind,
Where the main fibres are entwined,
Through Nature's skill,
May even contraries be joined
More closely still.

Only this romantic dream-picture could have enabled
Wordsworth to pen the most romantic lines ever written
on Burns: "[I think] Of him who walked in glory and in
joy/Following his plough, along the mountain-side."  

Byron's attitude towards Burns lacked the sentimentality and misty halo of Wordsworth, but reflected just
as clearly the romantic ideal of the half-god, half-man,
half-genius that made up Burns: "Read Burns to-day.
What would he have been, if a patrician? We should have
had more polish - less force - just as much verse, but
no immortality...."  

One must notice here a complete
reversal of attitude: Burns was received with open arms
by Edinburgh because he was a peasant and an answer to
their primitivistic prayers; he was then rejected by them
because he remained a peasant and refused to conform his
poetry to neo-classic tradition and because his rusticity
in humor and satire offended their civilized palates. Lord Jeffrey abhorred his peasant outlook and Scott was uneasy when confronted with it. But the "great names" among the romantic poets, representing two different camps; Wordsworth and Byron, find their joy in this peasantry - and Burns's immortality along with it. The mixture of things that made up Burns's complex character continued to fascinate the equally complex character of Lord Byron, who in recording his thoughts on the subject gave a phrase, the last word of which perfectly represented the Romantic attitude:

"Dirt and deity." The dirt the Romantics, for the most part, overlooked or lamented; the deity they extolled. It was Byron alone who could see the Burns of both dirt and deity without flinching or lamenting. He did not have to ignore the dirt to appreciate the deity.

The sensitive Keats, perhaps even more than Wordsworth, worshipped at Burns's shrine and felt most profoundly Burns's dirt. In his sonnet "On visiting the tomb of Burns," Keats expresses his honor of Burns: "Burns! with honour due/I oft have honour'd thee." Keats, however, was
disgusted at the sight of Dumfries and at the hovel in which Burns lived and this raised his sorrow over the fate of Burns to an even greater emotional height. The knowledge of Burns's actual surroundings only tended to make the Romantics idealize him even more; for only a half-god could write such glorious poetry in such an evil environment. One must remember that Keats and Wordsworth both took the grand tour of Scotland and of Burns's native county. Hence with deep emotion Keats could write to Reynolds:

One song of Burns's is of more worth to you than all I could think for a whole year in his country - His misery is a dead weight upon the nimbleness of one's quill - I tried to forget it - to drink toddy without any Care - to write a merry Sonnet - it wont do - he talked with Bitches - he drank with Black-guards, he was miserable - we can see horribly clear in the works of such a man his whole life, as if we were God's spies. 118

With this environment in mind Keat's could easily rationally Burns's dissipation:

Poor unfortunate fellow [Burns] - his disposition was southern - how sad it is when a luxurious imagination is obliged in self defence to deaden its delicacy in vulgarity, and riot in thing(s) attainable that it may not have leisure to go mad after thing(s) which are not. 119

These ideas were perhaps the best foundation for the deification of Burns by the Romantics. Of their lament at Burn's fate perhaps Keats has also expressed it best in poetry and at the same time linked Burns's name with
a hero whom Burns worshipped. The poet would have appreciated this tribute more than any other:

Of him whose name to ev'ry heart's a solace,
Highminded and unbending William Wallace.
While to the rugged north our musing turns,
We well might drop a tear for him, and Burns.
Chapter IV
REACTIONS AND SETTLEMENT

.....a tribute just
To the great bard, erect a Bust:
Nor is this all: from age to age,
As for a monarch, hero, sage,
Let anniversaries repeat
His glories, celebrate a fete,
Imbibe his spirit, sing his songs,
Extol his name, lament his wrongs,
His death deplore, accuse his fate,
And raise him far above the great.

What call you this? Is it Inania?
I'll coin a word, 'tis Burnomania.

The Rev. William Peebles's little volume, Burnomania, containing these doggerel verses, was a violent denunciation of Burns and his poetry on a charge of moral perversions which ranged from cruelty to his wife to downright atheism. Perhaps, however, the reverend poetaster from Newton-on-Ayr had a tint of malice or vengeance coloring his religious indignation. One cannot forget that in "The Kirk's Alarm" Peebles suffered a vicious satiric attack as "Poet Willie" (stanza XII) and in "The Holy Fair" ascended "The Holy Rostrum" "Frae the Water-fit" only to chase common sense "up the Cowgate" while he, as "antidote" to the Rev. George Smith, preached the "word o' God" (stanza XVI). Peebles's volume, at any event, was the obvious reaction to the intense romanticizing of Burns as a poet and as a man that had been the
critical attack of the early romantics. Where the romantics however had merely wept tears at Burns's supposed crimes and passed quickly over the satires, Peebles laid specific moral charges, calling on "all real Christians of every denomination" to support him. To all "real Christians" Burns could be seen only as one who "...deliberately, repeatedly, exultingly glories in vice, ridicules religion, makes the truths of God the subjects of merriment, and exhibits himself...as a profane blackguard." Peebles's attack on the poetry is almost chilling in its severity; nearly every poem comes under his execrating hand. The criticism of "The Holy Fair" will suffice as the typical example of Peebles's method:

...fun is more to him than God Almighty! The favour and will of heaven give place to fun! And he instantly gives ample proof that he profanes the Sabbath, and attends religious exercises not for fun only, but for pouring out all the virulence of malignity and vengeance, that is in him, on the ministers of religion: he gratifies himself and the lewd and licentious in describing the grossest indecencies, said, or supposed, to be met with at such scenes.

If such immorality is true in Burns then it is foolish to defend him as a sentimentalist, Peebles declares. And with this idea in mind the reverend gentleman launches into an attack of sentiment and fine feelings. To Peebles all gushing and tears over wounded hares, field mice, and whatever else the "men of feeling" considered refined and elegant was pure nonsense when unaccompanied by a genuine
love for one's fellow man: "...fine feeling is everything, obliterating all guilt, and rendering prodigality, extravagance, idleness, debauchery and vice not excusable only, but amiable, respectable and meritorious." Peebles was aiming at the very heart of the cult of sentimentality, but was striking out in every direction at once. He saw the heresy in the cult when he pointed out that "men of feeling" weep over a dying insect and remain cold to the sufferings of fellow human beings. But an attack so violent, and using the beloved Scottish bard as its target, could hardly expect to receive universal applause, which of course it did not. Instead a reaction in favor of Burns ensued. Although clinging to their romantic vision of Burns, the new critics took up Burns and his poetry on Peebles's terms: morality.

In 1812 George Gleig, bishop of Buchin, litterateur, and in 1816 profusìs of Scotland, presented the public for the first time with a critique of each poem in the 1787 edition. The purpose of this volume, though never stated explicitly, was simply to point out the moral that was in each of Burns's poems; if there was no moral too evident, Gleig simply forced one into the poem. It was a fairly simple matter to wax eloquent over the didacticism of "The Twa Dogs," "Lament for Glencairn," and "The Cotter," but to say that the moral instruction of "Bruar Water" is the author's hope to help the animals dwelling about
it, and to take the concluding moral of "Tam" with great seriousness clearly show how ludicrous such a moralistic defense must eventually become.

Gleig was, of course, forced to repudiate the extreme satires, although he was saved with "The Jolly Beggars" by having Scott's whole-hearted backing, whom he quotes completely. Although Gleig cannot condone "Scotch Drink" and "The Author's Earnest Cry and Prayer" because of its immoral tendencies, he is critic enough to praise the vivid descriptions of the peasants and the bacchanalian scenes. But with all his moralizing the problem of the satires still remained and needed to be explained if Burns was to rise triumphant over his religious adversaries. The fact that Gleig found moral purpose and instruction in many of Burns's poems and that he defended Burns as a poet on the romantic grounds that the range of an illiterate poet may not be great but is perhaps closer to nature than the literary poet who merely makes copies of copies of nature does not answer Peebles's charges of immorality in the religious satires. But the answer was delayed some years, although the way out of the difficulty may seem obvious now. But then that would really be arguing after the fact.

The defense of Burns's personal morality, however, was now in full swing. In 1815 Alexander Peterkin issued a new edition of Burns's works which was openly dedicated
to clearing the poet's name. To the subscribers for a national monument to Burns he dedicates the work: "I expect nothing from you, but approbation for having obtained evidence in refutation of some foul charges against the moral qualities of Burns, and his poetry, which have of late been propagated." These "evidences" are the now famous letters of Gilbert Burns, James Gray, Alexander Findlater, and George Thomson. In a long prefatory essay Peterkin refutes various assertions of Currie, Irving, Jeffrey, Scott, and Walker concerning Burns's drinking and licentiousness, but, as Professor Snyder points out, then made the mistake of reprinting Currie's life, in effect denying his own refutations. But as far as Burns's biography is concerned, to Peterkin must go the credit of the first large scale attempt to rehabilitate the life of the poet. As far as the poetry goes, Peterkin adds nothing to the trend in criticism.

But the defense of Burns that actually dragged the public into the argument was the now infamous letter of Wordsworth to James Gray. Wordsworth's only defense of Burns is the statement that Burns was probably not a drunkard when he wrote "Dr. Hornbook" and that he (Wordsworth) excused Burns's excesses, even though the poet himself admitted them. The real point of the letter was twofold: to explain the proper method of writing biographies of literary people and to attack Lord Jeffrey.
Ostensibly using Burns as the subject, by criticizing Jeffrey's review of Cromek, Wordsworth was merely venting his spleen against Jeffrey, unfortunately at the expense of Burns. When Wordsworth accuses Jeffrey of being inconsistent for saying that Burns was perpetually making a parade of his thoughtlessness and at the same time perpetually doing something else, the argument becomes as pedantic as debating how many angels can dance on the point of a pin—and just about as valuable. To this strange letter De Quincey later attributed the revived interest in the defense of Burns's morality. Although it was actually Gleig who set the reaction in motion, or perhaps one should say Peebles, De Quincey is certainly correct in so far as the general public was concerned.27 De Quincey comments that Currie had been accepted for many years: "So matters stood some twelve or fourteen years; after which period a 'craze' arose on the subject of Burns, which allowed no voice to be heard but that of zealotry and violent partisanship."28 Of Wordsworth's letter De Quincey states: "Its momentary effect, in conjunction with Lord Jeffrey's article, was to revive the interest (which for some time had languished under the oppression of Sir Walter Scott and Lord Byron) in all that related to Burns."29

It took two years to set up the partisan spirit, but when Hazlitt mounted the rostrum in 1818 to deliver his
lecture on Burns and the old English ballads\(^ {30}\) a Burns party was formed and given the basic platform for defense. After castigating Wordsworth for his pompous letter and his disgusting laceration of Jeffrey, Hazlitt says what Wordsworth would have said if Wordsworth had really liked and understood Burns - which he obviously did not since, as Hazlitt feels, he knew nothing of life, while Burns had lived life.\(^ {31}\) Wordsworth could have shown that the writing of "Tam" was enough to make any man immortal, for no Puritan had yet arisen to write such a poem.\(^ {32}\) He could have shown that poets are men of genius and not machines, and it is too much to expect them to be distinguished by "sang-froid, circumspection, and sobriety."\(^ {33}\) Or again, all men of genius are liable to error by the confidence their superiority inspires.\(^ {34}\) Further Wordsworth might have discussed the many temptations that Burns was exposed to from his struggles with fortune and the uncertainty of his fate.\(^ {35}\) But finally he might have pointed out the incompatibility between the excise and the Muse.\(^ {36}\) Romantic criticism is at its height here; unbridled genius and spontaneous overflow of emotions are perhaps for the first time, in regards to Burns, at least implicitly stated by a renowned Romantic critic.

The romantic view of genius comes out again, and this time somewhat to Burns's detriment, in Blackwood's review of Hogg, the Ettrick Shepherd.\(^ {37}\) The life of a farmer is
hard and unpoetic as opposed to the poetic and idyllic life of the shepherd. Hence Hogg's circumstances were more favorable than Burns's to writing poetry. Burns excels in pathos and deep human passion, while Hogg is full of wild enthusiasm for nature. Thus, Hogg rushes to embrace nature and Burns to embrace man 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..." The problem of illiteracy has completely disappeared from sight in romantic criticism, as has the problem of primitivism. To be sure they are present, but in an undercover fashion. The critics are no longer worried about or astounded at the lack of formal education. The more important problems of inspiration, enthusiasm, and nature are in the mouths of the critics. If one is to judge Burns now, the points of disagreement will be whether he has inspiration, enthusiasm, or love of nature. Thus, despite all Hazlitt's praise, Blackwood's with perfect calm could claim that Burns had more universality but Hogg more wild enthusiasm for nature. On the other hand the same magazine several months later, in reviewing Crabbe, could say (in a sense summarizing extreme romantic criticism):

He [Burns] was born a poet, if ever man was, and to his native genius alone is owing the perpetuity of his fame. For he manifestly never studied poetry as an art, nor reasoned on its principles - nor looked abroad with the wide ken of intellect, for objects and
subjects on which to pour out his inspiration... Hence, when genius impelled him to write poetry, poetry came gushing freshly up from the well of his human affections and he had nothing more to do, than to pour it, like streams irrigating a meadow, in many a cheerful tide over the drooping flowers and fading verdure of life. 42

If Hazlitt led the defense of Burns's morality on romantic principles of taste, one still had to face up to the religious satires. By quoting "The Cotter," "To a Mouse," etc., one could nicely ignore the moral question and challenge thrown down by Peebles, but nevertheless the satires were there and critics were still humbly apologizing for them and then passing them over quickly. Campbell, in his Specimens, rebuked Jeffrey for his attack on Burns's low condition and "perpetual" boasting 43, but at the same time stated the ambiguous case for the satires, for it was difficult to deny the wit and humor of the poems: "... his satire was fierce and acrimonious. I am not, however, disposed to consider his attacks on Rumble John, and Holy Willie, as destitute of wit; and his poems on the clerical settlements at Kilmarnock, blends a good deal of ingenious metaphor with his accustomed humour." 44 But still bound by propriety, Campbell feels obliged to comment on his praise of "The Holy Fair:

It is enough, however, to mention the humour of this production, without recommending its subject. Burns, indeed, only laughs at the abuses of a sacred institution; but the theme was of unsafe approach, and he ought to have avoided it. 45
But Campbell's mild praise had opened the door pretty wide for what would seem now the most obvious approach to a defense of the satires: make Burns a reformer of religion. This is exactly the position that the Rev. Hamilton Paul, a moderate clergyman of the New Lights, took in his life of the poet. After pointing out the errors of former critics and biographers and delivering a mild censure to Burns's indiscriminate use of Scripture, Paul bravely launches into a fervent defense of the religious satires. Of the "Holy Fair" he comments that "The shafts of ridicule are the best weapons for exposing absurdity," and that "Burns in that delightful satire has not offered a single sneer at the solemnity itself. He has only attacked the abuses attendant on the mode of conducting it." It is in his defense of "Holy Willie," however, that Paul reaches his real heights of eloquence:

This was not only the prayer of Holy Willie, but it is merely the metrical version of every prayer that is offered up by those who call themselves the pure reformed church of Scotland....He [Burns] could not reconcile his mind to that picture of the Being, whose very essence is Love, which is drawn by the high Calvinists or the representatives of the Covenanters - namely, that he is disposed to grant salvation to none but a few of their sect....The hypocrisy and dishonesty of the man, who was at the time a reputed saint, were perceived by the discerning penetration of Burns, and to expose them he considered his duty.

Paul continued in this manner to abuse the severe doctrines of the Kirk and shows how in each of his satires Burns set
for himself the duty of exposing the absurdity of the doctrines as well as the abuses in the ceremony of the Kirk and its discipline. It was left to the late Victorians, however, to carry Paul's arguments to their logical conclusions, i.e., making Burns a second Knox, a divinely inspired reformer of the Kirk, but Paul had in the meantime performed his own duty: to justify Burns's religious satires. Burns had now been dragged through almost every conceivable critical phase; he had been praised, damned, re-praised, and re-damned according to the critical standards of the times. From Paul's "Life" in 1819 until Cunningham's essay on Burns and Lord Byron in 1824, Burns's fame rested vindicated. A period of critical acceptance of the satires ensued; but it was only the calm before the storm; what followed one might call the pre-Victorian period.

This pre-Victorian period was an anticipation of the Victorian reaction to the Romantic idealization. Critics like John Lockhart and Sir Harris Nicolas were resharpening the prudish critical knife and plunging it into the body of old charges of public and private immorality. The former reopened the case against the satires and the latter restated the charge of personal immorality. But new defense mechanisms were also being set in operation. A new form of diversion from immorality was being set on foot: legend and anecdote as presented by the capable imagination of
Allan Cunningham. By the time the Victorian Age was well under way criticism had taken an almost reverse course and was right back where it was in the middle of the eighteenth century; and so of course was Burns and his poetry. The late nineteenth century would swing the pendulum the other way again, but for the moment the critics were preparing for Victoria.

The Burns legends had a faltering start in 1824 with Cunningham's "Burns and Lord Byron," which was a comparison of the death scenes and funerals of the two poets. The absurdity of this article has been too often pointed out to need comment here, but it was the first of Cunningham's series of imaginings proffered to the world as facts. Lockhart helped continue the legends with the assistance of Cunningham, but his critical coup was to denounce the satires and anyone who upheld them, including the Rev. Hamilton Paul. To Lockhart, "That performances so blasphemous should have been, not only pardoned, but applauded by ministers of religion, is a singular circumstance...." Of the satire against penance performed for fornication Lockhart righteously comments:

...and whatever may be thought of the propriety of such exhibitions [stools of repentance], there can be no difference of opinion as to the culpable levity with which he describes the nature of his offence, and the still more reprehensible bitterness with which, in his Epistle to Rankine, he inveighs against the clergyman, who in rebuking him, only performed what was then a regular part of the clerical duty....
The only satire that Lockhart grants even grudging praise to is "The Holy Fair" in which "satire keeps its own place, and is subservient to the poetry...." But even here his moral tone intervenes to comment that there was certainly something holy and grave about the sacrament which Burns "might justly have impersonated." Throughout the work Lockhart grows more and more moralistic: "That the same man should have produced 'The Cotter's Saturday Night' and 'The Holy Fair' about the same time - will ever continue to move wonder and regret." Lockhart congratulates Burns on the songs for Thomson, which were more refined than those in the Museum: "...the consequences have been happy indeed for his own fame - for the literary taste, and the national music of Scotland; and, what is of far higher importance, the moral and national feelings of his country men." It is not difficult to understand why Lockhart accepted "Tam" and "Beggars" with so much emotion; it would be difficult to repudiate works praised by Scott, Jeffrey, and nearly every eminent critic from 1787 to 1828. John Wilson's review of Lockhart's "Life was centered mainly around supporting the actual facts or supposed facts given by Lockhart. Wilson was a strenuous supporter of the Burns cult and a defender of Burns's morals as far as possible. When facts seemingly went against him, Wilson employed the weep and cast the first stone method, which when couched in impassioned language, was the epitome
of the Victorian attitude and silences all opponents.

Wilson's selections of Burns's poems are typical of the Victorian critics: "Winter," "Cotter," "John Barleycorn," "Despondency." The striking resemblance to the choices of the pre-Romantics is too obvious for comment.

As far as Burns's personal morals were concerned, Lockhart tried to be objective, or at least take the media via. When confronted with Findlater's and Gray's letters in opposition to Currie and Walker, Lockhart decides that the "truth lies between." Unfortunately, however, Lockhart's patronizing air and his high moral indignation at the supposedly known facts of Burns's dissipations left the impression that he favored Currie's version of the life.

Sir Harrie Nicolas's memoir in the famed Aldine series was not quite so temporizing as Lockhart. Nicolas felt the early biographers had been all Scotsmen and hence had desired to minimize Burns's crimes, but he, as an objective biographer, considered it his duty to record every crime he could locate. Since, however, Nicolas could not uncover any new crimes he merely imaginatively distorted the then supposed facts of Burns's life. As far as Burns's notorious amours were concerned the Aldine editor put the most criminal connotations possible upon them; he even went so far as to accuse Burns of refusing to make reparation to Jean Armour and attempting to flee to the
Indies to escape his duty. The satires caused Nicolas as much moral discomfiture as they did Lockhart. Without doubt Burns should have been censured for his levity toward sacred objects. But he felt more shame for the clergy who admired such productions as "Holy Willie"; who "seem indeed to have witnessed this prostitution of Burns's talents with feelings little creditable to themselves or their order."

It should now be clear that the cycle of criticism is closing and that the Romantic standards of taste are being subverted by the Victorian, which bear a close resemblance to the neo-classic critics of the late eighteenth century. Cycles in criticism are not being advanced as part of this thesis, but one cannot help observing how tastes change radically and then tend to revert to the previous and more staid tastes of a former generation.

To the late eighteenth century neo-classicists Burns exhibited refined Augustan diction and imagery in his "sentimental" poems; to the late eighteenth century primitives he exhibited untutored genius and almost divine inspiration; to the Romantics he exhibited natural genius (without the connotation of untutored or uneducated) and divine or natural-divine inspiration; to the late Romantics or pre-Victorians he exhibited genius without any of the divine or inspired elements. In all of these periods it was only at the height of the Romantic period that the
satires were at all accepted, and this was only for a very short time. This, of course, does not mean that the satires were not read or appreciated before or after 1819, but only that for a short period did the public expression of taste permit their approval. The methods of escaping the supposed facts of Burns's personal immorality changed concurrently with the critical judgments of his poetry.

To the late eighteenth century critics Burns's immorality was reproved with high moral indignation tempered with sighs and warnings to future generations. The Romantics either ignored or lamented his immorality. The pre-Victorians (and the Victorians up until the late nineteenth century) returned to the late eighteenth century method of moral indignation, but added stern and even fierce invective against the spirit of Burns for having dared to indulge in sensual pleasures. But if the Romantics were able to forget or ignore Burns's immorality by almost deifying him, the majority of pre-Victorians and Victorians were also able to forget the supposed facts of his life by building a legendary life and steeping it in sentiment and patriotism. Encouraged by the supposed authority of Allan Cunningham and John Lockhart the public was willing to let Burns's life and poetry be buried in the land of myth and sentiment.71

Before the period of legend and sentiment set in, however, the last of the Romantics and the first of the
Victorians, if one may so style Thomas Carlyle, made his famous defense of his countryman. Mixed with sentiment, patriotism, and a penetrating critical judgment, Carlyle's essay on Burns is one of the finest that came from the pens of Burns's early reviewers. Even in later years, long after his 1832 review of Lockhart, Carlyle retained his sentimental love for Burns. One cannot doubt the sincerity, even if one starts at the extravagance of the lines penned in his essay on Boswell's Johnson:

Alas, men must fit themselves into many things: some forty years ago, for instance, the noblest and ablest Man in all the British lands might be seen not swaying the royal sceptre, or the pontiff's censer, on the pinnacle of the World, but gauging ale-tubs in the little burgh of Dumfries.

The fact that the crown never presented Burns with a pension or some higher form of employment was a constant thorn in Carlyle's side and crept even into his acute and correct analysis of Burns's rise and fall in the late eighteenth century literary world:

Burns first came upon the world as a prodigy; and was, in that character, entertained by it, in the usual fashion, with loud, vague, tumultuous wonder, speedily subsiding into censure and neglect; till his early and most mournful death again awakened an enthusiasm for him, which, especially as there was now nothing to be done, and much to be spoken, has prolonged itself even to our own time.

Of course Carlyle's judgment of the literati lacked penetration, for he was unaware of the complexities of Burns's
relationships with them. But one must remember that this judgment was the first attempt at a dispassionate presentation of just what happened to Burns in his later life.

As to Carlyle's comments on Burns's supposed immorality, one may pass them over without any notice. Carlyle was forced to rely on the biographers of the time and therefore had to accept their authority. His own interpretation was that Burns, through lack of proper aid, was forced into sensual excesses. It is much the same idea that Keats had previously expressed. Burns lacked the two things necessary to great men: true, religious principles of morals and a single aim or goal. Unfortunately, "His religion, at best, is an anxious wish - like that of Rabelais, 'a great Perhaps'." 75

Carlyle's preferences among Burns's poems strike a modern reader as very strange, for the poems tend to be the didactic or sentimental ones. 77 His dislike of "Tam" as a piece of "sparkling rhetoric" 78 which becomes a "mere drunken phantasmagoria, painted on ale-vapours" 79 certainly startles modern readers. Indeed the only poem which Carlyle chose that would be completely acceptable today is "The Jolly Beggars," which for Carlyle was "the most strictly poetical of his 'poems'." 80 "The Jolly Beggars" "...seems thoroughly compacted; melted together, refined; and poured forth in one flood of true liquid harmony. It is light,
airy, and soft of movement; yet sharp and precise in its
details; every face is a portrait."  

In his general attitude towards Burns's poems, however,
Carlyle penetrates right to the center of the problem.
To Carlyle the distinguishing characteristics of Burns's
poetry are sincerity and indifference to subjects. In
fact "The life of Burns is what we may call a great tragic
sincerity. A sort of savage sincerity, - not cruel, - far
from that; but wild, wrestling naked with the Truth of
things." And added to this intense sincerity is that
great indifference to subjects: he makes all subjects,
even the most trivial, interesting. Carlyle attempts
to show Burns's method of approaching his subjects:

Is it of reason; some truth to be discovered?
No sophistry, no vain surface-logic detains
him; quick, resolute, unerring he pierces
through into the marrow of the question; and
speaks his verdict with an emphasis that can-
not be forgotten. Is it of description; some
visual object to be represented? No poet of
any age or nation is more graphic than Burns;
the characteristic features disclose themselves
to him at a glance; three lines from his hand
and we have a likeness. And in that rough dia-
lect, in that rude, often awkward, metre, so
clear and definite a likeness.

One can see "with what a prompt and eager force he grasps
his subject, be it what it may! How he fixes, as it were,
the full image of the matter in his eye; full and clear
in every lineament; and catches the real type and essence
of it, amid a thousand accidents and superficial circum-
stances, no one of which misleads him!"
Carlyle, like his fellow countryman, Scott, appreciated and rated the songs of Burns as the bard's highest attainment. "The most finished, complete, and truly inspired pieces of Burns" were without doubt "to be found among his Songs." Never since the age of Elizabeth has Britain been favored with so many and such excellent songs.

And

If we...take into account the immense variety of his subjects; how from the loud flowing revel in Willie brew'd a peck o' Maut, to the still, rapt enthusiasm of sadness for Mary in Heaven; from the glad kind greeting of Auld Langsyne, or the comic archness of Duncan Gray, to the fire-eyed fury of Scots, wha hae wi' Wallace bled, he has found a tone and words for every mood of man's heart, - it will seem a small praise if we rank him as the first of all our song-writers; for we know not where to find one worthy of being second to him.

After such a laudatory analysis of the variety of Burns's songs it is not surprising to find Carlyle concluding that "It is on his songs...that Burns's chief influence as an author will ultimately be found to depend."

Carlyle acutely felt the lack of a distinct Scottish literature. After the long struggle between the Kirk and the Crown the literati attempted to write English; but even then, says Carlyle, the influence was neither Scottish nor English, but French. If Burns did not have any imitators, at least any good ones, Carlyle feels that Burns has still contributed a great deal to Scottish literature: a choice of domestic subjects and a fierce pride and loyalty
which cannot help influencing future writers, whether they choose either the English or Scottish language. Perhaps Carlyle's loyalty and devotion to Burns itself is a direct result of this influence in action.

CONCLUSION

With Carlyle's essay on Burns (including the later lecture on heroes and hero-worship) a climax has been reached and the period of settlement and legend begins. The Burns cult continued in Scotland but in England was confined to the lower classes until the 1840's, when George Gilfillan led a reaction to the legends and began a new revival of interest in Burns, which culminated in both the fine scholarship of the middle and late nineteenth century and the prophetic school of social reformers and fanatics led by P. Hateley Waddell and Alexander Webster. The stained biography of Burns had to wait until the present century to be cleansed and purged of its errors, slanders, and myths. But all of this is subject matter for other chapters. It is sufficient merely to note that the problems did not die with Carlyle; they were ignored and allowed to rest for some fifteen years, but were destined to play another interesting role in the history of English literature and criticism. But for the time being one could certainly agree with
Madden's judgment of 1833, a judgment which was accurate until nearly the end of the nineteenth century:

Burns' fame has certainly declined in the fashionable world; but if it be any consolation to his spirit, his poetry continues as popular as ever with the poor. Its exquisite pathos has lost nothing of its original charm, but no volume is less the book of the boudoir - the fastidious imagination can hardly associate the idea of poetry with that of an atmosphere that is redolent of tobacco and spirituous liquors.
APPENDIX

BURNS AND MRS. DUNLOP

If Mackenzie, Blair and the Edinburgh literati represent the tastes of polite society, especially gentlemanly society, then it is to Mrs. Dunlop that one must turn to seek polite taste as represented by the upper class lady. The correspondence of Burns and Mrs. Dunlop has been greatly exploited for biographical data, but very little attention, save for a passing sneer, has been paid to Mrs. Dunlop's literary and domestic criticism and advice. Here, however, it is only the literary criticism that is of importance. Mrs. Dunlop's advice is far from important in the understanding and appreciation of Burns's poetry; her advice and censure, however, assume greater importance in interpreting the literary milieu in which Burns worked, when one considers that she is one of the few females who had written at any length to the poet, and because her social position reflects fairly accurately the female reaction to the "indecorous" Ayrshire bard.

As may be expected, Mrs. Dunlop's chief objection to Burns's poetry was the numerous "improprieties." But the chief reason behind the objection is even more indicative: "I pleased my Scotch pride with thinking I could hold up your volume to an English, nay to the most polite Frenchman, and defied his nation to teach their best in-
structured, most polished nobleman to equal a Scots peasant in genius, sentiment, purity of expression."¹ She had planned a scheme among her women friends to aid Burns, but the Edinburgh edition was not deleted of its Kilmarnock improprieties, so that she "durst not now offend them [her respectable ladies] with the mention of...[his] name."² Burns's "To Mary in Heaven" "quite charmed" the old lady, but for his sake she hoped it was "only a fancy piece."³

The excess of the well-meaning woman's prudery is seen in her damnation of "Tam" and the humorous criticism of "The Twa Dogs." Mrs. Dunlop's first sight of "Tam" was only in a fragmentary copy and of this she highly approved; but when she read the entire poem she sent Burns a stinging letter of criticism:

You tell me you are obliged by my applause of a late production of yours. I had seen then only one half of it, and I applaud the editor, whoever he was, for I don't know his name. Yet he shows me the truth of an old axiom that 'Fools should not see half done works,' at least that they should not speak of them. Had I seen the whole of that performance, all its beauties could not have extorted one word of mine in its praise, notwithstanding you were the author.⁴

Her true feelings are expressed when she asks the poet: "why has genius so often a desire for childish levities? Why does [sir] these impurities fall even from a Shenstone or a Littleton, and corrupt others? Might not an Exciseman glory in emulating the chaste pen of Thomson?⁵ Her next question, however, shows the subtlety of her mind
and her consciousness of the class distinctions Burns had to face: "Nay, ought he not fear that what the world would pass in a Lord might be imputed to the low ribaldry to which his profession as exciseman must frequently expose him?"

When criticizing the poems of Burns for his proposed fourth edition, Mrs. Dunlop, before going into particular criticism, again begs him to delete the impurities from the Edinburgh edition. Her objections to the manner in which the two dogs sit in "The Twa Dogs" only indicates the inanity to which her criticism was eventually reduced, but the surprising criticism is that she would prefer "Tam", which she had previously pilloried, to "The Ordination" and the "Calf". At least Mrs. Dunlop realized that if Burns was to have satire and "impurites," the lesser of two evils should be chosen.

Mrs. Dunlop could not appreciate the hearty humor of Burns's satires, but not because she was too delicate, for she did enjoy them in private. Her objections were of an entirely practical nature: she feared for Burns's reputation (with good cause) and wanted to see him write a great and extensive piece that would make his light shine from the mountain. She expresses true worldly wisdom concerning "The Kirk's Alarm":

I hope the clergy will not meddle with Mr. M'Gill, that you may not meddle with them. This is not the age of priestcraft that call for opposition. Those that deserve it are too
mean game for genius to hurt, and the satire too local for sale; it would be a subject would bring you less profit, and me less pleasure....

Or again:

....when you fall a-satirizing, 'tis as dangerous as King Henry the Fourth's bear-hunting with which they entertained the ladies of the French court, where the bears were like to hug their pursuers to death. Especially when you attack the clergy or the booksellers, they threaten you with a mortal squeeze in return, which I dread may hurt you more essentially than your sharpest sting can do them.

Mrs. Dunlop completely confirms Burns's reputation for satire when she replies to Burns's suggestion that he will publish his satire on the Regency Bill anonymously: "Everybody would know your 'Regency Bill' were it to appear. You cannot have a child more like the father, should you have twins every year as long as you live." Her choice of the best of Burns's songs in the Museum ("Tho cruel fate," "Raving Winds," "Thickest Night," "Cold blows the Wind")

her dislike of the measures of "The Wounded Hare" which her circle of friends liked (and in this case to Mrs. Dunlop's credit); her desire for "propriety and purity" in general mark Mrs. Dunlop as a poor critic, but a true product of her age. Her practical literary advice about satires, though we are today happy Burns did not heed it, show how aware of the ways of the world she was and how dedicated was her interest in Burns.
Delancey Ferguson in his excellent study of Burns, _Pride And Passion_, makes an assertion about Mrs. Dunlop that would greatly help the general tenor of the theme of this thesis, if one could feel it were entirely true. Mrs. Dunlop's attempt to have Burns support Jenny Little, "the Scottish milkmaid," as a sort of poetess and her desire to have him read and criticize her poems when he visited Dunlop House, Ferguson interprets as Mrs. Dunlop's inability to distinguish between the poetry of Burns and that of Jenny Little. To be sure, Mrs. Dunlop accepted the natural genius idea of the primitivists, but she also recognized Burns's genius. I can find no reference to Jenny, and there are many of them, in the Burns-Dunlop correspondence that supports Ferguson's thesis. All indications from Mrs. Dunlop's letters show that she pitied Jenny, favored her with work, and encouraged her to go on writing. She was asking Burns as a friend to be kind to the milkmaid and encourage her. Mrs. Dunlop states specifically that she realizes the difference between Jenny and Burns, and if she was upset with Burns for not desiring to read Jenny's poems when he was at Dunlop House, it is more because of Burns's rudeness than because she put Jenny on the same plane with him.
NOTES

The omission of place of publication indicates that it was either London or New York.

The following abbreviations have been used throughout the notes:

BC stands for the Burns Chronicle; GW for Chamber's
The Life and Works of Robert Burns, revised by William
Wallace, 4 vols. (Edinburgh, 1896); Letters for The
Letters of Robert Burns, ed. J. De Lancey Ferguson, 2
vols. (Oxford, 1931); B-D-G for The Correspondence of
Robert Burns and Mrs. Dunlop, ed. William Wallace (1898);
WSD for The Works of Robert Burns, ed. William Scott
Douglas, 6 vols. (Edinburgh, 1877).

INTRODUCTION


CHAPTER I

1. For the great number of Burns editions which appeared almost yearly from 1800 to 1900 cf. John Stuart Blackie,
Life of Robert Burns, "Great Writers" series (1888),
pp. 1-xvii of the bibliography. In a briefer form,
but easier to manipulate is W. A. Craigie's bibliography
in his A Primer of Burns (1896), pp. 166-187. The most
complete bibliography to date is the Memorial Catalogue
of the Burns Exhibition (Glasgow, 1896).

2. James Sibbald, Edinburgh Magazine, October, 1786; rpt.
in J. D. Ross, The Story of the Kilmarnock Burns (Stirling

3. Ibid., p. 25.

4. Ibid.


6. See Henry Graham, Scottish Men of Letters in the Eighteenth
Century (1901), p. 382.
9. Franklin B. Snyder discusses convincingly the reasons for the various omissions from the Kilmarnock volume in his *Life of Robert Burns* (1932), pp. 157 ff.
18. Lois Whitney would see in this a confusion arising from two contradictory ideas: the primitivism of natural simplicity versus the idea of progress—complexity. In this sense, the attempt to make Burns neo-classic in stanza and diction is an example of the idea of progress, while the love of his "pathetic" sentiments and the acceptance of him as an untutored ploughman represents the primitivist tendency. For a complete discussion see Lois Whitney, *Primitivism and the Idea of Progress* (Baltimore, 1934), pp. 1 ff.
24. The benevolence principle is certainly the idea behind lines like "The heart ay's the part ay/That makes us right or wrang." (First "Epistle to Davie") The summary of the doctrines of primitivism is given in Whitney in one of the clearest forms I know, pp. 9 ff.

26. Ibid., p. 382.


28. Ibid., p. 119.

29. Ibid. Sir William Craigie, lamenting the lack of Scots writing in the eighteenth century, comments that, besides Burns in poetry no Scottish writer of the eighteenth century who had anything important to say in prose attempted to say it in the language of his countrymen. He did it in his best English, and all the time he was haunted by an uneasy feeling that even his choicest English was not free from those dreadful solecisms known as Scotticisms, which would assuredly be pointed out and laughed at when his book had penetrated into the sister kingdom. (W. A. Craigie, "The Present State of the Scottish Tongue," BC (1922), p. 27).


31. Ibid.

32. Ibid., p. 388.

33. Ibid., p. 390.

34. Ibid.


36. Ibid., p. 39.

37. Ibid.


39. Ibid.

40. Ibid. Italics in this quotation are mine.

41. Following is a list of the most famous "peasant poets": Stephen Duck (1705-56), "The Wiltshire Bard" (Throscher). Mary Collier ( ), "The Poetical Washerwoman of Peterfield."
Henry Jones (1721-70), "The Poetical Bricklayer."
James Woodhouse (1735-1824), "The Poetical Shoemaker."
Ann Yearsley (1756-1806), "The Bristol Milkmaid" or "Laetitia."
Robert Burns (1759-1796), "The Ayrshire Bard" or "The Heaven-Taught Ploughman."
See Chauncey B. Tinker, Nature's Simple Plan (Princeton, 1922) for a brief discussion of each.

43. Ibid.
44. Ibid., p. 42.
45. Ibid., p. 41.
46. Ibid., pp. 44-45.
47. Ibid., p. 42.

48. It is interesting to note further that Moore's confusion did not lead him to underestimate Burns. While still holding to the natural genius thesis, he feels that Burns can become a great poet: "He seems to possess too great a facility of composition and is too easily satisfied with his own productions. Fame may be procured by novelty, but it must be supported by merit."
(Ibid., p. 45) Burns must then be much more than an inspired ploughman or else Moore would have been satisfied with the poet's "facility" and "easy satisfaction."

CHAPTER II

1. BC (1930), 31.

2. See Blacklock's letter in C-W, I, p. 417. Dugald Stewart in his letter to Currie says he feared only the worst from the very first, when Burns decided to go to Edinburgh. See Currie, I, pp. 137 ff.


4. Tinker comments that Burns was the answer to the prayers for an inspired peasant: "He had the divine fire for which Gray had longed and a Satanic pride which kept him from licking the boots of his patrons." (Tinker, p. 104.) But Tinker further points out - and this is the crux of Burns's troubles with the literati, who did not like the idea - that he was
also the proof that education does not hurt a poet; one does not have to be an uneducated savage to be inspired; genius and education are not incompatible. (Ibid., p. 105)


7. Ibid., No. 63, pp. 56-57.

8. C-W, II, p. 79. Even the aged and ailing Adam Smith sought to help Burns and suggested employment in the salt office. See B-D-C, p. 17.


10. Further indications of Burns's celebrity are to be seen in Andrew Dalzel's letter to Sir Robert Leston (C-W, II, pp. 79-80) and in Mrs. Barbauld's letter to her father (C-W, II, p. 57).

11. For the best short discussion of these traditions see David Batches, Robert Burns (1950), Chapter I.

12. See Daiches, pp. 6 ff.

13. See Snyder's comments on the critics' choices of the neo-classic poems, pp. 194-231.


15. Ibid.

16. Ibid.

17. Ibid.

18. Ibid., p. 96.

19. Ibid.

20. Ibid.

21. "The Jolly Beggars" and "Holy Willie's Prayer" were surreptitiously published in 1801 by the firm of Stewart and Melkie. It was due to Scott's praise of the "The Jolly Beggars" in this edition that attention was drawn to the poem. See C-W, I, p. 245.

23. Ibid.

24. Ibid. Moore, however, could also appreciate Burns's satires, even if he did not approve of them, for in this same letter he asks Burns for the MS copy of "Holy Willie's Prayer."

25. Ibid.

26. Again in November he advises Burns to adopt pure English. (B-D-C, pp. 33 ff) The doctor is patriotic enough to admit he would prefer a Scottish language if it existed, but since it does not, Burns should use English and limit the Scots to humorous touches and pieces of naiveté. He again suggests that a work of greater magnitude be considered and congratulates the poet on drawing his images directly from nature instead of using hackneyed phrases and borrowed allusions.

27. Moore to Burns, June 10, 1789, C-W, III, p. 50.


30. Burns felt the sting of Gregory's criticism, for he says, "Dr. Gregory is a good man, but he crucifies me." (C-W, III, p. 76).

31. Dr. Gregory to Burns, C-W, III, p. 75.

32. Ibid. Italics here mine.

33. Ibid.

34. Ibid.

35. Ibid.


38. See for example Letters, I, pp. 14, 112, 291, 83, 100; II, pp. 169, 265, 59, 76, 159, 196 where Burns expresses his great admiration and love for Sterne, Mackenzie, Thomson, Shenstone, etc.

40. Ibid.

41. Dr. Anderson to Currie, September 28, 1799, BC (1925), p. 11.

42. Ibid., p. 12.

43. Ibid., p. 16.

44. Ibid.

45. C-W, II, p. 194. In his Edinburgh Common Place Book Burns wrote his opinions of Lord Glencairn, Blair, and Dugald Stewart which should be consulted to see that Burns was in no way overestimating his patrons. See C-W, II, pp. 86-87.

46. See Graham's discussion in Scottish Men of Letters, pp. 239 ff.


49. Ibid.

50. Ibid.


52. Ibid., p. 58.

53. Ibid., p. 59.

54. Ibid., p. 71.

55. Ibid., p. 114.

56. B-D-C, p. 111. Mrs. Dunlop, like Dugald Stewart, feared that Burns would be spoiled in Edinburgh (See her letter, B-D-C, p. 5). Snyder makes the point that if Mrs. Dunlop was defending Burns so vigorously in 1788 it is no wonder that his detractors were so bitter in 1796. (See Snyder, pp. 331-332).


58. The legend of drink and several of the anecdotes that have contributed to the Burns myth are admirably traced by Snyder in "Burns and His Biographers," BC (1932), 55-74.
60. Cf. note 1.
63. Ibid.
64. Ibid.
65. Ibid., p. 256.
66. Ibid.
67. Ibid. Burns wrote to Mrs. Dunlop in 1791 that he looked upon her god-son, Francis Wallace as his "chef-d'oeuvre in that species of manufacture, as I look on Tam o' Shanter to be my standard performance in the poetical line." (B-D-G, p. 313).
69. WSD, VI, p. 219. Italics mine.
70. Ibid., p. 286.
71. Ibid., p. 291.
72. Ibid., p. 227. Italics mine.
73. Ibid.
74. See Appendix, pp. 114-15.
75. Snyder, Life, pp. 131-82.
76. Daiches, p. 246.

INTERLUDE

1. It may be noted here that the reviews of the Edinburgh edition of Burns's poems were few in number and were for the most part repetitions of Sibbald and Mackenzie. Snyder, however, points out in his Life (pp. 230-31) that the second edition made Burns's fame in England and brought out a parody of "To a Daisy" by "A friend to virtue." If, however, this edition did make his fame, the results were deterred until 1793 when Cadell and Davies published his poems. No significant criticism was made until after Currie in 1800.
2. The original newspaper is not extant today. It must be assumed that the best copy is the one she approved for Dr. Currie in 1800. Currie bowdlerized even it to a great extent. See WSD, VI, p. 367. All references in the text are to the reprint in WSD.

3. WSD, VI, p. 371.


5. Ibid.


7. Ibid., p. 703.

8. Ibid.

9. Ibid.


11. Ibid., p. 413.

12. BC, (1925), 11.


15. Ibid., p. 216.

16. Ibid., pp. 559-61.

17. Ibid., pp. 559-60.

18. Ibid., p. 560.

19. Heron even attempted to silence those who railed against Burns's impiety by showing how great a knowledge Burns had of and to what good use he put Sacred Scripture in his poetry. (Ibid., p. 214) This did not mean, however, that Heron passed over in silence Burns's supposed dissipation. On the contrary, for he is one of the main sources for the whole Burns drinking legend. (See pp. 555 ff).


23. *Ibid.* The author also laments the use of the Scots dialect, but wisely adds that "...the peculiarity of humour which he displays, and manners he describes could not be conveyed in any other language." (*Ibid.*)


CHAPTER XIII

1. Rpt. in BC (1921), 102.


4. Rpt. in BC (1923), 82-83.


8. Rpt. in BC (1924), 34.


15. See Graham's *Social Life*, Chapter XI.


so common, and seemingly so trivial as these, so fine a train of sentiment and imagery, is the surest proof, as well as the most brilliant triumph of original genius." (Ibid., p. 305)

20. Ibid., p. 296.

21. Ibid., pp. 307 ff. In anticipation it is interesting to note Wordsworth's impressions of the "depression poems":

....everywhere you have the impression of human life....Burns also is energetic, solemn and sublime in sentiment, and profound in feeling. His ode to Despondency I can never read without the deepest agitation. (Wordsworth to S. T. Coleridge in The Early Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth, ed., Ernest De Selincourt (Oxford, 1935), p. 222.)


23. Ibid., p. 298.

24. Ibid., p. 302.

25. Ibid., p. 10.

26. Ibid., pp. 310 ff.

27. Ibid., pp. 298 ff.


29. Ibid.

30. Ibid., p. 315.

31. Ibid. Note.

32. Ibid., p. 327.

33. Ibid., pp. 327-28.

34. See especially Ibid., pp. 249 ff, 151, 203 ff, 219.

35. BC (1923), 77-78.

37. Ibid., pp. 366 ff.
38. Ibid.
40. Recent findings have shown that Burns would have soon been promoted to commissioner of excise in due course. See Snyder, pp. 397 ff.
42. Ibid., p. 417.
43. Ibid.
44. Ibid., p. 419.
45. Ibid., p. 420. It is of interest to note that Burns was excused for his bad politics because his genius was destroyed of calmness and regularity, or else he would have seen that

...those institutions which condemned him to helpless poverty...[and]...that the same or similar obstacles to the advancement of genius, must exist in every form of civilized society ...(Ibid., p. 376).

47. Ibid., p. 301.
48. The critic treats Burns's dissipations in a most unusual fashion. He wishes the world to view them with compassion and understanding. He then compares Burns to a business man who is a cold person looking always for his per cents. Burns had an abundance of passion and was therefore easily tempted. He concludes with the Miltonic argument: "That he [the business man] does not become openly wicked, is not owing to any virtuous struggle, but merely because he has no inclination." (Ibid., p. 133)
50. Before romanticism had definitely established itself in the country an interesting two volumes appeared in 1804 by David Irving, The Lives of the Scottish Poets.
Although he bases his life on Currie's, he is independent in his interpretation of the poet's genius and points directly to the position of the great Romantic poets when he reproves Moore for advising Burns to become more educated and write some large and important work. Irving feels that Burns's genius lay in the tradition of the Scottish Lyric and Burns was prudent to stay within his bounds.

(See David Irving, The Lives of the Scottish Poets, 2nd ed. (1810), I, pp. 500 ff.)

51. Corrigan, pp. 435-36. The Romantics, however, approved of the dialect and Scottish measures.

52. Lamb, I, p. 46.


All quotations are from this text and will hereafter be cited as Wordsworth.

56. Eclectic, p. 395.

57. Ibid., p. 396.

58. Ibid.

59. Ibid., p. 399.

60. The return to primitivism is obviously no more than a pious wish. None of those who lamented the evils of civilization actually wished to return to a state of savagery. The closest one would wish to come to the happy primitive would seem to be merely the living of a more simple life such as undertaken by Priestly in the United States or the various other small communitistic communities that sprung up in the nineteenth century and quickly died.

61. Eclectic, p. 405.

62. Ibid., pp. 397-98.

63. Ibid., pp. 406-07.

64. Ibid., p. 407.
65. Ibid., p. 408.

66. If Montgomery cringes before Burns's satires, he does not do so before Burns's life. He states precisely and explicitly that he has no desire to meddle with Burns's follies; it is only the poetry that he is interested in and the life of the poet should come into view only when it is inseparable from the poetry. Such a view is certainly admirable in the face of Jeffrey's blast at the poetry, because the poet's life was immoral. (Ibid., p. 402)


68. Jeffrey, p. 249. As further proof that the Romantics realized that Burns was educated, one need only consider that Southey excluded Burns from his Lives of the Uneducated Poets.

69. Ibid.

70. Ibid., p. 552. Jeffrey's most blatant contradiction is seen in his advice to the "new school of poetry":

Though they will not be reclaimed from their puny affectations by the example of their learned predecessors they may, perhaps, submit to be admonished by a self-taught and illiterate poet [italics mine], who drew from Nature far more directly than they can do.... (Ibid., p. 276).

71. Cf. Note 68 supra.

72. Jeffrey, p. 252.

73. Ibid.

74. Ibid., p. 255.

75. Ibid., p. 260

76. Ibid., p. 262

77. Ibid.

78. Ibid., p. 266.

79. Ibid., p. 269.

80. Ibid., pp. 269-70.
81. Ibid., p. 267.
82. Ibid., p. 252.
83. Ibid.
84. Ibid., p. 270.
85. Ibid., p. 259.
86. Ibid., p. 256.
87. Snyder, p. 483.
89. Ibid.
90. Ibid.
91. Ibid., p. 25.
92. Ibid.
93. Scott, like Jeffrey, was afraid that Burns was too highminded and lacked chivalry. See pp. 26-27.
94. Ibid., p. 20
95. Ibid.
96. Ibid.
97. Ibid., p. 21.
98. Ibid., p. 22.
99. Ibid.
102. Ibid.
103. Ibid., p. 33.
104. Ibid., p. 34.
106. Scott, p. 35.

107. The Monthly Review, LX (1809), 399-409 and the Universal Magazine, II. S. XI (1809), 132-33 were the only reviews that felt Cromek had done a real service to literature, but their reviews merely recapitulated portions of Burns's life as borrowed from Currie.

108. Alfred Lord Tennyson, A Memoir by his Son, Hallam Lord Tennyson (1897), I, p. 217.

109. Ibid.


111. Ibid., I, 3, p. 226.


113. Ibid., VIII.


116. Ibid., p. 240.


118. Keats to Reynolds, 11, 12, 13 July, 1818, Ibid., p. 325.


120. Keats to G. F. Matthew, November, 1815, Ibid., p. 102. Keats's travelling companion, Charles Brown, pretty well states the Romantic case for Burns when he writes about Burns's tomb:

...I rejoice that Burns is buried there; for though it may be truly argued that the situation of a grave matters nothing to the dead, yet it matters a great deal to the living - to his family no doubt; and all Great Britain belongs to the family of a poet like Burns.

(Charles Brown's Walks in the North, in Letters, I, p. 455)
CHAPTER IV


3. Ibid., title page.

4. Ibid., p. 7.

5. Ibid., p. 19.

6. Ibid., p. 14. Peebles's sarcasm reaches eloquent heights when he jibes at Burns's "fine feelings":

There is something so amiable, so precious, so captivating in sentiment and fine feeling! And a little mouse turned up by the plough, and a mountain daisy far from the world, and a favourite ewe strangled in its tether, and a limping hare, etc. are excellent topics for a man of sentiment, suggest pretty conceits and touching comparisons and exquisite morsels of sentimental delicacies; and Robert Burns is a man of feeling, a man of fine feeling." (Ibid., p. 13)

7. Ibid., p. 17.

8. Josiah Walker printed a Life of Burns in 1811, which, as far as biography is concerned, was a fair attempt to present Burns without all the embroidery and anecdote of the early biographers. The volume, however, was written with a snobbish and patronizing air. See Josiah Walker, "Life of Robert Burns" in Poems by Robert Burns, I (Edinburgh, 1811).


10. Ibid., pp. 5-11.

11. Ibid., pp. 10-11.

12. Ibid., p. 65.

13. Ibid., pp. 22-23 and p. 69.

15. Ibid., pp. 11-14.
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid., pp. 2-3.


19. Gray denies that Burns was a habitual drunkard (p. 526), that he mingled with society that made him indecent or gross (p. 527); says he was able to read and converse intelligently to the end of his life (p. 527) and flatly denies most of Jeffrey's gravest charges (p. 529). Findlater gives him a good reputation as an excise officer (p. 532). For the texts of these letters I have used C-W, vol. IV rather than Peterkin.


23. Ibid., p. 270.
24. Ibid., p. 271.
25. Ibid., p. 267, ff.
26. Ibid., pp. 273-74; the Scots Magazine, LXXVIII (1816), pp. 605-612 lacerated Wordsworth's "Letter." In the Edinburgh Monthly Magazine (1817) Wordsworth was again attacked. However "N" vindicated Wordsworth in Blackwoods (October, 1817), pp. 65-73 and was rebutted by "D" in the November, 1817 issue, pp. 201-204.


28. Ibid., p. 130.
29. Ibid., p. 131.

31. Ibid., p. 131.

32. Ibid., p. 129.

33. Ibid.

34. Ibid., p. 130.

35. Ibid.

36. Ibid.


39. Ibid., p. 525 and p. 527.

40. Ibid., p. 527.

41. Ibid., p. 528. Keats, after reading the review wrote to George and Georgiana Keats: "The Blackwood's review has committed themselves in a scandalous heresy - they have been putting up Hogg the ettrick shepherd against Burns - the senseless villains." (The Letters of John Keats, ed. E. H. Rollins (Cambridge [Mass.], 1958), II, p. 78.)

42. Blackwood's, (July, 1819), 469-70.

43. Thomas Campbell, Specimens of the British Poets, VII (1819), pp. 243 ff.

44. Ibid., p. 246.

45. Ibid., pp. 242-43.


47. Ibid., p. xxxix.

48. Ibid., p. xii.

49. See especially Alexander Webster, Burns and the Kirk (Aberdeen, 1888-89).

51. In 1821 the most eloquent, patriotic, no-holds-barred panegyric of Burns's life appeared in Lives of Eminent Scotsmen, by the Society of Ancient Scots (1822), I, part I, pp. 157-198. Critically the work is useless, but as an indication of the temper of times concerning Burns's personal morality and that of his poetry, it is a valuable document.


54. See Snyder, p. 488 for references.

55. His most famous work was The Works of Robert Burns, 8 vols., (1834).

56. Lockhart, p. xxv.

57. Ibid., p. xviii-xix.

58. Ibid., p. xxxii.

59. Ibid., p. xxxi.

60. Ibid.

61. Ibid., p. cvi.

62. Ibid., pp. lxxviii and cxxii.


64. Ibid., p. 671.

65. Lockhart, pp. xcvii ff.


67. Ibid., pp. lxxi ff.

68. Ibid., p. xxxii-iv. Note, however, Mrs. Jameson's defense of Burns's loves in her The Loves of the Poets, II (1829).
70. Ibid.
71. See note 55 supra.
74. C-L, p. 270.
75. Ibid., p. 307.
76. Ibid., p. 308.
77. Ibid., pp. 283 ff.
78. Ibid., p. 285.
79. Ibid.
80. Ibid.
81. Ibid.
82. This quotation is from his lecture "Heroes and Hero Worship," Lecture 5, in The Complete Works as cited in note 73, vols. 1-2, p. 413. The same idea is expressed, but not as well, in C-L, p. 277.
83. C-L, pp. 277-78.
84. Ibid., pp. 279-80.
85. Ibid., p. 279.
86. Ibid., p. 286.
87. Ibid., p. 287.
88. Ibid.
89. Ibid., p. 289.
90. Ibid.
91. See especially, Chambers, C-W, WSD, and Henley.
92. See Waddell's Life (Glasgow, 1867) and Webster's Burns and the Kirk (Aberdeen, 1889).

93. The work of Daiches, Snyder, and De Lancey Ferguson is monumental in this respect. No work by them should be overlooked.


APPENDIX

2. Ibid., p. 25.
3. Ibid., p. 227.
4. Ibid., p. 296. Wallace, the editor of the letters, conjectures that the lines that offended Mrs. Dunlop were: those beginning "No Tam, O Tam, had thae been queans." (p. 286). Mrs. Dunlop disapproves of how the dogs sit; she feels that it would be more proper to describe their place where rather than their place how (p. 325).
5. Ibid., p. 297.
6. Ibid.
8. See note 122.
9. Burns-Dunlop Correspondence, p. 325.
11. Ibid., pp. 31 and 195.
12. Ibid., p. 39.
13. Ibid., p. 121.
15. Ibid., p. 110.
16. Ibid., p. 168.
17. For examples of Mrs. Dunlop's detailed criticism see
p. 93 for one on "Epistle to Graham of Fintry" and
p. 304 for "Elegy on Miss Burnett."


20. Following are several of the important references to
Jenny Little made by Mrs. Dunlop: *B-D-C*, pp. 126-27,
185-86, 226-27, 279, 283.
Aiken, John. General Biography; or Lives, Critical and Historical, of the most eminent Persons, of all Ages, Countries, Conditions, and Professions, arranged according to Alphabetical Order. Partially rptd. in British Critic, XXIII (January - June), 634.


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Quarterly Review. Review of John Clare. XXIII (May, 1820), 166-174.


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*Scots Magazine.* "Burns". LVIII (July, 1796), 506.

*Scots Magazine.* "Burns". LIX (January, 1797), 7-8.

*Scots Magazine.* "General Remarks on The Life and Character of Burns". LXVI (February & April, 1802), 131-133, 300-303.


*Scots Magazine.* Review of Cronk. LXVI (1809), 198-203.


Snyder, Franklin B. "Burns and His Biographers." *Burns Chronicle* (1932), 55-74.


