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## Maternity, Self-Representation, and Social Critique in Nineteenth-Century Working-Class Scottish Women's Poetry

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MATERNITY, SELF-REPRESENTATION, AND SOCIAL CRITIQUE IN  
NINETEENTH-CENTURY WORKING-CLASS SCOTTISH WOMEN'S POETRY

By

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The members of the Committee approve the dissertation of Kathryn Meehan  
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To God,  
To my dear friends,  
To my beautiful family, with love.

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## ABSTRACT

This dissertation studies self-representation, maternity, and social critique in the work of nineteenth-century working-class Scottish women poets. I focus on books of poetry by Janet Little (1759-1792), Christian Milne (1773-1820?), Susanna Hawkins (1787-?), and Janet Hamilton (1795-1873), while also contextualizing each poet's work in relationship to the publications of other working-class British women poets of the nineteenth century. I agree with Judith Rosen's revision of Donna Landry's argument in *The Muses of Resistance*. Rosen asserts that she observes "strategic affirmation" in working-class women's verse where Landry observes "dissolution and defeat" in poetry of the nineteenth-century. In this dissertation, I propose that each poet's treatment of maternity, self-representation, and social critique reflects "strategic affirmation."

Each volume affirms the poet's authority as a social critic, while also emphasizing her gender-appropriate perspective through maternal sympathy, or a related form of feeling for a child. Each working-class woman poet also claims a space for self-representation and creates a self-portrait which includes her life experience, creative inspiration, and personal beliefs. This strategy shapes each volume into a collection of poems which would be acceptable to nineteenth-century readers, especially important given each poet's unstable position as a working-class woman.

In the first chapter in this study, "**Janet Little and Working-Class Publication: Setting the Stage**," I argue that the content and publication history of Janet Little's *The Poetical Works of Janet Little, The Scotch Milkmaid* (1792) sets the stage for the study of nineteenth-century Scottish working-class women's poetry. Little frequently represents her self in relationship to Robert Burns and negotiates her gender and class identities. Little's representation of maternal sympathy includes a poem which expresses concern and hypothetical guardianship for an aristocratic child patron. Little also critiques pressures of courtship and marriage in her insightful portrayals of upper-class young women. I propose that Little's critique of class and gender constraints affirms her authority as an observer of upper-class women's concerns in addition to her insight into working-class women's struggles, as revealed through her Burns poems.

In Chapter Two, "**The Artless Muse: The Poetry of Christian Milne**," I argue that Milne's single published book of poetry, *Simple Poems on Simple Subjects* (1805),

includes “strategic affirmation” in Milne’s complex, often contradictory portrayals of self, maternity, and social critique. Milne’s poems frequently address patrons, critics, and potential supporters in the middle- and upper classes. Milne’s shifting tone reveals her complex relationships to her class superiors and her strategic approach in addressing each of them. One significant event which emphasizes the different eras of Little’s and Milne’s publications is Burns’s death. Little addresses Burns as a living contemporary, whom she briefly met, greatly admires, and with whom she shares a patron. Milne addresses the “shade” of Burns after his death, which allows Milne freedom to critique his behavior and poetry. The preface to Milne’s book of poetry also includes the strategic presentation of working-class women’s verse, which affirms Milne’s class and gender and seeks to reassure readers of her appropriate behavior according to both identity categories. I propose that intersections of maternity and social critique in Milne’s volume are significant, including a poem in which Milne urges her daughter to read, self-educate, and pursue ambitions which result from her education.

In Chapter three, “**Nature stood still’: The Poetry of Susannah Hawkins,**” I argue that Hawkins’s personifications of moral binaries and brief sketches of maternal sympathy and self-representation reflect the significance of her precarious class and gender position and the volatile cultural moment during which her volume was published in 1827. Hawkins writes poems of concern for middle- and upper-class ladies and gentlemen, and in one poem, “Lines on a Gentleman’s Son,” she expresses concern for an upper-class child. This likely provided her nineteenth-century readers with evidence of Hawkins’s potential maternal sympathy although she was not a mother, reassuring her readers of her gender-appropriate concerns. Hawkins’s poems vacillate between strategic descriptions of moral abstractions in rural scenes and her concern for various members of the royal family and several other ladies and gentlemen. Her volume also includes a brief prose introduction which forms a significant moment of self-representation. Although Hawkins’s volume frequently defers to those in the middle- and upper-classes, the prose introduction creates a small yet vivid self-portrait of the working-class poet.

In Chapter Four, “**Where there’s a will there is ever a way!’: The Poetry of Janet Hamilton,**” I argue that Hamilton’s multiple volumes, published from the 1860’s through the 1880’s, include a significant range of political and personal concerns and



publication histories crucial to our understanding of working-class women's poetry. Many of Hamilton's poems and essays vehemently condemn the effects of alcohol and advocate temperance. In addition to temperance, Hamilton also portrays the hardships of her physical labor as a tambourer (embroiderer) in "A Lay of the Tambour Frame," an examination of the physical realities of working-class life and their toll on the individual. Hamilton's volumes delve into the destructive effects of the rapid industrialization in her community and the struggle for working-class men's and women's rights, yet she also critiques national and international political injustices.

In Chapter Five, "**Between the Poet and the Public: Edwards's Anthology and Late-Century Publication Practice,**" I argue that the critical arrangement and content of working-class women's poetry in Edwards's anthology, published between 1880 and 1897, reflects the persistent popularity and circulation of working-class women poets' work throughout the century. Edwards's introductions often describe the poet's devotion to her domestic duties in addition to her creative impulses, and her contentment with her "simple" way of life. The working-class women's poetry included in the anthology reveals "strategic affirmation," from conventional explorations of maternity to social critique focused on poverty and workhouse conditions. Edwards's editorial mediation limits the range of expression of the working-class women poets he includes although his anthology reflects the prominence of working-class women poets in mid- to late-nineteenth century Scottish culture.

## INTRODUCTION

This dissertation studies self-representation, maternity, and social critique in the work of nineteenth-century working-class Scottish women poets. I focus on the poetry of Janet Little (1759-1792), Christian Milne (1773-1820?), Susanna Hawkins (1787-?), and Janet Hamilton (1795-1873), while also contextualizing each poet's work in relationship to the publications of other working-class British women poets of the nineteenth century. Judith Rosen has recently offered an important revision of Donna Landry's argument about plebeian poetry in *The Muses of Resistance: Laboring-Class Women's Poetry in Britain, 1739-1796*. Rosen describes her study of Ellen Johnston, "A Factory Girl" poet in these terms:

I aim to reopen areas that many critics have overlooked or shut down: to help recover poetry as a revealing, if highly fraught site of Victorian working-class women's expression; and, in doing so, to question the still-common insistence on radical resistance as the key component of working-class subjectivity. Where Landry would find dissolution and defeat, for example, I see strategic affirmation, as Johnston creates poetic personae that negotiate the often conflicting demands of her gender, her class, and her craft. (206-207)

Like Rosen, I find significant "strategic affirmation" in the volumes of working-class poets I examine in this study. Although the poetry of Little, Milne, Hawkins, and Hamilton includes limited evidence of "radical resistance," I propose that their volumes of poetry reveal significant cultural perspectives, remarkable poetic achievement, and important shifts in nineteenth-century working-class women's publication.

In *The Laboring Muses: Work, Writing, and the Plebeian Social Order, 1730-1830*, William Christmas observes, "Documentary evidence shows that plebeian poets, both men and women, were a popular, uninterrupted feature of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century literary culture" (18). Scottish working-class female poets, in particular, produced significant volumes throughout the nineteenth century. Although these poets share a national identity, I argue that identity categories such as class and gender combine with national identity to form significant distinctions between working-class women's verse in Scotland and working-class women's poetry throughout the rest of nineteenth-century Britain. Chapters one through four analyze single volumes of

poetry from Little, Milne, Hawkins, and Hamilton which reflect distinct cultural moments in nineteenth century Scotland. The concluding chapter includes working-class Scottish women's verse in the last two decades of the century, as it appears in a sizable anthology of Scottish poets, *Modern Scottish Poets, With Biographical and Critical Notices*, edited by D.H. Edwards and published between 1880 and 1897. I argue that Edwards's anthology reveals a wide body of readership for working-class Scottish women poets and the prominence of working-class women's verse in Scottish culture in the closing decades of the nineteenth century.

I propose that each poet's treatment of maternity, self-representation, and social critique reflects "strategic affirmation." Each poet employs her own form of social critique, usually progressive observations of societal ills, often balanced by conservative portrayals of maternal sympathy, or, for the poets who were not mothers, sympathy for an upper-class child. This strategic balance of conventional and progressive subject matter opens a space for self-representation. Each poet portrays herself differently yet occupies the space of the self-aware poet, an invaluable opportunity to provide readers with a working-class woman poet's representation of self in relationship to her poetic achievement. This strategy shapes each volume into a collection of poems which would be acceptable to nineteenth-century readers, especially important given each poet's unstable position as a working-class woman. Each volume affirms the poet's authority as a social critic, while also emphasizing her gender-appropriate perspective through maternal sympathy, or a related form of feeling for a child. Each working-class woman poet claims another vitally important form of authority as she claims a space for self-representation and creates a self-portrait which includes her life experience, creative inspiration, and personal beliefs.

These poets demonstrate varied strategies when they perform social critique, which enables each poet to use her experience as a working-class woman to identify forms of social injustice and imagine possibilities for improvements. Each poet strategically moves between conservative and progressive perspectives she must carefully negotiate in order to find acceptance in the form of publication. Little's volume, published in 1792, focuses on upper-class women's constraints, which affirms her authority as an observer of upper-class women's concerns in addition to her insight into

working-class women's struggles, as revealed through her Burns poems. In Milne's text, published in 1805, strategic social critique includes various addresses to patrons, critics, and potential supporters in the middle- and upper classes. Milne's shifting tone reveals her complex relationships to her class superiors and her strategic approach in addressing each of them. One significant event which emphasizes the different eras of Little's and Milne's publications is Burns's death. Little addresses Burns as a living contemporary, whom she briefly met, greatly admires, and with whom she shares a patron. Milne addresses the "shade" of Burns after his death, which allows Milne freedom to critique his behavior and poetry. The preface to Milne's book of poetry also includes the strategic presentation of working-class women's verse, which affirms Milne's class and gender identity and seeks to reassure readers of her appropriate behavior according to both identity categories.

Although Hawkins's volume was published more than two decades after Milne's, in 1827, most of her poems express more conservative ideas. As evidenced by Hawkins's book of poetry, nineteenth-century Scottish women's verse does not reflect a simple progression of form and content throughout the century. Hawkins's verse likely reflects the tense political atmosphere in the decades following the end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815, in which fear of revolution in Britain heightened the risk of expressing any progressive political or social critique, particularly for a working-class female poet. Hawkins's text employs a significantly different form of social critique which strategically relies on classical form and the personification of abstract moral concepts to critique immorality with few references to contemporary figures or events. Hawkins's text affirms her national identity, class, and gender in her brief introduction, yet her self-representation does not reappear in her poems, unlike Little's, Milne's and Hamilton's more in-depth portrayals of self.

By the 1860's, Hamilton's books of poetry reveal a working-class Scottish woman poet whose popularity and success provide her with a medium for addressing vitally important working-class concerns, including the profound effects of factories, railroads, and other forms of rapid industrialization within Hamilton's community in the mid- nineteenth century. Hamilton's manifold strategies appear throughout her multiple published volumes of verse. Her stringent social critique targets the unjust treatment of

the working classes, particularly working-class women, and she frequently occupies the tradition of a bard who envisions working-class solidarity and improvements in the quality of life for men and women who share her class and national identity.

In the wake of Hamilton's success, her verse appears in Edwards's extensive, multi-volume anthology of "modern" Scottish poets, published between 1880 and 1897. I argue that the appearance of Hamilton and several working-class women poets in Edwards's male-dominated anthology demonstrates the force of working-class women's poetry in mid- to late- nineteenth-century Scotland and the editorial implications of the anthology as a form of publication. Although Edwards's anthology includes several working-class women's poems which employ similar strategic affirmation, Edwards's editing strategies complicate our reading of the poets and their publication context. Editorial mediation and its effects on the working-class women's verse in the anthology exclude progressive representations of maternity, yet, like the books of poetry from earlier decades, scathing social critique and innovative self-representation proves acceptable for inclusion.

Although the strategy of social critique informs each woman's poetry, references to maternity and self-representation vary in each volume. Maternity serves as a significant component of identity as it provides a gendered perspective, which can act as a leveling force or serve to reinforce class difference. Hawkins's and Little's volumes do not include explicit autobiographical references to maternal experience, as each woman was unmarried and apparently did not yet have children when composing her poems. Both volumes, however, include single poems written in honor of an upper-class child, and Hawkins hypothetically refers to her guardianship of the child. Readers of Little and Hawkins in the early decades of the nineteenth century likely found evidence of potential maternal sympathy, a desirable quality, in these poems. Maternal sympathy proved particularly important for working-class women who could benefit from reinforcement of their appropriate gendered behavior and sentiments since publication represented a risky foray into space typically occupied by middle- and upper-class men and women. Milne and Hamilton frequently focus on their own children as each poet describes the complex responsibilities which accompany the roles of mother, wife, and poet. Both volumes also include intersections of social critique and maternity. Milne urges her daughter to self

educate, and Hamilton urges working-class mothers to educate their children as a source of working-class reform. I argue that this dual strategy of social critique balanced by adherence to norms of class and gender in representations of maternal sympathy creates a new kind of space for self-representation.

Self-representation for working-class poets, William Christmas points out in *The Lab'ring Muses*, proves vital as they negotiate their precarious positions in the literary world. In the texts of Milne and Hamilton, self-representation frequently intersects with social critique based on each poet's experience as a working-class woman. The self-representation of Little and Hawkins, however, includes less social critique yet allows each poet to present a self-portrait of a working-class woman to her readers. Although each poet's self-representation affirms nation, class, gender, and personal experience differently, each provides the poet an opportunity to explore self-awareness and creative inspiration. Not only can she claim her authority as a working-class Scottish woman poet with valuable experience and perspectives which she deems worthwhile subject matter for a book of poetry, she also occupies the poetic tradition made famous by Wordsworth and described by Keats as the "egotistical sublime." Each woman poet, however briefly, expresses the importance of self in relationship to poetry and its accompanying social and creative insights.

In her article "The Poetics of the Working Classes," (2001), Florence Boos considers the constraints and limitations involved in the publication and consequent study of working-class poets.

Mindful in any case of the screens and divides of time and cultural evolution, readers of nineteenth-century working-class poetry might also keep in mind that the extant works we have may themselves represent a very limited and somewhat biased sample. The British class system was brutally effective, and the testimonies of almost all published working-class poets to the difficulties they encountered strongly suggest that it interdicted "Parnassian" as well as non-"Parnassian" efforts of many more unschooled manual laborers. (1)

I analyze the work of Little, Milne, Hawkins, Hamilton, and other poets, therefore, with an awareness that the literary and cultural knowledge available through the study of their texts exists in relationship to the abundant information we have yet to discover

concerning working-class women's poetry. A growing field of scholarship suggests the significance of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century British working-class women's poetry, including the work of scholars such as Bridget Keegan, Moira Ferguson, Landry, Christmas, and Boos. Keegan's article, "*The Mean Unletter'd Female Bard of Aberdeen!*": *The Complexities of Christian Milne's "Simple Poems on Simple Subjects"* (2002), analyzes Milne's collection and proposes the significance of Milne's "double-voicedness" and class-inflected perspective. I argue that Milne's "double-voicedness" complicates self-representation, maternity, and social critique in her volume of poetry. Another study focused on women's poetry of the era, Moira Ferguson's *Eighteenth-Century Poets: Nation, Class, and Gender* (1995), proposes that identity categories of nation, class, and gender form crucial intersections in working-class women's poetry. Her skillful analysis guides much of my own critical practice, and I maintain that the relationship between personal and political concerns in working-class women's poetry is vitally important to our understanding of their work.

In addition to the scholarship of Keegan and Ferguson, Landry's landmark work, *The Muses of Resistance: Laboring-Class Women's Poetry in Britain: 1739-1796* (1990), continues to provide scholars with the first and foremost comprehensive examination of eighteenth-century British working-class women's verse. Judith Rosen's response to Landry attests to the centrality of Landry's text in this field of scholarship and the strength of subsequent revisions of Landry's arguments. Landry's critical study includes an examination of the poetry of Little, whose Scottish national identity receives due treatment, along with nuanced readings of other laboring-class women's poetic discourse. Landry and Ferguson suggest the significance of laboring-class women poets' various forms of work in the home, factories, and fields in relationship to their creative labors of poetic composition. I argue that working-class women poet's interwoven responsibilities become particularly significant in their representations of self, social critique, and maternity.

*The Lab'ring Muses*, Christmas's current and comprehensive study of laboring-class poetry and culture, includes a helpful overview of much of the recent scholarship on the subject. I share Christmas's interests in self-representation and social critique, but my study narrows its focus to female poets and maternity as a key component of gendered

self-representation in relationship to social critique. Christmas's study enriches our understanding of laboring-class poetic discourse of the era, also contextualizing the poetry within middle- and upper-class portrayals of laboring-class poets. *The Lab'ring Muses* also includes a lively example of the continuing scholarly discussion and analysis of Mary Collier's poem, "The Woman's Labour," published in 1739, as Christmas, Landry, and Ferguson argue regarding the complexities of Collier's remarkable poem. In addition to scholarship on working-class poetry, recent scholarship on maternity in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century British culture also informs my own analysis of maternity in working-class women's poetry. Julie Kipp's *Romanticism, Maternity, and the Body Politic* (2003), an insightful analysis of romantic writing on maternity and its cultural and philosophical context, does not consider the relationship between maternity and working-class culture.

Although each of these scholarly works informs much of my own, I also depart from this body of scholarship in chronological boundaries as my study focuses primarily on poetry written and published in the nineteenth century. I argue that nineteenth-century working-class women's verse discourse evolves into a poetics distinct from the eighteenth-century tradition. I continue the critical dialogue on nineteenth-century British working-class women's poetry begun by such critics Martha Vicinus in her groundbreaking study *The Industrial Muse: Nineteenth-Century British Working-Class Literature* (1974).

Recent articles by Florence Boos in *Victorian Poetry*, including "The 'Homely Muse' in her Diurnal Setting: The Periodical Poetry of 'Marie,' Janet Hamilton, and Fanny Forrester," relate to my study of Janet Hamilton and other nineteenth-century Scottish working-class women poets. Boos's insightful insistence upon the significance of publication processes provides a model for my own study of the publication histories of Janet Little's volume and D.H. Edwards's anthology. Boos's *Working-Class Women Poets in Victorian Britain: An Anthology*, published in April, 2008, examines seventeen poets, divided into three categories: "Rural poets," "Factory poets," and "Lyricists and Feminists." Boos's anthology represents a significant contribution to the field of working-class women's literature, and she includes the poetry of Janet Hamilton in the "Rural Poets" section. Rosen's article provides an excellent analysis of Ellen Johnston's



work, with an emphasis on the working-class poet's relationship to her community which guides my own analysis of the individual and community relationship among the poets included in this study. The careful analysis and insightful scholarship begun by Vicinus, Boos, Rosen, and other scholars interested in the work of nineteenth-century British working-class women poets provides a foundation for my own analysis.

This work has developed in the context of the scholarship on the more canonical laboring-class texts of Robert Burns and John Clare. Although scholars have maintained a consistent interest in Burns's work, recent scholarship also examines the life and poetry of Clare, including Jonathan Bate's 2003 text, *John Clare, A Biography*. Although my study focuses on women poets, scholarship on all eighteenth- and nineteenth-century British working-class poets shares a concern with the significance of class position in the study of literature and culture of the era.

One of the fundamental challenges of this field of scholarship is the limited availability of many working-class women's texts. An online resource, *A Biographical and Bibliographical Database of British and Irish Laboring-Class Poets: 1700-1900*, a component of the "Laboring-Class Writers Homepage," in association with Nottingham Trent University, provides an invaluable foundation for my search. Several scholars, including Keegan and Christmas, compiled the database, which provides a remarkably thorough listing and bibliography of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century British laboring-class poets. In addition to the laboring-class poets "superlist," the online collection of the University of California, Davis, *British Women Poets of the Romantic Era*, includes online editions of books of poetry published by Christian Milne, Susanna Hawkins and several other working-class poets. Another online collection, Alexander Street Press's *Scottish Women Poets of the Romantic Period*, edited by Stephen Behrendt and Nancy Kushigian, also includes the poetry of Milne and Hawkins. In the Special Collections of Strozier Library at Florida State University, I have also accessed first editions of Janet Little, Janet Hamilton, and D.H. Edwards's anthology.

Janet Little's single publication, *The Poetical Works of Janet Little, the Scotch Milkmaid*, was published in 1792. The publication history of Little's book of poetry reveals the complicated and often problematic publication processes behind the public availability of working-class women's poetry in the late eighteenth century. For my

study of Little's text, I will be using a first edition of Little's *Poetical Works* in the Special Collections of Strozier Library at Florida State University.

Christian Milne's single publication, *Simple Poems on Simple Subjects*, was published by subscription in Aberdeen in 1805. Susanna Hawkins sold her poems, published for free by the *Dumfries Courier*, door-to-door for 50 years. Her publications include *The Rural Enthusiast, and other Poems*, published in 1808, and *The Poetical Works*, published in 1829. I access the texts of Milne and Hawkins through the online collection of the University of California, Davis, *British Women Poets of the Romantic Era*.

Janet Hamilton published more prolifically than these predecessors. Periodicals such as *The Adviser* and *The Working Man's Friend* included her poems and essays, and five collections of her work were also published. They include *Poems and Songs* (1863); *Poems and Essays of a Miscellaneous Character* (1863); *Poems of purpose and Sketches in Prose of Scottish Peasant Life and Character in Auld Langsyne* (1865); *Poems, Essays, and Sketches* (1870); and *Poems, Essays, and Sketches: Comprising the Principal Pieces from her Complete Works* (1870). According to Boos, Hamilton was perhaps the most popular working-class poet in Scotland in her later years. For this study, I have access to *Poems and Songs*; *Poems, Essays, and Sketches*; and *Poems, Essays, and Sketches: Comprising the Principal Pieces from her Complete Works*, all first editions, in the Special Collections of Strozier Library.

In chapter five, I examine the publication history of D.H. Edwards's sixteen-volume collection, *Modern Scottish Poets, With Biographical and Critical Notices*, a copy of which is also available in the Special Collections of Strozier Library. Published from 1880 to 1897, Edwards's anthology reflects the prominence of Scottish working-class women's poetry late in the nineteenth century, along with Edwards's significant editorial mediation. Edwards's anthologizing practices reveal a complicated relationship between working-class men's and women's poetry and an emphasis on conservative perspectives in the "biographical sketches" which introduce each poet's section. Edwards's representation of Janet Hamilton's work proves limiting when compared to Hamilton's book-length publications.

Any approach which considers class as an important component of literary and cultural analysis must address special concerns of methodology and terminology. The definition of class, as an identity category or socioeconomic position, evolves as scholarship continues seeking to conceptualize class and explore its significance in the lives of people in various cultural moments. The concept of a “working class,” therefore, continues to shift as scholars re-define its origins and characteristics. E.P. Thompson’s *The Making of the English Working Class* (1968) guides my analysis of working-class culture and identity. Anna Clarke’s *The Struggle for the Breeches: Gender and the Making of the British Working Class* (1995) also influences my approach, with her careful consideration of gender and *British* national identity in the continuing scholarly discussion of British working-class culture in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

I choose to employ the term “working-class” since this project focuses on nineteenth-century literature and culture, and significant formations of working-class identity occur in the nineteenth-century. Landry and Christmas employ the terms “laboring-class” and “plebeian,” as alternatives to “working-class,” therefore emphasizing eighteenth-century social distinctions without employing the terminology associated with Marx and nineteenth-century cultural analysis. Both Landry and Christmas also focus much of their study on rural and agricultural working-class poets, while I use “working-class” to describe poets from rural and urban backgrounds in the nineteenth century. In *The Laboring Muses*, Christmas writes, “Social historians and literary critics alike have long engaged in intra- and cross-disciplinary debates about using a Marxist concept of class to describe historical persons who did not think of themselves in those terms” (43). The complexity of each poet’s awareness and articulation of her own social station informs my study. My approach seeks a better understanding of each text and its specific cultural moment, and also seeks to avoid the imposition of contemporary theories of class-formation or class-consciousness where they do not prove appropriate or relevant. Christmas includes E.P. Thompson’s cautionary statement:

If class was not available within people’s own cognitive system, if they saw themselves and fought out their own internal battles in terms of “estates” or “ranks” or “orders,” etc., then if we describe these struggles in class terms we

must exert caution against any tendency to read back any subsequent notions of class. (43)

This study suggests the significance of the dynamic relationship between class and gender identities, continuing many of the lines of inquiry begun by scholars such as Thompson, Clarke, and Christmas.

In the first chapter in this study, **“Janet Little and Working-Class Publication: Setting the Stage,”** I argue that the content and publication history of Janet Little’s *The Poetical Works of Janet Little, The Scotch Milkmaid* (1792) sets the stage for the study of nineteenth-century Scottish working-class women’s poetry. *Poetical Works* explores the identity of the working-class female poet. Little’s volume contains several poetic comparisons between herself and Robert Burns, her more famous working-class contemporary.

Publication histories reflect significant shifts in nineteenth-century working-class texts and readership, and multiple forms of mediation and manipulation shaped women’s poetry before it reached readers in published form. As Rosen points out in her article on Ellen Johnston, “The Factory Girl” poet, “To read a volume of working-class verse is, in several important senses, to read a work in translation” (207). Rosen goes on to describe middle-class sponsors’ attitudes towards working-class women poets’ work, and the complicated relationship between patron and poet. Published in 1792 and still circulating after the turn of the century, Janet Little’s volume does not contain an introduction from her editor or patron, but she does dedicate the work to the Countess of Loudoun, the daughter of her employer and patron. Janet Little’s collection also includes a poem titled “A Poem on Contentment, Inscribed to Janet Nicol.” The “Janet Nicol” of the title was a homeless woman, and Little’s poem reflects a concern for the plight of those who live in poverty. Little critiques marriage in the poem, as she wishes Janet Nicol to be spared the “mis’ries” of becoming a wife. With its complex social and personal concerns, Little’s volume sets the stage for this study of nineteenth-century Scottish working-class women’s verse.

Prefaces act as a key component of self-representation in working-class women’s books of poetry. The commonly-employed autobiographical preface, which ranges in length from a paragraph to several pages, begins many collections of working-class

women's poetry. The preface does a great deal of cultural and textual work in relationship to the poetry it introduces. Often preceded by a short introductory note from the editor, the preface ostensibly apologizes for the unsophisticated poetry by introducing readers to some of the particulars of the poet's situation and life experience. Seemingly intended to explain and perhaps even defend the lack of education and literary training which will become evident as one reads the poetry, the preface reveals a complex self-representation. Although we remain unsure of how the editors of each volume may have influenced each poet, or wielded their authority to add or omit sections, the preface often claims to include at least some of the autobiographical information each poet sought to impart to her readers. Although much of working-class women's poetry may seem quite autobiographical at times, the poetry does not make the same explicit claim to autobiography as the prefatory material.

In Chapter Two, "**The Artless Muse: The Poetry of Christian Milne,**" I argue that Milne's single published book of poetry, *Simple Poems on Simple Subjects*, includes "strategic affirmation" in Milne's complex, often contradictory portrayals of self, maternity, and social critique. Milne's poetry, like Little's, includes political and personal reflections. Milne's preface creates a remarkable dialogue with her collection of poetry. Although Milne's subtly subversive ideas surface throughout her poetry, in her prose preface we find explicitly proto-feminist expressions and a brief sketch of some of her life experiences. Milne describes her family's economic stability and relative comfort and their descent into poverty, an experience shared by many in the working-classes. Milne and her father, a former cabinet-maker, depend, for a time, on charitable contributions for their survival, until Milne sufficiently recovers from her bout with consumption, takes on a new position in domestic service, and provides for her father. The preface also includes descriptions of Milne's marriage to a ship-carpenter. Although Milne's poetry describes her marriage as devoted, loving, and mutually supportive, her preface compares marriage with slavery and refers to the constraints and limitations it places upon her poetic efforts. Milne's collection includes several poems written about her husband, such as "Lines to my Husband, on the Return of Our Wedding Day" and "Written in Dread of My Husband's Safety at Sea," and they describe a mutually supportive relationship with remarkable depth of affection. The preface narrative

provides a personal context for the poems and reveals complex and contradictory attitudes toward marriage. In her preface, Milne also refers to herself as “the mother of four promising children” and writes that she hopes to seek monetary support for their education with any profits from her publication. At times, maternal concerns act in close relationship with societal critique, as in Milne’s “Written on my Little Girl’s Introduction to Reading,” in which Milne urges her daughter to follow the path that her literacy will help to reveal, while refusing to allow constraints to impede her progress.

In Chapter three, “**“Nature stood still’: The Poetry of Susannah Hawkins,”** I argue that Hawkins’s personifications of moral binaries and brief sketches of maternal sympathy and self-representation reflect the significance of her precarious class and gender position and the volatile cultural moment during which her volume was published. Hawkins writes poems of concern for middle- and upper-class ladies and gentlemen, and in one poem, “Lines on a Gentleman’s Son,” she expresses concern for an upper-class child. This provides her readers with evidence of Hawkins’s potential maternal sympathy although she is not a mother, reassuring her readers of her gender-appropriate concerns. Hawkins’s poems vacillate between strategic descriptions of moral abstractions in rural scenes and her concern for various members of the royal family and several other ladies and gentlemen. Her volume also includes a brief prose introduction addressed to “the most noble marchioness of Queensberry,” a significant moment of self-representation. She describes her inspiration to write poems honoring God, which first occurred to her while tending her master’s cattle. Although Hawkins’s volume frequently defers to those in the middle- and upper-classes, the prose introduction creates a small yet vivid self-portrait of the working-class poet.

In Chapter Four, “**“Where there’s a will there is ever a way!’: The Poetry of Janet Hamilton,”** I argue that Hamilton’s multiple volumes include a significant range of political and personal concerns and publication histories crucial to our understanding of working-class women’s poetry. Hamilton’s collections include several poems and essays vehemently condemning the effects of alcohol and advocating temperance. In addition to temperance, Hamilton also portrays the hardships of her physical labor as a tambourer (embroiderer) in “A Lay of the Tambour Frame,” an examination of the physical realities of working-class life and their toll on the individual. Hamilton’s

volumes delve into the destructive effects of the rapid industrialization in her community and the struggle for working-class men's and women's rights, yet she also critiques national and international political injustices.

As the century drew to a close, D. H. Edwards's sixteen-volume collection, *Modern Scottish Poets, With Biographical and Critical Notices*, was published between 1880 and 1897. Edwards's anthology includes dozens of working-class women poets, some of whom had already published at least one volume. In Chapter Five, "**Between the Poet and the Public: Edwards's Anthology and Late-Century Publication Practice**," I argue that the critical arrangement and content of working-class women's poetry in Edwards's anthology reflects the persistent popularity and circulation of working-class women poets' work throughout the century. Edwards's introductions often describe the poet's devotion to her domestic duties in addition to her creative impulses, and her contentment with her "simple" way of life. D.H. Edwards's sixteen-volume anthology reveals the changing relationships between poets, editors, and readers throughout the nineteenth century. The working-class women's poetry included in the anthology reveals "strategic affirmation," from conventional explorations of maternity to social critique focused on poverty and workhouse conditions. Edwards's editorial mediation limits the range of expression of the working-class women poets he includes although his anthology reflects the prominence of working-class women poets in mid- to late-nineteenth century Scottish culture. The book publications of Little, Milne, Hawkins, and Hamilton also reflect examples of "strategic affirmation" through representations of self, maternity, and social critique.

**CHAPTER ONE**  
**JANET LITTLE AND WORKING-CLASS PUBLICATION:**  
**SETTING THE STAGE**

Janet Little's volume of poetry, *The Poetical Works of Janet Little, The Scotch Milkmaid*, was published in Ayr by subscription in 1792. Little's poems set the stage for this study of nineteenth-century Scottish working-class women's poetry. Little's poetic technique, subject matter, and publication history reflect characteristics which persist throughout the work of the nineteenth-century poets I consider in subsequent chapters. In Little's representations of social critique, maternity, and self, her poetry reflects "strategic affirmation" as she negotiates class and gender expectations.

Little was born in Nether Bogside, Dumfriesshire in 1759. She was in service from an early age, and, in 1789, she began to work for the Dunlop family, eventually holding the notable position of dairy superintendent at Loudoun Castle. Frances Dunlop was Little's employer, and Dunlop's daughter, Susan Henrie rented the estate. Dunlop supported and corresponded with Robert Burns and also encouraged Little to write. In 1792, Little married John Richmond, a widower with five children. The few available biographical details of Little include descriptions of her as an avid reader, an amiable, faithful woman, and a devoted step-mother. She died of abdominal complications in 1813. (Perkins)

Little's volume includes 53 poems and a list of over 650 subscribers. The poems include explorations of abstract concepts such as hope and happiness, narratives of young women negotiating courtship and marriage, poems describing fictional romantic couples, poems in honor of several "ladies" and "gentlemen," and several poems which consider Robert Burns. Little adopts varied points of view and most of the poems are relatively brief, often comprised of several four-line stanzas.

For the purposes of this study, I examine Little's poems which include social critique based on female agency and masculine desire. I consider Little's gendered social critique in relationship to her self-representation and the brief but significant portrayals of maternity in *Poetical Works*. Like many of her working-class poetic counterparts, Little moves between conservative and subversive perspectives, often utilizing poetic



conventions to create a distinct voice. These factors further reveal Little's precarious situation as a working-class Scottish poet with an innovative poetic perspective.

In recent years, two scholars have provided insightful examinations of Little's work. Donna Landry's *The Muses of Resistance*, published in 1990, examines several of Little's poems. Landry explores Little's use of Scots and English in her verses, and Little's significant representations of Robert Burns and their relationship as fellow working-class Scottish poets. She describes Little's heteroglossic text in the context of her Scottish national identity and role as a British subject. Landry writes,

Thus the cultural specificity of English imperialism is articulated with and against an emergent Scottish nationalism. The mimicry of Anglographic conventions serves as a textual ground from which Little can stage departures of a culturally resistant and profeminist kind. (237)

Landry goes on to observe the tensions in Little's responses to Burns since he provides a complicated working-class literary role model for Little. According to Landry, Burns's self-centeredness and problematic portrayals of women provide an important context for Little's representations of Burns. Landry also observes Little's search for female literary mentors as closely related to her fraught relationship with Burns. She observes female literary community in the "Nell" correspondence poems and significant problems and dissatisfaction between female heroines and their heterosexual lovers.

Moira Ferguson's *Eighteenth-Century Women Poets: Nation, Class, and Gender*, published in 1995, includes a chapter dedicated to Janet Little which focuses on Little's relationship to Burns. Ferguson carefully examines Little's attitude towards Burns's literary, social, and sexual reputation, and she considers how Little's texts shape themselves in relationship to Burns. She writes,

Commendatory tributes to Robert Burns enhance her own cultural standing while she extends mandated politeness to patrons and employers from the middle class and gentry. At the same time, Little questions Burns's relationship with women by obliquely critiquing power-based gender relations in his seemingly benign conventional lyrics and poems (92).

Ferguson includes excerpts of correspondence between Little and Burns and Dunlop and Burns, revealing the complex relationship between the patron and both working-class

poets in addition to the relationship between Burns and Little. Ferguson closes her argument with the idea that, through the work of Burns, Little “discovers tools to eschew a servile discourse” (108). She writes

Through personal negotiations with Burns, she begins to see the construction of her gendered class identity, and, by extension, how she might oppose that construction through braiding social and confrontational verse. (108)

Ferguson emphasizes the importance of Burns in Little’s development and self-representation as a working-class woman poet. Both Landry and Ferguson examine Little’s movement between subversive, profeminist ideas and the deference to patrons and other middle- and upper-class figures of authority expected from a working-class poet.

### **Social Critique: Representations of Gender and Class**

Little’s poems portraying heterosexual lovers include a variety of female characters and a sequence of poems which describe the correspondence between a young woman named Delia and a young man named Alonzo. Landry and Ferguson both examine the Delia-Alonzo poems, which include significant portrayals of sexual politics, but my study focuses on social critique in poems outside of the Delia-Alonzo sequence, where Little provides a more complex portrayal of the oppressive consequences of courtship and marriage for upper-class young women.

Celia is a stock character described in two of Little’s poems, “The Lottery Ticket” and “Celia and Her Looking Glass.” Both of the “Celia” poems examine societal expectations for conventional beauty and youth as vital attributes for young women in the upper classes. “The Lottery Ticket” begins with a description of Celia, already powerfully attractive to men. Little writes, “Beaux and sages panting, dying, / Did of love and her complain / While the nymph, his darts defying, / Triumphed o’er her thousands slain” (45). She goes on to describe Celia’s attempt to secure an attachment to one of the fickle men, “With their woes too rashly sporting, / Still more fatal darts were sought; / Anxious to augment her fortune, / She a lott’ry ticket bought” (45). We are unsure whether Celia wants to secure an emotional or financial fortune, or perhaps both. Celia receives a blank ticket, while Brunetta experiences a different twist of fate. “While Brunetta, short of stature, / Limbs distorted, shoulders round, / Gained new charms, in

spite of nature, / By good thirty thousand pound.” Celia, “with looks dejected,” receives this message from “the god:”

Go bright Celia, fair and cruel,  
Still of countless charms secure,  
Would you heedless add more fuel  
To the flames you will not cure?

View the maid to grief inclined,  
Though she grasps the golden prize,  
O how gladly she’s resign it,  
For the conquests of your eyes! (46)

Little’s poem values physical beauty over fortune as the more valuable asset for a young woman, yet the text does not delve below the surface to examine the emotional life of Celia. Rather, the “god” urges her to rest assured in the power of her physical charms while perhaps gaining a new sympathy for Brunetta, who lacks conventional physical attractions. Celia, “fair and cruel,” sought only to “secure her fortune,” yet this “god” implies that combining wealth with her powerful physical beauty would represent a cruel increase of her power over her male admirers.

Celia, in this poem, acts as an object of male desire who negotiates possession of attractive qualities, including beauty and wealth. She receives advice from the perspective of a male love “god” that she should show mercy by not seeking too many attractions for herself, therefore wielding too much power over these men. A woman’s desirability as the source of her power is a theme Little continues to her explore in her other “Celia” poem and elsewhere in her volume. Although Celia in “The Lottery Ticket” is not a particularly sympathetic or complex character, she does reveal the binds of desire and objectification which women negotiated in courtship and marriage. The lottery ticket Celia buys serves to emphasize the element of chance and material wealth in determining women’s desirability to men and women’s limited agency as objects of male desire.

Little’s other “Celia” poem is a more complex treatment of a similar theme. In “Celia and Her Looking Glass,” Little begins, “AS Celia, who a coquette was, / O’er

fading charms lamented.” Celia goes on to berate her mirror for reflecting something she does not want to see.

Thou'rt incorrigible and bold,  
Unworthy my attention:  
What! must I ever more be told,  
The thing I dread to mention?

A maiden old, kind heaven avert;  
I hate the appellation  
The blood runs chill about my heart,  
I'm choak'd with sore vexation. (87)

Instead of a sketch of the oppressive expectations for women's superficial desirability, we now see Celia ranting at the inanimate object which enables her to see her physical self. She *hates* the designation of herself as a “maiden old” which makes her blood run cold. The loss of her youthful beauty deeply disturbs Celia. She goes on to describe the scene at last night's ball, when she was charming and held the attention and admiration of Philander. A “new made toast,” Chloe, steals Celia's spotlight, as Celia hears a whisper, a laugh, and scoffing at her expense, as Philander is “cured” of her affection for her. Celia leaves, alone and unsupported by any “gallant youth,” and goes home where her sleep is plagued by scary figures of “specters and apes.” She describes how she sought “consolation” from the mirror, a “base ingrate.” She goes on to tell the mirror:

Though I'm abandoned on that score  
Though fools and fops are changed,  
Of thy impertinence no more,  
Else sure I'll be revenged.”

Its head the looking-glass did bow,  
With reverent low submission,  
And to its angry mistress now,  
Did utter this petition. (88)

Celia now sees the “changed” men who used to admire her as “fools and fops,” but her anger is still directed at the mirror rather than the men. The mirror delays her revenge with a bow and a speech of its own:

“O madam, deign to hear my tale,  
And let my sorrows move ye;  
My plain sincerity can’t fail  
To show how much I love you

Nor lap-dog, bird, or powder’d beau  
Was more by you regarded,  
Than I full fifteen years ago,  
Though basely now discarded.

Each hour you paid me visits ten,  
My counsel well you trusted;  
Without my approbation then  
No curls you e’er adjusted.

An artless smile adorn’d your cheek,  
And grac’d each lovely feature,  
Which I observe now, once a week,  
Distorted by ill nature.

The pallid cheek and wrinkl’d brow  
Announce your charms declining;  
And wont you take the vestal vow  
Without so much repining?

The truth, though in unwelcome strain,  
To you I must discover  
While youth or beauty sways the swain,

You'll never find a lover." (89-90)

Though the mirror claims to love Celia, its description ends with a cynical prediction that she will remain single. Finally, Celia throws the mirror on the floor and begins crying, when the last stanza brings an unexpected and abrupt resolution.

She would have died, but Claudia came,  
Preventing all her fears,  
He wed the pensive, weeping dame,  
And wip'd away her tears. (90)

Claudia rescues Celia from death and "all her fears" when he marries her. The poem concludes with her abrupt rescue by the unknown "Claudia" rather than any realization of self-worth beyond desirability and physical attraction in relationship to men. Although Celia marries after all, her heated conversation with her mirror reveals a significant commentary on women's self-perception. Celia is not only distressed over her visible signs of aging, she specifically addresses the instrument which allows her to see them.

Little's choice to personify the mirror adds a new dimension to the interior dialogue of self-perception experienced by women. She allows us to see the dialogue in the form of a passionate argument between a woman and the object which reflects her changing physical appearance. Significantly, she is not arguing with her reflection, but the physical object which transmits that reflection. Her anger, at first directed at the suitors who reject her, shifts to the mirror which shows her the physical self that her suitors, and her society, no longer appreciate. Celia is angry enough to want revenge based on the impertinence of her mirror. She looks to it for "consolation" and instead finds that it "rudely" predicted her "fate." In the past, she "trusted" the mirror's "counsel," and looked at the mirror more than she looked at any man. Celia's physical self, as reflected in the mirror, was formerly something she knew and trusted, even as a source of consolation. She seemed to enjoy looking at her physical self more than she enjoyed looking at men. Yet, when men stop admiring her physical appearance, Celia, too stops admiring it. Instead, it fills her with anger and despair. Having established in "The Lottery Ticket" that youthful beauty is the most powerful desirable quality a woman can possess, Celia is now about to die of grief because of her loss.

The sketch of Celia in “The Lottery Ticket” becomes a more individualized look at a woman whose self-perception seems dictated by the men around her in “Celia and Her Looking Glass.” Both poems portray Celia’s class-identity with references to material wealth in the form of lap-dogs, birds, powdered suitors, and balls. The critique targets the oppressive courtship practices of the upper-classes by examining their effects on an upper-class woman. Whether through imagination, observation, or both, Little re-creates scenes of upper-class courtship practices and their devastating effects on women.

In “Upon a Young Lady’s Breaking a Looking Glass,” we see a lighter poem about another stock character, Delia, who accidentally breaks an antique looking-glass. Delia is upset at the implication of bad luck because she has broken the mirror. We hear a narrative voice which first enforces Delia’s fear of bad luck and then shifts with rather different advice for her.

O Delia! Mourn thy direful fate,  
A thousand ills portending  
Black omens now thy stars await,  
‘Gainst which there’s no defending.

Poor Delia now, bedew’d with tears  
And pitied by acquaintance,  
Resolv’d to spend full fifteen years,  
In doleful, deep repentance.

Do tears these lovely charms distain,  
By thousand charms surrounded!  
These eyes from weeping do refrain;  
Their glance have many wounded. (156)

The narrator seems to find it a shame that Delia is so upset when considering her physical desirability. Next, the narrator advises that Delia embrace a different sort of positive, guiding energy in her self-development.

T’adorn thy more accomplish’d mind,  
Each radiant grace conspires:

Hence dread thou not their dark design,  
Though rage each demon fires.

Let hope diffuse a gentle ray,  
There magic spells defying:  
Let prudence Delia's footsteps sway,  
On virtue still relying.

But know the rake's alluring smile,  
The heedless fair bewitches:  
Let no fond youth your heart beguile,  
By soft enticing speeches.

And if good counsel aught avail,  
Attend Diana's classes:  
For mind our sex is ever frail,  
And brittle as our glasses. (157)

Grace, hope, prudence, and virtue will “defy magic spells,” guide Delia, and “adorn” her “more accomplished mind.” Unlike the “Celia” poems, we now understand that a woman’s “accomplished mind” is more powerful than superstitious fear about breaking a mirror. The young woman is, again, upper-class, since the poem refers to the mirror’s value by stating that a “forward chamber-maid” had never moved the mirror previously. Since Delia is not the chamber-maid, yet servants seem responsible for the care of her room, we understand Delia’s class position. Little was likely well aware that a woman of Delia’s rank and position would have greater opportunity to develop an “accomplished mind” than a working-class woman with limited opportunity for formal education. Like the “Celia” poems, Little critiques social expectations for upper-class women, perhaps less controversial than critiquing the strictures of gender in addition to class which she could have observed from her own position in the working-classes.

The poem ends with a warning which echoes the concerns of both “Celia” poems. The narrator urges Delia to avoid the power of men who “bewitch” and “beguile,” instead



modeling herself on Diana, a symbol of chastity. The last two lines seem to point toward women's vulnerability in their romantic interactions with men. The reminder that women are "ever frail, and brittle as our glasses" speaks to the accident which began the poem and the problematic mirror in Celia's story. Women's fate, uncertain in the world in which men dominated courtship and marriage relations, seems tied to their own self-perception, which can also prove changeable and uncertain, as reflected in Celia's looking-glass poem.

"A Young Lady's Lamentation for the Loss of Her Sister by Marriage" again describes the consequences of courtship and marriage and one young woman's reaction when her sister chooses to be married. She begins by describing her family's rank and respectability, her father progressing from merchant to being named among "*landed gentlemen*" and her mother, an "accomplished" woman of "wit and prudence." She describes her sister and herself as her parents' "joy and pride." Although men from various ranks pursued both sisters, both persist in rejecting their offers and "laughing at love." Despite their family's progression from the middling classes to a more elevated landed class, men from both classes seem unable to meet with either sister's approval. The narrator describes their "fortitude" and then begins employing the metaphor of a battlefield to describe her sister's decision to marry. She writes, "By some fatal destiny, / My sister languished in the field" (198). The next lines lament her sister as a victim of love.

Depriv'd of all my defensive arms,  
(I sigh, my tears begin to flow)  
And slain by a sea captain's charms,  
She married was a month ago.

In an unlucky moment he,  
From Plutus sure had learn'd the art,  
Made from his empoison'd arrows flee,  
Till one of them did pierce her heart. (199)

Her sister's decision also grieves their parents, whose disapproval she avoids by eloping. The narrator describes her sister's beloved, a sea captain, as "a clown by travels much

refin'd." He is not refined enough, it would seem, to win her approval, but the closing stanzas imply that no man could.

I will lament a sister lost.

Ah! ladies hear my piteous moan,  
Depriv'd of what I once could boast,  
I now must keep the field alone.

What though I no assistance have,  
I hope to act courag'ously,  
The subtle foe still to outbrave,  
And man's seducing arts defy.

The rich, the poor, the proud, the slave,  
The fop, the clown, the low, the tall,  
The gay, the giddy, or the grave,  
I scornfully defy them all. (200)

Aside from men's "seducing arts," the narrator does not specify why she and her sister chose indifference and why she describes her sister as "slain" in love.

Although the disapproval of the narrator and her parents implies a class-based insistence that the young "sister" should marry someone from a more elite class position than a sea captain, the narrator's opinion seems to include more than class-based disapproval. She never lightens the metaphor to include a playful description of a lovesick victim whose love still promises happiness in addition to powerlessness. In the context of the poems of Celia and Delia, however, one can better understand the narrator's viewpoint. According to these poems, involvement in a romantic relationship includes a significant loss of independence and agency for women in the upper classes. The narrator's agency remains intact as she "keeps the field alone," fighting life's battle as an upper-class woman without the complication of courtship and marriage.

Little's volume also includes "Lucina: An Elegy," which proves to be another cautionary tale about the dangers of romantic love without "reason." She begins by addressing love itself:

DIREFUL indeed are thy effects, O love!  
When Reason's voice deserts thy frantic shrine;  
Platonic lessons no asylum prove;  
His dictates must obsequious yield to thine. (94)

She goes on to describe different victims of love who feel its "cruel and malignant force" and "kneel at its altars." From the "wise," to the "prince" to the "peasant," all "drag an equal chain," including Lucina. Exceptionally beautiful and virtuous, Lucina eventually finds mutual love with Philander, a "dear, distinguished swain" who is nevertheless "arm'd with the cruel, unrelenting dart" (95). Lucina's father objects because Philander is not wealthy, and Philander too quickly chooses someone else. Class difference proves to be an important motivation for Lucina's father to oppose the match.

After much distress, with Philander as "her last, her darling theme," Lucina views the waves while standing on a cliff. The narrator provides us with an allusion for the act and a warning based on the tragedy.

No hand was near the frantic maid to save,  
And Sappho-like, love's victim she became!

Ye rigid parents, with attentive ear,  
Instruction learn from this sad tale of wo:  
Ye heedless maids, in time the danger fear,  
That wrought Lucina's fatal overthrow. (97)

She warns not only strict parents but also "heedless maids" of "the danger" which proves significant in so many of her poems. In this case, she describes the risk of love without reason, more specific than the Celia, Delia, and "Loss of a Sister" poems, where she warns against the dangers of romantic love of any kind for upper-class women.

Ferguson and Landry provide excellent readings of heterosexual desire in Little's poems, particularly those poems which describe the relationship between Delia and Alonzo. The Delia and Alonzo exchange reveals more examples of the risks and dangers of desire, courtship, and marriage. Ferguson writes

The cluster of neoclassical poems from Delia to Alonzo, fashioned in a related mode to the *pastourelle* that warns against smiling, emotionally fraudulent

seducers, is a case in point. The poems unmask sexual practices openly; in a subtly feminized reworking of Burns's masculinist tropes, the Delia-Alonzo poems allude to uneasiness about Burns through exposing male manipulation of women which Delia cannily rejects. (101)

Delia's rejection of "male manipulation" echoes the struggles and resistance of Little's other female characters who seem to consider most if not all men as dangerous seducers. According to the *OED*, the *pastourelle* usually described the amorous meeting between an aristocratic man and a young shepherdess. Little uses the genre to critique the power structure between the dominant male character, superior in class and social experience, to the ingénue. Landry provides another insightful examination of the Delia-Alonzo poems.

Thus an heroically rational, if faintly ascetic, female sensibility emerges from these texts of self-declared "celibacy." Such poems establish not instrumental reason but a protofeminist recognition of women's heightened vulnerability within the circuit of heterosexual desire. (232)

"Lucina," however, does emphasize reason in its first stanza, pointing out love's "direful effects" when "reason deserts its frantic shrine." Thus, Little's poems outside of the Delia-Alonzo sequence reveal a complex struggle experienced by upper-class women in the "circuit of heterosexual desire." "The Lottery Ticket" underscores women's problematic source of power as the objects of sexual desire based on physical appearance and wealth, while "Celia" explores the damaged sense of self based on a loss of sexual desirability. "A Young Lady's Lamentation on the Loss of a Sister in Marriage" provides another example of the "heroically rational...female sensibility" Landry observes. When we consider Little's poems critiquing upper-class women's lack of agency in desire, courtship, and marriage, we better understand the breadth of her social observation and her various forms of social critique.

### **Self-Representation and Maternity**

Unlike many other working-class women poets of the era, Little's self-representation is not bound with her identity as a mother. Little married around the time her volume was published and became a step-mother to her husband's five children, but her poems include no maternal experience of her own. As this section shows, however, portrayals of maternity still figure importantly in her volume. Although she does not

identify herself as a mother, Little instead emerges as a poet who portrays maternity with insight equal to her social critique.

Moira Ferguson describes Janet Little as such: “an early female cultural activist with a complex public self-representation, Little recognizes the vulnerability of her social position and takes pride in her gender.” (109) Little’s poems including gendered social critique certainly provide additional examples of her cultural activism, but, as Ferguson observes, Little’s self-representation also works in complex ways. Ferguson and Landry both examine Little’s self-representation as a poet in “Given to a Lady who asked me to write a Poem,” “To a Lady who sent the Author some Paper, with a Reading of Sillar's Poems,” and Little’s multiple poems dealing with her relationship to Robert Burns. They observe the difficulty of Little’s position in relationship to her patrons and class superiors. Little dedicates her poems to the Countess of Loudoun, whose estate, Loudoun Castle in Ayrshire, Little’s employer, Susan Dunlop, leased. The Countess succeeded her father at the age of six, after his suicide. Ferguson examines Little’s complex relationship to the Countess, along with Little’s other patrons and supporters. She writes, “Individually, these supporters and patrons reflect the multiple positions in which she locates herself positively; collectively, they deny her rights and expropriate her freedom” (109). Moving between compassion, affection, and appropriate deference, Little’s dedicatory stanzas, “To the Countess of Loudoun,” praise the Countess’ estate, where her verses are “born,” and also grieve the loss of the Countess’s parents.

The last two lines of “To the Countess of Loudoun” provide an interesting representation of maternity. Little describes the depth of her affection for the Countess in the wake of her parents’ death. She writes, “For their dear sakes my prayers are ever thine, / Nor can I more were your protection mine” (24). Little expresses the idea that her care for the Countess is as intimate as if the Countess were her own child; she simultaneously describes the depth of her affection and her sense of the child’s vulnerability. We can read the lines as, “I care for you as I would my own child,” or “Even if you were mine, praying for you would be the most I could do for your sake.” Either reading reveals a close relationship to the child which allows Little to imagine herself as the child’s guardian.

This rhetorical move is significant since it enables Little to represent herself as a

grateful recipient of the Countess's support (in her persona as a poet) while offering her own hypothetical maternal support for the young girl. Little does not claim the identity of the child's nurse, which would have been an appropriate role for a working-class woman in relationship to an upper-class child. Instead, Little emphasizes her urge to protect the Countess, claiming this maternal desire without describing it in the context of their class identities. The text erases class identity and privileges maternal affection instead. The perspective of a poet who possessed maternal sympathy, even for a child who was not her own, would have assured readers of Little's depth of proper "female" feeling despite her tenuous position as a single, successful working-class poet and dairy superintendent.

Little's volume also includes an unusual group of poems which sensitively examine events in the wake of the death of a gentleman, "J-H- Esq." The first poem describes his widow's profound grief and presents a wise nymph as a source of comfort. The next poem, dated five months after the first, celebrates the birth of the gentleman's son. The last poem describes the visit of a friend who traveled four hundred miles from London to see the child. The poems reveal Little's insightful portrayal of grief and maternal sympathy. The first poem, "On the Death of J--. H--. Esq.," provides a poignant description of the widow's grief. She writes,

No more, O death! Thy pointed shafts I dread!  
Thy keenest darts I hourly wish to share;  
Since my lov'd HENRY'S numer'd with the dead,  
Nought in this world can now engage my care! (134)

Her description of their relationship contrasts the fictional lovers frequently portrayed throughout the rest of her collection. Instead of selfishness, deceit, and superficiality, Little beautifully describes a healthy, loving marriage.

He was---but oh! No language can express---  
What my lov'd HENRY ever was to me:  
My joy in health, my tender support in distress,  
My lover, friend, and tender husband he. (135)

We soon find, however, that their circumstances were not ideal. Henry gave up his family and his nation in order to be with Belinda, but Little does not specify why his

family so ardently opposed the match. When a nymph appears, she attempts to comfort Belinda with an eloquent description of God's will and Heaven. The nymph tells Belinda,

He's gone to flourish in a fairer soil,  
A plant too noble for this noxious clime:  
Where virtue must triumphant ever smile,  
He'll share of joys extatic and sublime. (136)

She continues this spiritual description with a portrayal of the fleeting human experience and their eventual reunion in Heaven. This poem, dated June 1790, provides a helpful context for Little's subsequent poems dealing with the birth of Belinda and Henry's son. The next poem, dated 15 November, 1790, allows Little to portray the depth of grief and sense of hope in the midst of Henry's death and their son's birth.

"On the Birth of J--. H--. Esq.'s Son" is a celebration of the child's birth, complete with an "impatient Muse" ready to "pour libations." After the narrator ponders what the child will become, perhaps a hero or politician, she reflects upon the comfort the baby can bring to his mother. She writes,

While fondl'd by a mother kind,  
Thou checks the falling tears  
When thy lov'd father to her mind  
In ev'ry charm appears.

The features sweet, attractive, mild,  
Each soft, each winning grace,  
She does in thee, her darling child,  
With fond remembrance trace.

And that the virtues he possess'd  
May in thy bosom glow,  
She does indulgent heav'n request,  
Who mitigates her wo. (139)

The poem closes with two stanzas describing faith in God for the child's safety and

protection. Echoing Little's own sense of the young Countess's vulnerability, and her prayers for the child's protection, Little again taps into the depth of feeling a mother has for her child. She writes,

May he, on whom her hope relies,  
Protect thy lovely form,  
While sudden blasts impetuous rise  
In life's tempestuous storm.

For thee, be calm the rolling flood,  
Be still the blust'ring wave:  
May'st thou be bless'd with every good  
A mother's heart can crave. (139-140)

The narrator's protective attitude toward the baby and his mother continues in the third and final poem in this group, "On a Gentleman's Proposing to Travel 300 Miles to See J--. H--. Esq.'s Son." The poem begins with the narrator's exclamation "Is it true!" and she wonders if "Alonzo" is leaving London to visit the child, and then begins questioning why he is making this long journey, only to be reassured that his visit is based on friendship, not "interest."

Does the city prove irksome, insipid the ball,  
Nor the theatre claim a delay?  
Is it friendship or int'rest that ushers the call,  
Which he seems in such haste to obey?

I ask'd, and in whispers, by Fame I was told  
That his heart was by int'rest unmov'd  
That the ties of pure friendship were stronger than gold,  
And it's exquisite charms he had prov'd. (141)

It is unclear whether the "interest" of which she first suspected him is monetary or personal. She goes on to ponder if seeing the baby brought "solace to his mind" and then describes those who would not understand such an act of friendship and says, "Let them wonder" (141). She ends with a final note of concern for Belinda and her child, and the



comfort that this friend helped to provide.

In vain let them guess what Alonzo must know,  
Since friendship each action inspires;  
His presence will tend to alleviate wo,  
That done, it is all he desires. (141)

In her depth of compassion for Belinda, and her concern for Belinda's child, Little again demonstrates a form of maternal sympathy for a mother and her child, with a keen awareness of the tragedy and suffering Belinda experienced. In this representation of maternity, Little de-emphasizes class identity and privileges familial and maternal sympathy. Although Henry is named as "J-H- Esq." in the poem's title, along with the "gentleman," Alonzo, who leaves the theatre and balls in London to see the child, Little includes no description of the mother's class identity. We are left wondering if Henry's family disapproved the match on the basis of class difference, and the poems focus on the suffering, love, and devotion of Henry's wife. The narrator even protectively questions Alonzo's motives, only to be reassured of his friendship. Similar to Little's self-portrayal as the Countess's guardian, the text privileges the strength of maternal affection over class identity. Little's portrayals of maternity become more complex when we consider another sympathetic portrayal of a parent's loss in "Amanda, An Elegy on the Death of Mrs.---, Personating Her Husband."

"Amanda" is a poem written from the perspective of Amanda's husband, lamenting his wife who committed suicide after the death of their infant due to what would likely now be diagnosed as Sudden Infant Death Syndrome. The poem is remarkable for several reasons. The persona of a widower is a challenging point of view for Little, yet she portrays his perspective with poignant sensitivity. His bleak observation of life's fleeting happiness echoes the nymph who sought to comfort Belinda. His description of life's "airy dream" of happiness evokes the transient, imagined quality of the feeling. The balance between life's uncertainties and Heaven's eventual eternal peace, however, does not emerge in "Amanda." Instead, he bitterly observes,

Ah! what is happiness? An airy dream:  
While stupid mortals fondly hope its stay,  
Supinely basking in the transient gleam,

A sudden blast dispels the glimm'ring ray. (84)

We sense the parents' profound pain when he describes the death of the infant and Amanda's reaction.

No tender guardian mark'd his latest sigh;  
No cordial did his quiv'ring lips receive;  
So have I seen a flow'r of fairest die,  
Bud in the morn, and fade before 'twas eve.

Amanda view'd the change with wild surprise;  
Tumult'ous passions did her bosom swell;  
Nor could she long the fervid flame disguise;  
An awful victim to despair she fell! (85)

Like Belinda and Henry of the previous poems, another young couple who experience tragedy, Amanda and her husband seem to have had a healthy, loving relationship. In both couples, friendship is a foremost component of the relationship, revealing an admirable compatibility and intimacy absent in most of the other relationships Little portrays. Little's text again de-emphasizes class identity in favor of the depth of affection between individuals. The title refers to Amanda simply as Mrs.--, but the text otherwise portrays the couple without any reference to their class identity. In the final stanza of his lament, Amanda's husband writes,

The briny tears in copious torrents flow,  
Nor can my trembling hand the theme pursue:  
The pangs I feel may Damon never know  
Amanda's gone, my dearest friend adieu. (85)

The point of view in this poem is significant as Little adopts the persona of a grieving man lamenting the death of his wife and child, but also as it allows Little to not only portray maternal sympathy, but paternal sympathy, as well. In this poignant portrayal of parental loss, Little encompasses feelings parents of both genders possess for their children, in addition to affection, loss, and grief in a relationship between husband and wife.

Little's sympathetic portrayals of maternity reveal a more conservative

perspective than her scathing social critique and complicated self-representation in relationship to Burns and other writers. Ferguson writes, “Always a maid and a woman with limited resources at her disposal for dissolving certain vantage points, she presents herself modestly in several poems to preserve the ‘correct,’ self-effacing demeanor expected of her” (106-107). Although her portrayals of maternity would have been perceived as “correct,” they also de-emphasize class identity, often erasing it completely, therefore privileging maternal sympathy over class difference in her sensitive portrayals of husbands, wives, widows, widowers, and parents. This balance continues throughout the work of other Scottish working-class women poets writing in the nineteenth century, revealing the complexity of each poet’s subject position and treatment of potentially conflicting subject matter.

### ***The Poetical Works of Janet Little and Subscription Publication***

Published in book form in 1792, *The Poetical Works of Janet Little* contains a list of over 650 subscribers which includes Robert Burns. Little’s channels of publication, the format of her text, and its contents all set the stage for consideration of nineteenth-century books of poetry from working-class women. William Christmas describes the continuity of working-class women’s verse through the late eighteenth century and into the nineteenth century. He writes

If Anne Yearsley’s *The Rural Lyre* is the last significant volume of poetry by an English laboring-class author to appear in the eighteenth century proper, it nevertheless does not represent the end of anything...The century break, in fact, did not precisely cut off laboring-class female poets from the literary marketplace, though their numbers dropped dramatically. (267)

Christmas’s observation of publication of English working-class authors into the nineteenth century holds true for Scottish authors, as well. Little’s text represents channels of working-class publication which continued throughout the nineteenth century, as evidenced by the work of Christian Milne, Janet Hamilton, and many others.

Janet Little’s book was published by subscription, along with the volumes of Christian Milne and many other working-class women poets of the era. In *The Reading Nation and the Romantic Period*, William St. Clair describes subscription publication in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century as such:

Subscription had been a common method of publication in the previous century not only for titles which needed patronage, and in which lists of the subscribers' names were often printed, but for mainstream commercial titles. When it survived during the romantic period, there was often an element of charity, raising money for a widow or giving a start for a local lad or lass without a patron, and the subscribers were often local nobility and gentry. Lady Penfeather, a character in Scott's *St. Ronan's Well*, who pesters visitors to subscribe for the books of her coterie of poets, was probably a well-known type in many localities where the leisured classes were to be found. During the romantic period, few village Miltons lay unprinted in country churchyards. (166)

The "element of charity" in Little's volume is obvious in her deference to the young countess to whom she dedicates her volume. Although Frances Dunlop proved an important sponsor and ally for Little, Dunlop's friendship with Burns and the difference in their class positions created complications for Little, which Ferguson and Landry describe in detail. In subsequent decades, Milne and Hamilton negotiate their literary reputations and their relationships to patrons and subscribers, and it seems likely that all three women were aware of their status as a "well-known type," although we have no evidence of anyone pestering visitors to subscribe for their books of poetry.

Little's title page states that the book was "printed by John and Peter Wilson," and both names appear in her list of subscribers, with "J. Wilson" listed as a "bookseller" in Kilmarnock. According to St. Clair, Wilson was also the first to publish Burns's *Poems, Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect*, by subscription in 1786 (584). Ferguson examines the importance of Little's relationship to Burns in the context of audience and publication of her volume. She writes

At that time, Scottish laboring-class poets enjoyed a wide audience, of working- and middle-class people as well as gentry like Frances Dunlop; their poems were much in demand. Especially renowned in Scotland, Robert Burns was invariably called "the ploughman poet"...The power of the countess of Loudoun's name, Robert Burns's assistance in filling up the subscription bill, and Frances Dunlop's vigorous drumming up of takers attracted about seven hundred subscriptions, the

countess herself purchasing twelve copies, Dunlop and her relatives twenty copies. (92-93)

According to Landry, Little was “said to have cleared about 50 pounds through this publication, a very respectable showing” (222). Little’s association with Burns, her lengthy subscription list, and Dunlop’s sponsorship helped bring her work to the reading public in her region. Although English working-class female poets’ publications may have waned at the turn of the century, their Scottish contemporaries, as Ferguson explains, continued to produce and publish in the wake of Burns.

In addition to considerations of sponsorship, subscription, distribution, and audience, it is also important to consider the contents of Little’s volume. The format for books of poetry by working-class women in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries usually included an autobiographical preface of some kind, written in either poetry, prose, or both. Landry compares these prefaces to the frequently elaborate productions of their male counterparts. She writes

But they also come down to us less covered by biography and autobiographical statement than their male counterparts. Beyond a statement of their authenticity as plebeian writers, and sometimes a few facts about their families and employment, their works are made to stand by themselves—the curious productions of a “natural genius,” a working-class prodigy, but not the self-examinations of an autobiographical subject whose “lived experience” in itself can be considered worthy of public textualization. (14)

The preface to each woman’s volume, however, still proves to be a significant component in the presentation of the collection of poetry. Each poet’s preface serves a slightly different function. For example, in her article “Class and Poetic Communities: The Work of Ellen Johnston, ‘The Factory Girl,’” Rosen refers to the multi-faceted preface to one of the publications of Janet Hamilton, which includes “multiple layers of increasingly muddled mediation” (210). Landry also examines the preface to English working-class poet Ann Candler, whose “volume is dominated by an autobiographical memoir of twenty pages” (274). Milne’s preface, on the other hand, includes a shorter prose memoir and a poetic introduction, as well, which, like Candler’s introduction, reveals many of the difficulties of her personal history preceding the fortunate opportunity for publication.

Milne's preface includes the remarkable movement between humility and confidence characteristic of self-representation throughout her volume. Janet Little's volume includes no prose preface, but two introductory poems, one poem of dedication, "To the Countess of Loudoun," and one poem addressed to her readers, "To the Public."

Little moves between humility, gratitude, self-assurance, and a keen awareness that her volume will likely meet with disapproving critics despite the evident support she has already received from her lengthy list of subscribers. "To the Public" is divided into 5 brief stanzas, and, in the first, she describes herself as a "rustic maid" (25). Little's acknowledgement of "snarling critics," is balanced by her gentle confidence that she will be content with minimal recognition and praise of her volume. She writes

Upon your voice depends her share of fame,  
With beating breast her lines abroad are sent:  
Of praise she'll no luxuriant portion claim;  
Give but a little, and she'll rest content. (26)

In Milne's strikingly similar tone, and in the volumes of poets published in the decades after Milne, we hear echoes of Little's introductory verses.

The body of poems contained in Little's volume also reveals a characteristic working-class production, with many volumes published in subsequent decades including a similar combination of poetic forms and subject matter. The collection includes a balance of subversive and conventional poems, and many tropes of self-representation combine to set the tone for contemporaries who published in her wake. According to Landry,

This is a discourse elaborately coded and formalized: the same genres, modes, tropes, and preoccupations occur again and again, apparently without mutual recognition... We can characterize this verse by the predominance of class-conscious Georgic and pastoral poems, verse epistles to women, poems critical of marriage and of women's condition in general, poems in response to much-admired (usually male) poets, and versified narratives from the scriptures. (13)

In Little's critique of courtship and marriage, her portrayals of women's struggle with societal expectations and self-worth, her multiple poems addressed to women, and her recurring portrayals of Burns and their relationship, she grapples with recurring modes

and issues. We also find many of these characteristics continuing in the discourse of her nineteenth-century poetic heirs in the working-classes.

In his article, “The Voice of the Dependent Poet, The Case of Mary Barber,” Christopher Fanning observes an important feature of working-class Irish poet Mary Barber’s subscription volume, “Poems on Several Occasions,” published in 1735. Significantly, although Barber’s work precedes Little’s by several decades, we can observe similar features in her volume, and those which followed hers in the nineteenth century. He writes

What I wish to address here is how the necessarily deferential mode of a volume published by subscription affects the presentation of the poet’s authority and identity. Mary Barber offers a particularly female perspective on the position of the subscription poet as she examines relations between women and men which are parallel to those of poet and patrons. Barber uses the deferential mode of the subscription volume to construct a female poetic identity through indirection: the use of other voices by “ghost writing” for others, the creation of satiric personae, quotation, and the inclusion of others’ writing in her volume. The necessary paradox of this indirect technique is that the identity thus created requires a degree of self-effacement which obscures authority. (3)

Little’s volume also reveals remarkable movement between male and female voices, including the persona of a husband and father, romantic correspondence between a man and woman, and poetic letters of passionate friendship between two women. *Poetical Works* also includes examples closely related to the “double-voiced form, ranging from straightforward statements written for her son to satiric impersonations of adults or social types,” observed by Fanning in Barber’s volume (3). Little’s representations of Burns, in particular, range from the serious to the satirical.

Following in her footsteps in the next decade, Christian Milne’s subscription volume reveals similar “indirect technique” including “self effacement” while it “obscures authority” (3). In her article on Milne, “The mean unlettr’d female bard of Aberdeen!: The Complexities of Christian Milne’s ‘Simple Poems on Simple Subjects,’” Bridget Keegan examines this “double-voicedness” in Milne’s treatment of natural genius, servitude and creativity, and nationalism and war. Fanning’s article recognizes

the complex function of “indirect technique” in working-class women’s subscription publications of verse, reinforcing the significance of *Poetical Works* as a volume in dialogue with books of poetry written by working-class women in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

When we consider the publication of working-class poets’ volumes, the effects of editing become a significant concern. St. Clair describes the power of the publisher to manipulate the text in every stage of its publication, “The initiative for deciding how a literary text should be published normally lay with the publisher. It was he who took the decisions on format, design, print run, and price which determined access, sales, and therefore potential readership” (166). The works of John Clare provide the paradigmatic case for consideration of working-class poets’ publication in the era. Four books of Clare’s poetry were published during his lifetime. In 1820, his first volume, *Poems Descriptive of Rural Life and Scenery*, created the image of Clare as a “Northamptonshire Peasant,” and met with considerable success. Like many successful working-class poets, however, Clare’s experience with fame was brief, and his three subsequent books of poetry, *The Village Minstrel* (1821), *The Shepherd’s Calendar* (1827), and *The Rural Muse* (1835), found little success. Contemporary scholars seek to consider the effects of editing and revision on Clare’s published texts, as his editor, John Taylor, sought to “correct” Clare’s frequently misspelled and ungrammatical productions. Clare scholars, fortunately, have access to abundant manuscripts and drafts of Clare’s work which provide the opportunity to consider issues of publication processes and textual integrity (*Longman*, 908-909).

Although the effects of editing continue to create controversy among Clare scholars regarding the viability of his texts, such a debate is not even possible when scholars consider the texts of Little and many of her working-class female contemporary poets. Hopefully, scholars will uncover information to provide us with more detailed textual histories of many other working-class poets of the era, but, until then, we contend with many gaps in our knowledge of publication history. Nevertheless, Clare scholarship continues to inform other studies of working-class poets’ texts as we seek to carefully consider textual history and editorial influence on these vulnerable volumes. Boos



provides insight into the details of editorial control of working-class women's texts. She writes

Middle-class editors' moods and choices were constrained not only by personal beliefs about "appropriate" subjects for "humble" authors, but by more arbitrary preferences of middle-class journal and book purchasers, and other market-driven constraints. Strong evidence suggests, for example, that many editors and anthologists selected women poets' blandest effusions, and repressed unseemly expressions of "strong" thought. (105)

Whether Little's poems are her "blandest effusions," we cannot be sure, but "unseemly expressions of 'strong' thought" seem to abound in Little's volume. Although her volume contains plenty of conventional poems describing love and loss among fictional characters, it also includes profeminist considerations of women's lack of agency and lack of self-worth as a result of the oppressive strictures of courtship and marriage conventions. Ferguson and Landry also observe Little's "strong thought" in the form of her bilingual expression, her social critique, and her complex, emotionally-charged portrayals of her relationship to Burns. Her book of poetry provides examples of "strategic affirmation" and represents a significant, complex volume whose contents and publication help us to better understand working-class Scottish women's verse throughout the nineteenth century.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE “ARTLESS MUSE:” THE POETRY OF CHRISTIAN MILNE

Christian Milne’s single volume of poetry, *Simple Poems on Simple Subjects* was published in 1805 in Aberdeen by subscription. Milne’s volume includes an introductory preface, 45 poems and eleven songs, and a list of the volume’s subscribers. Milne’s collection includes several autobiographical poems which examine courtship, marriage, women’s education, religious faith, the British navy, nationalistic concerns, and a few fictional narrative poems. Milne was baptized in 1772 and died in or before 1816. At 24 years old, she was married to Patrick Milne, and the couple had eight children. Milne’s preface and several of her poems describe her experiences as a domestic servant, and then as a ship carpenter’s wife and mother of small children. They also describe her brief education in the village school as a small child, her eager engagement with her father’s books, and her first attempts at writing, which met with an unappreciative audience. After her works were “accidentally shown” to a lady, Milne’s publication by subscription met with considerable regional success, according to her list of 523 individual subscribers. Milne’s poems appear in one contemporary anthology, *British Women Poets of the Romantic Era*, edited by Paula Feldman. In addition to Feldman’s introduction, Pam Perkins’s entry in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* and Bridget Keegan’s “*The Mean Unletter’d Female Bard of Aberdeen!*”: *The Complexities of Christian Milne’s “Simple Poems on Simple Subjects”* also examine Milne’s work.

Milne’s work displays “strategic affirmation” as she moves between conservative and progressive positions and employs a unique poetic perspective. Keegan revises Landry’s argument in order to better approach Milne’s work and appreciate its significance, and she looks beyond “radical resistance” to read the political in Milne’s poetry.

It is certainly true that by 1805, when Christian Milne published *Simple Poems on Simple Subjects*, many of the conventions for plebeian poets who wished to be published were firmly established, and that these conventions were ideologically conservative. Expressions of patriotism, piety, and humility, all of which can be found in abundance in *Simple Poems on Simple Subjects*, were the guarantors of

any favorable, although usually condescending notice. As such, Milne's work has been of little interest to the feminist or marxist critics engaged in recovering laboring-class and women's literature. (1)

Keegan observes Milne's implicit political stance expressed through self-representation in "Introductory Verses."

Milne's assertions of her genius, humbly as she might make them, indicate a political message implicit in the very act of her writing, one that while not explicitly revolutionary nonetheless challenges Landry's summary dismissal of laboring-class women's poetry after the eighteenth century. (7)

Keegan's critical essay provides significant insight into Milne's work, and she also explores the methodology involved in approaching the work of Milne and her working-class contemporaries. Although Milne's preface privileges her biography and many of her poems refer to her life experience, Keegan cautions against the imposition of a political agenda upon Milne's work, instead seeking to consider the poetry in the context of its historical and cultural moment.

The literary value of laboring-class women's poetry should be judged neither by the grimness of the author's life, nor by how well it fulfills an anachronistic marxist agenda. Indeed, in reading the poetry according to any particular political agenda, we risk missing a good deal of what the poetry might teach about the literary culture of the British laboring classes - a culture that, while always "political" was not always overtly "politicized." Milne's poetry is political, but in no simple way. (2)

Milne's collection reflects various, sometimes contradictory opinions, and Keegan borrows the term "double-voicedness" to describe Milne's dual perspectives.

For every poem that offers a message of patient, pious acceptance of one's station or praise of British military might, there is another that satirizes class divisions or dramatizes the domestic, human costs of war. Reading any of Milne's poems in isolation creates a false critical impression, and, even within individual poems, Milne undermines our ability to identify an unequivocal political position. (3)

Milne's "double-voicedness" also informs much of her poetry concerning maternity, self-representation and social critique as she negotiates her positions as wife and mother and working-class female poet.

### **Preface: Biography, Authority, and Authorship**

Milne's book contains over twenty pages of introductory material which include a dedication page, one section of verse, and three sections of prose. Although most books of poetry by working-class women of the era included some type of preface, Milne's proves detailed and complex. In her *DNB* entry, Perkins claims that the preface was not written by Milne, yet Keegan does not mention the issue in her essay. Instead, Keegan repeatedly refers to Milne as the speaker in the introduction. The question of dual authorship in Milne's preface is open to interpretation. If Milne is the only author, then she chooses to employ a distinct and separate voice and persona as someone other than the author who introduces the collection. The dual voices and the abundance of information offered in the preface, however, prove important regardless of its author's identity, as we see another example of extensive introductory material in dialogue with the poetry it precedes.

Milne's introductory pages, after the title and publication material, begin with Milne's brief dedication to her Grace, the Duchess of Gordon. Much like Little's and Hawkins's dedications, Milne addresses her noble patron with appropriate deference and gratitude.

The following little work, published under the generous patronage of her highly distinguished name, is inscribed, with the most profound respect, by her Grace's much obliged and ever grateful and humble servant, Christian Milne. (v)

Next, the lengthy section titled "Preface" begins. This consists of a poetic introduction followed by a prose section which introduces a prose autobiography by Milne, and then another section of prose which provides further commentary on Milne's autobiography. The introductory poem casts Milne as a rather dramatic poetic persona.

SINCE yet no Author e'er did introduce  
His Works to notice, without some excuse,  
And "books had better want a title page,  
"Than want a PREFACE," cries each learn'd sage,

Be't known--'mid all who pant for public fame,  
That one more modest ne'er put in a claim  
To be enroll'd an Author, than the mean  
Unletter'd--female Bard of ABERDEEN ! (7)

The speaker mentions the work of Burns, Bloomfield, Milton, Pope, and Gay who did not suffer from the same distractions which left a “wreck of genius” (8). The speaker compares these male authors to a “menial maid” who has no rest from her work and either wanders the street or sits at home.

Sure state more adverse to poetic skill  
(With apathy more apt the mind to fill),  
The world knows not, save its counterpart,  
That state, more irksome to the feeling heart,  
When MENIAL MAID becomes a wedded wife,  
Her TERM of slav'ry then the TERM of life (8)

We find no echo of this comparison between marriage and slavery, also describing the suffering of a “feeling heart” in marriage, in Milne’s poetry, in which she repeatedly refers to her husband and her marriage with respect, love and appreciation. This reference forms an accurate description of many marriages of the era, yet Milne’s marriage, according to all of her autobiographical poems, seems to have been an exception. Her husband is quite proud of the acclaim her work earns, and she regards him as a loved friend. This contradiction between the preface and Milne’s poetry provides some evidence to support Perkins’s claim that another author penned the preface.

The preface also describes Milne’s lack of formal education, and urges, “Let no stern critic mark them for his own / and talk of rules when rules are all unknown” (9). The speaker insists that Milne never “in duty fail’d / to parent, master, child, or husband dear” despite her hardships, and this detail reflects an important trope in introductory materials to working-class women’s volumes of poetry. It reassures audiences that the author never neglected responsibilities associated with her class and gender, implying that she will remain in her station and fulfill her domestic responsibilities despite her poetic success.

After the introductory poem concludes, the speaker begins the prose section with another reference to the standard practice for introducing writers “similar” to Milne.

In cases similar to the present , the writer of the above prefatory Address is aware, that great critical skill has been displayed in arranging the materials of the author, and in pointing out, as they arise, the beauties of composition, and the force of genius; but, it is presumed, that the gifts of Nature, like Nature itself, have only, in order to excite admiration, to be left in possession of their original simplicity...(10)

“The writer,” as the mysterious narrator refers to himself or herself, does not propose any critical introduction, simply a biographical preface. The narrator next introduces Milne’s autobiography, including the names of several prominent men in the community who can validate the truth of her narrative.

In order, however, to indulge the laudable curiosity of the reader, eager, no doubt, to be made acquainted with the history of a female...the following artless and affecting narrative, from the pen of *CHRISTIAN MILNE* herself, is submitted to public notice...(11)

Milne’s autobiography, a prose narrative several pages in length, briefly describes her family, including grandparents, parents, and nine siblings, all of whom died by the time Milne was about twenty years of age. She mentions her early experiences with reading and writing, and, according to her father, she read well at five years old. Her first literary productions, however, met with negative reactions.

"When about twelve years of age, I recollect having repeated a song to a person of my acquaintance, but, no reply being made, when I told her I had composed it, I was led to suspect that she did not believe me; on this account I never again made a similar discovery.

"Having come to Aberdeen, however, when about fourteen years of age, I began to write down my little pieces; though, having no opportunity of shewing them to people of education, I had the mortification to find myself laughed at, and called idle by my fellow servants. (13)

She describes her father’s financial ruin and the death at sea of her last surviving brother. Milne traveled on foot with her father from Inverness to Edinburgh and sought to support

him with her wages as a servant. The experience profoundly affected her.

I was ill after such a long journey on foot; and, having always a thoughtful turn of mind, regret for my brother—the sight of my father in a state of grief and depression—and my own great bodily weakness, protracted from want of medicine, and even of the necessaries of life, gave my mind that plaintive, dejected cast, which has ever since been its prominent feature. (15)

As Milne's father struggled with emotional turmoil which would likely now be diagnosed as depression and Milne battled illness, later diagnosed as consumption, they depended for a time on charity. She eventually went north where she worked as a domestic servant and sent money to her father. After several months without receiving a letter from her father, Milne receives word that he died. She also describes a happier phase in her life when, at twenty-four years old, she marries Patrick Milne, and describes herself, at present, as "the mother of four promising children" (18). Milne also refers to her pleasant surprise at the success of her volume.

The narrator then provides closing commentary on Milne's prose autobiography, stating that "the simple annals of the poor" are at present a greater source of interest than ever before. The narrator describes Milne's biography and the anticipated response to her poetry.

It is not, therefore, to be doubted, that the above eventful little history, where enough is detailed to "chill the genial current of the soul," will have the effect of awakening in the reader's breast (whatever be his sentiments of her merit as a poet) some desire to promote the object of the author, whose heart indulges an honest wish to be possessed of the pecuniary means of giving her children in early life such education as, if they shall be found possessed of talents for distinguishing themselves, may enable them to --"Learn the bliss to prize,  
"That waits the sons of polish'd life." (21)

The narrator appeals to readers' sympathy for Milne and her children, with appreciation for her poetry almost irrelevant. This appeal also speaks to the dual author theory since Milne's poems focus on the value of her poetry rather than reliance on her readers' sympathy. Before concluding with another quote, the narrator writes, "An apology may be due for this *APPEAL* ; but it is first *APPEALED* to the hearts of the benevolent,

whether the apology ought to be made” (23). The content and tone of the preface does seem significantly different from Milne’s work, yet our limited examples of her prose also make discernment difficult.

The preface, including the verse and prose sections which introduce and conclude Milne’s autobiography, certainly introduces readers to Milne’s life experiences but makes no attempt to describe the content or technique of her body of published poetry. Milne’s self-representation, in her poetry, proves distinct from her self-representation in the autobiographical narrative. Although she often refers to the same life experiences in her poetry, she couples them with imagined scenarios and a determined pride in her poetic achievements. Milne’s representations of maternity also become complicated in her poetry as she explores the complex relationship between her devotion to her husband and her children and considers her daughter’s education and ambition. The preface includes some evidence of social critique, yet her consideration of social ills becomes more evident in several of her poems.

#### **Maternity: Marriage, Sacrifice, and a Literary Legacy**

Several of Milne’s poems describe her relationship with her husband as happy, respectful, and devoted, and, though her poems include fewer references to her children, she also expresses maternal concern. “On my Wedding Gown,” “To My Husband, on the Return of Our Wedding Day,” “Written in Dread of My Husband’s Safety at Sea,” “To a Lady, Who Did Me the Honour to Call at My House,” and “Written When My Husband Was at Sea” all describe Patrick Milne with affection and appreciation. “To My Husband, On the Return of Our Wedding Day” provides an excellent example of Milne’s portrayal of her love for her husband and their children as she lovingly contemplates her family. “When in Dread of My Husband’s Safety at Sea” reflects a remarkable intersection between spousal and maternal affection as Milne imagines her husband’s death, her desire to join him, and describes her faith that God will take care of their orphaned children. “Written on My Little Girl’s ‘Introduction to Reading’” reflects Milne’s appreciation for education and literary ambition as she urges her daughter to take responsibility for her own education and follow whatever path she might discover through the experience.



In “To My Husband, On The Return of Our Wedding Day,” Milne addresses her husband in honor of their fourth wedding anniversary, and she considers their limited material possessions in a positive light. Milne also describes their two daughters as a positive force which holds their relationship together. She begins by considering their marriage and their poverty.

FOUR times the Sun has cross'd the Line,  
Since Love and HYMEN made you mine:  
Tho' we be lowly, poor, and mean,  
We feel nor discontent nor spleen.  
We love and live in harmless joy, (49)

Milne frequently employs this technique to describe her material circumstances and her transcendent perspective of gratefulness. She next contextualizes their experiences and priorities in relationship to the wealthy and privileged, also a common trope in her autobiographical poems.

No worldly cares our peace destroy;  
We envy not the rich refin'd,  
With empty pomp, tho' polished mind;  
Our pleasures purer far than theirs--  
More light our purse, more light our cares. (49)

Other poems in the volume echo Milne’s reference to the “polished mind” of the rich, and she often contemplates the injustice of limited educational opportunities for the working classes.

The next four lines consider the passage of time and Milne’s growing love for her husband. Milne then affectionately describes their daughters.

Two infant Daughters, cement sweet  
Of wedded love and joy complete,  
Have, by the bounteous hand of Heav'n,  
To crown our worldly bliss, been giv'n. (50)

In the four closing lines of the poem, Milne refers to her husband as “friend,” and describes her wish that her husband outlives her. Milne’s poems frequently contemplate the real possibility of early death for herself or her loved ones. In addition to this

devoted, affectionate description of her marriage and her children, Milne considers both relationships in a somewhat different light in “When In Dread of My Husband’s Safety at Sea.”

Milne frequently contemplates her worry and fear for her husband’s safety as she considers his dangerous sea voyages as a ship carpenter in the British navy. “When In Dread of My Husband’s Safety at Sea” expresses this concern in relationship to Milne’s maternal affection for her children. The poem includes a rare moment of controversial maternity, since most working-class women poets of the era represented only devoted, selfless commitment to their maternal responsibilities. The poem begins with Milne’s poignant consideration of the painful realities of life, which she should not compound with worry over imagined potential “ills.”

This life still teems with real ills,  
To give complaining scope;  
Then why should I anticipate,  
While there’s a ray of a hope?

Why comes Despair, with cloudy brow,  
To sink a heart oppress’d?  
Kind Hope, I’m lost without thine aid,  
O! smile, and make me blest! (51)

Milne continues to address “Hope” in the next two stanzas, and describes her readiness to embrace “Despair” if she should have to face the reality of her husband’s death.

Say to my sad desponding heart,  
Thou hast not cause to mourn;  
Say that my valued Husband lives,  
And hasten his return!

Deceit and flattery I detest;  
If aught confirm my fear,  
I’ll drive thee out, illusive Hope,  
And welcome dark Despair. (51)

Milne, in the fifth and sixth stanzas, contemplates her reaction to this imagined news, and she expresses her desire to join her husband in death.

If he be gone, no more to meet  
My fond expecting eye  
Where shall I hide my wretched head;  
To whom for comfort fly?

I'll lend pale Death my hand with joy,  
To lead me to my Love;  
Who calls me from this wretched state  
To share his peace above. (52)

In the seventh stanza, Milne addresses her husband's spirit with an important afterthought regarding their orphaned children, but the eighth stanza resolves this concern with faith that God will protect their children.

But stay, lov'd Shade! How can we leave  
Our children dear behind?  
Will this cold world, that frown'd on us,  
To helpless babes be kind?

Yet GOD himself will be their Friend;  
(To thee I'll quickly press)  
GOD'S promise is ne'er to forsake  
The Orphan in distress. (52)

The poem concludes with the assurance that the couple will remain together without the dangers of earthly existence.

No dashing rock, or yawning wave,  
Shall part us any more;  
No howling winds, no beating rains,  
Assail that happy shore. (52)

Milne's faith and her devotion to her husband form the focus of many of her other poems, yet only in this poem do we find such a dramatic scenario which includes a rare,

unconventional maternal choice. Although Milne's other representations of maternity prove more conservative, both perspectives provide further evidence of Milne's layered considerations of conventional themes of spousal and maternal devotion.

In "Written On My Little Girl's 'Introduction to Reading'," representations of maternity, education, and ambition intersect as Milne addresses her young daughter. The brief poem, consisting of four rhyming couplets, begins as Milne urges her daughter to cultivate a passion for reading and education.

Prefer this Book to idle toys,  
Or romps with naughty girls and boys--  
Let Learning be thy chief delight,  
'Twill find thee work from morn to night; (75)

Although Milne's daughter likely benefited her mother's teaching at home, she also depended on her own self-discipline and commitment to reading and learning due to limited educational opportunities for girls, especially those in the working classes. Milne may have provided something of a role model for her daughter's education, since she chose to self-educate through reading and writing poetry. If "learning" can become her daughter's "chief delight," then the young girl may find at least as much if not more opportunity for achievement than her poetic mother. The fourth line presents dual possibilities for interpretation as the "work" provided by learning may simply keep the young girl busy or may help to "find" her employment when she reaches adulthood.

The next couplet proves particularly powerful as Milne urges her daughter to travel wherever her education guides her, "And ne'er be backward to pursue / The path it points out to thy view" (75). Although Milne's path toward publication included obstacles such as critics' disapproval and fellow servants who mocked her work, her poetry eventually reached an appreciative audience, and she wants her daughter to follow whatever path her education reveals. Milne's closing couplet focuses on her desire for her daughter to learn all that she possibly can, emphasizing the importance of striving to remember all she is taught. "Attend thy book, and don't be naught; / Strive to retain, whate'er thou'rt taught" (75). This poem represents a progressive maternal moment in Milne's volume and a protofeminist stance on women's education, as expressed in her advice for her daughter, a child of the working classes. Milne's poem provides a more

explicit portrayal of her hopes and ambitions for her daughter's education than Hamilton's "Phases of Girlhood," in which Hamilton contemplates her bright daughter, Maggie, leaving school in order to help her mother at home. Hamilton's poem may lament the end of her daughter's formal education, but Milne's poem, written several decades earlier, expresses distinct advice for her daughter to seek education and its accompanying opportunities.

### **Self-Representation: A Delicate Balance**

Milne's poems include several complex examples of self-representation in which she negotiates her working-class identity, often in relationship to the middle- and upper-classes, her supporters and critics in the literary community, and her role as a woman poet. This section examines Milne's self-representation as an author. "Introductory Verses" allows Milne to expand upon the biographical preface, and she begins to describe her relationship to her creativity and her audience. Two different poems address gentlemen, "To a Gentleman, Desirous of Seeing My Manuscripts" and "To a Gentleman, Who Sent me a Present of Pens," and in both poems Milne maintains her tone of confidence and humility, moving between unwillingness to be defined by her class and gender and appropriate deference which would reassure her readers that she did not flaunt "ideas above her station." Two other poems in which Milne cultivates her identity as a poet include "Address to the Shade of Burns," in which she grapples with admiration for Burns's writing and disapproval of his lifestyle and "On Seeing the List of Subscribers to this Little Work," in which she reflects upon the evidence of those who support her writing.

Milne's "Introductory Verses" begins with a stanza of 5 rhyming couplets followed by a longer stanza of 24 couplets. The first stanza describes the support she received for her work, but the last four lines of the stanza introduce the subject of Milne's critics.

I'm griev'd to think, that those whose lot is thrown  
Upon an equal level with my own,  
Should view her now with envy, scorn, or hate,  
Whose little gift lay buried till of late! (33)

Milne frequently responds to critics' disapproval in her poems, yet "Introductory Verses"

allows her to explore her own literary biography, as well. The next stanza begins with several couplets describing Milne's early sense of poetic inspiration, beginning at the age of six years old, when her memory was so sharp that she didn't require pen and paper to preserve her verses. As she grows up, Milne replaces this creativity with thoughts she "deemed better" and then describes the destructive effects of servitude.

For servitude, with its incessant toil,  
Harsh damp'd my Muse, when she inclin'd to smile:  
Tho' she at times would dart a sickly light,  
To shew she was not yet extinguish'd quite.  
When love, or gratitude, sorrow press'd.  
I sought the Muses to relieve my breast;  
I pour'd my thoughts in numbers by their aid;  
They scorn'd not to assist the menial maid. (34)

Writing poetry, although difficult, proves therapeutic, and Milne seems to describe destroying her poetry because she feared "rude abuse." Some of her early poetry was better than what she now writes because she had not yet suffered so many hardships.

Milne refers to Providence guiding her steps to a "fair lady" who appreciated her work, and the lady's friends, "generous" in their acceptance and encouragement of Milne's poetry. She then personifies the motivations of her critics, including those who accuse her of plagiarizing.

Yet Spite and Ignorance, with sneering looks,  
Assert my songs are drawn from printed books:  
They're quite unfit to judge the simple flow,  
The gift that Nature only can bestow. (35)

"Envy" and "Folly" also join in the disapproval, and Milne's personifications provide her with a useful device for addressing her critics without the risk of reference to specific individuals.

She ends the poem with a pronouncement which describes creativity transcending class difference. This view of literary potential also informs several of Milne's other considerations of writing.

Sure Folly cannot think that Heav'n bestows

On Fortune's sons alone such gifts as those:  
To rich and poor all mental gifts are free,  
And mark the fruitful from the barren tree. (35)

Milne's ideas of equality and self-representation also emerge as she addresses her patrons and class superiors.

Milne's "Gentleman" poems, like "Introductory Verses" examine class difference and literary creativity. "To a Gentleman, Desirous of Seeing My Manuscripts" is not the self-effacing statement of gratitude which often occurs in working-class women's poetry of the era. The poem, a terse production of six stanzas with four lines in each, instead expresses a wary gratitude. Milne contextualizes the gentleman's opinion among his class contemporaries who disapprove of her poetry based on her class and gender. Since the gentleman wanted to see Milne's work, we do not know if she included this poem as an introduction or wrote it as an afterthought. If the poem served as an introduction, then it exemplifies Milne's self-representation as a poet proud of her own work and unwilling to cower under considerable disapproval. The poem begins with gratitude but immediately addresses the problems a working-class woman poet faced.

I'm gratify'd to think that you  
Should wish to see my Songs,  
As few would read my Book, who knew  
To whom this Book belongs.

My mean estate, and birth obscure,  
The ignorant will scorn;  
Respect, tho' distant, from the good,  
Makes that more lightly borne. (55)

Milne underscores the relationship between her identity and her work, and creates a binary which consists of "ignorant" people whose criticism targets her class identity and "good" people who respect her, albeit from a distance. She refuses to flatter the gentleman with praise for middle- and upper-class patrons and supporters as she recognizes that even their respect is tempered by the desire to maintain a distance between the classes.

Milne's penultimate stanza creates a more dramatic self-portrait of the poet whose suffering at an early age strengthens her resolve as she would choose death rather than beg from "the haughty."

Inur'd to hardships in my youth,  
If want my age should crown,  
I'll never beg the haughty's bread;  
Death's milder than their frown. (56)

The last stanza again observes the limits of middle- and upper-class support for Milne's work, with Milne's characteristic ambiguous language.

You'll think but little of my Songs,  
When you have read them o'er;  
But say, "They're well enough from her:--  
And I expect no more. (56)

Milne recognizes the limits of the approval she is likely to receive from a gentleman, and she concludes the poem with a wry tone. "They're well enough from her" takes into account the standard reaction to her work, read in the context of her biography and limited education. Milne's text reinforces such a reading with her emphasis on autobiography in her preface, "Introductory Verses," and many other poems in her volume. In this way her work creates the dynamic between self-representation and poetic expression which proves standard for working-class book-length publications of the era, yet Milne's self-reflexive, ironic address to her audience is more unique.

Milne's other "gentleman" poem, "To a Gentleman, Who Sent Me a Present of Pens," consists of three four-line stanzas, with less irony than "To a Gentleman, Desirous of Seeing my Manuscripts."

The quills and kind epistle came,  
Which you in goodness sent me;  
I'm at a loss due thanks to frame  
For such a favour lent me. (139)

In the next stanza, Milne draws a relationship between the pens and formal education, as she lacked both in her creative efforts, until now. Although she is unlikely to further her formal education, the pens provide a pleasant material luxury to aid in her creative work.



Since Nature taught my muse to please  
Without the school's instructions,  
I ne'er possess'd such pens as these  
To mark my small productions. (139)

Milne's reference to her "small productions" seems self-effacing, yet she may refer to her relatively small body of work. The phrase provides another example of her ambiguous choice of language in self-representation, which continues in the last stanza of the poem.

As oft as I'm allow'd to taste  
The Heliconian fountain,  
Such fair made quills will aid my haste  
To climb Parnassus' mountain. (139)

Milne uses classical references to the "Heliconian fountain" and "Parnassus' mountain," creating a self-portrait of a classical literary artist, yet the poem remains unclear as to what or who "allows" Milne to create. Whether she refers to God, social constraints, or both, we cannot be sure, yet she clearly describes her eagerness to continue writing.

"Address to the Shade of Burns," like the "gentleman" poems, speaks to a prominent male figure, which allows Milne, like Janet Little and Janet Hamilton, to consider the famed working-class Scottish poet. The poem allows Milne to define herself as a working-class poet in relationship to Burns with one important difference: Milne chooses morally sound subject matter for her poetry and disapproves of Burns's light treatment of certain subjects.

Since Burns died in 1796, Milne may have written the poem directly following news of his death, and she begins the poem by addressing the late poet. She observes death's transcendent treatment of rich and poor, and introduces an important theme in the poem, the peaceful rest of morally sound individuals.

Now thou are gone, O BURNS! to thy last bed,  
Where Kings and Ploughmen, Wits and Fools, are laid;  
Nor softer lie the Kings than hardy hinds--  
They sleep most calm who wore the purest minds! (57)

Milne next begins to draw the parallel between herself and Burns as both suffered considerable hardships and the struggles of the working-class poet. She points out the

valuable support of those who “do justice” to working-class poets.

I've heard that thou, like others, hadst thy faults,  
And, like myself, didst hear life's rude assaults,  
Alas! These nipt, O Burns ! my rhyming powers,  
As April frost nips tenders budding flowers.  
Right well thou know'st how Poverty's despis'd,  
And poor folks wit by few is fairly priz'd;  
Yet there are some, as thou may'st frankly own,  
Will do us justice, if our merit's known. (57)

In the next stanzas, however, Milne laments Burns's reaction to his praise and fame, and she observes his misplaced priorities in the wake of his success.

Intoxicating praises made thee glide  
Down Vice and Folly's ruining tide:  
Bright hadst thou shone, if thou hadst rightly us'd  
The shining talents which thou hast abus'd. (58)

In addition to “vice and folly,” Milne criticizes Burns's choice of subject matter, which she seems to find objectionable on moral and religious grounds.

But, let me ask thee (for thou now canst tell)  
If subjects fit for jest were Death and Hell?  
Tho' me excelling, as the Eagle King  
Excels the Bat that flies on pow'rless wing,  
Yet my weak Muse ne'er ventur'd to deride  
The Man, commission'd from above to chide  
The vain aspiring thoughts of human pride. (58)

Although Milne recognizes Burns's success compared with her own achievements, her “weak muse” remains faithful to God according to her Christian beliefs. In the closing stanzas, Milne takes comfort in the belief that her guardian angel will give her poet's wings as she will sing praises to God in Heaven after her death.

'Tis this will cheer me when my vital breath  
Escapes its prison by the stroke of Death.  
My Guardian Angel knows my wish to sing,

He'll plant each shoulder with a poet's wing,  
To soar in praise to Heaven's Almighty King . (58)

Although Milne frequently explores her own religious faith, only a few poems examine others' behavior with the same standards. The poem allows Milne to represent herself as Burns's contemporary while reinforcing her own moral and religious beliefs. Religious devotion and moral behavior proved especially important for working-class women poets. Audiences were unlikely to accept the literary productions of woman with an immoral reputation since her public poetic persona was already problematic due to her class and gender. While Burns and other male poets could afford such publicity, the success of Milne and her contemporaries depended upon moral purity as a key component of self-representation.

"On Seeing the List of Subscribers to this Little Work" portrays a conversation between Milne and a friend as they discuss how many people will appear on the subscription list. In the first stanza, Milne suggests to her friend that no more than two hundred are likely to appear on the list "As few can know / My songs or I exist" (154). In the next stanza, Milne doubts the support of middle- and upper classes, employing an interesting metaphor.

"Besides, the great, no doubt, will think  
"I write and waste my time and ink,  
"Without sense or rule;  
"A female, train'd to care and toil--  
"Her mind unnurs'd in Learning's soil,  
"Can never touch the soul." (154)

Milne characterizes herself, through the perspective of "the great," as "a female, train'd to care and toil," so, as a working-class woman, one of her only acceptable modes of work is to "care" or nurture. She then describes her lack of nourishment, employing a metaphor of plant and soil, from "Learning," yet the image again proves maternal as "Her mind unnurs'd in Learning's soil / Can never touch the soul" (154). In this intersection of maternity and self-representation, Milne is trained to nurture although she received no nurturing from formal education.

The conversation continues as Milne's friend assumes she will publish the names

of her subscribers and she claims that she will not, “for shame,” since M’Neil and Burns “had ten for two” (155). In the penultimate stanza, Milne expresses her “sweet surprise” at the hundreds of subscribers on her list, and, in the last stanza, she expresses more gratitude for their support and the credibility which will contradict her critics’ disapproval.

My num’rous friends, accept my thanks,  
Where, to my pride, in goodly ranks,  
Ye grace my simple page;  
The sight of each respected name  
Will raise my little volumes fame.  
And shame the critic’s rage. (155)

Milne’s self-representation frequently intersects with her social critique as she defines herself in relationship to her supporters and her critics, and unabashedly deflates their arguments. Other examples of social critique, however, focus more specifically on societal ills, including warnings against the violation of gender roles.

### **Social Critique: Advice to Women**

Like Janet Little and Janet Hamilton, some of Milne’s most powerful social critique focuses on the concerns of women. “To a Very Imprudent Young Woman” chastises a woman for her immoral behavior while considering its effects on the young woman’s mother, and also describes her opportunity to repent and behave in an acceptable fashion. This poem stays within the boundaries of virtuous behavior for women and provides another text which would have reassured readers of the author’s own strict moral code. As the poem begins, Milne urges the young woman to define herself according to her inner life instead of focusing on her physical beauty.

Why all this haste, unhappy Maid,  
To reach the goal of shame?  
Why rush so fast from fault to fault,  
Nor think yourself to blame?

Your beauty’s but a whited wall,  
When Virtue’s laid aside;

When Prudence or a sage advice  
No more you make your guide. (39)

She then describes how the young woman's behavior affects her widowed mother, who once possessed great hopes for her daughter.

Unmov'd you see your Mother's eyes  
Weep floods to wash your stains,  
To cleanse your lost polluted fame,  
Their source she ceaseless drains.

You're now your widowed Mother's curse,  
Tho' late her pride and hope;  
She fondly thought your growing years  
Would be her age's prop. (39)

Milne goes on to compare the young woman to a foolish lamb who left the fold in search of freedom but eventually became prey to wolves. In the final stanza, Milne urges the young woman to improve her behavior and her spiritual and religious awareness.

O! think, before you meet the grave;  
Reflect, repent, and live;  
With penitence your steps retrace,  
And GOD will yet forgive. (40)

Milne does not specify what the young woman's immoral behavior includes, but her stance is clear. Like Little and Hamilton, Milne's poems to women consider the strict moral standards for women's behavior and the consequences of violating those standards. This form of social critique proves conservative, yet it also reflects Milne's awareness of restrictive social codes for women.

Milne begins "Advice to a Young Female" in response to the young woman's request for advice. Milne offers her observations regarding the vulnerability of poor women who may be tempted by material wealth.

The poor and credulous Vice marks as prey;  
With bait it lures them out of Virtue's way.  
Thus gay apparel and alluring coin

Make females break thro' ev'ry law divine;  
They shun reflection, and they scorn advice,  
Buying their pleasures at a deadly price;  
While souls immortal, and their bodies frail,  
They give for baubles that must instant fail. (41)

Milne considers the dual constraints of class and gender for working-class women while recommending appropriate behavior. In contrast to women who choose vice, Milne suggests the rewards of religious study and virtue for a young woman.

Not so the Maid who makes her early care  
To court Religion with a mind sincere;  
If Vice invite her, she disgusted turns--  
'Gainst base seducers her resentment burns;  
Nor gold, nor grandeur, can persuade to stray,  
Whom GOD supports in vile temptations day.  
With pure affection she regards the Youth  
Who walks with Virtue in the paths of Truth! (?)

Milne suggests that a virtuous young woman should resist “base seducers” and choose instead a virtuous young man as her partner. The closing stanzas describe the happiness of the couple as they bring up their children, with the young woman respected and loved. Milne describes youth and beauty as “transient,” while “Virtue’s beauties will for ever last” (42). Although Milne’s collection includes only a few such examples of advice to young women, these poems echo Little’s frequent references to the dangers of manipulative men and the importance of women’s resistance. These two poems addressed to women become particularly interesting when read in relationship to Milne’s most cutting example of social critique, which addresses a “lady” who criticized Milne’s authorship.

“On a Lady, who spoke with some ill-nature of the advertisement for my little work in the ‘Aberdeen Journal’” provides an excellent example of Milne’s critique of her literary critics. This succinct poem consists of four six-line stanzas in which Milne provides a poetic re-statement of one woman’s criticism.

Says pert Miss Prue,

There's something new  
In Chalmers' weekly papers--  
A Shipwright's Wife,  
In humble life,  
Writes rhyme by nightly tapers!! (152)

The first stanza includes reference to Milne's class and gender identity, as "a shipwright's wife," and mocks Prue's audacity with two exclamation points. Although critics usually remain anonymous as Milne responds to them, this poem includes such specifics as the critic's name and the piece she criticized, all the more remarkable since she disapproved based on an advertisement, without even encountering the poet's creative work. Although Milne refers to Prue as "pert," the remainder of the poem consists of Prue's opinions re-stated in verse form.

Milne's lack of formal education re-emerges as Prue attempts to further discredit the poet and her readership.

That folks of taste  
Their time should waste  
To read them, makes me wonder!  
A low-born fool,  
Ne'er bred at school,  
What can she do but blunder? (152)

In the penultimate stanza, Milne introduces more irony as she re-states Prue's criticism of her technique and her subject matter.

Write rhyme, forsooth!  
Upon my truth  
"Twill put it out of fashion;  
She can but paint,  
In colours faint,  
Rude Nature's lowest passion. (153)

Milne's choice of subject matter, instead of "rude nature's lowest passion" is Prue's criticism, in a sophisticated response to Prue's class-based insult. Finally, Milne reiterates Prue's insistence that she should only tend to her lowly domestic duties.

A wife so mean  
Should nurse, and clean,  
And mend her husband's jacket;  
Not spend her time  
In writing rhyme,  
And raising such a racket! (153)

Milne's poem, instead of raising a racket, simply transforms Prue's opinions into poetry, and Milne's opinion, throughout her volume, repeatedly focuses on her poetry as not a waste of time, but a valuable creative production. Keegan considers "On a Lady," and other class-conscious poems of Milne's in contrast with the two poems addressed to young women.

Although these poems express a class-conscious critique, their potential incisiveness is partially counteracted their coexisting in the volume alongside of very proper conduct poems urging docile female behavior (see "To A Very Imprudent Young Woman" and "Advice to a Young Woman"). (10)

Although "On a Lady" may lose some of its sting when read in the same volume as the "Young Woman" poems, all three reflect Milne's wide-ranging concerns in her poems of gendered social critique.

Keegan's insightful reading of the political in Milne's poetry is a departure from observations of "radical resistance." Keegan emphasizes gaps in Milne's imitation as important sites in Milne's work.

But if we listen carefully to all that Milne says, and refuse accept her own (perhaps deceptively self-protective) claims to simplicity, we may begin see fissures, spaces where her imitation, her mimicry is purposefully imperfect. It is there we may begin to identify more subtle forms of resistance present in the work. As such, we will no longer be able to claim that Milne's *Simple Poems on Simple Subjects* lacks the political energy of earlier plebeian poetry. Rather, that energy is still present, though it has become more diffuse, less direct, and, ultimately much more complex. (16)

Certainly, Milne's poems include ideas and expression beyond the simplicity she claims, and her poems' "political energy" proves important in our understanding of her verse.



Her work also includes a personal energy as expressed through maternity, self-representation and social critique, which, in dynamic relationship with her political content, also provides insight into her poetry.

## CHAPTER THREE

### “NATURE STOOD STILL:” THE POETRY OF SUSANNAH HAWKINS

*The Poetical Works of Susannah Hawkins* was published in 1829. Her collection includes twenty-seven poems and six songs. The owner of *The Dumfries Courier* published her poems for free in slim volumes with paper covers, and several editions of her text were published between 1829 and 1861. Although most of the poems are written in English, the volume does include a few poems written in Scots. *Poetical Works* explores an array of subjects from observations of nature and nationalistic sentiment to interesting portrayals of moral abstractions personified as gendered characters. Hawkins’s poetry provides an excellent example of “strategic affirmation” since most of her poems express a conservative perspective, yet they include significant representations of class and gender. Although her work includes few progressive ideas, the volume represents an important contribution from a working-class Scottish poet. The volume begins with a brief dedication to the Marchioness of Queensberry following a quote from Byron’s *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*. Hawkins’s short dedication, like the poems in her small volume, reads as a typical working-class production yet also includes many unique features.

Hawkins’s tone in the dedication is self-effacing, grateful, and humble, and these few sentences represent the sole example of explicitly autobiographical material contained in her volume of poems. Unlike many of her working-class contemporaries, including Janet Little, Christian Milne, and Janet Hamilton, Hawkins does not openly refer to her own life experience in her poetry. Her self-representation, therefore, primarily consists of her dedication which serves as a sort of introduction. In Hawkins’s narrative poems, she often emphasizes Christian principles in a didactic mode. Hawkins’s social critique emerges in these morality poems, which frequently explore value systems rather than specific, contemporary social ills. Like Janet Little, Hawkins, apparently unmarried during the composition of her poems, makes scarce reference to maternity. When she does explore maternal sentiment, she refers, like Little, to a child of her class superiors as she praises a “gentleman’s son.” Hawkins’s limited self-representation is all the more remarkable when one considers her biography as described

in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* and in Laura Mandell's critical essay on Hawkins's volume in the "Scottish Women Poets of the Romantic Period" database. As a middle-aged woman, Hawkins traveled on foot selling her volumes from door to door for many years. Her reputation as "The Wandering Minstrel of the Borders" spread throughout both countries, yet her poems include scarce reference to the poet herself (5).

Hawkins's father was a blacksmith, and she was born near Burnswark and Ecclefechan in Dumfriesshire. Hawkins worked as a herder and domestic servant, and, after the publication of her poems, the middle-aged poetess began selling her volumes in Scotland and England, and she sought to contact other natives of Dumfries who also traveled in England. According to the *DNB* entry, Hawkins was known as a "wandering minstrel of the borders" for fifty years. The entry includes this anecdote, "A genial Manchester patron declared that there were two forces a Dumfriesian in England could not escape—death and Susy Hawkins." (*DNB*) Considering Hawkins's trans-national reputation, her identity as a Scot and as a British subject prove particularly significant in her work. Mandell provides an insightful exploration of Hawkins's dialect poetry and the significance of her poetic form in relationship to her national identity.

Hawkins also uses primarily what has come to be known as "the Burns stanza"...

The Burns stanza is most clearly Hawkins's element, reflecting an oppositional, specifically Scottish nationalism belied by the content of her poems: Burns's validation in print of their common cultural heritage helped her find a voice. (5-6)

Despite her use of the Burns stanza, Mandell points out that Hawkins's diction and use of allegory and personification is in keeping with the "poetess tradition." She observes, "These poetic devices allow her to appear educated in print" (6). This also distinguishes Hawkins's voice from other working-class Scottish poets of the era, including Little, Milne, and Hamilton, whose poetic perspectives, in both Scots and English, include only occasional attempts to "appear educated in print." Their work proves more self-referential as each poet frequently explores her laboring experience and identity as a working-class woman.

Hawkins's religious and nationalist beliefs inform much of her poetry, and Hawkins's poems consider individuals prominent in her community and in politics, in

addition to observations of nature's beauties and the importance of adherence to a strong moral code of behavior. In poems such as "The Uncertainty of Happiness" and "Address to Satan," and her four tributes to late individuals, "On the Death of Thomas Stoddard," "On the Death of John Simpson, Castlemilk," "On the Death of Princess Charlotte," and "On the Death of our Late King," Hawkins contemplates the lives and deaths of several individuals and the importance of religious belief and Heavenly reward. This chapter, however, will focus on Hawkins's dedication and "Lines on a Gentleman's Son" as brief sketches of self-representation and maternity. I also examine several examples of Hawkins's social critique, with particular focus on her use of moral abstractions personified as gendered characters in poems such as "Art and Nature" and "Passion and Reason." Hawkins's poems form a unique body of work and provide a significant perspective on self-representation, maternity, and social critique from a nineteenth-century working-class Scottish poet.

### **Sketches of Self-Representation and Maternity**

Hawkins's self-representation consists of her brief dedication, and the reasons for its brevity are unknown. Although her publisher was apparently eager to publish her works, she may have only been permitted to include the short dedication as an introduction, or the choice may have been hers. Hawkins's introductory quote from Byron sets the tone for her humble dedication. "Tis pleasant sure to see one's name in print-- / A book's a book although there's nothing in't" (i). The quote from Byron challenges her readers to decide if there is anything or "nothing" in her book. Hawkins, like Jessie Ann Anderson in Edwards's anthology, engages with Byron as a fellow poet. Little, Milne, and Hamilton refer instead to Burns's poetry, and they also occasionally mention other working-class or Scottish poets. Instead of Anderson's fervent admiration for Byron, expressed in her poem, "The Bard of Passion," Hawkins simply allows his quote to introduce her volume, with an ironic or self-effacing interpretation left up to the reader. Before encountering Hawkins's poetic voice, the audience reads her prose dedication which follows the introductory quote from the famed male poet renowned for his use of irony and veiled self-representation.

Hawkins's dedication refers to her occupation and poetic and religious perspectives, and she employs a deferential tone.

A Scottish Poetess, highly favoured with the patronage of your exalted name, humbly dedicates the following pages to your Ladyship. I was born near the famed camp of Burnswark, where the brave Caledonians fought against the Romans. 'Twas there, tending my master's cattle, the Muse first inspired me with a wish to sing the praises of the great God, who favoured my country with the light of truth, a righteous king, and just laws; likewise the beauties of nature, love, admiration, and curiosity. She likewise whispered in my ear to keep by the Protestant Faith-- the Established Religion of the kingdom--to look around me, and Nature would tell me I had but one God to serve, and one faith to believe.

These, my Lady, were the feelings which prompted me to write the following verses. Unaccustomed, as I am, to address a Lady of your elevated rank, I trust you will overlook the blunt and unsophisticated manner in which I have taken the liberty of addressing your Ladyship. With heartfelt thanks, I am, My Lady, Your obliged humble servant, Susannah Hawkins. (iii-iv)

Hawkins's muse, who inspires her as she cares for her master's cattle, also whispers some rather specific instructions regarding her religious beliefs. Hawkins's emphasis on keeping "the Protestant Faith-- the Established Religion of the kingdom," reveals her devotion to her specific beliefs while effectively setting the tone for her collection. Most of Hawkins's poems view beliefs, people, and events through a distinctly conservative Protestant lens, and her dedication also prepares her readers for this unified perspective as her muse urges her "to look around me, and Nature would tell me I had but one God to serve, and one faith to believe" (iii). Hawkins's explanation is succinct as she writes, "These, my Lady, were the feelings which prompted me to write the following verses" (iv). Beyond this, Hawkins's poems rarely include any form of self-representation. Although much of her poetry seems to be informed by her beliefs, she does not explore explicit details of her personal experience, so we are left wondering if her few narrative poems or even her songs may reflect some autobiography. Hawkins's erasure of autobiography from her poems sets a tone different from the volumes of many of her contemporaries.

One of Hawkins's only poems expressing a personal perspective, "Lines on a

Gentleman's Son," represents the speaker as a humble admirer of the child and his "honoured" parents. The poem begins with a few stanzas expressing the beauty of nature and then addresses the child, Robert, with a comparison.

Robert, your little infant form,  
Like nature is complete--  
With innocence a graceful mien,  
Adorned with smiles so sweet. (32)

The next two stanzas compare Robert's neck, breast, lips, cheek, eyes, and breath to nature's beauties, and, finally, the last two stanzas address the child's moral and spiritual growth and his parents.

May virtue grace your infant mind,  
As nature doth your frame;  
From powers above that changeth not,  
But evermore the same.

Unto your honoured parents dear,  
A wise obedient son--  
To walk in wisdom's flow'ry path,  
And path of vice to shun. (32)

This poem, like Little's address to the young countess to whom she dedicates her volume, allows Hawkins to express something approaching maternal sentiment in her tender feelings for the child. She maintains her humble deference to the child's parents, yet she addresses the child's physical beauties and moral development with her characteristic focus on obedience. This near-maternal moment may have assured her publisher and audience of her "appropriate" feminine potential for maternal concern, yet the rest of the poems in her volume do not stray into the territory of maternity or references to children.

### **Moral Binaries, Personification, and Social Critique**

Hawkins's social critique appears in a few different forms. Her poems of praise address specific individuals whose benevolence she admires, and these range from ladies and gentlemen to members of the royal family. She also explores abstract moral concepts, often through personification and an accompanying didactic narrative. Among

the individuals described in her poems, the speaker values kindness, specifically benevolence toward the poor, which reflects sensitivity frequently found in the poetry of working-class writers who often existed just above the poverty line.

The first poem in Hawkins's volume, "The Beauty of Virtue," praises the Marchioness of Queensberry, privileging her compassion for the poor. The poem consists of eight stanzas, six lines each, and the first two stanzas explore the beauty of nature. The third stanza praises virtue's beauty above the natural scenes and the fourth stanza begins to describe the Marchioness.

A noble lady, rich and gay,  
Who walks in virtue's flow'ry way,  
Like Phoebus with his golden ray,  
A beam doth shine;  
In darksome night or cloudy day,  
Doth not resign. (9)

Hawkins's poem continues to describe the shining marchioness, and the next two stanzas praise her lineage, with great respect for her Scottish and British ancestry.

The Marchioness of Queensberry,  
A duke's daughter of high degree,  
The noble Marquis's Lady,  
Of great renown,  
Come of a noble family,  
True to the Crown.

The brave Buccleuch of ancient fame,  
The valiant Douglas is the same,  
Through Britain their renowned name,  
Being lords of state;  
Of noble ancestors they came,  
Whose fame is great. (10)

After praising the Marchioness's nobility, Hawkins, in the penultimate stanza, praises her virtue.

She to the poor is always kind,  
To them she bears tender mind,  
Tho' few to equal her can find  
For charity;  
For tenderness her heart doth bind  
If them she see. (10)

The poem concludes with a stanza wishing Heaven's blessings for the Marchioness during her life and after her death. Hawkins's focus on the Marchioness's compassion for the poor, her charity, and her kind thoughts upon seeing the poor provides a sharply drawn portrait of the compassionate noble woman. This poem of praise emphasizes the Marchioness's social conscience, and, instead of lamenting the plight of the poor, praises one who offers them charity. This form of social critique also emerges in another poem praising one of Hawkins's class superiors.

"A Few Lines on a Gentleman and a Lady" honors an anonymous gentleman and lady in a mode very similar to the tribute to the marchioness. Four stanzas, eight lines each, form the poem, and, in the first stanza, the speaker describes walking in a beautiful grove one morning. She happens upon the man and woman at the beginning of the next stanza and begins to praise the gentleman's specific acts of kindness and compassion.

A dwelling place amid the grove,  
That's pleasing to be seen;  
A gentleman and lady there,  
Dwelt near the banks of Mien.  
The summer's drought cast o'er the land  
A scarcity of food;  
But to the poor this gentleman  
Was liberal and good. (23)

Hawkins again focuses on the treatment of the poor, and she goes on, in the next stanza, to describe the circumstances surrounding those living in poverty.

When many men did tyrannize,  
Over both man and beast--  
And strove to keep the markets high,



The people to oppress;  
This gentleman, with Christian love,  
Had pity on the poor;  
And far below the market rate  
Did destribute [*sic*] his store. (24)

The last stanza honors the lady for her support of the gentleman, and, like the tribute to the marchioness, praises her shining virtue.

His lady did encourage him,  
On that agreed well;  
For beauty and for virtue true  
There's few can her excel.  
As Pheobus with his golden beams,  
Adorns each morning bright,  
The beams of virtue imitate,  
Bring darkness into light. (24)

Although the poem portrays this lady as somewhat passive compared to the marchioness, she still plays a role in supporting one who supports the poor. Hawkins's reference to the market rate and distribution forms her only specific descriptions of economic conditions in her entire collection, and the poem privileges the details of the gentleman's generosity in contrast to others who oppress the poor with greed and manipulation. Not even Hawkins's poems dedicated to members of the royal family, "On the Death of Princess Charlotte," "The Death of our Late King," and "Lines on the Royal Family," praise such specific benevolent acts as these tributes to the marchioness and the lady and gentleman. Although Hawkins's social critique in these poems takes the form of praise for wealthy people who helped the poor, other examples provide more explicit critiques of abstract social ills and immorality.

Hawkins frequently personifies abstract moral concepts then describes their conflicts and battles as examples of good versus evil or moral versus immoral behavior resulting in either pain or reward. One of the first examples, "Truth and Falsehood" describes the speaker's walk in the wood as she witnesses a violent battle between truth and falsehood, cruelty, and envy, with truth (a female entity) ultimately victorious. Some

other examples of this model are “Self Conceit,” “Guilt and Innocence,” “Art and Nature,” “Passion and Reason,” and “Virtue and Vice.”

“Self-Conceit” consists of two brief rhyming couplets and makes a concise statement with Hawkins’s characteristic imagery of abstract concepts walking through life.

When self-conceit doth lead the blind,  
Then ignorance doth walk behind--  
These two are close companions still,  
But with the humble walks good will. (23)

“Guilt and Innocence,” also consists of only four lines and describes a very similar meeting between a few different characters.

When Guilt and Innocence do meet  
They never do each other greet;  
For Jealousy leads Guilt away,  
With Innocence they dare not stay. (27)

Hawkins’s most remarkable poems of personified abstract moral concepts explore gendered characters negotiating moral binaries.

“Art and Nature” begins with the speaker’s usual stroll in a beautiful natural setting, yet she covertly sees two lovers and lies down in the grove to listen to their “words of love.” The exchange between “Art,” a swain, and “Nature,” a nymph, consists of Art attempting to seduce Nature and usurp her power. Nature, however, effectively resists his attempts and expresses various observations regarding the wonders of nature and the limitations of art. In the ninth stanza, she considers the difference between them.

Said she, “Ye wish to know my mind,  
To wear my crown is your design;  
But of my ideas you are blind,  
And shall be so;  
No man shall my perfection find  
On earth below.” (29)

Nature implies that her perfection is in Heaven, not earth, yet Art continues to attempt seduction as he tells her, “Your form doth in my bosom rest / And gives me pain” (29).

Nature patiently explains Art's misunderstanding to him as she says, "If ye my works could understand / We would agree" (29). Art then proceeds to ask her questions about plants growing, and the flow of rivers and tides of oceans, which Nature explains in relationship to the command of "Powers on high" (30). Art, still misunderstanding, next asks for Nature to teach him how to control natural phenomena.

Said Art to Nature, "Teach me skill,  
That I a wonder may fulfil,  
A motion make perpetual,  
And not to rest;  
As breath of life, keeps moving still  
Within the breast." (31)

Nature rejects Art's request, and she then further explains the relationship between God and herself, in two illuminating stanzas.

Said Nature, "Cease to try that plan,  
The first of all put into man,  
The breath of life when time began,  
By his great power;  
Ye cannot imitate his hand,--  
Behold that flower!

He made the earth, likewise the sea  
And sky, and all that in them be,  
I, Nature, work by his decree  
I'm second cause;  
The work he has ordained for me,  
Will come to pass." (31)

Art's desire to make "a motion perpetual" raises the question of how the poem defines "art." Certainly the imitation of nature and attempts to usurp the power of God and nature prove to be important defining characteristics of art in the poem, yet we cannot be sure whether Hawkins specifically refers to works of art in various media, such as drawing, painting, sculpture, or even literary or performing arts. Hawkins may also refer

to artifice such as artful behavior in social settings or any other social performance she may deem disingenuous.

“Art and Nature” concludes with an unusual last line as Art, not surprisingly, vows to return and “learn more,” and leaves us with an image of nature as passive or inactive.

Then Art he would no longer stay  
When Nature plainly said him nay,  
Resolved to meet another day,  
And learn more skill;  
He o'er the river took his way--  
Nature stood still. (31)

The striking image of nature “standing still” may reflect her peaceful return to her usual state of being, in keeping with the unique tone of the poem and the triumph of nature as she resumes her powerful place in life. Hawkins’s remarkable poem occupies dual poetic traditions, according to Mandell.

But it is truly amazing to find someone who "receiving a meagre education" (*DNB* 9.225) could pen the lines "Art and Nature," a dialogue between art and nature personified in which nature describes the secrets she will not reveal, no matter how much human industry is spent in trying to understand them (28-31). While God may in fact give her this message ("I, Nature, work by [God's] decree, / I'm second cause," 31), her sense that she has the ability to make God's case surely comes from her immersion in both the ballad and the poetess traditions since it could not come from the educational prowess she was denied. (5)

This confidence in her “ability to make God’s case” also underscores Hawkins’s additional personifications of abstract moral concepts.

“Passion and Reason” describes the narrator’s meeting with another pair of moral abstractions personified, but this meeting proves more violent and distressing than the observation of “Art and Nature.” The speaker first meets Passion as she walks, frightened, over a hill on a frosty night.

Said I to him, What is your name?"  
“Passion,” said he, “and great’s my fame,

Of many deaths I am the blame,  
And will be so,  
Soon after man was formed I came,  
A deadly foe.” (33)

Next appears “a maid called Reason,” whose beauty and smiles warm the speaker, but the narrator sees two armed men nearby, which presents Passion and Reason with an opportunity to intervene. Although Reason warns the men to send Passion away, since his involvement will end with one of them lying alone on the ground, they do not listen. Passion pretends to befriend both men, and a violent fight ensues, during which Reason flees to some unknown place. One man fatally wounds the other, and Passion leaves the scene. Reason returns and brings with her a moral lesson for the tale.

Then Reason said,--“Your crime is great,  
You see how wretched is your fate,  
O! how unhappy is the state,  
That you are in;  
You do repent, when far too late,  
For your rash sin.” (34)

The poem concludes with the words of the dying man who reiterates the moral of the narrative.

He said, --“Take warning old and young,  
Be on your guard, for Passions’ strong  
Continually he strives to wrong,  
Both man and beast,  
And by his false deluding tongue;  
I am oppress’d.” (34)

Similar to “Art and Nature,” Hawkins portrays the protagonist, Reason, as female, and the villain, “Passion” as male. Her choice to feminize reason proves particularly interesting when we consider the ongoing debate concerning women’s reasoning capabilities in relationship to the strength of their emotional sensibilities during this nineteenth-century cultural moment.

The last poem before Hawkins’s section of songs, “Virtue and Vice” again

presents a pair of moral abstractions personified. This time, the speaker wanders in a grove on a lovely spring morning and meets Virtue, a beautiful nymph clothed in white, and she also sees a more sinister beauty, clad in green and wearing a mask, with “Vice” written between her eyes. Two youths, with “passions wild,” also meet with the two female figures. One youth chooses to follow Virtue, and the other chooses to follow Vice. Vice leads her youth down a rough path, then abuses him. One of her companions joins the pair.

She led him up to a height,  
And robb’d him of his gold so bright,  
That soon appear’d unto his sight,  
Most grim to see,  
A wither’d hag who did him fright,  
Call’d Infamy. (49)

The youth, confronted with Infamy, also witnesses Vice’s “grim” face as she unmask, and his response echoes the victim of “Passion.”

“I have my time in folly spent,  
For want of grave could not repent,  
Indeed to spare I now lament,  
My wretched fate;  
My wicked heart did sore relent,  
When far too late. (42)

Not surprisingly, the youth who followed Virtue travels a more pleasant path. Virtue leads and protects the youth, and soon her friend, Fame, appears as another beautiful female figure. The last two stanzas of the poem include the image of Virtue and Fame lavishing the youth with material wealth and all that he requires.

Virtue far fairer did appear,  
Her luster shone with beams more clear,  
When met with Fame, her comrade dear,  
These ladies gay;  
Bedeck’d the youth with diamonds clear,  
In rich array.

He being clothed in rich attire,  
Had Fame and Virtue to admire;  
Had gold, whate'er he doth require,  
He lives at ease;  
What more on earth can he desire,  
But die in peace. (51)

Hawkins's social critique includes rather unusual configurations of personified moral abstractions in which positive moral qualities are usually feminized. She frequently employs the trope of seduction and abuse as her characters enact symbolic conversations and conflicts between positive and negative moral concepts. Interestingly, these provide some of Hawkins's only poetic examples of relationships between male and female characters, with a few additional portrayals in her fairly conventional collection of songs.

Mandell observes other examples of social critique in Hawkins's poetry which address justice, the legal system, and the morality of the prince regent. One of Hawkins's narrative poems, "On the Death of Thomas Stoddart," written in response to a local man's death, includes a subversive commentary on guilt, innocence, and laws in a murder trial, a model distinct from Hawkins's explorations of moral abstractions. Mandell provides insight into the range of Hawkins's social critique as she examines the poem.

Her intent, Hawkins tells us in the dedication, is "to sing the Praises of God, . . . a righteous king, and just laws" ([iii]). And yet, when Hawkins is acting her office of community Poetess, these "just laws" take a few hits. "The Death of Thomas Stoddart" condemns a court and jury that released a young woman "known" by the community to have poisoned Stoddart and his family. The poem ends with threats about her life in the hereafter, perhaps deflecting a political point into a narcoticizing religious truism, but perhaps not, insofar as the poem positions the community against the courts. (3)

Mandell also complicates Hawkins's reference to the prince regent in "Lines on the Royal Family." The poems appears to wish the king and country good health, in a succinct address.

Long life to our king, may he live long in peace,

And may all the blood royal in virtue increase;  
May the faith of our fathers still guard Britain's throne,  
And be nothing adored but the true God alone. (47)

Mandell, however, observes the ambiguity in Hawkins's use of "may."

Similarly, when Hawkins offers long life to the prince regent as he assumes the throne in "Lines on the Royal Family," her use of "may" could be either angelic or "demonic" (in Blake's sense of the term, as revolutionary energy); her "may" could be either prayer or (demonic) fiat. Given the history of "the prince of pleasure," in fact, Hawkins's demand, "may all the blood royal in virtue increase," in effect tells George IV to shape up. (5)

Hawkins's social critique emerges in several poetic forms, and it ranges from the subtle to the symbolic. Hawkins's subversive social commentary, however, proves less radical than many of her working-class contemporaries, including several women poets published in Edwards's anthology. The absence of Hawkins's work from the anthology, therefore, likely reflects editorial choice based on chronological boundaries rather than content Edwards might have deemed too subversive. Hawkins's frequent references to her Christian faith reflect an important quality in the poetry Edwards chose to include. Although Hawkins seemed to be a fairly well-known working-class poet in Scotland and England, very few poets included in Edwards's anthology were born before the nineteenth century. Like Janet Little and Christian Milne, it seems likely that Hawkins's poetry was simply published too early in the century to be included in Edwards's late-century anthology. Through her own remarkable distribution of her volumes, however, Hawkins provided her audience with access to her book of poetry, which reflects a significant nineteenth-century perspective and provides further insight into the treatment of maternity, self-representation, and social critique in Scottish working-class women's verse of the era.



**CHAPTER FOUR**  
**“WHERE THERE’S A WILL THERE IS EVER A WAY!”: THE POETRY OF**  
**JANET HAMILTON**

Janet Hamilton (1795-1873) was a popular, prolific working-class poet whose work was widely published in nineteenth-century Scotland. Hamilton worked from home as a tambourer or embroideress, in Langloan, Coatbridge, a town east of Glasgow. She lived to see four of her volumes published, *Poems and Essays of a Miscellaneous Character* (1863); *Poems of Purpose and Sketches in Prose of Scottish Peasant Life and Character in Auld Langsyne* (1865), *Poems and Ballads* (1868) and *Poems, Essays and Sketches* (1870). Two posthumous texts include memorial volumes of *Poems, Essays, and Sketches*, published in 1880 and 1885. Hamilton’s volumes contain a wide range of material from poems to essays and nonfiction prose pieces. Hamilton’s poetry reveals “strategic affirmation” through Hamilton’s expression of her strongly held opinions and her growing awareness of her own popularity and sizable audience.

According to Francis Boos’s entry in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Hamilton’s success is all the more remarkable when we consider the material realities of her existence. Although Hamilton learned to read as a child, she did not learn to write. Hamilton composed some poetry in her early adulthood, which she dictated to her husband. She stopped composing poetry after the birth of her third child. She began composing poetry again about thirty years later at which time she also taught herself to write. Hamilton gave birth to ten children, at least seven of whom survived beyond infancy, and, though she worked as a tambourer and educated her children at home, she remained an avid reader, staying awake after her family went to sleep, often until two in morning, in order to read. Hamilton began to lose her sight in her sixties and completely lost her sight at seventy-one years of age. She continued to orally compose poetry, which James, her son, transcribed. Hamilton received a civil list pension from Queen Victoria in 1868, but was primarily confined to her home by illness during the five years she received it.

In her article “*The Homely Muse*” in her *Diurnal Setting: The Periodical Publications of “Marie,” Janet Hamilton, and Fanny Forrester,*” Boos observes

Hamilton's large audience of readers. For a period in her later life, Hamilton may have been the most popular working-class poet in Victorian Scotland. Hamilton's funeral was attended by more than 400 people, many of whom traveled the distance from neighboring towns on foot. Boos also describes the subsequent two-year campaign to raise money for a memorial fountain honoring Hamilton. At the unveiling of the memorial fountain, Professor A. N. Veitch, of the University of Glasgow, read and responded to Hamilton's poetry. One source estimated that 20,000 people attended (263).

Boos considers the significance of periodical editors and audience in relationship to Hamilton's periodical publications. The availability of Hamilton's work in periodicals and books of poetry reflects her varied success as her poetry reached a considerable audience in Victorian Scotland. In the *DNB* entry, Boos also considers Hamilton's book publications and their audience:

Most of the records that might clarify how Hamilton's publications reached a wide audience have disappeared, but she probably benefited from the efforts of regional societies whose members subscribed to her works. Her essays and poems clearly had broad social and political resonance, in any case, and her reception in the 1860s and 1870s also benefited from an interest in "people's literature" fostered by reformist anthologists and newspaper editors.

For the purposes of this study, I consider maternity, self-representation, and social critique in selected poems from three of Hamilton's five texts, two editions of *Poems and Ballads*, published in 1868 and 1873, three editions of *Poems, Essays, and Sketches* (two published in 1870 and the memorial volume published in 1880) and *Poems and Prose Works of Janet Hamilton*, published in 1885. Both editions of *Poems and Ballads* and all three editions of *Poems, Essays and Sketches* were published by James Maclehose of Glasgow, "Bookseller to the University." Before turning to the subject matter of Hamilton's poems, I will briefly explore the publication history of each volume of Hamilton's poetry included in this study.

Each volume of Hamilton's poetry is structured similarly, including copious introductory material and selections from Hamilton's poetry and prose works, often followed by a glossary and a section of reviews from the press. For example, two editions of *Poems and Ballads*, printed in 1868 and 1873, include Hamilton's dedication,

a brief preface by Hamilton, the table of contents, and two introductory pieces. According to Boos, Hamilton's preface to the 1873 edition was the last she wrote, and she died five months later. A "glossary," which provides several pages of Scots words translated into English, and a section titled "Opinions of the Press," which includes several pages of quotes from sources praising Hamilton's work, follow her poems. Her dedication reads, "This volume is lovingly and respectfully inscribed by the authoress to her brothers the men of the working classes" (5). This is followed by the last three stanzas of Hamilton's poem "The Lowly Song of a Lowly Bard." The first introductory piece, an essay titled "Janet Hamilton: Her Life and Poetic Character," is a twelve-page introduction, written in 1868 by George Gilfillan, who was according to Boos, "a well-known critic and patron of Scottish poetry." This includes Gilfillan's description of Hamilton's life and work. Gilfillan writes in wonder and appreciation of Hamilton's self-taught composition amidst the many difficulties of her life. The second introductory piece is a sentimental contemplation of Hamilton's home, life, and work titled "Janet Hamilton at her 'Ain Fireside,' by Alexander Wallace, D.D, Glasgow" (30). Although published five years apart, both editions of *Poems and Ballads* include nearly the same collection of poems. The 1868 edition contains 83 poems, and the 1873 edition contains 85 poems. Following the poems, both include a glossary and a section of reviews titled "Opinions of the Press."

Two slightly different editions of *Poems, Essays, and Sketches*, both published in 1870, include the same basic format which begins with Hamilton's dedication page, followed by her poems, and, lastly, her prose works. Along with slight differences in binding and design, only one of the books also includes a preface written by Hamilton, four pages in length. Both editions include the subtitle "A Selection from the Two First volumes, 'Poems and Essays,' and 'Poems and Sketches,' with Several New Pieces." The volume's dedication refers, as in *Poems and Ballads*, to Hamilton's contemporaries in the working classes, but this revision addresses her working-class brothers and *sisters*. She writes, "This volume, like my last, is lovingly and respectfully inscribed by the authoress to her brothers and sisters of the working classes" (ix). The dedication is followed by the first, second, and fifth stanzas of "The Lowly Song of a Lowly Bard." According to Hamilton's preface, *Poems, Essays, and Sketches* was published in response

to requests from many readers who read her most recent publication, *Poems and Ballads*, but were not familiar with her first two publications, *Poems and Essays* and *Poems and Sketches*. She describes *Poems, Essays, and Sketches* as “a selected and revised edition of these two in one volume” (vii). The preface contains autobiographical information also included in the second edition of *Poems and Essays* in 1863. This “sketch” includes her own account of finding copies of Milton and Ramsay on a loom at eight years of age. This discovery began her eager consumption of any literature she could locate in between her work times at the loom and then at the tambour frame. *Poems, Essays, and Sketches* includes 96 poems and 15 prose selections.

By the time the “Memorial Volume” of *Poems, Essays, and Sketches* appears in 1880, the title page reads “Memorial Volume. Poems, Essays, and Sketches: Comprising the Principle Pieces from her Complete Works. By Janet Hamilton.” This volume begins with “Introduction to the Memorial Edition” written by William Phillips, and he describes himself in the introduction as “a member of the London coal exchange” who writes the introduction as a result of a request. He mentions his first encounter with Hamilton’s poetry, at a friend’s home in Scotland, and also describes Hamilton’s biography and writes of her life and her work with high praise, respect, and admiration. Phillips even includes a poem he wrote about Hamilton six years after her death, a simple tribute to her life and work.

Next in the volume is a “Prefatory Note,” penned in 1880 by James Hamilton, Janet Hamilton’s son. Following this note is the lengthy table of contents, which now includes page numbers for all five introductory pieces, along with the poems divided into three categories: “Miscellaneous Pieces,” which includes 173 poems, “Sacred Pieces,” which includes 15 poems, and “Temperance Pieces,” which includes 17 poems. Prose pieces are divided into “Social and Moral Essays,” which includes five essays, “Sketches of Village Life and Character,” which includes nine sketches, and five “Temperance Essays.” The introductory pieces by Gilfillan and Wallace follow the table of contents. Like earlier editions, a glossary and a section of reviews titled “Opinions of the Press” follow Hamilton’s work.

Five years after the publication of the “Memorial Volume,” “James Maclehose and Sons” published another “Memorial Volume” titled *Poems, Sketches and Essays*,

subtitled “New Edition.” The format is similar to the previous memorial edition, complete with the preface written by James Hamilton followed by the introductory essays by Gilfillan and Wallace, with an additional page which includes a description of the “Janet Hamilton Memorial.” The memorial description quotes Professor Veitch, who spoke at the unveiling of Hamilton’s memorial fountain, as he writes in appreciation of her works published in “Good Words” in February, 1884, and concludes with a description of the memorial fountain in Langloan. Although the contents of the collection are similar to the earlier memorial edition, the headings and groupings in the table of contents shift slightly. “Miscellaneous Poems” becomes “Poems” with 152 poems. “Sacred Pieces” becomes “Sacred Poems” with 15 poems included, and “Temperance Pieces” becomes “Temperance Poems” and includes 17 poems. The three essay categories become “Sketches of Village Life and Character, and other Essays” which includes 19 prose pieces. This memorial volume also includes a dedication page written by James Hamilton in honor of his sister. It reads, “This Memorial Volume, collected from my mother’s published works, is affectionately dedicated to my sister, Marion, in remembrance of her loving, devoted, and tender care of her parents, during their long and protracted illness (v).” This “new edition” changes the title to *Poems, Sketches and Essays* instead of *Poems, Essays, and Sketches* and includes a different title on the binding, *Poems and Prose Works of Janet Hamilton*.

Another feature frequently included in Hamilton’s introductory materials is a drawing of Hamilton herself and a separate page which includes “A Fac-simile of Mrs. Hamilton’s Handwriting,” along with her written words printed below. Her portrait is accompanied by her name beneath it, in her own handwriting, and both editions of *Poems and Ballads*, from 1868 and 1873, also include her signed name under her prefatory note. The text privileges Hamilton’s biography, her self-taught script and, in particular, her signature. This shapes Hamilton’s identity as self-sufficient autodidact and provides an important biographical context in which to read her poems and essays.

The arrangement of a book of poetry by a nineteenth-century Scottish working-class woman, exemplified in Hamilton’s texts, often introduces the reader to authoritative male voices justifying and praising the poet’s efforts before the reader encounters the poet’s own work. Although Hamilton’s popularity continued years after her death, her

memorial volumes include even more prefatory materials validating Hamilton's poetry and prose. These prefatory essays are closely related to the autobiographical prefaces in books of poetry by earlier Scottish women poets of the working classes, such as Janet Little, Christian Milne, and Susanna Hawkins. Perhaps the scarcity of work published by Milne, Little, and Hawkins attests to the limited introductory material, compared to Hamilton, whose multiple volumes allowed the publisher to revise and expand prefatory pieces. The poets who only published a single volume often include less introductory material, usually an autobiographical prose piece ranging in length from a paragraph to a few pages, with an occasional piece by an editor or patron introducing the poet. Most of Hamilton's introductory material, however, consists of biographical information written by others, from family members to editors to devoted readers. Both constructions of introductions provide descriptions of the poet's life experience and creative efforts, which would be described in contemporary terms as a "marketing strategy." By explaining the life and work of a working-class poet, one could interest readers in the unusual perspective of a writer who overcame limitations of class and gender in order to see her work published. The effect is two-fold, as it also explains any limitations within the work itself as the result of limited or nonexistent formal education.

Hamilton's poetry explores varied subjects, from introspective, religious contemplations to passionate cries for social justice. Although most of her poems are in English, her collections include a few poems written in Scots. These poems are among Hamilton's most vivid, and they include a poignant critique of the effects of poverty titled "Winter" and an insightful consideration of Scottish language and its accompanying cultural traditions in "A Plea for the Doric." Hamilton's social critique intersects with her representation of maternity as she subtly considers the limitations of class and gender her daughter will face in "Phases of Girlhood." Self-representation and social critique also intersect when Hamilton examines the challenges of a working-class poet in "The Lowly Song of a Lowly Bard." The varied quotes from "Lowly Song" in the introductions to Hamilton's volumes of poetry reflect a close association between the poet's career and the poem as an emblematic text. "The Lowly Song of a Lowly Bard" also represents Hamilton's sense of working-class solidarity and her many compassionate references to the struggles of her working-class contemporaries. Hamilton's poetry also

reveals her varied, sophisticated concerns with European and transatlantic politics. She often observes her native Coatbridge and reflects with pride upon her national identity, yet she frequently praises the efforts of Italian revolutionary Guiseppe Garibaldi. Hamilton's collections include many temperance poems, in which she identifies the negative effects of the consumption of alcohol. Some of Hamilton's most powerful social critique aligns her work with that of Charles Dickens in "The Peer and the Pauper" and Harriet Beecher Stowe in "Lines Written at the Birth of the Year, 1853." The thread of Hamilton's social critique runs through many of her poems devoted to maternity and self-representation, and this recurring concern includes keen observations and creative ideas for the improvement of society.

### **Maternity and Societal Contribution**

Hamilton describes the practice of motherhood from various perspectives. She explores her experience with her own children, the challenges working-class mothers face, and maternity as a significant component of a woman's identity. Hamilton repeatedly returns to the idea that working-class mothers possess the power and accompanying responsibility to contribute to society by caring for the emotional, physical, spiritual, and intellectual needs of their children. This class-based observation considers the intimate relationship between working-class mothers and their children, a relationship without the customary intermediaries present many in middle- and upper-class households such as nurses and governesses.

Many of Hamilton's descriptions of practical maternal experience include details informed by her class position. In "To Mithers," for example, Hamilton describes the harsh realities and difficult responsibilities of working-class mothers. She begins the poem by addressing them

Hear me, mithers, O mithers!  
Wives o' puir workin' men,  
Wha toil baith late and early—  
Little to spare or spen' (261)

She describes the details of poverty, such as the schooling children need, and the "small fees" it requires, which can be very difficult to pay. In the fourth stanza, she urges mothers do their duty, as she sees it.

Bide maist on your ain fire-een',  
The bairnies roun' your knee,  
Learnin' the fear o' Gude  
Be what a mither shou'd be. (262)

Throughout her poems describing maternal experience, Hamilton repeatedly urges mothers to fulfill those duties she defines as their responsibilities. Another significant quality of a responsible mother, according to Hamilton, is sobriety. In the poem's closing stanzas, Hamilton laments drinking mothers' neglect of their children and closes with this strong pronouncement:

There's nae sic plague on the yirth,  
There's nea sic curse in life,  
Like the curse that blichts the hame  
That hauds a drucken wife. (262)

Here is an intersection between maternal concerns and Hamilton's frequently occurring social critique of the dangers of alcohol, and a helpful way to consider Hamilton's definition of a responsible mother.

In "The Mother at Home," Hamilton voices some of her most didactic sentiments, as she again relates to the struggles of the working-class mother, yet urges her to tend to her children's complex physical, emotional, and educational needs. Boos describes Hamilton's views on mothers educating their children at home.

Hamilton also preached quite ardently the need for women to educate their children, a view that gradually led her to embrace wider appeals for women's self-culture and equal status in working-class education reform movements...Her poems and essays often praise women who had learned to read and taught their children, enjoin others to follow their example, and return again and again to the cardinal social virtues of such activities.

In "The Mother at Home," Hamilton considers the "cardinal social virtues" of mothers teaching their children, and she specifically addresses working-class Scottish mothers, who reared children through recent difficult hardships in their nation.

Oh mothers of Scotland! I call you by name,  
I bid you arise and rescue your fair fame;



Let your eyes trickle down like a fountain of tears,  
For young ones neglected through crime-shrouded years.

It is clear that Hamilton addresses a distinct portion of the population, using their gender, class identity, and maternal experience to create a discourse of maternal responsibility. In the next two stanzas, she describes her definition of working-class mothers' responsibilities.

Oh poor peasant mother—Oh working man's wife!  
Your child's food and clothing, his health and his life  
Should be toiled for, and cared for, as only a part  
Of your duty; Oh culture his mind and his heart!

Your cares are full many, your leisure is small,  
But the souls of your babes are more precious than all;  
While you toil with your hands you should watch, teach,  
For where there's a will there is ever a way! [and pray, (85)

Hamilton's insistence that working-class mothers tend to their children's emotional and mental needs in addition to their physical needs takes into consideration the limited educational opportunities many working-class children faced, despite many movements devoted to reforming working-class education. Although some children could attend village or church-based primary schools, many could not, due to remote rural locations of their homes or early laboring responsibilities which would not allow time for school. Hamilton also mentions the needs of the heart in keeping with her adherence to moral, Christian behavior.

Hamilton considers these maternal responsibilities as a part of the female experience in "Woman" and "Spring Scene in the Country." "Woman" describes the centrality of a mother's role in the home, using stars as metaphors to represent the significance of her power.

There is an element of power  
That suits the needs of every hour—  
All wants to which our state gives birth—  
The life, the mind, the home, the hearth.

Tis Woman. From the mother's breast

The babe draws life and strength and rest (90)

Hamilton's vivid language describing "Woman" as "an element of power" with capabilities which seem almost omnipotent continues as she describes, again, the mother who teaches "the infant mind" with the ways of truth, peace, and wisdom. She even seems to draw a parallel between woman and the portrayal of God in the Lord's Prayer as she describes "she who gives his daily bread." (90). After continuing to ponder the greatness of woman's responsibilities and capabilities as "mother, guardian, teacher, friend," in six stanzas, Hamilton spends the next four stanzas cautioning the "careless mother" who does not "check" "the early buds of vice" in her children. After warning against the effects of such neglect upon the children and spouse of such a mother, Hamilton closes with another reference to the mother's mission.

O Woman, much to thee is given—

Thy mission comes direct from Heaven ;

The priceless gems of human life—

A careful mother, virtuous wife. (91)

Hamilton's didactic maternal poems often include such a warning which seems designed to help prevent the destructive effects of neglectful mothers.

"Spring Scene in the Country" begins with an idyllic description of "bonnetless and barefoot" dancing girls frolicking in nature, including some who tend to their baby siblings. After observing the girls for 24 of the poems' 38 lines, she then observes the girls heading for home. This seems to spark a realization of the power they will one day wield in homes of their own.

Ah, your homes! Your state is lowly,

But your mission high and holy

Shall be in the future, when,

Mother's ye of future men,

Wield a power within the nation,

In the work of education, (79)

Like the descriptions in "Woman," Hamilton's recognition of women's power and influence is proto-feminist in its insistence on the importance of women. Although she

limits this influence to the domestic sphere, she recognizes that the power of women in the domestic realm actually surpasses the power of influential men in the public sphere.

Which priests and sages, Peers and Commons,  
Cannot wield—that power is woman’s.  
‘Tis not meetings, speeches, grants,  
Laying bare the crimes and wants  
Of your juvenile offenders ;  
But the fact experience tenders,  
That the power above all others  
Youth to train is this—good mothers. (79)

This portrayal of women’s power in maternity helps us to better understand Hamilton’s portrayal of her daughter’s experience with formal education and domesticity.

One of Hamilton’s references to women’s education in relationship to the domestic sphere occurs in the poem which describes her daughter’s growth and experiences, “Phases of Girlhood.” The poem is divided into four sections, each section devoted to a stage of her daughter’s early life. The first section includes tender descriptions of the nursing baby girl and her enamored mother. The next section introduces us to her daughter as a little girl, and Hamilton notices her curiosity and intelligence.

Nature has been very kind  
To my darling ; from her mind,  
Stored with sparkling gems of thought,  
On her lisping tongue are brought  
To my ears, and she will ask  
Questions that will sometimes task  
Me to give, as she desired,  
Answers such as were required. (168-169)

Since “nature has been kind” to the little girl, perhaps evidenced by her ability to challenge her mother with thoughtful questions, Hamilton is very thankful, yet she continues the section with lines praising her daughter’s faithfulness, protection, and obedience as “mother’s will is still her law” (169).

The next section describes her daughter's introduction to school, where Hamilton hopes her daughter will not be corrupted by her introduction to the "motley congregation— / A common school" (169). At the beginning and end of this section, Hamilton expresses a concern for her daughter's education and moral knowledge, as the two seem bound together. She writes, "At home were trained the budding beauties / Of her mind—her moral duties" (169). The "budding beauties of her mind," perhaps her intelligence, seemed to require moral training, according to Hamilton's standards. As Hamilton wishes her daughter well, she also writes, "And much may she, my darling daughter, / Profit by the knowledge taught her" (169). Whether that "knowledge" is moral, intellectual, or both, we cannot be sure, but Hamilton does wish her daughter the best with the knowledge she gains. She closes the section with the wish, "When school she leaves, be still my pearl, / An innocent and happy girl" (170).

Still concerned about the corrupting potential of this new form of socialization and perhaps the corrupting potential of formal education, Hamilton describes the end of her daughter's schooling in the last stanza.

My girl is but a workman's child,  
And so not Miss but Maggie styled  
At school four years has been at most  
And now she leaves—not for the cost,  
For that is small—at home she's wanted (170)

Hamilton describes her daughter's gender and class position and the resulting end of her four years at school. Her mother needs her help at home and, very subtly, seems to lament the end of her daughter's formal education.

A little colony is planted  
Upon the hearth and round the table  
There's more to do than mother's able  
To perform, and Maggie's clever,  
And now is done with school for ever.  
She now is set to washing, scrubbing,  
Baking, cooking, wringing, rubbing,  
Nursing little sis or brother

To relieve poor, weary mother. (170)

It seems that Hamilton comes to terms with her own role as a working-class mother who requires help from her daughter. Whether “clever” describes Maggie’s aptitude for scholarly or domestic pursuits, the finality of the line “done with school for ever” resonates in the midst of her deep affection and concerns for Maggie, voiced throughout the poem. The closing lines refer to Maggie as “tall,” “pretty,” and “forward with her teens,” although she “knows not yet what wooing means” (170). Her poem ends with prayers for protection as her daughter will soon know the joys and trials of love. The poem does not include any direct commentary on how this cycle of working-class women’s domestic responsibilities limits or prevents their opportunities for formal education. Although, as Boos points out, Hamilton eventually came to advocate equal education for working-class women, her views on the source of this education remained complicated. “She became, in fact, an unshakably committed believer in women’s education but assumed this need not take place in schools--none of which, after all, she had ever attended.” Hamilton’s description of Maggie, however, as “done with school forever,” may lament the end of her daughter’s education at school, which could also reflect Hamilton’s desire for her daughter to experience the schooling denied to Hamilton herself. We are left wondering if Hamilton imagined the future of Maggie’s hypothetical marriage, the possibility that Maggie might have a clever daughter of her own, and the possibility that Maggie’s daughter might gain the benefits of more formal education than that experienced by her mother and grandmother.

### **Self-Representation, Struggle, and Creativity**

Janet Hamilton’s self-representation includes several contemplative poems in which she ponders life, death, faith, and nature. For the purposes of this section, I will focus on Hamilton’s poetic self-representation, as she defines herself as a poet, frequently in relationship to other poets and proponents of working-class writing. As Boos points out, Hamilton’s self-awareness as a poet is significant when considering her work. Boos writes, “A concomitant belief in the dignity and moral importance of the tale-teller’s role informed Hamilton’s conception of her own literary purpose.” Hamilton frequently imagines herself as part of a community of writers from various backgrounds, and, as Boos observes, she appreciates the importance of writers’ contributions to society.

In the 1870 edition of *Poems, Essays, and Sketches*, Hamilton's "Centenary Poem" indicates her great admiration for Robert Burns as she aligns herself with his class identity and his perspective on equality. The poem is subtitled, "Recited at Burns' Centenary Festival, held at Mauchline, January 25<sup>th</sup>, 1859." Hamilton's prominence as a local poet helped her creative voice to speak for the community in honor of Burns. The poem exalts Burns's writing, life, and character with a comparison of religious devotion in the first stanza. This parallel holds special weight for Hamilton since her personal religious devotion becomes clear through many of her other poems.

Oh Bard beloved! As pilgrims to thy shrine,  
With song and gift we come, our vows to pay;  
The growing fame of hundred years is thine,  
And lands and nations hail thy natal day. (19)

Hamilton spends several stanzas referring to several of Burns's poems, with great admiration and appreciation for each. The closing stanzas of the poem include a reference to "For a' that and a' that," celebrating its message of equality.

Burns—Nature's noblest, brightest, dearest son—  
Large, loving heart, and independent mind  
Were his—not to be bought or warped, but won  
To love and sympathy for all mankind.

Bright on the altar of his manly heart  
The holy flame of patriot ardour glowed;  
Love's fragrant incense; Truth undimmed by Art,  
And wit and humour flashing as they flowed.

"A man's a man," whatever may befall  
Of honest poverty or lowly name—  
Birth, rank and wealth, the poet lacked them all,  
But worth and genius gave him love and fame. (21)

Hamilton's "love and sympathy for all," her national identity as a Scot, and her "worth and genius" all speak to her similarities with Burns. Hamilton's fame, though not as far-

reaching as Burns, was, in her time, considerable, and her work, like Burns's, emphasized equality in spite of the constraints of class difference.

"The Lowly Song of a Lowly Bard" considers working-class life and creativity. The varied quotes from "Lowly Song" in the introductions to Hamilton's volumes of poetry reflect a close association between the poet's career and the poem as an emblematic text. Lowly life and lowly experience form the theme of the first several stanzas, as Hamilton describes the position and weighty cares of a working-class person.

"We are lowly, very lowly:"  
Low the bard; and low the song;  
Lowly thou, my own dear village;  
Lowly those I dwell among. (32)

Hamilton then describes the promise of exaltation in Heaven and compares the working-class experience with that of Christ, who was "Low on Earth, but Lord above" (34). The last three stanzas describe the speaker's ambition, for herself and for others in her position.

Yet, not low my aspirations:  
High and strong my soul's desire  
To assist my toiling brothers  
Upward, onward to aspire.

Upward to the heaven above us,  
Onward in the march of mind,  
Upward to the shrine of freedom,  
Onward, working for our kind.

This to you my working brothers  
I inscribe, may nothing low  
Dwell in mind, in heart, or habit;  
Upward look, and onward go. (34)

These stanzas reveal the speaker's ambition for working-class solidarity and self-improvement. The song ends not on a "lowly" note, but instead emphasizes the

aspirations for improvement which reveal the poet's vision for her class contemporaries, to experience life with the hope of improvement rather than the drudgery and suffering of "lowly life."

In *Poems and Ballads*, first published in 1868, Hamilton's dedication, "This volume is lovingly and respectfully inscribed by the authoress to her brothers the men of the working classes" is followed by the last three stanzas of "Lowly Song" (5). In *Poems, Essays, and Sketches*, published in 1870, the dedication reads, "This volume, like my last, is lovingly and respectfully inscribed by the authoress to her brothers and sisters of the working classes" and includes the first, third, and fifth stanzas of the poem as the dedication (ix). The poem and dedication describe a family whose kinship is based on a shared class position, and, in her 1870 dedication, she revises the poem's reference to her "working brothers" to include gender equality among working-class sisters and brothers. Hamilton's self-representation as a poet committed to the improvement of working-class life informs "The Lowly Song of a Lowly Bard." The dedications and excerpts introduce readers to Hamilton's poetic self-representation and set the tone for Hamilton's entire volumes of poetry and prose.

Closely related, "Verses, Inscribed to an Unknown Poetical Correspondent," focuses on relationships between working-class writers and imagines the possibility for shared understanding within a community of working-class writers. Since Hamilton addresses someone "unknown," she begins the first three stanzas with "Where art thou?, Who art thou?, and What art thou?," respectively. The figure whom she addresses seems to be male, as she addresses him "my leal 'auld brither.'" (174). She imagines his life as a "busy worker" and a "child of nature," and, in the fourth stanza, describes their shared inspiration.

Low the vale, yet oft the muses  
Wander there, and we have heard,  
Sung in soft Parnassian measure,  
Strains that fired the listening bard. (175)

She also wonders whether, as she nears the end of her own life, the other poet might also ponder his soul's flight to Heaven. Along with a particularly poignant portrayal of the horrors of war, Hamilton revisits the social ill of alcohol in the poem's closing stanza.



From a world of crime and sorrow  
Bloody, bootless, wasteful war,  
Cruel drink—its woes, its horrors—  
O! my soul would fly afar.

As Hamilton imagines the possibility for communicating shared experience based on creativity and working-class identity, we can also understand her sense of community and artistic identity.

In “A Plea for the Doric,” Hamilton grapples with the complex choice to write the majority of her poems in standard English, and she laments the declining use of Scots in speech and literature. The poem begins with Hamilton’s passionate address.

Forgi’e me, forgi’e me, auld Scotlan my mither!  
Like an ill-deedie bairn, I’ve ta’en up with anither,  
And aft thy dear Doric aside I hae flung,  
To busk oot my sang wi’ the prood Southron tongue. (180)

The poem considers important events and figures in Scottish history and ends with the speaker seemingly content that Scots will not die in her lifetime. The third stanza describes the significance of the dialect in literature.

Sall the tongue that was spoken by Wallace the wicht,  
In the sangs o’ thy poets, so lo’esome and bricht,  
Sae pithy an’ pawky, sae tender an’ true,  
O’ sense and slee humor, an’ feelin sae fu’. (180)

Hamilton’s age, gender, and class position also inform her literary and social awareness of the Scottish language, according to Boos.

Hamilton's vigorous defense of Scots vernacular is noteworthy, especially when one considers the social constraints to which elderly women without formal education were subject and the "genteel" emulative pressures to which many male working-class poets succumbed. (*DNB*)

Hamilton appreciates the significance of her language choice, as she likely considered the expectations of her audience and the bi-lingual situation in which many working-class Scots lived, spoke, and wrote in the mid-nineteenth century.

Hamilton's self-representation also includes her own literacy history, in the poem "An Aul Memorie. Coatbridge." The poem, partially written in Scots, describes starting work at the loom at age eight, a happy and light existence, and one stanza describes the life-changing event which introduced her to literature.

It was there my young fancy first took to the wing;  
It was there I first tasted the helicon spring;  
It was there with the poets I wad revel and dream,  
For Milton and Ramsay lay on the breast beam. (183)

In addition to her biblical education, this fortuitous discovery of Milton and Ramsay on the loom proved to be just the exposure Hamilton needed in order to satisfy her hunger for reading and writing. Milton and Ramsay, representative of English and Scots literature, also provide Hamilton with landmark literary texts in the two languages which inform her own poetic expression and exploration of national identity. Hamilton's first encounter with non-Biblical literature introduces her to the competing languages and dual literary traditions which she would contemplate throughout her poetic career.

Hamilton further defines herself in relationship to her literary peers in "An Appeal for Thomas Elliot: The Shoemaker Poet," as she describes, in the first section of the poem, Thomas Elliot, who suffers from the emotional and physical effects of poverty. Hamilton's description shifts to include her memories of Tom as a thriving working-class poet.

Time was when Tom invoked the Doric muse,  
And she to hear his suit would not refuse  
And as he "bit the birse" and plied the awl,  
The voice of song rung through the cobbler's stall:  
And while, with sounding strokes, he beat the leather,  
His heart was with the muse "amang the heather" (274).

Her characteristic sympathy includes a keen awareness of the fine line between economic stability and poverty for members of the working class. She begins the second stanza with the cry, "I mourn for thee, my brother!" then goes on to write that she would give him gold and silver if she had it, but instead gives what she does have (274). She urges those with material wealth to give to Thomas, as giving to the poor is giving to the Lord.

The relationship between physical labor and poetic creativity recurs in another semi-autobiographical poem, “A Lay of the Tambour Frame.” The poem describes the embroidering work Hamilton performed at home, and focuses on the countless unnamed women who also toiled as tambourers and suffered poverty and neglect due to their work, gender, and class position. In the first stanza, Hamilton describes the tambourer as “slave in all but the name,” and describes her crouched “over the rickety frame” in the second stanza (170). Hamilton’s passionate sympathy for these women includes an address to working-class men in the third and fourth stanzas.

No union strikes for you;--  
Unshielded and alone  
In the battle of life—and a battle it is  
Where virtue is oft o’erthrown,  
O working men! O why  
Pass ye thus careless by,  
Nor give to the working woman complaint  
One word of kind reply?

Selfish, unfeeling men!  
Have ye not had your will?  
High pay, short hours; yet your cry, like the leech,  
Is Give us, Give us still.  
She who tambours— tambours  
For fifteen hours a day—  
Would have shoes on her feet, and a dress for church  
Had she a third of your pay. (171)

Hamilton clearly expresses her awareness of gender inequality among the working classes. After examining the fourth stanza, Boos observes Hamilton’s feminist, class-inflected perspective.

Hamilton came late to feminism, but she always identified broadly with other members of her sex and devoted herself throughout her work to the experiences and well-being of women. Her particular preoccupation with women's roles as

educators and workers was integral to her life experience and eventually led her to criticize the blatant bias against women in working-class movements of her time.

(*DNB*)

The poem resonates in our contemporary society, when human rights abuses of garment workers in developing nations remain largely unnoticed by the majority of the middle- and upper-class populations whose economies rely on the continuation of such wage disparity. The closing stanza presents the tambourer's relationship to society as a paradox.

Still the tambourer bends  
Wearily o'er the frame.  
Patterns oft vary, for fashions will change—  
She is ever the same. (172)

The last four lines of the poem leave the reader with the stark image of these disparate ways of life, with the working-class woman unchanging in her labor as her work contributes to the changing fashions celebrated by the middle and upper classes. Combined with her poignant portrayals of working-class women's suffering, this poem reveals Hamilton's sympathetic personal perspective informed by her observations of class and gender identity.

### **“Oor Location” and Beyond: Social Critique**

Hamilton's social critique ranges in subject matter from nationalistic examinations of Scottish political history, anti-war poems, detailed considerations of the plight of working-class women and men, and many passionate temperance poems. Hamilton even wrote a sequence of poems devoted to social critique, titled “Rhymes for the Times (1-5).” In this section, I will examine several poems which provide examples of her wide-ranging social concerns.

The 1870 edition of *Poems, Essays, and Sketches*, includes “Oor Location,” a lively, rapid-fire examination of contemporary social problems, rich with Hamilton's characteristic evocative language and succinct, vivid descriptions of place. Boos considers the scale of the massive growth and industrialization Hamilton describes. She writes, “Coatbridge quadrupled in size between 1821 and 1851 and suffered terribly from

the ravages of such unregulated industrial development.” Hamilton grapples with the effects of industry in her description. The poem begins

A hunner funnels bleezin, ’ reekin,  
Coal and ironstance, charrin, ’ smee kin,  
Navvies, miners, keepers, fillers.  
Puddlers, rollers, iron millers ; (70)

Hamilton focuses on problems with the police, with alcoholic women (along with a brief mention of alcoholic men), whiskey shops, and pawn shops. Her lament ends with a focus on the destructive power of alcohol, a frequently recurring theme in her poems of social critique. Some of Hamilton’s temperance poems from throughout her books of poetry include “The Mourning Mother,” “The Drunkard’s Wife,” “The Contrast,” and “Comparative Slavery.” In addition to these temperance poems, much of Hamilton’s work examines working-class rights. For example, “Winter,” written in Scots, examines the extreme conditions which affected the working-class poor. The final stanza includes Hamilton’s plea for compassion and help for those who suffer.

O! Ye wha ha’e o’ warl’s gear  
Mair than ye need or wish to spen,  
Let Winter’s cauld juist warm yer hearts  
To help piur needfu’ workin’ men. (163)

Hamilton’s social critique includes sensitivity to the complexity of class and gender roles and her awareness of the role working-class men and women occupied in relationship to their class superiors.

In the same collection, “The Peer and the Pauper” provides an excellent example of Hamilton’s class-based social critique. The poem is subtitled “Contrasted Scenes from Real Life,” and it is divided into two sections. The first section, “Scene 1—Marriage of Sir R. Peel with Lady E. Hay,” includes a lengthy description of the beautiful, elaborate wedding ceremony. The last four lines, however, describe equality in Heaven.

Ah happy bride! Though now to thee is given  
Earth’s best and brightest; at the throne of heaven  
The meanest female of the human race  
Shall occupy with thee an equal place. (82)

Hamilton next focuses on the plight of several “mean females of the human race.” The second scene describes people living in urban poverty, and Hamilton credits Dickens with the scene. It is titled “Scene II.—The incident is taken from ‘Household Words.’” Hamilton seems to address Dickens as she describes a desolate scene in London, which still cannot stop the flow of love from the man observing the scene. She writes, “Go on, large-hearted Son of Genius, go! / Look till they heart is pained, thine eyes o-erflow” (83). She describes his discovery of five huddled masses, snuggled together under rags, and Dickens’s conversation with one of the destitute women who describes spending three winter nights on the street after being forced from the workhouse. He asks about the other huddled people, and she describes two sisters and a young woman from the country and implies that they have all been driven to a life of prostitution and suffering. This scene ends with four lines, indented as a block section of text, hailing Dickens as a compassionate advocate for those living in the margins.

Dickens, thy graphic pencil paints with power  
The crimes, the follies, and the woes that lower  
And taint our moral atmosphere; still lend  
Thy potent aid— be still the outcast’s friend! (82)

Hamilton’s compassion extends to the most abused and neglected members of society, and she aligns herself with Dickens as a passionate spokesperson for those oppressed by poverty.

Another poem in the collection, “Lines Written at the Birth of the Year, 1853,” examines slavery as another form of oppression and gestures toward another writer, Harriet Beecher Stowe, whose social conscience parallels Hamilton’s. The first half of the poem describes freedom, personified as the dove from Noah’s ark, and Europe’s unwillingness to accept her and shelter her. She describes their need for “the Word” and the “Truth of God,” and then begins the second half of the poem with her depiction of slaves and the importance of Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*.

Ye sable millions, thralls of wrong and woe,  
Who wear the chain, and crouch beneath the blow,  
Your tears and blood, your stripes and toils, your shame  
Have found an ear in heaven—on earth a name.

“The weeping blood in woman’s heart hath gushed  
In words of power, to million eyes hath rushed (107)

In the last stanza of the second half, Hamilton addresses “each lov’d compeer,” but it is not clear whether these peers include people from her own class or all people. Her “best wish” for them in the new year includes the freedom of the truth and grace of God.

“Lines,” however, is not Hamilton’s only poetic reference to Harriet Beecher Stowe. Both of the memorial editions of *Poems, Essays, and Sketches*, published in 1880 and 1885, include an additional “temperance” poem “Lines Addressed to Mrs. H.B. Stowe, On the Occasion of her visit to Glasgow, April 13, 1853,” which welcomes Stowe and honors her passionate commitment to abolition while also voicing Hamilton’s additional concerns regarding temperance.

“The Horrors of War” provides an excellent example of Hamilton’s examinations of contemporary political activity and war. The poem includes the subtitle, “Verses Suggested by the War in Crimea, 1854,” and it includes five four-line stanzas describing the extreme violence and deaths of war time, and in the sixth stanza, she questions how long the war will last. Although some of Hamilton’s other poems also deal explicitly with war, her collections also include many poems honoring Italian revolutionary leader Guiseppe Garibaldi. In the same edition of *Poems, Essays, and Sketches*, “Garibaldi in his Conquering Career in Italy” includes high praise of Garibaldi.

Land of Song, genius and beauty  
He came in the hour of thy need  
On the wings of devotion and duty,  
A Son and a savior indeed. (179)

Hamilton’s admiration for Garibaldi is not surprising since he found many supporters among the British working classes, but her repeated references to his greatness and heroism reveal her choice to focus on Garibaldi as a representative champion of freedom, equality, and the common people.

*Poems and Prose Works of Janet Hamilton*, published in 1885, includes many of the same poems as her previous books and some additional poems, as well. One poem “Important Queries,” addresses working-class mothers, emphasizing class and maternal identity. The first three stanzas lament “Briton’s” lack of positive leadership and the lack

of “saving knowledge” in “the learning of the college” and “the lights of science unbaptized” (224). The next four stanzas urge mothers to improve the moral care of their children. In the last stanza, Hamilton makes it clear that she addresses “working mothers.”

O working mothers! List my rhymes,  
“Tis you I am addressing—  
The workman’s home and hearth are yours  
For either bane or blessing.  
God bless and help you to fulfil the duties of your station!  
These duties, well performed, will raise,  
Adorn and bless the nation. (225)

Hamilton appreciates the importance of working-class mothers, in their relationship to their husbands, and also in relationship to the nation itself. Social critique and maternity inform each other throughout Hamilton’s poetry as she urges mothers to improve society through their maternal duties. By emphasizing mothers’ relationship to the nation, she underscores the magnitude of their responsibilities.

This book also includes another examination of social problems which focuses on gender-based oppression. In “Leddy Mary—A Ballad,” Hamilton describes a young woman’s late-night visit to a midwife. After safely giving birth, the young woman returns to her father’s home and dies. The next day, when news reaches the midwife, she realizes that the young upper-class woman was well-known and perceives the “harm” her young man committed by leaving her pregnant and unmarried. This provides another example of Hamilton’s concern for the rights of women from various class positions, and their vulnerability and limited agency resulting from gender inequality. Boos observes Hamilton’s social critique across class boundaries.

She also populated many poems with young girls...and her empathy for her fellow women often extended across class boundaries...Seduction and desertion are romantic staples, of course, but Hamilton gave special attention to the harm caused to women and their families. Her wary expectation of male sexual dishonesty gave poems...at times a mildly feminist tone.



In addition to her critique of gender-based oppression, Hamilton also praises the efforts of patrons of the working classes.

Similar to her poems addressing Dickens and Harriet Beecher Stowe, this collection includes a poem honoring a patron of the working classes. In “Address to Col. D.C.R. Carrick-Buchanan, of Drumpellier, On His Presenting a Park for Recreation to the Working Men of Coatbridge,” the first section praises the colonel and the next section praises his wife, a teacher. Hamilton writes, “May high success attend thy every plan / To raise the *status* of the working man” (295). The *OED* defines “status” in the nineteenth century as “position or standing in society, a profession, and the like.” Hamilton chooses to emphasize the word “status” as she praises the colonel’s effort to provide some improvement of working-class identity or experience. As Hamilton aligns herself with figures known for their social conscience, she also creates her own identity as a champion of oppressed and neglected members of society. Hamilton’s body of work reveals a poet committed to exposing the plight of the working classes, with keen sympathy for writers and women, particularly mothers, whose marginalization speaks to Hamilton’s own experiences.

**CHAPTER FIVE**  
**BETWEEN THE POET AND THE PUBLIC: D.H. EDWARDS'S ANTHOLOGY**  
**AND LATE-CENTURY PUBLICATION PRACTICE**

In 1880, D.H. Edwards edited the first volume of an anthology titled *Modern Scottish Poets, with Biographical and Critical Notices*. The anthology includes sixteen volumes, published over the course of seventeen years. Edwards employs the term “series,” instead of “volume,” to describe each installment. The first series in his *Modern Scottish Poets* anthology was titled *100 Modern Scottish Poets*, yet the anthology assumed the more general title as subsequent series appeared. In his introduction to the second series, published in 1881, Edwards writes that an increased budget and the desire to include more poets and more biographical information led to the publication of the second series. His preface to the second series also describes the poets included as “modern,” and subsequent volumes include many working-class Scottish poets of the mid- and late-nineteenth century. Edwards’s anthology is important to the study of working-class poetry because it allows us to consider how an anthologizing publication constructed the tradition of working-class women’s poetry within late nineteenth-century Scottish culture.

This chapter examines Edwards’s anthology and his representation of working-class women’s poetry. **Publication History: *Modern Scottish Poets* and Related Anthologies** examines Edwards’s anthology in the context of other mid- to late-nineteenth-century Scottish poetry anthologies. **Maternity, Self-Representation, and Social Critique: Representative Selections** considers the poetry of five working-class women, not included in the previous chapters, whose work appears in *Modern Scottish Poets*, i) Jessie Ann Anderson, ii) Jane Cleghorn, iii) Jeannie Dodds, iv) Mary Jane Potter, and v) Margaret Smith. I then compare Edwards’s editing practices in relationship to book publications of poetry by working-class women poets in this study, using Janet Hamilton’s work as an example.

**Publication History: *Modern Scottish Poets* and Related Anthologies**

The sixteen volumes of *Modern Scottish Poets*, spanning seventeen years, reflect the success of the publication and its considerable readership. In *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period*, William St. Clair observes the significance of anthologies.

Anthologies, abridgments, and adaptations are part of the means by which texts and ideas are diffused. They enable longer texts to be made available, in some form, to wider readerships, including the less well-educated and the economically disadvantaged. They help to bind a society together, enable texts of different authors to be easily compared, uniting the reading experience of one generation with that of others, introducing children to texts which they may later read in fuller or more sophisticated versions, and helping to maintain a shared memory across time, place, and social situation. (66)

Edwards's emphasis on "modern" Scottish poets, bound by chronology and spanning various classes, genders, and professions, paved the way for a more thorough consideration of nineteenth-century working-class Scottish women poets, as readers accessed examples of their poetry alongside the poems of male poets from various class positions.

Nineteenth-century anthologies of Scottish poetry frequently focused on poets from a particular region of Scotland. For example Robert Brown edited *Paisley Poets, with Brief Memoirs of Them, and Selections from Their Poetry*, a two-volume anthology published in 1889 and 1890. W. S. Crockett edited *Minstrelsy of the Merse: The Poets and Poetry of Berwickshire, a County Anthology*, published in 1893. Some editors described the poets in their collection as "minor" such as Sir George Douglas, the editor of *Poems of the Scottish Minor Poets, from the age of Ramsay to David Gray*, published by Walter Scott in 1891. Other editors published poetry written in the previous century, such as George Eyre-Todd's *Scottish Poetry of the Eighteenth Century*, published in 1896. Eyre-Todd also edited *The Glasgow Poets: Their Lives and Poems*, published in 1906. Another regional anthology, edited by Donald Macleod, titled *Poets and Poetry of the Lennox*, was published in 1889.

One remarkable anthology, which proved more progressive than Edwards's in its focus on women poets, *The Songstresses of Scotland*, edited by Sarah Tytler and J. L. Watson, was published in two volumes in 1871. *The Songstresses of Scotland* includes

ten poets, three of whom are working-class, Jean Adams, Susanna Blamire, and Jean Glover. Interestingly, Blamire hailed from Cumberland, England, so her inclusion in a Scottish anthology stretches boundaries. All three poets were published in the eighteenth century, and their inclusion in this remarkable anthology reflects progressive editors in addition to Edwards who expanded the boundaries of class, and more significantly, gender, in this anthology. The anthology consists of few examples of each woman's poetry, however, with extensive prose introductions, up to ninety pages in length, which describe each poet's life and work.

Edwards's continuing commitment to publishing contemporary "minor" Scottish poets and honoring their lives and work with a researched biographical sketch for each proves remarkable for the sheer mass of material included in the sixteen volumes. Most significant to this study are the female poets who comprise about ten percent of all the poets included, and the even smaller percentage of working-class female poets within that subset. Edwards's repeated references to Janet Hamilton in his prefatory materials and his inclusion of her work in series one speaks to Hamilton's popularity, and the Hamilton poems he includes provide an example of his selection process. The five working-class female poets I consider in this chapter, Jessie Ann Anderson, Jane Cleghorn, Jeannie Dodds, Mary Jane Potter, and Margaret Smith, represent less successful poets still recognized by Edwards and included in the anthology.

Although some of his introductions to these female poets include occasional examples of gendered language, his descriptions of men's and women's poetry are remarkably similar. For example, in the third series, in his introduction to the poetry of William Miller, he writes that his "life was as pure as his poetry" (143). He similarly describes the writing of Rebecca Hutcheon, a rural working-class poet, as "characterized by purity and tenderness" (223). He also writes of Sarah Parker Douglas, a working-class Irish poet, "Her writings show high moral purity and beauty" (283). In addition to his admiration of morality and "purity" in the lives and works of the poets, his descriptions of the "gentle" attributes of each poet's work extend to women and men. Edwards's choice to describe their work as "gentle," a class-inflected term, emphasizes his frequent praise of each poet's personal refinement and inherent worth, despite their varied class positions. He writes in the eighth series of George Eyre, who works in "business," that

his poetry reflects “a rich depth of pathos, a tender sweetness, and a quiet beauty” (54). The introduction of Andrew Paterson Melvile, a member of the legal profession whose poetry is included in the twelfth series, describes his writing, “His reflective poems are generally terse and bright, and they are all marked by deep feeling, descriptive power, and poetic tenderness” (76). Most of Edwards’s introductions range from one to three pages in length, and his lengthier introductions vary. Some introductions focus primarily on professional or personal accomplishments, while others consider personal history and life experience.

Our contemporary anthologizing practices consider class and gender as key organizing factors, along with chronological and regional boundaries. Working-class Scottish women poets have been anthologized alongside their middle- and upper-class counterparts, but very recently an anthology entirely comprised of Victorian working-class British women poets appeared in print, *Working-Class Women Poets in Victorian Britain: An Anthology*, edited by Florence Boos, and containing the work of Janet Hamilton and several of her contemporaries. Edwards’s anthology represents an important moment in late nineteenth-century Scottish literature, as his inclusion of working-class women poets increased their already considerable readership.

Most of Edwards’s volumes begin with a new introduction, which frequently describes the current volume as the last in the anthology, then apologizes for the contradiction in the introduction to the next volume. Although the title only refers to “modern” Scottish poets, Edwards refers to the inclusion of “minor” and “working-class” poets in several introductions. Edwards’s title reflects his respect for contemporary Scottish poets, emphasizing their modernity instead of their obscurity, in contrast to other anthologies of “minor” Scottish poets. The sixteenth and final volume includes a “parting forward,” a biographical sketch of Edwards himself, an extensive introductory essay, and a remarkably useful index.

Another editor/author, Andrew James Symington, wrote Edwards’s biographical sketch. He refers to Edwards’s well-deserved title, “friend of Scottish poets” and also compares him to the “gentle Elia.” Symington also describes *Modern Scottish Poets* as the “National Anthology” of Scotland. Edwards was born in Brechin (between Dundee and Aberdeen) in 1846, apprenticed in the printing business, eventually went to work for

a printing company in Edinburgh, then returned to work at the *Brechin Advertiser*. He later began his own business as a printer and bookseller, and after that, became head of the *Brechin Advertiser* in 1879. The sketch describes Edwards as “a true poet who modestly assumes the anonymous,” and refers to his considerable body of prose and verse. In addition to his active participation in a literary society, Edwards was asked to deliver his essays on folklore, and his poetry was published in several magazines. Symington writes that Edwards “has a marvelous command of terse Doric prose” and “has accumulated enough material for several volumes.” The sketch also mentions Edwards’s lack of financial ambition in his literary efforts, and refers to him as “one of the few souls who love literature for its own sake.”

In addition to the information regarding Edwards in the biographical sketch, the index to the anthology also offers helpful information regarding the poets and poetry it includes. The index contains 1) Names of all of the poets included in the anthology, along with birth and death dates and the page numbers of their work 2) A list of poets’ birthplaces 3) A list of poets’ occupations (with the number of poets belonging to each occupation listed below), and 4) A list of poems, arranged by title. The index also includes a list of deceased writers not included in the index and a “tale” consisting of titles of Scotch songs.

The anthology includes between 1500 and 1600 poets, most of whom are male. Approximately ten percent of the poets included are female, and most of the poets included were born in the early- to mid-nineteenth century, with only a few born in the late eighteenth century. Most of the poets are from the middle- and working classes, and their occupations range from factory workers and farmers to teachers, ministers, soldiers, police, shoemakers, weavers, clerks, drapers, booksellers, editors, and many other professions. Edwards’s set of volumes, when perused in chronological order, appears as a work in progress. Late-nineteenth-century readers likely read the volumes in a similar way since despite plans to the contrary, one series consistently followed the next. The varied introductions to each volume emphasize different elements of Scottish culture, including education and the Scottish language in relationship to poetry. Edwards’s introductions are self-referential as he explains his frequently changing plans for the

anthology which, much to his surprise, continues to grow as he discovers more poetry to include.

The third and seventh series describe issues central to many working-class poets, education and inspiration in an industrial setting. Within the third series, published in 1881, the introduction, several pages long, describes Scottish working-class education in contrast to the limited education of the English working classes. The introduction also describes theories of poetic inspiration, “the Scottish mind,” and modern poets. Edwards mentions the inclusion of several Scots who had emigrated yet retained their love for Scotland and Scottish culture. In the introduction to the seventh series, he describes poets who find inspiration in the industrial environment in addition to those inspired by nature.

We have experienced the fact that not only does the spirit of poetry possess a home amid the quiet retirement of Nature’s most favoured spots, but that the Muse is being successfully wooed, and “thoughts that breathe” woven amid the din of steam-driven machinery. (xvi)

In addition to Scottish culture and working-class identity, Edwards also frequently considers the significance of Scottish national identity as reflected in the poetry in the anthology.

Edwards’s introduction to the fourth series, published in 1882, considers poetry as a component of national identity as he mentions the work of several “well-known” and “esteemed” poets, including a contributor to the “Glasgow Herald,” a late professor, a “popular writer,” and six or eight well-known poets who emigrated to America. He also mentions “Professor Veitch,” from the University of Glasgow, a friend who helped with the series. Veitch delivered an address at Janet Hamilton’s memorial fountain, as described in the introductory materials to one of her memorial volumes. After mentioning the challenging task of researching and producing “authentic biographies,” Edwards describes his hopes for the fifth series.

Yet the kindly reception of the public and the press of our previous efforts and the encouragement we received from publishers of copyright works encouraged us to persevere with our labours; and should the soft spring breath of kindly appreciation continue to warm the chilly atmosphere, we hope to be able to bring forth in 1883 another and concluding volume of flowers of perhaps even greater

richness and beauty, and thus preserve them to blossom forth and beautify and enrich our national literature. (12)

The seventh series also includes a consideration of Scottish poetry and national identity in an introductory essay, “The Popular Songs and Ballads of Scotland,” by John Stuart Blackie, Emeritus Professor of Greek in the University of Edinburgh. The essay, about twelve pages in length, explores Scottish national identity and literary history. The introduction to the tenth series discusses the use of the Scottish language, although most of the poetry in Edwards’s volumes is written in English, and quotes Janet Hamilton’s poetic defense of the language.

As its “hamely worth and couthie speech” is endeared by many kindly associations of the past, and by many beauties and poetical graces of its own, and as our songs are said to be the richest gems in Scotia’s literary diadem, let every true son of Scotland cherish and defend the brave words of the late Janet Hamilton... (ix)

Published in 1888, the 11<sup>th</sup> series also includes a quotation from Janet Hamilton’s description of Scotland. Edwards’s repeated references to Hamilton speak to her popularity and status as a representative working-class Scottish poet.

The sixteenth and last series, published in 1897, includes Edwards’s “parting forward,” in which he combines the concerns of his previous introductions, including Scottish culture, and class and national identity in poetry. His forward contains a short history of Scottish song, which mentions Burns, Hogg, Cunningham, Tannahill, and Motherwell. Edwards includes his own views on popular and literary works and envisions the relationship between the two.

There is a literature that has the grandness of oaks; there is also a literature that has the sweetness and the humility of grass, and, after all, the simple literature that is grass has, in its place, as fair a value as the literature that is oak. The work is full of those peculiarities of thought and fancy, which spring out of, and make perpetual appeal to, the interests and affections, the wit and humour of the common life of the common people living in the common day...It is put beyond a doubt that the poetic voices of modern times are much luckier than those of an earlier date. No poet now sings without being heard. (iii)



Edwards's anthology seeks to provide this humble literature "its place." Since it has "as fair a value" as "grand literature," Edwards's emphasis on "common" experience proposes a shared understanding between members of the working- and middle-classes whose poetic expression finds a home in his anthology. Edwards considers those who disapprove of the anthology and envisions an even better reception for "minor" poets.

Doubtless some will sneer at our formidable array of modern poets. Their cynicism is unjust. The future will decide more kindly; besides, every great man is obscure at first, and if some of our poets cannot claim the highest honours for their singing, they, at least, deserve respectful regard and grateful encouragement from their fellow countrymen...Indeed, the grand and the sublime in Nature and Art must be partaken of sparingly and at wide intervals, to be enjoyable and beneficial, whereas simple beauty, it has been said, is a wholesome, all-round perpetual meal, like porridge. How few have, for example, honestly read through "Paradise Lost" and honestly enjoyed it. Almost everybody knows and heartily enjoys our simple national songs. (v)

From porridge to *Paradise Lost* to a sense of responsibility to support fellow Scots' poetic endeavors, Edwards continues to use his pragmatic arguments in defense of his labors spanning seventeen years.

He also includes a paragraph on literary working men in which he observes the remarkable number of them and provides the reasons behind the "special interest" in such poets. Although Edwards's anthology does include some poetry written by working women, he only mentions working men, and, overall, the anthology privileges male poets.

We realize not only the peculiar difficulties and disabilities with which they have frequently to contend through limited education and unrefined surroundings, but also the advantage they have in writing of the poor and working orders from actual acquaintance and personal comprehension of their aims and needs. Both reasons tend to procure a cordial welcome when one of these toilers finds a voice to prove that labour is not necessarily a bar to culture and poetic feeling and that environment is, indeed, not all-powerful in fashioning heart and mind. (x)

Edwards's insight into working-class poetry, like his view of popular and valuable literature, reflects his progressive philosophy regarding poetry. The limits of his anthology, however, include gender bias, with female poets comprising only about ten percent of the poets included, and the bias toward "gentle" poems, conservative or traditional in tone, with few progressive or subversive selections.

In a re-statement of his philosophy, Edwards points out that he still exercises some value judgments as he considers the work of "minor" writers and reiterates his appreciation of their contributions.

We know that all minor writers are not good writers, and doubtless many of them will outlive every line they have written; but it is a fact that many of the songs and ballads which have enshrined themselves in the hearts of the people, and that are likely to live with the language in which they are written, have emanated from our minor singers. (xxii)

His eloquent phrase "to live with the language in which they are written" gestures toward poetry written in the Scottish language as an important component of national cultural identity in relationship to the increasingly dominant use of English although his anthology primarily consists of poems in English. His anthology privileges the solidarity of national identity over differences in gender and class identity, yet his inclusion of a small selection of working-class women's poetry still proves significant.

### **Maternity, Self-Representation, and Social Critique: Representative Selections**

Edwards's principles of selection include chronological boundaries which likely account for the exclusion of Janet Little and Christian Milne from *Modern Scottish Poets* since most of the poets he includes were born after the eighteenth century. His exclusion of Susanna Hawkins, however, is more difficult to explain, although her book of poetry, published in 1829, may have also been too early in the century for Edwards's consideration. Edwards does include five poems from Janet Hamilton in the first volume of his anthology, in addition to multiple references to Hamilton and her poetry in introductions to several volumes.

In this section, I examine five poets, not discussed in previous chapters, from Edwards's anthology, i) Jessie Ann Anderson, ii) Jane Cleghorn, iii) Jeannie Dodds, iv)

Mary Jane Potter, and v) Margaret Smith. I consider their poems in dialogue with the preface Edwards provides for each poet's section. Each poet's work provides examples of "strategic affirmation," as they explore maternity, self-representation, and social critique from various perspectives. Jessie Ann Anderson's "The Bard of Passion" provides a remarkable example of literary self-representation as the speaker explores her relationship to Byron and her identity as a poet. Potter's "My Companie" also explores the speaker's relationship to famous poets as she imagines herself part of a literary community comprised of poets and reader. Cleghorn's "A Woman's Mission" and Dodds's "A Mother's Test" include conventional portrayals of maternal responsibility and experience. Dodds's "The Pauper" and Smith's "Snow" provide examples of social critique as each poem considers the plight of the poor and social conscience among the privileged. I also consider Hamilton's poems in relationship to her published books of poetry as an example of Edwards's principles of selection.

In her article, "The Poetics of the Working Classes," Florence Boos considers the editing process of Edwards and other middle- and upper-class editors.

It is obvious that contemporary middle-class editors and patrons mediated much of the rhymed oral narration, humor, satire, individual inspiration, and collective protest in these works...Upper-middle-class patrons and anthologizers such as George Gilfillan and D. E. Edwards edited hard-cover collections of working-class poetry... Behind or at the side of every poor poet whose work has survived stood at least one more or less sympathetic patron or editor--a genuine blessing, occasionally mixed, but one which only a few aspiring poor writers could ever hope to have. (104-105)

Selected poems from several working-class women writers in the anthology allow us to consider the tradition of anthologizing Scottish working-class women's poetry, including the "mediation" of editors, along with each poet's representations of self, maternity, and social critique in the mid- to late- nineteenth century.

#### **i. Jessie Ann Anderson**

Edwards includes an extensive introduction to the poetry of Jessie Ann Anderson, followed by four of her poems. The introduction, nearly two pages in length, describes her place of birth as Ellon, Aberdeenshire, in 1861. Her parents moved the family to

Aberdeen when she was two years old so that her father, a mason, could find steady work. Before she was ten, she could read several of her mother's old school books, including *Paradise Lost*. The introduction also describes her physical condition since an accident left her a paraplegic and therefore unable to attend school. Nevertheless, she learned to write with "astonishing correctness," according to Edwards, and began writing poetry at seventeen. (77) Edwards also includes a large quotation from Anderson, describing the publication of one of her poems in the "Christian Cabinet." According to Anderson, she expected this publication to be well-received by her family, yet her mother suspected plagiarism since she had never before read Anderson's work. Anderson responds, "Until that moment I had scribbled away with no definite purpose, but my mother's opposition only roused within me a determination to do better" (78). Edwards goes on to mention other journals in which she has been published and includes another quote from Anderson describing her habit of writing after her family has gone to sleep since composing in the busy sitting-room, which she frequently does, sometimes impairs her creativity. Edwards ends the introduction with his own description of Anderson's style.

She writes with a refreshing boldness and freedom, and expresses her thoughts in pure and graceful language. The specimens of her poetic flights submitted for our perusal show the result of extensive reading, and have in them the ring of true poetry. (78)

Edwards provides helpful biographical material in this introduction, with unusually large quotes from the poet and remarkably few editorial opinions concerning the poet's biography. Although these features make this introduction rather different from most of the others introducing women poets in Edwards's anthology, his description of Anderson's poetry is similar to most of his other descriptions of women's poetry. He qualifies Anderson's work by referring to her "extensive reading" and the quality of "true poetry" and describes her language as "pure and graceful." Three of the four poems by Anderson prove somewhat conventional as she examines classical and Biblical figures in "The Greek Patriot" and "The Death of Samson." In "The Lost Earth," she describes the Earth's relationship to Jesus. "The Bard of Passion," however, provides a fascinating

example of self-representation as the speaker addresses Byron in a complex tribute to his poetic prowess.

“The Bard of Passion” consists of five stanzas in iambic pentameter. Beneath the title, she includes a quote from “Childe Harold,” “With him alone may rest the pain, / If such there be; with you, the moral of the strain.” (82). The first stanza provides a sensual description of the speaker’s first encounter with “Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage.”

Ah, Bard of Passion, how mine eyes devoured  
That long, bright summer day thy glorious page;  
I marveled not that meaner natures cowered  
Beneath thy lofty scorn and noble rage.  
And as each pregnant line heart-hunger fed  
My soul forgot the puny, earth-born cage;  
With every pulse in harmony I read  
Till dark-robed night came down to tell that day was dead. (82)

The next stanza describes how she awakens to see Harold “fallen low,” and her strong reaction continues as her tears fall on the page and she describes her prayer. “I prayed Heaven keep me stainless from such stains as thine” (82). In the next stanza, she describes her changing reaction to the poem, and her increased understanding.

But more I read, then I knew thou didst but turn  
At bay against the false hounds of mankind  
Hypocrisy, not virtue, thou didst spurn.  
Better to look on truth than to be blind—  
Who would not seek to know the hidden mind!  
What fool would trust the world’s seeming worth!  
There many a cause for laughter thou didst find,  
But ah, ‘twas the cynics bitter mirth,  
Lip-laughter with soul-tears for petty shows of earth. (83)

With this comprehension of Byron’s satire, she devotes her next stanza to lamenting the public’s misunderstanding of Byron, as she writes, “baseless slander thou hast borne” (83). In the last stanza, she aligns herself with Byron as she speaks to him, poet to poet.

Byron! Where I now stand, there thou hast stood,

Before life mystery and man's impotence,  
Lone on life's waste, and yet wast unsubdued,  
So I must ever speak in thy defence,  
Although I feel through every quickened sense  
Thy sun has lit my soul to quench a fire  
That burned until it felt thy light intense  
Unstrung and voiceless lies my wreathless lyre,  
To strike its feeble chords I scarce dare now aspire. (83)

Anderson represents herself as a poet who understands Byron's perspective, and shares it, and she also finds profound inspiration in his work. The closing couplet, however, expresses the "anxiety of authorship" described by Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar in their revision of Harold Bloom's "anxiety of influence" theory. Her creative instrument, unprepared for use, represents her own feelings of insecurity when considering the poetry of the male poet she so greatly admires.

We see other poets such as Little, Hamilton, and Milne grapple with Robert Burns's work and reputation, and each poet considers her relationship to Burns as a Scottish working-class poet. In "The Bard of Passion," Anderson instead compares herself to the aristocratic, satirical English poet. Her confidence allows her to explore the intellectual and creative space she shares with Byron, as an ardent admirer of his work and as a poet who shares his perspective. Although the closing couplet expresses her insecurity, the sensual, analytical description of her personal experience reading Byron's work creates a fascinating self-portrait, and makes this poem one of the more unusual among the women's poetry Edwards includes in this anthology.

## **ii. Jane Cleghorn**

Edwards's introduction to Jane Cleghorn is about a page in length, and the majority consists of biographical information describing Cleghorn, who was born at Port-Glasgow in 1827. He describes her father's heroic death, a young captain who saved his entire crew and then drowned. This occurred when Cleghorn was four years old, and, after a "scanty education," she went to work at the age of ten in order to help support her mother and sibling. Early in her adulthood, Cleghorn was unexpectedly widowed and left to support her aging mother and small child. Edwards then mentions a bout with

emotional distress, which would now likely be diagnosed as depression, brought about by these events and more. Cleghorn eventually becomes a hairdresser, yet Edwards claims that her proximity to beautiful scenery provides comfort.

Her life has been a constant round of care and toil, yet though both her surroundings and her work are prosaic, she has only to go a few paces from her home where she can feast her eyes on the gorgeous scenery of the Firth of Clyde—of the finest panoramas ever unrolled by our loving Father’s hand. As the shadows of evening are gathering round her, each year she enjoys this feast with renewed pleasure and zest. (367)

Cleghorn’s introduction, like so many others in the anthology, includes no quotes from the poet herself. Edwards’s closing paragraph, which includes his characteristic description of the poet’s work, is his only reference to her creative efforts.

Mrs. Cleghorn contributes frequently to the Glasgow and other newspapers, and as a poet she exhibits genuine feeling, striking thought, and considerable power of condensation. Her utterances are ever tender, and she at times rises to a real glow of fervour. (367)

Edwards’s compliments regarding “condensation” seem to refer to Cleghorn’s concise use of language. The “real glow of fervour” is also a bit mysterious and perhaps refers to the passion in Cleghorn’s poetry. He includes “The Temple of Nature,” a poem to God which describes nature honoring Him. “The Aged Widow to Her Wedding Ring” describes the tragic events of a woman whose ten children and husband die, leaving her to await her own death with Christian faith. “Oor Ain Fireside” describes Scotland’s nationalistic pride centered in one’s own home. Finally, “Woman’s Mission” describes the duties of a mother in helping male children to make their way in life.

“Woman’s Mission” portrays the selfless acts of mothers and refers to their significant role in shaping the lives of men, similar to Janet Hamilton’s references to maternal responsibility in relationship to social contribution.

To wait man’s entrance into life, and pay his passage here  
With mortal pangs, and glowing hope and pale and ghastly fear;  
Then quick forget the price we paid, and take the helpless thing  
And wind it round and round with love as with a bridal ring. (369)

The next stanza further describes this selfless “mission” as mothers “find earthly bliss” in taking care of their children. She describes moral responsibility in the third stanza.

To take his hand and lead him up the slippery steps of youth,  
And teach him how to gird his soul with manliness and truth ;  
To follow still the purest aims and aspirations high,  
And keep an open heart for claims of pure humanity. (369)

The last stanza refers to gender roles by describing males as providers of physical nourishment and females as providers of emotional nourishment.

‘Tis man’s to push through bush an’ break amidst the darksome wood  
To trample down the tangling briars in quest of daily food;  
‘Tis yours and mine to hold aloft the blazing torch of love  
Above his path and light him on to a home of rest above. (370)

As the speaker imagines herself speaking to other mothers, the poet imagines a community of women whose maternal responsibilities, though conventional, are also vastly important. The poems Edwards includes in the Cleghorn section reflect his portrayal of her in the biographical introduction as a long-suffering, hard-working, faithful woman. Her portrayal of traditional maternal attributes such as self-sacrifice and emotional nurturing speaks to many other examples from working-class women poets which portray maternity in conventional ways in Edwards’s anthology.

### **iii. Jeannie Dodds**

Edwards introduces Jeannie Dodds’s section with less than a page of prose describing her biography and her poetry. Born in 1849, Dodds’s father was a farm griever, and the family eventually settled in Kirkcaldy. At eleven years old, finished with school, she began employment at a “well-known firm,” Henry Horn, Son, & Co., as a “message girl.” (53). She eventually became supervisor of the dress and mantle-making department, and after fourteen years with the firm, she began her own business, which found success. Edwards writes that, although Dodds has been writing verse for twelve years, she was only recently convinced to publish in “The Fifeshire” and other newspapers.

These show the ardent lover of Nature, and the cares of business and the close devotion to home interests called forth by the weak health of her much-loved



invalid mother evidently give tone and colour to a number of her poems. Her mind is naturally reflective, and her feelings deeply religious—a hopeful and elevating sentiment pervading all her writings. (53)

Edwards's description of her poetry does little to prepare the audience for the first poem he includes, "The Pauper," which reflects Dodds's social conscience. The three poems following include "The Artist," which describes a painter's inability to create life, "A Mother's Test," which contemplates a mother's willingness to discipline her child in preparation for adulthood, "Consider the Lilies" and "Nothing that Defileth," both of which explore Christian beliefs.

"The Pauper" begins with a tragic portrait of an old man on the steps of a workhouse.

Upon the kerbstone of a city workhouse  
An old man sat one day,  
The sweat, like beads, was standing on his forehead,  
His hair was silvery grey.

His well-worn shoes could tell a tragic story,  
Wandering from town to town;  
The weight of years had crushed his lonely spirit,  
And bowed his shoulders down. (53-54)

Dodds describes the man eating a bit of food he held in an old, red napkin in the third stanza. Then, in the fourth, fifth, and sixth stanzas, we hear the old man's voice. Before considering his approaching death, he contemplates the pain and suffering he experienced.

"I've done my best to earn a decent living,  
Honest I've been and true;  
And now I sit and wipe the scalding tear-drops—  
The workhouse in my view.

Oh, it is hard indeed to be a pauper  
When verging on fourscore—

For hope dies out, and every genial feeling,  
Within the workhouse door. (54)

The last stanza presents a faithful depiction of the end of suffering for the poor in Heaven. This is also an example of the “deeply religious” writing Edwards mentions in the introduction. Nevertheless, a poor old man’s suffering in the workhouse reflects a personal perspective of a victim of Victorian urban poverty. Jeannie Dodds’s social critique is subtle, as she does not directly question the usefulness of workhouses, but instead simply introduces us to a suffering inmate. Edwards’s inclusion of the poem may reflect his emphasis on Dodds’s faith for the poor man’s ultimate comfort or his awareness that a poem contemplating the life of a man in a workhouse found particular resonance in the working-class community. In one of his introductions, Edwards mentions the valuable sensitivity to the conditions of poverty which working-class poets provide.

Like most of the poems describing maternal experience in Edwards’s anthology, Dodds’s “A Mother’s Test” provides a more conservative perspective than her social critique. “A Mother’s Test” describes a mother testing the faith of her young child which parallels God testing the faith of humans. She begins with a description of this rather unusual experiment.

There lay in the palm of a mother’s hand  
A beautiful bunch of flowers,  
And she said to herself—“I will try the strength  
Of this darling child of ours. (55)

The poem describes the child’s confusion as the mother refuses to release the flowers and let the child hold them. Although “the mother did not wish to withhold,” she does it all the same, but the last two stanzas parallel this tough love with the challenges faced in everyday life.

Like children, we reach out eager hands  
For gifts kind Heaven denies;  
But an unseen hand is holding them fast,  
Just to test what in us lies.

If we got all we longed for, and never were crossed,  
Our hearts would grow selfish and vain—  
The finest of gold by the fire is refined,  
And pleasure made purer by pain. (55)

This consideration of love and adversity provides a traditional, conservative maternal and religious perspective which balances the social critique in “A Pauper,” and provides evidence of Edwards’s description of Dodds as “deeply religious.”

#### **iv. Mary Jane Potter**

Edwards introduces Mary Jane Potter with descriptions of her early memories of reading and her long-standing love for the works of Shakespeare, which began with many hours spent enjoying her father’s illustrated copy of the bard’s works. Born in 1833, Potter lived most of her life in Montrose, where she brought up her sister’s four children after the death of her sister and brother-in-law. She still managed to contribute to the local papers, and Edwards gives her writing and her personal perspective a glowing review, including a quote from Potter herself.

Her poems show much appreciation and an intelligent love of the beauties of Nature, and they ever manifest religious fervour as well as refinement and grace. Hers is the calm wisdom and unaffected piety and tenderness of one who can “rejoice with those that do rejoice, and weep with those that weep.” In her own language—“If a wise Providence has kept from me many of the things I would have liked, He has given me many blessings, among which is a ‘cheerful heart that tastes His gifts with joy’” (376).

Edwards’s high praise includes the qualities which he seems to value most among the poets he includes: intelligence, appreciation of nature, religious belief, refinement, and tenderness. He includes “Lines to an Early Snowdrop,” a celebration of nature’s beauty, and “They Left the Bay at Midnight,” which laments the death of many men at sea. He also includes “My Companie,” an interesting example of self-representation in which the speaker imagines herself as part of a community which includes the writers she reads.

The poem consists of eleven four-line stanzas, and the first seven stanzas refer to literary works from Shakespeare, Milton, and Burns. As she imagines a community of

literary voices, narratives, and personalities, Potter portrays herself as an avid reader whose appetite for literature enriches her life and provides her with personal strength.

You ask if I am lonely here;  
An' think I'll wearied be;  
I never can be lonely for  
I keep good companie

I've "gentle Will" and "glorious John,"  
An' Robbie too, so slee;  
Then how can I be wearied when  
I hae sic companie? (376)

By the fourth stanza, Potter's celebration of the effects of reading is in full swing as she describes her imaginative journeys and her "friends" with enthusiasm.

An' backward rolls the tide of time  
As bygone days I see—  
Oh, better ilka day I live,  
I like their companie!

When night ascends "her ebon throne,"  
An' closes Nautre's e'e  
In my wee room I entertain  
My goodly companie.

An' some are English, some are Scotch  
An' some frae yont the sea;  
My dear-loved friends! I ne'er could wish  
For better companie.

When troubles comes across my path—  
For nane frae cares are free—  
I've prophets, sages, kings, and bards

Waiting to comfort me,” (376-377)

Here, Potter’s focus shifts from bards to prophets as she mentions Isaiah and David, and she culminates with the words of Jesus, “best of all,” in the last stanza. Potter’s hierarchy places Christ at the top, yet her speaker celebrates both secular and sacred literature with love and appreciation. Like so many of the poets Edwards includes, Potter’s poems reveal a self-educated woman with a passion for literature and religious devotion.

#### **v. Margaret Smith**

Edwards also includes three poems by Margaret Smith, who worked on her family’s farm in St. Andrews, Orkney. Her birth and death dates are not known, but Edwards published her poems in 1890. Edwards describes her “ordinary school education” and no schooling beyond that level, and her self-education through reading during occasional times of rest in between farm work. He writes that her work has been well-received in newspapers and magazines, yet, instead of his usual description of the poet’s creative work, he describes her humanitarian contributions.

As friend who knows her intimately says—“It is as natural for her to versify as it is for a thrush to sing.” It is pleasing to add that the poor in her neighborhood testify to her kindly and benevolent disposition. Many an act of self-denial she performs in order to serve them. (33)

He completes the introduction with mention of other talent in the Smith family, describing her brother, a cabinetmaker, as a prize-winning oil painter. Smith’s social conscience shines in two of the three poems included in her section. “Low and Sweet” considers the human experience in harmony with nature, and the two following poems, “Snow” and “Heroes,” consider marginalized members of society and the possibility for improving their living conditions.

“Snow” consists of seven eight-line stanzas which describe the disparate effects of harsh winter conditions on different communities. The first stanza describes a familiar, beautiful winter scene, which brings pleasure “to the healthy and wealthy, the happy and gay, / In palace or hall by its brilliant display” (35). The second stanza describes playful winter activities and the comfort of a warm home awaiting privileged members of society.

Snow, snow but with furs soft and warm,

The sharp frosty breezes can do them no harm;  
And away to the ponds, to the ice hard and strong  
For sport and enjoyment, how gaily they throng.  
If the cold should be keen, how delightful to know  
That the fireside will gleam with the rudlier glow;  
That without or within there is plenty to please  
And supply all the wants of these children of ease. (35)

Along with the evocative phrase, “children of ease,” her description of the frolicking continues through the next stanza as passers-by dodge snowballs, but the following stanzas include a portrait in sharp contrast with these opening images.

Snow, snow and the feeble and old  
Keep close to the fireside, complaining of cold;  
They are shivering and chill, and their blood runneth slow,  
They heed not the charms of the beautiful snow;  
But sigh for the summer, for days that are fled,  
For the hopes of their youth, and the friends that are dead,  
Or dream of a future, where sorrow and pain,  
Earth’s trials and tempests come never again.

Snow, snow and the garment of white  
Gleams fair in the sunshine and pure in the night;  
Yet the prospect is dark to the labourer whose heart  
Is oppressed with the cares, that are seldom apart  
From the bread-winner’s lot, when so small is his pay  
That he ill can afford to be idle a day;  
And the snow’s jewell’d tracery on window and wall  
Means pinching and want and stern Poverty’s thrall (35)

The speaker takes us inside different houses, with people suffering through the effects of the snow. The sensitive consideration of aging and infirm people, and those struggling to avoid poverty amidst “snow’s jewell’d tracery,” helps readers to consider the different realities resulting from this experience of material nature.

The next stanza describes more suffering in “tenements old,” where “the outcast and dying” struggle to survive as snow, “the only thing there that hath brightness or beauty,” enters “through rent rag-stuffed casements” (36). Using powerful images of people living in abject poverty, the speaker finally contemplates, in the closing stanza, the tragic disparity exemplified by the effects of the snow.

Snow, snow and the piercing winds sweep  
Along thoroughfare and alley, and snow gathers deep  
In each crevice and corner, and freezes the feet  
Of the houseless, and homeless, the waifs of the street.  
O! city, the home of the wealthy and gay,  
The home of the homeless, the “waif and the stray,”  
How long will it be such a river shall flow  
Between as is bridged by the beautiful snow? (36)

Smith’s use of the term “homeless” anticipates the concept now embedded in our contemporary social conscience. Her final, lyrical question, poignant and simple, leaves readers with a challenge. After describing snow’s vastly different effects, the speaker encourages her readers to consider how to provide an additional bridge between the wealthy and the poor, which might involve a newfound awareness and sense of responsibility among the privileged classes.

## CONCLUSION

Edwards includes several examples of women's poetry which observes and contemplates societal ills with range and depth. He also includes unique modes of self-representation such as Anderson's tribute to Byron, "The Bard of Passion." He balances these progressive poems, however, with conservative, traditional poetic representations of maternity and each introduction's description of the poets' morality. His emphasis on moral purity and his limited inclusion of poems expressing progressive ideas, however, extends beyond the poetry of working-class women. Most of the poems in his anthology reflect principles of selection which frequently value conservative subject matter. Working-class women poets in nineteenth-century Scotland therefore gained readership and critical standing with their inclusion into Edwards's anthology, yet readers would still need to refer to their book-length collections in order to better understand their range of poetry, from the conservative to the progressive, and their array of creative endeavors.

For example, Janet Hamilton's books of poetry include a wide range of concerns, and some of her social critique provides a keen consideration of working-class sufferings and gender inequality among the working classes, yet Edwards's selection does not reflect her range of published poems or her considerations of gender. Hamilton's poems in Edwards's anthology include "The Lowly Song of a Lowly Bard," a sensitive portrayal of a working-class writer with which Hamilton came to be associated, "Auld Mither Scotland," an affectionate tribute to her nation, "Effie—A Ballad," a narrative of courtship and betrayal, and two poems which explore Hamilton's personal relationship with nature, "Summer Voices" and "October." "Auld Mither Scotland" and "Effie" are both written in Scots. Edwards also includes a lengthy biographical sketch, over six pages in length, in which he describes Hamilton's fame and the respect and affection with which her large audience of readers regard her. In the introduction, he also mentions her published books of poetry and emphasizes, as with introductions to other working-class women poets, her commitment to domestic responsibilities. Edwards also refers, in the sketch, to Hamilton's range of poetic concerns. He writes, "She touched many strings, occasionally burning with political fervour; feeling for the oppressed and suffering..." (252). None of his selections, however, reflect Hamilton's commitment to international politics or her concerns with women's rights. With its limited space and principles of



selection, Edwards's anthology excludes many important nineteenth-century working-class women poets, and proves limited in the representation of the working-class women poets it does include.

When we consider Edwards's anthology in relationship to the book-length collections of Little, Milne, Hawkins, and Hamilton, therefore, we gain an understanding of important forms of Scottish working-class women's publication throughout the nineteenth century. These books of poetry include "strategic affirmation" in various representations of self, maternity, and social critique. Representations of maternity are largely conventional and conservative, yet in poems by Milne and Hamilton, each poet considers her daughter's education in a progressive moment of maternal representation. Examples of self-representation range from Hawkins's brief autobiographical mention in her dedication to poems by Little, Milne, Hamilton, and Anderson and Potter in Edwards's anthology in which poets consider their sense of self in relationship to the male poets they admire. Prefatory material complicates self-representation as autobiography and biography form a complex dialogue in the texts of Milne and Hamilton. Examples of social critique include the abstract moral considerations of Hawkins, explorations of class and gender constraints in the poetry Little, Milne, and Hamilton, and portraits of disparity between the wealthy and the poor in the poetry of Smith and Dodds in Edwards's anthology. These books of poetry offer insight into publication processes and include "strategic affirmation" in representations of self, maternity, and social critique which enhance our understanding of the literary and cultural significance of each poet's work.

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## **BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH**

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