

THE GOOD, BRAVE-HEARTED LADY: CHRISTIAN ISOBEL JOHNSTONE AND NATIONAL TALES¹

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This essay represents the first in-depth critical assessment of Christian Isobel Johnstone's *Clan-Albin: A National Tale* (1815). In order to highlight its importance, I will first establish the existence and importance of national fiction as a genre. Due to the overwhelming presence of Walter Scott, it is necessary to account for his domination of the literary market of this period and analyse his appropriation of the genre. After this initial examination, the greater part of this study will analyse *Clan-Albin*, demonstrating how it lays bare the ideological contradictions of national fiction—the *Waverley* model—by drawing a highly critical picture of a Highland regiment, very much the icon of romantic imperialism. By transferring the criticism from the army to civil society, and in particular, pouring scorn on the pretensions of the *nouveau riche*, she paints an ultimately pessimistic picture of contemporary Britain. I will conclude by asserting that this novel openly questions nationalist ideology, a surprising tack for a national tale published in the year of Waterloo.

In the «General Preface» (1829) to the *Waverley Novels*, Walter Scott explains how he had started on a novel in 1805, abandoned it, discovered it again by accident several years later, and then finished writing *Waverley* in the space of a few months, publishing it finally in July 1814.

Two circumstances in particular recalled my recollection of the mislaid manuscript. The first was the extended fame of Miss Edgeworth, whose Irish characters have gone so far to make the English familiar with the character of their gay and kind-hearted neighbours of Ireland, that she may be truly said to have done more towards completing the Union than perhaps all the legislative enactments by which it has been followed up.

Without being so presumptuous as to hope to emulate the rich humour, pathetic tenderness, and admirable tact, which pervade the works of my accomplished friend, I felt that something might be attempted for my own country with that which Miss Edgeworth so fortunately achieved for Ireland—something which might introduce her natives to those of her sister kingdom in a more favourable light than they had been placed hitherto, and tend to procure sympathy for their virtue and indulgences for their foibles. (Scott 1985: 523)

Scott's attitude towards the Union, particularly in his essays, is often ambivalent, but here there can be no doubt whatsoever of his fervent support for it. Phrases such as the «the kind-hearted neighbours of Ireland» and the final sentence of the quotation, one of

¹ The title of this essay is inspired by a letter from Thomas Carlyle to William Tait, dated 27/12/1839, which reads: «Mrs Johnstone's *Tales of the Irish Peasantry* bring her honourably to our mind. Pray offer the good brave-hearted lady my hearty remembrances, good-wishes and applause. - Radicalism, I grieve to say, has but few such practical adherents!» (Sanders et al.: Vol. XI, 234).

nauseating obeisance, are more appropriate to genuflection before a grand imperial power than to the defence of a separate —Scottish— identity. Scott's suggestion that Edgeworth's fiction is more powerful than politics —«she may be truly said to have done more towards completing the Union than perhaps all the legislative enactments by which it has been followed up»— confirms that digestible folklore and national sentiment do indeed find a resting place in the hearts of large sectors of the population. However, we should not permit Scott's wily rhetoric to blind us to the fact that his positioning himself as Scotland's answer to Maria Edgeworth forms part of a strategy which not only firmly stakes his claim as the major Scottish novelist of his time (in addition to his prestige as a poet) but also enthrones him as the founding father of Scottish national fiction. In one fell swoop, he has staked his claim as the major cultural spokesperson for the Union, thus challenging Edgeworth's supremacy, while appropriating politically correct fiction, moving it from the female to the male sphere, thus again challenging Edgeworth. His apparent modesty, «[w]ithout being so presumptuous as to hope to emulate the rich humour, pathetic tenderness, and admirable tact, which pervade the works of my accomplished friend» has turned out to be a vainglorious rather than a deferential statement. Furthermore, the Scott-Edgeworth alliance forms a pincer movement which, cutting across genre and gender, corners, if not eliminates opponents of their Toryism.

The ever-popular story of the lost and found manuscript of *Waverley* became part of literary folklore; but according to Scott's latest biographer, it is «one of the hoarier creation myths of nineteenth-century literature» (Sutherland 1995: 169). The moment of its discovery was immortalised in a picture by CM Hardie entitled «Scott Finding the MS. of *Waverley*», which was used as the frontispiece to the Black edition of *Waverley*, that is to say one of the cheapest and most popular editions of the novel published after it was no longer in copyright. However, the story of the lost and found manuscript is now believed to be false, and it is probable that Scott started writing *Waverley* in 1808, three years later than he claimed. What is at issue here is not just the authenticity of literary manuscripts, but the purposeful campaign waged by Scott himself and his son-in-law and biographer-cum-hagiographer John Gibson Lockhart to canonise Scott as the original voice of national fiction. If Scott's dating of the initial composition is highly suspect or plainly false, and if the purpose of this dating is to promote his position as the inventor of Scottish national fiction, it is logical to surmise that national fiction was already being published before 1814 and perceived to be a genre of some importance.

This is certainly the case, as will be illustrated by the quantity of similar fiction produced, by the frequent intertextual references to Scott and by the way in which Scottish fiction was perceived as a fashion.² The briefest of surveys illustrates that in 1804, Elizabeth Helme published *St. Clair of the Isle; or the Outlaws of Barra*; in 1810, Jane Porter published her bloody, epic tale of Wallace and the Bruce, *The Scottish Chiefs*; Elizabeth Hamilton's *Cottagers of Glenburnie* appeared in 1808 and Mary Brunton's *Self-Control* came out in 1811, and *Discipline* in 1814. National fiction was not just a Scottish phenomenon: 1807 saw the publication of Lady Morgan's *The Wild Irish Girl; A National Tale*, and 1808, Maturin's *Wild Irish Boy*; in that same year, Peter Garside notes that «the *Edinburgh Review* listed 'The Welch Peasant Boy, By an Irishman' and 'The Old Irish Baronet, or the Manners of My Country, By Henrietta Roviére'» (Garside 1991: 51). 1810 saw

² The best study of the subject is undoubtedly Katie Trumpener's *Bardic Nationalism. The Romantic Novel and the British Empire*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997.

the publication of Peter Middleton Darling's *Romance of the Highlands*, Honoria Scott's *Vale of the Clyde*, as well as Edgeworth's *The Absentee*. National fiction was written more or less concurrently, though Elton Oliver pushes the clock back much further to Sophia Lee's *The Recess, or a Tale of Other Times* (1784-5), which is very much a minority opinion. My own ongoing research indicates that the Londoner publishers Newman issued several new national tales every reading season.

Authors commonly referred to their contemporaries in much the same way as Scott praised Edgeworth; Scott himself acknowledges the importance of two «female authors, whose genius is highly creditable» (Scott 1985: 493) in the final chapter of *Waverley*: one is Anne Grant of Laggan, author of *Essays on the Superstitions of the Highlanders of Scotland* (1811), and the second is Elizabeth Hamilton. Soon, it will be female authors who, conscious of his steamrolling progress, feel obliged to assert the originality of their work through disclaimers. The preface to Mary Johnston's *The Lairds of Glenfern; or, Highlanders of the Nineteenth Century. A Tale*, a typical Newman publication, is a representative example:

Should this little Tale come before the tribunal of any of those sharp-sighted critics who sit in judgement on these «butterflies» of modern literature, it is possible that they may pronounce it «a puerile attempt at imitating those exquisite delineations of Scottish scenery and manners which have lately appeared, under the titles of *Waverley*, *Discipline*, &c.» The writer trusts she has a plea to avert such a verdict. The whole of the first, and great part of the second volume, have been written nearly four years; its other numerous defects she submits to their mercy. The composition of it lightened hours of depressing illness; and she trusts, whatever errors against good taste it may contain, it will not be found to offend against morality or national religion. (Johnstone 1816: v-vi)

Johnston's preface is remarkable in the way it reveals Scott's dominance of the literary scene. It is also highly ironic that Johnston feels obliged to inform her readers that even though her novel was published two years after *Waverley*, she had actually completed «[t]he whole of the first, and great part of the second volume» several years previously, in other words, we are witnessing exactly the same process, the need to establish originality and authenticity, which had become Scott's great obsession when he came to write the «General Preface» years later. A less spectacular example of Scott's influence over the genre would be the addition of notes to the second edition of Jane Porter's *The Scottish Chiefs* (1829): the post-*Waverley* edition contains explanatory notes in order to establish historical accuracy, after the fashion of *Waverley*.

The other piece of evidence which will confirm both the status of national fiction as a genre and Scott's immediate takeover of it is the publication in 1824, again by Newman, of *Scotch Novel Reading; or Modern Quackery, A Novel Really Founded on Facts*, written by «A Cockney» and attributed to Sarah Green. Its opening chapter contains the following pronouncement:

We have been now, for some years, inundated with showers of Scottish novels thicker than the snow you now see falling: and Alice, who is now in her nineteenth year, has read them all, or rather skimmed them over, merely to say she *has* read them; without understanding one-half of what she perused, and scarce comprehending one word of dialect with which they abound, but which she affects to use on all occasions, generally misapplying every word, as far as my little knowledge of the Scotch dialect goes: but she tells her companions, with an air of consequence, that she never reads any other novels than *Walter Scott's*; though no one, but herself, seems really to know who the deuce it is that scribbles so fast. (Green: 1824: Vol. I, 4-5)

The picture of a marriageable London girl speaking Scots «on all occasions» sets up many comic scenes in a courtship novel, but this acquired habit, added to her insistence on wearing tartan, does, to her father's great chagrin, put off prospective husbands searching for a RP-speaking spouse. The novel's opening phrase unequivocally informs us that literary fashion has been dominated by Scott and his imitators, yet his influence was far more durable than «the snow you now see falling».

Having established Scott's dominance of national fiction, it is necessary to define —albeit loosely— what it is. I would define national fiction in the following manner. First, all roads lead to the Union: whatever the intricacies of the plot, however genuine the celebrations of cultural divergence, the Union will always be emphatically affirmed. Nationalism is channelled into fervent support for Great Britain, though as the visit of George IV to Edinburgh in 1822 so graphically demonstrated, support for Union was perfectly compatible with support for a projected Scottish identity. Second, acceptance of this situation derives in great part from Enlightenment historiography and its belief in progress. Thus Unionist Scott finds his most fervent supporter in Lukács, witness his dramatic opening statement «[t]he historical novel arose at the beginning of the nineteenth century at about the time of Napoleon's collapse (Scott's *Waverley* appeared in 1814)» (Lukács 1981:15). Third, the embrace of Union implies fervent support for colonial expansion, demonstrated most emphatically in fact and fiction by the extensive use of Highland troops in the Empire. Fourth, the foundation-stone of the British Empire is Protestantism, which the fierce extra-parliamentary opposition to the Catholic Emancipation Act (1829) so graphically illustrates. In Scott's fiction, foreignness and Catholicism in Europe become interchangeable terms.³ Clearly, if national fiction is a British rather than an English or Scottish phenomenon, what unites Walter Scott and Jane Austen is not simply their Toryism but the national nature of their fiction. In his analysis of *Mansfield Park*, Edward Said (1993) goes some way towards converting Jane Austen into a writer of national fiction, but far more explicit and convincing is Nicola Watson in her reading of *Persuasion* (Watson 1994:105-108). Thus the polarity Austen-Scott, domesticity, provincialism as opposed to the historical novel, indicates different settings but similar politics.

Christian Isobel Johnstone (1781-1857) was a prolific novelist and journalist and through her marriage to John Johnstone, a printer, who had business dealings with *Blackwood's*, had greater access to the literary scene than other women of her time; she was a popular writer, her *Edinburgh Tales* sold over 30,000 copies in magazine format alone. Unfortunately, both husband and wife seemed to have erased every trace of their past: neither spouse left an inventory or will of their presumably considerable estate, to judge from the extremely fashionable address of 12 Buccleuch Place, Edinburgh, where Johnstone died. Thus in the register of deaths, it is simply stated that she was «wife of a gentleman». A brief sketch of her life is provided by *The Biographical Dictionary of Eminent Men[sic] of Fife*, which emphasises her many successful journalistic enterprises; for example:

The *Schoolmaster*, a three-half-penny weekly journal, [was] conducted and almost wholly written by Mrs Johnstone. This was one of the first cheap periodical papers published in Edinburgh, and at the outset was tolerably successful; but being really too good, grave, and instructive for the price, readers of cheap publications not being then so numerous as they have since become, it began to decline, when it assumed a monthly form as *Johnstone's Magazine*, published at eightpence. (Connolly 1866: 244)

³ In *Redgauntlet* (1824), Scott invents a third Jacobite rebellion which fails, not only due to lack of support, but to the weakness of Charles Stuart. He has been debilitated by a cocktail of women, Catholicism and France.

The *Dictionary*... also confirms Carlyle's description of her radicalism when it states that another journal to which she made considerable contributions, *Tait's Magazine*, was «of the extreme Liberal School, and as it was conducted with much ability and fearlessness, it rose at once into a large circulation» (Connolly 1866: 244). Johnstone's stance on social and moral issues was very clear: she was strongly in favour of temperance, wrote continuously on matters of education and moral training, and was fervently anti-slavery. Ralph Jessop states that writing on marriage «Johnstone boxes the ears of the sentimentalist with joyous and robust vigour» (Gifford and McMillan 1997:225), which is an accurate description of her infectious energy. Johnstone also wrote fiction, *Clan Albin* (1815) and *Elizabeth de Bruce* (1827), considerable chunks of *The Edinburgh Tales* (1845), and many didactic books of instruction for children including *The Diversions of Hollycot* (1828), *Nights[sic] of the Round Table; or the Stories of Aunt Jane and her Friends* (1832) and *The Students: or, Biography of Grecian Philosophers* (1827?).

I will concentrate on her enthralling, massive four volume *Clan-Albin: A National Tale*, published anonymously, in 1815. Much in tune with the times, this novel begins with the now standard disclaimer:

It neither usurps the privileges of the moralist nor the preacher. It appears indeed to have merely the plain, direct character, and single-hearted purpose, of the old-fashioned novel, with no loftier design than harmlessly to beguile a few of those hours which can neither be devoted to business nor redeemed to wisdom, by a simple delineation of Scottish manners and scenery. (Johnstone 1815: Vol. 1, ii)

Like Scott, she prefers anonymity, probably a wise decision if you are called Christian, and, like both Scott and Edgeworth, envisages a novel combining manners and landscape but lacking the moralising tone of many of her female contemporaries in order to occupy the space of the national tale which Scott had monopolised. The disclaimer is further proof of how quickly authors felt the need to position themselves in relationship to *Waverley*. *Clan-Albin* tells the story of the orphan Norman Macalbin's life from birth to marriage. He is brought up in the secluded Glenalbin by the clan's matriarch Augusta. However idyllic the location may be, the economic facts of life ensure that the glen will be overrun by outside interests and that its inhabitants either emigrate or join the army. This will be Norman's fate: after enlistment, he will be stationed in Ireland, before his regiment is sent off to Spain to fight Napoleon. The novel surveys a vast panorama of locations and societies, Scotland, Ireland, France, and Spain; the Peninsular War was a common contemporary setting in which a hero's bravery would be put to the test; Johnston's *The Lairds of Glenfern; or, Highlanders of the Nineteenth Century: A Tale*, works on similar lines. Whereas Scott or Johnston's fiction promote unionism and British might, the interest in *Clan-Albin* stems from its refusal to conform to the *Waverley*-model⁴ and from its satirising the pretensions of a predominantly English mercantile bourgeoisie, in other words the social class so closely associated with the rise of the novel, whom Nancy Armstrong baptises the «middle-class aristocracy» (Armstrong 1987: 160). Whether this satire becomes outright disagreement will become the subject we now turn to.

⁴ The term *Waverley*-model is borrowed from George Dekker's study of Scott. Dekker sets up a system of binary oppositions with values such as sublimity, wildness, liberty, ascribed to the Jacobites and others, such as correctness, order, boundaries, to the Hanoverians, «the conquering legions of progress». (Dekker 1987: 47) However, Dekker takes an anti-Lukácsian stance by recovering the importance of romance.

Making sense of a four volume novel in a short space is impossible; so, for practical reasons, I will concentrate on one remarkable episode from *Clan-Albin* which Johnstone decided to include in the first issue of *The Schoolmaster and Edinburgh Weekly Magazine* (August 4, 1832), a publication which the Johnstones had taken over. The fact the story was included in the very first issue would indicate how strongly Johnstone felt about the matter. The episode in question is the story of Phelim Bourke, which, in the journal, is preceded by a brief —four paragraph— but very angry article «Flogging in the Army». Johnstone asks the reader to imagine a brave soldier punished «for some violation of military law», in other words, something of no importance outside the military code, then tortured and humiliated publicly, attended by a «flogometer» (her neologism), in other words a surgeon, whose job it is to ascertain how many lashes the victim can endure before he is taken away to recover sufficiently to endure another session of mindless brutality.

By imagining such a scene of punishment, and such a result, we only figure to ourselves what has often in reality happened under the existing system of military torture. (Johnstone 1832: 9)

Let us not forget that France, with Napoleon at its head, had been the great enemy for so many years, when we read the following:

How does it happen that the French army can be brought to the highest state of discipline without being subjected to such degrading and inhuman punishment ! The most completely organized and powerful army, which, perhaps the world ever saw —that which Napoleon marched into Russia, and which the resistless powers of the elements only vanquished— know nothing of military torture, by the lash, or in any other shape. If the British soldier be less amenable to moral discipline, and less susceptible of feelings of honour and of shame than the French, it can only be attributed to the man-degrading effects of the barbarous cat-o-nine tails upon the mind and character of the former.

Such things cannot go on in England; already they have remained too long. (Johnstone 1832: 9)

As we can see, Johnstone was a formidable debater: first, she never uses phrases such as corporal punishment, instead she prefers «military torture» thus excluding the possibility of it ever being referred to by the accepted phrase *corporal punishment*, which, through a process of defamiliarization, now appears a feeble euphemism; second, military torture does not prevent or quell indiscipline to any extent whatsoever, presumably the major justification for its enforcement, rather, Johnstone insists, it is its cause; third, proof of this is Napoleon's armies, which are highly disciplined without the need to resort to military torture; fourth, and, crucially, Napoleon was not conquered by the forces of good, but only by the Russian winter.

In *Clan-Albin*, Johnstone paints a demoralising picture of a Highland regiment, describing it in images of Swiftian ferocity as «a promiscuous horde, shaken from the encumbered lap of society, and mingled with the overflowing scum of her morbid ebullition» (Johnstone 1815: Vol. II, 287). The sensitive and reformist Norman Macalbin tries to educate the common soldier by replacing beer and cards with education; he reads to them not *Waverley* but *The Popular Tales* of Miss Edgeworth and also teaches them to read. How do the officers react when they find out that the «spark of improvement was now spreading on all sides, —from tent to tent»? (Johnstone 1815: Vol. II, 307) As the incendiary images would lead us to expect, it has to be extinguished:

Well, reading be it, —I'll have no reading: Let scholars read, and get knowledge, and virtue, and all that, — we have no use for these things in the army. Soldiers must obey and fight: that is all we care for... (Johnstone 1815: Vol. II, 318)

Even though this might be stating what officers (or civilians) might think but never articulate in speech, this statement stands out for two reasons: first, its frankness or brutality; second, the words belong to Colonel Grant, the most humane, intelligent, perceptive and tolerant of all the army officers portrayed in the four volumes. In fact, he is the only military man who regards the social gatherings and intrigues of the aristocratic officer class with the same disdain as Christian Johnstone herself does. If this is the opinion of a reasonable man, we wonder, what must the others, the rule to which Colonel Grant is the humane exception, think? Furthermore, Johnstone implies, though she is not forthright or specific on this topic (again, let us recall that this is 1815), that the army has an added interest in maintaining the illiteracy of the soldiers: reading is not only enriching intellectually, but those on the path to self-improvement do not squander their money on beer, a profitable source of income for the army. Discipline in the British army, it is affirmed, is maintained both by the imposition of unspeakably cruel punishments and a deliberate policy of keeping the ordinary soldier as ignorant and as poor as possible. Thus, returning to Johnstone's comparison to Napoleon's armies, surely the implication is that the British army is inferior, and that the difference between both sides is not minor but major. We can appreciate that Johnstone has deliberately dismantled the chauvinistic, heroic image of the Highland regiments, thus distancing herself from the major ideology of the time: romantic imperialism, founded on patriotism, acts of heroism and sacrifice for this ideal. The importance of her critical stance is immediately striking, for Johnstone has set her sights on the very centre of early nineteenth-century ideology and policy.

Phelim Bourke appears in the second and fourth volume of *Clan-Albin*. The fact that the novel's major hero, penniless Norman Macalbin, has enlisted as a volunteer in a Highland regiment stationed in Ireland, which denotes that joining the army has become the last resort for the down-and-out rather than a declaration of intent by a patriotic enthusiast ready to serve his country out of idealism or for money. This location—Ireland—reinforces two important points: first, that fencible regiments acted as a neo-colonial police force: Scottish regiments were sent to Ireland, Irish regiments to Scotland in order to maintain law and order. (Fencible regiments were not supposed to be sent abroad. Regiments destined for overseas service were called line regiments.) At the same time, Norman's posting to Ireland brings about a knock-on effect, for what constitutes home and what constitutes abroad is no longer clear-cut, because the moment the movement from Scotland to Ireland, or Ireland to Scotland can be conceived as movement by a fencible regiment from home to abroad, parameters of colonialism and post-colonialism have appeared in what was conceptually perceived to be *home*. Instead of foregrounding the parameters of Union, which is what a description of the army would set out to do (the army unites the nation in a common cause), Johnstone has effectively dismantled them. Again, this is directly opposed to Scott's unionism, and, in the political climate of 1815, an astoundingly daring move. Furthermore, as a result of the aforementioned ambivalence, Johnstone is going some way towards suggesting that Scotland and Ireland have common historical experiences, the very subject she will develop in epic form in *Elizabeth de Bruce* (1827).

Macalbin and Phelim become friends, as both personal and national attributes fuse, but whereas Norman keeps himself to himself, Phelim falls foul of the aristocratic Sir Archibald Gordon, a pretentious absentee landlord, when Phelim's affections are oriented towards a woman whom the latter believes is above his station. Gordon loses his temper, lashes out and strikes Phelim for his «Irish impudence» (Johnstone 1815: Vol. II. 274); Phelim defends himself from the attack. The military authorities do not see his actions as self-defence and consequently he is sentenced to five hundred lashes. Johnstone then illustra-

tes the barbarity of the punishment in fiction as she would later do in her article. To avoid the terrible punishment, Phelim unsuccessfully tries to commit suicide; during the public humiliation, the sensitive Macalbin faints, and on recovering is informed that the flogo-meter stopped proceedings at two hundred lashes, to continue at a later date. Phelim manages to escape.

Phelim Bourke disappears from the novel for the best part of two volumes, but if we are thinking that Johnstone has forgotten all about him, nothing could be further from the truth: in a highly dramatic and daring reversal, Phelim Bourke reappears in the fourth novel as an officer in the Napoleonic army. In an act which corresponds to his true nobility, as opposed to the veneer of nobility which covers up the imbecility of the titled Sir Archibald Gordon, Bourke helps Macalbin avoid capture by the French troops. But fate eventually catches up with him; he is captured by British forces and sentenced to death for treason. Before his execution, he tells his life story to Macalbin:

He spoke as one who has made up his account of life. He regretted that boyish folly had led him to enter the service of England; and, though he appeared quite insensible to his crimes against that country, he said he sincerely lamented that when an horrible catastrophe left him no alternative between the degradation of living a scourged slave, or redeeming his honour at the expense of becoming a daring outlaw, he had so rashly engaged in the service of France. (Johnstone 1815: Vol. IV, 294)

This is an extremely suggestive but tricky passage. For, if it is folly which led him to enlist, if he was left «no alternative» to humiliation (flogging), how far —if at all— can that compensate for «the insensibility to his crimes against that country»? To what extent did Johnstone intend that Bourke's experience of life as a victim of imperial power should be seen not as an exception but as an unexceptionable result of British policy in Ireland? Or perhaps the balance should swing the other way: subjected to demeaning treatment by Gordon for being Irish, «Irish impudence,» given a trial which was a mockery of justice, suffering «military torture,» are all circumstances which can leave us in no doubt that he has been systematically victimised by individuals, by a social class and by a national institution. If we are still disinclined to see her writing as openly critical, we might well argue that Johnstone's reluctance to go the whole way in criticising British rule is evident when she says that Phelim «so rashly engaged in the service of France.» But this rashness could have many interpretations, of which three seem to me extraordinarily significant: first, he was rash to resist solely in the light of what happened to him afterwards (his capture and execution); second, if this phrase does refer to historical as well as personal concerns, then it was rashness only because Bourke underestimated the might of the British army; thirdly, and most crucially, if enlisting for Napoleon is described as rashness, enlisting for the British army was «boyish folly;» enlisting in any army is now seen as an act of folly or rashness. What we are witnessing here is one of the first and clearest examples of pacifism in nineteenth-century fiction which appears, contrary to all expectations, in a national tale published in the year of Waterloo.

Johnstone's lengthy account of Bourke's exploits not only gives life and psychological realism to her tragic Irishman but the confession urges us to consider his actions not in terms of personal misfortune but of political injustice. In other words, Johnstone's life of Bourke is explicable only if we take into account the interaction between his person and history. That might appear banal, but the important and influential school of literary scholarship, which Lukács has presided over, believes that Scott's major contribution to the European novel was precisely that, to fictionalize the importance of historical change: the novels which Lukács analyses and upholds as exemplary in their account of historical

change, *Waverley* (1814) and *Heart of Midlothian* (1818) function in precisely the same way as *Clan-Albin*. If this is a large claim, it is not an unfounded one, and sheds more light on the significance of Bourke's death. For, after the confession to Norman, he is urged to confess to a priest, but refuses, pleading «I have nothing to reveal» (Johnstone 1815: Vol. IV, 297). This defiant declaration, along with the melodramatic scene and words

The sheriff hinted something about the impropriety of his dress, and hoped that he would not think of addressing the multitude, whose intemperate resentments he knew so well how to inflame. - :«I mount yon scaffold to die, not to commence oratory.» said Phelim; «'tis somewhat too late for that. My deeds must speak to for me now. As to my dress.: continued he, smiling, as he glanced his eye over it, «blame my poverty.» (Johnstone 1815: Vol. IV, 300)

might make Phelim appear a blasphemous, roguish, music-hall Irishman. At the same time, his refusal to be properly dressed for execution, added to his emphasis on causality, are simultaneously true and unmistakably subversive. Yet Phelim's defiance of British authority is taken to its limits when, after his refusal to dress for the occasion, he dies not at the executioner's hands but stabs himself to death on the scaffold. From a Foucauldian viewpoint, Phelim's death takes on extraordinary significance, for the stage or the scaffold—the words not merely contiguous but synonymous—is precisely the location where the state exercises and represents its power over individuals through its ability to punish and/or to forgive. Therefore Phelim's ability to take his own life on the scaffold must be interpreted as an act of total insubordination, as it is something which in Foucauldian terms is conceptually impossible, as no citizen of a modern state, the panopticon, may act—in the widest sense of the word—in this way. This is in itself remarkable, but more is to follow, as Bourke's confession reinforces another paradigm:

In talking farther of his early service, Bourke said that till Gordon became colonel of the regiment, Gordon who had led that party which a few years before razed his father's house!—he had been perfectly thoughtless and happy...The torturing and ever present recollection of disgrace, which, he now vehemently declared, time, nor space, nor God, nor man, could ever obliterate, while he retained consciousness of being, had stung into a thousand strengths that busy devil which national prejudice and family wrongs, remembered too well, and resented too keenly, had first admitted in a heart which nature had fitted for the resting place of a very different inmate. (Johnstone 1815: Vol. IV, 295)

The tautological phrase «he retained consciousness of being» obliges us to question what the basic instigator of our thought and opinions is. On the one hand, it is surely crystal clear that the destruction of his family's property was not an isolated act of barbarity brought about by English expansion; it is also certain that Johnstone, despite hesitation and qualifications, outlines a model of imperialism based on the expropriation of property and forced enlistment. On the other hand, if nationalism, in the form of English expansion is responsible for injustice, it is extremely unclear what alternatives exist to nationalism. The havoc and destruction which have afflicted Bourke and his family provoked a reaction, which if understandable, is not condoned, for both «national prejudice and family wrongs remembered too well, and resented too keenly» are on the same level as rashness and folly. Johnstone pins down Bourke's actions as stemming from an emotional reaction: his heart should have been the receptacle for other, presumably better, feelings; though what they might have been is not specified at this point. What is striking, and at the risk of being repetitive, in the political climate of 1815, is the equation of nationalism and emotion. For if Bourke's nationalism is emotional, this is not because he is Irish, but because nationalism, Johnstone emphasises, is ineluctably emotional, whether Irish, Scot-

tish, English or British, and as such, the narrator implies, only has a place in the heart, as when transformed into policy inevitably produces war.

Why is this so subversive? Patriotic feeling is frequently associated with lost, irrecoverable glories. In the case of Scott, this is formulated into the split between the heart — Jacobitism, the Highlands, the Celtic and Scots tongue, the oral tradition— and the head —the Union, commerce, English and the rule of law. Another dramatic illustration is Boswell's reflection that

There is a certain association of ideas in my mind upon that subject, by which I am strongly affected. The very Highland names, or the sound of a bagpipe, will stir my blood, and fill me with a mixture of melancholy and respect for courage; with pity for an unfortunate and superstitious regard for antiquity, and thoughtless inclination for war; in short, with a crowd of sensations with which sober rationality has nothing to do (Johnson & Boswell 1985: 236)

Nostalgia, tartanry, tears of national sentiment exist, but as they are attached to referents which no longer have any measurable political implications, tears can be wept freely because they actually reinforce the inevitability of progress. Such sentiment, Johnstone implies, which is very much part of the novel's nostalgic farewell to those realities which stirred Boswell's blood, has been re-channelled into a new patriotism, into a new enterprise: Great Britain and the Empire. The terms used to describe Scott's ambivalence, heart and head, not only separate the emotional from the rational but reinforce the idea that the Union is rational, or, in other words, it is progress itself. However, the novelty in *Clan-Albin* lies in its suggestion that patriotism, nationalism of all sorts, both the old and the new, is equally emotional, irrational and deeply suspect. Proof of its suspect nature is the linguistic trick whereby progress and the Union are deemed progress and rational, whereas their ideological basis is simply that very same emotionalism which has been attached to the cultural past of the community which has been militarily and economically defeated.

In the earlier volumes of *Clan-Albin*, Johnstone engages in ferocious satire against the pretensions and folly of the English bourgeoisie who spend the summer season in Scotland. They become figures of fun not solely because they are obvious targets, but because they represent the new order, those whose money has enabled them to buy up large tracts of land in exactly the way that Talbot and Waverley do. One figure of fun is Mr Montague, a London merchant whose improvements to his estate «consisted of a poultry yard, a piggery; a slight painted paling and wicket, that formed a strange contrast with the massive pile it meant to enclose» (Johnstone 1815: Vol. I, 270). This idea is ridiculed by the narrator who insists that Highland chiefs never fortified their dwellings; the incoming landowner is only playing at make-believe. He also entertains the insane idea of painting his medieval castle white.⁵ The use of «improvements» (Johnstone 1815: Vol. I, 270) is ironic, as it is precisely that term which was used by landlords who evicted tenants, subsistence farmers, to make way for sheep-farming (the infamous Highland Clearances of the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century), as well as by the reforming landlords who advocated scientific farming in the eighteenth century: Montague's improvements are

⁵ Caroline Anderson and Aileen M. Riddell, in their essay «The Other Great Unknowns», also indicate the absurdity of this white castle. However ludicrous «the preposterous plan to whitewash [the] castle» (Gifford and McMillan 1997: 188) is, visitors to Scotland know that one of Tayside's most famous tourists attractions, Blair Castle, is indeed painted white. Furthermore, the Duke of Blair goes two steps beyond *Clan-Albin's* incomers; not only does he have his own distillery but also Britain's only remaining private (ceremonial) army.

therefore shown up for their farcical nature. Montague and his visitors who come to Scotland for the shooting are labelled by Johnstone as «many idle strangers» (Johnstone 1815: Vol. II, 1); they are accompanied by women bearing «the burden of their inanity» (Johnstone 1815: Vol. II, 1). Johnstone is harsh on this social class, yet one family is meted out the severest punishment: the Gordons.

The family of Gordon was not originally Highland: but Sir Archibald, when in England, affected the Chieftain, as that character procured observation, if not distinction: and he kept a piper, two or three fierce looking servants in the Highland garb, which he sometimes at balls and masquerades assumed himself, the better to assert and keep alive his feudal dignity. Now the possession of a Fingalian dog was an important element in the composition of curiosity, long denied to the vulgar acquisitions of Arabian horses, Irish hounds, Italian singers, curious wines, and Spanish jennets. (Johnstone 1815: Vol. II, 143)

As we have seen, Major Gordon is responsible for the destruction of Phelim's property, and the incidents leading to his punishment, exile and death. Gordon takes a fancy to Norman's dog and without further consideration, steals it; when Gordon is in danger of falling to his death while climbing, it will be Norman who rescues him, receiving little thanks in return. The female members of the family are no better: mother and daughter are haughty, rude, snobbish and insufferable. The daughter marries against her mother's wishes and is disowned: in one brief incident, two wrongs are committed: disobedience, on the daughter's behalf, and the breaking of family ties by the mother, both of which, within the novel, are almost unforgivable actions. In this scornful picture of empty lives, Johnstone moves closer and closer towards the stern religiosity of her contemporaries, Mary Brunton and Elizabeth Hamilton, but there is one significant difference: if, in the case of Mary Brunton, criticism is directed against a class, in the case of Johnstone, the frame of reference is far more specific. Just as some will play at being farmers, Gordon will play at being «the Chieftain.» The satirical portrait of «the Chieftain,» of the fake patriotic Scot, throws us back again to the fiction and epic poetry of Sir Walter Scott. For example, Waverley is presented with a sword by Charles Stuart, but instead of being used in battle, it ends up life at the novel's close as a decoration, hung among portraits of other real or fake chieftains above the mantelpiece in a castle which has passed out of Highland into English hands: thus the sword has become a collector's item, possibly another vulgar acquisition, one of many which go to make up that decaffeinated Scottishness, usually referred to as tartanry. To what extent Johnstone is aware of her askance allusion to tartanry is impossible to judge, but it is startling to see that a similar *modus operandi*—collecting souvenirs and buying property—emphasises Waverley's beneficial Anglo-Scottish capitalism whereas in *Clan-Albin* it underlines Gordon's villainy. He parades his patriotism, lacking the sympathy which the novel indicates as fundamental to clanship. I believe that we can only understand Johnstone's scorn if we bear in mind that ideally chieftainship requires the chief to lead his troops into his battle: he must be brave, exemplary, a born leader of men and he must sympathise with them. Gordon is a coward, his behaviour is reprehensible, and he believes people own him blind allegiance. If we return to the article «Flogging in the Army,» it is clear that something is terribly wrong in the armed forces if responsibility has been entrusted to fake chieftains like Gordon who display fake patriotism. In other words, the same ills that effect the army are present in civilian life; in this case the carrier is Gordon.

Phelim is destroyed, but Norman Macalbin is saved; he will marry the girl of his dreams, but he will also go to Edinburgh to learn estate management. Norman survives because unlike Phelim, he has been properly educated by the matriarchal Augusta Macalbin,

«destined to sustain the tottering honours of her race» (Johnstone 1815: Vol. I, 34). His upbringing is expressed in the following terms:

WOMAN was indeed the tutelary genius of Norman's wayward fate. Her kindness had preserved his feeble existence, fostered his infancy, and tended his childhood; she had been his earliest and almost his only friend, and from her lip of love he had imbibed those lessons, which would have told him «to drain his dearest veins,» in protecting the meanest of a sex so sacred. In every felicitous occurrence of his life, Norman could trace the agency of *woman*, —and through so endeared a medium every blessing was to him twice blessed. (Johnstone 1815: Vol. III, 108-9)

This statement is terribly sentimental and slushy. Although the capitalised «WOMAN» is straightforward enough, in describing Norman's objective in life as protecting «the meanest of a sex so sacred», firm female strength and moral guidance have made way for passivity and weakness. I must point out that this and similar moral commentary within the novel have to be placed beside two other important factors. First, Highland society has strong matriarchal structures in which women, elder women, are the repository of knowledge. The other elderly woman in this novel, Moome, is very much more akin to the folkloric Highland sage who has become a staple of twentieth-century depictions of Highland life, such as Neil Gunn's influential *Butcher's Broom* (1934). At the same time, this emphasis on home as the centre of moral values places Johnstone closer —again— to the moralism of her female contemporaries. Second, even though the Highland matriarch has been subject to sentimentality, in most other parts of this novel Augusta is most keenly aware of social realities, and as Norman's knowledge of the world is very much her legacy, it is interesting to see to what extent her views question the dominant ideology of a nation bound together in a common cause against Napoleon: I am arguing that Augusta becomes Johnstone's *alter ego* and spokesperson. Lady Augusta reluctantly accepts that the brave new world of the Union has destroyed Highland life, even in such a remote glen as Glenalbin. Neither sheep-farming nor any kind of life remains: «let the Highlands be made grass parks for England» (Johnstone 1815: Vol. I, 190) she laments. The transfer of ownership from clan to capitalist is a reason frequently given to explain why Highlanders enlisted in the army: there was no other opening for them. But joining the army is the last resort, for she «detested war» (Johnstone 1815: Vol. I, 128):

The army appeared to her a poor resource for a Highlander, a poor exchange for the glen of his fathers, domestic joys, and kindred charities: —the freedom of the citizen, and perhaps the virtue of man... (Johnstone 1815: Vol. I, 128)

In exactly the same way that this is a minority opinion in the novel —many of its major characters have successful military careers, and Norman himself, in spite of Gordon and his peers, enthusiastically participates in the Peninsular War— her views were very much those of a minority in British society. So what alternatives are left? Migration to the city receives short shrift:

The dark lanes of a manufacturing town appeared even worse than the army. The present generation of Highlanders could never be made manufacturers, and her generous heart revolted at the idea of her high-spirited countrymen sinking into the abject condition of hewers of wood, and drawers of water to a people they had hitherto shunned and despised. (Johnstone 1815: Vol. I, 30)

We should note the quaintly anachronistic picture of the workplace where men are still «hewers of wood, and drawers of water». As all those values that have been positively eva-

luated —the influence of women, the solidarity of the Highland community and so on, have no say in this brave new Europe, what alternative is there for the Highlanders?

America opened up her arms to the exiles of Scotland! —Much of hardship was to be encountered, many cherished feelings were to be sacrificed; but Lady Augusta indulged a well-founded and cheering hope, that the honest pride of property, the advantage of a rich soil, and above all, a free government, would, in that land of the exile, abundantly compensate her expatriated clansmen for what they were forced to abandon. (Johnstone 1815: Vol. I, 130)

It is hardly novel to hail America as the land of opportunity, but what surely makes *Clan-Albin* an extraordinary document is how and when this statement was phrased: for, the most outstanding feature of America is its «free government,» and this claim is made in 1815, not only the year of Waterloo but also the year of the decisive British defeat at the battle of New Orleans. We have thus reached the furthest point possible from the all-embracing ideology of union which, it is argued, is the basis of Scott's historical fiction, and, is, the historian Linda Colley argues, the basis of British policy and ideology of the time, that of Empire.

Christian Isobel Johnstone's literary career is one of many which suffered from the dominant position of Walter Scott. Although it is clear that her writings, both her journalism and fiction, show how unionism and nationalism —of all sorts— were energetically contested by an erudite, intelligent woman, it is impossible to judge to what extent the scant attention she has received is due to her strong, uncompromising liberal views or to the misfortune of her fiction being bundled together as national fiction, but national fiction which is always going to be considered as following Scott, as far as both its ideological position and literary value are concerned. As a conclusion to this essay, this would be a partially satisfactory answer, for not only have I brought to public attention a most interesting and unorthodox writer, but I have also illustrated how much she wrote against the grain, as she would continue to do in her next and final novel *Elizabeth de Bruce* (1827), which to gather from the correspondence between her husband and *Blackwood's* was not as successful as he had expected or would have liked: a post-*Waverley* novel which is an anti-*Waverley* novel had little chance of success, whatever its literary value, indeed the concept of an anti-*Waverley* novel had become a contradiction in terms. Fiction centred on the activities of Highland regiments continued to be popular but tended to move its location out of Scotland, Ireland and Europe towards the Empire. Mid-Victorian fiction provides many romantic views of the army, a popular example being Captain James Grant's *The Romance of War*: between 1850 —its date of publication— and 1882 it sold 100,000 copies. Its title says all.

Johnstone's literary career simultaneously demonstrates her energetic rejection of the ideological implications of national tales —as Scott has fashioned them — as well as her ambivalent acceptance of his overwhelming presence. To compete with Scott and his imitators either financially or ideologically was obviously an impossible task. Understandably, she turns to journalism and the short story, and very successfully, too: the 30,000 copies of *The Edinburgh Tales*, the long, healthy and vigorous life of *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine* and *The Schoolmaster* are irrefutable evidence of this. I would also suggest that her career is subject to doubts about the nature of fiction itself. If *Waverley* concludes with the author's analysis of progress, *Clan-Albin* also contains many interpolations: the most dramatic being the explanation of Norman's «tutelary genius». I would conclude that her shift of emphasis away from the novel to journalism and the short story provides her with the much needed space to put forward her views in the most forthright manner: fiction is

now at the service of the journalism, as the re-telling of the story of Phelim Bourke undoubtedly proves. But instead of pondering about the control of meaning and relating it to concepts such as the author function, we should not forget that Christian Isobel Johnstone's strong liberal views reach an interested public from the pen of the proprietor. Ironically, such successful control of the media is usually associated with Scott himself.

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