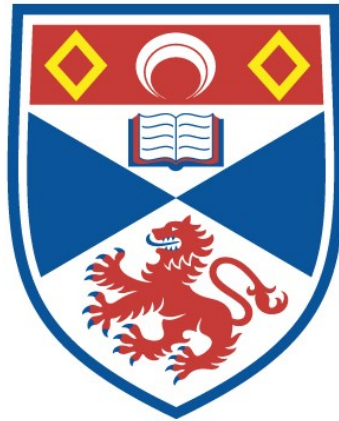


UNLOCKING THE DOOR OF LEARNING : THE
DEVELOPMENT OF THE SCOTTISH UNIVERSITY
NOVEL IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

Yoshitomo Katagiri

A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of MPhil
at the
University of St Andrews



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the Scottish University Novel in the nineteenth century**

by Yoshitomo KATAGIRI

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Abstract

My thesis is concerned with how Scottish higher education is described in nineteenth-century literature. There was a literary trend of University novels in Great Britain as a whole throughout the nineteenth century. Although "the University Novel" is an increasingly popular field of study, scholars have mostly concentrated on English and American novels, and Scottish novels have been so far almost entirely ignored. I had to start by looking for materials and collecting them.

In my thesis, I have discussed about a dozen stories written by Scottish authors between 1819 and 1901. The first half of my study focuses on the "lad o' pairts" stories; how students from humble origins proceed to a university and rise in society. It includes a review of *Kit Kennedy* (1899) by Samuel R. Crockett, in which the University of Edinburgh promises the farm boy a bright future. The second half focuses on Scottish university life; how Scottish universities and their academic life are described and dramatised in the novels. Scottish writers' views of their native university are not always favourable. In this section George Douglas Brown's *The House with the Green Shutters* (1901) is the key chapter.

Today Scottish universities differ little from other British universities. Although most Scottish universities still require four years, instead of three, to complete an undergraduate degree (and offer a Master's degree, instead of a Bachelor's), socially speaking, universities in Scotland recruit the same kinds of students as do their counterparts in the rest of the U. K. The situation was very different in the nineteenth century. Scottish universities retained many of the characteristics which made them distinctive from universities in the rest of the British Isles, and the contemporary novels I discuss here tell of nineteenth-century Scottish higher education more eloquently than any other literature.

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Introduction: The University Novel

“The University Novel” has yet to be established as a literary term. What are University novels? They should be distinguished from the more widely known “Campus novels”.¹ Since the publication of Mortimer Proctor’s groundbreaking volume *The English University Novel* (Berkeley, 1957), a number of extended studies have been made of novels which take university education as their central theme. H. Antor’s *Der englische Universitätsroman* (Heidelberg, 1996) is the most recent and arguably the most thorough study of the genre. However, these studies have dealt almost exclusively with English novels. While it has to be admitted that “the University Novel” has been a peculiarly English phenomenon, and an Oxford one at that,² Scottish examples have so far been completely ignored to the extent that many otherwise knowledgeable scholars in the field seem to be unaware of their existence.

Scottish novels about Scottish university experience do exist, and they are altogether different from English novels in the treatment of their subject matter. This situation is compounded when one realises that similar novels written in, for example, the United States before the first world war have tended to follow the larger English model.³ On the surface, this might seem remarkable, for Scotland and England had been politically united for more than a century. However, these novels about Scottish university experience truthfully reflected the different tradition in which Scottish universities were rooted and the different character they still retained in the nineteenth century.

Before we go on to explore the Scottish university novels and their distinctive nature, let us see, briefly, the general achievements of major English university novels in the nineteenth century. In 1823, J. G. Lockhart, the famous writer of the biography of Sir Walter Scott, and Scott’s son-in-law, set the general formula of English University novels with *Reginald Dalton: A Story of English University Life* (1823). While he is critical of excessive snobbery among students, Lockhart, himself a Scot, does not hide his love and admiration for Oxford, “that noble and ancient City of the Muses”;⁴ or for the English model of university it produced.

¹ “[N]otable English examples include K. Amis’s *Lucky Jim* (1954), D. Lodge’s *Changing Places* (1975) and Bradbury’s *The History Man* (1975)”. (See *The Oxford Companion to English Literature*’s entry under “Campus Novel”). While the Campus Novel as a genre emerged after W. W. II., the majority of University Novels are written in the nineteenth century.

² Although there are several stories based on Cambridge University, such as *Alton Locke* (1850) by Charles Kingsley, Oxford romances numerically overwhelm Cambridge ones.

³ See especially, John O. Lyons, *The College Novel in America* (Carbondale, 1962). This is, as I understand, the American answer to Proctor’s pioneering work.

⁴ J. G. Lockhart, *Reginald Dalton* (Edinburgh, 1823), vol. I, p. 229.

In the mid-nineteenth century, there developed a literary vogue for novels which exaggerated carefree undergraduate life, the most famous product of which is arguably Edward Bradley's *Verdant Green: An Oxford Freshman* (1853).⁵ Thomas Hughes's *Tom Brown at Oxford* (1861) is the weaker follow-up to the celebrated novel on public school life, *Tom Brown's School Days* (1857), and yet it manages at the same time to be both an indictment of Oxford snobbery and the expression of deep love for Oxford and its traditions.

Oxford's romantic quality culminated in *Zuleika Dobson, or an Oxford love story* (1911) by Max Beerbohm, in which the love for Oxford is transformed into a sort of mystical exaltation of the locale. This is probably the ultimate university novel. The characters, Zuleika and the Duke of Dorset, are mere caricatures. The main character of the novel is Oxford itself. In it, the author does not talk about the curriculum, or teaching, but tells of the joy of being there and breathing the moist air from the meadows, which is "the scent of Oxford", or "the Oxford spirit".⁶ Once the student is "mastered by the spirit", it "keeps him careless of the sharp, harsh exigent realities of the outer world".⁷ In his fantasy, being at Oxford is elevated to an aesthetic experience:

Oxford, that lotus land, saps the will-power, power of action. But in doing so, it clarifies the mind, makes larger the vision, gives, above all, that playing and caressing suavity of manner which comes of a conviction that nothing matters, except ideas... that mysterious inenubitable spirit, spirit of Oxford. Oxford! The very sight of the word printed, or sound of it spoken, is fraught for me with almost actual magic.⁸

Although it is merely a fantasy, this unabashed exaltation is probably the highest eulogy given by any former student to his or her alma mater. Here Oxford is no longer an educational institution. It has become a demi-paradise which protects youth from the real world. The first scene of *Zuleika Dobson* is clearly echoing Matthew Arnold's idea of Oxford, "the last enchantment of the Middle Ages".⁹ Beerbohm must have had this phrase in mind when wrote that "the last enchantments of the Middle Age"¹⁰ whispered to Zuleika when arriving in Oxford at the outset. What Lockhart described as the narrow

⁵He wrote under the pseudonym of Cuthbert Bede. *The Further Adventure of Mr Verdant Green: An Oxford Undergraduate* (1854), *Mr Verdant Green married and done for; being the third and concluding part of the Adventure of Mr Verdant Green, an Oxford freshman*, (1857) followed *the Adventure of Mr Verdant Green*.

⁶M. Beerbohm, *Zuleika Dobson* (Harmondsworth, 1981), p. 137.

⁷*ibid.*, pp. 137-8.

⁸*ibid.*, p. 138.

⁹M. Arnold, *Essays in Criticism* (London, 1875), p. xiv.

¹⁰M. Beerbohm, *op. cit.*, p. 7. We may also remember that Jude was in rapture when he encountered the "ancient mediaeval pile" at Christminster [Oxford]. See T. Hardy, *Jude the Obscure* (Oxford, 1985), p. 79. [The original book was published in 1895].

circle of the elites has finally developed into an all-embracing experience for anyone who can feel the aesthetic magic of Oxford.

To Arnold, and to many of the Victorian English middle class, the ancient university seems to represent a sense of virtue and pastoral idyll, rapidly disappearing in industrialised and commercialised Victorian England. To these writers, universities have a spiritual dimension. It seems to me that the exaltation of ancient universities has to do with their attempt to validate Victorian middle class culture as a long term part of traditional, therefore virtuous, English culture. I would argue that this development of the English University Novel can be seen as a kind of mystification of elitism.

In contrast, Scottish universities in fictional writings have more of a social role. They provide lower and lower-middle class students with certain advantages in social ascension.¹¹ Only in *Cyril Thornton* (1827), where the hero is an upper class young gentleman, does Glasgow University appear as the fashionable finishing school in Oxford University Novel style. Most of the student heroes in Scottish fictional writings are from underprivileged backgrounds: "the lads o' pairts". For example, in *From Ploughshare to Pulpit* by G. Stables (1895), a tenant farmer's son goes to Marischal College. *Kit Kennedy* by S. R. Crockett (1899) is a similar story. A poor farm boy goes to Edinburgh University by winning a bursary and higher education releases the hero from his class and manual labour and promises future success. In them, meritocracy and Scottish democratic education are exalted.

The English interpretation, fully affirmed by such illustrious Victorian figures as Arnold, Ruskin and Newman, is that a university education elevates youths and promotes appreciation of high culture in society. The Scottish interpretation is far less aesthetic and puts more emphasis on its commercial and social value. This is how they are different. But why do universities represent stability in England and mobility in Scotland? Why do Scottish novels develop their own character?

One answer worth exploring is Scottish universities' peculiar traditions and constitutions. It would be safe to say that ancient Scottish and English universities were largely similar in origin and function, although Scottish ones were comparatively poorer and modest in size. They went separate ways after the Reformation, and by the early eighteenth century, these two groups were quite contrasting in character. Scottish universities in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were relatively secular, by and large open to non-Presbyterians, and accessible to the lower orders because of their inexpensive fees and the bursary system, while English universities remained primarily clerical and excluded non-Anglicans and poor students. Scottish and English educational traditions were thus different and remained so, well into the late nineteenth century. These historical facts and context must be brought into the discussion.

There is sufficient reason to undertake an extended study on The Scottish University Novel (which term I use in this thesis for the sake of convenience). As I have pointed out, while extensive studies have been carried out on novels on English universities, almost nothing has been done about novels written by Scottish authors about their Scottish university experience. Scottish University Novel reflects the state and condition of Scottish universities and, by extension, nineteenth-century Scotland. As I endeavour to highlight in my thesis, they were quite distinct from those experienced in the rest of Great Britain.

Admittedly, such distinctive characteristics can also be found in histories and in memoirs, which I will consult on several occasions. Histories can give us facts and broad pictures of Scottish universities and their student life. Memoirs are informative, too, but they are often narrow and private. Contemporary popular novels, on the other hand, convey a collective experience. They tell us how Scottish writers and readers perceived and defined their own universities and educational tradition. Education is a major way in which culture is manifested and transmitted, and the Scottish University Novel, although by no means always first-rate literature, will provide us with a good platform for the understanding of, and a new and different way to look at, nineteenth-century Scottish culture. Ultimately, I will argue that, although many modern Scots are fairly ignorant of their heritage, their Victorian ancestors took very strong pride on their educational traditions which were, in their nature, quite different from the rest of Britain. Scottish University Novels in the nineteenth century have been sadly neglected and now largely forgotten. It is my firm belief that study of them in their entirety is long overdue, and that it will lead us to a better overall understanding of the multi-cultural nature of Great Britain in the nineteenth century.

I put the novels roughly in chronological order. I hope to show a certain continuity, a development of attitude toward universities over the period; from Lockhart's slight on the shallow and ineffectual Scottish higher education to the manifestation of pride in their institutions in the works by Maclean and Crockett (although it is impossible to ignore Brown's utter condemnation of Scottish education at the very end).

¹¹With a few exception such as *The House with the Green Shutters* (1899), which, in its own way, questions the validity of the Scottish educational system and the broader Scottish way of life.

“So little is said or thought”¹²
College of Edinburgh in *Peter’s Letters to his Kinsfolk* (1819)
by John Gibson Lockhart

I start my first chapter with a slight degree of hesitation, for the protagonist of John Gibson Lockhart’s epistolary novel¹³ is neither Scottish nor a student. Nevertheless, Lockhart’s observation and comments on the University of Edinburgh and its student life are thorough and suggestive. Until this time, the author says, “so little is said or thought” by anyone about Scottish University life; this, in spite of the fact that Edinburgh at the time was at the height of its reputation. This three volume novel¹⁴ provides us with a good starting point to explore nineteenth-century Scottish university fictions.

Peter Morris is obviously an alter ego of Lockhart. But instead of being a Scot in his twenties, as the author is, Dr. Morris is a middle-aged Welshman visiting Scotland for the first time. One thing he shares with the author is that they both went to Oxford and his account of Edinburgh University is from an English point of view.¹⁵ This novel is similar in style to Smollett’s *Humphry Clinker*. Morris writes his letters to his Welsh friend and whenever he is speaking of Edinburgh, or of anything Scottish for that matter, Dr. Morris compares it with English institutions, usually unfavourably. This scheme, though by no means originated by Lockhart, proves to be a handy and viable method to illustrate the characteristics of Scottish universities and later writers would often imitate it. In letter XIII, Morris finally starts writing about the prize institution of Edinburgh. His comparison is made as follows:

1. Unlike English Universities, Edinburgh is a city university, but urban environment does not do any good for young boys (PL, 145). (With the exception of St Andrews, Scottish universities were urban institutions and this created an educational ethos which is unique to Scotland).
2. The members of the University do not reside inside the College, and this has a major effect on their academic life; students have little contact with professors or fellow students. They are “so independent of each other” in a large town (PL,

¹²J. G. Lockhart, *Peter’s Letters to his kinsfolk* (Edinburgh, London and Glasgow, 1819), Vol. I, p. 145. Henceforward, PL.

¹³ (1794-1854). Lockhart studied at Glasgow (‘JOANNES GIBSON LOCKHART’ matriculated in 1805. *The Matriculation Albums of the University of Glasgow*) and consequently at Balliol, Oxford.

¹⁴The text I use is the “second” [*de facto* first] version published in 1819.

¹⁵e.g., often he says, “our Oxford ideas” (p. 146).

147). (The lack of corporate life in Scottish universities is a recurring theme in the Scottish University Novel).

3. Students are much younger here in Scotland than in England.¹⁶ This resulted in lower academic standards in Scotland. Most of all, Scottish students are left unskilled in classics (PL, 147).¹⁷

4. Students attend lectures, not tutorials as in Oxford, and classes are large. This, combined with the young age of students, makes the classes sometimes uncontrollable and students are tempted to idle (PL, 148).

There are, Morris admits, professors of merit at Edinburgh (Letter XVI, "Scottish Students"). Nevertheless, his argument always comes down to the inappropriateness of Scottish university education. In Scotland, Morris writes, university education is "diffus[ed]" (PL, 188) extensively. But he does not see this as advantageous. On the contrary, he thinks that this is doing harm to the student, to his community, to his country and "to Science in general" (PL, 188). Morris points out that the expenses of university education in Scotland are much less than in England, and he argues that this works adversely on the students. English parents, since university education is expensive, are cautious about sending their sons to a university. In Scotland, Dr Morris deplures, "any young man" (PL, 192) goes to university. At Scottish universities, student support themselves on meagre means. So does his family at home to enable him to go through the university. Morris comments that their "self-denial" is "noble" (PL, 194). But he is taking pity rather than admiring. After all the toil, students are "gaining so little" (PL, 197), for Scottish university education is inadequate. University education should not be for anyone, rather, it should be reserved for a chosen few. Apparently, Morris' opinion is elitist. This is a denial of the 'democratic' Scottish university ideal.

After lauding the ancient traditions of English universities in Letter XVII, "English Universities," Morris comes to an abrupt conclusion, saying, "the two institutions [English and Scottish universities] have different objectives" and "they are both excellent" (PL, 204), leaving readers unconvinced. Until the previous chapter, Morris was never tired of arguing how deficient the Scottish University is. What object does the Scottish University have? And in what way is it excellent? Morris is articulate about the objective of English universities. They are "to educate a certain number of persons, of a certain class, in a certain set of principles..." (PL, 204). "In a word, they are designed to keep up the race of English gentlemen" (PL, 204-5). It might be true that the "great empire" needs "many kinds of men" (PL, 204). But what kind of men are Scottish universities educating? And what function are Scottish universities performing?

¹⁶ In the early nineteenth century, the commonest age of entry into Scottish universities were fifteen.

¹⁷For the rest of "Letter XIII," Morris criticises Edinburgh's, and the Scottish universities', inadequate teaching of the classics.

Morris' allusion to "the Empire" is significant. The Empire was growing rapidly. It needed men of greater educational qualification and capacity than before, and the growing ranks of senior civil servants, military officials, lawyers and clergymen were to be supplied by universities. Both in England and Scotland, University education had to change in order to meet the requirements of the state.

Morris's scathing commentary on the incompetence of Scottish university education caused a great scandal, the echoes of which resounded almost till the end of the century.¹⁸ For all his cynical comments, however, Peter Morris is a keen observer and not a mere passing traveller. His account of the University is not only about its buildings and a few famous professors, as Smollett's, Johnson's and Boswell's were. He clearly understands how Scottish universities work, and how ordinary Scottish university students live and what kind of family backgrounds they have. Scottish and English universities in the early nineteenth century are, as Lockhart knew from experience, worlds apart.

While English gentlemen students lead insouciant undergraduate lives, "the Scottish student submits to a life of... penury and difficulty" (PL, 197). Universities south of the border may have been wealthier, their students more mature and the academic standard higher. However, does this mean that Scottish universities were not "worthwhile" (PL, 197)? Morris believes that "the solitary and secluded life to which [the Scottish student] devotes so many youthful years..." (PL, 194) is a waste and that the Universities of Edinburgh and Glasgow, Scotland's two prize institutions, should emulate English models.

His view on Scottish Universities is, however, inspired by English prejudice. After all, Lockhart wrote an extended novel on Oxford student life, but did not try to do the same on his Glasgow College experience. As the century advanced, Anglophiles and their Anglicising party were in the ascendant, and Scottish peculiarities began to disappear from universities. But in the meantime, they were still basking in the afterglow of the Scottish Enlightenment, and major reforms were yet to come.

The following chapters examine how Scottish universities are represented in fictional writings. We will recognise, above all, how the idea of democratic Scottish education, which even Morris could not ignore entirely, gradually takes shape and how, in the process, Scottish writers in the nineteenth century attempted to idealise Scottish culture and education.

¹⁸ J. G. Lockhart, *Peter's Letters to his Kinsfolk*, W. Ruddick(ed.) (Edinburgh, 1977), pp. xiii and xviii.

Part I The Lads o' Pairs

“We dinna lock the door o’ learning”¹⁹

The Youth and Manhood of Cyril Thornton (1827)

by Thomas Hamilton - Glasgow

Eight years after Dr Morris’s report on Scottish Colleges, we now have a protagonist-hero who is actually a student at the College of Glasgow. However, alas, he is not an ordinary Scottish student who submits to a life of penury and difficulty. He is a young English gentleman who comes up to finish his education at the College. But why is he in Glasgow instead of Oxford or Cambridge?

It is difficult to find any writer, in the first half of the nineteenth century, who was more suited to write a novel about Glasgow College than Thomas Hamilton (1789-1842), except, maybe, his distinguished brother Sir William (1788-1856), who was a close friend of Lockhart in his Glasgow and Oxford years.²⁰ The Hamilton brothers were born within the precincts of the College where their father William (1758-90) was Professor of Anatomy and Botany.²¹ Thomas’s grandfather, also named Thomas (1728-81), was Professor of Anatomy, with his elder brother Robert (d.1756) before him.

Their relation to Glasgow College can be traced back further, for the Hamiltons were descendants of James Hamilton of Cadzow, the first Baron of Hamilton (d.1479). Lord Hamilton donated the first permanent building along with a sizeable estate to the half-fledged University in 1460.²² The author was thus well connected to the University and eventually entered the College of Glasgow at the age of fourteen in 1803.²³

This was not unusually young to enter university in Scotland at the time. His brother William was twelve when he entered Glasgow College. John Gibson Lockhart was only eleven years old when he came in 1805. In Aberdeen, the average age of entrants to the Arts class was fourteen in the 1820s.²⁴ They were all today’s secondary school age. English university students were generally older than their Scottish counterparts. The difference of students’ ages between the two groups of universities created different curricula and reflected in their academic standards.

¹⁹T. Hamilton, *The Youth and Manhood of Cyril Thornton* (Aberdeen, 1990), p. 25. [henceforward CT].

²⁰ Professor of Civil History and Logic at Edinburgh. He was instrumental in the University’s struggle to relinquish its tie to the City Council, which invoked the first Royal Commission on Scottish Universities in 1826, and voiced his view on English universities reform through *the Edinburgh Review* since 1830s.

²¹ At Glasgow, it was customary that professors though by no means all of them, occupy a house within the College. The quadrangle where professors lived was called “Professor’s Court”. There were altogether thirteen houses and the one in which Thomas Hamilton was born was “House No 1”, which faced the High Street.

²²A. L. Brown and M. Moss, *The University of Glasgow: 1451-1996* (Edinburgh, 1996), p. 4.

²³ See Jennifer J Carter and Colin A. McLaren, *Crown and Gown: 1495-1995* (Aberdeen, 1994), p. 88.

Although Thomas Hamilton had such a strong connection with Glasgow academic society, he went down to Chiswick, now a part of London, for his schooling. This allowed the author to look at his native land and culture from an outsider's perspective. From the beginning to the end, Glasgow remains foreign and quaint to the protagonist-narrator of the novel.

“Vulgar, perhaps, ay, vulgar” (CT, 27)

Let us look at the character of Cyril Thornton first. Cyril starts the story of his life with “the stock” of his family. It is “one of ancient descent and spotless blazon... its dignity had always been baronial” (CT, 1). Cyril came from a landed gentry family, “English gentlemen” (CT, 1). This setting is important in understanding Cyril's contempt for the commercial and cosmopolitan city of Glasgow. He is rich enough to have a servant of his own to accompany him to College.

Why, then, does Cyril not go to an English university? There should not be any obstacle to Cyril attending either Cambridge or Oxford. One of the reasons is that Scottish universities had a high reputation for learning among education-minded English upper crust people, if not among Scottish Anglophiles. In spite of Morris' harsh indictment against Scottish colleges, roughly from the late eighteenth century to the beginning of the nineteenth century, it became fashionable for wealthy English families to send their sons to either Glasgow or Edinburgh for their education. (See Appendix I).

Cyril is sent to Glasgow where his uncle, Mr Spreull, runs a trading business. We know from a later description that this is September of 1802 (CT, 403). Less than a century had passed since the emergence of the United Kingdom. Cyril first goes to Argyle Street to see his uncle, but is perplexed by the speech of the servant who answers the door. “My English accent and her Scotch one, did not... make us mutually intelligible...” (CT, 22). Cyril eventually sees his uncle, but is late for the appointment. Mr Spreull says:

“Look at that, sir... seventeen minutes to five by the Tolbooth clock... But maybe they're yer English fashionable hours, and ye thought it vulgar, perhaps, ay, vulgar, that's what ye ca't... “. (CT, 27)

What makes Volume I of *Cyril* more interesting and readable than the rest is this cultural tension between Cyril, the young English gentleman, and the Glasgow tobacco lord. Although the story is always narrated from the English point of view, Uncle Spreull's

²⁴ His name can be seen in the matriculation roll. ‘Thomas Hamilton’ took Greek. His brother's name “Gulielmus” can be seen, too. For some reason, his surname appears as ‘Stirling Hamilton’. Stirling is their mother's maiden name.

contention and pride in his Scottishness as above give the story many layers. Cyril's description of "strange" Scottish customs and locutions are accurate and not without affection. His close observation of Mr Spreull's study, for example, must draw sociological interest.

An English gentleman at the College of Glasgow

Glasgow, having had Adam Smith (1723-90) and Thomas Reid (1710-96)²⁵ among its professors, is generally thought, along with Edinburgh, to be the cradle of the Scottish Enlightenment. At the beginning of the nineteenth century the College's prestige relating to social science and philosophy was considerable. Cyril's excitement at the sight of Glasgow is probably conscious imitation of that of Reginald Dalton, Lockhart's creation. As Reginald did at upon arriving at Oxford, Cyril exclaims when he first sees the city:

this is Glasgow!-- this [is] the chosen seat of Science and the Muses-- this [is] the academic quiet, in which the mind of youth is to be nursed in the calm abstractions of Philosophy! (CT, 20)

Nevertheless, it is not in its scholarship that his uncle, a shrewd Glasgow merchant, takes pride in the College. Upon his nephew's visit, he says:

"So ye've come down here to be a colleeginer. It's a lang gait to gang for learning. But after a', I am no sure that you could ha'e done better. Our Colleges²⁶ here are no bund down like yours in the south by a wheen auld and fizzionless rules, and we dinna say to ilka student, either bring three hundred pounds in your pouch, or gang about your business. We dinna lock the door o' learning, as they do at Oxford, and Cambridge, and shut out a' that canna bring a gouden key in their hand, but keep it on the sneck, that onybody that likes may open it. But where are ye gaun to bide?" (CT, 25)

It is noteworthy that the merchant says "our Colleges here". He is referring to all Scottish universities (there were five of them) and not just Glasgow. The juxtaposition

²⁵ Reid succeeded Smith as Professor of Moral Philosophy at Glasgow. They both lived in the Professors' Court.

²⁶ He uses the words "university" and "college" interchangeably. Except for St Andrews, traditionally, there was only one college in each Scottish university (two Aberdeen colleges had university status on their own until 1860), and "university" and "college" often mean the same, although the latter refers more to the specific site and the buildings.

of a democratic Scottish higher education against an exclusive English one is a popular conviction we often find in Scottish literature in the nineteenth century. As far as I know, this is the first appearance of this idea in Scottish fictional writings. "We dinna lock the door o' learning, as they do at Oxford and Cambridge" -- Mr Spreull's words epitomise Scottish pride in native institutions. Not only that, they point to the direction for the Scottish writers who exhibit the same sentiment in their works throughout the rest of the century.

Being the third generation of a Glasgow academic family and born within its quadrangle, Thomas Hamilton is, so to speak, a child of the Glasgow College. His description of the "the Old College",²⁷ which had stood on the High Street, is understandably detailed.²⁸ The appearance of this appeals to Cyril's youthful enthusiasm for learning.

At length, appearance of an ancient and venerable building informed me that I stood in the presence of the University. There is certainly something fine and imposing in its proud and massive front. It seems to stand forth in aged dignity, the last and only bulwark of science and literature, among a population by whom science is regarded but as a source of profit, and literature despised. On passing the outer gate, I entered a small quadrangle, which, though undistinguished by any remarkable architectural beauty, yet harmonized well, in its air of Gothic antiquity, with the general character of the place. This led to another [quadrangle] of larger dimensions, of features not dissimilar; and having crossed this, a turn to the left brought me to a third [quadrangle]... which was entirely appropriated to the residence of the Professors. There was something fine and impressive in the sudden transition from the din and bustle of the streets which surround it, to the stillness and the calm which reign within the time-hallowed precincts of the University. (CT, 21)

Apart from his biased view on Glasgow's cultural climate, it is noteworthy that the College, which the author's ancestor donated centuries ago, was already "surround[ed]" by "the din and bustle of the streets" of the great industrious city. The University is to remain at this site for just another sixty-eight years before being moved to Gilmore Hill.

²⁷Cyril's description matches surviving pictures of the old College. See David Murray, *Memories of the Old College of Glasgow* (Glasgow, 1927), and Anne Ross, *A new and splendid edifice: the architecture of the University of Glasgow* (Glasgow, 1975).

²⁸Robert Southey, in his *Journal of a Tour in Scotland in 1819*, (London, 1929), describes the College simply as "an ancient and respectable appearance" p. 257. Cyril's description bears resemblance to that of Peter Morris.

The Scottish residential system, or the lack of it

Dr Morris observed that at Edinburgh the members of the university do not reside inside the college, and suggested that it is not advisable that young students be left on their own. To his uncle's question about where he will live, Cyril answers, "[w]ith professor R[ichardson]-- at the College" (CT, 25). Through his father's connections, Cyril is to become an inmate at one of the houses for the professors and their families in the third quad, the Professors' Court. This was not an unusual arrangement. Professors at Scottish universities made a practice of taking students as boarders in their houses.²⁹ This meant close supervision and moral guidance on the part of the students and additional income on the part of the professors. Hamilton must have known well about this boarding system at Glasgow.

Boarders were usually sons of wealthy families. For example, after the Hamiltons left in 1790, House No.1 was occupied by John Millar, Professor of Civil Law.³⁰ In 1800, (this was the year William Hamilton entered the College) he had the sons of Viscount Melbourne as boarders. The elder of the two, The Hon. William Lamb (1779-1848)³¹, later to be Prime Minister, came to study at Glasgow after Cambridge.³²

From the early eighteenth century up to the beginning of the nineteenth century, "it became the fashion for young Englishmen"³³ to go to Edinburgh or Glasgow. Therefore, although Cyril seems to be nationally, mentally and financially (and probably religiously, too), Oxford-Cambridge material, it is understandable that an enlightened English gentleman like Mr Thornton sent his son to the Scottish university.³⁴

Boarding with a professor was a choice available mostly for wealthy students. Among the College's "nearly two thousand students," Cyril says, "[t]he leavening of English... was comparatively small", and only "a few Englishmen of a higher class... like myself... were received as inmates" (CT, 37). Peter Morris, in his *Letters*, pointed out Glasgow's similarity to English colleges, partly due to its stronger character as a

²⁹ "Many professors, and especially those with established reputations, further supplemented their incomes by accepting as boarders in their own houses the sons of parents who could afford to pay handsomely for the privilege." D. B. Horn, *A Short History of University of the Edinburgh* (Edinburgh, 1967), p. 61.

³⁰ (1735-1801). His name is often mentioned in account of Glasgow in the late 18th century. See, for example, the Archibald Constable & Co. edition of *Boswell's Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides 1773* (London, 1908), Vol. II, p. 147.

³¹ Afterwards second Viscount and twice Prime Minister 1834 and 1835-41. William Hamilton, as secretary to The Senate of Edinburgh University, corresponded with Melbourne several times in the midst of Scottish University reform. From the letters at least, they did not seem to know that they were at Glasgow at the same time and that Melbourne lived in the house where Hamilton was born. See Veitch, *Memoir of Sir William Hamilton, Bart.*, (Edinburgh, 1869). See also David Cecil, *Young Melburne (1939)*.

³² J. S. Olson and R. Shadle (ed.), *Historical Dictionary of the British Empire* (Connecticut and London, 1996) [henceforward HDBE] only mentions that Melbourne's education was Eton, Trinity College, Cambridge and Lincoln's Inn. p. 649. His name cannot be seen in the matriculation roll of Glasgow.

³³ Grant, p.493.

³⁴ See appendix i.

residential college than Edinburgh.³⁵ But the residential “third quad” that here Cyril has observed is for professors and not for students. Traditionally, Glasgow, and Edinburgh, too, for that matter, was not a residential college.³⁶ As a result, the majority of students found rooms in private houses in the city. Whether this pattern of students’ lodgings in town is a disadvantage of Scottish university education or not is open to question. Not having residence halls with strict rules could be advantageous for students. In fact, the absence of residence requirement and the lack of strict regulation at Scottish universities, such as compulsory chapel attendance, attracted English students, many of whom were Dissenters. “Our Colleges here are no bund down like yours in the south by a wheen auld and fizzionless rules” (CT, 25), as Mr Spreull put it.

On the other hand, however, it was in hope of having “the more immediate guidance and tuition” (CT, 37) than he would have had had he rented a room and lived on his own, that Cyril’s father chose to let his son live as a boarder with a professor. This type of boarding system, which was more common in Glasgow and Edinburgh than in other Scottish Colleges, was a direct, though not perfect, answer to the shortcoming felt by both the students and academic staff. An Edinburgh historian, Horn, evaluates the boarding system of the eighteenth and nineteenth century as follows:

It was believed that this solved at one stroke the recurring English objections to the leading Scottish Universities-- the absence of scholaric and moral supervision once the student had left the classroom.³⁷

Horn’s comment betrays a Scottish self-doubt, which became conspicuous in the late nineteenth century; a doubt about its educational system, its lack of residential provision above all, in the shadow of ancient English universities and, especially, the magnified charms of their collegiate ideals that they brought with them. The “recurring English objections” came from English and Scottish Anglophiles, and they must have been something very similar to Dr Morris’s. Edinburgh’s lack of residence halls has a resounding influence in the later stories. They will be discussed in part II of this thesis. In *Cyril*, our hero, the young English gentleman, is placed in a house appropriate to his rank and associates with his fellow boarders. The novel does not tell us how ordinary Scottish students lived.

³⁵Morris observes the Professors’ Court as follows: “the Professors... are lodged all together in a very handsome oblong court... immediately beside the quadrangles... their general effect is much like that of some of our third-rate colleges”. Lockhart, *Peter’s Letters*, Vol. III, p. 178.

³⁶ See, for example, Brown and Moss, pp. 4, 7 and 12.

³⁷Horn, p. 61.

“The more liberal establishment” (CT, 37)

Cyril makes some important observations on the student body at the College. He finds many fellow English students. But they are of different sorts. With detached tone, Cyril describes:

[English contingents were] ...chiefly furnished by the dissenters, who were compelled to seek in the more liberal establishments of Scotland, that access to knowledge and instruction, from which they were legally excluded by the great seminaries of their native land. (CT, 37)

English students were mainly non-Anglican Protestants, and they came to Glasgow because they were “excluded” from English institutions. It should be remembered that Oxford and Cambridge at the time were still officially institutions of the Church of England.³⁸ Although the novel’s fidelity to historical facts is not my main concern, Cyril’s phrase, “the more liberal establishments” has direct bearing on Mr Spreull’s earlier statement, “we dinna lock the door o’ learning”, and I believe that some knowledge of historical backgrounds helps us understand the distinctive character of Scottish universities at this period.

In many senses, Scottish universities were far more liberal institutions than others in the British Isles. Oxford and Cambridge in England and Trinity College in Ireland were exclusively Anglican institutions. As early as 1670, Glasgow received a number of dissenter students who transferred from an English university. One of them was Josiah Chorley who quitted Trinity College, Cambridge, because “he could not conform with the Church of England”.³⁹ In 1850, Charles Kingsley still had to rebuke Cambridge for its Anglicanism as follows:

You [Cambridge] refuse to admit any who are not members of the Church of England: -- say, rather, any who will not sign the dogmas of the Church of England, whether they believe a word of them or not. Useless formalism!⁴⁰

³⁸ As to how vehemently the two English Universities, especially Oxford, opposed the entrance of dissenters and Catholics in the first half of nineteenth century, see, e.g., Stephen d’Irsay, *Histoire des Universités françaises et étrangères des origines à nos jours: vol.II. Du XVI siècle à 1860*, (Paris, 1935), chap. XXI. One of the contemporary sources is W. Sewell, *Thoughts on the admission of Dissenters to the Univ. of Oxford*, (Oxford, 1834), p. 96. Some Scots did go to English universities before they opened their doors to dissenters in 1870s, but most of them were Episcopalians. After Glasgow, Lockhart went to Oxford in 1809 as a Snell Exhibitioner, just like Sir William Hamilton did a few years before. At Balliol, he found out most of his fellow Scots were Episcopalians. The Snell Exhibition was originally meant for clergy for the Scots Episcopal church. See Marion Lochhead, *John Gibson Lockhart* (London, 1954), pp. 14-5.

³⁹Murray, p. 548.

⁴⁰C. Kingsley, *Alton Locke* (London, 1850), p. 105.

The Glasgow historian Coutts describes how the students from England and Ireland chose Scottish universities, and Glasgow most of all:

England and Ireland scarcely afford a University education to citizens *unless they come within the fold of the established church*, and this brought, to the Scottish Universities, number of students belonging to the dissenting churches of these countries, especially such as were destined for the ministry. Glasgow had previously a bigger share of these English and Irish students than any other Scottish University.⁴¹ [italics mine. The established church is apparently Anglican/Episcopalian]

The situation was almost exactly the same in Edinburgh. There always was a “massive influx of English students and English influences... pre-eminently into Edinburgh”,⁴² and “the bulk of English students at Edinburgh were non-conformists, who could not conscientiously have taken the religious tests”⁴³ imposed by the English universities.⁴⁴

However, what made Scottish universities liberal was that they provided higher education to every religious minority. English students did not have to be Presbyterian. At Edinburgh, as well as in Glasgow, “[n]o religious or political tests were imposed... Anglican and Presbyterian, Baptist and Quaker, Unitarian and Deist... were equally welcome”.⁴⁵ In practice, since most of the students were living outside the College, it was difficult to impose a religious orthodoxy anyway.

Cyril also took notice of the large number of “natives of the north of Ireland” (CT, 37) at the College. Cyril says that students he saw were:

the sons of merchants and tradesmen of the city, and natives of the north of Ireland, of the very lowest order of the people, who came generally in a state of miserable destitution, to qualify themselves in the speediest and cheapest manner for the functions of the ministry (CT, 37).

Although Trinity College, Dublin, had been founded as early as 1592, the College remained an institution for the Anglican elite.

Catholics and dissenters, formally excluded from TCD until 1793 and unwilling even after that to submit to its Anglican ethos, were forced to look entirely

⁴¹ J. Coutts, *A History of the University of Glasgow* (Glasgow, 1909), p. 209.

⁴² Horn, p.65.

⁴³ *ibid.*

⁴⁴ Both Glasgow and Edinburgh had numerous English students, and there seems to have been a harsh rivalry between the two in recruiting them: “the jealous watchfulness of the University of Glasgow, which was also anxious to tap the English reservoir” (Horn, p. 31).

⁴⁵ Horn, p. 65.

outside Ireland, Catholics to the Irish colleges of continental Europe, and Presbyterians to the Scottish universities, especially Glasgow and Edinburgh.⁴⁶

The Irish students that Cyril saw were Presbyterians who were “unwilling to submit” to the Anglican ethos. Religious faith may not have been the only reason that foreign students came to Scotland. There was, of course, Glasgow’s academic excellence. However, religion was a key determinant of people’s cultural identity until recently and the part religion played in students’ choice of higher education should not be underestimated. Cyril himself was very likely an Anglican.

Religious tolerance was not the only thing that characterised the democratic nature of Scottish universities in the early nineteenth century. A university education was available for a far wider social class in Scotland than in England because of its relative inexpensiveness. This was already hinted at in *Peter’s Letters*, but let us now look more closely at the financial differences between Scottish universities and English ones. Mr Spreull says with pride that “onybody that likes may” come and study at Scottish colleges, and Cyril says that many of the students at the College are actually from the “lowest order” of society. How can a student of the lowest rank, if we take Cyril’s word for it, finance himself at the College?⁴⁷ Peter Morris claims that a student can come to attend Edinburgh College with 30 pounds per year, or a lot less, if he has “a decent coat and is willing to live in a garret upon porridge and herrings”,⁴⁸ whereas fathers in England would not think of sending their sons to Oxford unless they can afford “300 pounds”⁴⁹ for the same period.

The figure for Edinburgh is probably incorrect or it was already old, for six years earlier, Reverend Michael Russell published a report, *View of the System of Education at present pursued in the Schools and Universities of Scotland*, in which he stated that “a complete course at College”⁵⁰ cost £28 and 7s. at Edinburgh, £16 and 10s. at both St Andrews and Glasgow, £11 and 11s. at Aberdeen. These are course fees only and annually. Lockhart might have had Glasgow in mind when talking about Edinburgh.

The fees in Scottish universities often fluctuated. For example, Edinburgh suddenly doubled the matriculation fee in 1806 to “counter the inflation” caused by the war.⁵¹ It is also true that maintenance costs varied depending on the student’s life style. Let us take an example from an Edinburgh student. Principal Lee’s report in 1827⁵² introduces a third year philosophy student. His living expenses “averaged about 6s.9d. a

⁴⁶ S. J. Connolly (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to Irish History* (Oxford: Oxford Universtiy Press, 1998). See entry under “universities”.

⁴⁷ See appendix ii, p 71.

⁴⁸ Lockhart, *Peter’s Letters*, Vol. I, p. 192.

⁴⁹ *ibid.*, p. 190.

⁵⁰ Horn, pp.120-1.

⁵¹ *ibid.*, p. 101. Fees increased as the universities met financial difficulties.

week; [and] the amount for 24 weeks⁵³ is £8: 2s.", of which his lodgings cost "£3:12s" (for 24 weeks) and the whole expense of maintenance was £4:10s.⁵⁴ But he also has to pay for fire, for which he paid "3s. a week", so the total sum for his living expenses is £12:2s. (3s. X 24 = £3: 12s).

This philosophy student did, as Peter Morris observed, live mainly upon "porridge and herrings", but not every day. His life is rather frugal, but does not sound extremely poor by early nineteenth-century standards. To take just another contemporary example, "from 1819-1827", a St Andrews Arts and Divinity student "subsist[ed] in reasonable comfort through out the entire six-months session for little more than £14 all found".⁵⁵ As Peter Morris maintains, thirty pounds would have guaranteed reasonable College life in Scotland.

On the other hand, Morris's figure of £300 a year at Oxford, probably that for Balliol College, seems to be modest. An Oxford graduate testifies his average annual expense between 1834 and 1838 as £655. 4s.7d., excepting travel,⁵⁶ and yet "this is a low sum for Oxford".⁵⁷ These "exorbitant fees" were, according to Charles Kingsley, exacted to maintain the "extravagan[t]" life style which English universities "not only permit[ted], but encourage[d]".⁵⁸ The Glasgow merchant was not making a random remark. "Either bring three hundred pounds in your pouch, or gang about your business" was the reality of English higher education in the early nineteenth century.

Financially and religiously, Scottish universities were much more accessible institutions than the English ones, and the student body, especially at Glasgow and Edinburgh, was represented by a wider variety of social classes, nationalities and religious faiths. "We dinna lock the door o' learning... onybody that likes may open it," was not an overstatement.

However, regrettably, the proposition expressed by the Glasgow tobacco merchant is not followed in the novel at all. Mr Spreull's enthusiasm for Scottish democracy actually makes a sharp contrast to his nephew's class consciousness and sense of superiority to other students. Mr Spreull proudly proclaims that Scottish colleges are more democratic than English ones. Unfortunately, Cyril Thornton is not the kind of character who would benefit from democracy, and he could not care less about the "lowest order of the people". He had a "golden key" in his hand, but used it to open the

⁵² The investigation of the condition of all Scottish Universities was made in 1827 for "the Royal Commission of 1826". See R. G. Cant, *The University of St Andrews* (Edinburgh, 1946), p. 126.

⁵³ "Twenty four weeks" seems to be the length of one academic session.

⁵⁴ "Maintenance" here seems to mean food expences. See A. Grant, p. 488.

⁵⁵ Cant, p.125.

⁵⁶ Fees at Oxford and Cambridge varied dramatically according to the student's social rank, and it is hard to show the average sum.

⁵⁷ W. L. Guttsman, *The English Ruling Class* (London, 1969), pp. 216-17. A "Rev. J. D. Collins" must have been at Merton and later at Worcester College as a commoner.

⁵⁸ C. Kingsley, *Alton Locke*, p. 105. Kingsley (1819- 1875) was at Cambridge 1838- 1842.

door of the Scottish university, rather than an English one, simply because it was trendy to do so.

Cyril Thornton was widely read on both sides of the Atlantic. It remained in print until the 1880s, considerably outliving its author. Today Cyril's lengthy narration of his dramatic life has little appeal to general readers. However, it has the literary merit of being the first sustained treatment of Scottish university life. A small episode like that which follows has a documentary quality about Glasgow College life of nearly two hundred years ago. It has a distinctive College atmosphere, which will be coveted by some Scottish students of a later generation.

Cyril comes back from the Lord Provost's boisterous dinner party and goes to bed, thinking of "the calm and quiet elegance" of his English home. In his dream, he returns to the Thornton estates. The whole family comes out to welcome him home and to embrace him, and he wakes up.

Such were the visions of the night; they were broken only by the sound of the College bell... After dressing by the cold hazy twilight of a winter's morning, I hurried across the College courts, more than ankle[sic] deep in snow, to my class. I was too late. Prayers were over, and the lecture had begun. The Professor lowered his huge eye-brows on me as I entered, and in a moment all my pleasing dreams were forgotten. (CT, 49)

This is a slice of nineteenth-century university life, rich in information and implication. There was a College bell to signal the beginning of the class and it commenced with prayer, which was, however, little more than a formality. As a boarder within the College, Cyril stayed in bed until the last minute, quickly dressed himself and hurried across the quadrangles, while commuter students were trudging their way.

We also understand that classes at Glasgow are usually lectures and not tutorials. Glasgow abandoned the Regenting (tutorial) system in 1727, following the footsteps of Edinburgh which gave it up in 1708, and then the other universities followed.⁵⁹ Lectures conducted by experts on the subject (professors) were largely responsible for Scottish universities' great reputation in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century.

In common with many University novels, Cyril's description of College life ends with the graduation ceremony on the first of May. This was the day on which prizes were distributed to distinguished students in the great hall of the College; among whom was Cyril.

⁵⁹ The process was not overnight. St Andrews adapted the professional system in the 1740s, Marischal in 1753 and King's finally in 1799. As to St Andrews, see Cant, *University of St Andrews*, p.109.

The academical distinctions are bestowed with much of ceremonial pomp, in presence of a vast concourse of spectators, and it is not uninteresting to mark the flush of bashful triumph on the cheek of the victor, -- the sparkling of his downcast eye, as the hall is rent with loud applause, when he advances to receive the badge of honour assigned him by the voice of his fellow-students. (CT, 86)

Thomas Hamilton himself left the University without taking a degree, which was, again, not unusual.⁶⁰ He (and Cyril, too) was to join the Army as an officer. (Hamilton fought in Spain, rose to the rank of Captain, was wounded and retired).

In this long novel, only a small part is about his student life.⁶¹ Nevertheless, this is the first sustained treatment of Scottish university life in literature and is unique in that it describes student life at the ancient College of Glasgow which was torn down and disappeared in 1870. The site was sold off to the City of Glasgow Union Railway and became a railway goods yard (and still is). Glasgow was changing. Its industry, commerce and population were expanding rapidly and it was already (when the book was published) "the second city of the Empire". The growing Empire, with its expanding opportunities at home and abroad, was to have considerable repercussions on British higher education. This will be discussed again.

Through the perspective of an English upper-middle class student, *Cyril Thornton* conveys the democratic nature of the College of Glasgow and its atmosphere at the turn of the nineteenth century. Cyril's College life is in no way a typical one. Yet it provides us with the important theme that Scottish fictional writings would, overtly or covertly, propose in the nineteenth century: "We dinna lock the door o' learning, as they do at Oxford and Cambridge". The Glasgow merchant succinctly paraphrases the proposition that Scottish universities are more democratic, and better than English universities. In the following chapters, we shall see how this theme was dealt with by other Scottish writers.

⁶⁰The degree at this time did not have any commercial value. At Glasgow, "rarely more than twenty students graduated in any year before 1760 and never more than forty before 1810" in Glasgow. See Brown and Moss, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

⁶¹The novel is divided into three volumes. Volume I is about the hero's childhood in England and student life in Glasgow; Volume II, about his military service in Nova Scotia and in Spain; Volume III, about his experience in English high society. Thomas Hamilton himself worked in a merchant house in Glasgow after the College, and served in the army and reached the rank of captain; thus Volumes I and II of the book are roughly autobiographical.

**David Elginbrod (1863),
Alec Forbes of Howglen (1865)
Robert Falconer (1868)**

by George MacDonald - King's College, Aberdeen

A native of Huntly, Aberdeenshire, George MacDonald (1824-1905) belongs to a completely different place, age and literary tradition from Lockhart and Hamilton. He is remembered today chiefly for fantasies and fairy tales for children, such as *Phantastes* (1858) and *Lilith* (1895), strongly influencing G. K. Chesterton, W. H. Auden, and C. S. Lewis. However, his numerous works include no less than twenty multiple-decker novels based on Scottish country life, influencing a group of writers who were later to be known as the Kailyard school writers. In *David Elginbrod* (1863), *Alec Forbes of Howglen* (1865) and *Robert Falconer* (1868), three of his earliest works, the hero is a university student at Aberdeen.

The Scottish setting of MacDonald's earlier novels⁶² influenced younger generations of Scottish writers and inspired a revival of nationalistic literature. He may be regarded as the pioneer of the Kailyard school, but, after the long interval from Hamilton, he is also one of the pioneers in exploring the University Novel in Scotland. By the time MacDonald started writing *David Elginbrod*, Edward Bradley had penned *The Adventures of Mr Verdant Green: An Oxford Freshman* (1853), which became a huge hit all over Britain. Did MacDonald read it? At any rate, the success of Bradley's Oxford romances does not seem to have affected the Scottish writer, who is always interested in the inner world of human existence. MacDonald's Aberdeenshire novels revolve around the hero's moral struggle and improvement through ordeals. Let us explore how Scottish university education was described in these novels.

The heroes of MacDonald's three early works, *David Elginbrod* (1863), *Alec Forbes of Howglen* (1865) and *Robert Falconer* (1868) are students of one of the Aberdeen Colleges. (In *David Elginbrod*⁶³ Hugh Sutherland is already a student at the university.⁶⁴ In both *Alec Forbes* and *Robert Falconer*,⁶⁵ the story follows the protagonist from his childhood in a Scottish village to King's College in Aberdeen). In

⁶²His other vernacular tales include *Annals of a Quiet Neighbourhood* (1867), *The Seaboard Parish* (1868) and *Malcolm* (1875).

⁶³*David Elginbrod* (London, 1863, 3Vols.). Henceforward DE.

⁶⁴"He was now...[in] the recess between his third and fourth winter at one of the Aberdeen Universities". *David Elginbrod* (London, 1863), Vol. I, p.17.

⁶⁵*Alec Forbes of Howglen* (London, 1865) [Henceforward AF] and *Robert Falconer* (London, 1868) [Henceforward RF].

David Elginbrod, the description of King's College is sketchy and action takes place mostly outside the College. In the latter two novels, the University is where the protagonist falls in love (with Kate in *Alec Forbes*, and with Mary St John in *Robert Falconer*), meets his friends (Cosmo Cupples, the librarian, in *Alec Forbes*, and Eric Ericson in *Robert Falconer*) and rivals (Beauchamp in *Alec Forbes*, and Lord Rothie in *Robert Falconer*). It is a convenient setting, and, to contemporary Aberdeen students' dismay,⁶⁶ the life at the University itself is not given much attention.

Alec Forbes is probably where MacDonald comes closest to writing a University novel. As a novelist, he was never convincing at describing landscapes. Nevertheless, in the quotation below, MacDonald's portrayal of the city and the College from *Alec Forbes* is just about detailed enough for readers to realise that the University in question is King's College, Aberdeen:

It was already dark when he set out from his lodgings in the new town, for the gateway beneath the tower with that crown of stone which is the glory of the ancient borough... Through narrow crooked streets... he came to the open road which connected the two towns. (AF, 150)

Alec reaches Old Aberdeen and soon King's College:

The arch echoed to his feet as he entered the dark quadrangle, across which a glimmer in the opposite tower guided him to the stairs leading up to the place of meeting. He found the large room lighted by a chandelier, and one of the students seated as president in the professor's chair, while the benches were occupied by about two hundred students, most of the freshmen or *bejans* in their red gowns... (AF, 150).

From the assembly, "a certain *semi* (second-classmen, or more popularly *Sheep*) [italics his]" (AF, 150) stands up to give his opinion, but is hissed by the other students:

Among the loudest... were some of the red-gowned *bejans*, and the speaker kindled with wrath at the presumption of the yellow-beaks (*becs jaunes: bejancs*) [italics his]. (AF, 150-1)

One of "the presumptuous *bejans*" is Beauchamp, the hero's arch-rival. It is often pointed out by critics that, in MacDonald's novels, small episodes are separated from the main story, and not sufficiently related to each other. Here is a rare example where the

⁶⁶R. D. Anderson, *The Student Community at Aberdeen 1860-1939* (Aberdeen, 1996), p. 3.

setting, the University, and the description of the student activity are integrated into the development of the main plot. The use of College terminology, such as “bejans” and “semi”, is effective and would later be exploited by Neil Maclean.

In these three novels, however, as in much of his work, MacDonald concentrates on the heroes’ psychological condition and their spiritual improvement. Apart from the citation above, there few physical description of the College, its buildings, lodgings or professors. As if to compensate for this, the virtues of Scottish education in general are reiterated. In *Elginbrod*, for example, Hugh works as a tutor for Mr Elginbrod’s daughter who is going to a parish school. The narrator glorifies Scottish education as follows:

The English reader must not suppose the term parish school to mean what the same term would mean if used in England. Boys and girls of very different ranks go to the Scottish parish schools and fees are so small as to place their education within the reach of almost the humblest means. (DE, 76)

A similar idea can be found in the next work. “Now in Scotland education is more easily got than almost anything else” (AF, 146).

These expressions would have been more effective if the heroes were poor. However, Hugh is a son of a retired army officer, (“Major Sutherland” DE, 138) and Alec is a son of a small landowning farmer. The setting does not seem to make the story dramatic. The reason his mother sends Alec to the University is that “[h]e would be no worse a farmer for having an A.M. after his name” (AF, 146-7). At the College, Alec finds out that “some of the youths were of the lowest origin - the sons of ploughmen and small country shopkeepers” and “some, on the other hand, showed themselves at once the aristocracy of the class” (AF, 149). Alec belongs to “the middle class” (AF, 149).

How does this setting affect the hero’s education? Regrettably, how the hero finances his education is given perfunctory treatment by the author. Again, it is decided by his mother that “he should *compete for a bursary* [italics his]” (AF, 147). Alec competes for a bursary, but it is too easily acquired. In the next chapter, he is informed that “he gained a small bursary” (AF, 148). Considering the fact that George MacDonald, a miller’s son, actually went to King’s College⁶⁷ on a bursary, his treatment of the bursary competition is strangely sketchy. The bursary competition would be one of the major episodes in other Scottish University Novels

Robert Falconer seems to have come from the poorest social background among the three heroes. MacDonald might have recognised the weakness in his earlier novels. Robert’s mother died in his infancy, his father disappeared, and he was brought up by his grandmother. It is in this novel that the author is most articulate about the advantage of

⁶⁷He was at King’s College 1840-5, with an interruption between 1842-3.

Scottish higher education, which is available to the lower social orders. When Robert is looking down on the streets of Aberdeen from the window of his lodgings, he is pleased by the sight of students going home at the close of the session, “probably to the farm labours of the spring” (RF, 96). He blesses his University as follows:

Well may Scotland rejoice in her universities, for whatever may be said against their system - I have no complaint to make - they are divine in their freedom: men who follow the plough in the spring and reap the harvest in the autumn, may, and, often do, frequent their sacred precincts when the winter comes... one class which supplied a portion of them has almost vanished from the country - that class which was its truest, simplest, and noblest strength... I mean the class of cottars. (RF, 96)

Robert seems to identify himself with the students below, the “men who follow the plough in the spring and reap the harvest in the autumn”. They all belong to the same lowest social class, “the class of cottars”. The author is openly extolling the virtues of Scottish universities. Amongst them all, his college, King’s, is the university for the “truest, simplest, and noblest” people, although MacDonald knows that they are disappearing.

Victorian prosperity was beginning to set in, and Scottish society and universities were changing. By the late 1860s, the students from the lowest order who financed themselves by working during summer were a minority even at Aberdeen. The combination of MacDonald’s enthusiasm for the democracy of Scottish education and his idealistic and nostalgic view of Scottish peasant life are worthy of notice. The Scottish University Novel has just begun and it has already started myth-making. MacDonald should be regarded as the creator of the “lad o’ pairts” myth.

The early novels of MacDonald were influential on such writer as J. M. Barrie, Ian MacLaren and S. R. Crockett. These so-called Kailyard writers, however, were influenced by MacDonald’s specific attention to Scottish village life. Naturally, in their novels, parish schools, rather than universities, play the important role. The setting of university life and the theme of Scottish higher education, which MacDonald half-heartedly cultivated, were taken over by lesser known writers. In the next chapter, we will examine two other Aberdeen novels respectively by Gordon Stables and Neil Maclean.

“The Pride and boast of our country”⁶⁸
***Life at a Northern University* (1874)**
by Neil N. Maclean - King’s College, Aberdeen⁶⁹

Life at a Northern University is one of the rare examples of a full-length Scottish University novel in the nineteenth century. It is reported that Aberdeen students who were not convinced by MacDonald’s works accepted this novel as a fairly realistic representation of Aberdeen university life.⁷⁰ In fact, the book is full of self-lauding explanations about the Scottish university system and student life, and some of them are obviously self-deceptions. There is hardly any plot or characterisation. As a fiction, this is decidedly a second-rate work. We will find the reading interesting only when we put it in the context of the development of the University Novel.

Oxford

It seems that Maclean has read Edward Bradley’s *The Adventures of Mr Verdant Green: An Oxford Freshman* (1853), which was a very popular book at the time. (It sold over 100,000 copies in twenty years). Twice in *Life at a Northern University*, the hero is addressed as “Verdant Green”, as a recognition of his freshman status in the University (LNU, 30 and 91). In the *Verdant Green* novels, the author does not seem to have any intention of describing Oxford University as a place of learning. At the end of the story, upon his return from the University, Mr Green’s family inquire what he has learned. The protagonist answers proudly that he has learned to row and smoke. To the astonished family, he continues, “[a]nd to make shandy-gaff and sherry-cobbler, and brew bishop and egg-flip: oh, it’s capital!”⁷¹ This is, the narrator says, “the extent of his learning”, and Mr Green has “proved how a youth of ordinary natural attainments may acquire other knowledge in his University career”.⁷²

By the early 1800s, the tutorial system at Oxford was hopelessly outmoded and ill received by students. On the whole, college masters and tutors at “unreformed” ancient English universities did not take their academic role seriously. Lacking opportunity to

⁶⁸N. N. Maclean, *Life at a Northern University* (Glasgow and London, 1874), p. v. Henceforward LNU.

⁶⁹Neil Nathaniel Maclean was born in Peterhead, entered King’s College in 1853, graduated, with M.A., in 1859. He died in 1873 at the age of thirty-eight before publishing *Life*. See the introduction for the third edition.

⁷⁰R. D. Anderson, op. cit., p. 3.

⁷¹E. Bradley, *The Adventures of Mr Verdant Green: An Oxford Freshman* (London, 1853), p. 118. This book is a collection of the three Mr Green novels.

⁷²ibid.

specialise, tutors were incompetent, compared to Scottish professors. Sir William Hamilton, who went to Balliol from Glasgow in 1807, wrote to his mother, "I am so plagued by these foolish lectures of the College tutors that I have little time to do anything else".⁷³ An 1830s publication was indignant that undergraduates were "doomed to listen day after day to the same childish observation, or to hear a tedious passage of some Greek or Latin author translated into English, without the tutor making any observation, either through carelessness or inability".⁷⁴ And this, in spite of Lockhart's presupposed academic superiority of Oxford. Before the 1850s reform, "instead of being the national centre of learning, [Oxford and Cambridge] were little more than comfortable monastic establishments for clerical sinecurists with a tinge of letters... young men of family... spent their time pleasantly, some with a great deal of drinking and cheerful noise, and some with a little reading of books".⁷⁵ No wonder Oxford in the *Verdant Green* novels is a hilarious playground where students indulge in aristocratic dissipation. English universities were academically "slumberous"⁷⁶ and this is by and large reflected in the way they are treated in early nineteenth-century novels. Actually *Verdant Green* appeared when Oxford was on the verge of major reform. It nevertheless fixed in the public mind the ideal type of English university education.⁷⁷

King's College, Aberdeen

Nothing is more remote from Mr Green's Brazenface College than King's College in *Life at a Northern University*. Maclean explains how Scottish higher education is useful and well-organised, compared to English education, and how students can benefit from it. The Scottish university makes a man out of an impoverished farmer's son and makes him ready for the world. King's College is, as it was in *Robert Falconer*, the university for the people.

The book was first published in 1874 and was widely read, even if it was pale in comparison with *Verdant Green* novels. (Its fourth edition appeared in 1917).⁷⁸ Judging from what students are discussing in the Debating Society's meeting, the time is prior to

⁷³ Veitch, *Memoir of Sir William Hamilton*, p.30. Although Hamilton graduated with "extremely impressive first in Lat. Hum.," he felt "no gratitude to Balliol, or to Oxford". 'Oxford and its critics' by Asa Briggs in M.G. Brock and M.C. Curthoys. (eds.). *The History of the University of Oxford. Vol. 6*, (Oxford : 1997), p.142.

⁷⁴ *Thoughts on reform at Oxford. By a graduate* (1833), cited by M.C. Curthoys in *The History of the University of Oxford. Vol. 6*, P.149.

⁷⁵ Trevelyan, *British history in the nineteenth century and after, 1782-1919*. (London ; New York etc., 1938), p.27.

⁷⁶ Trevelyan, *op.cit.*, p.26.

⁷⁷ 'The Oxford of Mr Verdant Green' by Cuthroys and Day in *The History of the University of Oxford. Vol. 6*, pp268-286.

⁷⁸ WorldCat Search.

1860.⁷⁹ The protagonist narrator, "I", is un-named, but is often addressed as "Mac" by his friends. Like the heroes of the MacDonald novels, he wins a bursary and leaves his native village, probably in Aberdeenshire, for King's College in Aberdeen, his nearest university town.

The author acknowledges MacDonald's pioneering role in this genre. The reason he wrote this novel is that, while "[n]o books are read with greater avidity and pleasure than those relating to College Life", "almost nothing has been written concerning student life at our northern colleges... with the exception of some works by George MacDonald" (LNU v). Maclean seems to be referring to the three novels by MacDonald whose setting is also King's College. Yet he makes a distinction between MacDonald's novels and the one he is going to write:

In the works of George MacDonald we understand... that he deals with individual characters, not with students in aggregate. Now, what we have endeavoured to portray in the following pages is the life of students in a mass, their hard grinding, their wild vagaries, their drinking parties, and their practical jokes. (LNU, vi)

MacDonald and Maclean share the same setting (King's College in the mid-nineteenth century). However, while MacDonald used the University merely as a convenient setting where his heroes' moral struggles take place, Maclean focuses on student life itself. For example, Alec Forbes simply applied for a bursary and won it in a matter of a few pages. In *Life at a Northern University*, the bursary system, without which the protagonist could not have made it to the University, is the focal point of the novel. Its availability is repeatedly stressed as evidence of the Scottish universities' democratic character.

Likewise, since his focus was on moral aspects, MacDonald was *not* concerned about the hero's worldly advancement. *Alec Forbes*, after the spiritual reform, does not remain in London, but goes back to his native village to marry his childhood sweetheart. In *Life at a Northern University*, the protagonist, as well as his friends, rises in society. In the last chapter of the novel, it is explained that many of his college fellows now occupy respectable positions in the church or the civil and military services of the Empire.

"Hurrah, for our bursary system" (LNU, 108)

Let us look at each point in detail. The theme of the democratic Scottish education is one thing that Maclean shares with MacDonald. But Maclean is more enthusiastic. Throughout the book he is tireless in lauding the bursary system and its

⁷⁹They discuss the possible fusion of the two Aberdeen Colleges. King's and Marischal finally

significance in Scottish higher education. The narrator explains that these are what would be called scholarships in England and are competed for entirely on merit, and that these substantial bursaries have enabled “sons of the lower classes” (LNU, 18) to obtain a university education.

“[T]he excellencies of this system” (LNU, 18) are repeatedly stressed. Like Alec Forbes, the protagonist goes to the Debating Society’s meeting. Here again, the merits of the bursary system are stressed. One of the speakers says:

It is the boast of this ancient seat of learning that it has sent forth more men from the lower classes than any other university in the kingdom -- men who, by means of its noble endowments [bursaries], have been enabled to obtain that *ne plus ultra* of every Scotchman, a university education. (LNU, 85)

Thanks to its ample bursary endowments, students from the lower social classes can study at King’s College. It is claimed that King’s College is more willing to have students from the lower classes than any other university. “It is our glory and boast”, says a student, that what King’ College has done “for the poor man” is what other universities have done “for the rich and titled” (LNU, 261-2).

Several chapters later, Highland students from the lower classes give an account of how the bursary, and the parish school before that, helped them come to the university. The first student’s parents were too poor to pay for his education. But he hears about the bursary.

I one day learned... that any one, however humble his position, may by his own exertions, and by his own scholarship, gain such a bursary in open public competition. I could hardly believe that I had heard aright... I determined, at whatever the cost, to prepare myself for the competition... (LNU, 237)

Another student was equally poor. But the parish school (“our splendid parochial system of education” LNU, 242) fees were so cheap that even he could afford them, and there he prepared himself for the competition. The wide availability of Scottish parish schools was already mentioned in MacDonald’s novels. Here it is suggested that the parish schools are not only inexpensive, but are endowed with academic quality which is geared for the bursary competition. There the student learns “everything necessary for passing the competition and gaining the bursary” (LNU, 243). In this episode, each student from a poor background claims that “[his] case is even harder” (LNU, 244) than other students. “Our excellent bursary system” is thus commended because of its service to

amalgamated in 1860.

“the artisan and labouring classes” (LNU, 250). In reality Aberdeen students in the late nineteenth century were, broadly defined, middle-class⁸⁰ and destitute Highland students, such as described here, were seldom seen. Maclean’s presentation of the bursary system and its meritocracy is uncritical and reinforces the myth of the democracy of Scottish education.

“Its democratic spirit!” (LNU, 105)

In *Cyril Thornton*, Mr Spreull said that Scottish universities are superior to English ones because of their democratic nature. One of Maclean’s characters makes more or less the same point. The student says that he “admire[s]” his college because of “its democratic spirit” (LNU, 105). For one thing, there is the lack of respect among King’s College students for social status:

Go to Oxford, Cambridge, or any other universities in our own country, and you will find that rank, position, wealth are the things that generally hold sway. Here it is completely different. (LNU, 105)

He contends that, at King’s, each student is valued entirely for his academic performance. Another point, its economic value, is more in line with Mr Spreull’s claim:

It is useless mentioning Oxford or Cambridge, for the expense of education there effectively precludes any students from the lower ranks, and thus riches and position have their full swing... [and] at the other Scotch universities... it is the same...(LNU, 106)

At King’s, he maintains, “the majority of students are from the country” and the spirit of “Liberty-Equality-Fraternity” (LNU,106) prevails.

According to him, since King’s is the most democratic of all the Scottish universities, it is the best university in the United Kingdom. Moreover, it is claimed, King’s is academically superior to other institutions. “In none of our Scotch colleges, and still less in the English, are they so thorough in their work with us” (LNU, 100). Since students are valued only for their academic performance, King’s College students study hard, and accordingly its academic standard is high:

⁸⁰“[I]n general the students of this university... were the sons of fairly prosperous farmers” (R. D. Anderson, *The Student Community at Aberdeen*, p. 15). “Aberdeen students may be broadly defined as middle-class” (Anderson, op. cit., p. 13).

We work hard before we come up [for the bursary], and when here do the same (I speak here particularly of our own college)... the work at the English colleges is mere child's play...(LNU, 139)

In this novel, it is understood that Scottish students have a "love of learning", (LNU, 139) while "the majority of students... [at the] English colleges are sent there for the purpose of finishing their education as gentlemen" (LNU 139). Maclean's characters' harsh indictment of English education reminds us of Mr Spreull's welcome speech to Cyril.⁸¹ Obviously, however, Scottish students came to the university for many purposes, and not entirely for love of learning.

It is regrettable that *Life at a Northern University*, the first full-length fiction on Scottish University life, took this narrow contentious form. If some of the English novels on university life written in the nineteenth century are still readable, it is because they are ultimately concerned about the ends of a university education, or what a university education should be.⁸² Here in *Life at a Northern University*, the author is mostly concerned about Scottish universities' *raison d'être* against English institutions. Scottish universities' "democratic spirit" justifies their existence and testifies to their superiority over English universities, and the pattern seems to have been set.

"The battle of the world" (LNU, 298)

One of the poor Highland students says, "Scotchmen *will have* [italics his] knowledge, whatever difficulties may come in the way" (LNU, 247). They all have this "desire" (LNU, 18), or "the insatiable desire... for learning" (LNU, 135). A university education is "*summum bonum*" (LNU, 17) or "*ne plus ultra*" (LNU, 85). As Dr Nash suggests, in *Life at a Northern University*, the students' basic attitude toward education is "a love of learning largely for its own sake".⁸³ As a result, King's College sometimes assumes the air of a sacred place. "That old seat of learning" has been "surrounded... with a halo of sanctity" (LNU, 24). The hero is joyous that he can finally "drink that fountain of knowledge" (LNU, 51).

However, worldly success is also strongly anticipated. In the preface, Maclean explains the object of his writing this novel:

⁸¹This is, in hindsight, ironical. His English nephew came to Glasgow College to finish his education as a gentleman and the college served him as an enjoyable playground.

⁸²See M. Proctor, *op. cit.*, p.190.

⁸³Andrew Nash, 'Re-reading the 'Lad o' Pairts': The Myth of the Kailyard Myth', *Scotlands* 3.2 (1996), p. 88.

Our great object in this work has been to show that the poor man can by his talents and perseverance command a place for himself... what a number of these have risen to fame, and left a name of which their country is proud... [They] rose from the ranks, gained a bursary, and consequently a university education, and now live in the annals of their country. (LNU, vii)

King's College, it has been maintained, welcomes especially those who come from the working classes. At King's, "the son of the cottar is as acceptable as the son of the laird; indeed, we are more inclined to accept the former" (LNU, 103). But it is not because he is poor, but "because he is generally made of more talented material" (LNU, 103). So "the best scholars" are "principally from the lower or working classes... they [are] by far the most diligent students" (LNU, 19-20). MacDonald's idealisation of "the cottars" may be remembered. These statements are self-deceptive, a crude form of myth-making.

[T]he whole of the Scotch wranglers at Cambridge were bursars, and... the greater number of our most illustrious Scotchmen, those who have left their mark on the world, were indebted to a bursary for their university education. (LNU, 18-9)

"The sons of the cottars" are expected to get on well in the wider world and become "illustrious" and to leave their mark on it. Namely, university education is *not* the ultimate goal *per se* for the poorer students. It was expected that the successful bursary winner would be a successful scholar in the College and have a successful career afterwards. Far from being a finishing school, the Scottish university serves as a preparation for "the battle of the world" (LNU, 298) that awaits students after College where they are expected to remain winners.

"Friendship, hilarity, and good fellowship" (LNU, 115)

But how does the College, if it ever does, prepare its student for the outer world? It is stated that going to College is the protagonist's "first entrance into life" (LNU, 23), and the story follows their pranks, drinking, singing, and arguments. Maclean insists that these have educational purposes. When the protagonist reflects on his own conduct, his cousin persuades him that "[c]ontact with the world and mingling among his own species" (LNU, 259) only does him good. "[H]ard-working students" (LNU, 259) are guilty of isolation, conceit and self-absorption and of "knowing nothing of the outer world" (LNU, 257). A student should spend more time with his fellow students "who will polish him" (LNU, 259).

There is a certain anti-intellectualism, which contradicts the narrator's earlier admiration for the hard-working Highland students and their craving for learning. In

fact, Scottish universities did serve as a kind of finishing school. The university life gave those students who were brought up in Scottish villages and small towns a social training which would be useful in their later life, when they needed to blend into the mainstream British way of life in London or in the British colonies and Dominions (although some to Oxford or Cambridge for further polish).

It has been claimed that Aberdeen graduates, although many of them came from humble backgrounds, are usually "successful candidates for the civil and military services" because of their thorough academic work (LNU, 100). Ten years after graduation, in the last chapter, the hero learns of his old college fellows. A Highland student is preaching in Bombay, the leader of the Begeants group, named Lockhart, is a military officer in Calcutta. Many of King's College graduates are either distinguished in church or successful in civil and military service.

Civil service examinations and the career opportunities in the Empire were common factors in the Victorian reform in Scottish universities. The Indian Civil Service became open to all by way of competitive examination in 1853, and the Home Civil Service in 1870. High-profile careers are finally open to Scottish university graduates, too. These examinations, however, favoured students with classical English public school and Oxbridge education, and Scottish candidates who studied in Scottish colleges under old curricula were handicapped and less successful. The career-mindedness of middle-class Scottish students/parents and their desire to join the mainstream British elites would accelerate the university reform from within. Scottish university education was to take on a new meaning.

In *Life at a Northern University*, the utilitarian merit of a university degree and love of learning for themselves co-exist. Overall, the author remains uncritical of Scottish higher education, and his fiction is instrumental in the making of the "lad o' pairs" myth.

MacDonald, Maclean and Kailyard novels

In one sense, Maclean took up the ground MacDonald had left uncultivated. Maclean developed MacDonald's short and flat monologues into an extended form. With full details, *Life at a Northern University* explains how the bursary system works. The novel also gives a vivid description of Aberdeen University undergraduate life when there were no female students; their pranks, drinking, singing and arguments, which can hardly be seen in the Kailyard novels. To some extent, *Life at a Northern University* has a certain quality of historical documentary.

Dr. Nash is right in saying that *Life* shows “the typical contents of the ‘lad o’ pairs’ myth”.⁸⁴ As he points out, many Kailyard novels are actually celebrating “not... a system of education, but... a system of communal living”, or the “community ethos”.⁸⁵ There is a difference between *Life at a Northern University* and the Kailyard novels. What is missing in Maclean’s novel is this celebration of Scottish rural life and community. We find in the novel no description of community life.⁸⁶ Instead, the students’ peculiar behaviour and rituals of male fellowship, which occasionally take on a complexion of elitism, are celebrated, and University education enables one to escape from rural community life.

Scottish university students in the fictional writings always came from the country, and usually from underprivileged backgrounds. The village the hero lives in is small but pleasant, and there is a sense of community. Although rural life usually provides the hero with a socially and economically disadvantageous environment, it is surmountable by education. I will further discuss the relationship between the universities and communal living in later chapters.

Another theme which is strongly indicated is the continuity between university and the outer world, where the battle for success waits for students. Scottish universities prepare their students for the struggle in the world. Compare this to *Zuleika Dobson’s* Oxford, which protected its students from “the sharp, harsh exigent realities of the outer world”, and it is easy to see that the two universities represent completely different ethos; one mobility, and another stability.

In the next few chapters, I will examine the variation of roles that Scottish higher education plays in some of the Kailyard novels.

⁸⁴Nash, p. 87.

⁸⁵ibid., p. 91.

⁸⁶ The Spartan Latin coach is the only character in the village scene.

“Life at the Northern University”⁸⁷

***From Ploughshare to Pulpit* (1895)⁸⁸**

by Gordon Stables - Marischal College, Aberdeen

Possibly the most prolific of all the Victorian writers, Gordon Stables (1840?-1910)⁸⁹ was the author of nearly 150 books. He wrote extensively on outdoor life and animals, and military and adventure stories.⁹⁰ *From Ploughshare to Pulpit* is one of the many books Stables wrote for young adults. It is in one sense an attempt to describe university life as an adventure, and it contains many familiar features we have already seen in novels which deal with Scottish university life.

There are some passages in the novel that suggest that Stables had read Maclean’s *Life at a Northern University*. The protagonist-hero, Sandie, competes for a mathematics bursary with a destitute Highland student named “Maclean” who is called “Mac” by the hero. At one time, the author says that this story is about “life at the Northern University” [italics mine]. There are more than a few similarities between the two Aberdeen University student stories.

As Maclean did, Stables puts much emphasis on the bursary competition and the hero’s hard grind. Sandie is a hearty boy of eighteen in a Highland village. He is called the “Ploughshare student” (FPP, 22), for he studies for the bursary competition while working on the farm at the same time. His parents are so poor that he cannot afford a coach, let alone the university fees. The ploughshare boy teaches himself Latin.

In Thomas Hardy’s last novel, which was published in the same year, all that Jude, the self-taught English working class student, can do is to write a letter of enquiry to the Dean of Admission. Here the Scottish ploughshare boy prepares himself for the open competition. “It must be bursary, or not bursary-- bursary or utter failure” (FPP, 24). But he is at least given an opportunity to compete. The author puts in a footnote and explains the system with some air of pride as follows:

⁸⁷G. Stables, *From Ploughshare to Pulpit*, (Edinburgh, 1895), p. 235. [Henceforward FPP]

⁸⁸The text I used is not dated. The information as to *From Ploughshare to Pulpit*’s publication date is not available either in printed or in electronic resources. The date 1895 was given by Mr Terry Forbes at the Queen Mother Library, Aberdeen.

⁸⁹ His date of birth might have been earlier. See J. Sutherland (ed.), *The Longman Companion to Victorian Fiction* (Harlow, 1988), entry under “Stables”. Born in Banffshire, Stables studied Arts at Marischal College 1854-7, then medicine and divinity, receiving a Medical and a Christian Missionary degree in 1862.

⁹⁰A considerable number of Stables’ books were written for Christian organisations. *From Ploughshare to Pulpit*, however, seems to be Stables’ only novel that deals with university life. *World Cat Search*.

My English readers ought to know that a bursary is a kind of scholarship, which not only entitles the holder to free education at the University, but to a sum of money paid annually during the whole four years' curriculum. (FPP, 18-9)

What is Sandie going to do with the university degree? His "one grand ambition" is "to become a clergyman in the Church of Scotland" (FPP, 24); hence the title.

Unlike the students in Maclean's novel, the bursary prize is not an means for an escape from the rural life. On the contrary, his ambition, which he realises in the end, is to come back to his native village as a minister. Sandie is to be a minister "in some bonnie country parish", and not in London, or in Calcutta. He "couldn't stand the noisy town" (FPP, 20). Stables' sympathy is always for pastoral living and his treatment of community life is invariably pleasant and relaxed. The influence of Kailyard novels is recognisable in the way Stables idealises the beauty of Scottish village life and its people.

Yet the value of university education is not questioned. Mackenzie, the Established Church minister and a King's College graduate, offers his help in Latin, saying:

"I was a bursar at my University, or I wouldn't be where I am now for my people were only fisher folks at Peterhead". (FPP, 32)⁹¹

In this story, again, the bursary is a noble, magic vehicle that guides poor hardworking students through the College years to a respectable position in society. In this novel, there is a continuity, or a connection, between the rural community and the university.

Sandie's hard grind is duly rewarded by the first prize and he starts his life in Aberdeen. There follows the staple ingredients of Scottish university life: donning of red gown, rivalry between the two Colleges (Book II Chap. III), bad boys' pranks (Book II. Chap IV), snowball fight between town and gown (Book II. Chap VI), a Rectorial election riot (Book II. Chap. VII) and friendship with destitute Highland students (Book III. Chap. II).

Above all, the episode concerned with the Highland students is most Macleanesque. The Highland students (all studying "for the Church," FPP, 234) are "poor as rats" (FPP, 233). The leader of the group, named Maclean, proudly explains how hard their lives are ("We live like fighting-cocks" FPP, 234). They live on herrings, salt and oatmeal. Four students share one bed. Ever conscious of his English readers, Stables says, "poor though Englishmen would consider them... they are as hard and brown as nuts" (FPP, 234), lauding their heroic endeavour. Sandie deeply sympathises with them in exactly the same way the protagonist of *Life at the Northern*

⁹¹Mackenzie went to King's College as Neil Maclean did. Peterhead is Neil Maclean's native town.

University did for the Highland students. He is glad that “the great Northern University [Marischal]” (FPP, 235) has poor students like them, who are toiling for their education.

Sandie, too, belongs to what MacDonald called “the class of the cottars”. During the summer recess (Book III. Chap. IV), the hero and his companion Willie work on a herring fishing boat. Although he is the glorious first bursar and does not need to work, he takes pride in paying his way through the College years in the Scottish manner (“Never mind the honour, mother” FPP, 179). At this point, Stables seems to have exhausted all the ingredients of Scottish university life. Sandie’s health deteriorates and he goes to sea, as the author did in real life. After a pleasant adventure on a whaler to Australia, Sandie goes back to Aberdeen to finish his Divinity course, as Stables did, and returns to his village as a minister. At the end of the story, Sandie marries Mackenzie’s daughter, Maggie May (the plot is comparable to *Alec Forbes*).

By the time this book appeared, the majority of Aberdeen students were not as poor as was described in it. Some of them did work, but it was “to pass the time or to help their parents, not out of necessity”.⁹² The destitute Highland students, who are ubiquitous in Aberdeen stories, are decidedly a minority.⁹³ However, Gordon Stables genuinely believed in the idea of a people’s university and remained grateful to his alma mater.⁹⁴ The hero’s underprivileged background simply makes the story more dramatic and enjoyable. In *From Ploughshare to Pulpit*, the democratic character of Scottish university education is being cherished and reinforced for the younger generation.

⁹²R. D. Anderson, *The Student Community at Aberdeen*, p. 15.

⁹³ See also J. Carter and C. McLaren, *Crown and Gown 1495-1995 : the history of the University of Aberdeen* (Aberdeen, 1994), p. 90.

⁹⁴The book is “dedicated to my old professor, Sir W. M. D. Geddes, Principal of Aberdeen University, with sunny memories of auld lang syne” by the author.

“The idyll of Scottish University life”⁹⁵

***Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush* (1894)**

by Ian Maclaren - Edinburgh

In Ian Maclaren’s most famous story, “Domsie”, the tenant farmer’s son George goes to the University of Edinburgh. However, while parish school life is idealised, the university life, whose reality Maclaren knew very well, is consciously excluded from the story and assimilated to the idyllic living. In this story, or in any of Maclaren’s stories, real university life is not allowed to impinge upon the pastoral idyll. “Domsie”, more than any other of Maclaren’s stories, shows an interesting relationship between the rural community and the university.

Love of learning and the supreme value of university education

Drumtochty is an insular rural community in Perthshire where “the Duke of Atholl” (BBB, 32) still assumes the status of a feudal lord. Everywhere, we can observe people’s love of learning and of university education. In the Drumtochty community, education has an unquestionable value and university education is the ultimate goal for the pupils. The dominie gives “all his love to the children, and nearly all his money, too, helping lads to college” (BBB, 14-5). It is his pride that for thirty-five years, the Drumtochty parish school has always sent a student to “the University” (BBB, 16).

Parish school education is idealised. The parish school house is old and humble. Yet it is saturated with idyllic beauty and a cosy atmosphere:

The door was at one end, and stood open in summer, so that the boys saw the rabbits come out from their holes on the edge of the wood, and birds sometimes flew in unheeded. The fire place was at the other end and was fed in winter with the sticks and peats brought by the scholars. (BBB, 15)

In this school, there is a promising pupil called George, who is “marked for college” (BBB, 18).

⁹⁵I. Maclaren, *Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush* (London, 1937), p. 47. Henceforward, BBB.

The caring community

“[H]umble homes “ in Drumtochty have a “single ambition”: which is “to have one of its members at college” (BBB, 19). Usually this is where the bursary system becomes useful, but not so in Maclaren’s stories. He chooses to show the beauty of the sacrifices made by his family, instead of the beauty of the bursary system and meritocracy. For the lad to have a university education, “his brothers and sisters would give their wages, and the family would live on skim milk and oat cake, to let him have his chance” (BBB, 19); a “noble” self-denial, using Dr Morris’s words. As I have mentioned, by the late nineteenth century, the majority of Scottish university students were not that poor. But for the author to dramatise the student’s endeavour, George has to be a poor student.

George’s parents are too poor to finance a university education, but the bursary competition is not even mentioned. The dominie persuades Drumsheugh, whom people thought a miser, to pay for George’s education.⁹⁶ In the later story, “Drumsheugh’s Love Story”, Maclaren reveals the reason why Drumsheugh does so. He has always loved George’s mother and assumed secretly the role of a surrogate father.⁹⁷ Thus a brilliant Latin pupil, who could easily win a bursary, goes to the University of Edinburgh by the goodwill of people in his village.

The University not allowed to enter the community

The narration never leaves Drumtochty. George’s achievement at Edinburgh is reported by his own letter. He has won “the medal both in the Humanity and the Greek” (BBB, 27). In the same letter, George misses home and expresses his “gratitude to his schoolmaster” (BBB, 27), to which the dominie responds with “a rain of tears” (BBB, 27). His achievements are also announced in “the papers” (BBB, 31). Strangely, George’s academic endeavour in Edinburgh takes on the air of a military expedition. Later, his mother says to George, “Ye’ve been a guid soldier” (BBB, 34). There is a great distance, mentally and physically, between Edinburgh, where George is “fight[ing] the College battles” (BBB, 41), and the peaceful community of Drumtochty.

⁹⁶The narrator ends the section saying, “[Domsie] added as an after thought that Whinnie Knowe [George’s father] had promised to pay Drumsheugh’s fees for four years at the University of Edinburgh” (BBB, 24). The expression here is confusing. The dominie should have said, “Drumsheugh had promised to pay George’s fees,” but he is so excited by the news that he talks incoherently. As Dr Maclachlan suggests, this shows how surprising Drumsheugh’s generosity seems and how strongly Domsie is affected by his hopes for his best pupil.

⁹⁷See chapter II, “Drumsheugh’s Secret”, of ‘Drumsheugh’s Love Story’ in *The Days of Auld Langsyne* (London, 1895).

It is significant that George is dying when he comes home after having swept away all the prizes before him at the university. The distinguished Edinburgh University student is not allowed to come back to live in the pastoral community. He must die because he has already served his purpose by carrying back all the prizes that the village and the dominie expected.⁹⁸ George's death is necessary as well as convenient.

George's funeral adds gloss to his achievement and university education. George's friends come to the village to pay homage. They are the friends George met "in the commonwealth of letters" (BBB, 48), meaning, the University. Here it is suggested that the University is where sons of the rich and poor, from different faiths and origins, rub shoulders for love of learning. "One [a Gordon] was of an ancient Scottish house... and was High Church and Tory" (BBB, 48). He went to "Harrow". The other is "a Western Celt, who had worried his way from a fishing croft in Barra" (BBB, 48). As a token of the love of learning they shared with her dead son, George's mother gives them "Homer" and "Plato" (BBB, 48).⁹⁹

The room they are in is described as follows:

It was a low-roofed room, with a box bed and some pieces of humble furniture, fit only for a labouring man. But the choice treasures of Greece and Rome lay on the table, and on a shelf beside the bed College prizes and medals, while everywhere were the roses he loved. His peasant mother stood beside the body of her scholar son, whose hopes and thoughts she had shared, and through the window came the bleating of distant sheep. It was the idyll of Scottish University life. (BBB, 47)

Dr Nash quotes the above section in his article 'Re-reading the 'Lad o' pairts' and says that this is one of the few "small pictures we do get of university life" in MacLaren's writings.¹⁰⁰ This is, I presume, Dr Nash's misreading. The narrator is not in George's room in Edinburgh, but in Drumtochty. The reason why Maclaren put "it was the idyll of Scottish University life" at the end is obscure. "Scottish university life", however, is *associated* with the humble and pleasant rural living. From George's room in which "College prizes and medals" and "the choice treasure of Greece and Rome" are placed, you can hear "the bleating of distant sheep". This greatly contradicts the dominie's description of the university life, "the great war".

Maclaren (real name John Watson) entered Edinburgh University in the same year as R. L. Stevenson. He knew the real university life. He knew "the sacrifices"

⁹⁸Alternatively, George could go to London, or abroad and win yet bigger prizes.

⁹⁹Here Maclaren again introduces the military analogy. Since Gordon had a reputation as an excellent classic scholar at Harrow, the dominie is worried about George "in the great war" (BBB, 48) at Edinburgh.

¹⁰⁰Nash, p. 89. The other is 'His Crowning Day' in *His Majesty's Baby and Some Common People* (London, 1902), in which, university life is again simply imagined by the narrator.

made by poor students “for intellectual eminence” and witnessed the “tragic results”.¹⁰¹ He knew the harsh reality of the prize-winning race at the University. In fact the character of George is based on a brilliant student Watson was close to in High School who died at twenty-one in Edinburgh seemingly from exhaustion.¹⁰² The student was a successful bursary winner and expected to do well in the university, too. It was “a great war”, as the dominie said. But Maclaren consciously excluded the reality of university life and transformed it into an image which can be associated with roses and the bleating of sheep.

Despite his characters’ unmitigated craving for university education, Maclaren hardly deals with university itself in his stories. And when he does, he makes sure that the university does not disturb the rural community with its harsh reality. In his later story, another successful scholar, John Ross, now a professor in “a Colonial University”¹⁰³ in Australia, has established himself as a prominent figure. He left Drumtochty for Edinburgh just like George, and the news of his “graund discover[ies]” (AOS, 217) are reported, again, by mail and the papers. The Drumtochty folks are elated when they find the article in “*The Times*” of London, about John Ross, the “eminent man of science”, who came from “Drumtochty in Perthshire and received his early education at the parish school” (AOS, 218). He brings “three medals” each year “foon place o’ learnin ayont the sea” (AOS, 218). He belongs to the whole community of Drumtochty. But he is the pride of Drumtochty as long as he lives in the far away place. He never comes home with new urban ideas and foreign life styles.

In *Zuleika Dobson*, the university was a demi-paradise which protected its students from “the sharp, harsh exigent realities of the outer world”. Here in MacLaren’s story, a complete reversal has taken place. The university itself represents the harsh realities of the outer world and the community must be protected from the academic world.

There seems to be an incompatibility between Ian Maclaren’s stories and Scottish university life. Once they have gone to the University in the city, students are never allowed to come home. They go off-stage, either by dying, or emigrating to a place where they continue to win prizes and gain honours for his native village. Obviously, MacLaren’s intention is to describe a genuine Scottish community living in a peaceful valley. There, inexplicably, a university education has the supreme, almost tyrannical, value, and it claimed a young man’s life.

¹⁰¹W. Robertson Nicoll, *Ian Maclaren: Life of the Rev. John Watson. D.D.* (London, 1908), p.37.

¹⁰² *ibid.*, p. 30. George also dies at twenty-one.

¹⁰³Maclaren, *Afterwards and Other Stories*, (London, 1898), p. 214. Henceforward, AOS.

“Unlock the doors of success”¹⁰⁴

***Kit Kennedy: Country Boy* (1899)**

by S. R. Crockett - Edinburgh

Kit Kennedy follows the typical formula of “the lad o’ pairts” story. A country boy in Galloway gains a bursary and proceeds to the University of Edinburgh. He improves himself through education, although not always an institutionalised one, and grows up to be a great man. Throughout the story, the author keeps his positive attitude towards the educational system, especially the bursary system, and here again, university education represents the supreme value.

The story is fairly autobiographical. Like Crockett, Kit is an illegitimate son of a farmer’s daughter living in a small Galloway village. The dominie Kit meets in the parish school, Duncan, is not a saintly figure like Domsie in Maclaren’s stories. He spends too much time in a local pub (KK, 86), and believes that corporal punishment is necessary to instil discipline into boys (KK, 73). There is no idealising of the dominie.¹⁰⁵ This, however, does not mean that Crockett is questioning the parish school system. The dominie has “[f]orty years of mingled experience in the instruction of the boys in Whinnyliggate” (KK, 73). The descriptions of his beliefs and behaviour make him simply look more credible than Maclaren’s dominie. Crockett, who was a parish school boy himself, knew better than Maclaren (who was a High School student in Stirling). After all, Duncan has “a really kind heart” (KK, 73). Admittedly, in several parts of *Kit Kennedy*, Crockett makes pathetic or mean figures out of dominies, but he does so to emphasise Kit’s heroic independence in contrast to spoiled town boys who have able dominies behind them. Crockett is not attacking parish schools and their system as a whole.

If Kit is uncomfortable in the parish school, it is just because he is much more mature and cleverer than other boys, and more knowledgeable than the dominie. He soon outgrows the parish school. But this is to make the hero look better and more outstanding rather than to denounce the parish school system. Kit starts working on a farm and by an accident meets Christopher Kennedy, his long missing father in disguise. He used to be a Classic master (KK, 163) and has an academic title (he is “B. A.”, KK, 93, 216 and 220, but “Master of Arts”, KK, 192). As a son of a professional man, Kit is in a wrong environment, and his departure from manual labour is strongly anticipated. The narrator intends no irony when he says that Kennedy teaches Kit Classics, “a

¹⁰⁴S. R. Crockett, *Kit Kennedy: Country Boy* (London, 1899), p. 216. Henceforward, KK.

knowledge of which is universally believed in Scotland to unlock the doors of success in every profession" (KK, 216). I do not share Dr Nash's view that "an undercurrent theme" of the novel is that "education itself is no guarantee of success or moral fulfillment".¹⁰⁶ These are not what Kit is seeking in the parish school. His mind is set on the bursary competition from early on, to get out of his class and environment. Crockett's attitude towards academic institutions and the educational system is traditional and in no way is he questioning their authority.

Just like Mackenzie in *From Ploughshare to Pulpit*, Christopher Kennedy coaches Kit and implants a love of Latin in him. Kit absorbed himself in learning the Classics (KK, 222). He loves learning, but the narrator states in a matter of fact way, "[n]othing was any use which did not lead to a university education" (KK, 222). Kit is to enter the bursary competition. It is worth "[t]hirty pounds a year for four years" (KK, 222). Crockett is specific, as might be expected of a bursar such as he was.¹⁰⁷ Just like Sandie, Kit is an able and aspiring working class student off to the world, and Scottish universities will unlock the doors of success.

The treatment of the bursary system in *Kit Kennedy* reinforces the myth of meritocracy. The competition is virtually a duel between Kit and Jock MacWalter, his master's son. Predictably, Jock has a character quite opposite to Kit's. "[A] coward.. and a tale-bearer" (KK, 225), he is a student in the burgh (secondary) school which is elegantly named "the School of Saint John's Town" (KK, 225). He has an astute dominie as a second behind him. This dominie from the town is an "old fashioned pedagogue" who makes sure that his student is going to a university (KK, 225). But obviously these are the roles they have to play in the context of the story. Crockett is far from criticising the system or the competition at large. Jock is the laird's nephew and he does not need a bursary to go to the university. But it would be "the great feather" (KK, 234) for him, his family and the dominie. He enters the competition for the glory of winning a prize. In addition, Jock has an expensive and fully annotated copy of Virgil and he does not have to study hard.¹⁰⁸ The implication is that Jock does not deserve a bursary.

Kit is reprovved harshly by Jock's termagant mother, Mistress MacWalter, for looking at the sumptuous volume of Virgil. As she abuses him, Kit is merely "an out-worker about a farm" (KK, 233). But she is quite wrong in saying that Kit could not understand "a single word o't" (KK, 236). Kit is now a competent Latin scholar. The bursary competition is the great showdown. The descriptions of exam-taking techniques

¹⁰⁶ Nash, *op.cit.*, pp.94-5.

¹⁰⁷It is "capable... of seeing him thorough sessions at college" (KK, 222). Incidentally, this is the amount Lockhart said was necessarily for a student to maintain himself at a Scottish university in 1819 (See p. 16).

¹⁰⁸ This is "an American edition" (KK, 234). In Scottish fictions in this period, "America" often connotes copiousness, modernity, competitiveness and shrewdness. In *The House with Green Shutters*, Wilson, who outmanoeuvres Gourlay with new business ideas, is back from America.

recall the author's career as a bursar. Finally it is the ploughshare boy who wins the first bursary, which he needs and deserves. The spoiled son of Mistress MacWalter comes last.

The University of Edinburgh is basically the same as the parish school for Kit, in that he soon grows out of it. He finds new companions in his neighbours and frequents places of ill repute. He quits attending classes. Admittedly the description of Kit's University life is insipid and perfunctory. Crockett seems to have decided to follow Kit's Edinburgh life rather than his university life. The city broadens Kit's world. Through the agnostic lecturer, the kind of person Kit did not know in Galloway, he meets social workers and people living in the slums. Suddenly the Greek class and all the rest of academic matters mean very little to Kit. But this does not mean Crockett is critical of university education. Urban life is daunting to Kit, but not university life.

On the contrary, Edinburgh University is described as a rather humane place. One morning, Kit is late for the Greek class, as he usually was in the parish school. He is asked to translate a section from Homer, which he fails to do. The Professor makes passing remarks on Kit's underprivileged family background. He demands an apology and the professor apologises sincerely. "The Professor bowed to his student as the cheers of the class rang out" (KK, 329). The Professor invites Kit to a breakfast and talks about the pride of being Scottish. ("Episcopacy might be a religion of a gentleman, but... Presbytery was the religion for a man" KK, 331).

Edinburgh University provides the setting for an amicable portrait of teacher-student relationships. Again, I disagree with Dr. Nash's view that Crockett is "critical of university life".¹⁰⁹ Kit is not trying to find moral fulfillment *in* the University. He is unaccustomed to urban living and temporarily lost in the big city, but the University and its members of staff have an encouraging influence, rather than a discouraging one.

Kit Kennedy is, although full of twists of plot, a simple story in which a poor boy from the country broadens his horizon through education and becomes a great man. Throughout, Crockett is fairly uncritical of the Scottish educational system as a whole. He extols the bursary competition and its meritocracy. The scene where Kit waves the flag from the top of the tree to signal his victory in the bursary competition to his mother is the climax of the book (or it should have been. It is a pity Crockett did not end the story there). Crockett, amongst all Scottish writers in the nineteenth century, best dramatised the bursary system, the long acclaimed symbol of democratic Scottish education. This makes *Kit Kennedy* the most sustained treatment of the "lad o' pairs" story, a celebration of Scottish education.

¹⁰⁹ Nash, *op.cit.*, pp.94-5.

The dominie in this story was a slacker, and Kit did not benefit much from the parish school. However, there is no denying that Kit owes what he is now to the Scottish educational system and the open bursary competition. Overall, I see no “irony”¹¹⁰ in Crockett’s treatment of the Scottish educational system. It has liberated Kit from the petty tyrant’s clutches and near slavery in the farm house, and indeed unlocked the door of success for a lad o’ pairts.

Kit is still in the university when the story hurriedly ends. Kit, the former ploughman candidate, is now a respectable young man, with “two medals” (KK, 382) from the university to testify to his ability. His marriage proposal to the by now rich Mary Bisset and her consent (admittedly, too predictable and conventional even by the Victorian standards), shows his way forward.

‘You go about the country stealing ducks!’ (LMS, 161)

Crockett repeated the theme of university education and social mobility in the sub-plot of *The Loves of Miss Anne* (1904). In this story, a shepherd lad, Dan, goes to Edinburgh University when he has saved enough money although Crockett does not explain how. The university again represents supreme value: “It seems to him the very finest thing in the world [is] to go to the Edinburgh College”.¹¹¹ Presently Dan leaves for Edinburgh, but the story does not follow him to the city.

The relationship between the village of Whinnyliggate (the same village that Kit Kennedy grew up in) and Edinburgh is much simpler and clearer in this novel than it was in *Kit Kennedy*. The Galloway village life is pleasant and peaceful, and Dan is to come back after university as an eligible young man to marry Miss Anne, the local laird’s only daughter and his heiress. The story ends with Miss Anne saying to her tenants, “this gentleman, Mr. Daniel Weir” is to “look after and administer the estate” and they “must all obey him” (LMA, 408). Had it not been for his university education, he would not have gained this position.

One of Miss Anne’s favourite phrases is “I go about the country stealing ducks!” (LMS, 160). This, the narrator explains, came from the judge who, “by way of prejudice”, told the prisoner at the bar that “he had enjoyed the benefits of a University education--*instead of which*, said he, ‘you go about the country stealing ducks!’” [italics his] (LMS, 161). Although only a small episode, this summarises Crockett’s basic attitude towards a university education. It was the bursary and a university education that liberated him from the ploughshare drudgery in the country, and his viewpoint is clearly reflected in his writings.

¹¹⁰ Nash, op.cit., pp.94-5.

¹¹¹S. R. Crockett, *The Loves of Miss Anne*, (London, 1904), p. 26. Henceforward, LMS.

Part II Scottish University Life

The following three stories are about Edinburgh University life. The writers, A. H. Dunlop, A. C. Doyle and G. D. Brown, are not concerned about how their students manage to go to the university (such as by winning a bursary). In these stories we find how they understood student life at Edinburgh in the late nineteenth century.

Let us go back again to what Dr Morris said about Edinburgh University at the beginning of the century. Edinburgh is a university in a big city, unlike Oxford or Cambridge, and the members of the University do not reside inside the College. As a result, students have little contact with professors or fellow students. To make matters worse, they come to university at a much younger age than they do in England. Edinburgh students tend to be isolated and are tempted to idle.

Of the three, only A. H. Dunlop was not a university graduate. Although she attended a few classes at the University in her adult life, she was never a regular student. She was an Edinburgh shop owner by occupation and understood student life from the town people's point of view. In her story, *From Yarrow to Edinburgh College*, the student, who at first suffers from loneliness, feels secure under the landlord's protection and learns a lot from city life. What we see in this story is an ideal town/gown relationship.

In contrast, the other two authors offer us a grim view of urban student life. They are Scottish university graduates (Doyle from Edinburgh, Brown from Glasgow), and their experience is reflected in their stories. In *The House with the Green Shutters*, Edinburgh University has an especially negative influence on the student.

**From Yarrow to Edinburgh College:
When the Century Was Young (1886)
by Alison Hay Dunlop - Edinburgh**

Nineteenth-century University stories are usually written by university graduates (therefore, written by male authors), and autobiographical. *Yarrow* was written by a woman who was not a university graduate. Why did she write this story? And why must it be a historical one? Since she is almost entirely unknown to today's readers, some biographical facts will be necessary. The story has been included in a largely forgotten book. Therefore the circumstances under which the author wrote it must also be understood.

In 1886, the newly-founded Edinburgh University Students Representative Council celebrated the University's tercentenary with the publication of a book called *The New Amphion*,¹¹² a melange of poems, short stories and essays. The contributors included J. M. Barrie, Mrs Oliphant, Andrew Lang, George MacDonald, Robert Louis Stevenson; certainly the most prominent Scottish writers at the time.¹¹³ The name Alison Hay Dunlop can be found among them.

Little is known about Alison Hay Dunlop (1835-1888).¹¹⁴ She was born near Edinburgh, educated at the Free Church Training College for Teachers, and ran an antique shop. "Biographical Notes"¹¹⁵ in *Anent Old Edinburgh* says that she "attended Professor Masson's¹¹⁶ class of English Literature".¹¹⁷ Indeed, her name "Dunlop, Miss A. H. 27 Brunswick St." can be found among dozens of students who took "Professor Masson's English Literature Class Session 1868-9" in the *Class Register Book of "Association for the Higher Education of Women"*.¹¹⁸ She was 'present at 38 lectures'.

¹¹²*The New Amphion: Being the Book of the Edinburgh University Union Fancy Fair, in which are contained sundry artistick [sic], instructive, and diverting matters, all now made publick [sic] for the first time* (Edinburgh, 1886).

¹¹³It is curious to see Robert Browning among the writers. This came about probably because Browning had received an honorary LL. D. from Edinburgh in 1884.

¹¹⁴St Andrews University Special Collection holds a piece seemingly extracted from a magazine (see entry under "Stronach, A. L."). This one-page article is titled *The Mistress of the Glue-Pot*, undated and publisher unknown. My description relies on this article and "Biographical Notes" in *Anent Old Edinburgh*.

¹¹⁵Author unknown, possibly her brother Charles.

¹¹⁶David Masson (1822-1907) Professor of Rhetoric and English Literature at Edinburgh College 1865-1895. "He was particularly interested in the higher education of women, and lectured on its behalf; Masson Hall, the women's dormitory at Edinburgh, was named for him..." Kunitz & Haycraft (ed.), *British Authors of the Nineteenth Century* (New York, 1955). See entry under "Masson".

¹¹⁷A. H. Dunlop, *Anent old Edinburgh and some of the worthies who walked its streets: with other papers* (Edinburgh, 1890), p. xvi.

¹¹⁸Edinburgh University Special Collection Department.



Alison Hay Dunlop as she appeared in the article, *The Mistress of the Glue-Pot*.

Professors at Edinburgh had been individually giving classes to female students since the early nineteenth century. These were not part of a regular degree course. This particular scheme for the higher education of women was inaugurated only in the previous year. Although this was still a special course for women only, and the courses were held in a separate building (which must have made their student life very different from that of male students), the University awarded an official certificate at the completion of the course.¹¹⁹ Thus, although irregular and limited, the author had some connection with the university.

Robert Louis Stevenson, an Edinburgh graduate, begins his own piece for *The New Amphion* by saying "I was asked to write something (it is not specifically stated what) to the profit and glory of my *Alma Mater*".¹²⁰ Dunlop must have received a similar request from the Edinburgh Students Representative Council. She was one of the very first women who studied at University, and yet, the protagonist of *From Yarrow to Edinburgh College* is not a modern woman. This is a consciously tailored college story of an aspiring boy at the turn of the nineteenth century, who came from the country, overcame hardship, thanks to his landlord's help and encouragement. It presents the College of Edinburgh as the archetype of the nineteenth-century Scottish University, embracing the myth of democratic higher education in Scotland.

Dunlop had written exclusively about Edinburgh life of bygone days for the *Scotsman*.¹²¹ S. R. C. might have requested a piece especially related to the *old* College of Edinburgh. The description of academic life itself is quite understandably insubstantial. The most readable part of the story is the protagonist's initiation into old Edinburgh, his encounter with the town people, and the snowball fight with the town youths.

The setting Dunlop chose is the College of Edinburgh in 1807,¹²² about the same time that Cyril was at Glasgow. As is to be shown later, the College was in a transitional phase. Dunlop's intention seems to make it symbolise the hero who is standing at the threshold of adulthood. Like Cyril, the first-person narrator, John Scott, who has risen to fame and success, recalls his student days. However, while Cyril was a young English gentleman, John is a Scottish country boy going to his native institution, and while Glasgow served as an enjoyable finishing school for Cyril, both the College and city life are more of a challenge for John.

¹¹⁹ See Horn, p. 191 and Grant, pp. 158-9. Some actual "Certificate in Arts" scrolls survive at the library. Whether Dunlop received the certificate is unknown.

¹²⁰ *The New Amphion* [henceforward NA], 'Some College Memories', p. 221.

¹²¹ When "the International Exhibition of Industry, Science and Art" came to Edinburgh in 1886, Alison and her brother John Charles wrote the handbook, *Book of Old Edinburgh*. [J. C. and A. H. Dunlop, *The Book of Old Edinburgh, and hand-book to the Old Edinburgh Streets, designed by S. Mitchell... for the International Exhibition of Industry, Science and Art, Edinburgh, 1886. With historical accounts of the buildings therein reproduced, and anecdotes of Edinburgh in the olden times* (Edinburgh, 1886)].

¹²² Later the narrator says that this was the year of the completion of the Nelson Monument, which was 1807.

A boy from the Borders goes to the capital city

From Yarrow to Edinburgh College, like most of the nineteenth-century University stories, is a story of initiation and ordeal. John's rite of passage to adulthood begins when he leaves his comfortable home in Selkirkshire. Dunlop deliberately emphasises John's cultural shock.

The box he has sent to be carried to Edinburgh has a "secret shottle" to keep his money, for "[t]he Borders thought light of the morality of large towns" (NA, 150). John's journey along the Gala Water was bright, pleasant and peaceful. The people John meets in the Borders are supportive. There is Tibbie, the "guid wife" at the Selkirk inn, who takes her responsibility of carrying John's mother's letters to her son very seriously, and calls John "maister" (NA, 160), in recognition of his new dignified status as a university student.

John and his father ride from Yarrow through Newark and Selkirk, during which time John's father fuels John's ambition and expectations by telling him his personal memory of Mungo Park,¹²³ who went to the College of Edinburgh before him, and other great Scots from the Border region who achieved fame in the capital, such as Walter Scott and James Hogg.

In contrast, it is evening when John arrives in Edinburgh and the old town is dark, crowded and filthy. Tibbie's husband guides him through the old town of Edinburgh and gives him "warning as to the dangers attending youth in city life" (NA, 168). When they enter Barringer's Close, a window above is opened (NA, 174). The throwing of sewage from the window was a well-documented custom in Edinburgh.¹²⁴ John's room is on the top of the five-storey house.¹²⁵ The stair is so dark that Wat offers to go first with the light. At the beginning of the story, the grime and darkness of Edinburgh is in sharp contrast to the Border country, implying John's plight.

As to be expected from an Edinburgh antiquarian, Dunlop's description of the old city and streets and its customs corresponds to the facts, and the story begins to emphasise its historical significance. We should also recognise that so far this story follows the typical formula of a college story. A green boy arrives in the university and is bewildered by the new, unwelcoming environment.

¹²³ Mungo Park (1771-1806), Explorer of Africa, born in the Yarrow Valley, went to the College of Edinburgh. His statue stands in Selkirk.

¹²⁴ In 1773, Boswell wrote "...the magistrates have taken to enforce the city laws against throwing foul water from the windows; but, from the structure of the houses in the old town, which consist of many stories, in each of which a different family lives, and there being no covered sewars, the odour still continues". *A Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland and the Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides* (London, 1984), p. 168.

¹²⁵ Student rooms seem to be often located at the top of the building. In *Redgauntlet*, Nanty Ewart, when he was a Divinity student in Edinburgh, boarded at the "head of the highest stair in the Covenant-Close". W. Scott, (London, 1982), p. 303. The location is symbolic of John's isolation.

The College in transition

Dunlop's description of the College landscape is detailed. Again, people's names and the landscape of the College quadrangle correspond to the facts at the turn of the century, trying to convey its historical significance. In the following quotation, very much like John himself, the College of Edinburgh is in a state of transition. Dunlop seems to have set up a symbolic relation:

At that time, the College, as a building, was neither the College of the past, nor yet that of the present day... Part of the [new] quadrangle had been built after the original design by Adam; but on the south side was a row of old houses, one storey and half high, with storm windows, which in all probability had seen the day of Principal Rollock. At the very entrance of the quadrangle, was the old library, which, beside its stately surroundings, looked like an old country house that had strayed and lost its way. (NA, 183-4)

Rollock was the first principal of the College appointed in 1586 and by the nineteenth century no building from his time was left in the College. However, it was true that although demolition of the old College had begun in the 1780s, the College site remained "in a ramshackle state for another thirty odd years"¹²⁶ and the new quadrangle designed by Robert Adam was not completed until the 1820s. It was also true that the student chambers¹²⁷ on the south side were one of the last sections to be demolished, with "the old library"¹²⁸ being the very last old building to go.

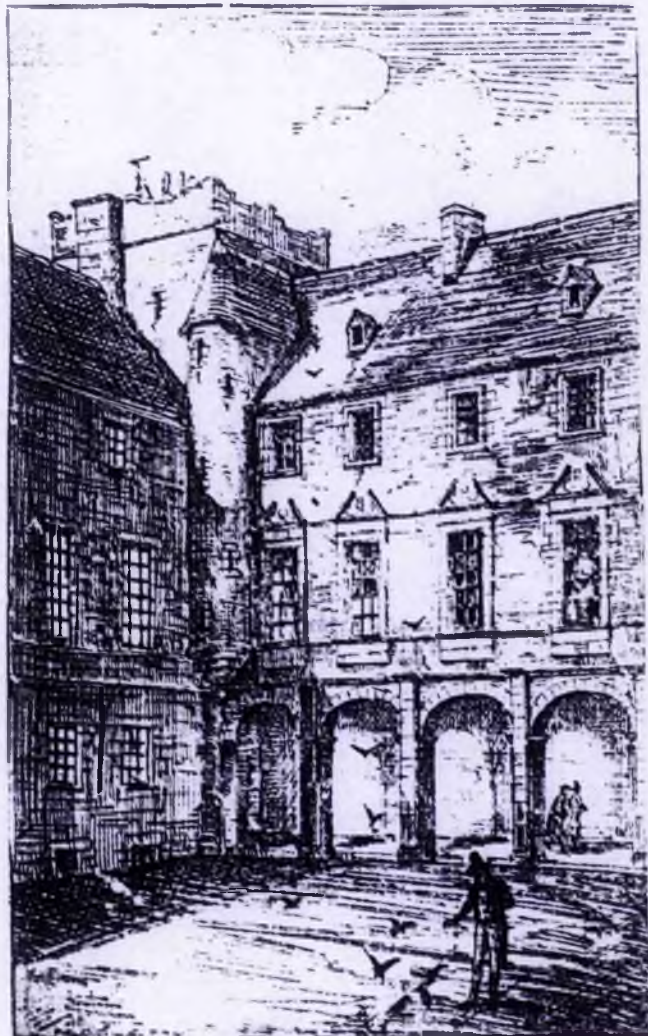
John "matriculate[s] as an Arts student in the University and joins the class of Professor (Alexander) Christison in Latin, and in Greek that of Professor Dunbar" (AN, 183).¹²⁹ These two professors, as well as "Principal Baird" and "Professor Hamilton" who appear later, were real people.

¹²⁶R. Footman and B. Young, *Edinburgh University: an illustrated memoir* (Edinburgh, 1983), p. 5.

¹²⁷Built in "1660-85", *ibid.*, p. 7. "Student chambers" were not dormitories.

¹²⁸*ibid.*, p. 8. The one called "the 1617 Library".

¹²⁹"Alexander Christison" was professor of humanity 1806-20. "Professor Dunbar" is George Dunbar, professor of Greek 1806-52. These two were respectively Thomas Carlyle's Latin and Greek tutors at Edinburgh. See *Reminiscences* (Oxford and New York, 1997), p. 217 and 271. "Principal Baird" is George Husband Baird, principal of the College, 1793-1840. "Professor Hamilton" must be James



John enters the quadrangle of the old college of Edinburgh

The New Amphion, p185.

Edinburgh, the non-residential college

An interesting feature of this story is that it refers to the alleged shortcomings of Scottish universities. Like the old library in the new quadrangle, the boy from Selkirkshire is left on his own and feels intimidated and out of his element in the large city. The first stage of his life at Edinburgh College is to be filled with "a memory of utter loneliness" (NA, 186). He cannot bear the "roar of the city with its crowded life" (NA, 186).

Had Edinburgh been a residential college, John would not have had to suffer this isolation. John Scott, old and now the master of a public school, admits that not having an adequate residential system, "this possible isolation" of students, is "one weak point - the Achilles' heel-- in the otherwise bracing system of Scottish College life" (NA, 187).

It is explained in the "preface"¹³⁰ of *The New Amphion* that the motivation behind the foundation of a Students Representative Council was to restore "a College Life", or "the common fellowship" to "the great University of Edinburgh" (NA, v-vi). They believed that "the students of 300 years ago under the roof of the old Town's College"¹³¹ had shared such College spirits, something which was "valued as the most precious among academic traditions by the students of other countries" (NA, vi) and regret that "the new University,¹³² unlike those of the old College, have no place for aught but lecture-rooms and laboratories" (NA, vi).

Robert Louis Stevenson, too, whilst a student in 1871, referred to "the unfortunate absence of *University feeling* which is so markedly a characteristic of our Edinburgh students [*italics his*]". "There is", he continued, "such an entire want of broad college sympathies and ordinary friendships that we fancy that no University in the kingdom is in so poor a plight", in one of his earliest essays, 'The Modern Student Considered Generally', written for the *Edinburgh University Magazine*.¹³³ It was thought by Edinburgh students in the nineteenth century that they shared too little opportunity to feel the bonds of friendship among themselves.

In the late 1880s, Edinburgh student life began to take on corporate forms on students' initiative, not on administrative initiative. The University authorities were still stubbornly fighting, primarily over curricula, against what they understood as Anglicisation and infringement on Scottish tradition. The founders of S. R. C. claimed that they took their inspiration from German universities' student associations and corporate life, which they believed to have existed in the old College. As can be seen in

Hamilton, professor of midwifery 1800-39. Again the author relies on historical facts. See entry under each surname in Grant, *The Story of the University of Edinburgh*, vol. II.

¹³⁰Written by Robert Fitzroy Bell and James Avon Clyde

¹³¹"Town's College" or "Tounis College" was the original name of the College of Edinburgh.

¹³²What today is called "the old College".

¹³³*The Works of Robert Louis Stevenson*, vol. XXII (London, 1912), p. 49.

Conan Doyle's account of Edinburgh University life in the next chapter, Scottish students were beginning to be influenced by Oxbridge collegiate ideals and values, quite irrespective of the protracted dispute between Scottish traditionalists and Anglophiles over the reform. Student life was one aspect of major change that took place in Scottish university in the late nineteenth century, and change in student life style and its ethos proceed change in curricula. It was primarily due to Victorian prosperity and middle-class' social advance in society.

But let us go back to Dunlop's story. She had known what Edinburgh student life was like and her story corresponds directly to this concern felt by the students.

Unexpectedly, the change comes with the snow. One winter afternoon, John finds himself involved in a student snowball fight with the town youth.¹³⁴ He cannot conceal his excitement. His "blood [was] on fire, and every nerve tingling with a new strange joy" (NA, 191).

John's adaptation to Edinburgh life is better expressed in the after scene of the snowball fight. His landlord, Jiddin, arrives and brings him home, reprimanding John's behaviour as inappropriate for a minister's son. In the lodgings, John sits by the fire place, "with the conviction that [he] would stay [with the Johnstons]" (NA, 205). John listened to the landlady's folktales and ballads "on and on, all through [his] student years... till the story of the old city became [his] own" (NA, 205). In the story, the town itself is an educating force, and both students and town people benefit. This is an ideal town/gown relationship written from the town's point of view.

Edinburgh life leads John into contact with many kinds of people in the city. He becomes aware of how other students endure poverty. "[M]y lot was favoured... as regards money at least... How narrow-- how very, very, narrow I have known these means to be!" (NA, 186-7). Edinburgh broadens the young student's horizons, and his experiences in the city help him to be a mature person, which might have been difficult if he had only associated with his fellow students inside the college walls. Thus John not only overcomes loneliness, but even benefits from what was to be the only shortcoming of Scottish college life.

College of Edinburgh and Presbyterianism

There is a curiously strong emphasis on Presbyterianism in the story.

¹³⁴Snowball fights were a legend of nineteenth-century Edinburgh student life. "Edinburgh University Library's Department of Special Collections for the history of the life in the University" holds "Account of the snow ball riot, University of Edinburgh, 1838. Written by one of the participants, R. Scot Skirving, fifty-four years after the occurrence (Dc. I. 87)".

First of all, John Scott appears as the Master of “an ancient Puritan foundation” which was “endowed in honour of Thomas Cartwright”¹³⁵ (NA, 141), the notable Puritan in Elizabethan times. There is a prolonged description of the life of Cartwright. The school, which is named after him, is “famed in the history... of Non-conformity” and “especially favoured by pupils of Scottish parentage in London” (NA, 143). Thereafter the boys are going to study in “Geneva, Leyden, or such other University... where... the science of sound Divinity is taught” (NA, 146). The narrator concentrates insistently on the suffering of Cartwright, the regulation of John’s own Presbyterian institution, its importance for the Presbyterians in London, its library, its fellowship and so forth.¹³⁶

These characters in the story seem to represent Presbyterian ethos and virtues. Dunlop’s intention seems to be to emphasise the connection between the Presbyterian faith and the hero’s struggle at Edinburgh. However, although it started as a Presbyterian institution and its Presbyterian character was still strong (because of the fact that its students mostly came from Presbyterian backgrounds), the College of Edinburgh, (and other Scottish colleges, too, for that matter), in the nineteenth century was no longer an exclusively Presbyterian institution. Its religious tolerance was the very essence of its attraction, and was what made Scottish Colleges “bracing”.

Scottish university education and the Empire

“[T]he boy from Ashkirk” (NA, 159) whom John has met at the College, dies young before reaching the “life of usefulness”, “fame” and “success” (NA, 212). These are the words John often uses. As John “enters the University gates”, he is filled with “lofty aspirations, high resolve, and glowing thoughts as to work and fame” (NA, 185). What values are emphasised as characteristic of “fame” and “useful work”? What kind of successful and useful life should an Edinburgh graduate lead?

That John, a small parish minister’s son from the country, could rise to a respectable social station is manifested at his graduation. John is awarded a prize for his essay. It is “on Cincinnatus” (NA, 210), the Roman dictator who is said to have saved the republic from enemy invasion, and after bringing the crisis to an end, resigned and

¹³⁵ Admittedly, Thomas Cartwright was deeply related to the earliest history of Presbyterianism. “Presbyterianism... conceived by Thomas Cartwright (1535-1603) and his followers upon the model of the Calvinist Church at Geneva”. C. R. N. Routh (ed.), *Who’s Who in History vol.II. England 1485-1603* (Oxford, 1964). See entry under “Cartwright”. Cartwright lost his professorship at Cambridge “on account of his Presbyterian views” and left for Geneva in 1570. Cross and Livingstone (ed.), *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (Oxford, 1997). See entry under “Cartwright”.

¹³⁶ Dunlop’s emphasis on the Presbyterianism might have derived from her education at the Free Church Training College for Teachers. See the Stronach article.

returned to his small farm.¹³⁷ Cincinnatus is therefore known for his selfless devotion to his country.

At the same time, Cincinnatus is a soldier who achieved his fame through his military capacity, and there are some strange military references in the story. In the middle of the snowball fight, John suddenly justifies his behaviour to the reader by saying that “the country was at high-war level” and there is “the normal instincts for fighting in man... hence the snow-ball” (NA, 193). He praises “the British Army’s glory”, and the victories of “Nelson” and “Wellington” (NA, 192).¹³⁸ He explains the development of the fight with military terms such as “a phalanx” and “squadrons” (NA, 196). John thought of Mungo Park, precursor of British invasion into Africa, on his way to Edinburgh. Dunlop’s idea of a successful and useful Scottish college-bred man seems to mean a man who contributes to the Empire.

Dunlop’s enthusiastic support for the Empire, and praise for its military glories, do not seem to collide with her Scottish identity. Scottish double allegiance to Scottish nation and to the British state has been well-discussed. As one scholar concluded, “[a] strong sense of Scottish cultural identity was quite compatible with political loyalty to the British state”.¹³⁹

The Empire neatly falls in line with her devotion to the Presbyterian faith as well.

How immovably firm was our belief in both [God and nation]! Did not all the churches pray for the success of the British arms, and were not prayers answered and did we not return and give God thanks!(NA, 193)

In *From Yarrow to Edinburgh College*, Dunlop’s understanding of university education is interwoven with imperialism and Presbyterian faith.

Dunlop’s idea of “the country” extends to the whole British Empire. And yet this is a strongly nationalistic story, and Edinburgh College appears as a quintessential Scottish institution. It is characterised as a democratic Presbyterian institution where a poor country boy like John can dream of achieving fame and success in the great Empire. It is true that cultural pride was compatible with loyalty to the British state. However, it was easier to assert Scottish pride when the tradition in question was already a thing of

¹³⁷Cincinnatus, Lucius Quinctius (b. 519?BC) “Cincinnatus” appears in *Life at a Northern University*, too. “[l]ike Cincinnatus, [students from lower rank] left the plough and entered by their own exertions this seat of Hellenistic lore[King’s College]”. MacLean, LNU, p. 102.

¹³⁸“Great Britain... [was] challenging all the history of modern nations... Nelson was dead--... but the glory of Nile, and Copenhagen, and Trafalgar were a national inheritance. Wellington had but gone to the Peninsula, and already Vimiero and Talavera were the earnest of the British Army’s glory...” (NA, 192). The sentence here echoes *Cyril Thornton*, when the hero decides to take a military career. “[Conyers] told me tales of Washington, of Burgoyne and of Cornwallis... And then Wolfe and the siege of Quebec!... Down with the Fleurs de Lis, and wave the banner of St George!...” (CT, 52).

¹³⁹R. D. Anderson in ‘The Formation of National Elites : The British Case’ in *University and Nation*, (Helsinki, 1996), p.123. See also G. Morton, *Unionist Nationalism*, (East Linton, 1999)

the past, and when it is no longer a threat, or even an obstacle, to the contemporary society. Dunlop's story and the rush of Scottish University Novels in the last quarter of the century eloquently tell us that by the late 1880s, distinctly Scottish higher education was already a history. Certainly, many of the post-Victorian reform Scottish graduates would become prominent in the civil, colonial and military service and the church. Greater career opportunities, however, cost them their cherished democratic educational tradition.

Professor Christison, who confers a prize on John for his essay on Cincinnatus, "himself had once been a herd-boy on the Lammermuir Hills" (NA, 210).¹⁴⁰ It is suggested throughout the story that the College of Edinburgh has been a gateway to success for young aspiring Scots from humble backgrounds. Although she herself was not allowed to enrol as a regular student, Dunlop describes the College of Edinburgh as the paragon of Scottish democracy.

¹⁴⁰ It is true that he was once a farm boy and somewhat a self-made man. "[Christison] was one of the instances, so numerous in the history of Scotland, of native intellect, combined with force of character, and aided by the parochial school and University system of the country, forcing its way out of disadvantageous circumstances into the higher walks of life". John's other tutor, Dunbar, was "a gardener" before he came to the College. See Grant, pp. 320 and 327.

“That grey old nest of learning”¹⁴¹

***The Firm of Girdlestone* (1890)**

by Arthur Conan Doyle - Edinburgh

I have quoted from R. L. Stevenson’s essay on his alma mater. Young Stevenson continues in the same article as follows:

If we could find some method of making the University a real mother to her sons - something beyond a building of class-rooms...¹⁴²

Stevenson was not quite at home in the University. As Dr Morris observed half a century before, Scottish university students had little contact with professors or fellow students. They were, as he says, “so independent of each other” (PL, 147).

Arthur Conan Doyle (1859-1930) shares a similarly grim view of the University of Edinburgh with Robert Louis Stevenson.¹⁴³ In spite of his encounter with Professor Joseph Bell, whom Doyle later developed into the celebrated sleuth, university does not seem to have made much impression on him. For Doyle:

[University life was] one long weary grind at botany, chemistry, anatomy, physiology, and a whole list of compulsory subjects, many of which have a very indirect bearing upon the art of curing. The whole system of teaching... seems far too oblique and not nearly practical... (MA 23)

Being a native of Edinburgh, Doyle found university less of an adventure. Conan Doyle’s first, semi-autobiographical, novel is today almost completely forgotten.¹⁴⁴ It has, however, some excellent descriptions of Edinburgh student life.

Let us see how Conan Doyle dramatised his life as a medical student. In *The Firm of Girdlestone*, Tom Dimsdale is a son of a comfortable London physician. His lodgings on Howe Street are on the top floor, like John Scott’s. Doyle describes Tom’s

¹⁴¹A. C. Doyle, *Memories and Adventures* (London, 1924), p. 260 [henceforward MA].

¹⁴²Stevenson, p. 50.

¹⁴³They were contemporaries. “Stevenson... and Barrie must also have been in that grey old nest of learning about the year 1876. Strange to think that I probably brushed elbows with both of them in the crowded portal” (MA, 260).

¹⁴⁴Having been rejected by the publishers more than once, it was finally published in 1890, after the author achieved Sherlock Holmes fame. But Doyle started writing it in 1884 and was virtually his first novel. See MA, p. 74.

chamber with remarkable accuracy and the documentary quality of it is comparable to Cyril's account of his uncle's study in Glasgow.

The author attempts to make Dimsdale's university life as colourful as possible. First, there is the Rectorial election, "a peculiarly Scotch institution... regarded by the students themselves as rite of extreme solemnity and importance".¹⁴⁵ As was the snowball fight in *From Yarrow to Edinburgh College*, its pandemonium is thoroughly described. "Another great event" (FG 44) is the Scotland versus England rugby match, and the final examination marks the climax of Dimsdale's university life. The examination scene, with its description of the actual interview procedure, is probably the most interesting part of this somewhat amateurish novel.

In this novel, Edinburgh University seems to be a reasonably pleasant place. Nevertheless, the author coolly criticises his alma mater for being impersonal and unromantic:

Edinburgh University may call herself with grim jocoseness the "alma mater" of her students, but if she be a mother at all she is one of a very heroic and Spartan cast, who conceals her maternal affection with remarkable success. (FG, 32)

Its monumental main building, the masterpiece of Adam brothers and symbol of the Scottish Enlightenment, is "square and massive, grim and grey... the dead monotony of the great stone walls" (FG, 32).

Doyle went to the University for a practical reason. He successfully completed his course and graduated in 1881 as a Bachelor of Medicine, which enabled him to start his practice as a Doctor.¹⁴⁶ If Edinburgh is too "practical" (MA, 23), then how should a university be?

Doyle would have agreed with Stevenson, had he read his essay. He also exhibits the usual and age-old Scottish habit of comparing his own institution with English ones. English Universities are, he says, "enlarged and enlightened public school[s]" (FG, 32) and students are under close supervision. They might be punished or praised according to their behaviour or misbehaviour. To Doyle, this means that in England, "his University takes a keen interest in him" (FG, 32). "There is nothing of this in a Scotch University" (FG 33), Doyle continues. A student is "[I]left entirely to his own devices" (FG, 33). Between students and the university there is only a transaction of money. "The University is a great unsympathetic machine..." (FG, 33).

¹⁴⁵ A. C. Doyle, *The Firm of Girdlestone, a Romance of the unromantic* (London, 1890), p. 41 [henceforward FG].

¹⁴⁶ Just like Stables before him, he made a voyage on a whaler as a doctor before settling down in England and started writing.

As Stevenson did, Doyle deplures Edinburgh's lack of intimate College feeling.¹⁴⁷ His fixation with "collegiate feeling" and his preference to "English universities" (apparently he simply means Oxford and Cambridge) as enlarged public schools are important comments on the receding Scottish confidence about its universities' superiority over English ones. Oxbridge style collegiate ideals were beginning to influence Scottish students.

Having examined the advantages and disadvantages of Scottish Universities, and compared them with English ones (very much in the manner of the international match),¹⁴⁸ Doyle comes to a decision in favour of Scotland. He admits that, left on their own, some students are "broken" (FG, 33) and fall into idleness and vice. However, those who have "manliness" and "good sense" will learn "self-reliance, confidence, and... become men of the world", while students in English Universities are "still magnified schoolboys" (FG, 33).

This muscular conclusion is becoming to a "convinced imperialist".¹⁴⁹ "Spartan and heroic" Scottish education produces men who serve the Empire's cause. This reasoning is more or less in line with A. H. Dunlop's. It is true that Edinburgh lacks an intimate atmosphere and students can be isolated from one another. But, after all, they are at university, and they do not need the college feeling. University students benefit more from a Spartan environment. As if to prove it, Dimsdale returns from his African adventure successfully at the end of the story and, with a beautiful heiress as his wife, settles down in London. In *The Firm of Girdlestone*, Conan Doyle answers the question: what are Scottish Universities good for? Instead of Scottish universities' democratic spirit, he admires their ability to produce independent and strong men, like Dimsdale, or Doyle himself.

¹⁴⁷ Some forty years later, Doyle still says "there is none of the atmosphere of an enlarged public school" (MA, 23). His grudge for the lack of public school feeling at Edinburgh University is, however, incomprehensible. His own Jesuit public school experience was not a particularly happy one. See MA, chapter II.

¹⁴⁸ Doyle argues the superiority of the universities in the two countries only in terms of the quality of their student life. He does not consider, for example, fees and curricula.

¹⁴⁹ J. Sutherland (ed.), *The Longman Companion to Victorian Fiction* (Essex, 1988), see entry under "Doyle".

“A vast depression”¹⁵⁰

***The House with the Green Shutters* (1901)
by George Douglas Brown - Edinburgh**

It is most appropriate to finish my analysis of nineteenth-century Scottish University novels with a book published in the first year of the twentieth century. Young John Gourlay's Edinburgh student life occupies a considerable portion of George Douglas Brown's only novel. It is often said that this is a condemnation of Scottish small town life, that the author is “determined to overthrow the sentimental ‘kailyard’ stereotypes of the day”.¹⁵¹ But this is also a condemnation of the Scottish educational system. Brown is determined to overthrow the idealised and much acclaimed Scottish democratic education, and ultimately the whole Scottish culture.

The House with the Green Shutters is the least autobiographical novel among the books I discuss in this thesis (with the exception of *From Yarrow to Edinburgh College*). The student, John, is not a “ploughshare student”, or a student from the working class, which G. D. Brown more or less was. John's father is a big man in town and he pays John's expenses. Thus the bursary and the theme of democratic Scottish education is carefully by-passed.¹⁵² Edinburgh, where John is sent, is notorious among its students and alumni for its indifferent and impersonal atmosphere. What we can see in this book is a grim glimpse of urban life, a Scottish university life without a democratic spirit.

Edinburgh students do not live in one place. As Dr Morris observed, it has a major effect on their academic life. They have little contact with professors or fellow students. Students are “so independent of each other” (PL, 147). Left on his own, John indulges in drinking. Morris also pointed out that classes at Edinburgh are too large and students are tempted to idle (PL, 148). John would be caught misbehaving in the classroom and punished. The narrator explains John's feeling when he arrives at Edinburgh as follows:

Many youngsters are conscious of a vast depression when entering the portals of a University; they feel themselves inadequate to cope with the wisdom of ages garnered in the solid walls. (HGS, 133)

¹⁵⁰ G. D. Brown, *The House with the Green Shutters*, Canongate Classics edn. (Edinburgh, 1996), p. 133. Henceforward HGS.

¹⁵¹ From the back cover of the Canongate edition.

¹⁵² Brown himself went to Glasgow University on a bursary.

Conan Doyle had said that Edinburgh University was a Spartan environment where those who have manliness learn self-reliance and confidence. Unlike his authoritarian father, young John Gourlay is meek and timid. Doyle's view of his alma mater, the "great unsympathetic machine" (FG, 33), continues as follows:

Of every thousand of the raw material, about six hundred emerge at the other side. The remainder are broken in the process... [M]any a lad falls at the very starting point of life's race, never to rise again. Many become idlers or take to drink, while others, after wasting time and money... leave the College with nothing learned save vice. (FG, 33)

John does not possess the manliness to survive Edinburgh University, and this is exactly what is going to happen to him. He belongs to the forty percent who are to be "broken in the process".

John's academic career would have been successful and fruitful had he found a way to use his imaginative power properly. Instead, his mind is 'left to prey upon itself' (HGS, 133). The narrator also says "[i]f he had been an able man he might have found a place in his classes to console him" (HGS, 133). But John's university life remains lonely and private. "The feeling of uneasiness" (HGS, 133) never leaves him. John has no friend to share the poverty and plights like the Highland students in Maclean's novel. Nor is he rich enough to live with a professor and associate with Edinburgh high society as Cyril did in Glasgow. He is not of so passionate a nature to occupy his mind with a female friend like Alec Forbes and Robert Falconer. On the other hand, he is not a muscular kind of person, who would enjoy the pranks and riots of the Rectorial election, either. He has just arrived from a small town, but has no church connection as John Scott did, and is not fortunate enough to have a landlord, like Jiddin, to take him under his wing. Although overly sensitive and timid, he is in one sense the most ordinary Scottish student we see in nineteenth-century Scottish University fiction.

The weak-minded student, however, is going to suffer at Edinburgh. He will be promptly and summarily expelled from the University and that is the end of his career. The Scottish University system fails to educate him in any sense. This bleak picture of Edinburgh University itself must have been disturbing to those readers who were accustomed to the novels of Ian MacLaren and S. R. Crockett. As we look closer at John's downfall, we realise that Brown's condemnation of the Scottish educational system is even harsher than meets the eye.

Scottish Education and Vanity

It is often said that the book is a conscious attack on the Kailyard novels. If it subverts the Kailyard world, more than anything it subverts the myth of Scottish love of learning and the caring community ethos. The poor Highland students in the novels of Maclean and Stables could not believe their ears when they heard that they could actually go to a university. John could not believe his, either, for exactly the opposite reason. John Gourlay Jr. first appears as a local parish school boy. Then he is transferred to a High School in the neighbouring town against his will. "I don't want to gang", (HGS, 111) but his protest falls on deaf ears. Soon after, John is told that he is going to the University in exactly the same manner. "Get yourself ready for the College in October" (HGS, 124) says John Sr. to his son out of blue. "'The College!' cried John, aghast... 'But I don't want to gang', John whimpered... " (HGS, 124).

John Sr. sends his son to the University for the same reason he has sent him to the High School. His business rival Wilson is sending his son, this time, to Edinburgh. It is rumoured that Wilson will make his son a minister. Actually, Wilson sends his son to the University to impress village folks, to show that he is the new big man in town. Public response is exactly what Wilson would have wanted to hear in person. In one corner of the town, a villager shouts, "[d]id ye hear?... Wilson is sending his son to Embro" (HGS, 122). Then the Provost refers to the "enormous" cost of university education. Brodie yells, "but Wilson can afford it! It's not anybody can!" (HGS, 123). Provoked, John Sr. decides to send his son to the University.

Thus John enters University out of his father's vanity. But he has nothing to achieve in the University. He has no particular subject to study, in contrast to Sandie's, or "Mac"'s, love of Latin. He has no future career in mind, or a goal of any kind, except when he expresses feebly his wish to help his father's business, which is sneered at in the usual manner by his father (HGS, 111). "'Young Gourlay off to the College'. But he has no pleasure... his heart was in his boots" (HGS, 130). John does not possess the love of learning. University education is forced on him.

John hates to leave home, but not because he loves Barbie, which is an unloveable town. Although he has already developed an emotional attachment to it, it is Barbie's fields and hills that have developed a certain charm and individuality in John's imagination (HGS, 129), not its community. In the village, boys pick on him at school and the elders are talking stealthily to each other with watchful eyes on "Young Gourlay's" every move. "There is a broad difference between the peoples of East and West Scotland", (HGS, 70) says the narrator. Westerners are usually "jovial", while Easterners are "narrower and nipper" (HGS, 70). Although Barbie lies in the West of Scotland (like Brown's native village of Ochiltree), it is Eastern in character. "Barbie... seems to have been transplanted from some sand dune looking out upon the German

Ocean" (HGS, 70). John hates to leave the rural life just because he fears the new urban environment. And if he finally agrees to go, it is simply because he fears his father more than Edinburgh. Pleasant rural life and the caring community which were common in Kailyard novels are absent from this novel. Symbolically, in *The House with the Green Shutters*, as the picture of pleasant community life breaks down, so does the dignified picture of the Scottish university.

Edinburgh, the hateful capital of the Easterners, is not an ideal place for learning, even if John were a willing student. Edinburgh is "offensive and depressing" (HGS, 133), as an urban city usually is to a country boy. In his lonely lodgings, like John Scott from the Yarrow Valley, he wonders if there is "a means to escape from the wretched life" (HGS, 134). "[A] turning point" (HGS, 135) comes in John Gourlay's life, too. The narrator's voice sounds intentionally cruel and sadistic when he says it was "lucky" that John was invited to "that dinner" (HGS, 135), for it is on this occasion he learns about drinking. It is precisely "the escape" that John hoped for, but a temporary and disastrous escape.

This dinner episode, "the turning point" for the worse, seems to be a mockery of stereotyped Kailyard characters. This is yet another subversion of community ethos, and maybe the harshest one. The dinner party is held by an old Barbie man called Jock Allan. He used to be a "ploughboy and herd" (HGS, 136), but now has become moderately successful in Auld Reekie. He is one of these "great hearted Scots far from their native place" (HGS, 136). Out of sentimentality, Allan idealises his native town. The narrator is especially harsh in saying that "he would have welcomed a dog from Barbie" (HGS, 137). To have admiring youngsters around "tickle[s] his vanity" (HGS, 137). However, the reason why Allan especially welcomes John is that Allan once loved John's slattern mother when she was young (HGS, 136).¹⁵³ In MacLaren's "Domsie" in *Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush*, Drumsheugh offered to finance George's University education because of his long hidden love for George's mother. In MacLaren's novels, Drumsheugh was a saviour. In this novel, the sentimental, but well-intentioned ex-Barbie ploughshare boy unwittingly plays the role of Mefisto. John instantly develops a habit of drinking, boasting and misbehaving. Here the caring tight-knit community connection works adversely. Brown is shrewdly exploiting a Kailyard prototype.

Brown also sheds a ruthlessly bright light on the relationship between the rural community and a Scottish University. From Edinburgh, John comes home for the summer recess by train. The minor essay prize¹⁵⁴ which he won by fluke has got into his

¹⁵³The description of her youthful days is told by a Barbie man in intentionally sentimental tone. See HGS, pp. 36-7.

¹⁵⁴The prize had been won by Barbie students in succession, and it would be a disgrace if "a Perthshire man" wins this year (HGS, 147). Brown may have George Howe, the hero of MacLaren's story, who swept away all the prizes before him at Edinburgh, in mind.

head. It “flatter[s] his vanity” when he hears a porter whom he knows shouting “young Mr Gourlay of Barbie, just back from the Univ-ai-rsity!” (HGS, 152) in the station. He feels a strong sense of “superiority” (HGS, 154) over Barbie folks. These “sure feelings of superiority” (HGS, 130) are of the same kind that he felt when he was going to the High School, but now that John is a University student, they are greater. Young John has more than his share of vanity.

John receives a hero’s welcome, but realises that he no longer belongs to Barbie. He exchanges greetings with Deacon. He catches himself giving John some casual advice, saying, “[a] College-bred man like you kenth far better” (HGS, 159). They talk about whisky. Here again, “the cunning old pryer” does not forget to add “University men have a fine taste in thpirits [*sic*]” (HGS,160). Although each reference to his university student status fuels his vanity, he cannot help realising that there is a gap between him, the university student from “Embros”, and the rest of the town folks. John meets a pathetic old minister, Reverend Struthers, who took ten years to go through the University. Struthers is “forever talking of ‘Univairsity’” and possesses “a peculiar vanity of some Scots peasants, who like to discuss Divinity Halls and so on” (HGS, 163). To Barbie folks, it was a good thing to hear that John won the prize and carried the name of Barbie, but beyond that, John’s University education means nothing, except talking to him on the street and feeding his vanity with small talk. University education severs the thin tie John had with the Barbie community. Just like Maclaren’s Perthshire town, a narrow community like Barbie cannot afford to accommodate university educated men very well.

Scottish education condemned

John idles away the summer and comes back to “accursed Edinburgh” (HGS, 177) and resumes his wretched life in his miserable lodgings, “those lodgings, those dreary, damnable lodgings” (HGS, 177). His self-consciousness and feeling of unease have worsened because of the petty prize he won. He develops the habit of drinking, swaggering and yet suffers from the feeling of loneliness, and insomnia. “Why am I here? Why am I trudging through mud and misery to the University?” (HGS, 189) he asks himself. In the class room, he is caught, unluckily, playing a prank and expelled. This is the end of the academic career of “the see-lect intellect of Scotland” (HGS, 164).

All that John acquired in Edinburgh is a drinking habit and a false sense of superiority. Dr Morris’ misgiving proved right. John should not have come to a university, not a Scottish university at least. On the surface, it seems that John’s collapse has been inevitable. It was his innate weakness, vanity and a little bit of misfortune that

brought him down. It is as if, as in Greek Tragedy, to which the novel is often compared, the fates had swept him away. But is no one really responsible?

Let us start with Edinburgh University. I have already provided examples from books and articles in which Edinburgh students and alumni, and a bystander like Morris, expressed their concerns about the lack of an adequate residential system in the Scottish capital. Brown seems to be developing the same point by describing a lonely youth who, left on his own, turns to vice.¹⁵⁵

Brown turns his fire on the teaching, too. The professor of Philosophy, Tam, who awards John the essay prize, is a dull pedant. He used to lecture on “the fifteen characteristics of Lady Macbeth” and “would announce quite gravely, ‘we will now approach the discussion of the eleventh feature of the lady’” (HGS, 148). And yet, according to the narrator, he comes under the category of good and wise among Scottish scholars, for “[t]he Professor [Tam]... (unlike the majority of Scotch Professors), rated quality higher than quantity” (HGS, 149).

Tam is good and wise enough to point out from his reading of John’s essay that his imagination lacks sustaining power and what John has to do next summer is to “set himself down for... solid and deliberate thought” (HGS, 155). But he says this only from the rostrum in the large (too large, Dr Morris would say) classroom and the words go unheeded by John. This advice could have saved John’s University career (and subsequent suicide). Instead, he makes a triumphant return to Barbie and wastes away the summer. The professor and the student never exchange a word personally. In fact the only occasion where John talks with a member of academic staff is when he is called to apologise for the noise he made in the classroom.

We find the same indifference in Barbie. The dominie, Bleach-the-boys, is a shrewd, but “bitter” (HGS, 126) person. He is sure that John will fail in Edinburgh (he repeats the words, “[t]hey’re making a grave mistake”), but avoids involvement and goes back to *The Wealth of Nations*, the reading of which is his “solace” (HGS, 126) in dull village life.

The headmaster of the High School, Mr MacCandlish, is the same type. John Sr. finds his son playing truant and storms into the classroom where he is teaching. Gourlay shouts that he pays the school “to look after that boy” (HGS, 116), a fair enough accusation, to which the headmaster answers, “‘But what can I do?’... with a white spread of deprecating hands” (HGS, 116). His gesture speaks volumes about his personality.

These people are not so much evil or malicious as indifferent and self-interested. And it is no coincidence that all the teachers John meets in Scottish educational institutions are of the same kind and fail to educate a boy of his nature. This indifference

and self-interest is what appears to Brown as the Scottish nature, the true colour of Scottish culture:

For many reasons intimate to the Scot's character, envious scandal is rampant in petty towns such as Barbie. To go back to the beginning, the Scot... is an individualist... History, climate, social conditions and the national beverage have all combined... to make the Scot an individualist, fighting for his own hand... (HGS, 32)

Scottish individualism asserts itself in education, too. "Self-dependence" (HGS, 32), however, was the excuse Tam, Bleach-the-boys and MacCandlish use for their indifference to John. Each of them is simply minding his own affairs, and cannot afford to meddle with other things. Look at this enormous class, the headmaster would say, what can I do with one little loser? Brown continues:

From their individualism... comes inevitably a keen spirit of competition (the more so because Scotch democracy gives fine chances to compete), and from their keen spirit of competition comes, inevitably again, an envious belittlement of rivals. (HGS, 33)

These sentences come immediately before Brown starts to tell us of the bitter rivalry between Wilson and Gourlay. It is a warning and an omen of the tragedy as well as a harsh indictment of Scottish culture. It is obvious that Brown set up Barbie, "a small place like Barbie" (HGS, 33), as a microcosm of Scotland. In a small country like Scotland, lonely individuals are competing with each other from envy. University, or the whole of Scottish education for that matter, simply offers another "fine chance to compete". It fails to provide an education of any sort. Parents send out their boys to compete in the bigger and more expensive school, while they are busy running their own race which is generated out of envy and vanity.

Young John Gourlay is a victim of the nineteenth-century Scottish educational system. He is sent, first to the High School, and then to the University, as a result of his father's petty rivalry with his neighbour. In nineteenth-century Scotland, a boy has to compete and win in school. No one has time to bother with a loser. John did not want to compete and exclaimed, "I don't want to gang!", to the institution for which Kit Kennedy and other "lads o' pairs" were craving. In this novel, much acclaimed Scottish democracy and meritocracy only give people the chance to hurt each other. It is

¹⁵⁵The same pattern can be seen in *Alec Forbes*, although in his case it was mainly because of his unrequited love.

simultaneously a condemnation of rural community values and of Scottish education.

We have so far looked at nineteenth-century Scottish writings which deal with university education and an academic setting, each of them in some way or other extolling Scottish universities and the democratic Scottish educational system. At the very end of the century, George Douglas Brown upset the apple-cart and overturned the defining feature of the genre.

The innocent, self-lauding picture of Scottish university life did not disappear from people's minds for a long time. It persisted one way or another until the twentieth century. But after Brown's novel, the idea seems to have become outdated and to have lost its gloss. *The House with the Green Shutters* marks the end of a phase in the history of the Scottish university novel.

Conclusion

The Scottish University Novel - An expression of national pride

The above are, as far as I know, all of the nineteenth-century Scottish novels on university education. Let us look back on what we have read. It started with Dr Morris' letters, in which he maintained that Edinburgh, and other Scottish colleges, too, academically lag behind Oxford, and that their student life is of low quality.

The quality of student life is a difficult subject to argue. Life style is by all means a matter of preference, and whether living under the rigid surveillance of college masters, and being punished for the minor violation of regulation, is truly educational is debatable. Lockhart left Glasgow for Oxford in 1809. *The Matriculation Albums of Glasgow from 1728 to 1858* reports that Lockhart was "solemnly rebuked at Oxford in 1811 and 1812 for breaches of discipline".¹⁵⁶

What about Morris' attack on the Scottish curriculum? Though powerfully written, Lockhart's criticism on Scottish universities was hackneyed in its contents. Since the Union, the generations of southern educated Scots came back with English prejudices against his native culture and institutions. English universities' academic standards were higher than Scottish ones. It was, as Lockhart himself acknowledges, partly because Scottish students were comparatively younger, and intentionally or not, he confined his argument to Classics. Oxford's curriculum was narrower, therefore deeper, compared to that of Edinburgh. Scottish curricula were broader and students were in general superior to English students in Philosophy which had been compulsory at Scottish colleges.

Did Lockhart read Jardine's *Outlines of Philosophical Education* published in the previous year? He must have. George Jardine (1742 – 1827) as Professor of Logic in Glasgow was an influential figure and so was his book, and even more, Lockhart was his pupil. In the second edition which was published in 1825, Jardine staunchly defended the Scottish general education against attacks made by those who upheld specialised education to which the two English universities were devoted. The peculiar features of Scottish higher education were, however, destined to disappear in the face of successive Royal Commissions and legislation, and major reforms that were subsequently involved. Scottish University Novels must be read against this backdrop.

In the midst of radical reforms, “democracy” of Scottish education, one of the great strengths of the traditional Scottish education and the main ingredient of many Scottish novels on university life, could not possibly remain intact. But before discussing its dissolution, let us trace how it has been expressed in the novels. It was first expressed, if not yet fictionalised properly, in Hamilton’s *Cyril Thornton* (1827). Lockhart was Jardine’s pupil at Glasgow, but so was Sir William Hamilton,¹⁵⁷ and most likely Thomas, his brother, too.

The theme was developed by George MacDonald, an Aberdonian, in the 1860s and given its most articulate form in Maclean’s *Life at a Northern University* (1874), in which King’s College’s “democratic spirit” wholly justifies its existence and testifies to its superiority over English institutions. Toward the end of the century, it became a trend among Scottish writers to write a story about a boy from humble origins doing well through education, and it was often associated with the bucolic beauty of Scottish country life. *From Yarrow to Edinburgh College* (1886) and *From Ploughshare to Pulpit* (1895) are as good examples of this trend as *Kit Kennedy* (1899).

In many of the novels, the bursary and the open competition, uniquely Scottish institutions in the nineteenth century, provide writers with an excellent vehicle with which to embody and develop the theme of Scottish “democracy”. We have seen how heroes struggle to win a prize in *Life at a Northern University*, in *From Ploughshare to Pulpit* and in *Kit Kennedy*. S. R. Crockett gave in *Kit Kennedy* the most sustained treatment of the “lad o’ pairts” story, in which the ploughshare boy proceeds to university by winning a bursary and becomes a great man.

These stories offer an answer to Dr Morris’ question, and in this sense, there is a distinctive common ground among many of the Scottish novelists I have discussed in this thesis. Is it worthwhile to go to a Scottish university? Our universities are, Scottish University Novels tell us, not only worthwhile, but even better than English ones, because Scottish universities are more “democratic”. Scottish universities in nineteenth-century literature mostly cater for the working class boys with social ambition and admired for their services. *From Ploughshare to Pulpit*, *Kit Kennedy*, and *From Yarrow to Edinburgh College* are very typical stories that fit in to this pattern.

In reality, Scottish universities contributed to the increase in social mobility of the working class in the Victorian era. It is no coincidence that most of the writers who dramatised their university experience are from lower-middle and working class backgrounds. With a university degree in hand, the brightest of them found employment in the Empire, as we saw in Maclean’s novel. Scottish universities played an important

¹⁵⁶ See Innes Addison (ed.), *The Matriculation...* “A. D. 1805” entry under “JOANNES GIBSON LOCKHART” The details of his conduct are unknown.

¹⁵⁷ “Hamilton always referred to Professor Jardine with respect, and acknowledged with gratitude the benefit he had derived from his instructions”. Veitch, *Memoir of Sir William Hamilton, bart.*, p.20.

role in assisting Scottish boys from humble origins assimilate into the mainstream British society and into worldwide English-speaking communities abroad.

At the other end of the extreme, we find Cyril Thornton, the English gentleman student. His university experience was inevitably different from that of the lads o' pairts. Cyril exhibited an excitement on his encounter with the "ancient and venerable" college buildings, "the chosen seat of Science and Muses". But then, he would have ended up in Oxford or Cambridge, had it not been for the war with France and a sort of Scottish fever among the English upper-class. In the novels, Scottish universities hardly ever provoked an aesthetic admiration among their students. Scottish universities might not be like public schools in England, and lacking in distinctive atmosphere, much to Conan Doyle's dismay, but they were not meant to be. We do not find any gentleman student after Cyril.

As I have shown in the chapter on *Cyril Thornton*, Scottish universities in the first part of the nineteenth century exhibited liberal characteristics which could not be seen in universities in other parts of the British Isles. They were virtually, if not officially, non-denominational when English (and Irish) universities excluded non-Anglicans, and were accessible to the lower orders because of their inexpensive fees and the bursary system. Although they were in reality not as numerous as the novels seem to indicate, the "lads o' pairts" did exist, and universities offered them certain advantages in social ascension. Thus heroes in Scottish University Novels are usually "ploughshare" students, and universities represent (upward) mobility rather than stability. This is how "democracy" is understood in the context of nineteenth-century Scottish university novels.

By the time *Kit Kennedy* was written, however, Scottish universities were ghosts of their former selves and 'lads o' pairts' were dimming legends. The reform came in successive phases, in the form of the Royal Commissions in 1826 and 1876, and legislation, the Scottish Universities Acts, in 1858 and 1889. In the end, Scottish general education, which Jardine and others determined to protect, managed to survive, but only as an inferior alternative to superior specialised "Honours" degree courses in the English style. The compulsory Philosophy course was abandoned.

Reform was, however, necessary and desirable, for "the nature of the unreformed Scottish degree handicapped Scottish students in competitive examinations for entry into the Civil Service".¹⁵⁸ Scottish "surrender"¹⁵⁹ to the English system, using G. E. Davie's term, seems to be complete by the early 1890s. It is worth noticing, however, that Scotland succumbed to the reality of this social and economic pressure, not to the line of arguments made by Lockhart and other Anglophiles which were mainly made from educational and cultural standpoints.

¹⁵⁸ E. Royle, *Modern Britain: A Social History 1750-1985*. (London, 1987), p.390.

¹⁵⁹ G. E. Davie, *The Democratic Intellect: Scotland and her Universities in the Nineteenth Century*, (Edinburgh, 1961), p.3.

It would be equally misleading to understand the process of change that Scottish universities went through from 1826 to the early 1890s as that of Anglicisation, and something of a unilateral subordination on the part of Scottish educational system and its ideals to the English pattern, as G. E. Davie argues. The Royal Commissions visited English universities, too, and it resulted in the Oxford and Cambridge University Acts of 1854 and 1856, which largely abolished religious tests on students, and later on senior members, in the teeth of fierce opposition from Anglicans and traditionalists. The age-old tutorial system was greatly modified and the Scottish style was adopted in some courses where experts conducted lectures before large classes. An Edinburgh-educated Prime Minister, Lord John Russell was instrumental in organising the first Oxford Commission in 1850.

The founding fathers of the University of London were mostly Scottish university men.¹⁶⁰ This non-residential, non-denominational and professional (as opposed to tutorial) University (later to be renamed as University College London) was clearly inspired by and modeled on Scottish university ideals. Thus, although this has not been fully acknowledged, through the University of London, Scottish universities vicariously acted as a matrix body for Victorian civic universities which opened their doors to students who had been excluded from higher education for financial and religious reasons. Many of those British civic universities were at least initially, modeled after professional and non-residential Scottish models, rather than Oxbridge models. "Oxford and Cambridge Universities" and "English Universities" cannot be used interchangeably after the 1830s. What G. E. Davies means by "Anglicisation" of Scottish Universities is in reality "Oxonisation".

Meanwhile, *The Edinburgh Review* had been persistently exerting pressure for change on English universities, and Sir William Hamilton was among the strongest advocates of the reform. His article 'On the state of the English Universities with more especial reference to Oxford', which appeared in June 1831, "exerted a decisive influence on the reform of the ancient English universities".¹⁶¹ He lived to see the reformed Oxford and "receive[d] an acknowledgement of his services in the cause of English university reform from several members of the Oxford Commission of 1850".¹⁶²

¹⁶⁰ Henry Brougham, George Birkbeck, James Mill, Thomas Campbell and Joseph Hume; they were Edinburgh and Glasgow professors and graduates.

¹⁶¹ D. B. Horn, 'The Universities (Scotland) Act of 1858' in *University of Edinburgh Journal*, vol. 19, p.187. This was followed by a second one in December, and in 1834 and 1835 by two articles 'On the Right of Dissenters to Admission into the English Universities' and 'Patronage and Superintendence of Universities generally', and in 1852 he wrote yet another one titled 'A reform of the English Universities, with especial reference to Oxford, and limited to the Faculty of Arts'. See Veitch, *Memoir of Sir William Hamilton*, pp. 164-73. "[H]is first article caught the reform tide at its height... his attack... proved very formidable", 'Oxford and its critics' by Asa Briggs in Brock and Curthoys. (eds.). *The History of the University of Oxford*. Vol. 6, (Oxford : 1997), p.143.

¹⁶² See Veitch, *op.cit.*, pp. 167.

A departure from tradition could be seen in every sphere of society, and reform on universities in the Victorian era was inspired and required by increasing demands of the Empire with its expanding economy, and social changes common to England and Scotland alike. What the Victorians witnessed was the birth of modern British universities, rather than the downfall of ancient Scottish and English universities.

The latter part of the nineteenth century, especially the 1870s, also saw the secondary school movement in Scotland (Fettes College and the rest).¹⁶³ Accordingly, the commencement age of university education in Scotland rose to seventeen by the early 1890s. As a result, going straight from local parish school to university through open competition for bursaries became less and less feasible. Kit Kennedy competed with secondary school boys for the bursary, and won. So did George in MacLaren's story, and in his case, with an English public school boy. In reality such cases were becoming rare by the end of century. A strong sense of nostalgia in MacLaren and Crockett's novels, which were written in the 90s, can be understood better from this perspective.

Another argument of Dr Morris' is that Scottish universities do not provide their students with a good environment. Young students are left on their own in a big city and they may grow idle and turn to vice. The two Edinburgh stories by A. H. Dunlop and A. C. Doyle respond to this alleged disadvantage of Scottish universities. Dunlop, representing the town, argues that students can learn a lot from city life and that landladies and landlords are willing to protect them. Doyle, the former Edinburgh student, brusquely declares that the harsh environment only did him good, for it will prepare the student for "the battle of the world" that awaits him after university.

In contrast to *Zuleika Dobson's* Oxford students who are sheltered in a lotus land, Edinburgh students are exposed to "the sharp, harsh exigent realities of the outer world".¹⁶⁴ In many cases, coming to a Scottish university is the student's "first entrance" (LNU, 23) into real life. Having come from disadvantageous backgrounds, unlike their English counterparts, the majority of Scottish students cannot afford to be cocooned inside the college walls. In any case, "ploughshare" students were ready for the battle of the world and move on, move upwards, to be exact.

Not interfering with the students' private life, or refusing to take responsibility of it, was part of Scottish university tradition. But even this was beginning to change in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Even at Edinburgh, that "great unsympathetic machine", a first permanent hall of residence (which is today's Myln's Court) was firmly

¹⁶³ Fettes College, founded in 1870, was ostensibly modeled on English public school. So far it produced "James Bond", the MI6 agent, and Tony Blair, the prime minister. Some schools, Glenside, George Heriot, George Watson's Stewart Melville, were founded earlier, but remodeled in this era.

¹⁶⁴M. Beerbohm, op. cit., p. 137.

established in 1887 (a year after the publication of *the New Amphion*).¹⁶⁵ There was an increasing demand from students for some kind of corporate life within university. The University remained indifferent on the surface, but it was becoming more and more difficult to ignore the demands from parents and government bodies for student supervision. This may be seen as yet another Scottish surrender to English way, the weakening of distinctive Scottish tradition. But, certainly, Conan Doyle and R. L. Stevenson would have welcomed the change, and G. D. Brown's creation, John Gourlay, would have benefited from the newly-founded corporate ideals within Edinburgh University.

The House with the Green Shutters is in many senses exceptional among the pieces I discussed in this thesis. It tells us of a dark, rarely discussed aspect of nineteenth-century Scottish university life; namely, what it was like to fail in a Scottish university. The story does not even pretend to defend Scottish culture in any sense at all. It ruthlessly exposes the disadvantages of Scottish education and powerfully substantiates all of Dr Morris' accusations about Scottish universities. A large city like Edinburgh is not conducive to study for young students. It is deplorable that Edinburgh University does not have a residence hall. It also confirms that academic standards at Edinburgh are not high. According to the narrator, Scottish professors rate quantity higher than quality and evaluate students' papers by weight. We may also remember the Edinburgh professor who goes on and on about the character of Lady Macbeth. The classes are too large and students do not receive personal attention.

It is interesting to find out that George Douglas Brown (1869-1902) had exactly the same academic career as John Gibson Lockhart (1794-1854). They went to Glasgow University and from there to Balliol College, Oxford on a Snell Exhibition. It is conceivable that Brown acquired his critical perspective on Scottish education through his experience at Oxford. However, unlike Lockhart, Brown could resist the temptation of directly comparing the two. He was not seduced either by the self-lauding and uplifting pictures of democratic Scottish universities or by the glamour of Oxford's close-knit collegiate community hype. It is often said that it was a great loss for Scottish Literature that Brown died so young. Had he survived a few more years, he might have written about his Oxford years, which were thwarted by poverty and his mother's ill-health and ended in the third class degree.¹⁶⁶

There is something to be said about a tendency among Scottish writers to compare their institutions with English ones. This Scottish tendency may be traced further back into the beginning of Scottish history and it runs through to today. But as

¹⁶⁵ See 'Of Chambers and Communities : Student Residence at the University of Edinburgh 1583-1983' by R. Pinkerton in Gordon Donaldson(ed.). *Four Centuries : Edinburgh University Life 1583-1983*. University of Edinburgh Press, 1983.

¹⁶⁶Neil Mclean and Alison Hay Dunlop also died immediately after they finished writing the pieces discussed in this thesis.

far as university education was concerned, Scotland had always held its own. In the eighteenth century, academic standards and reputations of Edinburgh and Glasgow were far above those of English universities. The table was turned by the end of the nineteenth century, and days of Adam Smith and David Hume were long gone. Shown clearly in the mid and late Victorian novels, (certainly in Maclean's and in Conan Doyle's pieces) is their desire to play up Scottish university life as a picturesque academic setting in Oxford and Cambridge style. This can be interpreted a clear sign of the degeneration of Scottish university ideals and of Scottish capitulation to English style collegiate corporate ideals, although, as we have seen, these writers adhered to the independent and democratic spirit which they believed Scottish universities still represented.

The increasing Scottish desire (middle class Scots, that is) to emulate the English notwithstanding, the English university novels in the nineteenth century and Scottish ones have almost nothing in common. They have very different settings and plots. Considering the fact that, across the Atlantic, American writers in the nineteenth century tended to follow the English pattern of university tales, it is remarkable that Scottish writers created, or held out to their own ethos, not emulating the English models.

As an historical term, "democracy" in nineteenth-century Scottish education simply means meritocracy, equality of opportunity and the selection of talented boys, not affirmative action. In the fictional writings, as we have seen, it is understood differently. It is always the ploughshare student who wins the first prize. Certainly, this is one form of self-deception. It is true that Scottish working class students were given the chance to compete, which was not given to boys in England. But ploughshare students in reality did not win bursaries as often as they do in the novels. In fact, as Scottish historians argue, the middle-class benefited more from the open structure of Scottish education rather than the working class.¹⁶⁷

Nevertheless, the "lads o' pairts" stories were repeatedly written and widely read. It shows how much this idea of "Scottish democracy" appealed to the Victorian society at large, and this, in spite of the irresistible tide of embourgeoisement of Scottish middle class. Readers were often the ones who enjoyed privilege and social inequality. The 'lad o' pairts' stories probably had a legitimising effect on the readers by which their Scottish identity, with its traditional emphasis on frugality, hard labour and Presbyterian piety, and their favoured social standings and comfortable environment in the midst of the Victorian prosperity was reconciled.

There seemed to be a psychological need in Scottish society to make sense of Scottishness, in the shadow of predominant English culture. And in the absence of an appropriate symbol of Scottish nationhood, the image of the "lads o' pairts" became an important symbol of national identity, a focus of Scottish pride. What we can expect to

see in Scottish University Novels therefore is not the true reflection of what Scottish universities were like, but pride the Victorian Scots took in their educational tradition, which was rapidly becoming a history.

The writers of Scottish University Novels were aware of their own national heritage and democratic tradition, although their knowledge was sometimes inaccurate, romanticised and self-deceptive. Through the reading of nineteenth-century Scottish University Novels, more than any other form of literature, we can feel “a lively pride” that “*even* Victorians [italics mine]” took in “Scottish educational achievement”.¹⁶⁸

Davie put “even” probably because, by the end of the century, ancient Scottish universities were no longer the same and the glories of the Scottish Enlightenment were long gone. We also know that in the late Victorian era, Oxford University was the focus of almost cultic worship among British middle-class people. However, one can argue that it was because they were Victorians that they took pride in the tradition which was peculiarly Scottish. The Scottish University Novel can be interpreted as one form of nineteenth-century Scottish nationalism, an expression of Scottish pride and desire for recognition within British society in which the English were predominant. It is a memorial to the Scottish tradition they sacrificed for the price of assimilation into mainstream British society and respectable positions in the Empire.

When “the lads o’ pairs” stories appeared in the late-Victorian era, Scottish university reform on a British model was complete (although whether it should be understood as Anglicisation is a different question), and memories of democratic Scottish education, symbolised by the lads of pairs, are something to be commemorated, as people did for William Wallace in Stirling. The Scottish University Novel expresses nostalgia. It does not express their discontent on modern British education. On the contrary, we have witnessed Scottish pride in the past being strongly linked to Scottish aspirations and expectations toward their future in the British Empire.

Today no one seems to read Scottish University Novels. Compared to their Victorian fathers, Scots today are generally ignorant of Scottish educational tradition. Have they found an appropriate symbol of Scottish nationhood to replace the “lads o’ pairs”? If the majority of Scottish people no longer feel a need to make sense of Scottishness, this they may suggest that they are already too much a part of mainstream British society to feel strong about their own heritage. Or, G. E. Davie may be right in saying that they are “too deeply imbued with English or rather semi-English values”¹⁶⁹ to

¹⁶⁷R. D. Anderson, *Education and Opportunity in Victorian Scotland: Schools & Universities* (Edinburgh, 1989), p. 336.

¹⁶⁸ Davie, *op.cit.*, p.8. As to Victorian assertion on Scottishness and its relation to the Empire. see G. Morton. *Unionist Nationalism*. (1999).

¹⁶⁹ *ibid.*

take their national heritage seriously. They may even be 'a little ashamed of'¹⁷⁰ Scottish educational tradition, as he suggests.

It may be observed that in these novels Scottish universities are little more than dignified secondary schools. There is no denying that, before the Victorian reform, Scottish university education was somewhat "secondary" or preparatory in nature by modern standards. But so was the traditional "liberal education" at Oxford and Cambridge, if they are to be compared with today's research-oriented academic activities and functions which can be seen in British universities across the board. Both in England and Scotland, ancient universities were performing functions now performed by secondary schools (correspondingly, students were young, although, admittedly, Scottish students were even younger). The idea of university as a place for advanced study and research is a late-Victorian innovation.

We are so much accustomed to evaluate universities in terms of selection and academic excellence. It is important to remember that ancient Scottish universities performed social and academic functions completely different from those of modern universities. The distinctive quality of eighteenth and nineteenth-century Scottish higher education was shaped by the demands of indigenous contemporary society, and its functions were perfectly justifiable.

David Murray proudly ends his *Memories of Old College of Glasgow* (1927) with the following sentences:

In Scotland the Universities have been open to all, and peer and peasant sat together on the same benches, and took part together in the life of the University. "Our students," says an alumnus of Glasgow, "are drawn from the community at large. Our gates are freely opened to all classes and creeds and countries without distinction, the one qualification for admission being a healthy thirst for learning..."¹⁷¹

This is a fair summary of Scottish University novels, and the way university education was described in nineteenth-century Scottish literature.

It is easy to dismiss them as Victorian myth, or mere fantasies. But, if they are fantasy, then, as Max Beerbohm said, "all fantasies should have solid basis in reality".¹⁷² And if, as he claims in the preface written in 1946, his representation of Oxford bears more resemblance to "the old Oxford"¹⁷³ than does actual post-World War II Oxford,¹⁷⁴

¹⁷⁰ *ibid.*

¹⁷¹ Murray, *op. cit.*, p. 464. "An alumnus" here is the Right Hon. John Inglis; The quotation is from his address as the chancellor of the University of Edinburgh. It is included in *Address at the Tercentenary of Edinburgh University* (Edinburgh, 1884), p.17.

¹⁷² M. Beerbohm, p. 5.

¹⁷³ *ibid.* I have not discussed the relationship between the English people and university education in the Victorian era. This would naturally require an in-depth review of English University Novels and major

then there is no reason why we should not suspect that institutions that appear in Scottish University Novels are actually nearer to the reality of the old Scottish colleges than Scottish universities as we see them today.

works of Newman, Arnold and probably Ruskin, and the space here will not allow me to do so. It shall be my future project.

¹⁷⁴“ [T]he palace now besieged and invaded by Lord Nuffield’s armies”, *ibid.*

Appendix i. Edinburgh and Glasgow

Despite Mr Spreull's claims that they were democratic, when Cyril was at Glasgow, Scottish universities had more upper-class English students than any previous time in their history. Mention has already been made of Melbourne and his brother. Before moving into the house no.1 at Glasgow's professors' court, Professor John Millar's students included Viscount Maitland.¹⁷⁵

The presence of wealthy English students was more conspicuous in Edinburgh. "An analysis of the 'university men' born between 1685 and 1785 who are noticed in the Dictionary of National Biography (some 2500) shows 343 receiving their university education in Edinburgh, of whom 152 were Englishmen".¹⁷⁶ The boarders of Dugald Stewart¹⁷⁷ included many sons of English nobility, amongst whom were the young Viscount Palmerston.¹⁷⁸ Lord John Russell lived with Professor Playfair.¹⁷⁹ Stewart's predecessor in the Chair of Moral Philosophy, Adam Ferguson,¹⁸⁰ had two sons of the Earl of Warwick¹⁸¹ boarding in his house. As Principal Grant put it proudly in 1883, "the University of Edinburgh in the last century used to attract the sons of English noblemen".¹⁸² It is interesting to turn the pages of *The Complete Peerage* and find out that so many aristocratic families, not only English, but also Scottish and Irish, sent their sons to the Universities of Edinburgh and Glasgow from the late eighteenth century to the early nineteenth century.¹⁸³ It is not surprising that Mr Thornton had "noble friends" (CT, 16) who recommended the Scottish university.

¹⁷⁵ Later the eighth earl of Lauderdale (1759-1839). The ninth earl (1784-1860) also studied at Edinburgh. See G. E. C., *The Complete Peerage* (London, 1929), under "Lauderdale".

¹⁷⁶ N. Hans, *New Trend in Education in the Eighteenth Century* (1951) quoted in Brock and Curthoys (eds.), *The History of the University of Oxford. Vol. 6, Nineteenth-century Oxford. Pts. 1 ;* (Oxford 1997), p.28.

¹⁷⁷ Thomas Reid's pupil. Stewart (1735-1828) was Professor of Moral Philosophy 1785-1810.

¹⁷⁸ Henry John Temple (1784-1865), the third lord Palmerston, was at Edinburgh from Nov. 1800 to the summer of 1803. His name can be seen in Matriculation Albums of Edinburgh. He later married to Melbourne's sister Emily and also twice Prime Minister (1855-8 and 1859-65). *Historical Dictionary of the British Empire* tells that his education was Harrow and Cambridge plus some private education. See entry under "Temple".

¹⁷⁹ The third son of the sixth Duke of Bedford, Russell (1792-1878) was at Edinburgh 1810-12, but did not receive a degree. His name was seen in the matriculation roll of the year 1810 as 'John Russell [Lord John Russell]. He joined the class of Professor Alexander Christison, as John Scott from Yarrow did. Also twice Whig Prime Minister (1846-1852 and 1865-6). See entry under "Russell" in *HDBE*.

¹⁸⁰(1723-1816) "Father of Sociology," Ferguson was one of the Edinburgh professors who entertained Johnson and Boswell in 1773. See entry in J. and J. Keary (ed.), *Collins Encyclopaedia of Scotland* (Harper Collins, 1994).

¹⁸¹ *The Complete Peerage* says that George Greville (1746-1838), the second earl of Warwick, "matric. at Oxford (Ch.Ch.) 24 Sep.1764, and subsequently at Edinburgh". See entry under "Brooke".

¹⁸² Grant, p.339.

¹⁸³ However, only a few students with titles can be found in the matriculation rolls. It was customarily that aristocratic students are marked as such. For example, Palmerston was recorded in the list of matriculated students in 1803 as "Henry Temple [Honble] [Lord Palmerston]". English aristocratic students (though Palmerston's was an Irish title) attended Scottish universities for a year or several terms without being matriculated and headed for Oxford, Cambridge or the Grand Tour in the Continent.

Another reason that Glasgow and Edinburgh at this time received so many upper-class students was the war with France. It denied the sons of aristocracy the traditional Grand Tour, and wealthy English students flocked to Scotland instead.¹⁸⁴ Coming to a Scottish university seems to have been an established practice by 1800. The Countess of Airlie explains why the sons of Lord Melbourne came to Glasgow as follows :

According to the custom of that period, when the Grand Tour on the continent was no longer possible, the education of young men of position always included a year or so in one or the other of the Scottish Universities, to study side by side with the sons of peasants who had toiled in the fields through the summer heat for a wage which would enable them to quench their thirst for learning during the winter.¹⁸⁵

Scottish students described here look familiar to us. We have seen them, the sons of peasants toiling for their education, in *Robert Falconer* and in many other stories. She is claiming that at the time Melbourne was at Glasgow, Scottish universities were already known for their democratic character and attracted upper-class students. It is interesting to observe "the peer and peasant myth", which appeared in MacLaren's story, actually being shared by a Scottish peer.

¹⁸⁴See Brown and Moss, p.17.

¹⁸⁵Mabell, Countess of Airlie, *Lady Palmerston and her times* (London, 1922), vol. I, p.13. The writer is probably Mabell F. E. Ogilvy (1866-?), the wife of the 6th earl. See *The Complete Peerage*, entry under "Airlie".

Appendix ii. Glasgow in the early nineteenth century

...the sons of merchants and tradesmen of the city, and natives of the north of Ireland, of the very lowest order of the people, who came generally in a state of miserable destitution, to qualify themselves in the speediest and cheapest manner for the functions of the ministry. (CT, 37)

Here Cyril's description must not be taken for granted. It is suggested in R. N. Smart's article, 'Some observations on the Provinces of the Scottish Universities, 1560-1850',¹⁸⁶ that traditionally "the largest and lowest class of the new industrial society" provided Scottish universities with a "disproportionately low share of the student body".¹⁸⁷ Cyril's phrase "lowest order" derives more from his prejudice.

Cyril's observation is correct when he says that the majority of students are the sons of merchants. In the same article, we can learn that between 1740-1839, families which engaged in "Industry and commerce" provided 44.4% of the total student body in the College of Glasgow. This is by far the largest group with "tenant farming" being a distant second (16.9%).

As Smart admits, any attempt to analyse the social structure of the student body is tricky for it is often "based on the mere description of a father as for example 'merchant' or 'manufacturer'". Such a description "fails to take account of the extremes of social and economic power which may be comprehended by these terms".¹⁸⁸ Yet the industrial and commercial character of Glasgow is apparent when compared with the analysis made of the St Andrews student body about the same time. Between 1750-1849, church ministers' sons (Established and Dissenting) represent 28% of the student body, followed by the sons of lairds at 19%. These groups together with 2% made up of the sons of peer and landed gentry, provided almost half the student body at St Andrews.¹⁸⁹

Meanwhile, during the one hundred years from 1740, only 9.9% of the Glasgow students were from the "church". Although the term "church" fails to specify the denomination, they included a large number of Ulster students. They might have come, as Cyril says, "to qualify themselves in the speediest and cheapest manner for the functions of the ministry". However, they were actually not in "miserable destitution" nor people of "the lowest order" as he claimed.

¹⁸⁶In G. W. S. Barrow (ed.), *The Scottish Tradition*, (Edinburgh, 1974), p.104.

¹⁸⁷Ibid. See also J. Abbot, 'Students' social class in three northern universities', in *British Journal of Sociology*, xvi (1965), pp. 206-20.

¹⁸⁸Smart, p.104.

¹⁸⁹The figures for Glasgow are the average of four selected decades. See also W. M. Mathew, 'Origins and occupations of Glasgow students, 1740-1839', *Past and Present*, No.33 (1966), pp.74-94.

Appendix iii. St Andrews

In his *The English University Novel*, Mortimer Proctor suggests that “the lack of novels about such venerable universities as those of Edinburgh and Glasgow”¹⁹⁰ may be accounted for by their lack of residential colleges. I presume that I am allowed to say that I have disproved the first part. But I am also doubtful whether residential colleges are responsible for novel writing. He says that “the social and intellectual life of the undergraduate was drawn together in a way admirably suited to the purpose of fiction”¹⁹¹ in the residential halls and colleges. This, however, does not explain the fact that there is no nineteenth-century novel about St Andrews, which is traditionally the most residential of all Scottish universities. It is not that St Andrews lacked a “long and colourful past”¹⁹² which Proctor believes essential for writing a novel. For example, John Douglas Sutherland Campbell (1845-1914), the ninth Duke of Argyll, records a charming account of his St Andrews days.¹⁹³ It is difficult to argue why certain books were written, or not written. It was just a coincidence that a redoubtable literary talent like Andrew Lang (1844-1912) chose to write verses, and not fiction, about his university.

As a highest-ranking aristocrat of the country, Argyll was not concerned about the reputation and prestige of the institution he attended for one year. In fact he was highly critical about Cambridge where he headed for after St Andrews. Andrew Lang, on the other hand, consciously plays up St Andrews’ medieval character as a suitable setting for Oxbridge-style academic activities in many of his verses. Students’ and alumni’s affection notwithstanding, St Andrews was at the lowest ebb of its long history in the eighteenth and the best part of the nineteenth century, and remained largely stagnant. Dr. Johnson’s elegy on the moribund institution was most famous.¹⁹⁴

St Andrews, as the only residential, small university in an isolated town, has always been exceptional among Scottish universities. Its reputation as ‘Scottish Oxford/Cambridge’, however, sounds more reasonable when it is related to its medieval origin and character, rather than its academic tradition. Neither did it play a significant part in the Scottish Enlightenment nor did it enjoy the same academic reputation as

¹⁹⁰M. Proctor, p. 203.

¹⁹¹ibid.

¹⁹²ibid.

¹⁹³See his autobiography *Passages from the Past* (London, 1907). Lord Lorne was at St Andrews, after Eton, in 1861-2 and lived in the same hall with Andrew Lang. The matriculation rolls of St Andrews record his name. He was accompanied by his younger brother Lord Colin Campbell, who completed his degree there. The eighth duke was chancellor of the University 1851-1900. Hence the brothers’ attendance.

¹⁹⁴ See Boswell, J. and S. Johnson, *Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides and A Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland*. London, 1984.

Edinburgh and Glasgow.¹⁹⁵ Accordingly, St Andrews did not attract many students and was exceptionally small by comparison; it had only 130 students in 1876 when Aberdeen had 667, Glasgow 1773 and Edinburgh 2351.¹⁹⁶ During the nineteenth century, its closure was repeatedly discussed.¹⁹⁷ This would partly explain why there is no novel on St Andrews university life in the period covered by this thesis. The so-called four ancient Scottish universities¹⁹⁸ did not share equal distinction or the same character, and to class them together and discuss them as if they are identical is both misleading and unfair.

¹⁹⁵ See E. Royle, Edward. *Modern Britain: A Social History 1750-1985*. (London, 1987) and V. H. H. Green, *The Universities*, (London, 1969).

¹⁹⁶ R. G. Cant, *The University of St Andrews*. (St Andrews, 1992) pp.141-2. See also Green, *op cit*. Throughout this thesis, 'Anglicisation' of Scottish universities has been used in relation to their curricula. Anglicisation of the student body was also happening. This was most notable at St Andrews whose staff traveled south to recruit English students.

¹⁹⁷ Cant, *op.cit*, p.142.

¹⁹⁸ It can be said that there were five, before 1860, when King's and Marischal merged.

Appendix iv. A bursary, “or the herding”¹⁹⁹
***Sentimental Tommy* (1896)**
by J. M. Barrie

A few years earlier than *Kit Kennedy*, in which S. R. Crockett celebrated the ploughshare student’s social rise, J. M. Barrie wrote this satire on Scottish education. There is a dramatisation of the bursary competition, again, but this time it is a farce. The hero finally fails to gain a bursary to go to Aberdeen University; and therefore, has no university life. But by way of showing that George Douglas Brown is neither the first nor the only Scottish writer who explored the deficiency of the nineteenth-century Scottish educational system, I add here some commentary on this novel by the author best known as the creator of Peter Pan.

Tommy, an adolescent, lives in Thrums with his sister. They are poor. The setting is perfect for a lad o’ pairts story. However, London-born Tommy is an outsider in the small Scottish town. He changes local schools, but gains nothing from them. Tommy’s main dominie at the school, Mr Cathro, is a professional trainer for the bursary competition.

[A] band of three, or four or even six [students] marched every autumn to the universities as determined after bursaries as ever were Highlandmen to lift cattle. (ST, 151)

We have seen the metaphor of military action for academic endeavour in Maclaren’s *Bonnie Brier Bush*, but here Barrie is obviously sarcastic. Winning a bursary is compared to stealing cattle. The pupils are the dominie’s soldiers. Mr Cathro is self-seeking, too. He says:

[I]f [Tommy] distinguished himself at the [bursary] examinations, I can take the credit for it, and if he comes back in disgrace, I shall call you to witness that I only sent him to them at [Miss Ailie’s] instigation. (ST, 339)

The dominie appears as a laughable ass, as he did in *Kit Kennedy*. However, in *Sentimental Tommy*, not only the dominie, but also the parish schools as a whole and the way they are oriented towards the bursary competition are ridiculed.

It is decided that Tommy is to take part in the bursary competition so that he at least gets "the chance of a college education" (ST, 223). And if he fails, his surrogate father is determined, that Tommy shall be sent herding (ST, 338). But Tommy is more like young John Gourlay in George Douglas Brown's novel than Kit Kennedy. He is fragile, restless and imaginative. He has an artistic disposition, a "spirit of Homer" (ST, 408). He is not fit for the university, where Miss Ailie hopes he will be trained to be a minister. Obviously he is even less fit for the herding. Yet these are the poor lad's choices; winning a bursary, or the herding.

Herding in the country and translating Latin into English require two completely different talents and skills. Tommy, who excels in neither, has no place to go but into his own world of imagination. As the dominie is "cramming" (ST, 224) and "stuffing" (ST, 228) his students with Latin grammar in the class room, Tommy, influenced by Walter Scott, is re-enacting the Jacobite rising in his imagination. He wants to be an artist, but the educational system cannot accommodate a poor boy with an artistic temperament. He must pass the bursary examination more for the dominie than for himself.

Barrie's tactic is to highlight this cruel situation, and to see it as a farce. His weapon is humour and irony. Here a lad o' pairts is a laughing stock.

Bursary examination time had come, and to the siege of Aberdeen marched a hungry half-dozen-- three of them from Thrums, two from the Glenquharity school. The sixth was Tod Lindertis, a ploughman... his place of study the bothy after losing time (Do you hear the klink of quoits?), or a one-roomed house near it... (ST, 423)

The military term, "the siege of Aberdeen", echoes Tommy's make-believe Jacobite rising, but also reminds us that the students are virtually in a battle. Compare this with the beginning of *Kit Kennedy's* chapter XXXV, "the Examination Day": "The day of the great trial of scholarship came around at last" (KK, 138), and Barrie's sarcasm is apparent. In *Kit Kennedy*, the secretary of the examination committee is surprised to see one student who does not belong to any school. The bursary examination was the setting for Kit's heroic stand against wealthy town students. Here in *Tommy*, the ploughman student is a simple boor.

Tommy fails to win a bursary because of his artistic sensitivity. He wastes his allotted time marvelling at the truth of the sentences set before him. The sentences he was supposed to translate into Latin went:

¹⁹⁹J. M. Barrie, *Sentimental Tommy: the Story of his Boyhood* (London, Paris and Melbourne, 1896), p. 38.

No man ever attained supreme eminence who worked for mere lucre; such efforts must ever be bounded by base mediocrity. None shall climb high but he who climbs for love, for in truth where the heart is, there alone shall the treasure be found. (ST, 447)

It goes without saying that this is another irony of Barrie's, for this is exactly the opposite of what the pupils are doing. In this novel, few pupils love Latin. They are forced to study it just because their parents and dominies believe that this is the royal road to success and to "lucre". One of the failed student goes back home to get "the whack on the head" (ST, 427) from his parent. Tommy, too, fails to win a bursary. But he is the one who has found a treasure in writing. The story ends with Tommy's departure from Thrums to seek his profession in literature. In *Sentimental Tommy*, the deficiency and cruelty of parish school education, and the narrowness of nineteenth-century Scottish education, are censured with bitter irony.

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