

THE CHANGING IMAGE OF MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS
IN NINETEENTH CENTURY BRITISH LITERATURE

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This is to certify that the

thesis entitled

THE CHANGING IMAGE OF MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS
IN NINETEENTH CENTURY BRITISH LITERATURE

presented by

Peter W. Stine

has been accepted towards fulfillment
of the requirements for

Ph.D. degree in English

Elwood P Lawrence

Major professor

Date 12/15/71

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The major purpose of the literature devoted to Mary Stuart, the Queen of Scots, reflects social and political changes which were taking place in the social structure of the time.

The first chapter, "The Legend" (1790-1830), is a lonely and distant story of a more celebrated figure, the "Queen of Dejection". Here is away from the concentration on the life of the Queen.

The second group of chapters, "The Passionate Romance" and "The fatal fate". The sources, the women began to emerge, the Reform Bill, and

ABSTRACT

THE CHANGING IMAGE OF MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY BRITISH LITERATURE

by Peter Wilfred Stine

The major purpose of this study is to show how a body of literature devoted to a major historical figure, in this case, Mary Stuart, the sixteenth-century Scottish Queen, often reflects social and philosophical attitudes of its own century. The selected works are examined by genre as well as by period to determine how accurate they were in sensing the vital changes which were transpiring in the literary cave as well as in the social marketplace.

The first chapter is devoted to the "Literature of Romantic Legend" (1790-1833) and portrays Mary as a 'solitary woman,' a lonely and distant figure given to weeping and sad laments. As in more celebrated works of the period such as Coleridge's "Ode to Dejection" or Byron's "Prisoner of Chillon," the tendency here is away from outer experience toward an intense inner concentration on the individual himself.

The second group of Marian works is called "The Literature of Passionate Romance" (1835-1865) and deals with Mary as a femme fatale. This radical change in image comes from a variety of sources, the two most important being the new social status women began to enjoy in the years after Waterloo and the First Reform Bill, and the strong reaction on the part of a new

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generation of writers to the intense subjectivism of High Romanticism. As a result, Mary Stuart now becomes a literary heroine cut from the same cloth as Thackeray's Becky Sharp and Tennyson's Princess. Just as the solitude of her prison years had appealed to the introspective tastes of Wordsworth's generation, the joie de vivre which bloomed in Mary during her early years recommended her to an era which itself was marked with great optimism.

Prior to the 1860's, historical writers had taken few pains to be either accurate or objective. The day of the literary amateur dealing loosely with historical fact was soon to be ended, however, by a new trend which demanded that the writing of history be conducted according to the scientific principles of disinterested observation and objective weighing of facts. The Marian literature of the latter third of the century, called here "The Literature of Historical Debate" (1865-1900), reflected this new emphasis and considered Mary in the role of 'historical queen.' This concentration on factual accuracy soon gave rise to a debate of major proportions, the wellspring of which was Volumes VII through XII of James Anthony Froude's History of England, otherwise known as 'The Reign of Elizabeth.' These volumes, which purportedly represented the purest example of the new historiography, were in reality highly biased and projected an image of Mary which was categorically negative. The Mary Stuart which emerged from Froude's pages was conceived in hatred and born

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in prejudice, and thereby provoked a coterie of writers to come scrambling to her rescue. The long shadow of Froude's History, then, was cast over this entire period of Marian literature and each literary piece was as much a reaction to Froude as it was a study of Mary.

This thesis does not pretend to exhaust the possibilities of the subject of Marian images in nineteenth-century British literature. It merely observes that there were certain general mutations in emphasis which sprang from larger intellectual and social changes. It shows, in short, that the literature about Mary Stuart written during the century was like a small but accurate barometer which sensed and diligently recorded the diversities of a remarkably variable literary and social climate.

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by

Peter Wilfred Stine

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INTRODUCTION

1. MARY AS SOLDIER

2. MARY AS FEMINIST

3. MARY AS HISTORIAN

4. CONCLUSION .

5. LIST OF WORKS

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THE CHANGING IMAGE
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THE CHANGING IMAGE OF MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS IN NINETEENTH CENTURY BRITISH LITERATURE

Introduction

Mary Stuart, the sixteenth-century Queen of the Scots, has always been a popular subject in the literature of England and Scotland. There have been periods during which she was less prominently mentioned than in others but her great feminine mystique enhanced by nearly three centuries of political controversy has worn well. Even now, nearly four hundred years after her death, novels, plays, and pieces of scholarly research are still appearing as undeniable evidence that this remarkable woman maintains her appeal even in an age for which monarchy has lost most of its attraction.

This study will look at the literature about Mary that appeared in the nineteenth century, will note the changes in the concept or image of Mary that occur within the century, and will discuss the implications of these changes. Not since the sixteenth century when eyewitnesses could still describe the bloody details of Mary's execution morning for any interested chronicler had the unfortunate queen been so popular in the works of the poets, novelists, and playwrights. During Elizabeth's reign it became expedient for any writer who wanted to remain in favor to make his work, however subtly, into either an indictment of Mary or an

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apologia for Elizabeth, or both. It is generally accepted, for instance, that Spenser's resurrection of Duessa in Book IV of The Faerie Queen and the long description of her trial and condemnation to death by Queen Mercilla in Book V are a slightly disguised account of Mary's trial and condemnation by Elizabeth in 1587. (1)

The issue of the Scottish Queen and her claims to the English throne ceased to be an important one in belles-lettres soon after her execution. This was primarily the result of two factors: the satisfying of Mary's aspirations that a Stuart rule England by the ascension of her son, James I, upon the death of Elizabeth in 1603, and a general decrease of interest in historical literature during the next hundred years. G. P. Gooch in his History and Historians in the Nineteenth Century explains this attrition:

Though the seventeenth century witnessed a gradual decline of confessional virulence, historical studies remained in large measure ecclesiastical. But with its secularisation history entered on a career attended by new and scarcely less formidable dangers. The

(1) The description of the trial of Duessa (i.e. Mary) in front of Mercilla (i.e. Elizabeth) in the last twelve stanzas of Book V, canto ix, incensed James, Mary's son, upon its publication in 1596 and he denounced the Faerie Queen and called for Spenser to "be duly tried and punished." Kerby Neill, "The Faerie Queen and the Mary Stuart Controversy," in The Works of Edmund Spenser, ed. Edwin Greenlaw, et al. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1936), V, pp. 319-324.

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abstract and absolute standard, the failure to recognize the differences in atmosphere and outlook in different ages, and the zeal for political and philosophic propaganda were hostile to the patient research and disinterested investigation.⁽²⁾

The first emergence of a major posthumous Marian controversy was in 1754 when an English scholar, Walter Goodall, published a book in which he claimed that the so-called Casket Letters, which had been so instrumental in turning popular opinion against Mary, were forgeries. The issue of Mary's guilt which had largely lain dormant in Anglo-Scottish literature for a century and a half was revived with Goodall's book. It might have died again in time but its glowing coals were blown into sweeping flames five years later, in 1759, with the simultaneous publication of the century's two most celebrated accounts of Mary's career: William Robertson's History of Scotland and David Hume's History of England under the House of Tudor. Both men immediately picked up the discussion begun by Goodall and both cast their votes to incriminate Mary. Hume especially accepted without question that Mary had taken part in the murder of her second husband and in a subsequent liaison with Bothwell. Hume here presents the reader with a paradox, for,

⁽²⁾G. P. Gooch, History and Historians in the Nineteenth Century (Boston: Beacon Press, 1959), pp. 5 and 10.

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(3) David Hume
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despite his usual emphasis on balance and restraint in the creation of his historical figures, he interprets Mary as having been a deeply passionate woman whose unbridled emotions brought her to the extreme point of committing murder and blatant immorality. Furthermore, Hume contends, if Mary was a martyr, it was not to the cause of the Roman Church as he continental defenders claimed, but to the frailties of her own nature, and to her inability to resist circumstance and temptation. According to Hume's own record, Mary was guilty of acts which might with difficulty be explained, "but which admit of no apology nor even of alleviation."⁽³⁾ The philosopher-historian had been moderately sympathetic with Mary until the murder of Darnley at which point he says, "All her flattering prospects were blasted by the subsequent incidents; where her egregious indiscretions, shall I say, or atrocious crimes, threw her from the height of her prosperity, and involved her in infamy and ruin."⁽⁴⁾ Nor was Hume's opposition to Mary confined to the pages of his History. In a letter to his

⁽³⁾David Hume, The History of England from the Invasion of Julius Caesar to the Revolution in 1688 (London, 1809), VI, p. 229.

⁽⁴⁾Hume, History, III, p. 428.

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(5) Ernest C
Elbank, 1748-1
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Jacobite friend, Lord Elibank, Hume refers to the Queen of Scots as "an old strumpet who has been dead and rotten near two hundred years."⁽⁵⁾

The Hume and Robertson arguments for the authenticity of the Casket Letters and the guilt of Mary are too complex for discussion here but they did not go unchallenged. A number of heated rebuttals, especially to the opinions of Hume, followed in the 1760's and 70's. The chief among Hume's antagonists was William Tytler, whose Inquiry first appeared in 1760, and in subsequent editions with textual modifications in 1767, 1772, and 1790.⁽⁶⁾ Tytler brought prestige to his cause by enlisting such men as Samuel Johnson, who contributed a sympathetic review of the Inquiry to the October, 1760, issue of Gentleman's Magazine, in which he blasted Hume for assertions which Johnson felt were contrary to fact, and which, if considered in their fullest meaning, obviously rendered Hume's theory about the existence of a higher nature invalid. At this juncture, Hume broke his standard rule of never replying to his critics

⁽⁵⁾ Ernest C. Mossner, ed., "New Hume Letters to Lord Elibank, 1748-1776," Texas Studies in Literature and Language (1962), IV, p. 456.

⁽⁶⁾ This work was first published anonymously at Edinburgh as An Historical and Critical Enquiry into the Evidence Produced by the Earls of Murray and Morton against Mary Queen of Scots, With an Examination of the Rev. Robertson's Dissertaion, and Mr. Hume's History with Respect to that Evidence.

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and began to fill his personal correspondence with angry references to Tytler, who by now had, in Hume's opinion, degenerated into a "very mangey cur" for whom "a sound beating or even a rope" were too good."⁽⁷⁾ Tytler, for his part, continued to goad Hume with long appendices to each subsequent edition of the Inquiry and with frequent articles between editions. Although neither side succeeded in having the last word, Hume's severe criticism of Mary accomplished nearly the same thing as Froude's pro-Tudor sentiments would a century later: it caused a controversy important enough to attract the attention of some of the writers and thinkers of the day and to urge them to join one side or the other of that controversy.

The two decades which included the Goodall-Hume-Tytler exchange have been called "the inaugural period of apologetic literature relating to the unhappy Queen of Scots."⁽⁸⁾ Hume and his disputants helped to usher Mary once again from the wings to center stage from which she was not to exit for at least another century. The glaring light of controversy was soon softened, however, and Mary's reputation, at least for a season, enjoyed relief from the adjudication and censure which followed in the wake of Hume's History. Those writers

(7) J. Y. T. Grieg, ed., The Letters of David Hume (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1932), I, p. 318.

(8) Laurence L. Bongie, "The Eighteenth Century Marian Controversy and an Unpublished Letter by David Hume," Studies in Scottish Literature (April, 1964), p. 241.

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who became interested in Mary during the last decade of the century, at the outset of what is usually called the Romantic Period of English literary history, saw Mary as an individual free from any specific historical context. The academic questions of her worth as a queen, her complicity in the murder of Darnley, whether or not she was guilty of adultery with Bothwell, or her role in the Babington conspiracy were not important. For the Romantics, the fact that such mystery and unresolved controversy surrounded Mary only added to her attractiveness.

It is with an examination of the Marian literature written in the period roughly from 1790 to 1835 that this study begins. The attitude toward Mary here is largely laudatory and notably free from blame or abuse. Mary's long years in prison and her perpetual unhappiness are focused on here, for Burns, Wordsworth, and the others sought to isolate her against an anonymous background in order to concentrate full attention upon her as an individual. The result is that Mary Stuart's image in Romantic literature is that of a solitary jewel, a frustrated and unfulfilled woman whose charm and courage alone keep her from being the victim of a sterile environment.

When the literary pendulum began to swing away from the specific romantic emphasis on individual experience, Marian literature reflected this movement. Just at the time when fiction, drama, and poetry were becoming noticeably more

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concerned with social intercourse, Mary was emerging from her dingy cell to become a literary heroine of singular grace and devastating beauty--a femme fatale. This new image enjoyed a certain amount of popularity for more than thirty years and was instrumental in forming the idea of Mary that is popular in the present century. It might have remained the prevailing image in nineteenth century Marian literature had not other demands been placed on historical writers by the influx of new historiographical methods from the continent. This updated modus operandi drastically changed the nature of historical writing, even in the belles-lettres, and forced those who wished to write about the Stuart queen to switch their scenes from the bedchamber to the throne room and their view of Mary herself from a social and personal one to one which was historical and detached. The contrast between these two views can be seen in the work of Swinburne, who wrote about Mary in both periods and who, in effect, created two different women with the same name. His earlier Mary was a sensuous and devious seductress while his later creation was a queen of great presence whose driving force was her political and not her social ambition.

The claim that there does exist a 'Marian literature' is as legitimate as that which insists on the existence of, say, an 'Arthurian literature.' It is true that the body of writing dealing with the Scottish queen is neither as large

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Nor as well-known as that about the legendary king but there is enough of it to designate it as a separate corpus, especially in the nineteenth century. The list of names of those whose work we will examine includes the great--Burns, Scott, Wordsworth, Swinburne, Bronte; the near-great--Yonge, Landor, Aytoun, Froude, Kingsley; and the long-forgotten--Haynes, Murray, Muddock, Grahame, et al. As dissimilar as their abilities were, these writers shared an interest in Mary Stuart, and a recognition that her perennial appeal was worthy of their finest efforts. The pattern of change in the Marian literature we will study was perhaps not immediately obvious to those authors involved, but an overview is useful for seeing a series of trends and a consistent development of which they could not possibly have been aware.

This study will depend on its readers' readiness to accept generalization without immediately searching for exceptions. The varied nature of the nineteenth century's literary history makes definite categories or neat divisions impossible and necessitates the forming of broad statements by anyone who would try to describe it. The works about Mary Stuart are an important, though not a major, part of that literary history, and deserve our attention because of their marvelous ability to reflect what was happening as the seasons changed in Georgian and Victorian England.

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I. Mary the Solitary Woman: The Literature of Romantic
Legend (1790-1833)

A. The Solitary Woman in Poetry

The greatest achievement of the Romantic Period was its poetry. The novel had gained immense popularity since Defoe but was now in a gothic/medieval stage; the drama had flourished with Goldsmith and Sheridan but had since regressed to spectaculars, melodramas, and poetic closet dramas; and serious prose in the form of literary and social criticism was just beginning to be written with any regularity. On the other hand, the generation of poets after Pope began to develop wider themes and explore new styles and, as a result of their experimentation, left an immense legacy of ideas from which the Romantics could and did draw heavily. Such familiar Romantic trends as a return to rural values and an increased interest in Nature and her benevolence were prominent in the works of men like Thomson, Collins, and Cowper. It is partly because of this heritage that poetry was the premier literary activity of the period beginning with Burns and Wordsworth and it is with this poetry that a discussion of Mary Stuart's literary image in nineteenth-century literature must begin.

It is appropriate that Robert Burns should be the first to define in verse the image which Mary was to have during the years of the Romantic Period. He was deeply interested

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in Scotland's past glory and was probably attracted to Mary because of her important role in his country's history. Moreover, she possessed unique personal traits to which a sentimental man like Burns would be attracted. This attraction seems to have been more than an intellectual one for in a letter which accompanied a manuscript of his first Marian poem "Lament of Mary Queen of Scots on the Approach of Spring" in 1790, Burns admitted that "the story of our Mary, Queen of Scots, has a peculiar effect on the feelings of a poet."¹ At least part of this 'effect' influenced the quality of his work for he says in the same note that "the enclosed ballad has pleased me beyond any effort of my muse for a long while past."² To another friend to whom he sent this poem Burns said, "You know and with me pity the miserable and unfortunate Mary Queen of Scots."³ This is pity, as Burns' poems make clear, which did not grow out of an artificial political allegiance but from the poet's natural empathy with Mary's long imprisonment and tragic death.

The term 'lament' as used by Burns and later by Wordsworth denotes a specific poetic type which might be defined as a 'song of grief.' The grief here is Mary's, for she is sad at not being able to enjoy the loveliness

¹Robert Burns, The Poetry of Robert Burns, ed. W. E. Henley and Thomas F. Henderson (Edinburgh: T. C. and E. C. Jack, 1896), p. 425.

²Burns, p. 426.

³Burns, p. 426.

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of Spring's arrival except through the window of a prison cell. The first twenty-two lines of the poem are devoted to a lyrical description of Spring and its beauties without revealing that Mary is the narrator or that she is not free to enjoy the scene she is describing. Burns finally reveals Mary's situation by using a series of contrasts to indicate her frustration. The first of these is Mary's comparison of herself with her lowest subject: ". . . the meanest kind in fair Scotland/ May rove thae sweets amang; while she, the Queen of a' Scotland,/Maun lie in prison strang." Mary next turns from the present to the past and remembers better days with regret:

"I was the Queen of bonie France,
Where happy I hae been;
Fu'lightly rase I in the morn,
As blythe lay down at e'en:"
(11.25-28)

and realizes that though coming back to Scotland was dangerous enough, her state is now far worse:

"And I'm the sov'reign of Scotland,
And mony a traitor there;
Yet here I lie in foreign bands,
And never-ending care."
(11.29-32)

Mary now looks to the future and addresses her bete noire, Queen Elizabeth:

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But as for thee, thou false woman,
 My sister and my fae,
 Grim Vengeance yet shall whet a sword
 That thro' thy soul shall gae:
 The weeping blood in woman's breast
 Was never known to thee;
 Nor th' balm that drops on wounds of woe
 Frae woman's pitying e'e.

(11.33-40)

The penultimate stanza of the poem contains the last of Mary's contrasts as she addresses her son and successor to the throne, James, and wishes for him a happier reign than she was allowed:

My son! my son! may kinder stars
 Upon thy fortune shine;
 And may those pleasures gild thy reign,
 That ne'er wad blink on mine!
 God keep thee frae thy mother's faes,
 Or turn their hearts to thee:
 And where thou meet'st thy mother's friend,
 Remember him for me!

(11.41-48)

Mary's sorrow reaches its peak in the last stanza as she expresses a desire to die and be free of her burdens. Here Mary uses the cycle of seasons as a motif to express a final death-wish:

O! soon, to me, may Summer suns
 Nae mair light up the morn!
 Mae mair to me the Autumn winds
 Wave o'er the yellow corn?
 And, in the narrow house of death,
 Let Winter round me rave;
 And the next flow'rs that deck the Spring,
 Bloom on my peaceful grave!

(11.49-56)

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This is quite obviously not the Mary over whom Robertson, Hume, Goodall, and Tytler quarreled thirty years earlier. The eighteenth-century men were concerned with the verdicts of history on Mary's career, but in this period, beginning with Burns and lasting a little more than forty years, Mary becomes more of a symbol than an historical figure; she is the embodiment of loneliness and helplessness. The fact that she has been accused of adultery and of being the center of several international political intrigues is no longer important. To Burns, Wordsworth, Scott, and the other men who helped construct the Marian image of these years, Mary Stuart was an ideal subject for their work: she was beautiful; unhappy in love; morally controversial; and suspected of murdering her husband. These men could not have invented a character to satisfy their literary tastes and needs as well as did Mary Stuart.

Burns mentions Mary's name in two more of his poems and reinforces the impression of her gained from the "Lament." In 1801 a posthumous poem was published with the long occasional title, "Scots Prologue for Mrs. Sutherland on Her Benefit-Night at the Theater, Dumfries, March 3, 1790," which had, the poet admitted, a "dark stroke of politics in its belly." Along with other things, the poem is a plea for a playwright to celebrate Scottish history on the stage. After mentioning the names of

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Wallace and Bruce, Burns turns his attention to Mary:

O for a Shakespeare or an Otway scene
To paint the lovely, hapless queen.
(11.21-22)

Here again are the two characteristics of Mary which marked the earlier poem and which continue to be corner stones of her image as it was slowly constructed during these years: beauty and helplessness or, more accurately, lucklessness.

Burn's Scottish bias reappears in this short passage as he again alludes to Mary's rivalry with Elizabeth and expresses regret that the better woman did not win:

Vain all the omnipotence of female charms
'Gainst headlong, ruthless, mad rebellious arms!
She fell, but fell with spirit truly Roman,
To glut the vengeance of a rival woman:
A woman ('tho the phrase may seem uncivil)
As able---and as cruel---as the Devil!
(11.23-28)

Burns' third use of Mary's name is a very brief one in a comic poem, "The Dean of the Faculty." The poet is conjuring up examples of great battles in mock-parallel to a battle that is currently raging on a Scottish campus and Mary's name suddenly appears to reinforce the impression left by the two earlier poems:

And dire the discord Langside saw
For beauteous, hapless Mary.
(11.3-4)

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The allusion here is to the Battle of Langside, fought soon after Mary's escape from Lochleven Castle, between Loyalist forces and those of the Earl of Murray, her illegitimate half-brother who had caused her to be imprisoned and had then seized the throne. It was the resounding defeat at Langside that caused Mary to seek asylum in England. Burns does not mention Langside to be erudite but to recall a specific event which would again remind the reader of the "beauteous, hapless Mary."

The three poems of Burns which mention Mary Stuart are not particularly important by themselves; they are minor entries in the Burns canon. They are significant, however, in that they indicate a new direction, both in Marian literature and in English literature generally. The poet has, perhaps for the first time ever, rescued Mary from the museum case of history and made her a lonely, weeping, pitiful woman, not much different in many ways from the other women who will be the subjects of Burns' poems and those of his immediate successors. The seething rivers of the Marian controversy which had arisen out of the ground three decades earlier and which had reminded the English-speaking world of Mary's troubled life had now, beginning with the work of Burns, become a tranquil brook. Mary the whore-queen of Hume's History had now become Mary Stuart, the lonely and tragic woman whose misfortunes were to kindle the imaginations of an entire generation of Romantic writers.

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The premier poet of the early Romantic Period, William Wordsworth, wrote three short poems about Mary Stuart. The first, Sonnet XXVII in Miscellaneous Sonnets, was published in 1819 and is a curious blend of extended simile and private prayer. The simile takes up the entire octave and describes the tortuous experience of recalling pleasant times when in misery:

As the cold aspect of a sunless way
Strikes through the Traveller's frame with
 deadlier chill,
Oft as appears a grove, or obvious hill,
Glistening with unparticipated ray,
Or shining slope where he must never stray;
So joys, remembered without wish or will,
Sharpen the keenest edge of present ill,--
On the crushed heart a heavier burden lay.

The lonely wanderer is a favorite subject of Wordsworth's and he often uses a journey or pilgrimage as a metaphor of isolation and estrangement, even when writing autobiographically in The Prelude. That 'Traveller' now is Mary as she begins what will be nearly a twenty-year captivity, and who, as did Burns' Mary, already feels the difference between the joy of freedom and the depression of imprisonment which is now her lot and which can only "sharpen the keenest edge of present ill."

The last six lines of the poem are intensely personal, for Mary now expresses her concerns in the form of a prayer.

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She asks for patience and discipline as she begins what she hopes will be a temporary stay as Elizabeth's prisoner:

"Just Heaven, contract the compass of my mind
To fit proportion with my altered state!
Quench those felicities whose light I find
Reflected in my bosom all too late!--
Oh be my spirit, like my thralldom, strait;
And, like mine eyes that stream with sorrow,
blind!"

Mary's request for a "contracted compass of mind" to accept her "altered state" shows both a resigned acceptance of her present condition and a realistic consideration that the future might hold even worse. She knows she is very much alone and can depend on no other human for help and therefore turns to God to give her strength if not deliverance. Mary's piety has always been a part of her legend and Wordsworth refers to it on several occasions.

This sonnet also reveals a great amount of self-recognition on Mary's part. She knows she is not suited temperamentally to the sedentary life of political captivity. She remembers too well what it was to sit on Scotland's throne and enjoy the liberty of coming and going as she pleased. She is realistic enough to see this is all in the past and, therefore, prays desperately, not for delivery, but to have quenched "those felicities whose light I find/ Reflected in my bosom all too late." The courage demonstrated by Mary here is a higher sort than that of Burns' Mary. The Scottish poet drew a more pathetic figure than Wordsworth:

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Burns' Mary is overwhelmed with the thought of not being able to enjoy the approaching Spring and seems to have little else to console her, while Wordsworth's heroine relies on her inner resources to prevent any such defeat.

In his three Marian poems, Wordsworth uses a variety of methods to construct his particular version of the solitary Mary and to underscore the devastating effects that years of ennui had wreaked on her. He uses the familiar journey/traveler metaphor described above; he recognizes the value of the first person immediacy in the monologue form and uses it to capture Mary's different moods; he seizes on Burns' method of contrasts and, like the earlier poet, has Mary compare her state with that of those who know the joy of freedom. In the longer "Lament of Mary Queen of Scots on the Eve of a New Year," Mary is less content and less resigned than she was in the earlier poem, for her captivity has obviously worn on now for some years. Her prayer has gone unanswered, her worst fears have come true, and she now admits to being bitterly lonely:

"Me, unapproached by any friend,
Save those who to my sorrow lend
Tears due unto their own."

(ll.19-21)

Like Burns' Mary, she is frustrated at not being able to enjoy what even the commonest Englishman can participate in, the festivities which usher in the new year:

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Bright boon of pitying Heaven!--alas,
 I may not trust thy placid cheer!
 Pondering that Time tonight will pass
 The threshold of another year;
 For years to me are sad and dull;
 My very moments are too full
 Of hopelessness and fear.

.
 Tonight the church tower bells will ring
 Through these wide realms a festive peal;
 To the new year a welcoming;
 A tuneful offering for the weal
 Of happy millions lulled in sleep;
 While I am forced to watch and weep,
 By wounds that may not heal.

(11.8-14 and 22-28)

In stanza five Wordsworth returns to one of the themes of
 Burns' "Lament," the disparity between the joys of the
 past and the defeat of the present:

Born all too high, by wedlock raised
 Still higher--to be cast thus low!
 Would that mine eyes had never gazed
 On aught of more ambitious show
 Than the sweet flowerlets of the fields!
 --It is my royal state that yields
 This bitterness of woe.

Yet how?--for I, if there be truth
 In the world's voice, was passing fair;
 And beauty, for confiding youth,
 Those shocks of passion can prepare
 That kill the bloom before its time;
 And blanch, without the owner's crime,
 The most resplendent hair.

Unblest distinction! showered on me
 To bind a lingering life in chains:
 All that could quit my grasp, or flee,
 Is gone;--but not the subtle stains
 Fixed in the spirit; for even here
 Can I be proud that jealous fear
 Of what I was remains.

(11.29-49)

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As in the earlier poem, Wordsworth's Mary comes across as a more complex person than Burns' Mary did for she expresses more serious convictions and is capable of much deeper thoughts than the earlier creation even hinted at. Here the realization that her glorious past is gone forever only throws Mary more strongly on the religious faith which has sustained her to this point. In the last of the monologue stanzas she repeats her prayer for patience and again rejects the possibility of earthly help:

Farewell desire of human aid
Which abject mortals vainly court!
By friends deceived, by foes betrayed,
Of fears the prey, of hopes the sport;

and asserts faith only in the symbolic power of Christ's death:

Nought but the world-redeeming Cross
Is able to supply my loss,
My burthen to support.

(11.57-63)

The poem might have ended here and been complete. Mary has moved from the frustration of being forgotten and alone on New Year's Eve through discouragement about her general condition through disillusionment with other people to an affirmation of faith in God. The poem to this point has been entirely in Mary's words and has dealt with her difficult climb from doubt to faith. However, Wordsworth now changes the tone of the poem and finishes by taking a

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long look into Mary's future:

Hark! the death-note of the year
Sounded by the castle-clock!
From her sunk eyes a stagnant tear
Stole forth, unsettled by the shock;
But oft the woods renewed their green,
Ere the tired head of Scotland's Queen
Reposed upon the block!

(11.64-70)

This quasi-prophetic ending is probably no more than an attempt to solicit sympathy and to indicate that Mary's devotion to God will have several years of testing before her life ends.

Wordsworth's third poem about Mary appeared in 1833. It is again a sonnet which this time celebrates an event antedating the events in the first two poems: Mary's arrival in England soon after the Battle of Langside. Wordsworth was born in Westmorelandshire near the spot on the Derwent River where Mary landed and he grew up with the tradition of Mary's landing as part of his earliest heritage:

Two things only there were which breathed
romance; a high-pitched castle of the
thirteenth century, where Mary Stewart was
harboured after Langside and her landing at
Workington; and the broad and clear waters
of the Derwent with their tidings of the
lakes and hills. The child made the most
of both. He chased butterflies on the
castle-hill; he rejoiced in the yellow
summer flowers that shone on its green
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⁴David Warrington
(London: 1974)

darkness of the dungeon. . . .Such was
the material, such were the surroundings,
the nursery, of this austere and yet most
English poet.⁴

The name of the poem is a description of the event:

"Mary Queen of Scots Landing at the Mouth of the Derwent,
Workington." Wordsworth's notes acknowledge Robertson, the
eighteenth-century historian, who, with Hume, played a
major part in the renewed interest in Marian history, as
a source of information. It is again a sonnet and is even
more highly structured than the first. Each of the first
two quatrains has a separate emphasis while the sestet is
devoted to a look into Mary's future similar to that of
the 'Lament.' The opening lines describe the actual
landing and draw attention to Mary's lovely ways:

Dear to the Love, and to the Graces vowed,
The Queen drew back the wimple that she wore;
And to the throng, that on the Cumbrian shore
Her landing hailed, how touchingly she bowed!

Wordsworth is more concerned with emphasizing Mary's beauty
here than in the first two poems and toward that end makes
her smile the crowning touch to the description of the
first four lines and the subject of an extended simile in
the second quatrain:

⁴David Watson Rannie, Wordsworth and His Circle
(London: 1907), p. 25.

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And like a Star (that, from a heavy cloud
 Of pine-tree foliage poised in air, forth darts,
 When a soft summer gale at evening parts
 The gloom that did its loveliness enshroud)
 She smiled

In the first eight lines of the poem, the intimation is that Mary's life in England will be as happy as the moment of her arrival; she is beautiful and delicately charming, the crowd is enthusiastic, and Carberry, Lochleven, and Langside are only ugly memories. Wordsworth, however, knows this is not true, and sensing that part of Mary's attraction as a romantic figure is the congruently tragic death she suffers, the poet animates Time and lets him tell what the future holds:

. . . but Time, the old Saturnian seer,
 Sighed on the wing as her foot pressed the strand,
 With step prelusive to a long array
 Of woes and degradations hand in hand--
 Weeping captivity, and shuddering fear
 Stilled by the ensanguined block of Fotheringay!

The grotesqueness of the last six lines is in deliberate contrast to the pleasantness of the first eight, for Wordsworth was aware of the mutability of human affairs and thought it important for the reader to recognize that the event which seemed to be the beginning of a happier period in Mary's life, was, in fact, "prelusive to a long array of woes and degradations."

Although they were not written in such order, the three poems about Mary by Wordsworth form a chronological sequence.

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The poet isolated three moments from her nearly two decades in England at which he felt Mary was most like the solitary heroine he wanted to portray: the landing in England from Scotland while Mary was still hopeful about returning to Edinburgh victorious; somewhere in the early years of captivity when she was still resilient and thinking about freedom; and finally, at a point not far from her end when she realized that she was to die prematurely and without fulfillment. Wordsworth seemed interested primarily in Mary's moods of depression, and even when he depicts her as happy, it is only a matter of time before she is once again preoccupied with that frustration which always dogged her.

Lord Byron did not devote an entire poem to the subject of Mary Stuart but he did make two significant references to her in Don Juan. Always sensitive to the niceties of the female sex, Byron used Mary's celebrated beauty to illustrate the physical charms of two of his heroines. In Canto V, the poet describes "the lady" of the Oriental Palace to whom Juan and Baba paid obsequies:

. Her years
 Were ripe, they might make six and twenty springs,
 But there are forms which Time to touch forbears,
 And turns aside his scythe to vulgar things:
 Such as was Mary Queen of Scots; true-tears
 And Love destroy; and sapping sorrow wrings
 Charms from the charmer, yet some never grow
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 (Stanza 98)

There is more to this passage than just the praising of an

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attractive face. Byron recognizes that there have been various women in history, Mary Stuart being one, of such consummate beauty that Time could not mark them but was forced to attend to "vulgar things." Neither tears, the vagaries of love, nor sapping sorrow could cause Mary to be less lovely. For Byron, Mary remained a paragon of beauty in spite of circumstances which would have scarred a lesser woman.

In Canto IX, Byron again turns to Mary to help praise by analogy the loveliness of his heroine. In this case, the subject is the eyes of Catherine of Russia:

Her blue eyes, or grey--
 (The last, if they have soul are quite as good,
 Or better, as the best examples say:)
 Napoleon's, Mary's (Queen of Scotland) should
 Lend to that color a transcendent ray.
(Stanza 71)

There is no hint here, unless possibly by the juxtaposition of her name with Napoleon's, of the traditional grimness commonly associated with Mary. The poet was concerned with finding a pair of grey eyes worthy of comparison with those of the Czarina of Russia. Mary's beauty alone would have been sufficient to recommend her to Byron's notice but the facts of their lives must lead one to believe that in the pitiable Scottish Queen the lame poet could recognize a woman for whom he could feel some genuine empathy.

The poems of Burns, Byron, and Wordsworth are of value

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in clarifying the four main attributes which make up the Romantic image of Mary Stuart: her solitariness or loneliness; her personal courage and inner strength; her superlative beauty and charm; and the mystique of tragedy which surrounded her from the day of her arrival back from France as a teenage queen to her execution at Fotheringhay Castle at the age of forty-five.

Mary's solitariness, either by necessity or by inclination, is perhaps the key to the distinctiveness of her Romantic image. This solitariness is not only a physical condition in the literature, it is also the result of the poet's attitude toward his subject. The Romantic writer saw Mary entirely as an individual without reference to any historical or cultural context. He was interested in the effects of her incredible string of personal tragedies on such things as her philosophy of life and her attitude toward herself. Such a concept of Mary is thoroughly humanitarian and democratic, even melioristic. Wordsworth and Burns put her into prison but not for any historically important reason. There is not a hint here, as there will be later in the century, that Mary was a woman of easy virtue or was capable of political conniving. Mary was important to these men simply because she was Mary and because she had had an incredible amount of misfortune which had made her the person she was. Emphasizing her isolation or solitariness became, then, a necessity for any poet who took this individualistic view of Mary.

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In Wordsworth's "Lament . . . on the Eve of a New Year," we are shown two forms of solitariness: a literal separation by the use of prison walls and bars, and a less obvious type caused by differences in birth and position. The first is frustrating but not devastating:

"Unblest distinction: showered on me
To bind a lingering life in chains;
All that could quit my grasp, or flee,
Is gone; but not the subtle stains
Fixed in the Spirit."

(ll. 43-47)

while the second cuts much more deeply:

"Born all too high, by wedlock raised
Still higher--to be cast thus low!
Would that mine eyes had never gazed
On aught of more ambitious show
Than the sweet flowerlets of the fields!
--It is my royal state that yields
This bitterness of woe."

(ll. 29-35)

This poem is found in the complete works of Wordsworth under the rubric, "Poems Founded on the Affections." It is followed by another poem remarkably similar in tone, "The Complaint of a Forsaken Indian Woman," which is the last woeful words spoken by an Indian woman who is too weak to travel and has been left in the woods either to recover or to die. Here again, as in the poem about Mary, the total concentration is on the individual, her attitude toward life and her thoughts about her imminent death.

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For Wordsworth and the other writers who helped construct this complex image of Mary, each individual they treat, whether the Queen of Scotland or the Cumberland Beggar, is a separate entity. The motifs of solitariness and isolation are the partial means by which the integrity of this concept of individuality is maintained.

An outgrowth of the emphasis on Mary's isolation is the great inner reservoir of strength and courage with which the poets seemed to be fascinated. This is not the sort of courage that operates in times of great danger, although Mary had her share of that, but is that which is buoyant in the face of severe disappointment and defeat. Mary's most acute need of self-support occurs on those several occasions when she thinks of the great difference between what she once was and what she has fallen to now:

"I was the Queen o' Bonie France,
Where happy I have been;
Fu' lightly raise I in the morn,
As blythe lay down at e'en:
And I'm the sov'reign of Scotland,
And many a traitor there;
Yet here I lie in foreign bands,
And never-ending care."

Burns' "Lament" (ll.25-32)

So, joys, remembered without wish or will,
Sharpen the keenest edge of present ill.
Wordsworth - "Captivity Sonnet" (ll.6-7)

or when she thinks too long about the ironic differences between her condition and the freedom of those outside:

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"The meanest kind in fair Scotland
 May rove thae sweets amang;
 But I, the Queen of a' Scotland,
 Maun lie in prison strang."
 Burns' "Lament" (ll. 21-24)

"Tonight the church-tower bells will ring
 Through these wide realms a festive peal;
 To the New Year a welcoming:
 A tuneful offering for the weal
 Of happy millions lulled in sleep;
 While I am forced to watch and weep,
 By wounds that will not heal."
 Wordsworth's "Lament" (ll. 22-28)

A different sort of inner strength is revealed in Mary's statements of pious belief and in her prayer for patience to bear whatever might come and to accept without remorse a way of life greatly inferior to any she had ever known. When she remembers how things were when she was queen, she becomes anxious to return to those days until she realizes that they will in all probability never be possible again. Her main petition to God is to give her the gift of accomodation:

"Just Heaven, contract the compass of my mind
 To fit proportion with my altered state!"
 Wordsworth's "Captivity Sonnet" (ll. 9-10)

The metaphor used here indicates the closing of a compass to fit a smaller circle which in this case is the four walls of a prison cell.

Another central figure in this prayer for patient courage is light. Mary asks not merely to have the light of

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Quench those felicities whose light I find
 Reflected in my bosom all too late!
 "Captivity Sonnet" (11.11-12)

This reference to light points back to lines four and five of the sonnet where the Traveller, trudging "the cold aspect of a sunless way," sees "a grove, or obvious hill,/ Glistening with unparticipated ray,/ Or shining slope where he must never stray"

Finally, Mary's burning need for more inner fortitude causes her to make two modest requests of "Just Heaven:" that her spirit, which has always been carefree, be made strait (i.e. restricted) like her "thraldom," and that her eyes, the same that Byron celebrated but which are now "streaming with sorrow," be made blind. The prayer in this sonnet gives a clear indication that Mary had no intention of relying entirely on herself for the strength she needed to overcome the difficulties of perpetual imprisonment. Her individuality is not compromised in the least by her piety. If anything, her recognition of the need for Divine guidance adds greatly to her stature in the eyes of most readers.

Mary's physical beauty has never been questioned, even by her enemies. David Hume, never a Marian apologist, admitted that she was well endowed with physical graces:

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The beauties of her person, and graces of her air, combined to make her the most amiable of women; and the charms of her address and conversation aided the impression which her lovely figure made on all beholders.⁵

Mary's beauty was the subject of an oft-recorded conversation between Elizabeth and her Ambassador to the Court of Scotland in which the emissary told the truth about Mary's appearance only to find his Queen so jealous that he had to resort to telling lies. Burns calls her the "lovely . . . Scottish Queen" and the "beauteous . . . Mary." In Wordsworth's "Lament," Mary admits she had once been beautiful but prison had changed that:

Yet how?--for I, if there be truth
In the world's voice, was passing fair;
And beauty, for confiding youth,
Those shocks of passion can prepare
That kill the bloom before its time;
And blanch, without the owner's crime,
The most resplendent hair.

(11.36-42)

Byron's two short references to Mary are concerned entirely with Mary's beauty. Her beauty, for him, is the eternal kind, the sort "which Time forbears to touch." There are a small group of women in all of history, and Mary is one of them, who will "never grow ugly."

⁵David Hume, The History of England from the Invasion of Julius Caesar to the Revolution in 1688 (Philadelphia: Samuel H. Smith, 1795), IV, 66.

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Mary's "solitary image" is enhanced by this emphasis on her beauty. The pathos of her captivity is increased because she is so beautiful. The Romantic poets were fascinated by the thought of Mary "wasting her sweetness on the [prison] air." They recognized a poetic incongruity between the beautiful woman and the grotesque prison. No Romantic poet would have written laments about an ugly woman for such are not the stuff of poetry nor the inspiration of poets. Mary's beauty was taken for granted by these men who used it to complement the less visible sides of her character and to contrast her lovely presence with the sordid treatment which was so often her lot.

The last of the major characteristics of Mary's image as it exists in Romantic poetry is that she was endowed with a ubiquitous sense of tragic destiny which is difficult to define. Her execution alone was sufficient to make of her a cause celebre but this perpetual sense of imminent doom which had hung over Mary from childhood was more profound than the halo of temporal sainthood given to people who die violent deaths. It is important to remember that except when she lived in France as a very young girl, Mary's life was never really happy. Those who should have befriended her either wanted her wealth or her influence. Those whom she thought she could trust became the least trustworthy, and in the end, it was always the same: she was left to fend for herself.

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Burns, on two occasions, refers to Mary as "hapless." Again, this does not indicate helplessness but rather lucklessness, or, as the poets would have it, the quality of never being able to know happiness. Wordsworth was a little more specific in his delineation of this state of affairs. The 1833 sonnet describes Mary's reception in England and the poet is quick to tell us that though Mary is now "bowing touchingly" to "the throng, that on the Cumbrian shore the landing hailed," the friendly crowds will soon be gone. Mary's first step on English soil, the step she clearly hopes is the beginning of her return to Edinburgh Castle, is really "prelusive to a long array of woes and degradations." Not content with generalities, Wordsworth goes on to mention "weeping captivity and shuddering fear" as being yet in the future. Then, in the final line, he looks far into the future and discovers the ultimate symbol of tragedy in Mary's life, "the ensanguined block of Fotheringay." Mary's execution was still nearly twenty years in the future at the time of her flight to England but the poet knew that Mary's triumph was short-lived and so uses the vision of the beheading block for the fullest effect. The 1820 poem by Wordsworth also ends on a tragically prophetic note. Here, however, the situation was different, for Mary is not enjoying a moment's triumph but is at an emotional nadir, the usually happy arrival of a New Year. Mary has now reached the

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point of thinking that to die would be an improvement, but Wordsworth assures us this will not be the case, at least right away: "Oft the woods replaced their green/ Ere the tired head of Scotland's Queen/ Reposed upon the block."

Wordsworth has now, in two poems, made Mary's execution serve a double purpose: to show that any happiness she might have is short-lived and to remind us that her captivity will be a long and painful one.

The Romantic poets ignore the first twenty-five years of Mary's life because there were brief periods of time during that period in which Mary was content with her life. This neglect is easily explained: it is difficult to superimpose an image of a solitary woman over a happy and fulfilled person. The view of Mary as a lonely but courageous, beautiful but destined woman, that Wordsworth, Burns, and Byron took is by no means a complete one but it is a view consistent with their other characters and with the individualistic concept of Man which informed the literature of the Romantic Period. These men would hardly have dared invent Mary Stuart but since she came to them as she did, they embraced her and paid her the highest compliment possible: a place in their poetry.

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B. The Solitary Woman in Drama

In 1801 the German poet and playwright, Friedrich Schiller, wrote Maria Stuart, a play which deals with the five or six days immediately preceding Mary's execution. This play was translated into English the same year and at least six more times within the next half-century.⁶ Allardyce Nicoll says that German drama enjoyed immense popularity in England during the last years of the eighteenth century and into the nineteenth.⁷ It cannot be claimed with honesty that Schiller's play about Mary had a great influence on any specific English writer. It is conceivable, however, that Schiller's treatment of his Scottish heroine complemented the attitude of the Romantic writers so that they unconsciously borrowed an occasional attribute or characteristic. A note of similarity between the German's view and that of his English contemporaries can be found in a letter written by Schiller to Goethe in March, 1799:

⁶Footnote in Allardyce Nicoll, A History of English Drama, 1660-1900 (Cambridge: The University Press, 1966) V, 86.

⁷Nicoll, V, 87.

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already have had heartily of soldiers, heroes,
and rulers.⁸

The central theme of Schiller's play is the search for redemption through suffering and the entire play traces Mary's quest for spiritual freedom before she dies as she knows she must. By the time she has reached the period which the play covers, Mary has lost most of the Welt-lust which marked her earlier life. She is now a very lonely and suffering woman who recognizes at last that there is no hope for her ever to regain the power and influence she once enjoyed. She died as she lived: with the ability to inflame others with the joy of life and the necessity for realizing the imminence of death.

Schiller's specific contribution to the building of the Romantic image of Mary Stuart is impossible to calculate. His Maria and Wordsworth's Mary are of the same cloth but the final product is so much a part of each man's literary uniqueness that it is futile to try to compare on specific points. It can only be surmised that Schiller's play came to London when the time was right for a play on Mary and that undoubtedly somewhere deep inside

⁸Quoted in Louise Genevieve Fellows, "Schiller's Maria Stuart in the Light of History," M.A. Thesis Columbia 1915, p. 17.

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There were, in addition to Schiller's drama, at least three
other plays about Mary written and performed during this period.
The earliest of these, Mary Stewart, Queen of Scots, was written
by a friend of Scott's, James Grahame, and appeared in 1801.
Grahame admits in his notes that he has taken on a popular subject:

The misfortunes of Mary Stewart have so
frequently been the topic of the historian,
the antiquary, and the dramatist, that he
who resumes the theme must expect to encoun-
ter no small share of that prejudice, which
a general belief, that the subject is exhausted,
never fails to create.

but he defends his own work by dismissing all previous dramas
about Mary, especially that of Schiller, as inadequate:

Had the poetical attempts which have been
made on this subject, been equal, in any
respect, to the interesting narratives, and
ingenious vindications of the life of Mary,
the foregoing play would never have made its
appearance. But of all the different dramas
in which the Queen of Scots is either cele-
brated or traduced, there is not one that can
be called a popular play. The latest that has
appeared is the production of Schiller
I venture, then, without hesitation, to assert,
that the tragedy of Mary Stuart by Schiller is
a performance utterly unworthy of its author.
It is a tedious dialogue, insipid in most parts,
and, where not insipid, disgusting.

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Grahame is very much a man of his time in his attitude toward historical accuracy. He readily admits to seeing no necessity to pay "scrupulous observance to the minutiae of facts and dates." He has even taken the prerogative, perfectly acceptable until the scientific historians took over after mid-century, of "adding and misplacing incidents and adding several fictitious characters." He is quick to deny, however, that he has unduly "exaggerated the virtues of one party, and the enormities of the other," although he does confide to the reader that he slightly favors Mary but was very careful in making Elizabeth "a portrait faithfully copied from an original painting."

The familiar subject of Mary's beauty is the topic of conversation in the English throne room between Elizabeth and Mary's ambassador, Melvil, as the curtain goes up on Act I. Elizabeth becomes increasingly disconcerted as the scene progresses and ends the scene alone on stage by giving her true feelings about Mary:

"I've acted well:
He does not see how much
I hate this queen, this paragon.
His words were all superfluous to
Such hate as mine."

The subject of this hatred is imprisoned in Lochleven Castle, having been denied her throne by her half-brother, the Earl of Murray, who has forbidden Mary to have even the company of her infant son. This prohibition is especially

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hard on Mary for she knows that the baby's smiles "would serve to cheer my gloomy prison hours." Mary is very alone in prison and like the Mary of the poets, she compares her lot with the world outside her bars:

"Look at yon lily through my window bars,
'Tis withering space; it has no root:--
I am that faded flower:--a queen dethron'd
Is but a rootless flower, and 'tis withal
Quite honeyless." (I,ii)

Mary escapes from her prison later in Act I but she carries the scars of captivity with her:

"The shadow of a tree,
Or e'en the rustling of a single leaf,
Or trickling of a dew drop
Would make me quake: my mind, alas!
'Tis crushed; Captivity has quite unnerv'd my soul.
(I,iii)

Grahame does not neglect the air of loneliness and solitariness which is the core of Mary's image in the literature of this period. When the son of Murray, Mary's political enemy, returns from a spying mission, he tells his father how deeply Mary has impressed him:

"'Mong the dark-visaged Douglasses she seem'd
A lonely star amid the hurrying clouds,
Seen by glimpses." (II,i)

In the scene immediately following, Mary betrays her bitterness about having to "be seen by glimpses":

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Abus'd, dishonour'd, outrag'd, yea, despis'd!
 A queen despis'd, dishonour'd; by the man
 Whom she had lifted to her throne."

(II, ii)

Grahame also recognized the importance of physical beauty as revealed in the throne room conversation in Act I. As though he felt that all levels of society were interested in Mary, Grahame devotes Act II, scene iii, to a conversation between two rustic followers of Murray. At one point in their conversation they discuss Mary's appearance as it relates to her character:

Block: "She's fairer than she's quid.

Gule: Aye, she is fair: I saw her when she
 gaed to Cruxton with that Darnley. Buth auld
 and young gaed out to glow'r at her. I fallowed
 hera' the gate for I cou'dna' keep my een off her.

Block: She is a paynted Jayzobe.

Gule: Wha wad e'er paynt a flower. Did ye e'er
 see her?"

This conversation has no relation to the plot but it does bear on the reader's/playgoer's impression of Mary. It was an inspired thought which led Grahame to allow Block and Gule to be heard on the same subject as had Elizabeth and Melvil. If Mary's beauty is integral to our understanding of the Romantic image, that beauty must first be acknowledged by the dramatist and his characters.

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now decides to flee into England rather than risk capture and death in Scotland. Her correspondence with Elizabeth has been cordial for many years and she believes the English Queen will do everything in her power to help her regain her rule. The first scene of the play is recalled now and we realize that Grahame was preparing us to follow the steps of Mary into the lion's mouth. Mary's decision took a great deal of courage for she was choosing the unknown over the known but she had decided that anything was better than living in constant danger:

I am resolv'd: I will not thus remain
 A slave to ever new alarms: I'll brave
 The storm, rather than crouching, tremble thus
 Beneath the threatening rock.
 For England at sunset we depart; 'tis fixed;
 My resolution is taken; do not harass me
 With vain entreaty. (III,iv)

When Mary arrives in England and discovers the trap Elizabeth has laid for her, she has second thoughts about leaving Lochleven. In a speech reminiscent again of the "Laments" of Burns and Wordsworth, Mary compares her fate with that of the simplest of God's creatures:

"The weary rook hies home--my home's a prison;
 All things are free but me, why did I leave
 Lochleven's beauteous isle:
 There I could range
 Along the shore, or, seated on a rock,
 Hope for better days
 Ah! Misery is a shield against all seasons,"
 (IV,ii)

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Later, when she is told that English imprisonment includes the humiliation of wearing chains, she realizes, perhaps for the first time, that not all the world is as kind and loving as she is:

"I'm ready--on--I'll follow thee
 My fate is all before me, I see it all.
 Can malice, fraud, and cruelty like this
 Exist, and can the stupid world look up
 Shouting, God save this model of all virtue?"
 (IV,iv)

Mary's piety does not go unmentioned by Grahame. At one point, Mary seems to be chastising herself for asserting her will too strongly and finally cries in desperation, "O God forgive me: may Thy will be done." Mary's God is the only security she has; after years of imprisonment and punishment, she has learned that the temporal world is full of disappointments and frustration. Ironically, her faith jeopardizes her standing among the English for she is a devout worshipper of the Church of Rome and the sixteenth-century Englishman distrusted any Papist, royal or not.

In addition, or, perhaps to supplement Mary's ecclesiastical practices, Grahame gives his heroine a series of three prophetic dream-visions which prepare her for what lies ahead. The first, as Mary describes it, seems very symbolic:

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"I us'd to muse on death, but now
Behind his form, I see a hooked wheel
Half-cover'd, with a black, but blood-stain'd pall,
And in his knarled hand, 'stead of a dart
He shakes fell torture irons,
Which with his rattling joints dire music make."
(IV,ix)

The second is harder to interpret:

"These window-bard,
At times appear'd as if of glowing iron;
And up this chain there sometimes ran a gleam;"
(V,iii)

The third is briefer but very clear in its meaning:

"I dreamed I saw a scaffold and a block;
My eyes were dazzled with the gleaming axe."
(V,iii)

These dream-visions serve the same purpose as do the closing lines of Wordsworth's poems: they intensify Mary's isolation by surrounding her with a cloak of imminent danger. These writers refused to separate Mary from her eventual end. Any device that could be found to concentrate the reader's attention on Mary and the illusion of melancholy around her was pressed into service.

Grahame's play dates itself when it ends melodramatically as young Douglas, who had been instrumental in the escape from Lochleven, is beheaded and his sweetheart falls dead from grief. Mary's last speech in this greatly telescoped play is delivered just before she is led away to her own execution and leaves the reader with exactly the impression

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Grahame wanted:

Bereave me, miserable, if not of life,
Of Reason; dash down the conscious power,
And make my soul a dream without an interval.

The second dramatic work of this period, William Murray's 1825 piece, Mary, Queen of Scots; or, The Escape from Lochleven, is obviously based on Scott's novel, The Abbot: even the stage directions describe Mary when she first comes on stage as "Dressed as in the novel of The Abbot." This very short work deals with two of the three major episodes contained in the novel, but concentrates on the first, the signing of the Bill of Abdication under pressure from Murray's nobles. Given the limitations of the stage, the confrontation between Mary and the nobles is more effective than the second episode, the escape from Lochleven. The first is largely dialogue with a minimum of physical action, while the second depends on disguises, sound effects, intricate lighting, and other special considerations. The Abdication episode is also important because it puts Mary in the position of being the victim of others' treachery and injustice.

What we have been calling Mary's courage is now translated in Murray's work, by way of the vastly influential Scott, into 'Stuartness.' This unique mixture of bravery and family pride initially comes to the surface when one of the uninvited

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nobles wears a sword into Mary's presence. She tells him that she will not be intimidated: "It is a somewhat singular ornament for a court--though I am, as I will need to be, too much of a Stuart to fear a sword." When Lindesay fails to take her hint, Mary comes back with a stronger statement quoted directly from Scott: "Had Mary Stuart inherited her father's sword as well as his sceptre, the boldest of her rebels should not upon that day have complained that they had none to cope withal." Both by calling her prison a "court" and by reminding the nobles that she had inherited the monarchy from her father, James V, Mary prepares herself for what she correctly fears will be a demand to relinquish her queenship. When the demand of the Regent Murray is made by his noble proxies, Mary is ready with an answer: "To such a demand, and sent by the mouths of those who can insult a lone and friendless captive, Mary of Scotland has no answer." Even Ruthven, who was a favorite of Mary's when she was queen, is scorned when he offers his "word and honour as warrant that you will not be disturbed." Mary repulses his offer with a charge of insincerity: "They are too slight and unsolid pledges, my lord; add at least a handful of thistle down, to give them weight in the balance."

Mary's "Stuart-courage" obviously surprises the nobles, especially the crude Lindesay, who never thought Mary would dare oppose three armed soldiers. In frustration, Lindesay

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answers Ruthven's query as to why Mary wouldn't listen to reason: "When did a Stuart ever heed the voice of reason, or follow in the paths of prudence?" Even as Mary is tempted to yield ever so little, she is fortified in her determination not to disappoint those who expect better of a Stuart: "Will it not show a weakness unworthy of my race, and cast a shadow on Mary's history?" This is courage with real tenacity, even if Murray did nearly run the "Stuartness" theme into the ground to emphasize it.

What the nobles attempt to accomplish with their swords, Mary accomplishes by her unabashed family pride and the courage which comes from belonging to a race of kings. She stands very much the solitary woman in her opposition to the usurping nobles for she has invisible allies on which she can rely and against whom no sword can ever prevail.

An important distinction is made in this play between Mary the queen and Mary the woman. Lindesay dramatizes this distinction when, at the end of the abdication proceedings, after Mary has finally relented and signed the Bill, he kneels humbly at her feet and apologizes for his roguish behavior: "Lady, I have done you wrong . . . thou art a noble creature, though thou hast abused heaven's choicest gifts." There is no intent here on Lindesay's part to pay homage of a political nature, rather he wants simply to show that he has recognized in Mary a woman of rare quality. Then, as though to prove to his comrades that he was not guilty of political compromise,

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Lindesay makes the distinction starkly clear: "I pay that devotion to thy manliness of spirit I would not have paid to the power thou has undeservedly wielded--I kneel to Mary Stuart, not to the Queen." (I, iii) A full comprehension of what is implied in Lindesay's distinction would be valuable in understanding the Romantic concept/image of Mary. There is here at once an attitude expressed about historical figures in general and about Mary in particular. This period and its literary spokesmen called people by their names and not by their titles; the historical frame of reference in which a person operated was secondary to his individual characteristics and the particular contribution he could make to the reader's understanding of Man in general. Mary's solitariness in this literature is, then, a sort of extended metaphor which represents the degree to which every man is different from every other man.

A third play, an obvious product of the popular melodramatic trends of the 1820's and 1830's, appeared in 1829 under the title, Mary, Queen of Scots; or, Melrose in Ancient Times, During the Last of the Abbots. (An Historical Melodrama Shewing the Contests between the Catholics and the Protestants Just Before the Reformation). Written by a 'Captain Erskine,' the play is an account of the disastrous ecclesiastical polarization which occurred in Scotland during the later years of Mary's sovereignty with special emphasis on the Knox-led opposition to the Englishman Darnley and that foolish boy's tireless quest for

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the matrimonial crown. Darnley, Mary's second husband, is the villain of the piece and is held responsible for Mary's troubles by the noblemen and women who make up most of the dramatis personae. Mary and Darnley appear in only one scene so most of what is learned about them is the result of such standard devices as intercepted letters, overheard conversations, frequent messengers' reports from Edinburgh, and eyewitness accounts of their abnormally solemn wedding.

The play opens with a young woman who has just returned from the Queen's wedding telling a friend who stayed home that she had sensed an uneasiness about the proceedings: "Although etiquette was strictly observed . . . I saw little gaiety in their countenances." Furthermore, the wedding guest had been severely disappointed with the bridegroom: "I did not discover in him that nobleness, and that affable dignity, which ought to mark the character of a king." As the Act progresses, reports arrive from Holyrood Castle that Mary is becoming increasingly disenchanted with her new husband, for she has discovered that "the qualities of his mind are not proportioned to his personal accomplishments." Darnley answers his wife's objections with calumny and makes a treasonous alliance with his Protestant enemies to overthrow Mary and seize her throne. By the end of Act I, Darnley has been identified as the murderer of Rizzio, the Queen's private secretary, and has been accused of abusing his pregnant wife.

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Those men who witnessed Darnley's crimes, however, felt that Mary's courage was equal to her husband's villainy for a familiar reason: "the blood of the Stuarts would animate her to fresh exertions."

Act II brings a new narrator, Oliver, with an updated account of events in the capital city. Protestants and Catholics are fighting in the streets and widespread slaughter is being carried in Mary's name, though she knows nothing of it. Word comes that Darnley has ordered Catholic troops into the countryside to conduct further atrocities in the Queen's name, and the Act ends with the Protestants running for cover to a strange place: a friendly abbey.

The third Act begins with Mary's single appearance in the play. She enters laughing with her maid-servants and calling on some of them to play their instruments or sing a song. Erskine has one of the maidens express her regard for Mary in an aside to the audience: "I am very frightened I shall go wrong. Her Majesty, like all Stuarts, has so good an ear, and so just a taste, that she will detect even a grace-note if out of tune." It might be said here that because it connotes the unusual, and singular, and in some instances, the solitary side of Mary, her 'Stuartness' is endemic to her romantic image and appears in some unlikely places. The tranquil music is soon disturbed by Darnley

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and the subsequent exchange of insults and accusations. Among other things, Mary charges her husband with indiscriminate murder and house-burning in the name of religion and tells him that she will live and rule alone rather than to give support to his extreme measures. At the end of this scene, Mary is left sitting alone, expressing her hatred of her husband's cowardice and lack of character. She realizes that she alone can bring any sort of order to the religious rampages in the streets of the city and through the surrounding villages and countryside. In the end, through Mary's intervention, the Protestants are saved from disaster. Darnley, by unknown means, is blown up in his bed, and Mary is left, still very much alone, trying to hold her country together after her husband's rampages.

This play is definitely a period piece, a musical melodrama with a Marian theme. It is highly partisan toward Mary, as are most of the romantic works, but it expresses her solitariness in different terms. Although Mary here is revered, praised, and adulated by her subjects, she has no close companions, no one in whom she can confide, no one with whom to share happy moments. She is alone--not in the nadir of prison, but in a royal castle at the pinnacle of power. Erskine has substituted an empty throne room for the prison cell but the attraction of the main character remains the same: she is singular in talent and

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and beauty, revered by those who serve her, and yet often lonely, somewhat distant and unapproachable, and without the real love that makes a woman complete and fulfilled.

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C. The Solitary Woman in Fiction

The most important piece of Marian literature written during the Romantic Period is Sir Walter Scott's 1820 novel, The Abbot. The first half is devoted to defining the Zeitgeist in Scotland in the middle of the sixteenth century with descriptions of the bitter feuds between noble families, the wide divisions between the Catholics and the Protestants under John Knox, and the even wider gulf between the followers of the bastard Regent, the Earl of Murray, and the supporters of the defeated and imprisoned Queen Mary. With years of experience in writing historical fiction to guide him, Scott thought it unwise to make Mary the center of the action but chose instead to observe her closely through the eyes of a minor character. The plot therefore centers around the adventures of Roland Graeme as he is adopted by the wife of an important figure in the Regent's court, goes to Edinburgh, and finally, in the second half of the novel, is sent to Lochleven Castle as a spying page to Mary herself.

When Scott felt that he had sufficiently set the stage for the action, he concentrated on three major events in Mary's life: the demand for abdication, the nocturnal escape from Lochleven, and the futile Battle at Langside and Mary's subsequent flight into England. The Mary Stuart which emerges from the pages of this novel is more fully

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drawn than she is in any of the other romantic works but she possesses the same attributes: classic beauty, courage which seems never to leave her at a loss, and a personal loneliness which gives her that sense of distance and aura of personal tragedy.

Scott admits in his Introduction to The Abbot that he has written about Mary because he needs an antidote to the unpopular Monastery, the most recent of the Waverley Novels, and he hopes a story about Mary Stuart will help regain some of his lost prestige:

There occur in every country some peculiar historical characters, which are, like a spell or charm, sovereign to excite curiosity and attract attention, since everyone in the slightest degree interested in the land which they belong to has heard much of them, and longs to hear more. A tale turning on the fortunes of Alfred or Elizabeth in England, or of Wallace or Bruce in Scotland, is sure by the very announcement to excite curiosity to a considerable degree, and ensure the publisher's being relieved of the greater part of an impression, even before the contents of the book are known. (p. xiii)

However, although Mary was a logical choice as the subject of an historical novel by Scotland's greatest novelist, Scott acknowledges that the choice puts him under a certain amount of pressure for if he fails to do her justice or to make her attractive, the penalty could be literary annihilation:

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Notwithstanding a risk which should make authors pause ere they adopt a theme which, exciting general interest and curiosity, is often the preparative for disappointment, yet it would be an injudicious regulation which should deter the poet or painter from attempting to introduce historical portraits merely from the difficulty of executing the task in a satisfactory manner. Something must be trusted to the generous impulse, which often thrusts an artist upon feats of which he knows the difficulty, while he trusts courage and exertion may afford the means of surmounting. . . . It was with these feelings of hope and apprehension that I ventured to awaken, in a work of fiction, the memory of Queen Mary, so interesting by her wit, her beauty, her misfortunes, and the mystery which still does, and probably always will, overhang her history. In doing so, I was aware that failure would be a conclusive disaster, so that my task was something like the enchanter who raises a spirit over whom he is uncertain of possessing an effectual control. (p. xiv)

The novelist's admission that he was attracted by Mary's "wit, her beauty, her misfortunes, and the mystery which still does . . . overhang his history," puts him squarely in the company of Wordsworth, Burns, and Grahame as men who were attracted most to Mary because of what they could understand least.

There are indications that Scott's image of Mary as it is drawn in the novel ran contrary to his own private opinions about the Queen and her career. That is, there might have been a dualism in Scott's mind about Mary; the literary man seeing her as a tragic heroine and the nineteenth-century man of reasonable opinions seeing her as

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an example of questionable political behaviour or of moral failure not compatible with his idea of true royalty. This ambiguity in Scott's thinking comes out in a letter to Lockhart dated July 14, 1828, four years before Scott's death, in which he tells of a request that he write a biography for a new series:

I have also had Murray's request to do some biography for his new undertaking. But I really can't think of any Life I could easily do, excepting Queen Mary's; and that I decidedly would not do, because my opinion, in point of fact, is contrary both to the popular feeling and to my own⁹

Scott's puzzling reference to "my opinion" being "contrary both to the popular feeling and to my own" is partially, but only partially, explained by his later comment that his Jacobitism, which could be stretched to mean allegiance to the entire Stuart family, belongs "to the fancy rather than the reason." It is probable that Scott realized his tie with Mary Stuart was an emotional one and that The Abbot is a sentimentalized view of Mary which is consistent with the Marian image as it was currently being projected in belles lettres. Scott's statement about his "opinions of" and his "feeling about" Mary being contrary means that he

⁹ John Gibson Lockhart, Memoirs of the Life of Sir Walter Scott, Bart., (Edinburgh, 1837), VIII, p. 305.

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clearly was not interested in mixing his politics with his literature. Scott may not have been attracted to Mary's behavior, but he was most certainly attracted to Mary herself.

There seems to have been a second conflict within Scott: that between the student of history and the historical novelist. The erudite notes which explain the obscure allusions and medieval folkways are the product of Scott the antiquarian; the narrative with its manipulated plot and invented characters are the work of Scott the novelist. He indirectly refers to this conflict in his note on Mary's resignation: "The details of this remarkable event, are, as given in Chapter XXII, imaginary; but the outline of the events is historical." Again, sensing the thin line between history and license, Scott tries to satisfy both the scholar and the reader of fiction in his description of the Battle of Langside: "If, however, the author has taken a liberty in removing the actual field of battle somewhat to the eastward, he has been tolerably strict in adhering to the incidents of the engagement." Most of the time, historical accuracy was desirable or acceptable to Scott only when it didn't interfere with the demands of the novel. Scott comments on the role of historical fact in a "work of amusement:"

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In another case, it would be tedious to point out in a work of amusement such minute points of historical fact; but the general interest taken in the fate of Queen Mary renders everything of consequence which connects itself with her misfortune.¹⁰

In yet another note, Scott is content to call himself "a Romancer" when he says that "a Romancer, to use a Scottish phrase, wants but a hair to make a tie thereof." He even admits that he will not allow "fiction to give way to fact" in order to maintain the "interest of a scene." In this same passage, Scott alludes, as he does often, to "the confusion of history and tradition" which is precisely the confusion he suffered as an historical novelist.

The historian-romancer struggle in Scott is closely related to the Mary-the-queen/Mary-the-woman conflict mentioned in connection with the Murray plot. This period of English literary history was in the midst of reacting against the ordered universe and rational view of man which had occupied the generation of Pope and Swift. Under the tutelage of Wordsworth and Coleridge, the new literary giants, Imagination was favored over Reason and Man as an individual over Man as a social entity. When Scott, very much a product of this new way of thinking, decided to focus his attention on Mary as a woman, a solitary individual, it was inevitable that he would on occasion have to deviate from historical fact in

¹⁰ Sir Walter Scott, The Abbott (Boston, 1900), New Abbotsford Edition, XX and XXI, p. 440.

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order to achieve his purpose. He saw Mary as his imagination demanded he see her and not as he had often read about her in the sterile records of history. When the Abbot says to Mary, "Be a Queen, madam, and forget that you are a woman," he is asking for the impossible, at least from Scott's Mary. Mary the political Queen is not the topic here, for to have told her story would have demanded a stricter adherence to fact than Scott was willing to make and a detachment which would have played traitor to the novelist in him. Scott was perfectly satisfied to leave the formal history to the professional historian. At the beginning of Chapter XXXVII, the novelist admits his reluctance to enter into "the historical part of the reign of the ill-fated Mary." He refers the reader to Chalmers' History of Queen Mary, where, he says, one can find "much light thrown on the most minute details of the period." Chalmers, Scott concedes, can give the reader something the novelist cannot: "the fullest information which ancient records afforded concerning that interesting time."

The Abbot is definitely Mary's story even though she does not appear until the middle of the novel or, as Scott originally planned, the beginning of the second volume. The Abbot of the title, a mysterious character who comes and goes, and the youth, Roland Graeme, take up most of the action in Volume One. The first several chapters

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show Roland caught up in the strife and political unrest which followed in the wake of Mary's imprisonment. The country was deeply divided into two halves and the youth finds himself in considerable trouble since he has, through "various circumstances not under his own control, formed contradictory connexions with both the contending factions by whose strife the kingdom was distracted, without being properly an adherent of either." Those "contradictory connexions" consisted of his being sent by the Regent to Lochleven Castle to be Mary's personal page and to send back periodic reports of her activities. This puts Roland in a singular position, given the fact that the grandmother who reared him was a strong supporter of Mary:

. . . it was no less clear that these two persons, the one the declared enemy, the other the enthusiastic votary, of the Catholic religion; the one at the head of the King's new government, the other, who regarded that government as a criminal usurpation, must have required and expected very different services from the individual whom they had thus united in recommending. It required very little reflection to foresee that these contradictory claims on his services might speedily place him in a situation where his honour as well as his life might be endangered. (Chapter XX)

Roland, for his part, was determined to keep a clear mind and was looking forward to his meeting with the celebrated queen:

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"I will see this beautiful and unfortunate Mary Stewart," said he, "Of whom we have heard so much, and then there will be time enough to determine whether I will be kingsman or queensman." (Chapter XX)

That meeting comes a few pages later and it is important, for not only is it Roland's first view of Mary, but it is the reader's as well. Scott knows how he wants Mary to impress the reader and, more importantly, he knows just how to gain that initial impression. He prepares for Mary's entrance by first setting a scene of dismal melancholy:

She led the way with a slow and stately step to the small garden, which, enclosed by a stone wall ornamented with statues, and an artificial fountain in the centre, with which it communicated by a low and arched portal. Within the narrow circuit of its formal and limited walls, Mary Stewart was now learning to perform the weary part of a prisoner, which, with little interval, she was doomed to sustain during the remainder of her life.
(Chapter XXI)

and then making Mary a sharp contrast to these dull surroundings:

. . . but in the first glance which Roland bestowed upon one so illustrious by birth, so distinguished by her beauty, accomplishments, and misfortunes, he was sensible of the presence of no other than the unhappy Queen of Scotland. (Chapter XXI)

This first glimpse of Mary by Roland and the reader is

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followed by a long paragraph in which Scott tries to reinforce the first impression by expanding on Mary's beauty:

Her face, her form, have been so deeply impressed upon the imagination that, even at the distance of nearly three centuries, it is unnecessary to remind the most ignorant reader of the striking traits which characterise that remarkable countenance, which seems at once to combine our ideas of the majestic, the pleasing, and the brilliant, leaving us to doubt whether they express most happily the queen, the beauty, or the accomplished woman. Who is there that, at the very mention of Mary Stewart's name, has not her countenance before him, familiar as that of the mistress of his youth, or the favourite daughter of his advanced age? . . . That brow, so truly open and regal; those eyebrows, so regularly graceful, which yet were saved from the charge of regular insipidity by the beautiful effect of the hazel eyes which they overarched, and which seems to utter a thousand histories; the nose, with all its Grecian precision of outline; the mouth, so well-proportioned, so sweetly formed, as if designed to speak nothing but what was delightful to hear; the dimpled chin; the stately, swan-like neck -- form a countenance the life of which we know not to have existed in any other character moving in that class of life where this kind of actress as well as the actors command general and undivided attention.

(Chapter XXI)

The emphasis on beauty and physical charm in this passage is overwhelming enough to cause the reader to conclude that among the various parts of the Marian image as it has been defined above, Scott was most taken with Mary's appearance.

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The other ingredients are here too, and in abundance, but for the master of Abbotsford, nothing about Mary was as memorable at the first meeting with Roland Graeme as her lovely face.

The first of the three central episodes in the novel--the confrontation at Lochleven Castle between the nobles and Mary over the subject of the abdication of the throne--is the longest and, in many ways, the most important of the three. Here Mary is literally more alone than she will be until she flies to England at the end of the novel. The visit of the nobles comes as a surprise to her and she weeps, though she rarely ever does, when she realizes why they have come. Mary apologizes for this brief lapse:

"I am ashamed of my weakness, . . . but it is over---and I am Mary Stewart once more. The savage tone of that man's voice--my knowledge of his insolence--the name which he named--the purpose for which they have come, may excuse a moment's weakness, and it shall be a moment's only."

The description of Mary as she arises assures us that her weakness was, in fact, "a moment's only:"

. . . she arose from the chair, and stood like the inspired image of a Grecian prophetess, in a mood which partook at once of sorrow and praise, of smiles and tears.

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In an even more impressive way than she had in Roland's first sight of her, Mary dominates the beginning of the scene with the rebellious nobles without saying a word:

Queen Mary presented herself, advancing with an air of peculiar grace and majesty, and seemingly totally unruffled, either by the visit or by the rude manner in which it had been enforced. . . . Even Lord Lindesay, though the rudest noble of that rude age, was surprised into something like respect by the unconcerned and majestic mien of her whom he had expected to find frantic with impotent passion, or dissolved in useless and vain sorrow, or overwhelmed with the fears likely in such a situation.

Nor do Mary's words reveal anything but her Stuart tenacity as she first berates Lindesay for daring to wear his sword into her presence, and then refuses to be insulted by his insults: "And be assured that she will be moved to anger by nothing that you can tell me, my lord. There are cases in which just scorn has always the mastery over just anger." Still troubled by Lindesay, Mary at last cuts off his boasting with a threat:

". . . But had Mary Stewart inherited her father's sword as well as his sceptre, the boldest of her rebels should not upon that day have complained that they had no one to cope withal"

When the nobles finally state their mission and demand a "demiſſion of royal authority," Mary, still very much in control, repulses them with a series of bitter and

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uncompromising responses. She first pretends that she doesn't believe they are serious:

"How is this, my lords? Are my ears turned rebels, that they deceive me with sounds so extraordinary? And yet it is no wonder that, having conversed so long ago with rebellion, they should now force its language upon my understanding. Say I am mistaken, my lords--say, for the honour of yourselves and the Scottish nobility, that my right trusted cousins of Lindesay and Ruthven, two barons of warlike fame and ancient line, have not sought the prison-house of their kind mistress for such a purpose as these words seem to imply."
(Chapter XXII)

She then changes from disbelief to bitter irony:

"And is this all my loving subject require of me, my lord? Do they really stint themselves to the easy boon that I should yield up the crown, which is mine by birthright, to an infant who is scarcely more than a year old; fling down my sceptre, and take up a distaff? (Chapter XXII)

Finally, when the nobles press for an answer to "the demand of the council," Mary becomes adamant:

"The demand of the council! Say rather the demand of a set of robbers, impatient to divide the spoil they have seized. To such a demand, and sent by the mouth of a traitor, whose scalps, but for my womanish mercy, should long since have stood on the city gates, Mary of Scotland has no answer."
(Chapter XXII)

Mary has the energy for one more blast at her adversaries, specially Ruthven, when they lay the responsibility for

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Scotland's internal troubles at her feet;

"My lord, it seems to me that you fling on my unhappy and devoted head those evils which, with far more justice, I may impute to your own turbulent, wild and untameable dispositions: the frantic violence with which you, the magnates of Scotland, enter into feuds against each other, sticking at no cruelty to gratify your wrath, taking deep revenge for the slightest offenses, and setting at defiance those wise laws which your ancestors made for the staunching of such cruelty, rebelling against the lawful authority, and bearing yourselves as if there were no king in the land, or rather as if each were king in his own premises. And now you throw the blame on me--on me, whose life has been embittered--whose sleep has been broken--whose happiness has been wrecked by your dissensions."

(Chapter XXII)

Through a strange sequence of circumstances ending with a secret message which falls out of Roland's scabbard, Mary is persuaded finally to sign the Bill of Remission, but lets her antagonists know that she would never have given in under normal circumstances:

". . .the evils we cannot resist we must submit to: I will subscribe these parchments with such liberty of choice as my condition permits me. Were I on yonder shore, with a fleet jennet and ten good and loyal knights around me, I would subscribe my sentence of eternal condemnation as soon as the resignation of the throne. But here . . . I have no freedom of choice."

(Chapter XXII)

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As Mary begins to sign the parchment, Ruthven, never satisfied with a minor concession, insists that this be made to look like a voluntary act on Mary's part. To this idea Mary brings an answer straight from the finest Stuart tradition of the Divine Right of Kings:

"If I am expected to declare I give away my crown of free will, or otherwise than because I am compelled to renounce it by the threat of worse evils to myself and my subjects, I will not put my name to such an untruth--not to gain full possession of England, France, and Scotland! all once my own, in possession or by right.

This speech moves at least one noble, Lindesay, to fall at the speaker's feet although he insists that he was paying homage to "Mary Stuart, not to the Queen." Mary was the winner here--this cannot be doubted--but it was an empty victory, for while she won the respect of her enemies, she lost her kingdom and that would prove an impossible loss to recoup.

The nocturnal escape from Lochleven Castle is the second of the three central episodes in The Abbot. Here we have all the elements of the classic flight-and-pursuit motif: a surreptitious exchange of keys, whispered passwords, a boatribe through cannon fire, and a pre-dawn flight by horseback. This escape calls for courage in the face of great danger, but Mary is more than equal to the challenge. She was willing to risk death to escape from her prison cell;

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she has often looked out of her barred windows and longed to change places with the humblest farmer plowing his field. Now that the opportunity has finally come, Mary is eager to go, sustained by the thought of things as they used to be:

" . . . I have recalled the spirit of my earlier days, when I used to accompany my armed nobles, and wished to be myself a man, to know what life it was to be in the fields with sword and buckler, jack and knapsack!"

The escape is perfectly executed and the effect of freedom is immediately noticeable on Mary:

The influence of the free air, the rushing of the horses over high and low, the ringing of the bridles, the excitement arising at once from a sense of freedom and of rapid motion, gradually dispelled the confused and dejected sort of stupefaction by which Queen Mary was at first overwhelmed. (Chapter XXXVI)

As she rides and talks with her rescuers, Mary feels that she is among friends as well as subjects and her royal station has become, during that all-night ride, almost incidental: "Her feelings as a woman, grateful at once and compassionate, prevented her assuming the dignity of a queen, and she endeavoured to continue the conversation in an indifferent tone." This sense of liberty continued when they reached their destination and Mary greets the members of her shadow court with surprising abandon which allows them to see, perhaps for the first time, that she is a woman

as well as a queen:

She flung the casement open, and with her bare head, from which the tresses flew loose and dishevelled, her fair arm, slenderly veiled by her mantle, returned by motion and sign the exulting shouts of the warriors, which echoed for many a furlong around. When the first burst of ecstatic joy was over, she recollected how lightly she was dressed, and, putting her hands to her face, which was covered with blushes at the recollection, withdrew abruptly from the window. The cause of her retreat was easily conjectured, and increased the general enthusiasm for a princess who had forgotten her rank in her haste to acknowledge the services of her subjects. The adorned beauties of the lovely woman, too, moved the military spectators more than the highest display of her regal state might; and what might have seemed too free in her pose of appearing before them was more than atoned for by the enthusiasm of the present moment, and by the delicacy evinced in her hasty retreat. (Chapter XXXVI)

Still, Scott, like Wordsworth, knew that Mary's triumphs were short-lived and concludes this happy scene with a look into the future:

Often as the shouts died away, as often were they renewed, till wood and hill rung again; and many a deep oath was made that morning on the cross of the sword, that the hand should not part with the weapon till Mary Stewart was restored to her throne. But what are promises, what the hopes of mortals? In ten days these gallant and devoted votaries were slain, were captives, or had fled. (Chapter XXXVI)

The removal to Dunbarton Castle presages the third and

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final important episode of the novel: the Battle of Langside and Mary's subsequent flight into England. Mary is extremely reluctant about letting anyone fight for her as she remembers the past and especially what happened "in her last appearance in arms at Carberry Hill." The past haunts Mary all through the battle and even when her forces are forced to seek cover, Mary chooses to stay in the path of danger rather than enter the safety of a castle associated with her earlier life. It is at this point that the Abbot urges her "to forget you're a woman and be a Queen!" Again, this is neither possible nor desirable, for Mary the Queen is an alien character to this novel. It is Mary, the woman, who is alone even when surrounded by soldiers, and is most courageous when most frightened, who is Scott's true heroine.

Mary's fears about the battle prove to be justified and Murray's forces achieve a smashing victory. Mary now absolutely forbids another sword to be raised in her behalf and prepares to do the only thing that will save her retainers from annihilation at the hands of the Regent: remove the source of friction by seeking asylum in England. Her followers are as aware as she that Elizabeth is no true friend but Mary makes a gallant effort to encourage those whom she is leaving behind:

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to depart. Her language and gestures spoke hope and consolation to her attendants, and she seemed desirous to persuade even herself that the step she adopted was secure, and that the assurance she had received of kind reception was altogether satisfactory; but her quivering lip and unsettled eye betrayed at once her anguish at departing from Scotland and her fears of confiding herself to the doubtful faith of England.
(Chapter XXXVIII)

The reader's last view of Mary is as sober as the first was promising and impressive. Mary now stands in the boat and all the separate parts of the Romantic image seem resident in her as she disappears from view:

The sails were hoisted, the oars were plied, the vessel went freshly on its way through the firth, which divides the shore of Cumberland from those of Galloway; but not till the vessel diminished to the size of a child's frigate did the doubtful, and dejected, and dismissed followers of the Queen cease to linger on the sands; and long, long could they discern the kerchief of Mary, as she waved the oft-repeated signal of adieu to her faithful adherents and to the shores of Scotland.
(Chapter XXXVIII)

Scott's novel is the piece de resistance of Marian literature in the first third of the nineteenth century. Not only is it the longest and most compelling of the Marian accounts, but it projects the quintessential example of what has through this entire chapter been called the "image of the solitary woman." That is, there emerges from the pages of

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this novel an impression, a conceptualized form of a woman with some very pronounced Romantic characteristics: solitariness or loneliness; courage and inner strength; magnificent beauty and charm; and the constant sense of tragic destiny which hounded her from her early girlhood until her death. An observation by Lady Douglas, the mistress of Lochleven Castle and Mary's jail-keeper, shows the impression Mary's solitariness made on one person:

"She is like an isle on the ocean;
 She is surrounded with shelves and quicksands;
 Its verdure fair and inviting to the eyes,
 But the wreck of many a good vessel which
 Hath approached it too rashly."

(CHapter XXIII)

The truth of this statement was soon to become a reality to the speaker, whose son died, in a matter of days, while defending Mary at Langside.

This ubiquitous sense of doom did not escape Mary's notice and she comments on it at least three times in the novel. The first is on the occasion of the betrothal of Roland Graeme and Catherine Seyton when she contrasts the happiness of the present occasion with the events of her own life and concludes that perhaps the only escape from continuing unhappiness is perpetual seclusion:

"Were we not better to cease to struggle,
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much of plot and intrigue around me, since I was stretched an orphan child in my very cradle, while contending nobles strove which should rule in the name of the unconscious innocent. Surely time it were that all this busy and most dangerous coil should end. Let me call my prison a convent, and my seclusion a voluntary sequestration of myself from the world and its ways." (Chapter XXXI)

Mary's second comment on her chronic misfortune deals with a theme which often appears in Marian literature: the contagious nature of her personal tragedy. As she stands over the limp body of George Douglas, the son of Lady Lochleven, she remembers other men who have died as a result of their connection with her:

"Look--look at him well; thus has it been of all who loved Mary Stewart! The royalty of Francis, the wit of Chastelar, the power and gallantry of the gay Gordon, the melody of Rizzio, the portly form and youthful grace of Darnley, the bold address and courtly manners of noble Douglas--nought could save them: they looked at the wretched Mary and to have loved her was crime enough to deserve early death! No sooner had the victims formed a kind thought of me than the poisoned cup, the axe and the block, the dagger, the mine were ready to punish them for casting away affection on such a wretch as I."
(Chapter XXXVII)

The third of Mary's statements turns its attention to the future. Not only have Mary's first twenty-five years been unhappy, but now she tells Roland of a prophecy which she fears will be fulfilled:

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"Oh! Roland Graeme, be true to me; many
 have been false to me. Alas! I have not
 always been true to myself! My mind
 misgives me that I shall die in bondage,
 and this bold attempt will cost all our
 lives. It was foretold me by a soothsayer
 in France that I should die in prison, and
 by a violent death, and here comes the hour.
 (Chapter XXXV)

Mary speaks truer than she knows for that very night she fled
 to England where nineteen years of continuous captivity and
 a beheading awaited her.

When one takes an overview of the literature of the
 Romantic Period in England, it becomes clear that the
 solitary image of Mary we have been describing is consistent
 with the emphasis on the solitary recluse contained in this
 literature. The circumstances of Mary Stuart's life as well
 as the attributes of the woman herself were a gift from
 history to the Romantic writer but when history was not so
 kind, the writer was left to invent characters who could be
 studied in isolation. There are several such characters,
 particularly in the poetry or poetic dramas of the period,
 who share with Mary Stuart a bent toward introspection and
 a keen sense of personal destiny. Some such were Byron's
 Manfred, who confesses to having been estranged from mortal
 man:

. From my youth onwards
 My spirit walked not with the souls of men,
 Nor looked upon the earth with human eyes;
 The thirst of their ambition was not mine;
 My joys, my griefs, my passions, and my powers,

Made me a stranger; though I wore the form
 I had no sympathy with breathing flesh.
 (II,ii,50-57)

and the Prisoner of Chillon, who finds, like Mary, that his
 cell has sapped his spirit and made inroads on his will to
 survive:

The fish swam by the castle wall,
 And they seemed joyous each and all;
 The eagle rode the rising blast,
 Methought he never flew so fast
 As then to me he seemed to fly;
 And then new tears came in my eye,
 And I felt troubled--and would fain
 I had not left my recent chain;
 And when I did descend again,
 The darkness of my dim abode
 Fell on me as a heavy load;
 It was as in a new-dug grave,
 Closing o'er one we sought to save,--
 And yet my glance, too much oppressed
 Had almost need of such a rest.
 (ll.350-365)

and even the poets like Coleridge who describes his personal
 feelings of isolation and frustration:

A grief without a pang, void, dark, and drear,
 A stifled, drowsy, unimpassioned grief,
 Which finds no natural outlet, no relief,
 In word, or sigh, or tear- - - -

 My genial spirits fail;
 And what can these avail
 To lift the smothering weight from off my breast?
 I were a vain endeavour
 Though I should gaze forever
 On that green light that lingers in the west:
 I may not hope from outward forms to win
 The passion and the life, whose fountains are
 within. ("Ode to Dejection" ll.21-24 and
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and Wordsworth, whose "musings in solitude," mentioned in The Recluse, are similar to those of Mary:

"On Man, on Nature, and on Human Life,
 Musing in solitude, I oft perceive
 Fair trains of imagery before me rise,
 Accompanied by feelings of delight
 Pure, or with no unpleasing sadness mixed;
 And I am conscious of affecting thoughts
 And dear remembrances, whose presence soothes
 Or elevates the Mind, intent to weigh
 The good and evil of our mortal state."
 (I, i, 754-762)

The Romantic version of the image of Mary Stuart is informed by the philosophic as well as the literary trends of the period. For example, this tendency in Romantic literature to withdraw from outer experience to concentrate upon inner reflection had its basis in the Lockean idea of the uniqueness of each man's experience as determined by the variations in his perception of sensory data. The intensely personal tone of these early nineteenth-century works about Mary, created by such devices as the use of the first person, extended monologues, outbursts of emotion, and prayers of frustration, indicates that these writers were influenced by this phenomenon in their concept of the Scottish Queen. The entire isolation motif, then, was linked to an understanding of individuality as the Romantics had created it. They recognized that it was when Mary was alone that she seemed most beautiful, her sorrow most moving, and her destiny most tragic.

II. Mary Stuart as Femme Fatale: The Literature of Passionate Romance (1835-1865)

In the "Foreword to the First Edition" of The Romantic Agony, Mario Praz says that, from a given point of view, "the literature of the nineteenth century appears as a unique, clearly distinct whole, which the various formulas such as 'romanticism,' 'realism,' 'decadence,' etc., tend to disrupt."¹² While this statement is generally accurate, a complete elimination of the academic boundaries between what might be called the period of High Romanticism, usually considered to be the years from 1798 through 1832, and the rest of the century, would be misleading. The earlier period bred a philosophical romanticism which placed great emphasis on the value of the individual and his position at the center of all life and experience. Coupled with this was a deeply-held conviction that Nature was a source for limitless inspiration and emulation. These emphases at times caused the poet to follow some blind alleys of social and political reform, often highly idealized and impractical, as in the case of Coleridge's 'Pantisocracy' scheme. On the other hand, the literature of the early Victorian age,

¹² Mario Praz, The Romantic Agony (New York: 1956), p. vii.

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while still maintaining the spirit of romanticism, began to reflect the influence of the Industrial Revolution and the inroads which the New Science was making in such areas as philosophy and religion. These influences created an entirely new set of categories for the poet and novelist and caused them to abandon much of what had been important to Burns and Scott. In short, those who followed literary careers during the middle third of the century were romantic but not Romantic, and were, in fact, as we shall see, often critical of their immediate predecessors.

It was in the literature of the mid-1830's, therefore, that the Romantic cult of individualism slowly began to lose importance, and it was then, too, that Mary Stuart's emergence from her lonely prison cell began. Nor was she allowed to stop half-way but was immediately thrust into a role which bore little resemblance to the one she had played in Scott's novel or Wordsworth's poems. She now became a seductive woman who enticed men, almost always with the help of her feminine charms, into dangerous, or, at least, very compromising situations. Nearly every situation was the same: a man--and these were of all sorts--noble, courtier, servant, poet--became immensely attracted to Mary, usually at his first sight of her, only to find himself so enamoured that he was neither willing nor able to see the wisdom of escape and gladly paid for his foolish bravado with his life. This final fact is important, for it

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indicates that many of the men who became involved with Mary experienced more than an intense flirtation from which they could have emerged unscathed. The fates of Mary's four most celebrated victims, all of whom figure prominently in the literature of this period, will illustrate: Chastelard was beheaded; Rizzio was slashed to death with daggers; Darnley was either strangled in his sleep or blown to bits--history cannot decide which; and Bothwell was chased out of Scotland and died like an animal in a Danish prison.

This shift in Mary's role makes it clear that the image of the solitary weeper has now been replaced by a more modern and, in many ways, a more interesting one. Such an evolution was the result of several factors, both literary and extra-literary. First, there was the general reaction to what we have called High Romanticism on the part of the new generation of writers which was emerging about the time of Victoria's ascension. As Jerome Buckley says, "The Victorian era rapidly recognized its proper spokesmen in writers who were strenuously conscious of Victorian problems; and the reputation of the romantics suffered accordingly a far-reaching shift in taste."¹³ There are, in fact, a myriad of recorded examples of how the early

¹³Jerome H. Buckley, The Victorian Temper (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1951), p. 17.



Victorians showed disgust with the older authors and such things as their preference for isolation and solitariness. This is illustrated in Macaulay's failure to sympathize with Byron's penchant for avoiding cities for the sake of "high solitudes of self-communion,"¹⁴ or in Browning's confusion over the tendency of the Romantic to "forever climb mounts to escape his fellow."¹⁵

Even more serious, however, was the general feeling that the Romantics had been grossly inadequate in their approach to art. Jerome Buckley again speaks to the point when he concludes about the generations of Wordsworth and Shelley that "too frequently they appeared to regard art as an excrescence of mind rather than an imitation of life, as a product of personal impression and private mood rather than a deduction from general experience."¹⁶ A poem such as Tennyson's "Palace of Art" reflects this conflict and indicts much of the literature from the previous three decades. Matthew Arnold also rejected this highly subjective mode in his 1853 Preface when he explained his exclusion of Empedocles Upon Etna by saying it was a poem

¹⁴Samuel Chew, Byron in England (London, 1924), p. 220.

¹⁵Robert Browning, "La Saisaiz," Works (New York, 1936), p. 1131.

¹⁶Buckley, p. 16.

"in which the suffering finds no vent in action; in which a continuous state of mental distress is prolonged, unrelieved by incident, hope or resistance; in which there is everything to be endured, nothing to be done."

It is this second reaction to High Romanticism which helps in understanding the change which took place in the image of Mary Stuart. It is obvious that the prison/captive metaphor of the earlier Marian literature is an example of this failure of "suffering to find vent in action" or of a character in "a continuous state of mental distress." The image of Mary as a weeping prisoner was the product of an ethos which placed value in what Buckley calls "personal impression and private mood." It follows, then, that a strong reaction to these tendencies would result in some radically different emphases, of which Mary's new image is an example. To put it another way, if a figure like Tennyson's Ulysses can be called representative of the new era in the same way that, say, Childe Harold was of the earlier one, the change in Mary's literary image from a melancholic woman for whom each day was more painful than the last to a passionate bon vivant whose life was a continuous adventure with only transient hazards, was a natural one.

This change in literary tastes and intellectual habits was not the only factor in the formation of Mary's new image. After the victory over Napoleon, an unprecedented

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number of the English populace became increasingly involved in social and political affairs. This development, helped immensely by the 1832 Reform Bill, created, among other things, new ideas about woman's role in society. The social mores of England had traditionally been geared almost exclusively to male participation; such institutions as the coffee-house and its successors--dining clubs, guild halls, gaming parlours--had always been the refuge of a man from the women in his life, whose place was always in the home. That this was all changing was signaled by such mid-century events as the founding of such women's colleges as St. Mary's, London; the inclusion of women in Civil Service appointments; and the admission of women into learned societies. The fact that the doll was really beginning to walk out of the doll's house is recorded in J. S. Mill's remarks written in the 1860's:

At the present time, the progress of civilization, and the turn of opinion against the rough amusements and convivial excesses which formerly occupied most men in their hours of relaxation . . . have thrown the man very much more upon home and its inmates, for his personal and social pleasures: while the kind and degree of improvement which has been made in woman's education, has made them in some degree capable of being his companions in ideas and mental tastes.¹⁷

¹⁷John Stuart Mill, The Subjection of Women (London: World's Classics, 1912), p. 570.



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The target of these women, as Tennyson notes in the following passage from The Princess, was not full equality, which they considered both impractical and unattainable, but "distinctive womanhood":

. let her make herself her own
 To give or keep to live and learn and be
 All that harms not distinctive womanhood
 For woman is not undeveloped man,
 But diverse.
 and in true marriage lies
 Nor equal, nor unequal. Each fulfills
 Defects in each. (VII, 255-60 and 284-85)

Mary Stuart was ready-made for a period whose literature would celebrate this evolution of 'the New Woman.' In the same way as the solitude of her prison years had appealed to the reserved and introspective tastes of Wordsworth's generation, the joie de vivre and savoir faire which bloomed in her during the early days of her Scottish reign recommended Mary to an era which was marked with great ebullience and optimism and which was, as it were, busily moving the furniture in a great many previously sacrosanct rooms.

Contrary to the passive creature which moped through the pages of Burns and Haynes, Mary has now become assertive and strong and is on even terms with the men with whom she consorts. Since royalty is of little or no consequence in these new Marian works, her importance is not as a member of the House of Stuart but as a woman of liberated

habits for whom social intercourse is both natural and enjoyable.

There is, however, another very distinct dimension to this relationship between Mary's new literary role and the emancipated Victorian woman. However compatible Mary's personality and accomplishments may have been with the new ideal of woman's freedom, her historical reputation was that of a refined whore, who, contrary to the highest nineteenth-century ideals, felt no reticence about violating the sanctity of her three wedding vows, and was obviously blind to an area where the average Victorian would allow no compromise: sexual intimacy. That is, Mary may have been brazen enough to tryst openly with a variety of men, but the mid-century Englishman felt that a proper woman should not so much as speak of such matters, even to her husband, for, as one historian says, the marriage bed was "the Holy of Holies in the vast temple of middle-class domesticity."¹⁸ Walter Houghton talks of a "worship of purity" which "made fidelity the supreme virtue and sexual irregularity the blackest of sins." Houghton further describes the phenomenon of 'Victorian prudery:'

The term has come to be used loosely
and broadly to cover all efforts to

¹⁸ Esme Wingfield-Stratford, Those Earnest Victorians (New York, 1930), p. 156.

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conceal the facts of life: the demand for expurgated editions of English classics, the drawing-up of indexes of books or authors not to be read, especially by girls, the powerful condemnation (and hence in effect prohibition) of any candid treatment of sex in literature, the insistence that conversation be impeccably proper, even to the point of banning any words which could conceivably carry a sexual suggestion.¹⁹

With this widespread sensitivity to sexual matters and the opposition to anything or anyone who represented license in such areas, it seems, at first glance, peculiar that Mary Stuart's literary image would now be readily transformed into that of a woman of overwhelming sexual power for whose favors men were willing to die. Such was the case, however, and for certain predictable reasons.

There was, first of all, the fact that the emerging importance of women in society created a concomitant interest in strong literary heroines. Patricia Thompson, in her study of the changing heroine in Victorian fiction, says that "the novel was sensitive to the significant changes that were taking place in the position of women."²⁰ She further says that, beginning shortly after the half-way

¹⁹Walter Houghton, The Victorian Frame of Mind (New Haven, 1957), p. 356.

²⁰Patricia Thompson, The Victorian Heroine: A Changing Ideal (London, 1956), p. 1.

mark of the century, "the last dog-days of masculine tolerance of their own shortcomings was almost over, and the exacting feminine planet was in the ascendancy at last."²¹ To look at Thackeray's work alone, his Laura Bell (Pendennis), Ethel Newcome, Beatrice Esmond, and, of course, Becky Sharp, are witnesses to the fact that times had changed, both in and out of the novel, since Miss Austen's empty-headed Bennett sisters spent their days flirting with His Majesty's soldiers. The same generalization might be made from such poetic figures as Constance, in Browning's "In a Balcony," Tennyson's Princess, and certainly later in such people as the wife in Meredith's Modern Love, or Tennyson's Guenevere. The figure of Mary Stuart was very amenable to this new role: she naturally dominated the scene without resorting to being overbearing or unnaturally bold; she was very willful and was able to persuade men to do things they would normally refrain from doing; she represented the ultimate in feminine pulchritude and charm.

Even more important than this, however, and harder to explain, was the natural attraction of the Victorians, possibly heightened by their severe moral posture, for the forbidden and the unorthodox. There were elements in Mary's unapologetic and forthright relations with men which some

²¹Thompson, p. 165.

of these writers found irresistible, and yet, as we have seen, she represented the very antithesis of the moral standards of mid-Victorian England. It remained, therefore, for those writers who chose Mary as a literary subject to resolve this difficulty.

This resolution was accomplished in various ways. Of the seven authors who wrote about Mary as a femme fatale, only two, Charlotte Bronte and Algernon Swinburne, blamed her for the deaths of her lovers. To make the situation even more complex, opinion even seems divided between these two. Miss Bronte has no good thing to say about Mary and categorically condemns her for her deceit and immorality. Swinburne, on the other hand, seems to applaud Mary's treatment of Chastelard and is favorably impressed by her lack of constancy and her alacrity in using the French poet for her own amusement. The five authors who walk up to the water's edge and yet do not plunge in by admitting that Mary was what she appeared to be, avoid getting wet by employing a useful, if slightly dishonest, dodge. These men, including such important minor figures as Walter Savage Landor and W. E. Aytoun, make Mary into some variety of an 'innocent femme fatale.' That is, they exonerate her from the common charges of murder and/or adultery by showing that either she was uninvolved in and unaware of the many plots and intrigues which occupied the members of her court, or that she ignorantly and indiscreetly

encouraged men into destruction without recognizing what she had done until it was too late. In at least two instances, Bothwell becomes completely insane to help lift the burden of guilt from Mary's shoulders. Only Landor, of the five, gives the least indication that possibly Mary is aware of what she is doing. To him, Mary is so overwhelmed by her need for male support and companionship that though she protests against Bothwell's advances, her protests are so weak that His Lordship is encouraged, not repulsed. Mary here is neither the scheming bitch of the Bronte poem nor the fickle beauty of Swinburne's play, but is a lonely woman who sees in an unexpected turn of events the possibility of escape from her despair. She intends no harm to Bothwell and she doesn't really mean to encourage him to distasteful behaviour, but she has no intention of letting him slip through her fingers. Landor's Mary is neither on the side of the angels nor is she on the road to perdition, and it is precisely because she is so difficult to classify that she may be the most successful of the seven Maries considered in this chapter.

Those who insist on Mary's absolute innocence in the face of overwhelming evidence to the contrary, are only trying, it appears, to resolve the conflict between their natural attraction to her siren charms, and their conditioned reluctance to defend moral turpitude in any form. Except for Miss Bronte, whose parsonage rearing

would not allow her to gloss over Mary's behaviour, and Swinburne, for whom vice was a positive and not a negative quality, none of the remaining authors felt sufficiently concerned for historical fact to let it interfere with their portrayal of Mary as pure in the "midst of a people with unclean hands."

A third but far less important factor in the making of the Marian femme fatale image during the 1830's, 40's, and 50's, was the direct contrast such a figure represented to the life style of Queen Victoria. As the mother of nine children, a loving wife, and a faithful widow, the Queen, whose domestic life was routine almost to the point of dullness, was the embodiment of those virtues which most of her subjects considered indispensable:

But of all the many triumphs of married love that the Victorian Age affords, none is more conspicuous than that of Victoria herself, and her beloved Prince Albert. Most people would have augured ill from the masterful tone adopted by the young sovereign in her engaged correspondence, but once married, she soon elected to submit herself . . . to the influence of one who . . . was endowed with all the high seriousness of purpose and chastity of life that the Victorians most prized.²²

Mary's life, on the other hand, included three marriages

²²Wingfield-Stratford, p. 170.

plus numerous liaisons which led to murders, duels, and executions. Considering the extreme differences in the life-styles of the two women, the mid-century writer who chose Mary as the subject of poem or novel could probably not avoid feeling a certain ambiguity about his choice, since the queen he had plucked out of the sixteenth century was different in so many ways from his own Queen that any comparison was bound to lead to divided loyalties.

To summarize, the femme fatale image given to Mary Stuart in English Literature from about 1835 to the publication of the last six volumes of Froude's History in the middle 1860's, was the result of several important factors. It grew out of a strong reaction to the immediately preceding literary generation and its emphasis on private moods and isolated characters. It also paralleled and, in some ways, reflected the steady growth of womens' rights during the middle third of the century. Too, it was the product of a tension between the natural appeal of Mary's colorful reputation and her symbolic opposition to accepted standards of virtue and morality. Finally, far to the rear of these more important reasons was the comparison some writers might have made between Mary and their own Queen, who was no more of a femme fatale than she was a Byronic heroine. What makes this study interesting is that his new image of Mary is a point where the



widely-separated paths of anti-Romanticism, moral orthodoxy, womens' rights, and loyalty to the Queen converge, if only for a moment, in an obscure corner of the literary map.

A. The Femme Fatale in Poetry

In an article in the Times Literary Supplement for April 20, 1940, entitled "Charlotte Bronte on Mary Stuart," Davidson Cook prints for what he claims is the first time, the last twenty-one lines of an early Brontean poem entitled "Lament Befitting These 'Times of Night.'" Cook gives a brief account of the previous publications of the poem--those by Maclean, Shorter, and others--but says that for some unexplained reason, these lines have always been omitted. This suppressed passage is of interest to this study because it reveals Charlotte's, and to some degree, a contemporary, attitude toward a woman of Mary's reputation:

.
 But Percy for that Rose of thine
 Maria Stuart, bright divine
 Divine and bright the mortal form
 The eternal soul a venomed worm
 For her I'd never heave a sigh
 Unmoaned I'd let the fair fiend die
 Seductive in her treachery
 Most dazzling in her crimes
 The flower of France should fade away
 And Scotland's heather hell decay
 Her death-mass tint its chimes
 And I would smile vindictively
 To know the earth I walked was free
 From her who kissed her lord to death
 And poisoned him with kindness breath
 One moment fondly o'er him bending
 The next her gentle spirit tending
 To plots that well might wake and shiver
 In bosoms crime has scathed for ever
 Accursed woman o'er thy tomb
 My sword flings down its sternest gloom



Earlier in the poem the writer has requested sympathy for three classes of people: "the soldier, laid on the battle-plain . . . alone," "the martyr who dies for his faith," and "The son of wisdom, the holy sage full of knowledge, and hoar with age." Miss Bronte says that she would willingly drop "a pitying tear" at the bier of any one of these but would, in what seems a strange comparison, never have so much as a "sigh for Maria Stuart." Editor Cook does not explain this repugnancy satisfactorily when he says that "Charlotte Bronte . . . may have imbibed her antipathy to Mary Queen of Scots from the pages of an old magazine." Even if such an article did draw Charlotte's attention to some of the less attractive details of Mary's life, it is unlikely that it was the entire cause of her disdain. The reasons that Charlotte Bronte chose, as Cook says, "to manifest her venemous scorn of Mary . . . in vitriolic verse," very likely sprang from her strongly Protestant provincial rearing. Such a background would naturally have biased the young minister's daughter against the Catholic Scottish Queen whose historical reputation was full of sexual innuendo.

The emphasis in the first ten lines of the suppressed passage is on the great difference between Mary's physical beauty ("Divine and bright the mortal form") and her spiritual ugliness ("The eternal soul a venomed worm"). The oxymoron "fair fiend" gives further support to this

paradox. The seventh line contains the phrase "seductive in her treachery" and indicates that the writer specifically objects to Mary's sexual behaviour. Mary's beauty may have allowed her to be "dazzling in her crimes" but this cannot save her from being "damned in Hell." The poetess gets even more adamant by refusing not only to "heave a sigh" for Mary but promising to "smile vindictively to know the earth . . . was free" from such a woman. Mary stands accused of deceit, false love, and sexual hypocrisy, all perpetrated presumably against Darnley, though no name is mentioned. The poem makes it clear that Mary's acts were literally those of a femme fatale, for she "kissed her lord to death/ And poison'd him with kindness." One moment she was pretending to be fond of him and the next was "tending to plots" to kill him. So great was Charlotte's antipathy to such behaviour that, in contrast to the heroic dead she had lamented earlier in the poem, she has nothing but scorn to fling over Mary's tomb.

It is probable that the Yorkshire lass expressed herself so strongly primarily because she felt that Mary had violated her obligation as a woman by deceiving her husband and thereby defiling what should have been a sacred relationship. Mary's willingness to use sexual charm to gain her ends repulsed this young innocent from the provinces and violated those canons of behaviour which

her rearing had taught her to be unique and holy. Nor was this instance of strict morality atypical. In the same year that she wrote the poem with the anti-Marian passage, Charlotte answered a letter in which she expressed similar opinions about literary works: "Now don't be startled at the names of Shakespeare and Byron. Both these were good men, and their works are like themselves. You must know how to choose the good, and to avoid the evil; the finest passages are always the purest and the bad are invariably revolting; you will perhaps wish to read them over twice. Omit the comedies of Shakespeare, and the Don Juan, perhaps the Cain of Byron" ²³ Later in her life, Mrs. Gaskell records, Charlotte was alarmed at the levity with which Thackeray approached the novels of Fielding and felt that had Thackeray had a son who was "brilliant but reckless," he never would have spoken "in that light way of courses that lead to disgrace and the grave." She then makes the same rule for her fellow novelist that she had made for herself: "The true lover of his race ought to devote his vigour to guard and protect; he should sweep away every lure with a kind of rage at its treachery." ²⁴

²³Mrs. Elizabeth Gaskell, Life of Charlotte Bronte (Everyman's Library, London), p. 85.

²⁴Gaskell, pp. 381-382.

When Charlotte Bronte created Jany Eyre, she made her an ideal woman in whom resided the very virtues Mary Stuart lacked: humility, kindness, faithfulness in love, and modesty in behaviour. Jany Eyre is Charlotte's personal antidote to the excesses of such women as Mary whom the novelist obviously considered the embodiment of everything a woman ought not to be. It is ironic that with those few final lines to a thoroughly mediocre poem, Miss Bronte was among the first to introduce the new and more interesting image of Mary Stuart, for the Scottish Queen could have had no sterner or more determined opponent than the chronicler of Angria.

Even though one of the first portrayals of Mary in her new role was a virulent one, she was certainly not lacking for defenders. William Edmondstone Aytoun, the Scottish poet, was a staunch Jacobite all his life and, according to a recent study of his works, "had always wished to write a book which would vindicate Mary Stuart."²⁵ To 'vindicate' in this case meant to clear Mary from precisely the sort of charge Miss Bronte had lodged against her. The result of this strongly pro-Marian sentiment was a long 'lyrical epic,'

²⁵Mark A. Weinstein, William Edmondstone Aytoun and the Spasmodic Controversy, Yale Studies in English, Volume 165 (New Haven, 1968) p. 195.

entitled simply Bothwell, and written in that form, Weinstein suggests, as "a reaction against the Spasmodics."²⁶ A commonly accepted anecdote says that the immediate inspiration for the poem came early in 1853 when Bulwer-Lytton turned to Aytoun during a visit to Holyrood and said, "Let the world hear the story of Bothwell."²⁷ Aytoun's response to this plea was an extended monologue spoken by Bothwell and set in Malmoe prison in Denmark where Bothwell was permanently confined after his dramatic flight from Carberry Hill and subsequent capture off the Danish coast.

There is a difference of opinion between the poet and his reviewers about the balance of personal bias and historical accuracy in Bothwell. In the Preface to the first edition, dated July 10, 1856, Aytoun says that he has chosen "the most striking events of the history of Mary, Queen of Scots . . . and in doing so, I wish it to be distinctly understood, that, except in minor and immaterial matters, necessary for the construction of a poem of this length, I have not deviated from what I consider to be

²⁶Weinstein, p. 196.

²⁷Weinstein, p. 196.

historical truth." With tongue in cheek, the reviewer in Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine indicates he does not believe the poet's claim of detachment and gives him license to "alter, omit, exaggerate, distort, suppress, garble, or disguise history to any extent that might suit his purpose." "After all," the review continues, in a statement which shows that the age of scientific historiography is still decades away, "the poetry, not the history, is the important thing."²⁸ The Westminster Review is just a shade less critical: "Aytoun's view of historical truth is the one most favourable to Mary With one who applied neither a high nor an irrelevant standard, and who, moreover, is not an avvocato del diavolo opposing the canonization of Mary, we can understand that Bothwell may be a favourite poem."²⁹

Although the primary intention of Aytoun's poem was to exonerate Mary from the persistent charges of conspiring to murder Darnley and committing adultery with Bothwell, there is a second theme that was close to the poet's heart: the conflict between the old order of character and principle represented by Mary and Bothwell, and the new order of ruthlessness and expediency represented by the English Queen and Scottish nobles. Bothwell's life itself

²⁸Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, August, 1856, p. 224.

²⁹Westminster Review, January, 1857, p. 172.

illustrates in miniature the tension between these two orders: he began on a high idealistic level with great moral aspirations and, under the influence of his peers, slowly deteriorates into banality and corruption. As Aytoun draws him Bothwell is a sheep among wolves, a moral man surrounded by immorality and deceived by those he thought to be like himself. His idea of the responsibility of the nobility was an elevated one and the recognition that others did not accept this idea was slow to come and hard to believe. Representative of this difference was Bothwell's reaction to the savage murder of Riccio, Mary's private secretary, toward whom he felt no special affection, but whose destruction he thought beneath the dignity of his peers: "Base it was for belted knights/ So poor a wretch to kill." Bothwell was especially critical of Henry Darnley, the Queen's new husband, for not only had Darnley led the attack on Riccio, but, for Bothwell, the coming to power of such a person was the end of an era for Scotland: "Set was the sun of chivalry/ That erst had gleamed so pure/ Upon the crests of those who lay/ On Flodden's fatal moor." (I, 277-80) Darnley's lack of chivalry was most painfully evident in his treatment of Mary: "I had seen my Queen profaned/ Outrag'd before my face,/ By him, the dastard, heartless boy,/ The land's disgrace and ours." (I, 645-48) In Bothwell's eyes, Darnley never deserved the title of 'king,' for he had nothing in common with "the real kings

of the past," including personal courage:

But kings--forsooth, they called him king--
Are craven now! They claim
Exemption from the knightly rule,
And skulk behind their name.
They dare not, as in Arthur's days,
When chivalry began,
Tell their accuser that he lies,
And meet him, man to man. (II, 648-55)

The main cause of Bothwell's troubles was Mary Stuart herself. From the first time he saw her, he was incapable of moderation in his feelings for her. The early lines of the poem describe this initial meeting and show how deeply Bothwell was affected by her from the very beginning:

I worshipped; and as pure a heart
To her, I swear, was mine
As ever breathed a truthful vow
Before Saint Mary's shrine.
I thought of her as a star
Within the heavens above,
That such as I might gaze upon,
But never dare to love. (I, 121-28)

This first impression was so memorable to Bothwell that he insists that he, in contrast to many of the other nobles, was never able to betray his country: "These fingers never felt the touch of England's proffered gold./ Free from one damned guilt at least/ My soul has ever been;/ I did not sell my country's rights,/ Nor fawn on England's queen!" (I, 135-40) Aytoun, showing strong signs of Scottish chauvinism, has Bothwell make frequent reference to Elizabeth's jealousy of the more attractive Mary, whose

and reign had been full of a color and excitement seldom seen in the kingdom to the south.

Bothwell's memory of Mary has not faded as the years have passed for him in the Danish cell and he readily admits that "the blood still grows thick around my heart" whenever he thinks of her. It is primarily her beauty that he remembers and he is elaborate in his praise of it:

O lovelier than the fairest flower
That ever bloomed on green
Was she, the darling of the land,
That young and spotless queen.
The sweet, sweet smile upon her lips,
Her eyes so kind and clear,
The magic of her gentle voice,
That even now I hear! (I, 85-92)

This initial infatuation remained just that for several months and Bothwell gave no thought to a serious relationship with Mary until one day she paid him a surprise visit as he lay recuperating from severe battle wounds. This confrontation altered the course of Bothwell's life for it helped change his feelings for Mary from fervent admiration to passionate love. He had now fallen irretrievably under the spell of his idol and though he knows he joins a long list of those who have fallen prey to her 'magic charm,' he is both unwilling and unable to prevent it:

For then, indeed, I felt the spell
 That turned weak Arran's brain;
 That drove the luckless Chastellar
 To love and die in vain.
 With tenfold power that magic
 Charm was stirring in my soul. (II, 313-18)

This is a pivotal scene, not only in Aytoun's poem but in much of the Marian literature generally; it was at Bothwell's bedside that Mary's role as a femme fatale traditionally began to be acted out. According to less sympathetic interpretations, the plot to murder Darnley and the subsequent adulterous relationship were born during this sickroom visit. At any rate, Mary's signal of interest in Bothwell, which Aytoun firmly believes to have been no more than that of any queen for one of her prominent nobles, fanned his emotions to a frenzy.

Aytoun was faced with a knotty problem when it came to treating Bothwell's role in the murder of Darnley. As a defender of the old order, Bothwell could hardly be allowed to commit vicious acts of revenge, and yet historical tradition is nearly unanimous in saying that Bothwell was not only involved but was in fact the leader in the plot to kill Mary's estranged husband. Bothwell tells us in Aytoun's poem that since Darnley was not willing to meet him 'man to man' in individual combat, he had not other choice than to turn to more subtle methods of violence. His growing ambition causes him to entertain encouragement and promises of support from other nobles; at one point,

Bothwell even tells of a dream in which Maitland took him to the scene of Darnley's murder, showed him a crown, and promised him Mary as soon as the deed was done.

Bothwell recalls the actual night of the murder in great detail: after leaving a wedding reception, he walked in the deepest shadows from Holyrood to Kirk o'the Fields. While making his way through the dark, he first saw the face of his dead mother, then he tripped over and injured a sleeping dog, and finally, as he approached the house where Darnley lay recuperating from pneumonia, the sky suddenly lit up with fire and the house exploded. As he ran back toward the Queen's palace and the safety of the celebration, he was stopped short by an aminorous voice which told him of the fatal change which was even then taking place: "Welcome to thee, the knight that was,/ The felon now forever more."

According to Bothwell, the murder of Darnley was just the beginning of a concerted effort to destroy his relationship with Mary. Maitland, speaking for the rest, then encouraged Bothwell to press his suit with the widowed Queen, and even took the trouble to sign and deliver the Ainslie Bond.³⁰ Bothwell was further urged to

³⁰A controversial document signed by a coterie of Scottish nobles in support of Bothwell's announced intention to wed Mary and so called because it was signed at a place called Ainslie's Tavern.

intercept Mary on her return from a journey for the purpose of persuading her to escape with him. Bothwell carried out this advice by lying about a false rebellion and convincing the frightened queen to follow him to his castle for her own safety. Once on familiar ground, Bothwell took the advice of his friends, asked Mary to be his wife, and assured her that he was taking this bold step with the support of the entire Scottish Parliament. Only after Mary had reluctantly consented did Bothwell find the tables turned against him and the nobles objecting to his 'immoral abduction' of the Queen.

At this point in his story, Bothwell admits that his idealistic sense of chivalric behaviour had become a bit tarnished and that his name had long since been "struck off the knightly roll." He is particularly sorry about his lie to Mary, realizing he had been "false to faith and chivalry," but tries to excuse it by saying that times have changed and those days are gone "When duty was a sacred thing,/ When loyal hearts the people bore,/ and priests were subject to the king." (V, 289-92) Bothwell maintained some vestiges of chivalry to the very end of his career in Scotland, for he remembers that on Carberry Hill, in the presence of all his enemies, he was "eager, intent, resolved to fight,/ Ay, to the death, as seems a knight." He challenged his enemies to personal combat and was ridiculed for "displaying idle chivalry," for none of his



adversaries was willing to die for 'chivalrous display.' Bothwell finally realized that he had been caught in the press between the passing of an old tradition and the triumph of a new one. As he watched his troops drift away, either to join the enemy or to return home, he knew that he now represented a superseded order. At this point he realized that however cowardly it might be, escape was his only hope and so, without as much as a glance at Mary, he rode toward the sea.

One of the most remarkable things about Bothwell is that it does not hold Mary responsible for the acts of violence which were committed during her reign. Aytoun, in fact, completely and specifically exonerates Mary from the two main charges of regicide and adultery by showing that she was either nowhere near the scene of the crime or that she was oblivious to what was happening. Bothwell refers to the rumors which were circulated soon after the explosion which annihilated Kirk o'the Fields and states categorically that "no saint in heaven was less to blame for wretched Darnley's death than she." As for the abduction, Bothwell remembers Mary insisting that she was not aware of having done anything to encourage him, and was anxious to know why he expected special attention or preferential treatment:

What word of mine has raised your hopes
 In such a wild degree?
 I gave you trust, because I deemed
 Your honor free from stain . . .
 (V, 458-461)

Especially painful to Bothwell's memory is Mary's expression of disappointment:

And can it be
 That Bothwell has his Queen betrayed?
 Bothwell, my first and foremost knight,
 Bothwell, whose faith I deemed most bright,
 More pure than any spotless gem
 That glitters in my diadem.

 Are these your thanks for all my grace,
 Is this your knightly vow?
 (V, 387-92, 466-67)

Mary's refusal to take seriously Bothwell's expression of love caused the rough Borderer to become unnaturally violent. He sensed that blood was "rushing and burning to his brain" and he felt "all the worst passions of his soul break out at once beyond control." Bothwell admits that at this point he threw away 'pity and remorse' and stood before his queen as 'a rebel.' The rest of the story is brief: after a month of uneasy reign and unhappy marriage, Bothwell was forced to flee and Mary was taken prisoner--they never met again.

Aytoun's poem provides an image of Mary which is almost self-contradictory: an innocent femme fatale. Her innocence is proved by Bothwell's testimony and by her incredulous response to his proposal and her reply of 'a burst of frenzied tears.' Her role as a femme fatale is vindicated

by the increasingly devastating effects she had on Bothwell. During his descent from 'the pure worship' of his first sight of her to 'the magic charm' of her bedside visit to 'the awful deed' of Darnley's murder done on her behalf, to the ignominious plea for death with which the poem ends, Bothwell's life was centered around Mary and motivated by a desire to please her. His love for her caused him to be more ambitious and foolhardy than he ordinarily would have been. Completely without encouragement, but always with the unquenchable hope of winning her, Bothwell murdered, plundered, and lied with no thought for the consequences until it was too late and he was left with only his memories and the prospect of a premature death in a hostile land.

Aytoun's creation of a naive and innocent Mary contradicts his claim of historical accuracy. However partisan the reader might be, it is clear that Aytoun's lily-white queen will not bear close scrutiny. In fact, neither Aytoun nor Miss Bronte comes close to describing what was probably the real truth about Mary. The latter delivers a harsh moral judgment while Aytoun sees no need for any kind of censure, and the reasons for the one writer's blindness and the other's overreaction to Mary's faults are complex and difficult to explain. As mentioned above, it was probably Charlotte's rearing that made her so adamant about Mary, while Aytoun's predisposition toward

her was a combination of his Jacobitism, his desire to defend one who had too long been maligned, and his natural attraction to Mary as a woman of great charm and appeal. The fact that he wanted Mary to be both a devastator of men and an innocent woman points up his inability to resolve the paradox of Mary's character and to this degree he is a product of his time. He strained out the undesirable parts of Mary's legends in much the same way as Thomas Bowdler screened the works of Shakespeare, and the result in both cases was far removed from the truth.

B. The Femme Fatale in Drama

The dramatic stage is an excellent vehicle for any one interested in the femme fatale image of Mary Stuart. There the complexities of her relationship with the men of her court can be studied from every angle and some conclusions reached about the extent of her guilt in leading her lovers to their quick and bloody deaths. This exposition was not possible, however, for the English stage underwent a famine during the first three-quarters of the nineteenth century. Subjects as ripe with possibilities as Mary's love affairs were ignored in favor of formula melodramas and spectacular burlesques headlined by walking dogs and climaxed with great waterfalls. This study will consider three pieces of literature which can be categorized as drama. Of these, only one, James Haynes' Mary Stuart, was written specifically for the stage. Walter Savage Landor's Imaginary Conversation between Mary and Bothwell is included because the nature of its dialogue brings it closer to drama than to either fiction or poetry. The third piece, Swinburne's Chastelard, with its long speeches and lack of action, was never considered as anything but closet drama. This lack of stage-worthiness does not indicate a lack of literary quality, nor does it mean that these men were indifferent to Mary as a literary subject. It merely points to the fact, if an explanation must be found, that both Landor and

Swinburne recognized that neither their own abilities nor present conditions in the theater warranted their trying to write successful plays about Mary Stuart.

In 1840, a prominent dramatist of the London circuit, James Haynes, admitted in the 'Advertisement' to his play, Mary Stuart, that, in choosing to write about Mary's relationship with her personal secretary, David Rizzio, he had undertaken a very difficult task:

I embarked my humble powers, with more ardour than consideration, in the attempt to construct a play out of the existing materials, little thinking at the time, what difficulties my imagination had concealed from my judgment. It was not until I had proceeded too far to retract, (for no man likes to throw away his labour) that I discovered how much . . . the nature of the subject, and even the tone of the characters, were calculated to obstruct my design. Ruthven was too savage, Rizzio too despicable, to be faithfully represented on stage; and Mary's attachment to her favourite could not be rendered prominent, without the greatest danger . . . of suppressing the only circumstances that could palliate, or indeed account for the sanguinary act.

The 'sanguinary act' to which Haynes refers and toward which the action of the play builds, is the brutal murder of Rizzio at the hands of a group of nobles headed by Darnley and Ruthven. Their animosity to Rizzio stemmed mainly from jealousy of his role as the Queen's favorite and the immense political power which accrued from such a

position. The nobles knew that Rizzio was a major obstacle in their campaign to gain control of the government and resented him because of it.

When the play begins, Rizzio is so firmly in control that all access to the Queen, even that of her own husband, is granted only by his permission. A suspicion begins to grow about Rizzio's true intentions about Scotland which is aggravated by his nationality and his religion. When Ruthven, the ranking noble in all Scotland, is refused an audience with Mary, he objects to these very things: "I hate him for his country; his religion." By the beginning of the third act, the situation has deteriorated so badly that Darnley, as titular king, takes it upon himself to set up an ad hoc court to try Rizzio. Mary draws the final battle line between Rizzio, herself, and the nobles by promptly revoking the sentence of this court, dismissing the charges against her secretary, and chastising those responsible for the travesty of justice. This humiliation causes Darnley, who had previously not been committed to a violent solution to the Rizzio problem, to join forces with Ruthven and promise to destroy the foreigner by any means necessary.

To this point in the play, Rizzio has been the subject of controversy, but has not been allowed to show himself as an individual. This is changed when, in the scene immediately following Mary's breaking up of the kangaroo

court, Rizzio comes on stage alone for the first time and unexpectedly declares his love for Mary. When Mary enters immediately after with news of opposition to their relationship by the nobles, Rizzio offers to leave the court but Mary refuses to let him go and promises to save him from any attempts on his life. As the Mary-Rizzio dialogue continues, it becomes clear that Haynes intended Rizzio to have a dual role: the first, an historical/political role, comes from being a Catholic interloper into the politics of Protestant Scotland and thereby acting as an instrument of division between the Catholic Queen and her Protestant nobles; the second role is much different, for here Rizzio is a man pitifully in love with his queen, who wants, above everything else, to protect her from a husband she despises and from retainers she fears. Either role would have been a dangerous one but the fact that Haynes gives Rizzio both indicates how complex he thought the relationship between the Italian musician and the Scottish Queen might have been.

The final scene of the play brings the climax toward which events have been building. Rizzio and Mary are alone in the Queen's chamber when the old man blurts out a confession of love and says he has revealed his secret because he has a 'dark premonition of death.' Mary's immediate response to this surprising revelation is an admission of unwise though innocent behaviour:

When too late, I see my own
Rash conduct too; I've been to blame for much
Of this distress and error: I have acted
lightly, not guiltily; but guilt and shame
Have small beginnings both: 'tis hell's device
To plunge its victim into hopeless crime.

Almost before these words of regret are out of Mary's mouth, the nobles break in and begin to attack Rizzio as the curtain falls.

The immediate subject of Haynes' play is the struggle for power between the leaders of Scotland's oldest families and a Florentine musician who came to Mary's court as a servant and stayed to become the royal favorite. Not centrally involved in this struggle but very crucial in the play, however, is the personality of the Queen, whose influence is clearly felt, especially on the character of Rizzio. In the very first scene, there is grumbling about Mary's being "as much as ever in the hands of Rizzio," and about a report that Mary allowed Rizzio to sit between the King and herself at a recent pageant. In Act II, scene iii, after Rizzio has repeatedly offered himself as a buffer between the Queen and her angry nobles, Mary rewards him by inviting him to join her in a bit of recreation--the acting-out of a simple play. During this skit, Mary completely forgets herself and allows Rizzio the freedom of a short caress and some intimate words. This brief interlude so moves him that as soon as Mary leaves to dress for the activities of the evening, he confesses his love openly and prays for more

opportunities to be close to her. Several instances follow in which Mary unwittingly fans this flame: she rescues Rizzio from her husband's ersatz trial; she pleads with him to stay at court on the grounds that she "needs him"; she shows herself to an angry mob which is demanding Rizzio's death; she tells him when he insists on leaving that she must see him "once more, and that the last"; and finally, she sits with him alone in a nearly-dark room and listens to him sing French lovesongs only to realize that they are meant for her.

Mary, it can be argued, is innocent of any direct share in Rizzio's death, but this argument is misleading and not really to the point. She allowed him unwarranted freedom and undeserved intimacies. She caused him to speak and act in a way he had no right to speak or act, but he was helpless, for thinking of Mary caused him to become unnaturally bold and forthright. As a result, Rizzio stayed when he should have fled and was reckless when he should have been most cautious.

In the 'Advertisement' to the play, Haynes says that one of the major obstacles to writing a successful play about Rizzio and Mary was the utter impossibility of determining the precise nature of their relationship. The playwright then goes on to explain how he attempted to solve this difficulty: "I have produced scenes which, without countenancing the imputation of actual guilt, are still sufficiently marked by

indiscretion, to soften the otherwise mitigated horror of the catastrophe." Here the playwright solves a problem which resulted from wanting to walk the thin line between censure and license. This happened to a greater or lesser degree with most of the writers who felt disposed toward Mary Stuart. They tended not to blame her directly for the destruction of men who loved her, or, as Haynes says, to "make an imputation of actual guilt." Instead of charging her with malice and deviousness, they called her 'indiscreet' in her affairs with men. Haynes does not indicate that there was any immorality between Mary and Rizzio, but there are scenes, notably the afore-mentioned third scene of Act Two, in which the Queen momentarily forgets the required demeanour of her royal position and hints things she does not mean to hint. As vague as these charges of indiscretion and lack of propriety are, no mid-Victorian writer would have been willing to be any more specific. Not even in Swinburne's play, where Mary is as bold as she is anywhere, is it clear that she used the bed to weave her spell; Mary never seduced, she merely charmed, and any man who suffered and died under her spell did so of his own accord and by his own foolishness.

One writer who recognized his inadequacy to write sustained drama, but yet who wished to express his ideas about Mary Stuart in dramatic form was Walter Savage Landor.

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One of the few literary figures who made a successful transition from romanticism to the demands of the Victorian reading public, Landor wrote a series of one hundred and fifty dialogues, called Imaginary Conversations. In these works, such notables as popes, kings, philosophers, and poets are caught in conversation and the reader is allowed to eavesdrop on discussions of crucial issues from the past.

Among the several Conversations set in the sixteenth century is one between Mary Stuart and Lord Bothwell. The occasion is Bothwell's abduction of the Queen, and the work is concerned mainly with Mary's reaction to this rash and unexpected move. Landor is masterly in his creation of a Mary who has such a great gift of subtlety that when she seems to be most disgusted by Bothwell's audacity, she is actually very pleased. Mary's strong tones of protest become less and less convincing as the Conversation progresses.

Landor begins the femme fatale theme early by having Bothwell admit that his nervousness comes from being close to Mary and not from fear of capture: "I tremble in the presence of majesty and beauty. Where they are, there lies my law. I do confess I am afraid, and hugely; for I feel hard knockings . . . where my heart lately was." Bothwell then assures Mary that he will make her so happy with the present that she will have no cause to "pine after the past."

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This obvious allusion to the lately murdered Darnley brings an immediate reaction from Mary, and her tongue-in-cheek chastisement of Bothwell for his part in the regicide is really a disguised expression of relief:

He was very handsome; and you must
acknowledge it--If he had only been
less cross and jealous and wayward and
childish What is over is over--
God forgive you, bad man! . . . It was
all you, and you dare smile! Shame upon
you, varlet! Yes; now you look as
you should do. Nobody ought to be more
contrite. You may speak again . . . I
mean if you will speak reasonably.³¹

Bothwell is clever enough to know when he is being encouraged and makes the most of Mary's token opposition. He knows that Mary has just lost a husband she despised, and that now she needs someone to protect her from those who would usurp her throne. When his offer of love and protection is repulsed, Bothwell is quick to remind Mary that she was the cause of his desperate act:

Do you look so sternly on me, when you
yourself have reduced me to this extremity?
And now, worse! Worse! do you deprive me
of the last breath, by turning away from me
those eyes, the bright unerring stars of my
destiny? (p. 53.)

³¹T. Earle Welby, ed., The Complete Works of W. S. Landor (London: Chapman and Hall, 1927), 51. All subsequent references will be made by page number in the text.

Mary, on the other hand, protests Bothwell's behaviour and pretends ignorance of his intent as long as is necessary to keep up appearances, but part of Landor's skill is evident in the creation of a queen who knows exactly how much protest is enough and the value of expedient compromise. She acts out her drama with consummate skill and keeps her admirer far enough away to avoid trouble but never too far to cause him to lose interest. When Bothwell gets too precise in his suggestions, Mary backs him off by claiming not to "understand a single word of what you're saying," and then changing the subject. Or, when Bothwell tries to convince her that he has brought her to his castle for "Safety, for freedom, for the protection of a dutiful subject to the burning heart of a gallant man," Mary pretends to be incredulous: "I am frightened out of my senses at the mere mention of any such thing. What can you possibly mean? I never knew the like." Mary plays her part so well that even when Bothwell address her as his 'beloved lady,' she warns him that he must address her by a title which is 'within the rules and regulations.'

As the scene draws to a close, Bothwell gets even bolder and more aggressive. He apologizes for any offense he might have given but confesses that he lost control of his reason when he first saw Mary:

For surely he is most unfortunate, who,
 having ventured the most to serve you,
 has given you thereby the most offense.
 I do not say I hazarded my freedom; it
 was lost when I first beheld you: I
 do not say I hazarded my life; I had none
 until today. (p. 54)

In one last desperate attempt to win the day, Bothwell
 makes a physical move toward Mary. At first he is resisted,
 but then is given encouragement by Mary's ambiguous answer:

MARY: Move your hand off
 my knee. Do not lay your cheek there, Sir! O
 Bothwell! I am tired to death, take me back! O
 take me back! Pray do! If you have any pity.

BOTHWELL: Would your Highness be pleased to
 repose awhile, and remain by yourself in a
 chamber upstairs?

MARY: I think it might do me some good.
 (p. 55)

With this capitulation, the Conversation ends and the reader
 is left to imagine what, if anything, will happen in the
 upper bedroom.

Landor seems to assume Mary's duplicity in the
 abduction and considers her opposition to Bothwell's
 advances insincere. In fact, one of Landor's methods to
 give his dialogue a thoroughly realistic tone and to make
 his two characters complex and subtle, is to give Mary an
 occasional tendency to 'play-act.' That is, Mary pretends
 ignorance when ignorance is not possible and over-reacts
 at Bothwell's slightest hint. It is a possibility which

should not be overlooked that Landor means for this facade of innocence, especially when it is unbelievably transparent, to be perfectly obvious to the reader, and, therefore, to be the prime contributing factor in the construction of the image he wanted. If this is the case, it was an ingenious idea, for Mary's abduction was the culmination of Bothwell's determination literally to stake his life on her acceptance of him, and it is not until the last ten lines that Bothwell [and we] realize that he is not to be disappointed.

Landor, unlike his friend Swinburne, had not life-long passion for Mary. This Conversation was probably the result of a general impression of Mary rather than of careful and extensive research. Landor was fascinated, if only for a moment, with Mary's feminine wiles and subtle techniques. The fact that the piece was, as Forster says, 'interfused with intense passion,' probably means that Landor found Mary to be exotic, exciting, and a woman of scandal whose power over men made her consummately attractive in the middle of a century whose women were for the most part pale imitations of the Scottish Queen.

The third writer who chose a dramatic form for his study of Mary Stuart had a special affinity for his subject. Algernon Swinburne believed, with some justification, that the Swinburnes had been among Mary's strongest supporters, and that one ancestor in particular, Thomas Swinburne, had

been one of Mary's lovers and had fought for her in England.³² Swinburne says in an 1882 poem, "Adieux à Marie Stuart," that he had given his life to Mary's memory just as his fathers had. Curtis Dahl, the author of a long and comprehensive dissertation on Swinburne's trilogy, says that Mary Stuart occupied the creative part of Swinburne's mind from 1858, the year of his Eton essay De Morte Mariae Scotorum Reginae, to 1881, which marked the end of the most productive years of his life.³³ During these years, Swinburne wrote Chastelard, Bothwell, Mary Stuart, plus a long essay in the January, 1882, issue of Fortnightly Review entitled "Notes on the Character of Mary Queen of Scots," the article on Mary in the Ninth Edition of the Encyclopedia Britannica, and the afore-mentioned "Adieux à Marie Stuart."

The first play of the long and celebrated Marian trilogy is named for one of Mary's earliest and best known victims, Pierre de Coscosel de Chastelard, a French poet who came to Scotland in the entourage which accompanied Mary when she returned to claim the Scottish throne. The name 'Chastelard' became synonymous with the tradition of love martyrology in Renaissance poetry and has often been

³²Curtis Dahl, "Autobiographical Elements in Swinburne's Trilogy on Mary Stuart," Victorian Poetry, Spring, 1965, p. 91.

³³Curtis Dahl, "Swinburne's Trilogy on Mary Queen of Scots," Diss, Yale University, 1945, p. 21.



mentioned in love poems since that time. The play, published in 1865, deals with the rashness of the young poet and the tragic results of his ill-advised love for Mary.

Swinburne introduces the femme fatale theme at the very beginning of Chastelard with the use of an appropriate epigraph from John Maundeville's fourteenth-century narrative, Voiage and Travaile:

Another Yle is there toward the Northe, in
the See Occean, where that ben fulle cruele
and ful evele womman of Nature; and thei han
precious stones in hire Eyen; and thie benof
that Kynde, that zif they beholden any man,
thei slen him anon with the beholding. . . .

The thought of beautiful women who were 'fulle cruele and ful evele' was a pleasant one for Swinburne, who was attracted by the la belle dame sans merci type. He makes Mary Stuart into an almost mythic sex-figure like Astarte, Faustine, or Dolores, and uses her, as Dahl is fond of saying, as "a symbol of unsuccessful moral and aesthetic revolt."³⁴ The interest that the other authors of this period had in Mary was much more casual than Swinburne's: they saw her as a woman out of history whose life had been exciting, full of tragic events, and, above all, marked by a series of intense, brief, and always unfulfilled love affairs, while Swinburne

³⁴Curtis Dahl, "Swinburne's Mary Stuart: A Reading of Ronsard," Papers on English Language and Literature, Winter, 1965, p. 49.

[illegible]

was consumed with her and saw her as a complex symbol of his own day. Mary Stuart, for Swinburne, stood for an aesthetic and moral honesty that the Victorian period, with its militant religiosity and its stringent puritanism, could never know. As Dahl says, "the tragedy of the beautiful Queen of Scots, slain by a generation that values her not, is for Swinburne the essential tragedy of his own age, too."³⁵ Even as Mary was opposed by the likes of Knox, Walsingham, and Elizabeth herself, Swinburne felt that he, and the small minority who thought as he did, were being opposed by the great hosts of philistines who made up the English populace. The poet used Mary's life, and, in a later play, her death, to prove his continuing thesis that 'the pale Galilean' has indeed conquered and that, moreover, 'the world has grown gray with his breath.'

Swinburne intended Chastelard to be a prologue to the main work of the trilogy, Bothwell, just as he meant Mary Stuart to be an epilogue. In a letter to Alfred Austin, Swinburne is quite clear about what he wants the play to be considered:

Chastelard, begun at college when I was yet an undergraduate, could not and was never meant to be more than a mere love-play played out between two single figures before the curtain should rise,

³⁵ Dahl, "Ronsard," p. 44.

as in actual history, on the wide and crowded stage of her life-long tragedy.

and equally clear about what he prefers it not be considered:

To have mixed up the broader political or national interests with which I have attempted to deal in the second or central part, with the prelude which treated of the last episode of her main girlhood . . . would have been incompatible with my play and incongruous with my project.³⁶

This clarification is valuable if a bit obvious. To be told by the author that Chastelard was meant to be simply a confrontation of two individuals and not a rehearsal of important historical events is helpful in understanding, among other things, the character of Mary as the poet meant for it to be understood.

It is true, as Dahl, and Grace Hadaway Boswell, the author of another long dissertation of the Marian trilogy,³⁷ observe, that the poet was occasionally obliged to overpaint Mary's moods. In the play, we are told that she is 'an amorous goddess,' and 'more vengeful, more lying, more than woman ever was.' This insistence on hyperbole is

³⁶Cecil Y. Lang, ed., The Swinburne Letters (New Haven, 1959), II, p. 305.

³⁷Grace Hadaway Boswell, "Swinburne's Mary Queen of Scots, and the Historical Mary," Dissertation, University of Georgia 1960, p. v.

partly caused by Swinburne's conception of Mary as the perfect embodiment of those qualities of beauty, cruelty, love, passion, and freedom, which he so admired, and partly the result of what might be called a strong Pre-Raphaelitish influence. This latter factor is much stronger here than in either of the two later plays, and means that Swinburne avoided superimposing morality on his art or making moral judgments about Mary's behaviour. As Dahl remarks, "All that is needed for a work of art is her beauty reflected in poetry. . . . He sees no reason he should not be what is called 'indecent,' if he is true to art."³⁸ Since the need to condemn does not exist in Swinburne's list of priorities, the image of Mary in Chastelard is much different from what it is in the later plays when the poet, following the trend of historical literature, separates art from fact, and pays more attention to the demands of the latter. The languidly beautiful and fiercely passionate girl of this early play will never appear again, for Bothwell, and Mary Stuart, are products of a later period and by the time they are written, both the poet and his poetic queen will have grown older.

Chastelard opens with a conversation among the four Maries--the Queen's ladies-in-waiting, and members of the

³⁸ Dahl, dissertation, p. 461.

Houses of Hamilton, Beaton, Seyton, and Carmichael--about a game they had played with their mistress in France. Each of the five had been blindfolded and then had plucked grapes from a vine to represent their future lovers. Mary Hamilton tells of having picked a green one which promptly fell through her fingers; Mary Beaton describes how she got the stalk of a bunch already stripped; and Mary Carmichael remembers how the Queen caught a great handful, more than she had intended, and how she began to tear some of the plumpest ones apart. The significance of this game is immediately obvious: Mary Hamilton will love prematurely and lose her lover; Mary Beaton will love someone who loves another; and Mary Stuart will have such an abundance of lovers that she will unintentionally destroy the superfluous ones. The description of this game is followed immediately by a report of Mary's behaviour with Chastelard at a recent party: "She held him with her hands and eyes,/ Looking a little sadly, and at last/ Kissed him below the chin." One need only remember the epigraph from Maundeville and the prophecy of the extra grapes to realize what the young Frenchman has in store for him.

Chastelard is struck with Mary, but finds it difficult to say precisely why she attracts him. He speaks of the usual things: her 'sweet eyes,' her 'smooth temples' or 'her mouth, a flower's lip with a snake's lip, stinging sweet,/ And sweet to sting with.' Then there is 'her

speech, and shape, and hand and foot and heart/ That I would die of.' Even more of a prophet than he knows, Chastelard is not oblivious to the dangers of involvement with Mary, for he recognizes that loving the Stuart beauty can be painful and even fatal:

I know her ways of loving, all of them:
A sweet soft way the first is; afterward
It burns and bites like fire; the end of that,
Charred dust, and eyelids bitten throughout
with smoke. (I,i)

The young poet's love for Mary, like that we have seen of Rizzio and Bothwell, makes him reckless of his own safety and willing to make drastic gambles. He first hides in the bedchamber of Mary Beaton, thinking it is the Queen's, only to beg for Beaton's help when he discovers his mistake. While waiting in the shadows for Mary to appear, Chastelard remembers the story of the sea-witch whom men were compelled to love at first sight, but who, after having lain with them, always killed her lovers, The Frenchman compares his probably fate with that of the victims in the ancient tale:

Now I have kissed the sea-witch on her eyes,
And my lips ache with it: but I shall sleep
Full soon, and a good space of sleep.

but sees his imminent death as a pleasure, not as a tragedy:

My love
Would kill me if my body were past hurt
Of any man's hand; and to die thereof,
I say, is sweeter than all sorts of life.
(III, i)

Chastelard's bold confrontation of Mary in her private quarters is the pivotal scene of the play. He gives her a simple ultimatum: he must have all her love or he will die, for he refuses to share her with any other man. When he senses that Mary is not willing to commit herself to this degree, Chastelard assures her that his determination to die for her sake is no fraud:

I have come here to take farewell of love
 That I have served, and life that I have lived
 Made up of love, here in the sight of you
 That all my life's time I loved more than God,
 Who quits me thus with bitter death for it.
 For you well know that I must shortly die,
 My life being wound about you as it is.
 (III, i)

Mary's reception of this plea disappoints him. She urges the young man to forget the matter and to leave quietly. When he refuses, she tells him he will be dying in vain for, try as she may, she will soon forget all about him:

I would to God
 You loved me less; I gave you all I can
 For all this love of yours, and yet I am sure
 I shall live out the sorrow of your death
 And be glad afterwards
 God made me hard, I think. Alas, you see,
 I had fain been other than I am. (III, i)

Later, in prison, Chastelard tears up the pardon Mary has brought him and, using the gift of prophecy with which Swinburne has endowed him, tells her that he is only the first of a long line of men who will die for her love:

Men must love you in life's spite
For you will always kill them; man by man
Your lips will bite them dead; yea, though you
would,
You shall not spare me; all will die of you.
(V, i)

The last two lines of the play put a cruelly ironic finishing touch to all this as well as act as an organic link to the second play. The Queen, having just watched Chastelard's beheading, has arisen to return to the castle when an usher announces the entrance of Chastelard's successor to Mary's affections:

'Make way there for the lord of Bothwell; room--
Place for my lord of Bothwell next the queen.'

The character of Mary Stuart in Chastelard is the quintessential femme fatale. She charms her victim with kisses and caresses for her own amusement, but when he gets too bold, she loses interest and leaves him to find his way out of the web into which she has lured him. Mary was amused with Chastelard as long as their activities were confined to balls and dinner parties, but when he came to her bedchamber uninvited, Mary knew the situation had gone too far and declared an end to it. By this time, however, Chastelard's ears were so filled with her siren songs that he would hear of no retreat and chose death rather than the humiliation of losing her. When the play opens, the die has long been cast and Chastelard is firmly in Mary's

control. He confesses to Mary Beaton, who secretly loves him, that the Queen's love has changed since he first experienced it: "A sweet soft way the first is; afterward/ I burns and bites like fire." Still, Chastelard is neither willing nor able to avoid such hazards. The entire play is concerned with his futile attempts to dissolve Mary's growing indifference with the use of poetry, songs, flattering promises, and finally, the foolhardy intrusion into her private bedroom. Mary's attitude toward the whole matter is summed up in a simple warning she gave the lovesick boy while trying to persuade him to leave her room;

Alas, poor lord, you have no sense of me;
I shall be deadly to you.

Swinburne worked at creating a strong femme fatale image for various reasons. First, as we have seen earlier, he loved to assume an anti-puritan stance in his poetry and a cruel, seductive Mary would certainly have met that requirement. Even in the later plays where Mary becomes much more serene, it is John Knox, the voice of Protestant intolerance and Mary's antagonist, who is the arch-villain. Again Curtis Dahl perceives it rightly when he says, "Swinburne goes out of his way to attack puritan standards and to emphasize Mary's 'sinfulness,' a quality to which he would deny moral authority."³⁹ Too, there is the possibility

³⁹Curtis Dahl, "Swinburne's Loyalty to the House of Stuart," Studies in Philology, July, 1949, p. 456.

that in keeping with his intention of making Chastelard a prologue to the longer and more important Bothwell, he purposely made Mary into a caricature of rashness to contrast her with the queen of reason and maturity in the later plays. Also, it seems likely that Swinburne's concept of Mary may have been a projection of his concept of himself. Once more, Professor Dahl speaks to the point:

The Mary of Chastelard, youthful, passionate, enormously cruel, intense in her partially thwarted desire for amorous pleasure, eager for beauty and aesthetic stimulation, is not far different from the erotically excited, somewhat perverted, dissipated, partly frustrated, almost precious friend of John Nichol and Simeon Solomon.⁴⁰

To add to this list of similarities would not be difficult, for one could also say that Mary has the same attitude toward social strictures and the same bent toward amorality that Swinburne had. In short, the poet became involved with her in a manner that no other writer of Marian literature ever has, for to Swinburne, Mary Stuart was not just a figure out of history whose life-style and tragic history were appealing, she was a human being with whom he identified so closely that she knit herself into his very psyche.

For all these elaborate attempts to figure out Swinburne's fascination for Mary Stuart, it must be

⁴⁰Dahl, "Autobiographical Elements," p. 97.

remembered that the Mary of Chastelard, along with the Maries of the other writers, represents one approach to understanding the social and sexual paradox that was very much a part of literary life in the mid-nineteenth century. To the degree to which this approach is effective, the study of Mary's Stuart's literary image becomes a legitimate tool to help understand better that confusing era.

C. The Femme Fatale in Fiction

The historical novel was virtually the creation of Scott and all who aspired to succeed in this genre, especially those who were interested in Scottish history, were careful not to stray outside of his shadow. Such a man was James Grant, who wrote nearly sixty historical novels, most about his native Scotland, and who was an admitted imitator of Scott's methods and style. In 1851, about half-way through his career, Grant completed Bothwell; or, The Days of Mary Queen of Scots, an undistinguished narrative which covers the years from Bothwell's first meeting with Mary to his capture in Denmark as a fugitive from Scottish justice.

James Hepburn, fourth Earl of Bothwell, is a character we have confronted often during this study. He was responsible for the integrity of the border between Scotland and England and acquired a reputation for his ferocious defense of it against interlopers. Bothwell was both the most prominent and the most controversial man in Mary's life; there are several details about their relationship which are still not fully known. It is probably these unresolved and puzzling matters which account for the fact that in most of the literature which deals with Mary as a femme fatale, Bothwell plays a central role. Up to this point, the closest look we have had at Bothwell was in

Aytoun's long monologue in which he was cast as an overly-ardent and easily-cozened lover whose ideals and action were poles apart. There Bothwell confesses that his love for Mary precipitated drastic changes in his personality and in his sense of moral standards and chivalric justice. The murder of Darnley is the best illustration of how severely Bothwell had changed since the beginning of the poem. As opposed as such an act was to his idea of chivalry, Bothwell's hope of winning Mary caused him to forget his early idealism, and take part in an act which, as the voices in the dark warned him, changed him from 'knight' to 'felon.' The difficulty about such a change in Aytoun's poem is that the poet was so committed to defending Bothwell that the symptoms, both psychological and, is such a distinction can be made, spiritual, that would normally accompany such deterioration are not evident.

James Grant had no such inhibition and, as a result, his delineation of Bothwell's collapse under Mary's influence is terrifyingly realistic. He assures us that Bothwell began as "naturally good, with the qualities of warmth, generosity, and gratitude," but that his desperate love for Mary was a catalyst to those latent desires for position and power which overwhelmed his natural virtue and led him to eventual destruction.

As the novel begins, Bothwell is returning to Scotland from Denmark where he has been planning political revenge against his enemies. As he approaches the coast of Norway, his ship begins to founder and he is rescued by the son and daughter of an aristocratic Norwegian family. While he recuperates from his injuries, Bothwell falls in love with the young girl and promises to send for her when he reaches Scotland. Once home, however, his mind turns to other matters. He marries the daughter of the important Gordon clan and takes his place in the court of the new Queen just returned from France.

Bothwell immediately becomes susceptible to Mary's charms. She has such an overwhelming effect on him that he becomes an altogether different person in her presence. It is almost as though an evil force were at work within him: "The demons of a more dangerous ambition than he had before ever dared to dream of, began for the first time to pour their insidious whispers in his ears and Bothwell found that he was lost." Even when Ormiston, his man servant, lists all of Mary's previous victims for his master, Bothwell is not deterred, for, like Chastelard in the Swinburne drama, he, under Mary's spell, has become reckless and oblivious to personal safety.

The first close meeting between the two is the same sickroom visit which was so focal in Aytoun's poem:

Now that being, so long and so hopelessly his idol, was before him expanded into one of those magnificent women that are believed to exist only in the most enthusiastic visions of the poet and painter.⁴¹

This vision is sufficiently strong to drive Bothwell to plan immediately the murder of Darnley so that he can have Mary to himself. The very thought of possessing Mary is so staggering that the act of regicide seems almost trivial:

He deemed himself predestined to accomplish this terrible deed . . . though little did some of the conspirators divine the . . . sentiment, so wild and guilty, that filled with an agony, almost amounting to suffocating, the breast of Scotland's greatest earl. (II, 259)

Described earlier as "a creature of strange impulses," Bothwell now becomes the victim of an accelerating mental deterioration. The act of murdering Darnley hastens this madness to the point that he now hears "a low wailing cry upon the wind" and feels "frightful ideas pressing in crowds through his mind . . . like burning coals." Driven by an "irrestible fatality," and ignoring strong opposition from his fellow nobles, Bothwell captures Mary in broad daylight and locks her in his castle. His elaborate fantasy

⁴¹James Grant, Bothwell; or, The Days of Mary Queen of Scots (London, 1851), II, p. 123. All subsequent references will be made by volume and page numbers in the text.

about her love for him plus his loosening grip on reality have caused him to gamble on the chance of Mary's accepting his proposal. When he realizes he has lost this unrealistic wager, he flees for his life. Hunted like an animal, he is finally captured by the very people he betrayed at the beginning of the novel and dies an insane screaming savage in the prison at Malmoe.

This novel is a variation on the familiar theme of Mary's destructive effect on the men in her life. Grant chooses a useful device by showing Mary's power over Bothwell in terms of a mental collapse: he behaves normally at first but is compelled by his love for Mary to commit acts of violence which in turn compound his instability. The subject is the same--Mary's charming but fatal influence --but the metaphor of unfulfilled love expressed in terms of psychotic behaviour is a new twist.

Grant, like the other writers we have discussed, with the notable exception of Charlotte Bronte, seems reluctant to place much blame on Mary. Darnley is exceptionally boorish in Grant's story, and when Mary naturally turns to Bothwell for companionship and protection, she has no idea of how highly susceptible he will be. This susceptibility exists in two specific areas: his 'frantic love' for Mary and his 'mad ambition' for the crown. The more Bothwell becomes obsessed with sharing both Mary's bed and her throne, the more violence and crimes he is willing to commit.

The irony of Grant's version of the femme fatale image is that Mary suffers more than anyone else from Bothwell's excesses. The savage effect on his fragile mind of her innocent attention turned its poison back on her, for in his demented attempts to win her, he committed such drastic acts that her life and royal position were threatened. Indeed, as Grant says in conclusion, it became Mary's destiny "to mourn in crownless captivity the shame, the contumely, and the hopeless fate his wiles and ambition had brought upon her." (III, 245)

A second novel about Mary as femme fatale, G. J. Whyte-Melville's The Queen's Maries: A Romance of Holyrood, was published in 1862 and used by Swinburne in the writing of Chastelard. This work gave Swinburne the idea of interweaving Mary's career with those of her four ladies-in-waiting and suggested to him the utility of Chastelard as a foil to Mary. The treatment of Mary in this novel is somewhat reminiscent of that in Romantic literature: her beauty is elaborately described ("The whitest hand in all Europe hung like a snowdrop against the black volume of her draperies"⁴²); her 'Stuartness' is mentioned in several places; and she is even said to have 'tameless courage' and

⁴²G. J. Whyte-Melville, The Queen's Maries: A Romance of Holyrood (London: Ward, Luck, and Co.; 1862), p. 71. All subsequent references will be made by page number in the text.

to be 'constitutionally brave.' The difference is that the mid-century novelist had no interest in Mary as a set piece and a character set apart, but wanted to study her effect on those with whom she was thrown socially and more particularly on those men who chose so unwisely to love her.

The story is once again about Mary and Bothwell and once again it is that first view of Mary which remains the most impressive one: "He knelt . . . to tender his homage to the fair widowed bride, who looked so sweetly down upon him, with her pleading womanly beauty, softening and enhancing the majesty of the Queen. It was the first time he had ever looked on that face, which, despite of all his madness, all his crimes, was imprinted henceforth on his rebellious heart." Whyte-Melville takes a page from Grant in his characterization of Bothwell as psychotic. The difference is that here Bothwell is not ambitious but jealous. He had watched the Queen's machinations with Chastelard with amusement, for the French poet had been young and helpless to oppose Mary's charms: "It mattered not what became of him: to live or die he cared not; but it must be at the Queen of Scotland's feet." Now, all this was changed with the entrance of Darnley, newly arrived from England with Elizabeth's blessing to win Mary as his wife. With a serious rival at hand, Bothwell's mental state, which had always been delicate, begins to decline rapidly and he becomes more violent than ever. Mary's

decision to marry her English cousin causes Bothwell's sanity to snap completely. The description of what the loss of Mary drives Bothwell to become is frightening:

It was but a brief period, yet it was long enough for Bothwell to bid farewell, at once and forever, to all the higher and purer feelings of his nature; to change him from a man who, with mere faults and with ingovernable passions, yet possessed of a certain uprightness, a certain chivalrous devotion to the one idol of his life, into an unscrupulous ruffian, prepared to commit any crime, to go to any length in the prosecution of his schemes, and in brutal selfishness to drag his idol down to the dust, rather than see her enshrined on the pedestal of another. (pp. 334-335)

The novel ends with the sensational murder of Darnley which is an inevitable result of the collapse described in this passage. The question of responsibility for acts committed under mental duress seems not to have been a problem with either Grant or Whyte-Melville. In each instance, it is as though Bothwell were a tragic hero with the classical hamartia--in these cases, ambition and jealousy--and was forced to stand or fall according to how successfully he combated these major weaknesses.

Although sharing the story with her ladies-in-waiting causes Mary to be less visible here than in the novel by Grant, her presence is still very much felt. This presence is symbolized by a dark fate hanging over Mary's head, of which she is constantly aware and about which she warns Bothwell:

"Have a care my dear! There seems to be a fatality about Mary Stuart. Those who love me best seem ever to be the most unfortunate." Mary is sensitive to the needs of Bothwell, but her attempts to help him understand her decision to marry Darnley serve only to drive him further into dissolution. To this point of Whyte-Melville's novel, there is a great similarity with the works of Aytoun, Haynes, and especially Grant. At the end of the book, however, the author presents an interesting thesis about Mary and her relationship to her court, and especially to Bothwell, toward whom she had shown such sympathy. He wonders if perhaps Mary was too good, too virtuous, or too charming for her own good or the good of those who wanted to be beside her:

The fairest daughter of the Stuarts was
always, alas! more of the woman than the
queen. Had she been less frank, less
trusting, less kindly, less affectionate,
. . . the crown of Scotland would have sat
more firm upon her head.

The matter of Mary and her lovers has now turned full cycle with Whyte-Melville's question about virtuous excess which represent the opposite end of the continuum from the diatribe with which this chapter began. The writers of this period differed considerably in their appraisal of Mary's behavior and moral turpitude. To the highly moral daughter of the Rector of Haworth, Mary was a whore, and very reprehensible and

unattractive; to Swinburne, she was the symbol of rebellion in the form of a consumately sensuous woman to whom one man was nearly the same as another; to Landor, she was a beguiling and clever woman who manipulated her lover's desires with great skill and was in control of every situation; to Aytoun, she was a naive Scottish girl to whom passionate love came naturally; and finally, to Grant, and particularly to Whyte-Melville, Mary was a woman of extraordinary virtue and remarkable goodness who naturally inspired men to great love and to the foolish acts and madness which accompanied that love.

III. Mary Stuart as Historical Queen: The Literature of Debate (1865-1900)

A. Froude's History: The Wellspring of Debate

Our discussion of Marian literature in the first two-thirds of the nineteenth century has shown that the writer who chose his subject matter from history neither professed nor was particularly expected to be accurate or objective. Sir Walter Scott, who was more responsible than anyone else for the rise of 'historicism' in the century, is a prime example. In a recent study of the English historical novel, Avrom Fleischman cites Scott's determination to emphasize "the character and passions of the actors--those passions common to men in all stages of society."⁴³ What Fleischman calls 'this uniformitarian view' is continued in the prefatory statement to Ivanhoe where Scott talks of combining past and present: "It is necessary, for exciting interest of any kind, that the subject assumed should be, as it were, translated into the manners, as well as the language, of the age we live in."⁴⁴ Even when he deals

⁴³ Avrom Fleischman, The English Historical Novel (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1971) p. 24.

⁴⁴ Fleischman, p. 25.

with Mary Stuart in The Abbot, Scott forces history to take a second place to his more general desire to "explore the influence of religious ideology as it operated on the formation of the gentry."⁴⁵

As the century moved along, the poets, dramatists, and novelists who were drawn to the story of Mary Stuart's life were seldom reluctant to change or slant the facts to suit their own purposes. Liberties were taken with real events and dates, characters were invented or eliminated, and important words were put in the mouths of people who would never have had an opportunity to say such things. The modern reader wonders, for instance, if the queen's landing at Workington was as emotional as Wordsworth's 1833 sonnet makes it seem, or if Rizzio was as infatuated with Mary as Haynes claims, or if Mary Stuart was either as totally depraved or as wonderfully pure as the poetic versions of Bronte and Aytoun insist she was. One is forced to conclude that the writer of historical literature, when faced with what he saw as a choice between factual accuracy and an interesting narrative, would invariably have chosen the latter.

Nor were the belles lettres the only available outlet for a literary man's imagination about past events. Many of the

⁴⁵Fleischman, p. 61.

historical chronicles themselves were written by men who combined "history with dramatic narratives which bore a strong impress of the author's philosophy, and which espoused causes."⁴⁶ Writing history, for these men, was a literary exercise. "Macaulay," says Gooch, "was the most popular and most eloquent interpreter of Whig historical philosophy," and, together with Hallam, "shaped the opinion of the world."⁴⁷ Thomas Carlyle did not begin to write history until he was in his late thirties, and then used it, Gooch claims, "to illustrate his Scottish Calvinistic ethical teaching."⁴⁸ It was in such works as The French Revolution and the character sketches of Luther and Knox, that the principle of the "elected hero" was established. This concept was carried further in the edition of Cromwell's letters and speeches, which shows perhaps better than any other work that the creative writer had swallowed the historian in Carlyle's thinking. As Gooch says, "Carlyle was totally unfitted for the technical duties of an editor.

⁴⁶Richard Brooks, "The Development of the Historical Mind," Backgrounds to Victorian Literature, ed. Richard Levine (San Francisco: Chandler Publishing Co., 1967) p. 181.

⁴⁷G. P. Gooch, History and Historians in the Nineteenth Century (Boston: Beacon Press, 1959) p. 276.

⁴⁸Gooch, p. 301.

...He made little effort to seek the best text, allowed himself a wide license in emendations, modernized the speeches . . . and cared little for technique so long as he could make his hero live."⁴⁹ As for James Anthony Froude, Carlyle's chief disciple and a man whose name will appear often in this chapter, even his enemies admitted that he had a "clear and graphic style" and they lauded his "consummate art in imagery and diction."⁵⁰ One modern scholar says that "Froude owed much of his great gift of portraiture to Shakespeare."⁵¹ For all his fine stylizing, Froude was, as we shall see, one of the most biased of historians, and it was yielding to this bias that made him the subject of a major controversy.

The day of the literary amateur dealing loosely with historical fact to serve his own cause was soon to be ended by a new trend in historiography: the so-called 'German school' of history-writing which, as Gooch says, "raised history from a subordinate place to the dignity of an independent science."⁵² The movement's two founders, B. G.

⁴⁹Gooch, p. 307.

⁵⁰Anonymous review of Froude's History of England, Volumes I-VI, Catholic World, Volume XI, No. 63. (June, 1870) p. 289.

⁵¹Sheldon Vanauden, "Froude: A Collision of Principles," Histories and Historians, ed. Albert Prior Fell (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1968) p. 100.

⁵²Gooch, p. 14.

Neibuhr and Ernst Ranke, demanded that the writing of history be conducted on the principles of science: disinterested observation and the objective weighing of facts. The most crucial part of this new approach was a new concept in the use of sources which is referred to by Ranke in the "Preface" to German History in the Reformation Era:

I see a time coming when we shall build modern history no longer on the accounts even of contemporary historians, except where they possessed original knowledge, much less of derivative writers, but on the relations of eyewitnesses and original documents.

Gooch's summary of Ranke's contribution to the discipline of writing history can be applied to the 'German school,' generally, and represents a significant contrast to the techniques of Macaulay, Carlyle, and Froude:

The first was to divorce the study of the past as much as humanly possible from the passions of the present. . . .The second service was to establish the necessity of founding historical construction on strictly contemporary sources. He was the first to use the archives well. When he began to write, historians of high repute believed memoirs and chronicles to be primary authorities. When he laid down his pen, every scholar with a reputation to make or to lose had learned to content himself with the papers and correspondence

of the actors themselves and those in immediate⁵³ contact with the events they describe.

It is remarkable to note that although Niebuhr's first two volumes on the history of Rome appeared in 1811, the scientific approach to historical research did not enjoy wide-spread acceptance in England until the rise to prominence of Freeman, Green, and Stubbs, better known as the 'Oxford school,' in the early 1870's. It is true that Froude travelled to Spain at least twice to consult the hitherto untapped archives at Simancas, and that he quoted at length from documents and letters in the History; but, unfortunately, he allowed a violent prejudice to offset in his narrative what objectivity might have been present in his methods.

James Anthony Froude's early religious experiences helped form the biases which became so obvious in the Elizabethan volumes. Although he early fell under the influence of Newman, he lost interest when his mentor moved to the Church of Rome and finally became an arch-opponent of the Anglo-Catholic movement. He continued, however, to be interested in the history of the English Reformation. At Oxford he had been taught that "it was the most unfortunate

⁵³Gooch, pp. 96-97.

incident which had destroyed the unity of the Church . . . and a schism promoted by corrupt and tyrannical princes."⁵⁴ Froude did not believe this, for he felt that the Reformation was "the root and source of the expansive force which has spread the Anglo-Saxon race over the globe."⁵⁵ Furthermore, he felt that the Church of Rome "was, and always had been, the enslaver of mind and soul."⁵⁶

Froude wrote the most controversial piece of Marian literature, if it may be called that, in the entire nineteenth century, in Volumes VII through XII of his History of England, which were subtitled 'The Reign of Elizabeth.' This work projects an image of Mary Stuart which is so negative that an entire body of literature, both in the belles lettres and in the essay and 'quasi-documentary,' rose up to oppose, or, in a few isolated cases, to applaud, the historian's conclusions. The Mary who appears in the pages of Froude's History, and in the works that appeared after it, is vastly different from the poetic figures of the romantic weeper or the seductive femme fatale, though vestiges of both

⁵⁴ Dunn, I, p. 170.

⁵⁵ Richard Garnett, Edmund Gosse, eds., English Literature: An Illustrated Record (New York: Grosset and Dunlop, 1904), IV, p. 331.

⁵⁶ Gooch, p. 311.

occasionally appear. Mary has transcended those earlier literary images and, in keeping with the interests of the period, now appears in a strictly historical role--the Queen-Dowager of France, and Queen of Scotland, who also claims succession to the English throne, and is the champion of continental Catholicism. It is to these two latter facts--Mary's declared desire to have Elizabeth's crown and her devotion to the Church of Rome--that the reasons for Froude's hatred of Mary can be traced.

The source of the controversy surrounding Froude's treatment of Mary in the History was his blatant partiality, or, if you wish, his conscious lack of accuracy. The Fortnightly called him "constitutionally inaccurate,"⁵⁷ while a French critic cited instances where Froude joined together two passages of a letter as though they were one, and where he had included within quotation marks the paraphrase of another.⁵⁸ James Westfall Thompson analyzes Froude's work correctly when he says that

he was as inaccurate a worker as any great historian can afford to be and still retain some standing. He was unforgivably careless . . . but his inaccuracy extended to another

⁵⁷Reynolds, p. 62.

⁵⁸L. Wiesener, "Marie Stuart et ses derniers historiens," Revue des Questions Historiques (1868) IV, p. 387.

more dangerous fault. . . .He wrote with prejudice, or as an advocate.⁵⁹

Froude was militantly pro-Protestant, pro-English, and pro-Tudor. Since Mary Stuart represented the antithesis to all three of these categories--she was Catholic, Scottish, and a Stuart--she came in for a great deal of abuse. In addition to these accidents of birth, or, more likely, as a result of them, Froude considered Mary as being of inferior character. An instance of this is when, on the occasion of the death of Francis II, we are told that "Mary Stuart . . . was speculating before the body was cold on her next choice."⁶⁰ Froude consistently abused the advantages of hindsight in this manner and assigned motives to Mary that she may never have had.

As negative as all this is, it acts only as a frame of reference for the more important, and more controversial, issue in the History: Mary's 'guilt,' i.e. her active participation in the planning and perpetration of three distinct crimes. Final proof of Mary's part in these violations--the murder of Darnley, the adulterous affair

⁵⁹A History of Historical Writing (New York: Macmillan, 1942) II, p. 307.

⁶⁰James Anthony Froude, History of England from the Fall of Wolsey to the Defeat of the Spanish Armada (New York: Charles Scribner, 1971) IV, p. 209. All subsequent references will appear as History with the appropriate volume and page numbers.

with Bothwell, and the plot to assassinate Elizabeth--would have justified Froude's blazing attack on Mary; but the fact is that these allegations have never been proved nor the crimes solved with the finality which the tone of Froude's narrative implies.

It should not come as a surprise to the reader of this study, after a look at Froude's biases and pre-suppositions about Mary Stuart as they sear the pages of the History, that a debate of major proportions began to shape up in the decade following the appearance of the final two volumes. From the standard literary genre of the novel and the drama as well as from the formal essay and the 'quasi-documentary,' there came immediate responses to Froude's image of Mary Stuart. Some of the authors charged the historian head-on while others, not even mentioning his name, were satisfied to let their work stand as their statement.

And so it comes to this: James Anthony Froude almost single-handedly changed the current of Marian literature in the latter third of the nineteenth century. At a time when the writing of history was on its way toward being taken seriously, he filled his pages with footnotes and masqueraded his biases as fact. By doing this, he invited opposition and challenge, and he was not disappointed. The reaction to the History and its treatment of the Scottish Queen showed that interest in Mary Stuart had not flagged

and that the fascination over her remarkable life had not been eroded by the passage of time. The Mary Stuart that emerged from Froude's pages was conceived in hatred and born in prejudice, and thereby provoked a coterie of writers to come scrambling to her rescue. If Froude was not accurate, he was at least provocative, and perhaps it was somehow fortunate that, as Gooch says, he "never realized that the duty of the historian is neither eulogy nor invective, but cool interpretation of complex processes and conflicting ideals."⁶¹

⁶¹Gooch, p. 316.

B. Debate and the Historical Queen in the Essay

Until now, our study of the changing Marian images in the literature of the nineteenth century has dealt exclusively with poetry, drama, and fiction. To these must now be added the formal essay, which became a common vehicle of opinion and developed into a literary genre of some influence and importance. These literary essays usually appeared first in one of the important critical magazines such as Blackwood's or The Edinburgh Review and often reappeared as chapters in a book. The search for the truth about Mary Stuart was an appropriate subject for a literary form which acted as midwife for a number of important political and ethical controversies.

An early and loyal supporter of Froude's opinions in the pages of the major reviews was Charles Kingsley. The two men were close friends for many years and, in fact, the two things for which Kingsley is most celebrated occurred as a direct result of his close relationship with the historian: Froude's essay on English seamen inspired Kingsley's novel, Westward, Ho!, and it was during a review of Volumes VII and VIII of the History that Kingsley made his unfortunate remark about J.H. Newman's carelessness with the truth. Kingsley and Froude often corresponded on the Marian question and though Kingsley did not write prolifically on the subject, he did record his opinions in an essay about one of Mary's chief

sixteenth-century detractors, George Buchanan.⁶² Buchanan had once been an admirer of Mary's and had, in fact, even dedicated poetry to her on occasion.⁶³ His pen, unfortunately, went where his political obligations led it, and so, after the estrangement and murder of Darnley, Buchanan fled into the camp of his patron, the earl of Lennox, Darnley's father. From this new vantage point, Mary looked different to the poet and with the publication of three works---Book of Articles, written to convince the Commissioners at York of Mary's guilt with Bothwell; The Tyrannical Reign of Mary Stewart; and Detection of Mary Queen of Scots, in which the Casket Letters were first published---Buchanan became, after Knox, Mary's chief traducer.

It is chiefly in the Detectio, to give the work its Latin name, that Kingsley expresses interest. He starts his essay with the assumption that the question of the Casket Letters' authenticity was settled by Froude and discusses the problem only as it related to Buchanan. Operating from this premise, Kingsley answers the two main charges against Buchanan: that he published letters he knew were forgeries, and that he was bitterly ungrateful to the queen who had befriended him. The

⁶²"George Buchanan, Scholar," Health and Education (New York: Appleton, 1874). All future references will be made in the text by page number.

⁶³Antonia Fraser, Mary Queen of Scots (New York: Delacorte Press, 1969), pp. 180-181.

first argument is answered by the strange logic that "no one clever enough to be a forger would have put together documents so incoherent . . .," and that "a forger in those coarse days would have made Mary write utterly alien to the tenderness, the delicacy,. . .the conscious weakness . . . which make the letters . . . more pathetic than any fictitious sorrows which poets could invent." (p. 341)

The second argument, that Buchanan owed some allegiance to Mary, is fallacious, says Kingsley, for "payment, or even favours, however gracious, should not bind any man's soul and conscience in questions of highest morality and highest public importance." (p. 302) For Buchanan's integrity and ability to see clearly, Kingsley has nothing but praise:

He was one of a people formed out of the heart of Scotland, steadfast, trustworthy, united, strong politically because strong in the fear of God and the desire of righteousness. (p. 342)

and feels that the diatribes against Mary were justified "to vindicate the national honour, to punish the guilty, and to save themselves from utter anarchy," and, finally, asks that he not be blamed "too severely for yielding to the temptation common to all men of genius when their creative power is roused to its highest energy by a great cause and in great indignation." (p. 345)

The likelihood that Kingsley was interested in Buchanan for his own sake is not a strong one; it was his

retaliation against Mary that made him eligible for this panegyric. Buchanan's works were part of the anti-Marian canon and he was one of the patron saints, as it were, of the long struggle to prove conclusively that Mary was guilty as charged. Another factor which may have influenced Kingsley's choice was a footnote about Buchanan in Froude's History:

The vituperative eloquence which has been poured upon Buchanan's Detectio has failed to expose a single serious error in it, and in the few trifling points where a question can be fairly raised upon Buchanan's accuracy, is it clear that the fault does not lie after all in the inadequate information of his critics? The book has been called slanderous from the completeness of the case which it establishes. The sentimentalism which cannot tolerate the notion of the Queen of Scots' guilt denounces the evidence against her as forged. But to denounce is not to prove. The account which was now published was the deliberate plea of Protestant Scotland at the bar of Europe; and as the passionate aspect of the story gives place to calmer consideration, it will receive at last the authoritative position which it deserves.

(X, p. 321)

The authenticity of the Detectio, and hence, of the Casket Letters, is mentioned often in these pages, for it is one of the Marian debate's most controversial issues. Hosack had bitter contempt for Buchanan's work, calling him "the prince of literary prostitutes," and was amazed that Froude--he didn't mention Kingsley, but the distinction is

academic--would take Buchanan at his word. Others have felt similarly, including Mary's latest historian, who notes that Buchanan was given the responsibility for turning the young James against his mother by propaganda, and who makes what might be a definitive comment on Buchanan's work:

But for her actions and movement during the next eight months, the critical period from the birth of James in June, 1566, until the death of Darnley in February, 1567, it is extremely important to distinguish between information and reports written at the time--that is to say before the death had taken place--such as ambassadors' comparatively impartial reports on the state of Scotland, and Mary's own letters posted to France, which could not be altered by arriere pensee, and those accounts written long after the event, specifically to prove Mary's guilt with Bothwell. These later accounts include the Book of the Articles written by Buchanan as an accusatory brief at the time of her trial in England, two years later, and Buchanan's own History, and his Detection of Mary Queen of Scots. The point of Buchanan--who was bound by allegiance to Lennox, and therefore to Darnley--is to prove as salaciously as possible that Mary had enjoyed an adulterous liaison with Bothwell from the birth of her child, and possibly before. But in the course of making his charges, Buchanan allowed himself the luxury of so many glaring inaccuracies that it is difficult to take his opinion on any aspect of the situation seriously.⁶⁴

It is appropriate that the next essay of interest is by Froude's, and Kingsley's, mentor, Carlyle, and deals with

⁶⁴Fraser, p. 269.

Buchanan's master, John Knox. The essay, entitled "The Portraits of John Knox,"⁶⁵ is vintage Carlylean Hero-worship. The ostensible subject is the various extant portraits of the Reformer, but Carlyle takes ample space for telling Knox's story and for mistreating his enemies. Mary appears as a young queen, newly arrived from France, who is being interviewed by Knox so that he might warn her of the dangers of her religion. Carlyle begins the Knox-Mary passage in a very defensive tone:

The interviews of Knox with the Queen are what one would like to produce to readers; but unfortunately they are of a tone which, explain as we might, not one reader in a thousand could be made to sympathize with or do justice to in behalf of Knox. The treatment which that young, beautiful, and high Chief Personage in Scotland receives from the rigorous Knox, would to most modern men seem irreverent, cruel, almost barbarous. (p. 356)

but goes on to applaud Knox's treatment of the young girl:

Here more than elsewhere Knox proves himself,-- here more than anywhere bound to do it,-- the Hebrew Prophet in complete perfection; refuses to soften any expression or to call anything by its milder name, or in short for one moment to forget that the Eternal God and His Word are great, and that all else is little, or is nothing; nay, if it set itself against the Most High and His Word, is the one frightful thing that this world exhibits. . . . Nothing can move Knox here or elsewhere from that standing-ground; no consideration of Queen's

⁶⁵The Works of Thomas Carlyle, Centenary Edition (London: 1915), Volume XXX. All future references will be made by page number in the text.

sceptres and armies and authorities of men is of any efficacy or dignity whatever in comparison; and becomes not beautiful but horrible, when it sets itself against the Most High. (p. 356)

After declaring Knox the easy winner in the royal interviews, Carlyle ends this brief section with a blanket condemnation of Mary's Catholicism, which was, Froude insisted, the cause of all her problems:

The tendency of all is to ask, 'What peculiar harm did she ever mean to Scotland, or to any Scottish man not already her enemy?' The answer to which is, 'Alas, she meant no harm to Scotland; was perhaps loyally wishing the reverse; but was she not with her whole industry doing, or endeavouring to do, the sum-total of all harm whatsoever that was possible for Scotland, namely, the covering it up in Papist darkness, as in an accursed winding-sheet of spiritual death eternal?'--That, alas, is the dismally true account of what she tended to, during her whole life in Scotland or in England; and there, with as deep a tragic feeling as belongs to Clytemnestra, Medea, or any other, we must leave her condemned. (p. 359)

Carlyle came to this essay with his mind made up about Mary's despotism and about Knox's monumental contributions to the cause of freedom. Any fact which would have changed these two absolutes was either bent or ignored. Mary was never given a chance to defend herself, for the debate with Knox was decided before it was begun. A modern historian comments on this dilemma in Carlyle's writing:

Indeed, in this instance, as in many others, he was the prisoner and the victim of a theory--a theory which in many respects was fruitful and produced useful results. But when it was made into a Procrustes bed into which the facts had to fit, the results were unfortunate. ⁶⁶

There were, in addition to the essays by Kingsley and Carlyle, some works which took a far more critical view of Froude's conclusions. One of the longest and most comprehensive rebuttal essays was written on a suggestion from, of all people, Froude himself, by John Skelton, a friend and frequent correspondent of the historian's. Skelton's "Defense of Mary Stuart" ⁶⁷ expresses literally the debate metaphor we have been using in this chapter, for it is in the form of a trial. It is a full-blown defense of Mary in which the author flings back protestations about Mary's infidelity and immorality in the faces of her accusers. He defends her Catholicism, her boredom with Darnley, and her marriage with Bothwell. He refutes those who would accuse her of knowing complicity in Darnley's murder or in the abduction by Bothwell. Skelton comes down especially hard on his opponents' most damaging piece of

⁶⁶F. R. Flourney, "Thomas Carlyle," Some Modern Historians of Britain, ed. by H. Ausabel et al. (New York: Dryden Press, 1961), p. 41.

⁶⁷The Essays of Shirley (London: Blackwood, 1883) Vol. I. All future references will be made in the text by page number.

evidence, the Casket Letters, and cites both internal and external evidence to support his case.

The piece begins with 'The Speech for the Lords,' which is largely summary of the major charges. Mary is accused of having "returned to reverse the Reformation," and of being "selected by the great Catholic confederacy to bring Scotland back to the Church." Next comes a description of how Mary's "passionate and uncontrollable aversion" to Darnley led her to agree to, and even help to plan, his murder. Finally, the prosecutor, quoting "the honest and impartial Buchanan," speaks of the Casket Letters: "There is real anguish in these lines; but she had become the slave of passion which she could not disobey, and which had utterly subdued her." Here the prosecution rests its case:

'I maintain, gentlemen, that the sequence of circumstances alone is sufficient to convict the Queen. . . . Amid the chaotic confusion, one story is told with fatal precision, one figure stands out in disastrous simplicity. The duty which you have to discharge is as simple and as precise.' (p. 7)

Skelton obviously constructed a prosecution case as a "straw man": it occupies four pages, while the defense covers more than seventy; the prosecution statement, being summary, is sketchy, while the speech for the defense is precise, even minute; and the prosecution, clearly influenced by the work of Froude, is made to look

overly-general and slipshod, while the defense is specific and pointed. Skelton (we presume he is the counsel for the defense) immediately eliminates Buchanan as a reliable witness, and then hammers away at the proposition that Mary's passion influenced her judgment, or, more seriously, her moral sense. Speaking of the prosecutor as if he were Froude, Skelton refers to statements not made in the initial statement, but in the History, as for example, "My learned friend has likened her to some wild animal of the forest--a pantheress, or tiger cat."

Skelton tries, in the first few pages, to eliminate the 'idle rhetoric' and get to the central question:

Whether the said Mary Stuart was privy,
art, or part, to the murder of her husband,
Henry Stuart, Lord Darnley, and whether the
said Mary Stuart was privy to the said murder
in order that she might marry the Earl
Bothwell. (p. 9)

He now points out that complicity in both crimes needs to be proved to make either single indictment valid, for, "unless the murder and the love had interlaced, the tragedy at Kirk-o'-Field would have been clearly forgotten." (p. 10)

"If Mary had wanted to kill Darnley to marry Bothwell," the defense concludes, "she needn't have done it in such a dramatic way." Darnley died because he had betrayed his confreres in the Rizzio murder plot. The defense urges the jury to recognize the distinction that Mary was startled but

not surprised by Darnley's death, and her mourning was not hypocritically elaborate. Bothwell, furthermore, was one of many in the plot and so there is no evidence that the king was killed for Bothwell's convenience.

Skelton continues to reject the 'passion theory' as he discusses the "courtship" and marriage between Mary and Bothwell. He claims that she was "deceived and cajoled" for she was "masculine in moderation, firmness, and magnanimity." "The fact is," Skelton concludes, with a sweeping generalization of his own, "no woman ever lived to whom love was less of a necessity." (p. 41)

The process of eliminating the Casket Letters as valid evidence takes the last thirty pages of the "Defense." Skelton concentrates on the "Glasgow Letter," or No.2 as we will call it in discussing Henderson's book on the Letters, and insists that on its validity, the others will stand or fall. The "Defense" admits there was a casket and that some letters to Darnley were kept there, but he reminds the reader that Mary's belongings were confiscated during her imprisonment in Lochleven and it would have been simple to mix forgeries in among a few legitimate letters. Furthermore, the behavior represented in this letter is "not typical, anomalous, and out of character." It was clearly a conspiracy, Skelton insists, for "why, of all the letters that could have been in the casket, were the two which were most condemnatory there?" As far as internal evidence is

concerned, Skelton insists that Mary's other letters are "refined in tone, elegant in expression, and harmonious in texture and composition" while the "Glasgow Letter" is very fragmented, has very little unity, has two tables of contents, and apologizes for the peculiarity of the handwriting. After answering Froude's two objections to the forgery theory, Skelton concludes the summary of internal evidence with a plea for common sense: "It is enough for me to say that no fairly intelligent man . . . can be required to believe that this is a love letter addressed to Bothwell by the Queen." (p. 53) Skelton continues his step-by-step disassembling of the Casket Letters until he is satisfied that he has forgotten nothing, however trivial. He then ends his plea to the bench with one of those elaborate pieces of partisan rhetoric of which Mary's defenders were so fond:

Placed by an unhappy chance in the very centre of the tremendous forces which were fashioning a new world, she became the victim of their violence. . . . The picture of this woman, struggling vainly against impending doom, yet bearing herself bravely in her darkest hour, in her sorest need, and to the bitter end, is one of the immortal masterpieces of history. (p. 79)

Algernon Swinburne's position in the Marian debate is unique, for he is neither on the negative side of Carlyle

and Kingsley, nor does he accept the positive and sterile conclusions of Skelton. In fact, in his two essays on Mary, one written for the Ninth Edition of Encyclopedia Britannica,⁶⁸ and the other as an appendix to the trilogy,⁶⁹ Swinburne insists that each side is doing the opposite from what it intends:

. . . they who came to curse the memory of Mary Stuart have blessed it as with the blessing of Balaam, and they who came to bless it, with tribute or panegyric or with testimony in defense, have inevitably and invariably cursed it altogether.

(Note, p. 422)

His personal disdain, he admits, is directed primarily at her defenders:

To vindicate her from the imputation of her vindicators would be the truest service that could now be done by the most loyal devotion to her name and fame. (Note, p. 422)

The reason for Swinburne's paradoxical opinion is that he did not operate with the same set of presuppositions as the rest of the participants in the discussion. The terms 'guilt' and 'innocence' had no meaning to Swinburne where

⁶⁸ (Edinburgh, 1883), Volume XV. All future references will be made in the text by page number and essay will be referred to as EB.

⁶⁹ "Note on the Character of Mary Queen of Scots," The Complete Works of Algernon Charles Swinburne, Bonchurch Edition, ed. Sir Edmund Gosse and Thomas James Wise (London: 1925-7), XIV, pp. 422-442. This essay will hereafter be referred to as Note and all references will be made in the text by page number.

Mary Stuart was concerned. He thought only in terms of her intelligence and her courage:

Many bitter and terrible things were said of that woman in her lifetime by many fierce and unscrupulous enemies of her person or her creed: many grave and crushing charges were alleged against her on plausible or improbable grounds of impeachment or suspicion. But two things were never imputed to her by the most reckless ferocity of malice or of fear. No one ever dreamed of saying that Mary Queen of Scots was a fool. And no one ever dared to suggest that Mary Queen of Scots was a coward. (Note, p. 423)

and insisted that one could not exist without the other:

Even the detractors who defend her conduct on the plea that she was a dastard and a dupe are compelled in the same breath to retract this implied reproach, and to admit, with illogical acclamation and incongruous applause, that the world never saw more splendid courage at the service of more brilliant intelligence, that a braver if not 'a rarer spirit never did steer humanity.' (EB, p. 602)

In directing his attack against both sides of the question, Swinburne predictably trains his attention on the works of the two spokesmen: Froude, whose History we have already examined, and Hosack, whose Mary Queen of Scots and Her Accusers we will look at in the last segment of this chapter. Swinburne thinks that Hosack, with his protestations of Mary's innocence, has created an impossible situation:

That a woman whose intelligence was below the average level of imbecility, and whose courage was below the average level of a coward's, should have succeeded throughout the whole course of a singularly restless and adventurous career in imposing herself upon the judgment of every man and every woman with whom she ever came into any sort of contact, as a person of the most brilliant abilities and the most dauntless daring. (Note, pp. 423-4)

or at least, along with Mary's other apologists, has left himself with two untenable alternatives:

A woman who could play the part assigned to Mary . . . must have been either the veriest imbecile whose craven folly ever betrayed in every action an innate and irresponsible impotence of mind, or at least and at best a good girl of timid temper and weak intellect, who had been tenderly sheltered all her life from any possible knowledge or understanding of evil, from all apprehension as well as from all experience of wickedness and wrong.
(Note, p. 427)

Nor does Swinburne intend to "accept the ideal of Mr. Froude's implacable and single-eyed animosity." He is convinced that "by such flashes of fiery and ostentatious partisanship, the brilliant and fervent advocate of the Tudors shows his hand . . . a little too unconsciously and plainly." (Note, p. 429) In a witty passage comparing Froude and Hosack, Swinburne summarily dismisses both positions:

And his ultimate conclusion that 'she was a bad woman, disguised in the livery of a martyr' (vol. xii, ch. 34), seems to me not

much better supported by the sum of evidence producible on either side than the counter inference of his most pertinacious antagonist that 'this illustrious victim of sectarian violence and barbarous statecraft will ever occupy the most prominent place in the annals of her sex' (Hosack, vol. ii, ch. 27). There are annals and there are annals, from the Acta Sanctorum to the Newgate Calendar. In the former of these records Mr. Hosack, in the latter Mr. Froude, would inscribe--as I cannot but think, with equal unreason--the name of Mary Stuart. (Note, p. 429)

Swinburne's Mary, here, as in the plays, is an amoral creature whose French rearing shaped her future life. In one of the most brilliant passages in the Note, Swinburne describes Mary's early years in her mother's native land:

But of the convent in which Mary Stuart had passed her novitiate the Lady Superior was Queen Catherine de'Medici. The virgins who shared the vigils of her maidenhood or brightened the celebration of her nuptials were such as composed the Queen-Mother's famous 'flying squadron' of high-born harlots, professionally employed in the task of making the worship of Venus Pandemos subserve the purposes of Catholic faith or polity, and occasionally, as on the Feast of St. Bartholomew, exhilarated by such diversions as the jocose examination of naked and newly murdered corpses with an eye to the satisfaction of a curiosity which the secular pen of a modern historian must decline to explain with the frankness of a clerical contemporary. The cloistral precinct which sheltered her girlhood from such knowledge of evil as might in after days have been of some protection to her guileless levity was the circuit of a court whose pursuits and recreations

were divided between the alcoves of
Sodom and the playground of Aceldama.
(p. 425)

and concludes that, contrary to Hosack, it is not probable
that

the girl who was reared from her very
infancy in this atmosphere . . . should
have been a blameless though imbecile
creature, an innocent in the least
flattering sense of the word, whose
blood was very snow-broth and whose
brain a very feather. (Note, p. 426)

It is not as though Swinburne were trying to make his
way across the middle ground between the two lines of battle;
he is not even on the same plot of ground with Froude,
Hosack, and their respective troops. Mary was not a 'bad
woman,' as Froude said she was, for no such value is
applicable here:

And in a worshipper of this divine devil,
in the ward of a Medici or a Bonaparte,
it would be an inhuman absurdity to expect
the presence or condemn the absence of
what nothing short of a miracle could have
implanted--the sense of right and wrong,
the distinction of good from evil, the
preference of truth to falsehood. (Note, p. 430)

Also, when Froude said that "she never lacked gratitude to
those who had been true to her," and that "never did any
human being meet death so bravely," he contradicted his
indictment of Mary as 'bad' for "except in the dialect of
the pulpit, she is not a bad woman of whom so much at least
must be said and cannot be denied." (Note, p. 430)

As for the trio of crimes which are the crux of the case against Mary, Swinburne revels in her participation in them. Swinburne applauds Darnley's murder and is only critical that it was done so awkwardly:

To rid herself of a traitor and murderer who could not be got rid of by formal process of law was the object and the problem which the action of Darnley had inevitably set before his royal consort. That the object was attained and the problem solved with such inconceivable awkwardness and perfection of mismanagement is proof that no infusion of Guisian blood or training of Medicean education could turn the daughter of an old heroic northern line into a consummate and cold intriguer of the southern Catholic pattern. (Note, p. 440)

The liaison with Bothwell was equally deliberate, and the theory that Mary was frightened or forced against her will is rejected, both in the picturesque language of the Note:

The theory that an 'unscrupulous oligarchy at length accomplished her ruin by forcing her'--of all things in the world--'to marry Bothwell' is simply and amply sufficient, if accepted, to deprive her of all claim on any higher interest or any nobler sympathy than may be excited by the sufferings of a beaten hound. (p. 441)

and in the more academic tones of the Encyclopedia Britannica article:

This passion or emotion, according to those who deny her attachment to Bothwell, was simply terror,--the blind and irrational

prostration of an abject spirit before the cruel force of circumstances and the crafty wickedness of men. . . .There are those who assert their belief that the woman . . . who long afterwards was to hold her own against all the array of English law and English statesmanship, armed with irrefragable evidence and supported by the resentment of a nation--showed herself equally devoid of moral and of physical resolution; too senseless to realize the significance and too heartless to face the danger of a situation from which the simple exercise of reason, principle, or courage must have rescued the most unsuspecting and inexperienced of honest women who was not helplessly deficient in self-reliance and self-respect. (p. 598)

The Casket Correspondence, so important in other Marian works, is ignored by Swinburne because "its acceptance or its rejection does not in any degree whatever affect, for better or for worse, the rational estimate of her character." (EB, p. 598)

Swinburne follows the same reasoning for Mary's involvement in the Babington Plot as for the other crimes: she was party to the entire matter; for to have been otherwise would have been against her best interests, and, hence, foolish. Again he raps the knuckles of those who would find Mary clean:

It is maintained by those admirers of Mary who assume her to have been an almost absolute imbecile, gifted with the power of imposing herself on the world as a woman of unsurpassed ability, that, while cognizant of the plot for

her deliverance by English rebels and an invading army of foreign auxiliaries, she might have been innocently unconscious that this conspiracy involved the simultaneous assassination of Elizabeth. . . . As in the case of the casket letters, it is alleged that forgery was employed to interpolate sufficient evidence of Mary's complicity in a design of which it is thought credible that she was kept in ignorance by the traitors and murderers who had enrolled themselves in her service (EB, pp. 600-601)

To prevent the unlikely possibility of any reader missing the point that Mary's 'guilt' or 'innocence' is not a legitimate issue, Swinburne ends the Note with an undisguised statement that raises her above the conflict between Froude and Hosack:

Considered from every possible point of view, the tragic story of her life in Scotland admits but of one interpretation which is not incompatible with the impression she left on all friends and all foes alike. And this . . . is simply that she hated Darnley with a passionate but justifiable hatred, and loved Bothwell with a passionate but pardonable love. For the rest of her career, I cannot but think that whatever was evil and ignoble in it was the work of education or of circumstance; whatever was good and noble, the gift of nature or of God. (Note, p. 442)

Swinburne contributed an alternative to the two familiar extremes of opinion about Mary's guilt with his amoral interpretation of Mary's life. Like the other two, this view has its defects and its strong points, and like them, perhaps even more than they, it was the product of a deep

love and interest in Mary and her private affairs. B. Montgomerie Ranking, writing in The Gentleman's Magazine on the tercentenary of Mary's death, was speaking about Swinburne's essays as well as the other works we have studied when he said that in spite of a conscientious search for the historical truth about Mary, ". . . as soon as her case is brought up, every man . . . who may be engaged in the discussion immediately loses his head, so to speak; not one of the interlocutors seems able to speak calmly and dispassionately on the subject"70

⁷⁰"The Case of Mary Stuart," No. 263 (April, 1887), p. 395.

C. Debate and the Historical Queen in Fiction

The discipline of writing 'history' in the form of fiction has always been a problematic one, and never more so than in this period when the methods of Ranke were influencing all forms of historiography. To say, as some did, that the historical novel needed to be precise was wrong; it needed, rather, to be truthful. The difference is explained in Conrad's essay on James:

Fiction is history, human history, or it is nothing. But it is also more than that; it stands on firmer ground, being based on the reality of forms and the observation of social phenomena, whereas history is based on documents and the reading of print and handwriting--on second-hand impression. Thus fiction is nearer truth. ⁷¹

and in Fleischman's chapter on "Towards a Theory of Historical Fiction":

Whether his preference is for realism or romance, kitsch or high art, the reader of historical novels is also likely to demand some sort of truth from them, if only to praise or blame on the grounds of 'accuracy,' or faithful recording of presumably established facts. It requires scant sophistication in historiography or esthetics to recognize that such a criterion of value in this genre begs as many questions as does any

⁷¹"An Appreciation," Henry James: A Collection of Critical Essays (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1963), p. 15.

other mimetic norm for fiction. Granting that historical fiction, like all art, tells some kind of truth, it clearly does not tell it straight. By the same token, history itself does not tell truths that are unambiguous or absolute; even the nature of historical fact is problematic. Yet the value and, almost inevitably, the meaning of an historical novel will stand in some relation to the habitual demand for truth"72

All this is not to say that the historical novels of the late nineteenth century made no more attempt than Scott or Bulwer-Lytton did to avoid the extraneous and the patently unauthentic; but it does indicate that the nature of fiction is such that it cannot be wholly and finally accurate, in the normally accepted sense of that word. Another of Fleischman's remarks is appropriate to close this discussion:

The genre is unashamedly a hybrid: it contemplates the universal but does not depart from the rich factuality of history in order to reach that elevation.73

Our discussion of the Marian novel as a post-Froudian phenomenon will consider two works, both of which oppose the historian's basic conclusions about Mary. The earlier of these, Charlotte Yonge's Unknown to History: A Story of the Captivity of Mary of Scotland,⁷⁴ is based primarily on a

⁷²Fleischman, p. 4.

⁷³Fleischman, p. 8.

⁷⁴(New York: Macmillan, 1882).

once-popular rumor that Mary had conceived a second child after the abduction by Bothwell. Miss Yonge was a very pious woman "who in everything she did had in view the higher purpose of serving the Kingdom of Heaven on earth."⁷⁵ She was the spiritual child of John Keble and an avid supporter of the Oxford Movement, whose principles she inculcated both in her personal life and in her books. Considering these High Church sympathies, it is not surprising that Miss Yonge chose to defend Mary's cause against the pernicious influence of Froude's History.

The main plot of the novel is concerned with the Catholic-inspired Babington plot. Anthony Babington appears early and often in the novel as a rash young man, eager to defend Mary's cause, even in front of Elizabeth's most powerful nobles. The Plot itself is followed in every detail by Miss Yonge, beginning with the swearing of the oath of loyalty among the conspirators. (p. 218) When Mary discovers their plans to rescue her--she is not informed of the scheme to kill Elizabeth--, she refuses any help or support and, as her reason, recites the now-familiar catalog of those who have tried to help her and have failed:

'Men need but to bear me goodwill, and
misery overtakes them. Death is the best
that befalls them! The gentle husband of

⁷⁵ Ernest A. Baker, The History of The English Novel, (Barnes and Noble, 1960), VIII, p. 102.

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my girlhood--then the frantic Chastelar,
my poor, poor good Davie, Darnley,
Bothwell, Gordie Douglas, young Willie,
and again Norfolk, and the noble and
knightly Don John. One spark of love
and devotion to the wretched Mary, and
all is over with them! . . . warn
Babington against ever dreaming of aid
to a wretch like me. I will perish
alone! It is enough! I will drag down
no more generous spirits in the whirlpool
around me.' (p. 317)

Babington and his cohorts will not listen, for their reason
has been crowded out by their fanaticism:

. . . Anthony was well-nigh crazed . . .
with the contemplation of the wrongs of
the Church and the Queen, whom he
regarded with equally passionate
devotion, and with burning zeal and
indignation to avenge their sufferings,
and restore them to their pristine
glory. (p. 322)

As perpetration of the actual plot comes closer and closer,
it is clear that Miss Yonge will not allow Mary to have any
connection with it. Nor is that the only point at which
Miss Yonge directly contradicts Froude: where the historian
considered Elizabeth's treatment as salutary and generous,
Miss Yonge considers it cruel and the result of jealousy;
where he saw Walsingham as an interested but innocent
observer, she sees him as conniving and treacherous; and,
referring to past events, where Froude described Mary's
relations with Bothwell as illicit and adulterous, Miss
Yonge insists on her innocence:

They had dealt with her strangely and subtilly; they had laid on her the guilt of the crimes themselves had wrought; and when she had clung to the one man whom at least she thought honest, they had forced and driven her into wedding him, only that all the world might cry out upon her, forsake her, and deliver her up into those cruel hands. (p. 182)

The details of the Babington Plot, as they have traditionally been interpreted from the High Church-Catholic viewpoint, come out in Babington's confession during his stay in the Tower. He tells of being led by his fellow conspirators, who were actually Walsingham's agents, into communicating their final plan to Mary. The condemning letter of assent which arrived a few days later was not, Miss Yonge firmly asserts, written by Mary.

The novel concludes with a detailed description of Mary's trial. The portrayal of Mary at her arraignment is clearly a sympathetic one:

It was a lovely thing, as those spectators in the gallery felt, to see how brave and acute was the defence of that solitary lady, seated there with all those learned men against her; her papers gone, nothing left to her but her brain and her tongue. No loss of dignity nor of gentleness was shown in her replies; they were always simple and direct. The difficulty for her was all the greater that she had not been allowed to know the form of accusation, before it was hurled against her by Mr. Serjeant Gawdy, who detailed the whole of the conspiracy of Ballard and Babington in all its branches, and declared her to have known and approved of it, and to have suggested the manner of executing it. (p. 457)

Miss Yonge spares us the details of the execution, for she has already made her point. She has acquitted Mary of the crimes of murder, adultery, and, especially, of perfidy against Elizabeth. It is true that her narrative is as partisan as Froude's but in all fairness it should be remembered that it was he, not she, who threw down the gauntlet and forced those in the High Church and Roman Catholic camps to defend the integrity, not only of Mary Stuart, but of their religious traditions.

A second Marian novel which appeared in this period was J.E. Muddock's Basile the Jester: A Romance of the Days of Mary Queen of Scots.⁷⁶ The central characters are the members of Mary's court, but her career is traced very diligently and is the main skeleton to which minor events cling. The opening scene, clearly dated April 24, 1558, is the wedding of Mary and the Dauphin, Francis, and also marks the high point of happiness and fulfillment from which Mary gradually descends through the entire story.

The major conflict of the novel occurs after Mary's return from France. Waiting for her arrival is the leader of the Scottish Reformation, the father of the Presbyterian Church, and a militant enemy of the Church of Rome, John Knox. Muddock is very clear in his opinion of the man Froude called "the representative of all that was best in Scotland":

⁷⁶ (London, 1897). All future references will be made in the text by page number.

The intolerant John Knox was hurling his thunderbolts against the Romish church; while the Catholics had leagued themselves together to resist persecution and to uphold their creed. (p. 67)

and is especially critical about the way Knox attacks Mary without provocation. For all Knox's pontificating, there is a remarkable lack of consistency between his preaching and his practice:

The light of the Reformation was dawning over the land, but those who took upon themselves to herald it were sullyng the justness of their cause, and mocking the holiness of the doctrine they proclaimed, by merciless uncharitableness and fierce cruelty. (p. 90)

When Mary married Bothwell, the Protestants became even more unmanageable:

From the Protestant pulpits the preachers thundered forth the new doctrine and taught forbearance, peace, forgiveness, and charity. But their words fell on barren soil and took no root, and even they themselves practiced not what they preached, but were stirred to the depths with hatred for those who differed from them. (p. 239)

Muddock was doubtless familiar with Froude's celebrated delineation of Knox as a Protestant saint: "he was no narrow fanatic who, in a world in which God's grace was equally visible in a thousand creeds, could see truth and goodness but in his own formula. He was a large, noble, generous man . . ." (VII, p. 107), but felt that such a portrait was

not the accurate one. He has Bomoester, one of Knox's staunchest supporters, make claims which belie Froude's insistence on Knox's tolerance: "We are the Lord's elect, and it is our duty to remove and beat down in His Name all those who refuse to spread the light and to come into the fold." (p. 115)

While Muddock was trying to pull down the Knoxian icon Froude and his supporters had built, Mary was, to mix metaphors, caught in the cross-fire. She was defended because she was Catholic and, therefore, in the novelist's view, subjected to overly-harsh treatment by Knox and the rest of the Puritan community. At the same time, Muddock was not oblivious to her personal faults: "For though brave, and even heroic, she was sadly wanting in that . . . caution which should be one of the strongest features in the character of a royal personage." (p. 194) The novelist is especially critical of Mary's conduct when she falls under the influence of Bothwell. The issue here is not one of sexual morality, but of political responsibility:

With a fatuity that seems almost incredible, Mary Queen of Scots allowed her passion for Bothwell to have full reign in spite of the universal reprobation of her people. . . . The history of woman's weakness would almost fail to present a parallel case of bline infatuation, such as led Mary to peril herself, her son, her throne, and her country. The responsibilities resting on her were ignored; the welfare of the nation

was forgotten; the stability of her throne
was allowed to sap and wither, (p, 239)

To one experienced in reading Marian polemics, it is obvious that Muddock is charging Mary with a lesser crime to avoid being forced to admit her guilt to Froude's list of felonies. Bothwell is clearly the villain in Darnley's murder, and no mention is made of Mary's complicity. Mary is "blinded by infatuation" and, consequently, cannot be held responsible for what happens in her court or on her behalf. She is weak, perhaps, but weakness is not criminal. By approaching Mary's actions from this direction, Muddock avoids a whitewash and still is able to contradict Froude's conclusions about the close relationship between Mary's Catholicism and her immoral behavior.

The novels of Charlotte Yonge and J. E. Muddock, then, show distinct signs of anti-Froudian opinion, nor should their allegiance to Mary be thought as strange. Froude's sweeping condemnation of the Scottish queen and of her Catholic ideology were not to be taken lightly, especially by those who had been touched by the Oxford Movement. Much more than historical accuracy was at stake in much of the opposition to Froude, for he had categorically and with great finality condemned the Church of Rome by condemning its chief sixteenth-century adherent, and by doing so, had created a natural bed of opposition, of which only one small part was these two novels.

D. Debate and the Historical Queen in the Drama

Historical drama shares with historical fiction the problem of achieving definitive accuracy. The dramatic form, whether intended for the stage or for the study, demands a certain amount of fabrication to give it life. This could be done in a number of ways, such as with two or three invented characters, an apocryphal sub-plot, or a strongly slanted interpretation of the events. This does not mean again that the facts are altered, but it does mean that the stage is not the classroom and that enough invention needs to be blown into the lungs of the historical material to give it animation and direction.

Four plays will be discussed to show how the Marian debate influenced dramatic literature and its quest for the historical Mary. Two of these are the remaining works in Swinburne's trilogy and approach the controversy on their terms. The other two are divided in their viewpoints, with one on either side of the issue. J. Wimsatt Boulding, the author of the first of these, Mary, Queen of Scots: An Historical Tragedy,⁷⁷ announces his loyalties in the Dedication:

⁷⁷ (London: Bemrose and Sons, 1873). All future references will be made in the text by page number.

To

JAMES ANTHONY FROUDE, Esq., M.A.,

By His Kind Permission,

This Poem,
Which is a Humble Attempt to Represent,
In a Dramatic Form,
The Character of Mary Queen of Scots
As Pourtrayed [sic.] in His Glorious History of England
Is Dedicated
With Profound Admiration and Respect,

By His Obliged Servant,

THE AUTHOR.

Special attention should be paid to the fact that it is Mary's 'character' that Boulding intends to represent. His 'humble attempt' is successful, for he has studied his master well and has made the historian's animosity toward Mary his own.

The influence of Froude on Boulding's play shows the strongest in his delineation of Mary as greedy for the English throne and as consumately deceitful. In an early conversation with Bothwell, Mary indicates her impatience to achieve Elizabeth's place:

'For to wait
'Till death takes off her crown; ang gives to me
What she can wear no more, and I wear then
But a brief day on brows as weak and old,
Perhaps shall never wear, so frail is life;
This might content some other Mary Stuart,
But not the Queen who boasts that name today.
What glory is it to receive a crown
That drops like fruit o'er ripe into the lap
Of one whose eyes have grown all weak and dim'
With watching for its fall?

.
I will not rest 'till either her's is left
A crownless head, or mine a headless crown.'

(I,ii)

Darnley is the main target for Mary's deceit, for she is determined to have revenge for his part in killing Rizzio. After convincing her husband of her forgiveness with embraces and kisses, she confesses her true feelings when he leaves: "This would-be lion with caresses soft/ I've changed into the humblest, basest slave/ That ever crawled before a monarch's feet." (II, i) She then prophecies his end by promising to "shake off the serpent from my sceptre" until "he shall be tortured, withered, and consumed." The plot to kill Darnley is carefully described by Boulding so as to implicate Mary at every step. She first repulses the king by telling him that they would never again be "joined together" until "Heaven and Hell do make one light," and then charges Bothwell to "be rid of him." In his enthusiasm to damn Bothwell for the subsequent murder of Darnley, Boulding puts a speech into his mouth which is pure caricature:

'I'll stick at nothing for so rich a prize.
 Her hand; her heart; 'tis much, her crown, 'tis more!
 Right, wrong; good, bad; that blazing sun of gems
 Confounds them, mixes them and makes them one
 Unto my dazzled vision. Morals! Phew!
 Leave them to preachers, priests, and school masters
 Who live by them, incorporating morals
 Into their bones and blood. Bothwell lives
 By his good sword, or, failing that, by dirk
 Or pistol-ball. One rule he hath--but one;
 All's good that suits himself, all's bad that doesn't.'
 (III, ii)

Act IV is the fulcrum of the play, for here the murder itself, the main event of the play, takes place. In scene ii,

on the eve of the crime, Boulding has Mary and Bothwell speaking of Darnley's "imminent death" and also causes Mary to admit that she married Darnley only to gain the English throne. Scene iii, largely pantomime, shows Bothwell supervising the carrying of gunpowder into the basement of Kirk-o'-Field. In scene iv, Mary comes to bid him good-night before leaving for a wedding celebration, gives him her ring, kisses him, and then, on her way out, reminds him that "'twas just this time last year that David was killed." Finally, in scene v, Mary and Bothwell are dancing together when the news of Darnley's death comes. Mary immediately begins to weep and Bothwell swears revenge.

Having made his case for Mary's guilt in Darnley's murder, Boulding, in Act V, turns to another of Froude's disputed causes: the defense of Murray. The subject of the man who succeeded Mary to the throne of Scotland as Regent for the infant James was, like the Casket Letters, a controversial footnote to the larger Marian debate. One source says that Mary had a "sincerely sisterly attachment for the man in whom she failed to recognize her worst enemy,"⁷⁸ while Froude says that Mary "hated him with an intensity to which her past dislike was pale and colourless," while Murray acted "as an affectionate brother or a Christian nobleman." (IX, p. 162) Boulding takes his cue

⁷⁸Catholic World, XI, p. 225.

from the historian and ends the play with Murray, soon to be Regent, generously rejecting demands for Mary's death and pledging his love and support:

'O Mary, I have been thy victim oft,
I am thy brother, and thy faithful friend,
And I shall be a martyr for thee yet.
(V, iii)

Boulding's play was published three years after the appearance of Volumes XI and XII of Froude's History. This was time enough for the full impact of Froude's Mary to have registered on the literary community, and for those who were interested to react. Boulding obviously believed in Froude's conclusions enough to want to extend their influence out across the footlights.

Next in chronological order after Boulding's play, though far exceeding it in importance, is the second work in Swinburne's trilogy, Bothwell.⁷⁹ Swinburne matured greatly as a poet in the nine years between the publication of Chastelard and the appearance of Bothwell. This growth can be monitored best by noticing differences between the two plays. Those of interest to this study include the slowly

⁷⁹Selections from the Poetical Works of A. C. Swinburne, ed. R. H. Stoddard (New York: Crowell, 1884), pp. 130-377. All future references will be made in the text by Act and scene numbers.

evolving change in form from drama to epic; the transfer of the center of influence from the Pre-Raphaelitish and French in the earlier work to the Elizabethan in Bothwell; and, especially, a growing emphasis on historical accuracy.

We have seen in this chapter how the historical literature of the nineteenth century became more concerned with accuracy and documentation as a result of the new trends in historiography and the advent of the scientific method in historical research. The difference between Scott's Mary and Swinburne's Mary is the difference between traditional legend and, as much as possible, established fact; for one dared not, Froude excepted, write otherwise. As Mrs. Humphrey Ward put it, "Modern imagination in dealing with historical facts and persons works like a hawk in leash, liable always to be recalled and chidden by research."⁸⁰ Swinburne was vocal about his historical integrity. In the Note, he speaks of two slight alterations in Chastelard--the date of Mary's second marriage, and the circumstances of her last interview with John Knox--but claims in a letter to W. M. Rossetti, that his methods were stricter in Bothwell than they were in the earlier play.⁸¹ He also emphasized the importance, not

⁸⁰"The Marriage of William Ashe," The Writings of Mrs. Humphrey Ward (London, 1911), XII, p. xi.

⁸¹Cecil Y. Land, The Swinburne Letters (New Haven, 1959), II, p. 283. Hereafter referred to as Letters with references in the text made by volume and page numbers.

only of avoiding deliberate alterations and inaccuracies, but of omitting "no detail, . . . no link in the chain," for only then could the work be "dramatically coherent and historically intelligible."⁸² Mrs. Boswell, in her dissertation on the historical qualities of Swinburne's Mary, agrees that the poet was usually as accurate as he knew how to be but occasionally was forced to "give the reader . . . a portrait with details vividly supplied from his imagination when those details were not supplied by historical accounts."⁸³

Since this chapter is in large measure a study of the influence of Froude's image of Mary on subsequent Marian literature, it is important to understand Swinburne's attitude toward the History. This attitude was partially seen in the comment on Froude's work in the Note, and is further delineated in a letter to John Nichol:

It is of course true that in the matters of incident and development of story I owe a great debt to Froude's brilliant narrative . . . but I may conscientiously disclaim the charge of having blindly followed his guidance or adopted at secondhand his views of character, and estimates of motive. . . . Still less did I draw from Froude my studies of the Queen and Murray. With all his rhetorical

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Letters, II, pp. 211-212

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Boswell, Dissertation, p. v.

power, he seems to me (even apart from his one-eyed prepossession and palpable special pleading) but a shallow reader of character . . .

(Letters, II, p. 301)

Considering the fact that Swinburne was diligent in collecting the facts about Mary's life, that he tried to preserve the continuity of her story by not omitting any significant details or events, that he recognized Froude's inaccuracies and biases, and, most importantly, that the issues of the traditional debate were meaningless to him, we may find that the central character in his trilogy came closer to being the quintessential 'historical queen' than any other pretender to that title.

Bothwell is an exceedingly lengthy play, perhaps the longest in the language, and covers the events from the murder of Rizzio to Mary's flight into England, a span of slightly more than two years. Each of the five acts is headed with the name of the person who represents, Swinburne says, "some alien influence predominant in Mary's mind or fortunes." (Letters, II, p. 302) Since each act is long enough to be a separate entity, it is as five separate plays, rather than as one very long one, that Bothwell will be discussed in these pages.

Act I, which covers only one day, is titled 'David Rizzio,' and deals with the plot against Mary's powerful secretary and with the growing rift between the Queen and

her husband over Rizzio's position. This second conflict, even more serious than the first, is apparent from the first speech of the play where Darnley complains that Rizzio is allowed to "sit covered by the queen where lords stand bare." Darnley feels that Rizzio has taken the positions of honor, and perhaps the more husbandly prerogatives, that rightly belong to him. Darnley here is in error, for Swinburne makes it clear that Rizzio did not displace Darnley, but that the young Englishman had, in Mary's mind, long been unworthy of his place as advisor and counselor, and that Rizzio, far from being a usurper, had been chosen to fill it. Mary speaks freely of her growing unhappiness with her consort:

For first the man that I set up for lord,
 For master of mine and mate of only me,
 Have I perforce put forth of my shamed bed,
 And broken on his brows the kingless crown,
 Finding nor head for gold nor hand for steel
 Worth the name of king or husband, but the throne
 Lordless, the heart of marriage, husbandless,
 Through his foul follies. (I, i)

The man of whom Darnley ought to have been wary, James Hepburn, Earl of Bothwell, begins to court Mary's favor in this first Act as well. Like Rizzio's political position, the place Bothwell is to occupy has been vacant for sometime:

I have kept my body, yea from wedded bed,
 And kept mine hand, yea, from my sceptre's weight,
 That you might have me and my kingdom whole:

What have these done to take you, what to keep,
 Worth one day's doing of mine yet?
 For all the shape and show of things without,
 For all the marriage and bodily bond
 And fleshly figure of community,
 I have loved no man, man never hath had me whole,
 I am virgin toward you. (I, i)

The plot, if it can be called that, in Act I deals mainly with the conspiracy, led by Darnley, to murder Rizzio. Since this act covers only one day, the poet was forced to condense and telescope the planning of this crime; but that is hardly noticeable. At the end of scene i, Darnley makes the final plans for the act with Morton; and by the beginning of scene ii, the matter is common enough knowledge to allow Mary Beaton, one of the queen's ladies, to warn Bothwell against being at court that night.

In scene iii, the Rizzio plot is momentarily put aside while attention is paid to a fiery confrontation between Mary and John Knox, in which the Reformer delivers a stinging rebuke to the young queen for her religion, her treatment of her husband, and her general behavior before her subjects. It is difficult to know whether Knox represents the voice of reason and truth or the voice of puritanical restraint. W. L. Courtney, in his Fortnightly Review article on Swinburne's poetry, says that Knox is a man with whom Swinburne could not have had much in common, considering his vocation and his faith, and that it was a real achievement for the poet to

have portrayed him so honestly.⁸⁴ This last point is well taken, for, as Mrs. Boswell shows, the speeches which Swinburne gives Knox are almost verbatim from the Reformer's history of the Scottish Reformation.⁸⁵ It is also a conclusion of Mrs. Boswell's that this visit of Knox to the royal quarters, though the first in the trilogy, is actually patterned after the fourth such visit.⁸⁶ It was at this visit that Knox sufficiently angered Mary that, according to his own record as well as the play, she wept, and threatened revenge:

"Sir, you that make me weep,
 By these my tears and my sharp shame of them
 I swear you will not laugh to see me laugh,
 When my time comes: you shall not; I will have
 Time to my friend yet; I shall see you, sir,
 If you can weep or no, that with dry eyes
 Have seen mine wet; I will try that: look to it.
 (I, iii)

Knox was the only man Mary ever met whom she could neither master nor intimidate with her intelligence, her rank, her charm, or her anger. Given the vast differences between Knox and Swinburne, Courtney is correct in noting the poet's determination to hold the line on historical accuracy and allow Knox to come off as well as he does.

⁸⁴"Swinburne's Poetry," XXVII (May, 1885), p.606.

⁸⁵Boswell, Dissertation, p. 128.

⁸⁶Boswell, Dissertation, p. 161.

Scene iv sees the resumption of the Rizzio plot, though little remains to be done. The murder scene itself begins quietly with Mary and her secretary together with a few members of the court in the 'Queen's cabinet,' The tranquil mood is interrupted by the rude entry of Darnley, who kisses the queen as a signal for his retinue to follow. The nobles demand Rizzio for the wrong he had done to the king. Darnley affirms this and sarcastically assures his wife that her minion will be kept safe:

Ay shall he, safe--
 In that same chamber where you used of old,
 Before this fellow grew so in your grace,
 To come and seek me; but since he so fell
 In credit with you and familiar use,
 Even if I come to yours I find of late
 Small entertainment of you . . . (I, iv)

The scene ends with Mary promising revenge. The same vein of anger that reacted to Knox's meddling is now turned with greater intensity toward the man who had in better times helped conceive the child which even then was growing in her womb.

Act II, subtitled 'Bothwell.' is the longest of the five and covers the eleven-month period from the day after Rizzio's death to the day of Darnley's murder at Kirk-o'-Field. Darnley's role in the slaughter of Rizzio exterminated forever what small chance he ever might have had to regain Mary's favor. She needs him, however, to help her escape from the same men who attacked her secretary; and, in a

display of deceit which Swinburne would have applauded, Mary convinces Darnley to turn against his fellow-conspirators and lead her through the darkness to safety. By the time scene iv ends, and Mary is safely back at Holyrood and once again in control, Darnley realizes that all is not as it once seemed:

Yet would God
 I had not chosen to lose their loves for hers,
 And found so cold her favor! Scarce escaped,
 Scarce out of bonds, half breathless yet with flight,
 No mind was in her of my help, my love,
 My hand that brake her prison: for all this,
 My kin forsaken, mine own wrongs and griefs
 Forgotten, mine own head imperilled, mine
 For hers that I delivered, and perchance
 To leave within their danger had done well,
 No thought of thanks I get of her
 (I, iv)

Mary now sets the wheels in motion for Darnley's demise by forcing him to admit that he had no part in the murder of Rizzio, and thus angering those who were doing him a favor by eliminating the immigrant musician. In scene vii, Mary invites her husband to air his grievances publicly; but he refuses to speak, thereby doing what Mary had hoped. The decline of Darnley reaches its final stage in scene x, when Mary appears before her most trusted advisors--Murray, Bothwell, Maitland, Huntley, and Argyle--and tells them she wants rid of the king. Divorce is unacceptable, for it would cast doubt on the legitimacy of the prince; and so, Mary says she will trust those present to free her. Part of

the final plan called for Mary again to feign kindness to Darnley, and this she does in the form of a visit to his sickbed and in arrangements to move him from Glasgow to Kirk-o'-Field, just outside Edinburgh. All things are now ready for the fulfillment of Mary's threat of revenge.

The question often arises at this point about whether or not Mary was aware of precisely what Bothwell, the leader of the new murder conspiracy, had planned. After her statement of desire to be rid of Darnley, the question is an academic one, and Swinburne treats it so. He does indicate that Mary was present in the drawing room while the gunpowder was being carried into the basement, so it seems as though he took her awareness for granted. At this point, she loathes Darnley so much that any remedy would have been satisfactory as long as it was successful. Mary and Bothwell have been exchanging vows of love since the second scene and the sooner Darnley is eliminated, the sooner they will be able to enjoy their freedom. The explosion does not occur in the play but the desperate last words of Darnley, and of the Act, indicate it is not long off or far away:

Let them come.
 How do men die? but I so trapped alive,--
 Oh, I shall die a dog's death and no man's.
 Mary, by Christ whose mother's was your name,
 Slay me not! God, turn off from me that heart,--
 Out of her hands, God, God, deliver me!
(I, xxi)

Swinburne himself was happy to be rid of Darnley. In a letter to his mother, he expresses his relief:

I can't tell you how glad I was the night I went to bed after finishing the scene of his murder, to think that I should have no more to do with him! . . . you do see by instinct, as I did when I was writing the book,--there is quite as much of the poor wretch as could possibly be endured--and I was, as you say, 'only too thankful to be rid of him.' (Letters, II, p. 346)

The poet had never had much to say about Darnley that was kind. In the Encyclopedia Britannica article, he calls him "the hapless and worthless bridegroom," the "besotted boy," and "the miserable boy who had so often and so mortally outraged her." (p. 596) Swinburne felt that Darnley was clearly Mary's inferior and that it was only to be expected that she would, sooner or later, rid herself of a man whom she married in haste and tolerated with regret. Swinburne further felt that it was not cruelty but a justified desire to rid herself of a "brainless, heartless, sexless, and pusillanimous fool," that caused her to agree to the extreme deed with which Act II ends.

Bothwell is, as much as anything, the story of the growing love between Mary and her paramour. When the play was finally completed, Swinburne spoke of it as getting his "big black ram and white ewe into fold at last."

(Letters, II, p. 284) The first sign of Mary's regard for Bothwell came at the very end of Chastelard, when an usher

announces Bothwell's entry and asks for a place to be made for him next to the queen. His first appearance as a character is in scene i of the second play, and even this early in the scheme of things, Mary tells him he is too valuable to be fighting mere border skirmishes. She repeats this fear when she makes her famous visit to see the wounded Bothwell in scene viii. It is this meeting, as will be remembered from chapter two of this study, that is often reputed to have been the beginning of this infamous liasion. In Swinburne, however, the seeds of love had been sown long before that; and by the time that Darnley was killed, they had grown into a full-size plant.

Act III sees the culmination and dissipation of this love affair, but is, otherwise, the dulllest part of the play, because "the interest of the historical narrative itself naturally flags during the passage from Kirk O Field to Carberry Hill." (Letters, II, p. 301) Even if this is true, Act III is important for its description of Mary's final desperate attempt at happiness, and for its delineation of her passionate abandonment which was the quality about her Swinburne loved most.

Considering the intense nature of Mary's affair with Bothwell, it may seem strange that Swinburne named Act III after Jane Gordon, Bothwell's first wife. He explains his choice in a letter to a friendly reviewer:

. . . if you look you will see that from the first scene of this act when the Queen appears to the last, the phantom or idea of her rival is ever present as a . . . first Nemesis, so that her spirit or influence is always on the stage and pervades the action throughout, thus justifying the sub-title
 (Letters, II, p. 302)

Jane Gordon represents a legal as well as an emotional barrier to Mary's marriage to Bothwell, and removing her necessitates further deceit on the queen's part. At the beginning of Act I, Mary says that she arranged Jane's wedding with Bothwell knowing full well it would be only a temporary arrangement. Jane is not heard of again until Act III where, according to Swinburne's explanation, her existence is as important as her appearance. The logistics for achieving the necessary divorce are discussed in scene iii by Herries and Melville, two of Mary's loyal courtiers. Herries explains that there are two plans, in case one fails. The first is to have the Lady Buccleuch declare that she was Bothwell's mistress before his marriage. The more drastic contingency plan calls for a distant relationship between Bothwell and his wife to be discovered and have the marriage dissolved on the grounds of consanguinity. Melville remembers that a dispensation to cover this problem was granted at the time of the wedding, but Herries tells him that this problem has been anticipated: ". . . they think to cover it/ As with a veil of invalidity/

Pretexed for pretence, or with dumb show/ Darkly disclaimed:
 this shall not cumber them.'" (III, ii) If this deceit is
 not sufficient, the support of Jane's brother will be
 purchased by restoring his forfeited lands. Herries says
 he has warned the Queen about the danger of such devious
 action but has been expelled from the court for his trouble.
 Later in this long scene, he goes back to plead with Mary
 once again; but by this time she is far too committed to
 Bothwell to comprehend reason. At this point in the act,
 scene vi, Swinburne employs the useful device of a
 conversation between 'citizens' to inform the reader about
 the opinion of Mary's subjects concerning her behavior. The
 verdict is unanimously negative. All five speakers oppose
 Mary's part in obtaining Bothwell's acquittal at his murder
 trial, and resent even more her deceitful methods in
 obtaining a divorce. They realize they are helpless to do
 anything and must rely on a greater power:

but yet I think
 His hand nor hers shall put God's judgment back
 That waits to take them triumphing, and turn
 To tears their laughter and our grief to joy.
 (III, vi)

Jane Gordon makes her brief appearance near the end of
 the act, after the marriage of her husband to the Queen.
 She is a direct contrast to Mary: where Mary is vindictive,
 Jane is forgiving; where Mary is suspicious and cynical,

Jane is honest and trusting; where Mary is selfish, Jane is generous. She insists she has come neither to plead her cause nor to get revenge:

I had come not of weak heart or evil will,
But in goodfaith, to see how strong in love
They stand whose joy makes joyless all my life,
Whose loving leaves it loveless, and their wealth
Feeds full upon my famine. (III, xi)

She says further that she recognizes Mary's prerogatives as her sovereign and is willing to "give my crown of love to gild your crown of gold." Jane Gordon, now, joins Mary Beaton, the erstwhile sweetheart of Chastelard, as a woman deserted because of Mary's fickle desires. Mary Beaton, who appears often as a lady-in-waiting, has hidden her bitterness well, and will, until the end of the trilogy. Jane, whom we see just this once, must make her impact in a very few speeches. She begins by appealing to the remnant of Bothwell's sense of honor, but this angers Mary and she tries to punish Jane:

Mine ears
Burn that must hear by your device and hers
With what strange flatteries on her prompted lips
This dame unwedded lifts her hand unringed
To abash me with its show of faith, and make
Your wife ashamed at sight of such a love
As yet she bears you that is not your wife?
(III, xi)

Jane capitalizes on Mary's show of temper and delivers an elaborate explanation of her side of the issue. She so

thoroughly carries the argument that Mary forbids her even to touch Bothwell's hand in parting. Jane again scores on Mary by saying that any desire she might have come with was gone for she has "seen with eyes more sad/ More than I thought with sorrowing eyes to see/ When I came hither." With this last thrust she takes her exit.

One of Jane Gordon's functions was to act as a 'foil' to Mary Stuart. That is, she brought out those parts of Mary's personality that Swinburne wanted brought out. One must force himself to remember that there will be no final didactic moral to these plays and that, therefore, the confrontation between Jane and Mary, which is probably apocryphal, does not, as it might in other hands, have any symbolic significance. This was the Mary Stuart that Swinburne saw in the pages of history and as he understood her to be. She acted as she did because she loved Bothwell with what the poet calls in the Note "a passionate but pardonable love"; and on such love, and the acts needed to guarantee its safety, Swinburne seems to have smiled with approval.

While Act III covered a period of five months, Act IV covers just two days. Swinburne liked this act for the important role its events played in Mary's life, and speaks of his favor in two letters:

My favourite part of the poem is the first half (scenes one to four inclusive) of the fourth act, which deals to the best of my power with the greatest moment, as I conceive it, of Mary's life, as it was doubtless the supreme crisis of her career. . . . I certainly think the scenes on Carberry Hill and the escape from Lochleven the highwater mark of my non-lyrical work--and for insight and variety of intellectual power and interest the greatest things I have done.

(Letters, II, pp. 301 and 313)

Carberry Hill and Lochleven were important place-names in Mary's history: the first was the spot at which Mary came to the end of her tether as Queen of Scotland, and, after seeing Bothwell flee for his life, surrendered to the rebel forces; Lochleven was the island prison in which the rebels put her and from which she made the daring escape described by Scott in The Abbot.

John Knox's name is at the head of Act IV, for it is he who, in the trilogy's longest speech, presents the cause of the Scottish people against their Queen. We will skip over the first six scenes, for they deal with the confrontation on Carberry Hill and, though the poet's favorite passage, are not directly concerned with Knox. The action in scene vii is set on 'The High Street' where 'a crowd of citizens' are gathered. They are much more bitter now than they were even in Act III, and are ready, when Mary passes their way, to demand her death. Knox's sermon incites the already angry crowd by telling them they have a divine mandate to

see that Mary is punished and by warning that God will not forgive those who spare her. It is evident that Knox has not mellowed since his brief appearance in Act I, scene ii, when he warned that never had Scotland had "a foe than this more dangerous," or since his interview in scene iii of that same act in which his dogmatic denunciation of her private sins caused Mary to weep and swear revenge.

In spite of his limited appearances, it seems that Swinburne meant for John Knox to play the antagonist to Mary Stuart's protagonist. The leader of Scotland's Protestants was a worthy adversary for Mary; for though the Queen and the preacher were at opposite poles on the matter of religion and worship, they were equally matched in pride, courage, and, above all, in their determination not to compromise. That Swinburne saw Knox as something special is obvious from his comments to Lord Houghton:

. . . Knox, the only person then living of courage and intelligence equal to her own, is in effect, beneath the outershell of Protestant bigotry, the prophet or at least the precursor of democracy and the popular spirit of the future.

(Letters, II, p. 307)

Swinburne further says that for the important character of Knox, he did not rely on secondary sources but "went to the fountainhead, and painted my portrait from a careful study of such part of his own writings as bore directly upon my

subject." (Letters, II, p. 302) This confirms what we concluded earlier--that, in spite of obvious differences in moral and religious matters between the Reformer and himself, the poet presented the truest picture of Knox and his opinions possible. He may have, in fact, succeeded too well. A humorous sidelight to the appearance of Knox and his sermon is discussed in another of Swinburne's letters:

Did you see the expression of the Spectator's fond hope that I--I--I, by means of that and the other discourses of J. K. might be the instrument to bring back the Scotch Church from the errors of modern Calvinism to the 'Pauline hunger and thirst after righteousness' of Knox's undegenerate doctrine? That I should live to be hailed by a Hutton as the prospective Reformer of the Kirk--'a latter Luther,' as Mr. Tennyson sweetly expresses it--was, I very truly say, what my wildest dreams would never have prefigured.

(Letters, II, p.313)

Yet, after all this, Knox is really the villain of the piece, because he was, as Mrs. Boswell says, "the enemy to ideals for which Swinburne felt loyalty,"⁸⁷ or, to put it another way, he "would have destroyed the art and beauty of Mary and her followers."⁸⁸ Also, Mrs. Boswell adds, "he was so doggedly devoted to his vocation and so fiercely loyal to his creed that he has forgotten the true spirit of his

⁸⁷ Boswell, Dissertation, p. 169.

⁸⁸ Dahl, 'Swinburne's Loyalty,' p. 164.

religion."⁸⁹ The poet who created such a figure was no anti-Froudian with Catholic sympathies. On the contrary, he was an admitted pagan who did not let his personal biases dictate Knox's temperament but allowed the Réformer's own words to be the most damaging evidence of all.

After naming the first four acts for Mary's dead secretary, her recently-banished third husband, his bitter first wife, and her chief antagonist, there is no one left and so, Act V is called simply 'The Queen.' This is appropriate, the poet says, because "the protagonist is left alone for the first time, without any present influence at hand of friend or foe, to shift for herself and 'fight for her own hand.'" (Letters, II, p. 302) With Act V we also return to the prisoner, the setting for much of the Romantic Marian literature. The difference between Swinburne's Mary and, say, Wordsworth's, is that Swinburne's character is not disposed to weeping or laments. She is too busy taunting her keeper, Lady Lochleven, and devising ways to escape. When the lords come to demand her abdication, she is ready for them and tries to shame them by revealing their presumption, but they know her tricks and turn the blame back on her:

⁸⁹Boswell, Dissertation, p. 170.

Madam, no man here
 But knows by heart the height of your stout words
 And strength of speech or sweetness; all this breath
 Can blow not back the storm yourself raised up,
 Whose tempest shakes the kingdom from your hand,
 And not men's hate. (V, ii)

But Mary is defiant and never allows herself the dangerous luxury of self-pity. The resentment at being the prisoner of her own people is sufficient to keep her spirits high and her eyes open for an opportunity to regain what has been snatched from her unwilling hands.

The accounts of the escape from Lochleven and the abortive battle at Langside are exciting but do not show as much of the historical Mary as the last scene of the play. Here Mary is preparing to throw herself on English hospitality and test ten years of promises from Elizabeth. She recognizes the risks, but in a magnificently defiant speech, she pledges that her enemies have not heard the last of her:

If I live,
 If God pluck not all hope out of my hand,
 If aught of all mine prosper, I that go
 Shall come back to man's ruin, as a flame
 The wind bears down, that grows against the wind,
 And grasps it with great hands, and wins its way,
 And wins its will, and triumphs; so shall I
 Let loose the fire of all my heart to feed
 On these that would have quenched it.
 I will make from sea to sea one furnace of the land,
 Whereon the wind of war shall beat its wings
 Till they wax faint with hopeless hope of rest,
 And with one rain of man's rebellious blood
 Extinguish the red embers. (V, xiii)

In a letter to a reviewer, Swinburne explains his intentions in this final speech:

This valediction was intended to mark the close of the last serious personal passion or private interest of the heart in all her life, and to enforce the position indicated throughout the poem which she holds as representative of the past--of monarchy and Catholicism (Letters, II, p. 307)

Bothwell and its story of Mary's most important years comes to a close with the short trip across Solway Firth. When we next see Mary, eighteen years will have passed and her vision, considerably narrowed though by no means extinguished by nearly two decades of English captivity, no longer will be able to compass the drastic measures she promised when she left Scottish soil.

It was Swinburne's plan from the beginning to make Bothwell the main pillar of the Marian trilogy and to use Chastelard as a prologue and Mary Stuart as an epilogue. (Letters, III, p. 122) Mary Stuart covers a much shorter period of time than the longer play, six months as against twenty-six, and is concerned only with two events, the Babington Plot and the execution. This play, nevertheless, is as much a product of scholarly application as Bothwell, perhaps more so.

After Bothwell was published, Swinburne found himself

being considered an authority on the life of Mary Stuart. He was invited to write the article on Mary in the Encyclopedia Britannica, and considered the invitation "by far the highest compliment ever paid to me in my life." (Letters, IV, p. 263) His preparation for the last play in the trilogy did not belie this trust in Swinburne's devotion to historical research and accuracy. A letter dated January, 1876, tells that "the day . . . has been spent in beginning to compile an abstract or digest of history of the thirteen years of Mary's in England--dry and wearisome work, but necessary to lay the foundation of Part III," (Letters, IV, p. 122) Dahl says that by 1881, the year of Mary Stuart, "Swinburne had moved away from the field of literature into the field of learning, away from creation into reproduction and analysis."⁹⁰ Edmund Gosse, Swinburne's early biographer, thought possibly the reason that Mary Stuart was, in his opinion, "much less interesting" than Bothwell was that "the poet knew too much of his subject and was hampered at every turn by too accurate information."⁹¹ There is some scholarly opinion that Swinburne relied on the uncontroversial parts of Froude's History for a large part

⁹⁰Dahl, Dissertation, p. 559.

⁹¹The Life of Algernon Charles Swinburne (New York: Macmillan, 1917), p. 257.

of Mary Stuart. Mabel Wallis Neal, in her thesis on Marian drama,⁹² gives examples of how Swinburne appropriated Froude's text into the text of the play, including the following:

In a loud voice, and [Elizabeth's] features working with passion, she replied that she was sorry M. Believre should come to England on so bad an errand. She appealed to God to judge between her and the Queen of Scots. 'The Queen of Scots,' she said, 'had sought shelter in her realm, had received nothing but kindness there, and in recompense had three times sought her life. No misfortune which had ever overtaken her had cost her so many tears as this last conspiracy.' (History of England, XII, p. 320)

'I am sorry, sir, you are hither come from France
Upon no better errand, I appeal
To God for judge between my cause and hers
Whom here you stand for. In this realm of mine
The Queen of Scots sought shelter, and therein
Hath never found but kindness; for which grace
In recompense she hath three times sought my life.
No grief that on this head yet ever fell
Shook ever from mine eyes so many a tear
As this last plot upon it.' (Mary Stuart, IV, i)

Gosse quotes P. Hume-Brown who also comments, though not always accurately, on Swinburne's use of Froude:

In his selection of events, their sequence, and connection he appears to have generally followed Froude. This is notably the case in the last of the three dramas; in all the five acts that compose it the speeches of

⁹²Mary Stuart in Drama, Unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Oklahoma, 1934, p. 91.

the different characters are for the most part based on the text of Froude. In the main, also, Swinburne's conception of Mary's character is the same as Froude's--though with a difference. For both, craft and passion are the dominating traits of her nature, and both equally recognise the qualities wherein lay her personal charm. But while Froude's narrative makes prominent the bad which he saw in her, Swinburne presents her character as a whole, and exhibits her good and evil qualities in equal relief.⁹³

There is one exception to this case of historical accuracy we have been making for Swinburne; and, though it is not made clear until the very end of Mary Stuart, it is appropriate to mention it here. When Mary allowed Chastelard to be executed for the minor offense of refusing to leave her private chamber, she either ignored or was unaware of his love affair with Mary Beaton. At the moment of the young French poet's beheading, the Queen's favorite lady expressed her hope that she would someday have revenge:

What is this they say?
 'So perish the queen's traitors!' Yea, but so
 Perish the queen!--God, do thus much to her
 For his sake only: yea, for pity's sake
 Do thus much with her.

 But if I live then shall I see one day
 When God will smite her lying harlot's mouth,
 Surely, I shall. (Chastelard, V, iii)

⁹³Gosse, Life, p. 258.

Nothing is said further until the last lines of Bothwell, when Mary Beaton makes her mistress a promise which, without the Chastelard incident, would have been a sign of devotion, but was, in reality, a veiled threat:

MARY STUART: . . . as I go forth now
with but the hate of men to track my way,
And not the face of any friend alive.

MARY BEATON: But I will never leave you till you
die. (Bothwell, V, xiii)

Then, at the very end of the trilogy, as the crowd outside her window reacts to Mary Stuart's beheading, a cry comes in the window, 'So perish all found enemies of the queen!' Mary Beaton now, after almost twenty-four years, at last has her revenge:

I heard that very cry go up
Far off long since to God who answers here.
(Mary Stuart, V, ii)

This successful vengeance theme is Swinburne's single lapse into apocryphal plot-making. Swinburne explains about what he called his cheville ouvriere in a letter to Lord Houghton:

I . . . have hit upon the cheville ouvriere of the whole poem which is to serve as a hinge of the plot and direct cause of the catastrophe from a dramatic point of view. It is an invention, but not in contradiction with fact nor (as I think) out of character or at war with probability. (Letters, III, p. 122)

Swinburne loses no time getting into the Babington Plot.

Mary Stuart, Act I, scene i is a meeting of the conspirators to lay the final plans for Elizabeth's death and Mary's delivery. That Mary has, through her years of English captivity, kept some of the qualities for which she was once celebrated is obvious in Babington's praise of her:

Hath she not been found
Most wary still, clear-spirited, bright of wit,
Keen as a sword's edge, as a bird's eye swift,
Man-hearted ever? (I, i)

Nor has she lost that well-honed edge of her temperament, for she is still able to abuse an enemy:

How loud she lied soever in the charge
That for adultery taxed me with her lord,
And, being disproved before the council here,
Brought on their knees to give themselves the lie
Her and her four sons by that first lord of four
That took in turn this hell-mouthed hag to wife,
And got her kind upon her. (V, ii)

At the end of Act I, Mary is allowed the rare privilege of riding in the country so that, unknown to her, the English officials can intercept the plotters as they try to rescue Mary. The Queen is seized and moved to a place of greater security. This for all practical purposes, marks the end of the futile Babington Plot.

Act II is named for Walsingham, the man responsible for spoiling the conspiracy, and deals with the occurrences between the capture of her would-be rescuers and her own

trial. Mary appears just long enough to defy the right of any English court to try her:

Think these folk truly, doth she verily think,
 What never man durst yet, nor woman dreamed
 May one that is nor man nor woman think,
 To bring a queen born subject of no laws
 Here in subjection to an alien law
 By foreign force of judgment? (II, ii)

This same defiance carries into the second part of Mary Stuart, the trial and execution. In the Encyclopedia Britannica article, Swinburne praises Mary for her ability "to hold her own for two days together without help of counsel against all the array of English law and English statesmanship." (p. 599) This very scene is repeated at the beginning of Act III, which is named for Burghley, Elizabeth's chief prosecutor, when Mary says, "there are full many men of counsel met;/ Not one for me." (III, i) Her defense is brilliant, as expected, for Swinburne had not brought Mary this far to have her fall mute and trembling before her English accusers. She demands justice, fully realizing she is in no position to demand anything; but the sense of royal prerogative that was to become the hallmark of the English Stuart kings resided in their grandmother as well, and she assures any who will listen that she is accountable only to God.

Act IV, named for Elizabeth, contains an attempt by Swinburne, purely in the name of justice and not by some

tacit agreement with Froude's account, to show the agony of the English Queen over Mary's destiny. She is very reluctant to sign the death warrant until she is given a letter, written long before by Mary in a fit of temper, which contains slander about Elizabeth's private life. The letter is sufficient to decide the matter and Mary's past indiscretion is made the cause of Mary's death. Swinburne was adamant enough about details that he reacted negatively when the Saturday Review and the Academy claimed ignorance of such a letter and in a statement which showed his lack of partisanship, referred them to both Froude and Hosack. (Letters, IV, p. 250)

With Elizabeth's indecision ended by the libellous letter, all that is left for Mary Stuart is to die. This she does in Act V, named, appropriately, for her. Here, it is almost certain that Swinburne makes extensive use of Froude's description.⁹⁴ The crucial thing is that he does not fall into the historian's anti-Catholic cadence but makes Mary's death a triumphant affair. She is neither depressed nor fearful; she approaches the beheading block with the same courage she summoned to avenge Rizzio's death, to elope with Bothwell, to escape from Lochleven, and to confound the prosecution at her English trial. From her

⁹⁴ Boswell, Dissertation, p. 198.

lyrical song which opens Act V to her refusal to stir when the first blow of the headsman glances off her neck, Mary's last hours on earth, for the poet, were a rehearsal of her whole life, for once again, she conducted herself as she pleased and gladly bore the consequences.

Swinburne's trilogy is the high-water mark of nineteenth-century Marian literature. Not only is the scheme the most ambitious and the sweep of events the broadest and most inclusive, but the central figure is one of the most attractive and, as we have tried to demonstrate, perhaps the closest to the original. Josephine Chandler evaluates correctly when she says,

Thoughtful examination of the trilogy reveals evidence that Swinburne apprehended intuitively his chief characters and that he turned to the study of history to corroborate his intuition. He believed that Mary Stuart's career was essentially dramatic and tragic. He therefore felt that to avoid falsifying history would give strength to his dramatic conception.⁹⁵

To move from the gigantic works of Swinburne to the work of an unknown author is to put the latter in company with which he cannot hope to compete. There is, however, one more

⁹⁵ The So-Called Elizabethan Tragedies of Swinburne: A Study in Literary Assimilation, Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Berkely, 1935, p. 104.

play from this period to be discussed. The last, and probably the least, of the four plays about Mary appeared in 1894 under the title Mary Queen of Scots: A Tragedy,⁹⁶ and was written by Robert Blake (pseud. for Richard Thompson). This is a stridently pro-Mary play and was written because Blake felt that "the story of Mary Queen of Scots has never yet been treated adequately in dramatic form." To the reader who wonders if Blake had ever read Swinburne, the answer is in the Preface:

Mr. Swinburne's Mary Stuart is a libel not only on the Queen's character, but on her wit. He not only takes the view of her conduct as a wife, which Elizabeth and her Ministers so long and so successfully laboured to produce on the minds of their own generation, and which there is not a particle of real evidence to support, but he makes the most brilliant and accomplished princess of her age an almost insufferable bore. The greatest woman the human race has ever produced, a woman who in intellect, learning, literary and political ability, and energy, surpassed almost all the men of her time, as much as she excelled other women in grace and beauty, is made to maunder through page after page of dreary platitudes, to drone out line after line of often indifferent iambics, till the reader feels that her murderers may almost be forgiven, for that nothing but death could adequately punish such interminable prolixity.

⁹⁶ (London: Simpkin, Marshall, and Co., 1894). All future references will be made by page number in the text.

Blake admits earlier in the Preface to not liking closet drama and to thinking any drama is improved when a Greek chorus is added. His objection to non-actable drama is that such a piece is "only a poem written in a particular form" and "a most unnatural and inconvenient form" at that. As for the Greek chorus, Blake says that "the fault of all our modern drama is that it does not use this most powerful of all effects." If Blake is not a good dramatist, and that has yet to be decided, he is at least a devotee of the orthodox and a literary iconoclast.

Blake obviously intended his play to be an alternative to Mary Stuart, for it covers the same events and period of time with the exception of the Babington Plot, which is only mentioned. Elizabeth, who is definitely a villainess in this version, comes in for a great deal of abuse early in the play when the English queen is accused of wanting an heir but fearing the cost of marriage, or of favoring her mother though not sure of who she was. Mary also has conflicts with Paulet, her Puritan gaoler, who, at the end of Act I, is responsible for having her seized. To him and all others who would tamper with her freedom, she is resolute:

Who are they
Who dare to sit in judgment on a queen?
We have been born above such courts. We own
Allegiance only to the God of justice,
Who tries all treachery . . . (I, i)

Blake seems determined to get Mary's courage across to his

audience, for he has Jane Kennedy comment that "no spirit ever dwelt more proud and fearless" followed by Paulet's description of her as "fierce as a tigress and fearless as a hawk," which is followed by Mary's affirmation that "live or die, I bend the head to none." At the trial it is more of the same. Mary begins by defying her judges' right to try her ("We've led your betters in the field") and then defends herself against their charges by defending her birth, of which she is "justly proud," and her faith, which has been her "hope, only consolation, and trust." She attacks Elizabeth, accusing her of "conspiring, forging, and torturing to procure our ruin," and her son, James, for whom she hopes that "his ears to all eternity/ In deepest Hell may ring with a mother's curse."

Now that Blake has dispatched all of Mary's enemies, he turns to the more specific problem of exonerating her. The playwright resorts to the rather crude device of a bad dream to make Mary seem innocent of Darnley's death. Mary awakens screaming for the guard to save Darnley and for the alarm to be sounded. This clumsy attempt to clear Mary from one of Froude's major charges is laudable but incredible. The last scene of the play shows Mary praying over Paulet's voice as he tries to read the death warrant. Like the rest of the play, it is overstated to the point of being caricature, much like Boulding's but in the opposite direction.

Blake's play is precisely the kind of mindless defense to which Swinburne addressed himself in the Note. The one-sided view of Mary is so full of fallacies and obvious contrivances that it does her cause little good. Blake is really attacking Froude by way of Swinburne, but such a lightweight contribution to Mary's cause hardly moved the scales so that one would have noticed.

We have studied the work of one giant and two pygmies in this section. The plays of Swinburne were discussed for obvious reasons: their general comprehensiveness, their magnificent poetry, their attractive characters, their historical integrity. The reasons for selecting such admittedly mediocre plays as those by Boulding and Blake are less obvious. Perhaps the best one is that they show that the debate over the basic issues of Mary Stuart's life made its way into the minor literature of the Victorian Period, the grass-roots level, as it were, and was not confined to the major figures. The plays of Blake and Boulding are nearly equal in their lack of imagination, dearth of good dialogue, and stereotyped characters. They are also similar, and this is their saving grace, in the ferociousness with which they defend the opposite sides in the Marian debate; for which side they chose indicates whether they were content to stay within, or wanted to flee from, the long shadow of Froude's History.

E. Debate and the Historical Queen in the Quasi-Documentary

The last genre to be considered in this study of late nineteenth-century Marian literature, the 'quasi-documentary,' is even more of a separation from the general idea of creative literature, of belles lettres, than the essay was. This form is a direct result of the new scientific emphasis in historiography and consists of a sixteenth-century document, previously unpublished, dealing with an important detail of Mary's life, which, with the use of prefaces, footnotes, indices, facsimiles, appendices, and other scholarly apparatus, adds to the accumulation of evidence on either side of the question of Mary's guilt. We have included them here for two major reasons: first, they throw considerable light on the issues previously considered in the novels, essays, and dramas; and secondly, the trends in historiography at the end of the last century blurred the lines between the areas of literature and history and left such works as these eligible for study in either area.

The earliest of these quasi-documentaries is appropriately entitled A Lost Chapter in the History of Mary Queen of Scots Recovered.⁹⁷ It was edited by a bona fide scholar, the Secretary of the Society of Antiquarians of Scotland, John Stuart, and

⁹⁷ (Edinburgh: Edmonston and Douglas). All future references will be made by page number in the text.

consists of the Dispensation of marriage between Lord Bothwell and his first wife, Jane Gordon, along with, as the title page says, "Remarks on the law and practice of Scotland relative to marriage dispensations." The importance of this document, which Stuart found among several forgotten papers from the sixteenth century, is that it proves that consanguinity was acknowledged and approved between Bothwell and Jane, who were fourth cousins, and that, consequently, their divorce was not legal, a fact which, in turn, invalidates the marriage of Bothwell and Mary Stuart.

Some obvious questions arose on the occasion of Stuart's discovery of this document, and the disagreement over the solutions to these questions further polarized the sides of the debate. The primary question, and the only one which will concern us, is whether or not Mary knew about such a dispensation. Swinburne thought she did, for in Act III, scene iii, of Bothwell, in a passage presumably inspired by the then-recent discovery, he mentions it:

Why, ere his marriage with the Lady Jane,
She had her dispensation from the Pope,
For the blood mixed between them of all bars
Which might have maimed it with impediment.

Stuart is sure she did:

We must bear in mind the conditions of
Scotch society, which made it merely a
piece of prudence that a dispensation
should form part of a marriage

settlement. The process on which the Dispensation for Lady Jane Gordon's marriage with Bothwell proceeded was to some extent of a public character, involving the examination of the witnesses of note in the presence of the Secretary of the Primate, it seems probable that the reading of the Dispensation had formed a preliminary at the marriage ceremonies. . . . Looking at these circumstances, it seems to me that the Queen's knowledge of the Dispensation is no unreasonable supposition. (pp. 25-26)

John Hosack, a devoted apologist for Mary whose work we will see later, disagrees:

The question naturally arises, was Queen Mary aware of the existence of this dispensation, and did she knowingly contract a marriage which, in the eye of her Church, was absolutely and incurably void? Her adversaries will probably answer in the affirmative, on the assumption that her infatuated attachment to Bothwell rendered her regardless of all consequences; and if they could produce any trustworthy proofs of this extraordinary affection, the argument would be strong, if not conclusive. But as no evidence which they have been able to adduce upon this point will bear examination, we must believe that she was ignorant of the existence of this dispensation when she consented to marry Bothwell.⁹⁸

Hosack puts the burden of proof on those who believe Mary ignored what she knew to be a legal marriage, while Stuart,

⁹⁸ Mary Queen of Scots and Her Accusers (Edinburgh: Blackwood and Sons, 1874), II, vi.

aware of Hosack's argument, cannot believe that Mary would have been ignorant of such a common practice. This particular issue does not include Froude's opinion, for he was unaware of such an item; but we can be sure, as Mrs. Boswell says, that "had he known that it existed, he surely would have used it as evidence of Mary's evil."⁹⁹

The second of these contemporary documents which came to light during this period was The History of Mary Stewart From the Murder of Riccio Until Her Flight Into England¹⁰⁰ written in the form of a journal by Claude Nau, Mary's secretary, and edited by a Jesuit priest, Joseph Stevenson. Father Stevenson tells the reader that this neglected manuscript was found under a vague and misleading title in the Cottonian section of the British Museum. He then describes why he thinks it is significant:

So abundant and so varied is the biographical literature connected with the Scottish queen that it may reasonably be asked upon what ground I venture to add yet another contribution to the store of materials already too extensive. My answer is that I offer this work to the public because I believe it to contain information which is at once new and important. I claim a hearing for a

⁹⁹ Boswell, Dissertation, p. 75.

¹⁰⁰ (Edinburgh: Adam and Charles Black, 1890). All future references will be made by page number in the text.

witness who has something to say on an interesting question which is not yet decided. It seems to me that no just estimate of Queen Mary can be formed until the countents of the present volume shall be adduced in evidence, and their value duly sifted and ascertained. (p. xi)

and admits that a document of such importance will be controversial:

In laying before the public a narrative which claims to have been written by one of the most trusted of Mary's secretaries, which professes to furnish new and trustworthy information upon some of the most moving incidents in the eventful life of that queen in a narrative which I suppose to have been written under her roof, and probably under her own immediate supervision, I am aware that any statements which I may make in support of that claim will be closely and keenly examined. Such large concessions as I venture to demand for this narrative cannot be easily granted either by the advocates or the accusers of the Scottish Queen; and it is well that they should not. If this fragmentary memoir of Mary Stuart be what I believe it to be, it can stand its own ground, and has nothing to dread from fair criticism. (pp. xvii-viii)

Despite his claims that his work is "not a life of Mary Stuart, still less that it is an apology for her conduct," Father Stevenson's conclusions tend to favor her cause. She was victimized, he says, because "her ruin was necessary to the success of her enemies." Furthermore, since "much that she said and did has been misunderstood, and much that she

suffered has been concealed and forgotten," this opportunity to study an eye-witness account is fortuitous.

The events described in Nau's journal include two of the three major crimes cited by Froude: the murder of Darnley and the abduction/marriage with Bothwell. Mary is cleared of complicity in both. Nau says that rather than bitterly hating her husband, as Froude claims, Mary had resolved her differences with Darnley during his sickness. But when the murder was completed, the murderers "pretended . . . that their object was to free the queen from the bondage in which she was held by her husband." When this failed, they became "most active in endeavouring th throw the guilt upon her majesty" Their attempts were successful to the degree that modern historians have often accepted their accounts as accurate.

Nau's account of the Bothwell marriage runs even more counter to the accounts written by Froude and the other Protestant historians. Nau tells how the members of Mary's Privy Council waited on her to advise her that another marriage was necessary for stability in the kingdom and that Bothwell was their choice. Mary refused at first; but, and these are Nau's words, "perceiving that the said Earl of Bothwell was entirely cleared from the crime . . . , she began to give ear to their overtures." (p. 38) Bothwell met Mary on her return from Stirling and persuaded, but not forced, her to go to Dunbar Castle where she consented,

somewhat reluctantly, to marry him. At this point, Nau assures us, "the chief of the nobility gave proof that they looked upon the union with great satisfaction." (p. 40) It was not until the marriage was consummated, claims Nau, that the nobles turned against Bothwell, accused him of Darnley's murder, and forced him to flee, leaving Mary to be taken captive.

Nau then concludes that it was not Bothwell but Mary who had been the nobles' target from the beginning. Only her fall from power and death or imprisonment would guarantee their success. Mary, according to this eye-witness account, was neither part of the Darnley murder plot nor guilty of wrongdoing with Bothwell, but was sucked into the maelstrom of green and corruption which raged at the center of sixteenth-century Scottish politics.

Father Stevenson goes to great pains to establish two facts essential to his case: that this account was really written by Claude Nau; and that it was not true, as some had claimed, that Nau was a key witness in the English prosecution of Mary. The first problem is solved by a comparison of handwriting samples between letters known to have been written by Nau and the manuscript of the History, which was unsigned. The question of Nau's final loyalty to Mary, Stevenson feels, was an English plot to discredit further the Scottish Queen and her followers. Stevenson traces Nau's career as he returned to France after Mary's

death and cleared himself with the Duke of Guise, the most powerful Catholic nobleman in the country and the brother of Mary's mother. This settles the matter for Father Stevenson:

He stood there in the position of a man who had been grossly caluminated, and whose reputation had been restored to him by competent authority after sufficient investigation. (p. liii)

Joseph Stevenson's editorial work on this controversial work is skillfully done. Besides having both the English and the French versions of Nau's Journal, he has included a seven-chapter synopsis, extensive notes at the end of each chapter, and 'illustrative papers' from, as might be expected in a Jesuit-edited work, "the secret Archives of the Vatican and other collections in Rome." The volume is, the editor's denial notwithstanding, an apologia for Mary throughout; but it is important for our study, because it indicates that the Catholics were as capable as the Protestants of using scholarship and documentation to buttress their case in the prolonged debate.

The third of these strictly documentary pieces deals with what has always been 'Exhibit A' in the case against Mary Stuart: the so-called 'Casket Letters.' If these letters are genuine, as three centuries of anti-Marian sentiment have insisted they are, then Mary was guilty as charged. On the other hand, though proving the letters false would not

exonerate Mary, it would prove there was a concerted effort to mar the integrity of her reputation. Such a ripe subject was not likely to be ignored in the 1880's and 1890's when the conflict Froude had started was turning into a full-fledged war.

In his second edition of The Casket Letters and Mary Queen of Scots,¹⁰¹ the editor, T. T. Henderson, replying to the many objections to the arguments in the first edition, asserts that champions of Mary, from any period, have been ineffectual in disproving the genuineness of the letters. John Skelton, whom Henderson sees as one of his chief opponents, called the Casket problem " a riddle which has baffled the finest wits"; but Henderson will not admit this and cites the work of a half dozen historians, including Hume and 'Mr. Froude,' as those who were not baffled at all--they were genuine. It is therefore Skelton, not Henderson, who occupies a position conspicuously different from that of 'the finest wits.' In like manner, the anti-Casket conclusions of Hosack are disposed of by Henderson:

Less convinced than puzzled by Hosack's statement of the case, the general reader was inclined to regard the controversy as 'practically futile'; but so largely were Hosack's arguments

¹⁰¹(Edinburgh: Sands and Co., 1895). All future references will be made by page number in the text.

based on mere assumption, that in addition to the crumbling processes to which they were exposed by independent examination of authorities, new information was almost certain to directly contradict them. His ingenious theory as to the method of forgery had really nothing to commend it except its ingenuity. (p. vix)

The crux of the Casket Letter problem is Letter 2 and its much-argued authenticity. It is in this letter that Mary expresses unqualified disdain for her husband and love for Bothwell. It is here, too, that she pleads for something to be done to relieve her of Darnley's presence. The problems of establishing the genuineness of this letter are many and complex. There is the matter of having the English, Scotch, and Latin translations, but not the French original; there is the possibility of two letters in one, each intended for a different reader; there are inconsistencies of internal evidence in dates, allusions to events which could not have yet occurred, and phrases which were mistakenly or clumsily translated. Henderson tries to explain away some of these problems but is hard pressed to remove all doubts. He dismisses the objections of Skelton and Hosack as overly-partisan but finds it hard to admit defeat himself. When all the data points to the existence of a forgery, Henderson, his hands empty of any evidence to the contrary, defends his position with conjecture:

A forgery in such circumstances would undoubtedly have been specifically dangerous--dangerous to the Regent Moray in Scotland should it by any possibility have been discovered, probably still more dangerous to him should Elizabeth and her advisors have detected it, and dangerous to Elizabeth's reputation should she wittingly or unwittingly have permitted herself to be influenced by forged documents. (p. 11)

Henderson's tenacity in defending a position even he admits is shaky indicates how deeply the rift between the two sides in this debate had gone.

It is remarkable that these diligently researched and thoroughly documented works so often contradict each other. To take one example not directly related to the Casket Letters, Henderson insists that

It is perfectly well known that many of the nobles who had banded together for the Queen's 'deliverance' from Bothwell cherished no animosity whatever against the Queen personally.
(p. xxi)

while Stevenson asserts the opposite:

They had not charged him with this crime until he had become her husband. Long before now there were many occasions when they could have seized him; and they could have done this without the long force which they now employed for the purpose. Hence it appeared that she alone was the object of their attack, in order to deprive her of her crown.
(p. 46)

Each of these arguments is plausible, and yet one at least must be false. It is possible to draw boundary lines in this conflict according to religious creed with the Catholics here and the Protestants there; the works of Froude and Miss Yonge illustrate this, to say nothing of the friendly Nau edition of Father Stevenson. But this does not really answer the problem of how two presumably honest men, both of whom claim to be more interested in the 'facts' of the case than with the defense of a given position, can arrive at exact opposite views on the subject of the nobles' intentions toward Mary or, more importantly, the authenticity of the Casket Letters. Since there are no such mutually exclusive phenomena as 'Catholic truth' and 'Protestant truth,' one, or both, of the men are wrong. Froude himself may have had the answer when, after describing the divergent views in works on the Reformation, the French Revolution, and even the American Civil War, he concludes that

Probably the writers of every one of them had formed their conclusions before they looked into the facts, and they saw, or imagined, or believed exactly what fell in with their preconceived opinions.¹⁰²

¹⁰²Short Studies on Great Subjects, II, p. 483.

The last piece of quasi-documentary literature to be considered, The Tragedy of Fotheringay¹⁰³ by Mrs. Maxwell Scott, was "founded on the Journal of D. Bourgoing, physician to Mary Queen of Scots, and on unpublished documents." This work confines itself to a description of Mary's trial and execution. It should be remembered that Froude's account of Mary's death was attacked for its lack of seriousness and respect, or, as the Edinburgh Review put it, "all mercy, forbearance, kindness, and moderation was blown to the winds."¹⁰⁴ Mrs. Scott tries to offset Froude's callousness with a sensitive, even emotional account of Mary's final days.

Mary's testimony at her trial, presumably recorded by Bourgoing, who was present, is the most important part of this volume. As the only witness on her own behalf, Mary contradicts all the traditional charges against her, including the immediate pretext for the trial, her involvement in the Babington Plot. Mary denies having had any knowledge of it and refutes the letters placed in evidence against her. She says that she never has had enmity against Elizabeth nor has she plotted to gain the English crown. This speech of Mary's, made on the first day of the two-day trial, is long and moving in its appeal for justice.

¹⁰³ (New York: Hurd and Houghton, 1872). All future references will be made by page number in the text.

¹⁰⁴ (January, 1870), p. 3.

Mrs. Scott says that "the Queen's defense was so clear and unanswerable" that it "silenced for a time the accusers, and they took refuge in insult." (p. 69) On the second day, according to this account, the efforts of the prosecution were directed toward causing Mary to incriminate herself. When this was unsuccessful, the trial was recessed with the proviso that it would recommence in the Star Chamber at Westminster in ten days. This it did, without Mary's presence, and a 'guilty' verdict was the result. Mrs. Scott does not hesitate to state her opinion of these proceedings:

Then terminated a trial which in legal history has probably no counterpart, and regarding which the following points especially strike us: the incompetence of the English tribunals, as then constituted, to judge an independent sovereign; the refusal of counsel to the prisoner, in violation of the laws of England, and in violation especially of the statutes of Mary Tudor and Elizabeth; the absence of witnesses, whose presence in front of the accused was essential to all just procedure; the forced procedure of Mary, not before independent and trustworthy judges, but before Commissioners carefully chosen beforehand, and who, combining the offices of judge and jury, united in endeavouring to nullify the defense.
(p. 82)

One of the clearest things about the Mary that Mrs. Scott has discovered is her devotion and faith. Bourgoing's transcriptions of the trial speeches are filled with

references to 'the will of God,' 'the wishes of the Church,' and pleas for religious tolerance in England. Mary admits her Catholicism with alacrity but denies, and this hits Froude's arguments broad-side, that her devotion to the Church of Rome influenced her political or moral behavior. She says that she had often wept at the widespread persecution of English Catholics and was ready to shed her blood for them, but she had never planned violence in their behalf.

Mrs. Scott speaks in reverent and hushed tones when she comes to the time of Mary's death. In every detail, from the description of Mary's reaction to the news of the execution date ("When it was finished, Her majesty, with great constancy and without emotion, replied.") to the famous missed first stroke of the headsman ("The executioner . . . struck with an ill-assured aim, and only wounded the Queen severely, but she neither moved nor made a sound."), she is painfully accurate and precise in her revelation of Mary's character in the closing hours of her life. She also shows that Mary was concerned about her servants who had suffered with her through the long captivity, and, in an especially moving scene, describes her last night with them:

She admonished each separately, charging them to live at peace with each other, and to give up all past enmities or bitterness, and she showed in all this great proofs of wisdom, understanding, and constancy. (pp. 181-182)

Even when Mary lay down to rest, she was an inspiration to those who watched by her bed:

She lay immovable, with closed eyes and hands crossed on her breast, but she did not sleep. Her attendants perceived, by the movement of her lips and an occasional peaceful smile, that she was praying, and all absorbed in the thought of the life to come. As Jane Kennedy expressed it, she seemed to be 'laughing with the angels.' (p. 188)

The execution itself is described in great detail and with rhetoric calculated to further impress the reader with Mary's near-sainthood. A comparative look at two descriptions of a short exchange between Mary and the Protestant clergyman who attended her at the scaffold will illustrate the slant of Mrs. Scott's narrative. First, Froude's version of the brief incident:

The Dean of Peterborough, Dr. Fletcher, approached the rail. 'Madam,' he began, with a low obeisance, 'the Queen's most excellent Majesty'--thrice he commenced his sentence, wanting words to pursue it. When he repeated the words a fourth time, she cut him short.

'Mr. Dean,' she said, 'I am a Catholic, and must die a Catholic. It is useless to attempt to move me, and your prayers will avail me but little.'

'Change your opinion, Madam,' he cried, his tongue being loosed at last; 'repent of your sins, settle your faith in Christ, by him to be saved.'

'Trouble not yourself further, Mr. Dean,' she answered; 'I am settled in my own faith, for which I mean to shed my blood.'

'I am sorry, Madam,' said Shrewsbury, 'to see you so addicted to Popery.' 'That image of Christ you hold there,' said Kent, 'will not profit you if he be not engraved in your heart.'

She did not reply, and turning her back on Fletcher knelt for her own devotions.

and then Mrs. Scott's:

The Dean of Peterborough, Dr. Fletcher, now advanced, and placing himself in front of the Queen, made her a profound reverence, and said that he had come to her by his mistress's command in order to prepare her for death.

'Peace, Mr. Dean,' replied Mary gently, 'I have nothing to do with you; I do not wish to hear you; you can be silent if you please, and go from here.' And as he began to exhort her, Mary said resolutely, 'you gain nothing; I will not listen to you; be silent, please,' and turned her back on him. Fletcher, however, continued to insist on placing himself again before her and exhorting her to 'repent of her crimes' till Shrewsbury, shocked, bade him be silent and begin to pray.

Kent, observing that Mary often made the sign of the cross with the crucifix she held in her hand, rudely exclaimed, 'Madam, what does it avail you to hold in your hand that vain image in Christ if you do not fear him in your heart?'

'How is it possible,' replied the Queen gently, 'to have such an image in one's hands without the heart being profoundly touched by it? Nothing is more suitable for a Christian about to die than to bear

in his arms the true mark of his redemption.' (pp. 202-203)

Froude's Mary is the same dogmatic and intransigent Papist we saw earlier, while the Queen in Mrs. Scott's narrative remains firm but gentle, and genuinely pious to the very end.

There is not enough evidence present to indicate that Mrs. Scott published her work, which was actually a paraphrase of Bourgoing's Journal, with Froude's History specifically in mind. It would hold true, however, as we have mentioned previously, that no one who chose sides in the Marian debate could be oblivious to the historian's work. Only Henderson, of the four 'editors,' mentions Froude by name; but neither Father Stevenson nor Mrs. Scott, both fervently pro-Marian, was firing his cannon against a totally unseen enemy. With the extremely potent weapon of an unpublished original document at the disposal of each, they were able to inflict great damage to what Froude and his followers obviously felt was an impenetrable fortress of contrary evidence.

There remain two works to discuss in this general area of documented histories. Both were written for the purpose of refuting Froude and, in the case of Hosack, also David Hume, another critic who took an accusatory stance toward Mary. The first is by an American scholar, James F. Meline,

and carries a red-flag title; Mary, Queen of Scots and Her Latest English Historian: A Narrative of the Principal Events in the Life of Mary Stuart, With Some Remarks on Mr. Froude's History of England.¹⁰⁵ Meline blasts Froude on the familiar grounds of gross partiality and blatant partisanship. There is not much that Froude did that Meline can applaud. He feels that the historian is neither knowledgeable ("his very defective knowledge of all history before the sixteenth century led him into the most grotesque blunders") nor is he able, as an historian must be, to generalize ("He handles a microscope skillfully, but is apparently unable to see through a telescope.").

To discuss Meline's criticism of Froude thoroughly is not to the point here, both because he is an American writer, though well-known in England, and so technically does not belong in this study, and because such a discussion would be redundant in its negativity. A pastiche of excerpts from the text of Meline's book will speak for itself:

In matters of style, Mr. Froude is a pamphleteer; in personal questions, he is an advocate. (p. 8)

Mr. Froude trifles with his readers and plays with his authorities, as some people play with cards. (p. 10)

¹⁰⁵(Edinburgh: Blackwood and Sons, 1869 and 1874). All future references will be made by page number in the text.

Mr. Froude accustoms his readers to accept testimony which . . . would be thrust out of the obscurest rural court. (p. 64)

There are whole pages of the history in question in which blunder and innovation strive for the mastery. (p. 132)

. . . no such strange or shocking narrative as that of Mr. Froude has ever grieved the judicious and blotted the page of history. (p. 307)

Meline's English counterpart, John Hosack, appears to have been to the Catholic-Marian side what Froude was to the Protestant-Tudor side. Henderson acknowledged him as 'able' and felt that his criticisms of the Casket Letters were more credible than Skelton's. John Stuart, it will be remembered, recognized his role as spokesman in the discussion of the marriage dispensation. On the other hand, Father Stevenson quotes him in his footnotes and Mrs. Scott quotes him at length about Mary's trial.

The two volumes of Hosack's Mary Queen of Scots and Her Accusers¹⁰⁶ were published five years apart, with Volume I covering from the birth of Mary in 1542 until the death of the Regent Murray in 1570, and Volume II continuing until Mary's death in 1587. Although this is not the intent of

¹⁰⁶See note #98.

the work, Hosack's volumes could qualify as 'quasi-documentaries,' for in the introductory remarks to Volume I, he mentions that he is publishing for the first time a Book of Articles which was prepared for the famed Conference of Westminster, held in 1568 to decide what to do with Mary after her flight to England. It is not Hosack's method to showcase these documents, as Henderson and the others did, but to place them in the body of his narrative in the appropriate context.

The title of Hosack's work would easily lead one to believe that he means to take on anyone who had ever written a negative word about Mary. This is not true; he ignores the midgets and saves his strength to do battle with two Goliaths: David Hume and James Anthony Froude. Hosack's differences with Hume center almost entirely on the Westminster Conference. He dismisses Hume's mistaken interpretation about Mary's behavior there as the result of ignorance, not malice. He concludes by referring to Hume as "the ablest and most indulgent" of Mary's modern adversaries.

Hosack is not so patient with Froude. He does not resort to the bombast that filled Meline's book because that sort of cover for his inadequacies is unnecessary. He can rise to Froude's level and meet the historian on his own terms. We will deal briefly with the differences between the two men concerning the three major crimes, and conclude by noting

Hosack's dissection of Froude's conclusions about Mary's character.

Froude's assumption of Mary's participation in the murder of Darnley is the produce of his greatest flaw, his blind acceptance of questionable evidence. In this case it is the highly suspicious deathbed confession of Nicolas Hubert, better known as 'Paris,' one of Bothwell's servants, that Froude accepts as authoritative. He, in fact, "transfers to his pages some of its most sensational passages, without even acquainting his readers that its authenticity has ever been called in question." (I, p. 252) Hosack also quotes Froude's statement that on the first news of Darnley's murder, "the general instinct had settled upon the queen," and shows that the source for this statement, a letter from the Spanish Ambassador in London to his king, depends on rumor and conjecture for its conclusions. This is an excellent example of how effectively Hosack gets at the tap-root of Froude's work. He does not try to refute specific passages from the History, but he shows that Froude's methods are sufficiently spurious as to cast suspicions on his conclusions.

On the subject of Mary's liaison with Bothwell, Hosack catches Froude at the trick of putting his own words into her mouth "for the obvious purpose of leading his readers to conclude that she was an accomplice in the designs for Bothwell." (I, p. 302) Again, in the description of the

wedding of Mary and Bothwell, Hosack lists those present at the ceremony but then notes that, for obvious reasons, "Mr. Froude, not withstanding this testimony, asserts on his own authority, for he gives no other, that not a single nobleman attended the marriage." (I, p. 322) Froude's insistence on the authenticity of the Casket Letters contains statements and ideas for which, as Hosack says, "Mr. Froude is indebted entirely to his imagination." (I, p. 346)

The Babington Plot, which Froude considered Mary's brainchild, was hardly that, as Hosack shows. He illustrates again how Froude misled his readers by misquoting, or by partially quoting, to gain the effect he wanted. Froude had Mary say that she had never heard of "any enterprise intended upon the realm for her relief" when, as Hosack proves, Mary meant that she was ignorant of any current movement. Again, concerning the lost postscript to Mary's answer to Babington, Froude tried to explain its existence by a circuitous argument; Hosack, with simple logic, shows that no such postscript ever existed. Froude also claimed ambitious things for the extant documents containing the confessions of Mary's secretaries about their part in the plot. Hosack admits that this time, "Mr. Froude has surpassed himself," for there are no such documents in the Record Office so, obviously, Froude has again substituted conjecture for fact.

Finally, Hosack sees a paradox in Froude's attitude toward Mary's character. How was it possible, he asks, for Froude to inform his readers that Mary was "warm and true in her friendship," that she had "a noble nature," and that she was "generous" in the extreme, and still accuse her of premeditated murder, adultery, and treasonous conspiracy? As Hosack says, "To assert that any human being, possessed of the high moral qualities attributed by her modern adversaries to Mary Stuart, could have been guilty of such monstrous wickedness, is an absurdity which refutes itself." (II, p. 492) By accepting questionable sources as authentic along with "occasionally inventing fiction of his own, Mr. Froude has made out, to all appearances, a very strong case against the Queen of Scots." The paradox, however, still remains:

But how to reconcile all this wickedness with the noble and amiable qualities which he attributes to the royal criminal, is a problem which he leaves his readers to solve for themselves. (II, p. 493)

Hosack's duel with Froude is a high point in this long battle for the truth about Mary Stuart. Each man had his supporters as is obvious from remarks in the Catholic World:

Hosack's book, written in a tone of legal calmness and dignity, stands in refreshing contrast with Mr. Froude's savage bitterness and repulsive violence.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁷ (April, 1870), p. 35.

and in the Dublin Review, which called Froude "the accredited modern representative of the party in English Literature hostile to the memory of Mary Stuart," and praised Hosack for "having tracked Mr. Froude through the successive stages of the story of Queen Mary, and sifted a second time this printed and manuscript evidence on which he pronounces so sweeping a verdict."¹⁰⁸

Froude, very likely, had no conception of the immense controversy that would follow in the wake of his History and its image of Mary Stuart. In a letter to Skelton in 1862, he does say that he expects some reaction: "I fear my book will bring all your people about my ears, for Mary Stuart, from my point of view, was something between Rachel and a pantheress"¹⁰⁹; but he was sure that most Englishmen would side with him.

It is directly to the assurance of Froude that he was right that this latest and most controversial form of the nineteenth-century Marian image can be traced. The Mary Stuart of Froude's History that stimulated the controversy of which we have been speaking was part of a highly chauvinistic attempt on the historian's part to adulate the

¹⁰⁸Volume 75 (October, 1874), p. 345.

¹⁰⁹Dunn, II, p. 33.

English past, and especially the greatness of the Reformation, at any cost, even that of the truth. The Catholic World, usually very slanted in discussions about Mary, hits dead center when it says that

In the case of the Queen of Scotland, every inch of ground is obstinately fought, because her innocence means the shame of England, the disgrace of Knox, the condemnation of the ornaments of the Anglican and Puritan churches, and the infamy of Elizabeth.¹¹⁰

In a letter dated March 15, 1858, Froude told the Rector of Exeter College, Oxford, that the purpose of his History "is nothing more and nothing less than to clear the English Reformation and the fathers of the Anglican Church from the stains which have been allowed to gather on them."¹¹¹ Since this was the case, a friendly attitude toward a devoutly Roman Catholic claimant to the English throne could not have been expected. What was missing, however, was a willingness on Froude's part to give the Scottish Queen even the slightest benefit of the immense doubt which clouds the major events of her adult life. It was this inability to bend, together with the questionable techniques he employed to avoid what he would have considered compromise, which gathered an entire body of literature given over to continuing the debate he had begun.

¹¹⁰Volume II (April, 1870), p.33.

¹¹¹Dunn, II, p.298.

IV. Conclusion

It only remains, in conclusion, to affirm that this study of the changes which took place in Mary Stuart's literary image during the nineteenth century ought to be of value to the student of that period. At least three reasons can be offered to support this claim. The first is that Mary's position as a celebrated historical figure makes possible a monitoring of the different attitudes toward the past which existed during the century. The Romantic writers, for example, generally considered the past as amorphous, and did not think of it in terms of periods, reigns, epochs, or eras. The precision of historical fact was of little importance to them; Mary could have lived in the sixteenth century or the sixteenth and it would not have affected the way they wrote about her.

With the rise in nationalism that followed Waterloo came a new kind of historical literature. Under the influence of Scott, who took history more seriously than most other Romantics, the delineation of historical events in creative literature became an acceptable discipline and an activity for serious writers. Complete accuracy was not yet considered an important priority but the Marian literature at mid-century did show signs that some awareness of sequence was present and that some attempt was being made to place Mary in her historic context. As the century grew into its last third, historiography, under the aegis of the 'German school' of historians, became so infused

with the scientific method that even the belles lettres, usually the hand-maiden of serious historical scholarship, were often semi-encyclopedic in their use of specific data and extensive documentation. The gulf between actual history and imaginative literature continued to shrink and become less visible than ever before. In the Marian works we have considered, this insistence on exactitude was primarily evident in the use of minute details to prove a disputed point and an unswerving fidelity to primary sources. And so, the readers of the literature about Mary Stuart in the years from 1790 to 1900 should first of all be aware of a progression from a casual view of historical accuracy to a strict reliance on contemporary evidence and established records.

The second source of interest in this literature is the difference in the treatment and development of the characters which occurred from period to period. During the Romantic era, the emphasis was on Mary as a solitary individual; neither her Scottish origins nor her royal genealogy was of more than incidental interest. A prison cell was seized upon as a convenient device for isolating Mary and for insuring her anonymity; there her sorrow and her courage, the two most important features of this early image, could be accented and magnified.

In the middle three decades of the century, during a period of reaction against High Romanticism, Mary lost most of this intensely personal identity and became more of a type, even at times a symbol. The fact that she had once ruled Scotland was

still of minor importance though now she had been granted a more comprehensive base of operations than a prison cell could offer. Her new literary image, coming at a time when the social order was radically changing, made her into a different genus of woman---liberated, alluring, independent---who was naturally inclined toward matters of a sexual nature. This drastic change grew partially out of a rejection of the Romantic over-emphasis on the individual, and partially out of the vast influence such phenomena as the Reform Bill and the ascension of Victoria had in literature as well as in other areas in improving the secondary status to which women had commonly been relegated. To make Mary a femme fatale, as these mid-century writers did, was to make her one of a type which would appear again and again in works as different from each other as Vanity Fair and Major Barbara.

The Marian literature of the latter third of the century was content neither to accept the characterization of Mary as a social/sexual stereotype nor to regress to the narrow focus of Wordsworth's generation, but sought to strike a new course. Caricature and hyperbole were put aside in favor of an objective, almost journalistic style, and an enthusiasm for accuracy replaced the attitude that facts were expendable if the story required it. These new opinions had implications for this literature: by this time in the century, Mary had outgrown the roles of the tortured soul in prison or la belle dame sans merci,

and was now cast in the part of historical queen visibly active in the affairs of English and Scottish polity.

The third contribution this study will hopefully make to the student of British history and literature in a broader understanding of Mary Stuart herself. There are always problems in historical literature, and these are especially abundant in Marian literature, in separating bias from truth. Perhaps more persistently than any other figure in British history, the real Mary Stuart has remained hidden behind a mask of controversy. The three very different views of Mary that we have considered in this study, when taken together, give us a composite picture which brings us as close to the truth about her as we are likely to come. That is, she probably did long for activity and was sufficiently sensitive to weep on realizing that she could not enjoy even such common things as the freshness of spring or the arrival of a new year, as Scott and the Romantic poets have portrayed her; she also likely was as careless, even reckless, in her treatment of the men in her life, or quickly grew as impatient with those who were dull, like Darnley, or those who took her gestures of love too seriously, like Chastelard, as Landor and the others at mid-century claimed; and she in all likelihood was as much a person of great political acumen and as painfully aware of the crucial position of the English throne, which she almost certainly coveted for her own, in the larger

scheme of continental politics as Swinburne tells us she was. Each of these portraits is true and yet inadequate when taken alone; Mary was each of these things and more. When pieced together, however, these separate images give Mary a completeness that would have been difficult to achieve in any single work.

This study does not pretend to have exhausted the possibilities for examining the images of Mary Stuart in nineteenth-century British literature. It has merely observed that there were these general mutations in emphasis and that these mutations sprang from certain larger literary and social changes. To reuse a figure from earlier in the work, the literature about Mary written during this century was like a small but accurate barometer which sensed and diligently recorded the diversities of a remarkably variable literary and social climate.

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