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# Gender and the Nation in the Work of Robert Burns and Janet Little

LEITH DAVIS

In *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Benedict Anderson broke new ground in linking the development of the nation in the eighteenth century to cultural practice, including the growth of print culture.<sup>1</sup> In so doing, he revitalized interest among literary and cultural critics in the discourse of nationalism.<sup>2</sup> But Anderson pays little attention to the role of gender in the development of the nation. Andrew Parker and the other editors of *Nationalisms and Sexualities* question some of the assumptions behind Anderson's interpretations of nation-ness, asking, "How is it that the world has come to see itself divided along the seemingly natural lines of national affiliation and sexual attachment?" and, more importantly, "How do these categories interact with, constitute, or otherwise illuminate each other?"<sup>3</sup> In a similar vein, Mary Louise Pratt argues that Anderson's very description of the nation displays "the androcentrism of the modern national imaginings," because in portraying the nation as a fraternal link, Anderson and those working with his definition of a nation directly exclude women.<sup>4</sup> Asserting that the nation developed not only simultaneously with, but in direct relation to, the evolution of separate, gendered spheres, Pratt contends that the "bourgeois republican era" has been particularly limiting to women: "the nation by

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definition situates or 'produces' women in permanent instability with respect to the imagined community."<sup>5</sup> Moreover, Pratt asserts that the precarious position in which women are placed within the nation reflects back on the precariousness of nationness: "The fundamental instability accorded to women subjects may be one of the features that distinguishes the modern nation from other forms of human community. But, of course to say that women are situated in permanent instability in the nation is to say that the nations exist in permanent instability. Gender hierarchy exists as a deep cleavage in the horizontal fraternity, one that cannot easily be imagined away."<sup>6</sup>

Pratt's assessment of the "permanent instability" in the nation recalls Homi K. Bhabha's examination of the ambivalence that exists in the very discourse which imagines the nation into being. In *Nation and Narration*, Bhabha sets out "to explore the Janus-faced ambivalence of language itself in the construction of the Janus-faced discourse of the nation."<sup>7</sup> The essays by various authors in that volume examine the nation as a "process," in the "act of 'composing' its powerful image."<sup>8</sup> Bhabha's own collection of essays, *The Location of Culture*, also probes the "cultural construction of nationness as a form of social and textual affiliation,"<sup>9</sup> asserting that the idea of the nation, conceived as a "holistic cultural entity . . . produces a continual slippage of categories, like sexuality, class affiliation, territorial paranoia, or 'cultural difference' in the act of writing the nation."<sup>10</sup> Bhabha suggests that while the nation is realized as a continuous act of history, the expression of that linear history produces ambiguities and distortions in all the categories, including that of gender, which are used to construct the nation in history. Where Pratt destabilizes the category of gender to reveal problems in the construction of the nation, then, Bhabha destabilizes the category of the nation to expose it as a collection of heterogeneous elements inflected by gender.

In this discussion, I want to draw together Anderson's, Pratt's, and Bhabha's observations, bringing the category of gender to bear on the imagining of the nation through literature, and, at the same time bringing the category of the nation to bear on the gendering of the literary imagination. My interrogation of the nation will begin on the margins. Specifically, I will focus on how gender in the work of two poets of what Pratt calls the era of "bourgeois republicanism,"<sup>11</sup> Robert Burns and Janet Little, challenges the idea of the nation. Both are members of the Scottish laboring class, inhabiting the geographical and conceptual periphery of Britain. The 1707

Union which joined England and Scotland under the name of Great Britain created a fundamental split or doubleness in the nation. Scotland had long been subject to the pressures of English hegemony, and from the time of the Union of Crowns, many of its inhabitants had internalized the dominant English ideology. But even after the 1707 Act of Union, Scotland retained its own laws, language, and customs.<sup>12</sup> With the Act of Union, then, Britain became a double nation: both united, but also fractured, with its uncanny and suppressed Other within its midst. The case of Britain challenges assumptions about the nation as a “holistic cultural entity,” and both Burns’s and Little’s poetry adds to that challenge, albeit in different ways.

Although much of Burns’s work reinforces the position of women as external to the nation, at the same time he unravels the holistic nation through his ambiguous deployment of the image of woman. Burns reflects the marginalization of being working-class and Scottish in his writing, but as a man, as a citizen of the nation, he is still entitled to publicly represent the nation. Little’s relationship is more complicated; as a woman, she is by definition excluded from the process of imagining the nation. However, Little’s poetry foregrounds how dependent the ideology of the nation is on the construction of a gendered society. Moreover, she uses her anomalous position as a woman writer to challenge the nation’s location of women on the periphery. Little’s voice, associated with and limited to the private sphere, nevertheless makes her marginalization a critique of the nation’s claims to be both represented and representative. At issue in this discussion, then, will be not only the question of whom the nation does (or does not) represent, but also the question of who can (or cannot) represent the nation.

Burns’s work draws attention to the ambiguities inherent in the imagining of eighteenth-century Britain. In his poems, songs, and letters, he adopts various perspectives, identifying himself at different times as both a Scottish patriot and a British citizen.<sup>13</sup> In works such as “The Cotter’s Saturday Night” and “Scotch Drink,” Burns speaks of his allegiance to Scotland. Yet in other poems such as “The Author’s Earnest Cry and Prayer, to . . . the Scotch Representatives in the House of Commons,” he harnesses this patriotism to the larger enterprise of representing Britain. After visiting Stirling Castle, which occasionally housed the old Scottish Parliament, he was moved to scratch the following poem on the window of his room:

HERE Stewarts once in triumph reign'd,  
 And laws for Scotland's weal ordain'd;  
 But now unroof'd their Palace stands,  
 Their sceptre's fall'n to other hands;  
 Fallen indeed, and to the earth,  
 Whence grovelling reptiles take their birth.—  
 The injur'd STEWART-line are gone,  
 A Race outlandish fill their throne;  
 An idiot race, to honor lost;  
 Who know them best despise them most.<sup>14</sup>

Yet he also wrote that he had always been a fervent supporter of the Hanoverian cause and the “sacred **KEYSTONE OF OUR ROYAL ARCH CONSTITUTION.**”<sup>15</sup> He joined the Dumfries Volunteers during the war against France and requested (and obtained) a military funeral.<sup>16</sup> Pressures at various times from patrons, friends, and his employer, the Excise Board, undoubtedly contributed to his political wavering. However, rather than attempting to discern the elusive “truth” of Burns’s affiliations, it is more productive to read his multiplicity of perspectives as a strategy of evasion. Consciously or unconsciously, by constantly shifting his stance, Burns avoids being categorized as an unqualified patriot and constructing an unqualified nation; as a result, he offers an alternative ideology of nation-ness. But while he often draws on the category of gender to problematize the ideology of the holistic nation, his work stops short of a similar problematization of the ideology of gender.

“Love and Liberty—A Cantata,” a poem which Burns chose to suppress, offers a bleak view of the imagined community in the late eighteenth century. The “Jolly Beggars” who share their stories at Poosie-Nansie’s become indirect commentators on the state of the nation. Although all the beggars exist outside the bounds of mainstream society, it is the women who are the most marginal of the marginal. The soldier, the “Son of Mars” (line 29), for example, has at one time been an active player in the nation, taking part in military engagements in Europe and in North America. Although he has lost “an arm and a limb” (line 38), he is still willing to devote himself to the cause of the nation: “Yet let my Country need me, with ELLIOT to head me, / I’d clatter on my stumps at the sound of a drum” (lines 39–40). The soldier demonstrates the unconditional devotion to the nation that Anderson sees as the necessary glue of nationalism.<sup>17</sup> Burns, however, presents this devotion ironically. The soldier attests that he is happy, but the reader sees that once the

soldier's country has finished with him, he is disposed of and forced to beg. With the war over, he joins the fiddler and the tinker of the poem outside the bounds of society.

Yet, while the soldier participates in the imagining of the community for a limited time before he is discarded, the two women who speak are perpetually marginal. The first woman is the product of the military state; she is the daughter of "one of a troop of DRAGOONS" (line 59). She declares that she subsequently fell in love with "SODGER LADDIES," at one point taking on the "Regiment AT LARGE" (line 70). Even in peace time, however, she is reduced to begging, until she can align herself with her "old boy" (line 74). The second woman who speaks also reveals herself as ex-centric to the state. She married a "Highlandman" who was "banish'd . . . beyond the sea" (line 105) and eventually hanged. In both cases, the women are external to, yet affected by, political circumstances. "Love and Liberty" is not an entirely sympathetic picture of the disaffected in the local and national community, but it demonstrates clearly that there are different levels of marginality for men and women, and that women are, in Pratt's words, "'produced' in permanent instability"<sup>18</sup> to the nation.

"Tam O'Shanter. A Tale" also troubles the idea of the holistic nation. To begin with, the context in which the poem appeared suggests the fundamental instability of the nation. Written in 1788 to complement an engraving of Kirk Alloway in Francis Grose's *Antiquities of Scotland*, it began as a project of representing the Scottish nation as a collection of artifacts to the world beyond its borders, chiefly England. What the poem offers, however, are contradictory images of the nation. Both the familiar, comfortable world of the pub and the unsettling Satanic community are presented as distinctly Scottish. The world of the pub and market which we encounter initially, for example, contains "lang Scots miles" of "mosses, waters, slaps, and styles" (lines 7, 8). But the Satanic community at the kirk is also Scottish, as the witches leap about to "hornpipes, jigs, strathspeys, and reels" (line 117). Moreover, the devil plays the bagpipes: "He screw'd the pipes and gart them skirl" (line 123). Burns's images of Scotland are fractured and ultimately resistant to the ideology of national homogeneity.

In addition, "Tam O'Shanter" also pointedly involves the discourse of gender to illustrate the instability of the nation.<sup>19</sup> The world of the pub and market is primarily a masculine world from which the desires of women are excluded. Although the landlady of the inn is mentioned, the focus is on male relationships.

Tam chums with his cronies and, ignoring his wife's anger, imagines himself "O'er a' the ills o' life victorious" (line 58). In contrast, Tam's wife sits at home, "Gathering her brows like gathering storm, / Nursing her wrath to keep it warm" (lines 11–2). The poem thus begins with a division of public and private, male and female, spheres, and the narrator offers a mock warning against the dangers that result from this division:

Ah, gentle dames! it gars me greet,  
 To think how mony counsels sweet,  
 How mony lengthen'd sage advices,  
 The husband frae the wife despises!

(lines 33–6)

While this apostrophe is ironic, however, the narrative makes it clear that Kate's anger is linked to the events which follow:

She prophesied that late or soon,  
 Thou would be found deep drown'd in Doon;  
 Or catch'd wi' warlocks in the mirk,  
 By *Alloway's* auld haunted kirk.

(lines 29–32)

As we see, the attempt to separate women into the private, domestic domain, paradoxically creates its horrific Other. Tam's rejection of Kate's words leads him to cross over the border into the territory of the Satanic cult, into the arena of what Bhabha, after Freud, calls the *unheimlich*.<sup>20</sup> Tam's disregard for the private domain in the everyday world finds its reversal in his intrusion on the private ceremony of the witches, and when his presence is detected (again through gendered circumstances: he is entranced by the attractive young witch Nannie, whose "cutty sark," [line 171] or short shirt, no longer covers her adequately), he is pursued. Kate's *unheimlich* double is indicated in the figure of Nannie; where the one admonishes him not to leave the domestic space, the other wants to punish him for entering the *unheimlich* space. Kate's warning almost comes true, as Tam is nearly "catch'd"; his pursuers are not "warlocks," however, but their female counterparts, witches.<sup>21</sup>

In *The Location of Culture*, Bhabha theorizes about the disregard for the domestic sphere that is inherent in the "distinctions of the private and public spheres of civil society."<sup>22</sup> He argues that this disregard has an impact on the citizen of the nation: "Such a forgetting—or disavowal—creates an uncertainty at the

heart of the generalizing subject of civil society, compromising the 'individual' that is the support for its universalist aspiration."<sup>23</sup> "Tam O'Shanter" can be read as a picture of the uncertainty that the disavowal of the private, female sphere creates in the individual citizen, represented by Tam, a disavowal which results in the fracturing of the everyday world of the community, as Tam is forced into communication with that community's *unheimlich* Other. But "Tam O'Shanter" cannot be read as recommending a remedy for that disavowal; indeed, it rejects such interpretative closure. Instead, the poem finishes with a pun, as "Remember Tam O'Shanter's mare" (line 224) asks the reader to recall and to associate with one another: the mare's tail, the narrator's tale, and the fetishized female "tail." The division of the community into private and public spaces provides material for an entertaining story, problematizing the notion of the holistic community, but the poem does not advocate readjustment. Instead, it converts the private space of the female domain into a space for male voyeurism: the private parts of the female.

I want to conclude my investigation of Burns's deployment of gender in his ambiguous construction of the nation by focusing on his use of the figure of woman as a symbol of the nation in "The Vision" (1786). Pratt comments on such symbolism, suggesting that, "[t]he uneasy coexistence of nationhood and womanhood is played out in that paradoxical republican habit of using female icons as national symbols."<sup>24</sup> However, there is a slippage that is evident in Burns's use of the woman as national icon. In "The Vision," in particular, his destabilization of this image has repercussions for his resulting representation of the nation.

In "The Vision," Burns sets out both his poetic agenda and his sense of national affiliation. The "Vision" appears as the narrator has spent a hard day threshing and is bewailing the use of his time in "stringing blethers up in rhyme / For fools to sing" (lines 23–4) when he could have been extending his "*Cash-account*" (line 28). Just as he is uttering an oath to be henceforth "*rhyme-proof*," the door opens. The female spirit who appears to Burns, called Coila, after his own district of Kyle, offers him a geographical and historical image of his nation which inspires a feeling of patriotism in him:

My heart did glowing transport feel,  
To see a Race heroic wheel,  
And brandish round the deep-dy'd steel



In sturdy blows;  
While back-recoiling seem'd to reel  
Their Suthron foes.

(lines 97–102)

She instructs him to serve, as she does, “bounded to a district-space” (line 193), to write of his immediate environment and by so doing to help perpetuate the Scottish nation. Burns’s “Vision” alludes to his predecessor Allan Ramsay’s poem of the same name.<sup>25</sup> Ramsay’s is a dream poem in which the narrator is instructed by the Warden, the guardian of Scotland. Unlike Ramsay, however, Burns represents the spirit of the nation as both female and divided. Behind the scenes of Burns’s “Vision” is a male “*Genius*” of the nation, but there are a number of other female images that constitute the nation. The larger national genius is overshadowed by the presence of the immediate local female figures.

Burns further disrupts the traditional iconographic representation of the nation as female by drawing attention to the physicality of Coila. Her body is literally made to represent Scottish geography and history:

Her *Mantle* large, of greenish hue,  
My gazing wonder chiefly drew;  
Deep *lights* and *shades*, bold-mingling, threw  
A lustre grand;  
And seem'd, to my astonish'd view,  
A *well-known* Land.

(lines 67–72)

Burns troubles the traditional association of woman as landscape, as he presents her as a lower-class woman whom he considers on the same level as the local women in his neighborhood. When she enters his home, he notes that she appears as “A tight, outlandish *Hizzie*, braw” (line 41). He also comments on his attraction to her:

Down flow'd her robe, a *tartan* sheen,  
Till half a leg was scrimply seen;  
And such a *leg!* My bonie JEAN  
Could only peer it;  
Sae straught, sae taper, tight and clean,  
Nane else came near it.

(lines 61–6)

The woman then is both a “Scottish muse” and a “Hizzie.” The result of Burns’s ambiguous deployment of Coila is that he represents not a cohesive nation, but a nation which is constantly shifting and contradicting itself. Robert Crawford has argued that Burns’s juxtaposition of the high and low constitutes a critique of the dominant literary culture of England. He suggests that “[t]he effect of this technique is to upset established categories, raising questions about the way in which we casually assign cultural value.”<sup>26</sup> There is a similar oppositional tension in Burns’s use of woman as revered symbol of the nation and sexual object, a tension which upsets the way we casually assign national value.

These explorations have suggested the ways that Burns uses gender to critique the idea of the holistic nation. In part, his interest in the marginal place of women may owe something to his own identification with those who exist on the periphery. His task of trying to please the Edinburgh *literati* may have given him a particular sensitivity to political outsiders. Nevertheless, his depictions of women, while they serve to question the nation, do not question gender roles; as we have seen in “Tam O’Shanter” and in “The Vision,” women are objects of masculine desire. Tam would have been more interested in the witches if they had all been “queans” (line 151); Coila is not just a national icon, but also a titillating fantasy. Despite any identification with the marginal position of women, Burns, as Moira Ferguson points out, was allowed freedoms that were denied his female working-class contemporaries, among whom was Janet Little.<sup>27</sup> While Burns shows an awareness of the way gender could be used to trouble the idea of the nation, it was left to Janet Little to explore the mutual construction of gender and national identity.

Little was born near Ecclefechan, Dumfriesshire in 1759. She worked as a servant, first for Reverend Mr. Johnstone and later for Mrs. Dunlop, Burns’s patron. From there she became dairy-maid at Loudoun Castle, the rented residence of Mrs. Dunlop’s daughter, Susan Henri. Mrs. Dunlop served as Little’s supporter, sending some of her poems to Burns for comment. Little’s only book, *The Poetical Works of Janet Little, the Scotch Milkmaid*, was published by subscription in Ayr in 1792; one of the subscribers was Robert Burns.<sup>28</sup>

Throughout the course of her book of poems, Little both aligns her literary concerns with those of Burns and differentiates her sense of the nation from his. Little promotes Burns’s position as national poet for Scotland; indeed she recognizes that she has benefited from his popularizing of the Scottish language.

However, unlike Burns, Little critiques the patriarchal nature of the nation and its exclusion of women. In her important study of working-class women's poetry, *The Muses of Resistance*, Donna Landry situates Little in the vanguard of Scottish nationalism, suggesting that by utilizing Scots dialect in opposition to standard English, Little ensures that "the cultural specificity of English imperialism is articulated with and against an emergent Scottish nationalism."<sup>29</sup> But Landry's argument reads Little as supporting what is essentially a gendered institution: the nation, whether of England or Scotland. I would contend, however, that Little's work is more radical than this. Rather than just representing "an emergent Scottish nationalism," Little also challenges the gendered discourse of nationalism. While Burns uses the image of woman to represent the indeterminacies of national identity, Little, as a woman writer, exposes the implicit assumptions about gender and the nation in the articulation of nationalism. Moreover, in a number of poems, she offers her own discourse to counter masculine imaginings of the nation.

Little shares with Burns a desire to contest the dominance of the upper class and the hegemony of English letters, although she is forced to express her views in a more covert fashion. *The Poetical Works of Janet Little, the Scotch Milkmaid* inverts relationships of social dominance right from the beginning. In her "Dedication" to the twelve-year-old Countess of Loudoun, Little states her gratitude for being under the protection of Loudoun:

Within your walls my happiness I found  
 Luxuriant flourish, like the plants around:  
 Blithe as the birds that perch on yonder spray,  
 In joyous notes, I pour'd the willing lay.<sup>30</sup>

But the poem quickly changes from enumerating the pleasures of Loudoun Castle to focusing on the disruption that is inherent in the life of the nobility living at Loudoun:

Beneath your roof these humble lines had birth,  
 Whose honour'd Patrons now lie low in earth;  
 Or borne by Fate far from their native shore,  
 With smiles auspicious glad my heart no more.

(lines 7–10)

Little alludes to the suicide of the Earl of Loudoun, an allusion which undermines the image of the nobility as the stable force in the nation. As a substitute, Little presents her poems as offering

an image of national continuity by commemorating the vanished aristocrats. Although the Countess's descendants have either died or emigrated, Little's "humble lines" continue to preserve their memory. She conjures up the specters of the inhabitants who have vanished into "lamented tombs" or been whisked away to "distant realms," and again offers her own poetry as an antidote to this dissolution:

For their dear sakes, bid lines they priz'd still live,  
 And grant that shelter they no more can give.  
 Yet, the sad verse how should you patronize  
 That wakes up anguish in a heart at ease!

(lines 43–6)

The familial line may be threatened, but Little's own lines remain to maintain the connection. Little concludes, "For their dear sakes my pray'rs are ever thine, / Nor can I more were your protection mine" (lines 47–8). These lines imagine a reversal of the positions of protector and protected. Similarly, Little rhetorically revises the roles of the working class and the aristocrats when she notes that it is at Loudoun that she "joy'd to see, to serve, and to approve" the knowledge "[t]hat virtue's paths alone can bliss bestow" (lines 12, 14). The nobility are enshrined and "approved" by those who serve them. Like Burns, Little is concerned with promoting equality among different classes. Where Burns addresses the general political sphere in his egalitarian poems such as "A Man's A Man" and "The Tree of Liberty," Little focuses on the specifics of one household, changing the relationship of upper-class dominance by emphasizing the agency and power of those who are dependent. And where Burns uses a declarative tone to announce the worth of even the lowly laborer, Little uses a strategy of complicated rhetoric to both express and conceal her views.

In her next poem, "To the Public," Little shifts her focus from patronage to marketing, noting the transgression she will be seen as committing in the eyes of readers:

A rustic damsel issues forth her lays  
 From the dull confines of a country shade,  
 Where she, in secret, sought the Muse's aid,  
 But now, aspiring, hopes to gain the bays.

(lines 21–4)

She presents a "snarling critic" who accuses her of being "[r]ude and imperfect" in her "rural song" (lines 5–6). However, she

notes that she will rely “on public candour” to give her poetry the attention it deserves. Again, we see a reversal of a power structure, as Little alters the relationship of the poet producing a product for the reader’s passive acceptance or rejection. She solicits the reader to “[g]ive but a little,” and suggests that she herself will “rest content” at that point (line 16); the labor of the poet is replaced by the labor of the reader. Both “To the Public” and the “Dedication” draw on conventional forms of praise and modest apology. What I suggest, however, is that they also allow for a reading that goes against the grain. Little illustrates how her upper-class employers depend on her, a mere servant, to preserve their good name. In a similar fashion, she subverts the structure of the literary market, suggesting that her readers must work to appreciate her poetry. The literary market causes Little to reflect on the difference between the limitations placed on her as a woman writer and the relative freedoms that Burns enjoys.

“Given to a Lady Who Asked me to Write a Poem” addresses the relationship between poetry, gender, and the nation, as Little broaches the subject of changing the literary canon. The poem is written from the perspective of a literary critic who delivers a history of poetic reputation, asserting that “[i]n royal Anna’s golden days / Hard was the task to gain the bays” (lines 1–2). Few were successful, “[e]xcept that little fellow Pope” (line 7). Nowadays, the narrator continues, things have changed. In particular,

A ploughman chiel, Rab Burns his name,  
Pretends to write; an’ thinks nae shame  
To souse his sonnets on the court.

(lines 21–3)

He is successful not because of critics’ praise, but because he pleases the readership: his “hamely, uncouth rhymes . . . please the times” (lines 19–20). The hierarchical power of the critics has been challenged: “Nor dare the critics blame his quill” (line 32). It is Burns’s position as a Scot, Little suggests, that allows him to effect such a break with the past. As representative of the nation, he is approved by Scots of all classes. Even high folk “Ca’ him the glory of our nation” (line 16). Burns is presented as complicating class barriers as well as interrupting the struggle for the dominant discourse. He can write “wi’ ease, / An’ a’ denominations please” (lines 5–6). At the same time as the poem describes the break in the tradition of neo-classic English

literature, the narrative of the poem itself challenges the dominance of standard English, employing Scottish dialect and undermining the seriousness of literary criticism by employing colloquial expressions. Pope, says the narrator, should be thankful for the use of Homer's crutches "[o]r down the brae he'd get a clank" (line 10); Dr. Johnson's famous name gets short shrift, as it is first misspelled as "Johnston" (line 4), then translated into the familiar "Sam" (line 21).

While Little aligns herself with Burns in her efforts to promote the Scottish dialect in the face of the dominant English hegemonic force, however, she also reveals the gendering implicit in representing the nation. The narrator of the poem notes that while Burns was a shock to literary tradition, he was able to alter that tradition. However, as a working-class woman, Little is barred from performing a similar task. Her narrator registers scorn for a milkmaid who "must tak up her quill" to write: "Does she, poor silly thing, pretend / The manners of our age to mend?" (lines 41–2). The narrator continues:

May she wha writes, of wit get mair,  
An' a' that read an ample share  
Of candour every fault to screen,  
That in her doggerel scrawls are seen.

(lines 45–8)

Even though, like Burns, Little is Scottish and of a lower class, she can never occupy the position Burns does. Burns can talk "of politics . . . wi' skill" (line 31); Little never can. Little's poem confirms the assertion of Pratt that "Women inhabitants of nations were neither imagined as nor invited to imagine themselves as part of the horizontal brotherhood."<sup>31</sup> Little herself appears at the end of the poem with her reaction. She says that the critic's words make her slink "beneath the shade" in dread at their "spite" (lines 50–2). Little represents the alignment of masculinity, literary power, and national identity at the same time as she demonstrates the construction of women within the nation.

Little's poems on Burns continue to draw attention to this alignment; however, they also suggest Little's challenge to her own exclusion from national literary matters. "On a Visit to Mr. Burns," for example, topples him from his poetic seat and suggests that while a woman cannot be recognized as a national poet, she can have an impact on the chosen masculine figure-head. Moira Ferguson suggests that this poem, with its reference

to Little's previous excursions in dream to Burns's house, reveals Little's own erotic attraction to the poet;<sup>32</sup> such a comment is not only impossible to prove, given the dearth of information on Little, but also perpetuates a critical gendering in which women writers are interpreted in terms of their sexual relationships to men. What is clear in the poem, however, is Little's attraction to Burns's poetic and national reputation. In "On a Visit to Mr. Burns," she describes her excitement about finally being allowed to call at Burns's cottage:

Is't true? or does some magic spell  
 My wond'ring eyes beguile?  
 Is this the place where deigns to dwell  
 The honour of our isle?

(lines 1–4)

Little notes that Burns's masculine identity gives him a privilege she is unable to share.

The charming Burns, the Muse's care,  
 Of all her sons the pride;  
 This pleasure oft I've sought to share,  
 But been as oft deni'd.

(lines 5–8)

Her description of being "denied" access to the poet also suggests her being denied the title of the pride of the Muses.

Although Little cannot share Burns's reputation, she calls it into question as she subverts his national and poetic identity. When he finally arrives home, it is in the midst of a "dire alarm," as he has fallen from his horse and has broken his arm. In a footnote, Little adds that "[t]he name of the Poet's horse" is Pegasus.<sup>33</sup> The implications of Little's employment of the mythic horse from whose hoof print the Hippocrene, the fountain of the Muses, sprung are interesting. Burns, recalling here the equestrian portrait of the national hero, is seated on an animal which represents his poetic inspiration; national and poetic identity are conflated. Accordingly, Little's depiction of Burns's fall from his horse and his fracturing of his arm represents the loss of his powers on both levels. More importantly, in this poem, Little shows Burns's poetic reputation as dependent on the female realm. He is described as a "son" of the Muses. Even Little's assertion that the name of Burns's horse was Pegasus associates him with the female realm, as Pegasus was born from

the blood of the head of Medusa. Little takes Burns's reliance on a female muse in "The Vision" to its furthest conclusion, rendering Burns totally subservient to the female realm. Burns himself is emasculated, rendered an invalid, dependent on his wife and on Little herself, while Little supplants him in offering the final poetic moral. As his wife stands weeping, Little takes the time to deliver the final poetic judgment:

"No cheering draught, with ills unmix'd,  
Can mortals taste below;  
All human fate by heav'n is fix'd,  
Alternate joy and wo."

(lines 25–8)

Little has the last (and only) spoken words in the encounter, as Burns is enveloped by the tears and moral judgments conventionally attributed to women. By situating the masculine figure firmly in the domestic sphere, the poem responds to poems such as "Tam O'Shanter" that show the division between the private and public spaces. Instead of concluding with a mock warning of the danger of cutty sarks, Little supplies a message on the dangers of national and poetic hubris.

"An Epistle to Mr. Robert Burns" similarly moves from praising Burns as the national poet to enclosing his power within the female realm. In the first stanza, Little acknowledges Burns as the modern representative of Scotland, a descendent of Allan Ramsay:

Fairfa' the honest rustic swain,  
The pride o' a' our Scottish plain;  
Thou gi'es us joy to hear thy strain,  
And notes sae sweet;  
Old Ramsay's shade, reviv'd again,  
In thee we greet.

(lines 1–6)

However, the credit for Burns's fame is attributed in the second stanza to "that delightful muse," "lov'd Thallia," who "cho[s]e" to "grace his lay" (lines 7–12). Furthermore, Little herself serves as Burns's interpreter to the world. In the lines which follow, she summarizes Burns's major poetry and philosophizes about its effects. She catalogues the importance of "The Twa Dogs," "The Cotter's Saturday Night," "To a Mountain Daisy," and Burns's more general love poems. Although Little laments that she



cannot even write fit verse to praise Burns—"In vain I blunt my feckless quill, / Your fame to raise" (lines 39–40)—she bases her entire poem on just this subject. In the end, she suggests that it is her task not to praise him, but to pray for him:

The task I'll drop; wi' heart sincere  
 To heav'n present a humble prayer,  
 That a' the blessings mortals share  
 May be, by turns,  
 Dispens'd with an indulgent care  
 To Robert Burns.

(lines 55–60)

As in "A Visit to Mr. Burns," in which she provided the moral message of the poem, Little implies that while she herself will not be the "pride o' a' our Scottish plain" (line 2), it is her role to take the more universal perspective of wishing blessings on the national poet. Her language here also functions to deflate Burns's power: she hopes he will "share" blessings with other "mortals," cared for by an "indulgent" parental God. The message of "An Epistle" also cautions against pride. In this representation of Burns, too, his work is both inspired by and transmitted by a female figure, while he himself serves as the moral of the story. Most importantly, the poem directly addresses Burns. Despite its protestations of inferiority, "An Epistle" illustrates Little's sense of her own power. The poem is an epistle, a form which Burns employed to acknowledge his literary comrades, and it is written in "standard Habbie," a verse form which Burns, after Ramsay, often employed.<sup>34</sup> Little puts herself at least on speaking terms with Ramsay and Burns.

In addition to commenting on, challenging, and writing to the masculine poet laureate, whose position it is impossible for her to attain, Little also offers an alternative to conventionally gendered imaginings of the nation by establishing a counter-discourse which focuses on the place of working-class women in the nation. Her poem, "To My Aunty," for example, attacks the male critics of literary tradition, as it presents Little having a dream in which

My works I thought appear'd in print,  
 And were to diff'rent corners sent,  
 Whare patrons kind, but scant o' skill,  
 Had sign'd my superscription bill.

(lines 13–6)

Her work is subject to “Voracious critics,” who “devour” it (line 7), despite its humble origin.

Little reveals the critics to be full of pretense. More importantly, rather than each passing his own judgment on aesthetic grounds, the critics are locked in an elaborate hierarchy. As soon as Tom Touchy doubts a line, for example:

The meaner critics scratch'd it out;  
Still to be nam'd on Touchy's side,  
Was baith their int'rest and their pride.

(lines 28–30)

The verses are approved by James Easy, but as soon as this happens, Touchy is outraged and turns on his rival. Little provides a commentary on the ineptitude of the critics. Their concerns are revealed to be not the works of writers, but their own personality conflicts. In this poem, Little presents herself as the monitor of taste, commenting that her poems are promoted by patrons who are “scant o' skill” and judged by critics who are inept.

“To My Aunty” also promotes the power of female working-class discourse, in contrast to the petty judgments of male critics. Her aunt, she notes, possesses neither “wit nor lear” (line 2), yet she can “unravel dreams” (line 4) and has an ability to perceive the truth behind the surface layer of narrative. Little presents her dream-poem for her aunt's interpretation, not for the critics'. Furthermore, Little's reference to her own writing in the poem stands out against the lack of imagination of the critical world. She says, “For I'm commanded by Apollo, / Your sage advice in this to follow” (lines 7–8). She presents her creative power as dependent not just on Apollo, but on her aunt's wisdom.

In the poems which purport to be letters between a fellow servant, Nell, and herself, Little further establishes a female laboring-class literary tradition in contrast to the male circle. Drawing again on the verse-epistle for which Burns was famous, Little fits it to the needs of the two female friends. In the “Epistle to Nell,” Little describes her establishment at Loudoun Castle. An answer from Nell follows this poem, and the series of three concludes with “Another Epistle to Nell.” These epistles assert the presence of women, in particular working-class women, in the literary realm, as it shows the two women discussing “poetry and poets” (“Nell's Answer,” line 27) and attempting to write: “Mongst the vast crowd, let you and I aspire / To share a little

of Apollo's fire" ("Another Epistle to Nell," lines 27–8). Little challenges the authority of the "far-famed" ("Nell's Answer," line 28) Burns even as she acknowledges it, urging her friend to vie for the status of national poet: "Go on, dear Nell, the laureate-wreath pursue, / In time perhaps you will receive your due" ("Another Epistle to Nell," lines 23–4).

The literary relationship that the two women share also challenges masculine literary imaginings: "The more I read, the more I prize your skill" (line 20), she writes in "Another Epistle to Nell," creating a sense of their connection in both writing and appreciating each other's work. This expands into complete self-sufficiency with the suggestion that if national and critical fortune don't favor them, they may "please ourselves with one another's praise" (line 32). Little subverts the relationship of dominance here, suggesting that the two women can reject their critics and create their own imagined community. Moreover, instead of relying on a model of national construction which is based on the writer/reader relationship, Little offers an alternative model based on equality: both women write their own poetry and read each other's work.

"A Poem On Contentment" serves as the manifesto of Little's counter-discourse, paralleling Burns's unification of poetic and national concerns in "The Vision." Where Burns imagines a fanciful muse and a heroic nation, however, Little identifies her own poetic inspiration with a woman even more marginal than she is, the wandering Janet Nicol. Where Burns called his muse in "The Vision" a "tight outlandish *Hizzie*," Little describes her muse "in tatter'd low condition" (line 2). And where Burns's Coila draws him into the poetic condition, conferring national prestige on him as she crowns him with the holly wreath, Little, by associating herself with Nicol, situates herself on the margins: Janet Nicol lives "by the wall." Little is careful not to turn Nicol into an icon of her inspiration. Rather, addressing Nicol, Little says that the situation of her own muse "does much *resemble yours*" (line 6, my emphasis). Where Burns uses women as allegories of poetic and national inspiration, Little creates a female community within the nation, calling Nicol her "patroness and friend" (line 15) and referring to others of their "sister train" (line 21).

Little uses Nicol to point out the absurdity of both conventional poetic devices and abstract national imaginings. She suggests that if she paints Nicol as "a Venus or Diana" (line 10), no one will believe her. In the series of stanzas which follows the wish to "compliment" Nicol by dedicating a song to her, Little contrasts the hypocritical world of "Celia," "Delia," and

“Cordelia” where ideal beauty and love quickly give way to the mediocrity of matrimony or the pain of broken vows, with the “cakes, and scones, and kibbocks” (line 78), the “wee glass” and “pipe and specks” (line 81) of Nicol’s life. Associated with this conventional realm are also national concerns: the “Patriot” who toils “[f]or honour and Britannia’s good” (line 66) and the “Courtier” who flatters his sovereign. The poem also shows Little’s self-consciousness as she admits and chastises her own desire for poetic fame. Included in the vanities of the conventional world is the desire to shine in verse, to invoke the assistance of “the tuneful Nine,” “despite fortune’s frown” (lines 54–6). Little comments to Nicol: “O may you never feel the pain, / We heedless scribbling fools sustain” (lines 61–2) and cautions her to “shun the coxing tribe” (line 69). In fact, she suggests that it is people like Janet, not the patriots or courtiers or poets, who effect the actual creation of the community as they elicit sympathy from such figures as the Countess of Loudoun:

Content grows joy, in meeting there  
The little, lovely, blooming fair,  
Who makes thy cot and thee her care.

(lines 89–91)

Little’s poem, then, turns away from personal aggrandizement and poetical and national imagining to particular instances of charity among women of different classes.

“Verses Written on a Foreigner’s visiting the Grave of a Swiss Gentleman” challenges the idea of the nation from yet a different angle, as Little draws attention to the position of women on the margin of the nation in order to critique the nation as both a masculine and holistic construct. It is the only one of Little’s poems situated directly in the political realm. The full title of the poem, “Verses Written on a Foreigner’s visiting the Grave of a Swiss Gentleman, buried among the Descendents [sic] of Sir William Wallace, Guardian of Scotland in the thirteenth Century,” combining Scottish and Swiss affiliations, suggests Little’s interest in re-imagining the nation not as a pure homogeneous construction but as an interplay of conflicting associations. The poem begins with an image of the antagonistic national relationship between Scotland and England, as it discusses the insults Wallace was subjected to by Edward I:

Our regal seat to Edward fallen a prey,  
Our Chief’s insulted corse his victim lay;

Our ruin'd land no monument could raise;  
 Yet grateful bards still sung his heart-felt praise.

(lines 1–4)

But the antagonistic relationship is supplanted by a bicultural image as the memory of the national hero, Wallace, is displaced by attention to Henry, a native of Switzerland who lived in Scotland. The emotional impact of the poem is concentrated not in mourning Wallace and the Scottish nation, but in grieving for the young Swiss man, the “dear youth” (line 21), “the friend, the husband,” and “father” (line 18). Henry serves to conflate Scotland and Switzerland; his presence “mix[es]” Wallace’s “memory with Tell” (line 14). Little seems to be advocating a different model than the strict national boundaries which have been sought after by England and Scotland. The poem’s grammar also rejects national boundaries. At one point, Little addresses the spirit of Wallace: “Thus mid thy race did their lov’d Henry dwell” (line 13), employing “thy race” to indicate the Scots. Previously, however, she had used the first person plural to refer to Scotland as “our native place” (line 7). She refuses to adopt a single national perspective.

The poem ends with a conventional image of a mother weeping by the graveside of her son—“A parent’s silver hairs bestrew thy shrine; / Her griefs were mortal, but her joys sublime” (lines 25–6)—suggesting how women produce and mourn the nation’s citizens yet are always outside of the nation. In Pratt’s terms, “As mothers of the nation [women] are precariously other to the nation”;<sup>35</sup> the poem’s title, too, invokes the idea of women’s “foreignness” to the nation. But in Little’s poem, the woman’s gaze from outside national affiliations becomes a positive image: “In tears we mourn the body laid to rest; / She hails thy spotless soul ’mid angels blest” (lines 27–8). The woman serves to translate the body of the particular national individual into the universal realm of the spirit. “Verses Written for a Foreigner” thus displaces the masculinist idea of the nation as consisting of individuals who are willing to die for their country, by pointing out the insignificance of national affiliation after death. In this poem, then, Little both defuses and diffuses national identity by focusing on the women in the margins.

Nineteen ninety-six marked the bicentenary of the death of Robert Burns. While Burns aficionados gathered in Burns Club locations all over the world to toast the national bard, few considered the gender specific role that they were celebrating. Such specificity continues in critical traditions as well. In a 1989

article disputing Burns's status as a national figure, Dietrich Strauss still perpetuates the historical exclusion of women from the cultural arena of the nation; his definition of the "ideal" national poet, one "whose literary creativity is expected to function as a focus of the precarious identity of an endangered ethnic entity," is clearly gendered.<sup>36</sup> Strauss's suggestion that such a figure should have "fully understood the essence of" the "principal philosophical texts produced in his time" and "have integrated this essence into his poetic work"<sup>37</sup> discounts the work of women, who were historically considered incapable of comprehending philosophy and who were not encouraged to write about it. Strauss also builds gender into the job description when he writes that a national poet should "remain, within the limits set by his responsibility for his family, a man of independent mind" and that, furthermore, he should be "of manly appearance."<sup>38</sup> Such preconceptions can only be removed by investigating the historical relationship between gender and the nation and by examining voices like Little's who were critiquing the relationship even as it was being established.

I want to conclude this paper with a quotation from Mrs. Dunlop, a figure who was a bridge between Burns and Little and whose comments shed light on the relationship between gender, national identity, and poetry which I have been exploring so far. In an early letter to Burns, Mrs. Dunlop described her reaction to the letters of St. Everemont and Waller:

The arguments of the poet are pure sophistry, yet, employed to reconcile an old man to banishment from his country and his friends, make me not only forgive but like the writer, who is breathing a sentiment I have ever abhorred . . . These letters have likewise pointed out to me a comparative view, shall I say? of the French and English idiom, or of male and female writing, in the wonderful difference of modesty and delicacy of expression between the original and translation of the verses of the Duchess of Mazzarin on her leaving the world. Is that difference characteristic of the nations or the sex? I rather think only the last, for though I should in theory look for most poetry in women, I have never yet seen what I thought a female poet.

In the following line she adds, "I am even writing this in the house with Jenny Little."<sup>39</sup>

Mrs. Dunlop's rejection of the idea of a "female poet" demonstrates the historical limitations put on women as participants in the poetic as well as the national realm; the characteristics

which have been attributed to and adopted by women are not those which are conducive either to writing poetry or to producing a nation. As Pratt points out, domesticity, passivity, and lack of individualism are not characteristics which have been valued in a nation. Neither are such characteristics valued in a poet: “[Women] are imagined as dependent rather than sovereign; they are practically forbidden to be limited and finite, being obsessively defined by their reproductive capacity: their bodies are sites for many forms of intervention, penetration, and appropriation.”<sup>40</sup> In her own time, and continuing in ours, Little’s exclusion reveals the gendered politics of taste which prevents the participation of women and the acknowledgment of women’s part in the ambiguous imagining of the nation.

But there is another aspect to Mrs. Dunlop’s account which bears examination, specifically her question, “Is that difference characteristic of the nations or the sex?” Her confusion highlights the slippages which occur between national identity and gender. Her haste to resolve the issue suggests how sexual difference is even more naturalized than national difference. Both Burns’s and Little’s work makes us aware of the politics of aesthetics that renders the words “national poet” and “woman” incompatible. But it also makes us think again about the relationship of the two terms. As R. Radhakrishnan asks in studying the relationship between feminist historiography and nationalism, “isn’t the so-called [totality of the nation] the shifting expression of equilibrium among the many forces that constitute and operate the horizon: gender, class, sexuality, ethnicity, etc.?”<sup>41</sup> Reading Little next to Burns reminds us of how much the growth of the nation and the identification of its cultural figures depends on the establishment of separate gender roles.

There is another crucial issue involved in rereading Burns’s and Little’s work as an interrogation of the nation. Recent interest in national identity has been inspired in the literary sphere by postcolonial criticism; the posts of empire have provided a fruitful place from which to critique the center.<sup>42</sup> But what remains to be investigated further is the indeterminacy inherent within the colonizing nations. It is only by examining the “shifting expressions” of the forces constructing the nations that grew to assert hegemonic power that it is possible to move toward the achievement of decolonization, however problematic that term may be. In *Nations without Nationalism*, Julia Kristeva calls for “the creation of new social groupings where, by *choice* rather than on account of *origin*, through lucidity rather than fate, we shall try to assure our children living spaces that, within

ever tenacious national and identity-forging traditions, will respect the strangeness of each person within a lay community."<sup>43</sup> Robert Burns's use of gender to critique the nation as a "holistic cultural entity" and Janet Little's attention to the nation's positioning of women qualify them as participants in a historical reading of "strangeness" in the imagined community of Britain, a reading which is concerned not just with questioning national identity, but with ensuring the participation of women in such questioning.<sup>44</sup>

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983; rpt. 1991).

<sup>2</sup>Recent studies of nationalism relevant to this study include John Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State* (London and New York: Manchester Univ. Press, 1993); Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca and London: Cornell Univ. Press, 1983); E. J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1990); Anthony D. Smith, *National Identity* (London: Penguin, 1991). Aijaz Ahmad's *In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures* (London and New York: Verso, 1992) offers a critique of current academic concerns with the nation. See Adam Lerner and Marjorie Ringrose, *Reimagining the Nation* (Buckingham and Philadelphia: Open Univ. Press, 1993) for a collection of essays which takes Anderson as a starting point but also seeks out "strategies for countering the totalizing effects of the nationalist discourse" (p. 4).

<sup>3</sup>Andrew Parker et al., *Nationalisms and Sexualities* (New York and London: Routledge, 1992), p. 2.

<sup>4</sup>Mary Louise Pratt, "Women, Literature and National Brotherhood," *NCC* 18, 1 (1994): 27–47, 30.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup>Pratt, p. 31.

<sup>7</sup>Homi K. Bhabha, ed., "Introduction," in *Nation and Narration* (London and New York: Routledge, 1990), pp. 1–7, 3.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup>Bhabha, "Introduction," in *The Location of Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), pp. 1–18, 1.

<sup>10</sup>Bhabha, *Location*, p. 140.

<sup>11</sup>Pratt, p. 30.

<sup>12</sup>In *Understanding Scotland: The Sociology of a Stateless Nation* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), David McCrone explores Scotland as a potential model for alternative definitions of the relationship between the state and society, due to its unique history: "Scotland seems poised to provide the specifically British example of those fissiparous tendencies which signal the radical remaking of political orders everywhere" (p. 3).

<sup>13</sup>For critical interpretations of Burns's self-fashioning, see Robert Crawford, *Devolving English Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992); Carol McQuirk, *Robert Burns and the Sentimental Era* (Athens: Univ. of Georgia Press, 1985) and "Burns, Bakhtin and the Opposition of Poetic and Novelistic Discourse: A



Reply to David Morris," *ECent* 32, 1 (Spring 1991): 58–72; David Morris, "Burns and Heteroglossia" *ECent* 28, 1 (Winter 1987): 3–27; Peter Murphy, *Poetry as an Occupation and an Art in Britain, 1760–1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1993); Kenneth Simpson, ed., *Burns Now* (Edinburgh: Canongate, 1994); and Simpson, *The Protean Scot: The Crisis of Identity in Eighteenth Century Scottish Literature* (Aberdeen: Aberdeen Univ. Press, 1988).

<sup>14</sup>Robert Burns, "[Lines on Stirling]," in *Burns: Poems and Songs*, ed. James Kinsley (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1969), lines 1–10. All other poems by Burns will be quoted from Kinsley's edition, and further references to the poems will appear parenthetically in the text by line number.

<sup>15</sup>G. Ross Roy and J. DeLancey Ferguson, eds., *The Letters of Robert Burns*, vol. 2, 1790–1796 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985), p. 173.

<sup>16</sup>Ian McIntyre, *Dirt and Deity: A Life of Robert Burns* (London: Harper Collins, 1995), p. 398. See McIntyre for a comprehensive biography of Burns's life. For an alternative analysis of Burns's relationship to the nation, see Marilyn Butler, "Burns and Politics," in *Robert Burns and Cultural Authority*, ed. Crawford (Iowa City: Univ. of Iowa Press, 1997), pp. 86–112.

<sup>17</sup>Anderson explains the fact that people are willing to risk individual death for their nation as an indication that nationalism, like religion, appeals to the desire for immortality (p. 11).

<sup>18</sup>Pratt, p. 30.

<sup>19</sup>Crawford, in examining "how much Burns's work is informed by the vernacular club-world of masculinity in which . . . he was so at home" ("Robert Ferguson's Robert Burns," in *Robert Burns and Cultural Authority*, pp. 1–22, 14), comments that "Tam O'Shanter" is "a tale all about tail, gender roles and masculinity" (p. 16). Crawford confirms that the poem keeps "the female and the feminine in their rightful subject place" (p. 17).

<sup>20</sup>I am drawing on Bhabha's discussion of the *heimlich* and *unheimlich* in *The Location of Culture* (pp. 9–11). Employing Freud's idea of the *unheimlich* as the return of the repressed, Bhabha examines the way cultures, like individuals, repress the heterogeneous elements within them. For Bhabha, "[t]he unhomey moment relates the traumatic ambivalences of a personal, psychic history to the wider disjunctions of political existence" (p. 11). As Bhabha points out, "although the 'unhomey' is a paradigmatic colonial and post-colonial condition, it has a resonance that can be heard distinctly, if erratically, in fictions that negotiate the powers of cultural difference in a range of trans-historical sites" (p. 9).

<sup>21</sup>Bhabha suggests that it is on the bridge that "'presencing' begins because it captures something of the estranging sense of the relocation of the home and the world . . . that is the condition of extra-territorial and cross-cultural initiations" (*Location*, p. 9).

<sup>22</sup>Bhabha, *Location*, p. 10.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid.

<sup>24</sup>Pratt, p. 31.

<sup>25</sup>Allan Ramsay, "The Vision," in *Poems by Allan Ramsay and Robert Ferguson*, ed. Alexander Manson Kinghorn and Alexander Law (Totowa NJ: Rowman and Littlefield, 1974).

<sup>26</sup>Crawford, *Devolving*, p. 89.

<sup>27</sup>Moir Ferguson, "Janet Little and Robert Burns: The Politics of the Heart," in *Romantic Women Writers: Voices and Countervoices*, ed. Paula R. Feldman and Theresa M. Kelley (Hanover NH: Univ. Press of New England, 1995), pp. 207–19, 208.

<sup>28</sup>See Donna Landry, *The Muses of Resistance: Laboring-Class Women's Poetry in Britain, 1739–1796* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1990), p. 221.

<sup>29</sup>Landry, p. 237.

<sup>30</sup>Janet Little, "Dedication" in *The Poetical Works of Janet Little* (Ayr, 1792), lines 3–6. All other poems by Little will also be quoted from this edition, and further references to the poems will appear parenthetically in the text by line number.

<sup>31</sup>Pratt, p. 30.

<sup>32</sup>Ferguson, p. 215.

<sup>33</sup>Little, p. 112.

<sup>34</sup>For a history of this form, see Roderick Watson, *The Literature of Scotland* (London: Macmillan, 1984), pp. 170–1.

<sup>35</sup>Pratt, p. 30.

<sup>36</sup>See Dietrich Strauss, "Burns—Literary Focus of Scottish National Identity," in *Nationalism in Literature—Literature, Language and National Identity*, ed. Horst W. Drescher and Hermann Volkel (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1989), pp. 107–16, 107.

<sup>37</sup>Strauss, pp. 107–8.

<sup>38</sup>Strauss, p. 108.

<sup>39</sup>William Wallace, *Robert Burns and Mrs. Dunlop: Correspondence Now Published in Full for the First Time* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1898), p. 226. At the end of the letter Mrs. Dunlop says she has been reading Falconer's "Shipwreck" and urges Burns to "compare the close of that poem with Charlotte Smith's *Elegy*, or with any female writing you ever saw, and glory you are a man" (p. 228).

<sup>40</sup>Pratt, p. 30.

<sup>41</sup>R. Radhakrishnan, "Nationalism, Gender, and the Narrative of Identity," in *Nationalisms and Sexualities*, pp. 77–95, 78.

<sup>42</sup>In addition to Bhabha, I am thinking in particular of Partha Chatterjee's *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse?* (London: Zed Books, 1986). In his more recent book, *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1993), Chatterjee continues his explorations of a method to circumvent the kind of monolingual discourse that has produced the concept of nationalism: "Against [a subject-centered reason] critics in recent years have been trying to resurrect the virtues of the fragmentary, the local, and the subjugated in order to unmask the will to power that lies at the very heart of modern rationality and to decenter its epistemological and moral subject. In this effort at criticism, materials from colonial and postcolonial situations have figured quite prominently" (p. xi).

<sup>43</sup>Julia Kristeva, *Nations without Nationalism*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1993), p. 35.

<sup>44</sup>A version of this paper was presented at the Bicentenary Burns Conference organized by Kenneth Simpson and held at the University of Strathclyde in January 1996. My participation in that conference was made possible by a generous grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.