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O. Douglas and the Borders of Fictional Identity

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Abstract

This thesis maintains that "O. Douglas" (Anna Buchan) is a more interesting and complex writer than has been generally recognized and needs to be critically reassessed. She makes a distinctive contribution to several different fictional genres.

The key to her novels is an all-pervasive irony about herself and her work and the central issue is identity. Her sense of self-identity emerges in relation to family, home background and upbringing which she returns to and uses repeatedly in her work. Not only is her sense of identity formed by her personal circumstances and life experiences but also by a variety of wider social, historical, cultural and political factors. Her writing is therefore studied in the context of its time and significant literary and intertextual connections are made and traced.

Recourse has been had not only to the novels themselves, together with her autobiography and various family memoirs, but also to her unpublished papers and letters and to what critical and biographical writing there has been about her. She is also looked at in relation to other writing of the same kind and to any work of her contemporaries that seems to offer illuminating comparison. In this way an attempt is made to place her work appropriately and open up new lines of approach.

The purpose of the thesis is to contribute to the developing research in Scottish literature and the broader movement of recovery of forgotten or comparatively neglected Scottish (women) writers.

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University of Cape Town

O.Douglas and the Borders of Fictional Identity

Introduction	The Sly Hen	1
Chapter 1	Daughter of the Empire: <i>Olivia in India</i>	17
Chapter 2	I belong to Glasgow: <i>The Setons and Eliza for Common</i>	48
Chapter 3	Scottish Fairy: <i>Penny Plain</i>	80
Chapter 4	Ghost of Time Past: <i>Ann and her Mother</i>	101
Chapter 5	Heir to the Scottish Enlightenment: <i>Pink Sugar</i>	134
Chapter 6	Scottish Unionist: <i>The Proper Place, The Day of Small Things, Taken by the Hand, Jane's Parlour, The House that is our Own</i>	164
Works Cited		203

Illustrations

- Fig. 1: Anna Buchan from *Unforgettable, Unforgotten* (1945)
opposite p. 3
- Fig. 2: Bank House, Peebles from *Farewell to Priorsford* (1950)
opposite p. 13
- Fig. 3: Anna Buchan with Alistair from *Unforgettable, Unforgotten* (1945)
opposite p. 35
- Fig. 4: Dust cover of Nelson edition of *Olivia in India* (1913)
opposite p. 36
- Fig. 5: Dust cover of Nelson edition of *The Setons* (1917)
opposite p. 72
- Fig. 6: Frontispiece of 1962 edition of *Penny Plain*
opposite p. 80
- Fig. 7: Mrs. Buchan with son John from *Unforgettable, Unforgotten*
opposite p. 108
- Fig. 8: Dust cover of *Farewell to Priorsford* (1950)
opposite p. 202

O.Douglas and the Borders of Fictional Identity

Introduction	The Sly Hen	1
Chapter 1	Daughter of the Empire: <i>Olivia in India</i>	17
Chapter 2	I belong to Glasgow: <i>The Setons and Eliza for Common</i>	48
Chapter 3	Scottish Fairy: <i>Penny Plain</i>	80
Chapter 4	Ghost of Time Past: <i>Ann and her Mother</i>	101
Chapter 5	Heir to the Scottish Enlightenment: <i>Pink Sugar</i>	134
Chapter 6	Scottish Unionist: <i>The Proper Place, The Day of Small Things, Taken by the Hand, Jane's Parlour, The House that is our Own</i>	164
Works Cited		203

Introduction

The Sly Hen

“O.Douglas” has been taken at her own professed estimation of herself, as given through a series of novelist characters. “*I don’t pretend to count...I feel the merest amateur.....I have only the smallest talent*” (*Pink Sugar* 101, 103). Reviews or references to her work repeat her self-descriptions: comforting, homely, simple, nice. On the dustjackets of her novels are reproduced comments such as, from the *Glasgow Herald*, “O.Douglas liked good people. She was kind to them in her books” and, from *Punch*, “O.Douglas never forgets that kindness knocks cleverness to the back of beyond” (on the covers, respectively, of the Bank Edition of *The Proper Place* and the first edition of *The House That is Our Own*). Martin Green has collected a few other such puffs: “When I open a book by O.Douglas I know.....I shall be introduced to very nice people” (*Country Life*), “Reading a novel by O.Douglas is like visiting the home of dear friends – we are certain of finding pleasant company there” (*Liverpool Post*), and, directly from her publishers, “How perfect is the charm of an O.Douglas novel” (Green 215). The reviewer of the *Times Literary Supplement*, taking a hint from the author, read her book in bed and reported that “the effect was most agreeable” (*Pink Sugar* 488).

As a consequence of this kind of response, her work has not been evaluated seriously. Regarded as a lightweight, she has never had any kind of critical reputation. Nor has she been reprinted in Virago Modern Classics. Yet she was one of Hodder and Stoughton’s “Big Five” authors in the inter-war period and was one of fifty “distinguished” artists and authors to be invited to contribute to a hastily compiled book, *The Queen’s Book of the Red Cross*, at the outbreak of the Second World War. Among the thirty-six other writers represented are A.E.W.Mason, Hugh Walpole, Charles Morgan, A.A.Milne, Cecil Roberts, Daphne du Maurier, Alfred Noyes, Howard Spring, L.A.G Strong, John Masefield, Walter de la Mare, C.Day Lewis, and T.S.Eliot. Clearly, then, she is being not just disarming but disingenuous when she remarks by proxy, “after you’ve said my books are pleasant there isn’t much more to say, is there?” (*Pink Sugar* 105).

The few critics who have discussed her realise that there *is* more to be said, that the author is protesting too much. Martin Green, while claiming to have recognized even in his teens that her work was “kitsch” and “a kind of literary aspirin” (ii), yet concludes that the discourse she “devised” expressed only part of her identity: she “wrote nice books” but behind and beyond that she was “something more” (241). Debbie Sly, evaluating as a feminist critic the “pink sugary pleasures” of O.Douglas novels, discovers that out of the sweet comes something strong: “despite their apparent conformity with traditional patriarchal ideologies, a closer reading of her works reveals fundamental differences between their values, structure, and the pleasures they offer, and those of conventional romantic fiction” (7). Beth Dickson goes further, regarding O.Douglas’s exploitation of “the potentially stultifying conventions and values of popular fiction” as “sophisticated” (340). The same critically favourable word is used by Robert Crawford in describing the novels as “bourgeois fiction for those sophisticated enough to denote a hint of authorial mockery” (98), a remark which expands on the “subtle sense of humour” noted by an early reviewer in the Times Literary Supplement (*Penny Plain* 534). Likewise Wendy Forrester, while conceding that the novels might be called light romances, draws attention to their “very Scottish and very individual” humour (7).

It is the contention of this thesis that the key to O.Douglas is her all-pervasive irony, about her work and herself. She appears to make light of her work, almost apologizing for issuing it, as if she is surprised at her own temerity in assuming the mantle of the writer. But this is part of a larger question of how she sees herself. She is highly aware of being a woman in a man’s world, a Scot in the British world, a conservative in a time of social change, a writer out of step with prevailing fashion. Her novels are a sustained exploration of these aspects of her self-identity, consistently in an ironic mode, which has the effect of distancing her slightly and reserving a central privacy. Her irony is so slight as to be easily missed and in essence very Scots and “pawky”, revealing nothing as it were outwardly but looking with slanted eyes at the hearer or reader to see if he or she is quick enough to get the point. Her world may appear to be a cosy women’s world of tea-cups but she is not to be taken at face value.

That she adopts a pseudonym – and one that is gender-free – indicates that she may be constructing a façade. “O.Douglas” was the nom-de-plume of Anna Buchan (1877-



ANNA BUCHAN
(O. DOUGLAS).

[Photo: Elliott and Fry]

Fig. 1: Anna Buchan

From *Unforgettable, Unforgotten* (1945), frontispiece

1948), daughter of a Scottish Free Church minister and his wife, and sister to four brothers, one of whom figured – or loomed – large in her life: John, brilliant older brother and famous writer, novelist, and man of affairs. Born in Pathhead, she grew up and spent her young womanhood in Glasgow, where her father was minister of the John Knox Church in the Gorbals, thence moving in 1906 to Bank House, the family house at the end of the High Street in Peebles, which remained her home with her mother and brother Walter for the rest of her life. She published twelve full-length novels between 1913 and 1940, drawing much on family situations and relationships, and rounded off her oeuvre with an autobiography, *Unforgettable, Unforgotten*, in 1945. Though leading a quiet personal and family life, she was well-known publicly and in demand as a speaker on platforms, being introduced once as one of the “record openers of bazaars and sales of work” (Report of a speech). She was also much involved with local community drama, appearing often on stage, and amateur theatricals feature in her novels. That is to say, she knew how to fill a role and play a part. As in life, so in her writing: behind the persona of O.Douglas, seemingly so modest and comfortable, hovers the ironical intelligence of Anna Buchan, who scrutinizes us sideways as in the photograph which forms the frontispiece of her autobiography. She tips us the wink when, according to her nephew, she describes herself there as looking like “a sly hen” (William Buchan, *John Buchan: A Memoir* 118-9) [Fig. 1]. This thesis attempts to go behind the façade to show that O.Douglas is a more interesting and complex writer than hitherto recognized.

Irony is, first, her mode of literary defence in the post-1918 Modernist era, as dominated by “Virginia Wolff [sic] and other highbrows” (*Taken by the Hand* 245-6). Several times in her novels, her different characters discuss modern fiction and how “very queer” it is (47). Some are writers themselves and, speaking through one such, Mirren Strang, O.Douglas wryly concedes that “there’s nothing of Art for Art’s sake about me” (*Pink Sugar* 103); her books are written, she maintains, to “make pleasant reading” (103) for “simple plain people who like plain things” (104). Hence the title of the fictional Mirren Strang’s best-known work, “The Penny Whistle”. As a musical instrument, the penny whistle is commonly regarded as of no account, beneath the notice of the serious musical artist. Yet the book of that name, purportedly coming out during the War, “touched the hearts of quite a lot of people” (*Pink Sugar* 103). This then functions as O.Douglas’s oblique defensive comment on her own earlier novel,

The Setons, which also came out in war time and had the same effect, and the connecting link is the penny whistle. In *The Setons* the good Glasgow minister, the Rev. James Seton, whose life is devoted to touching the hearts of many, favours and plays the penny-whistle – as does his real-life prototype, Anna Buchan's own minister father, the Rev. John Buchan, who in turn was "like R.L.S. [Robert Louis Stevenson] a great performer" on that instrument (*Unforgettable, Unforgotten* 11). The penny-whistle, then, opening up something of a regressive vista in life and literature, is an in-joke, a subtle spoof, that allows O.Douglas to do two things at once. She defends as over against Modernism her own kind of "decent" middle-class, middle-brow literature that helps people and makes them happy, while at the same time retaining – and showing us she retains – an ironic awareness of the self-imposed limitations of such an outlook.

Some of O.Douglas's own titles are likewise tongue-in-cheek and function in the same way. *Penny Plain*, while making pleasant reading, is far from being a plain tale for plain people. The book is tuppence-coloured and a modern fairy-story in which Cinderella marries her prince and everyone lives happily ever after. Conversely, *Pink Sugar* is the "most outrageous of all the O.Douglas titles" (Green 186), a deliberate leg-pull and parody of what the author anticipates could be the critical verdict on her work. And the ploy succeeds: the critic of the *Times Literary Supplement* reassures her that "she errs on the side of modesty when she calls her stories 'a sort of soothing syrup'" (*Pink Sugar* 488). What the author attempts in this as in all her books is both more balanced and more difficult to achieve than excessive sweetness or sentimentality. Her aim, indicated in her autobiographical novel, *Ann and her Mother*, through Ann who is writing her mother's Life, is to produce a book that is "pleasant without being mawkish" as an alternative to the sort of contemporary literature which she characterizes as "clever and nasty" (219). And she is saved from being mawkish and can comfortably pursue her chosen path by virtue of the constant suggestion of ironic humour in her work. Elizabeth Bowen seemed to be aware of these nuances of O.Douglas's work when, not without a suggestion of irony herself, she described her in the *Tatler* as "probably unique" and "one of the few who are on the side of the angels" (qtd. on the book cover of *The Day of Small Things*).

O.Douglas's irony serves other, more personal, purposes. It was a self-protective response to her family's rather ambivalent attitude towards her as author. Far from treating her as a "literary lion with a wonderful writing-room filled with signed photographs of other writers" (*Pink Sugar* 102), her mother regarded her writing "as a self-indulgent pleasure, which ought to be fitted in between duties" (Green 163).

At home I was never encouraged to take myself or my writing seriously. Nobody minded interrupting me. I had not even a room of my own. When strangers came and asked in hushed tones, 'May we see where you write your books?' I could only reply, 'Oh – just all about.' A small table beside the fire in the family living-room was my favourite place in winter, and general conversation was no bar to my literary efforts. I joined in and wrote at the same time, which perhaps accounts for the sort of work I produced. (*Unforgettable, Unforgotten* 176-7)

While she appears to acquiesce in the situation, there is a suggestion of ironic detachment in that final, typically self-deprecatory clause. The clause at the same time provides an accurate indication of the world of O.Douglas's fiction. Since it is not open to her to "be a man and have a career" (*Olivia in India* 83) as a professional writer or "diplomatist" (83), she embraces and deliberately restricts the woman's world in which she is located. Affectionately but with a suggestion of amusement, she depicts its petty worries and concerns. In *Priorsford*, Miss Teenie Watson, one of the cast of local characters, expands on the kindness of one of her neighbours who gave her a bowl of fruit as a Christmas gift and told her to keep the bowl: "I think that was so thoughtful, for if you've got a bowl to return it's always on your mind" (274). The question is whether we take this at face-value as showing the smallness of O.Douglas's woman's world or detect here a hint of authorial mockery, that is, whether we read this complicitly or ironically. Or perhaps (like the author?) we read it both ways at once.

Contriving thus to exploit the limitations of her situation, she focusses in her writing on the household interior and the tea-table. Her novels concentrate "on the pleasurable

domestic details of bourgeois existence” (Crawford 98). While the men may go to the far corners of the Empire, the women keep the home fires burning. By portraying “the conventionally circumscribed nature of the Scottish middle-class woman’s life” (Crawford 100), a life that like her own seemed too uneventful to be fictionalized, O.Douglas won a large female readership. Spinsters, widows, mother-and-daughter households - women on their own in consequence of the huge losses of men in the War - found their lives mirrored and affirmed. Her literary modesty, her (ironic) disclaimers of talent and ambition, enabled her to be on equal or intimate terms with her readers and form a mutually supportive community. She knew her terrain, knew exactly what she was doing; and there is a hint of authorial self-mockery in the passage in her autobiography where she relates how her books delighted the heart of her mother:

They were as pure and almost as sweet as home-made toffee, their pages unsullied by swear-words, and they were about happy comfortable people. Like Dr. John Brown’s sister, she might have said, “They are very nice people – so like ourselves”.
(*Unforgettable, Unforgotten* 159)

In particular, her all-pervasive irony gives her a refuge and cover from the oppressive literary regard of her older brother John - financial enabler, role model, reader, and publisher of his sister’s work which itself frequently portrayed him or revolved around his life (Crawford 98). John, though giving her “effective support” (Green 164), had “little liking for mild domestic fiction”, as she finally feels free after his death in 1940 to acknowledge in the dedication of her last novel, *The House that is Our Own*: “you...read patiently my works, blue-pencilling when you had to, praising when you could” but - she adds - “encouraging always”.

Anna created enough space to be able to make the occasional liberating dig at John and his penchant for fast-moving adventure tales, what he dubbed “shockers”. Speaking through Mirren Strang, supposedly in relation to another character, she remarks, “Mild domestic fiction he abhors; the more vivid forms of crime are all he cares about” (*Pink Sugar* 100). And in *Eliza for Common*, the heroine ridicules the

efforts of her twenty-three year old novelist-brother to portray young women: "I must say he draws some dreadful sticks. No wonder. You can see him standing a long way from the easel, so to speak, giving a push with his brush, his head half-turned away – dabbing at the portrait like a clocking-hen" (219). Anna's feminine world, formed in contradistinction, also acts as a foil to John's masculinist world (Crawford 99).

Otherwise, her stratagem for dealing with John's distaste for her fictional world is to put an ironic distance between herself and her work, making light of her role of novelist. To do this, she ironically imagines herself into her texts and acts the ventriloquist through a series of women characters who are novelists (Mirren Strang, Esme Jamieson, Katharyn Eliot) and who all alike protest their inadequacy and limitations. Thus O.Douglas constructs her identity and carves out a place for herself as a writer by paradoxically disclaiming that identity and disowning that place. Whether such writer-characters are to be identified with the pseudonymous author and author in turn with real-life Anna Buchan is always teasingly problematic. Suggestively recurring in the novels is a detached Mona Lisa-like figure with an enigmatic smile, from Olivia in the novel that bears her name ("I watch the game and find it vastly entertaining" *Olivia in India* 89) through Nicole Rutherford who "had much too acute a sense of humour not to be amused by the human comedy that goes on everywhere" (*The Day of small Things* 95), to Miss Alison Lockhart in the later novels with "her twisted ironic smile" (*Jane's Parlour* 362). The author is satirizing her own role of looker-on, not only looking on the fictional world she has created over against John's but looking on as he edits and controls her work and even contributes passages directly, for example his description of the drawing-room in *The Proper Place* (7-9) which she likens to "a patch of brocade on a stuff garment" (*Unforgettable, Unforgotten* 168). O.Douglas's work as a whole could be characterized as an essay in self-mockery, though the irony is notably less in her last two books, *Jane's Parlour* and *The House that is Our Own*, when John has physically moved to Canada as Governor-General. Nor is there an authorial alter ego, a novelist-character, in her final novel, perhaps because with the death of John there is no longer a superego. The critical problem is to arrive at a view of the writer that is distinct from her own ironic view of herself and John's view of her to which she wryly acquiesces.

She develops her self-view and constructs her ironic literary persona from material she found in Scott. Where John Buchan patterned himself both in life and literature on the Laird of Abbotsford and the Author of *Waverley*, Anna located herself in Scott's more intimate and personal and domestic *Journal*, one of her favourite books. "It is a book that some of us could hardly do without", she declared ("Writers and Readers"). From it she appropriates for her own satirical use Scott's confession of his lack of method and of his difficulties with plotting. "I never could lay down a plan – or, having laid it down, I never could adhere to it" (*Journal* 117). Referring to the success that a "well-contrived story" can bring a writer, he laments that "that requires thought, consideration – the writing out a regular plan or plot – above all the adhering to one – which I never can do, for the ideas rise as I write..." (276). He has "generally written to the middle of one of these novels, without having the least idea how it was to end, in short in the *hab nab at a venture* style of composition" (545). Anna Buchan professed the same approach to her work in a public lecture as reported in *The Glasgow Herald*, 1929 (Report of a lecture):

People often asked her what was her method. She had not one. Her brother John, who never put pen to paper until he saw the whole book in his mind, once shared a study with her for three months. He was appalled to see her sit down before a pile of paper without a notion of what she meant to put on it. It might be said that was what her books seemed like – they just meandered on. They did. She did not pretend to do anything else but write about ordinary people, and their lives just meandered on.

This may not be strictly true – her notebooks contain suggested outlines of chapters – but it is the writerly role she wants to cast herself in. She added, "amid laughter", that "plots were very difficult.....she never could think of a plot" (Report of a lecture). She says the same thing in the novels themselves through, for example, Mirren Strang who "was by way of being a novelist, but she always made light of her claim to the title" and readily admitted that "as for plots, I simply can't think of one!" (*Priorsford* 138). Martin Green holds that O.Douglas is here showing increasing signs of literary desperation (Green 214). But put her alongside Scott and an alternative view emerges: that she is posing and making fun of herself as a writer by echoing Scott and casting herself in the same mould as the great man himself. Describing the *Journal* as "the

great example of innocent revelation" ("Writers and Readers"), she knowingly and not so innocently converts the complaints that Scott confides there into a characteristic trope of her novels; and by such seeming self-deprecation at once evades the oppressive regard of John and gains the sympathy of her readers, making us feel she is one of us.

That is, she consciously acts the part of the writer. On occasion she "bares the device of [her] artistic presence" (McGann 115) and shows us how she works, for example in chapter XII of *Priorsford* through the novelist-within-the-novel, Mirren Strang. Where in a lecture she sympathized with Sir Walter "when he complains that people come and take away his time in tea-spoonfuls" (Report of a lecture), in *Priorsford* O.Douglas contrives to turn such a situation, which was often her own, to her advantage by immediately – and wittily – incorporating the distractions into her novel. "For her sort of writing, she [Mirren] declared, quiet did not matter, and she rather welcomed interruptions and stray callers" because "they all went into her conversations" and "gave them verisimilitude" (139). On cue enters Rebecca, her housekeeper and companion, with the shopping-list. All proves grist to the mill. Later "on this day of which I write" – O.Douglas's almost conspiratorial aside to the reader – Mirren the writer and Rebecca the homemaker sit down comfortably before the fire to recount to each other the events of their respective afternoons. Through Mirren and Rebecca, author and reader are imagined into the text. Like the one in relation to the other, we are "deeply interested in her doings, and the news she brought in" as we would be in conversation with a friend (143). We are part of the fictional world that has been created – indeed, we are in on the creating of it. Looking round the room, Mirren's eye falls on an old sampler between two Ming parrots and she muses to herself whether she might bring it into the chapter she is writing (just as O.Douglas has brought it into the chapter she has written) when Rebecca breaks into her thoughts with domestic details. Like the two Ming parrots, Mirren and Rebecca have repeated and mimicked what they had heard and seen that day – that is, they are doing O.Douglas's work for her of "describing the involvements....of ordinary life" (Scott, *Journal* 155). The whole of this chapter XII is a reflective interlude, when the author draws us into intimacy with herself and we are put in self-conscious relation to her enterprise. Then at the end she gently steps back and we are returned to our proper role. "I seldom meet any one in a book that I can be bothered with", remarks Rebecca,

and Mirren, looking at the Ming parrots, replies that it would be a sad job for writers if there were many Rebeccas in the world (149); and we realise that, though we have been not merely “bothered” but absorbed, yet after all this is a book and these characters are imaginary, created for us by an author. As with Scott, so with O.Douglas: the “whole game” of her art has been put on display and “drawn into the fictional space of the text”. This kind of writing, “so replete in Scott” and in O.Douglas too, “is more than make-believe, it is conscious make-believe” (McGann 117).

She is like Scott also in her use of a pseudonym. Where at first the identity of the Author of Waverley was unknown but widely speculated about, thus enabling Scott to tease his readers and “play with, and upon, the rumours” (McGann 117), with O.Douglas it was an open secret right from the start. But this allowed her, indeed almost compelled her, to play a role before her audience, the role of a novelist called “O.Douglas”, and to play that role within two of her books, *Olivia in India* and *Ann and Her Mother*, while in addition adopting the multiple authorial personae of her series of novelist characters.

What has been missed by critics is this playful and essentially mischievous quality of much of her writing. Significantly, she applies to herself several times Henley’s lines on Stevenson:

A deal of Ariel, just a streak of Puck....

And something of the Shorter Catechist. (The Setons 192)

She sees herself as Ariel, the spirit of the air and the spirit of lightness who does not take himself seriously, and as Puck, the beloved imp of mischief, but also - ruefully - as yet retaining something of that saving Calvinist severity, that Scotch propriety, in which she had been formed. There is hard granite beneath the playful surface.

For irony governs not only her literary relations with John and her sense of herself as a writer but also her sense of national identity as a Scottish writer. Irony is the means by which she deals with the dilemma of the writer born and domiciled in Scotland, the dilemma which her contemporary, Edwin Muir, characterized as that of operating in a “hiatus” (Muir, *Scott and Scotland* 11) or a “blank” (12). “Neither a nation nor a province”, according to Muir (11), Scotland was not “an organic society with its own

conventions of thought and sensibility". Instead, "except in the ordinary commerce of daily life, it was trying to imitate England" (132). For O.Douglas, the question was whether to regard herself as a Scottish writer (or a writer of Scots formation, as Muriel Spark described herself), or an English writer producing "pleasant books with a Scots flavour" (*Priorsford* 157), or - yet another alternative - a British writer focussing on Scotland and the Scots in the context of Britain and the Empire. As a way of resolving the dilemma, she opts for a parody of all three roles.

As Scottish writer, she finds herself mirrored in one particular entry in Scott's *Journal*, where he is writing about her namesake, his daughter Anne: "an honest, downright, good Scots lass, in whom I would only wish to correct a spirit of satire" (39). Martin Green observes that in *The Setons* "the author is uneasy with her own satire" which is "timid and hesitant" (138). Perhaps she had been "corrected" by her parents, just as Mr.Seton tried to curb the persiflage and nonsense of his daughter, Elizabeth. But the spirit of satire, if restrained in regard to other people, receives free expression in relation to herself, where she plays on her plain downright Scottishness, presenting herself as stereotypical of her race while indicating at the same time that she knows she is "too large for the part" (*The Setons* 188). In that gap between what she purports to be and what she reveals of the self behind, she presents her series of self-consciously Scottish heroines who seem a "wishful" - or ironic - "projection of the author herself" (Gamerman 191): Olivia, Elizabeth Seton, Jean Jardine, Ann Douglas, Kirsty Gilmour, Nicole Rutherford, and even, in a different way, the excessively self-deprecating Beatrice Dobie. "Which were you?: asks her niece and concludes, "A little of each perhaps", adding, "though none are like you" (Fairfax-Lucy 51).

She guys "the rugged grandeur of the Scots character" (*Olivia in India* 10). Yet by virtue of this character, Scotland - or a particular kind of Scotland - has in the novels a regenerative role and function over against England. A succession of (upper-class) characters, claiming Scottish blood and background, return to their roots and to a homeland they may never have known, where they find themselves and make their soul or discover their life's purpose or partner (Pamela Reston in *Penny Plain*, Kirsty Gilmour in *Pink Sugar*, Althea Gort in *The Day of Small Things*, Isobel Logan in *The House that is Our Own*). The same trope or template, dubbed "Designer Kailyard" by

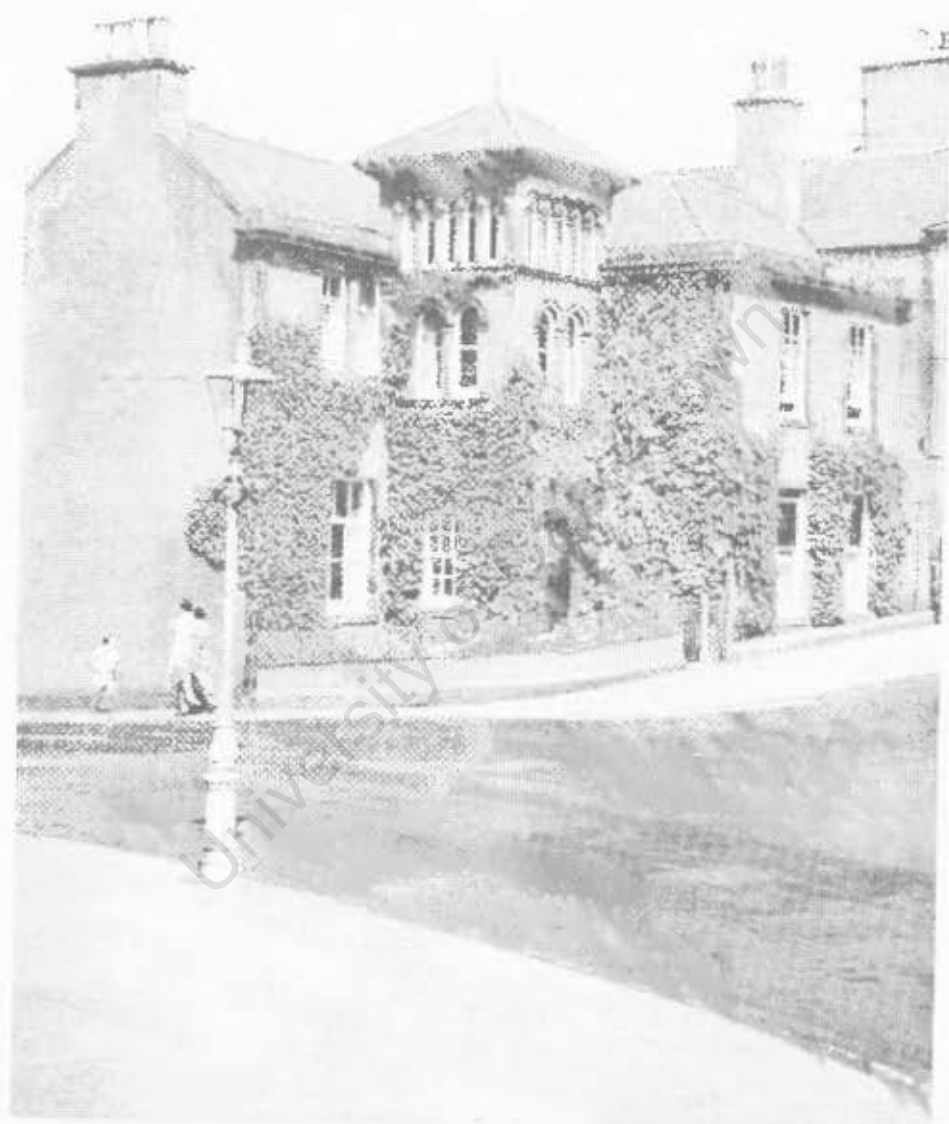
Deirdre Chapman, recurs in the best-selling novels of Rosamund Pilcher. Metropolitan or cosmopolitan exiles who have been living shallow lives return home to solid country-estate and small-town Scotland to be "healed, soothed, detoxed, largely by contact with dour and unexamined minor characters" (Chapman 539).

The kailyard is also one of O.Douglas's referents. The literature of the kailyard (meaning "cabbage-patch") as found in such writers as J.M.Barrie, Ian Maclaren, and S.R.Crockett, is characterized by sentimentality, couthiness, and acceptance of convention. Although she follows these kailyard writers by including death-bed scenes and "a host of sympathetic situations.....whose aim is clearly the reader's tear" (Campbell, *Kailyard* 88), she makes fun of their style in *Eliza for Common* when Eliza's Aunt James

read aloud...one of Ian Maclaren's most pathetic stories, where every sob and every broken utterance was represented by a dash. Aunt James rendered it literally with curious effect. "I (dash) have come home (dash)...". Once Eliza caught her mother's eye, but happily they were able to preserve their gravity. (*Eliza for Common* 213)

Though the O.Douglas novels might seem to qualify as kailyard, "at its best her writing has a humorous sharpness which suggests she is observing, rather than subscribing to, the ethos of the urban kailyard" (Burgess 71).

Opposed to the kailyard was the work of O.Douglas's literary namesake, George Douglas Brown, who wrote under the name of "George Douglas". Published in 1901, a year before his untimely death, *The House with the Green Shutters* was "deliberately organized as a counterblast to the excessive sentimentality of the Kailyard men" and told "a tale of Scottish small-town life, in which few prospects pleased and man was quite remarkably and consistently vile" (Blake 94). Though conceding that she must be very cramped as a novelist because she had never met "the ape and tiger sort of people", but only "decent people" (*Pink Sugar* 105), O.Douglas was yet aware that Brown's novel was a literary landmark - John had pointed this out to her in a letter from Johannesburg on December 28th 1901. So she may have been suggestively indicating her own position over against Brown when, twelve years later, she adopted



BANK HOUSE, PEEBLES

Photo: J. L. 11051

Fig. 2: Bank House, Peebles

From *Farewell to Priorsford* (1950), frontispiece

the same pseudonym of Douglas. Certainly, as Louis MacQuilland writing in the 1920s noted, they are at opposite poles: one, in Blake's later words, "brutal or at the least merciless" (Blake 99), the other all "sweetness and light" (MacQuilland). And there is a further unintended ironic parallel. Where Brown, a man of one book, is often referred to as "the author of *The House with the Green Shutters*", O.Douglas became known throughout her life and afterwards as the author who lived in *The House with the Red Door*, as Bank House, her home on the High Street of Peebles for forty years, was often called [Fig. 2].

Speaking through Jean Jardine in *Penny Plain*, she positions herself between Ian Maclaren and George Douglas Brown: "I have thought of writing and trying to give a truthful picture of Scottish life – a cross between *Drumtochty* and *The House with the Green Shutters*" (119). Though in context whimsical, this could also be taken as O.Douglas's statement of her artistic intentions. But characteristically she then deflates her own pretensions and slyly pre-empt's unfriendly criticism by adding "it would probably be reviewed as a 'feebly written story of life in a Scots provincial town'" (*Penny Plain* 119).

As an English writer or a writer in the English tradition, rather than as a Scottish writer, O.Douglas draws on Jane Austen for characters and situations and follows the conventions of later domestic and romantic fiction which, speaking through the character of her mother, she summarizes as "gentle but not drivelling, good character drawing and a love story that ends all right" (*Ann and her Mother* 219). With a hint of authorial irony, she goes on to wonder if in the light of this literary recipe she should become "the writer for middle-aged women" (220). While appearing to subscribe to what Nicola Humble retrospectively classifies as "the feminine middle-brow novel", she does not completely conform in spirit. One of her novels, *Eliza for Common*, begins almost as a parody of the English suburban novel, in accordance with the formula expressed by Aunt Fanny in an earlier novel, *Pink Sugar*:

To begin with, it must be "nice", that is to say, it mustn't discuss any unsavoury subject; it must of course end well, for Aunt Fanny is easily depressed; but it must also begin well, for she cannot endure

those modern books which launch the reader into unknown seas, without chart or compass. She likes the sort of book that begins: "The Surbiton family sat together in the drawing-room of the Laurels one stormy December night. Mrs Surbiton, a stout sweet-face woman of about sixty summers, chatted pleasantly with her husband, a well-preserved man of seventy. Janetta, the eldest daughter, sat at the piano....". and so on and so on.

Then she knows where she is, and can keep a firm grip of the characters until they are all married or dead. (49)

Eliza for Common opens with the Laidlaw family sitting together in their Glasgow drawing-room one January evening. Jim, the eldest son, sat at the piano.....But this is not going to be the ironic transposition of an English suburban novel to Scotland, for in the course of the novel both Jim and his sister go south: he to Oxford and thence to London to make his way in the world, while she, aspiring after beauty in life, marries one of Jim's Oxford friends and becomes, like Jean Jardine in *Penny Plain*, Lady of the Manor in an English village.

For all her vaunted Scottishness, O.Douglas feels the pull of England both in literature and in life. England represents beauty, refinement, polished manners. Anna Buchan loved and enjoyed London and Shakespeare and Ensfield, John's English country house in Oxfordshire. In almost every one of her novels there is an excursus to Langham's Hotel or Stratford or Oxford. Much of *Taken by the Hand* is set in an Oxfordshire village, which Beatrice romantically calls "the heart of old England" (164). Like John, Anna had come to admire and appreciate England and things English for themselves. What R.D.Kernohan says of Buchan and Scott would be equally true of John and Anna: both were "passionate Scottish patriots - and both Anglophiles" (Kernohan 24). But if John remains "at the margins" (Cannadine, "John Buchan" 85) of the English establishment, Anna too is looking at England "from the outside" (Forrester 91). In "Such an Odd War", her 1939 short story for *The Queen's Book of the Red Cross*, she tries to write from within but, without her ironic edge, produces what is a parody of the real thing. The story opens with a rather stilted conversation on the lawn of Mintern Abbas between Lord and Lady Bidborough

(scarcely recognisable as the Jean Jardine of *Penny Plain*). Their exchange, on the declaration of war, is couched in the clipped emotionally-constricted tone of a Noel Coward dialogue:

She turned to her husband, who was sitting with his hands in his pockets, staring before him, and asked, "What will it mean, Biddy?"

"Changes, Jean."

"I know you will want to go?"

"Of course. As a matter of fact, Leithen promised me a job some time ago. You wouldn't want me to stay, darling?"

"I wouldn't keep you, Biddy. You'd be miserable not working."

"You will find lots to do," said her husband. "I suppose we'd better offer Mintern Abbas as a hospital?"

"Oh!" Jean looked startled. "Yes. I suppose so. A convalescent place, don't you think? It's better suited for that". (140)

Anna's world here merges with John's: Leithen, the hero of several of his "shockers", belongs to the male clubland of London - a world, however, that Anna did not naturally belong to but "knew [it] only as a guest" (Forrester 91).

If she is aware of the dilemma of the Scottish writer, she is unable to resolve it by trying to become an English writer. She is poised between two worlds which, as a loyal Unionist, she tries to hold together. But the Empire also helped to shape her imagination and form the horizon of her outlook. After her own seminal visit to India in 1907, all her novels contain old India hands or "Anglo-Indians" who have retired and come home, or children who have been sent home to school or orphaned and returned to the care of a relative. Later, Canada swam into her ken when John was appointed Governor-General and nephew John joined the Hudson's Bay Company. Anna had two visits to Canada, in 1936 and 1939, and, never a writer to waste a personal experience, sends the heroine of her last complete novel, *The House That is Our Own*, on a similar trip. But while John fully identified with the British Imperial world, her position allowed for more ambivalence. She is less aristocratic in pretension, sitting lightly to protocol and ritual: alike in Government House, Calcutta (in *Olivia in India*) and, thirty years later, in Government House, Ottawa (in her

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autobiography, *Unforgettable, Unforgotten*), she makes fun of herself participating in the sort of court ceremonial that John, wearing his plumed hat, loved and took with full seriousness. A modern reader will identify more with Anna's attitude and outlook than John's. Gender difference is significant here: her touchstone is the homely and the human, rather than the political and the ideological. Where John saw himself as part of an unfolding Imperial grand narrative, she was kept close to everyday reality by Scottish common sense and practical wisdom, as given expression in her fiction by her domestic servants. While John is a major landmark and reference-point in any attempt to map the contours of Anna Buchan, she is not simply his mouthpiece but has her own point of view and is her own complex personality.

But apart from its bearing on her relationship with John, the wider question of dual identity as a Scot in a British world is constant throughout her work and is one of the main themes of her Glasgow novel, *The Setons*, discussed in chapter 2 of this thesis along with *Eliza for Common*, a portrait of herself as a young girl in the manse in Glasgow. Chapter 3 considers *Penny Plain* as a variant or pastiche of the Scottish Fairy Tale. The highly autobiographical *Ann and Her Mother*, the subject of chapter 4, gives a picture of old Free Church life and represents the author's farewell to the tradition in which she was brought up. By contrast, *Pink Sugar*, studied in chapter 5, tests and examines the values of the Scottish Enlightenment in relation to life, literature, and the landscape of the Scottish Borders. Finally, Chapter 6 looks at the ethos of Scottish Unionism as reflected in the later novels against the background of both social and Imperial problems. The element of playful irony and mock-seriousness is less marked as the crisis of the British world approaches in the 1930s.

This complex of issues and the critical need to attend to authorial tone and attitude come into focus in her first novel, the only one set outside Scotland or the United Kingdom, which provides her with the opportunity to explore, always playfully, who she is and what her role as writer should be. To this we turn now in chapter 1.

Chapter 1
Daughter of the Empire:
Olivia in India

In October 1907, Anna Buchan went to India to spend a "cold weather" with her brother, Willie, nicknamed Boggley, who was in Government service. The resultant book, finally published in 1913, consists of a series of letters written by "Olivia" to a young Englishman, Arthur, to whom near the end of the book she becomes engaged.

As part of British life in India, there were social and quasi-court rituals. Olivia, presented at the Vicereine's Drawing-Room with her friend "G", pokes fun at herself in such a way as to gently undermine the occasion:

Not being the wives or daughters of Members of Council or anything *burra*, we hadn't the private entrée, and had to wait our turn in pens, like dumb driven cattle.

It is a much simpler affair than a presentation at home; one need not even wear veils and feathers, and the trains of our white satin gowns were modest as to length. It was silly to be nervous of such a little thing, but I quite shook with terror. I think it was being passed along by A.D.C.'s that unnerved me, but when I reached the last and heard 'To be presented', and my name shouted out, I stotted (do you know the Scots word to stot? It means to walk blindly - to stumble - that and much more; oh! a very expressive word) over a length of red carpet that seemed to stretch for miles, feeling exactly as a Dutch wooden doll looks; saw, as in a glass darkly, familiar faces that smiled jeeringly, or encouragingly, I could not be sure which; ducked feebly and uncertainly before the two centre figures; and, gasping relief, found myself going out of the doorway walking on G's train. (134-136)

There are two standards by which she judges the occasion and puts it in perspective. One is that of "home" where presentations at Court are more elaborate, though this in

itself must surely be tongue-in-cheek, for Anna Buchan, the Free Kirk minister's daughter, was never herself presented. But the other is precisely her sense of Scottishness and Scots sense of humour which sets her inwardly apart and will not let her take the proceedings seriously. The single Scots word "stot" placed where the narrative is building up to the high point effectively cuts the whole thing down to size.

In this novel, O.Douglas explores her Scottish national identity in relation to her personal and literary identity, moving to and fro between India and Scotland. In becoming conscious of one, she becomes conscious of the other – "And what should they know of Scotland, who only Scotland know?" to adapt Kipling's line. Taking passage to India on the S.S.Scotia, she embarks on what may be an elaborate self-parody; for while insisting on her Scottishness as over against Englishness, at the same time, with a little hint of irony, she accepts the linguistic conventions of Anglo-India and readily includes herself in the term "England" ("It grieves me to say that I am one of the class who ought to remain in England," 89). Given that England is the dominant partner and a particular set of English class-based attitudes defines the ethos of the Raj, the Scot in India knowingly accepts the system (to his advantage) and adopts the outlook as his own, subscribing to the esprit-de-corps that serves to uphold power but retaining a certain inward detachment.

In this respect Anna Buchan invites comparison with Violet Jacob (1863-1946), a contemporary and fellow Scots writer whom she held in high regard, and a friend of John's so presumably known personally to Anna too. Violet Jacob had a spell in India just before Anna but for a period of five years (1895-1900). Married to an army officer - also named Arthur and likewise "a rather shadowy figure" (Jacob 3) - and stationed with him on the plains of Central India, she kept a diary and wrote a series of vivid, detailed letters to her mother which she later gathered and typed and had bound. They were finally edited and published with an introduction by Carol Anderson in 1990. Like Anna, Violet Jacob "lived in India as part of an expatriate community" and naturally mirrors their attitudes. She "is never critical of the British presence as a colonizing power" and toasts the birthday of the monarch. And she does not talk about "Britain", she "tends to talk about 'England' and 'the English' " even though "she thought of herself emphatically as a Scot" (Anderson, Jacob 16). O.Douglas, however, as her light satire shows, is aware of the ambivalence of the

Scots position. On the one hand, as colonizers, "the Scots contributed disproportionately to imperial enterprise in India as elsewhere"; on the other hand, vis-à-vis England, they were in something of the position of the colonized themselves. More than Violet Jacob, O. Douglas shows that "the distinctive Scottish experience of Empire, subtly different from that of the English because of Scotland's own experience of domination by English culture, has yet to be understood" (16).

O. Douglas counteracts this felt domination of English culture by striking two satirical poses. On the one hand, identifying with the polarity of "Home" and "India", she affects familiarity with metropolitan society, with the London of her new sister-in-law, Susan [Grosvenor], who had married John earlier that year. "After tea we drove on the Maidan...in an unending stream of carriages and motors....One might almost have imagined oneself in the Park" (66). Getting used to bargaining in the Bazaar, "I shouldn't wonder a bit when I go home and am ruffling it once more in Bond Street if, when told the price of a thing is a guinea, I laugh in a jocular way and say, 'O come now, I'll give you ten shillings.' " (78). The *douce* Anna Buchan, who had been given an allowance by her brother John so that she could have some income of her own, is here playing the part of riding in Hyde Park and shopping in Bond Street – almost tilting at the world which John has now joined - to entertain both herself and her readers. The touchstone is her Scottishness.

On the other hand, she also plays the role of the unsophisticated young girl admiring her brother and what he represents, the prestigious Indian Civil Service which was responsible for the day to day administration of the Indian Empire. She describes a typical working day in her brother's life:

Boggley, hard-worked man that he is, has departed for his office followed by a kitmutgar carrying some sandwiches and a bottle of soda-water, which is his modest lunch. Really, a Government servant's life is no easy one. He is up every morning by six o'clock, and gets a couple of hours' work done before breakfast. His office receives him at ten and keeps him till four, when he comes home and has tea, after which we ride or drive or play tennis somewhere. A look in at the Club for a game of billiards, more work, dinner,

and, if we are not going to a dance or any frivolity, a quiet talk, a smoke, a few more papers gone through, bed, and the long Indian day is over. All day chuprassis, like attendant angels, flit in and out bearing piles of documents marked Urgent, which they heap on his writing-table...(69-70)

Curzon, Viceroy from 1898 to 1905, during which time William Buchan entered the service, "drove himself and his subordinates relentlessly" and "struck against the bureaucratization of Indian government 'at both ends', praising the energetic 'man on the spot'" (Wurgraft 6). Olivia's tone of conscious awe and reverence, however, hints that some of those matters that the conscientious young man had to deal with may not have been quite so urgent after all. And alongside the artless picture she draws of Boggley on tour in the Mofussil - "the people come in little groups and talk to Boggley outside his tent, and I must say he is most patient with them and tries to do his very best for each one of them" (215) – there is another hint that the British task in India, even when prompted by idealism or Christian compassion, is nevertheless futile:

They make my heart ache, these natives, they are so gentle and so desperately poor. Isn't it Steevens who says the Indian ryot has been starving for thirty centuries and sees no reason why he should be filled? (215)

Curzon, addressing the students at Calcutta University a few years earlier, may have loftily attributed the Englishman's (sic) imperial success to

universal belief in his integrity, his sincerity, and his purpose. People know that his heart is in his task, and that, when the pinch comes, he will stick to his post. (Wurgraft 160)

But the real state of relations between the Indians and the British is revealed in the little incident when Olivia's shadow falls on a native's cooking pot and he throws the contents away (157) because she has defiled them. The British are alien in India and their disregard for the Indian response to their physical presence, as E.M.Collingham

argues in *Imperial Bodies: the Physical Experience of the Raj*, severely undermined their own position and led to their ultimate rejection.

In sum, though writing in the last flush of easy Imperialism and remaining overtly uncritical, Olivia yet does not fully identify with the aims and ethos of Empire. Maintaining a saving levity, she casts herself in various roles that set her inwardly apart. At odds with her Imperial identity is her sense of Scottishness, both intensified and relativized by her experience of India.

Anglo-Indian novelist?

Lending an edge to her writing, this inner detachment and Scottish sense of humour equip her to make a distinctive contribution to the Anglo-Indian novel¹. An “almost distinct sub-genre” of colonial literature (Ridley 2), the Anglo-Indian novel in the ninety-year period between the Mutiny in 1857 and Independence in 1947 is represented mainly by women writers such as Flora Annie Steel (1847-1927), Sara Jeanette Duncan (1862-1922), Maud Diver (1867-1945), Alice Perrin (1867-1934), Bithia Mary Croker (c1850-1920), Ethel Savi (1865-1954), and Ethel Dell (? - 1920), most of whom, according to Rashna B. Singh in his study of British fiction on India, “have been relegated to total obscurity” (12). Such, he declares dismissively, is also the fate of O.Douglas. But his opinion is contradicted by the variety of other writers and critics who have cited her favourably – Buphal Singh, for example, in an earlier survey of the field, described the book as “amusing and readable” (128) - and it is the contention of this chapter that *Olivia in India*, originally subtitled “The Adventures of a Chota Miss Sahib” stands out from others of its kind by reason of its Scottish perspective and satirical angle.

Writing in awareness of the literature (“Manpur is a fairly big station - *the sort of place you read about in Anglo-Indian novels*” 225, my italics), O.Douglas sets out to subvert its conventions. According to Bhupal Singh, a typical Anglo-Indian novel

¹ The term “Anglo-Indian” was applied originally to the British in India and only later to people of mixed British and Indian descent (Cawasjee 10). Here it is used in its original meaning.

thing to do.....The next duck-shoot I attend I shall choose as companion a less earnest sportsman. (219)

More, she makes much play of the practice of social "calling". "The calling-hour of Anglo-India has surprised all newcomers", writes Buphal Singh "and makes Anglo-Indian society resemble Cranfordians" in that "the two hottest hours of the day are selected for paying calls" (21). He describes the customs associated with calls in a passage that is clearly based on O.Douglas. She writes:

I have been employing a shining hour by paying calls. You must know that in India the new arrival does not sit and wait to be called on - she up and calls first. It is quite simple. You call your carriage - or, if you haven't aspired to a carriage, the humble, useful tikka-gharry - and drive away to the first house on the list, where you ask the durwan at the gate for bokkus. If the lady is not receiving, he brings out a wooden box with the inscription "Mrs. What's-her-name Not at home', you drop in your cards, and drive on to the next. If the box is not out, then the durwan, taking the cards, goes in to ask if his mistress is receiving, and comes back with her salaams, and that means that one has to go in for a few minutes, but it doesn't often happen. (91-2)

He writes:

Another peculiar custom is that it is the new comer who calls first, without waiting to be called. on The method of paying calls is simple. You drive to the first house on your list. If the lady is not receiving, the servant will bring a box with the inscription 'Not at Home'. You simply drop your card and drive on to the next house on the list. If the lady is receiving, the servant brings the lady's salaams and you have to go in for a few minutes. No call is expected to last for more than five minutes. (22)

And confirming that O.Douglas is indeed his source of information, Singh concludes by quoting her final comment on the matter:

"The funniest part", writes "O.Douglas" in *Olivia in England* (sic) (1913), "of it is that one may have hundreds of people on one's visiting list and not know half of them by sight, because of the convenient system of the not-at-home- box". (22)

He then adds further, "the etiquette of Anglo-India demands that you should leave as soon as another visitor arrives" - a point that in the novel, two pages further on, Olivia makes some comedy out of: "It seems to be etiquette to go away whenever another visitor arrives" but, claiming not to understand this, Olivia grabs someone's hand and begs him to stay and is consequently chaffed about this (93-4).

Olivia, then, never quite manages or wants to conform socially and her sense of being a slight misfit is the source of the humour and gentle satire. This lightly satirical stance is the key to the novel. But her accuracy of observation is such that she is cited by several historians (even if they misunderstand her satire). Both Benita Parry (34) and Hugh Ridley (129), in discussing the radical transformation of the social status of many British people in India, quote "everyone in India is, more or less, somebody" (*Olivia in India* 88). Olivia, apparently naïve yet a shrewd observer of the social scene, has highlighted the disjunction of class between metropolitan Britain and Imperial India: "although Anglo-Indians were drawn mainly from middle-class backgrounds in Britain, their lifestyle in India – from their large domestic staffs to their enthusiasm for big-game hunting – in many ways resembled that of the British aristocracy" (Procida 16). Again, as an example of how a new arrival in India quickly learns to deal with servants, Parry maintains that O.Douglas "records with hilarity" the incident of the nice old globe-trotting lady having a cup of chocolate at Peliti's and insisting on sending out to see if the tikka-gharry wallah would like a cup (37). But Olivia, far from having adopted colonial attitudes, is aware that the old lady at Peliti's was "anxious, like me, to conciliate the natives" (*Olivia in India* 75). That is, she humorously but accurately indicates the imperialist dilemma, the irreconcilability of the twin goals of winning the affection of the ruled while maintaining the mastery of the ruler. She may have been made acutely aware of this from her own experience of

being Scots in an English-dominated world. O.Douglas is not a serious social critic: she accepts the conventions, but, seeing the human comedy, sits lightly to them.

More recently, Mary A. Procida refers to *Olivia in India* as showing how “Anglo-Indian women foregrounded the spectre of the Mutiny and of Mutiny violence in many of their writings” (126):

Realizing that her bedroom has multiple doors and windows, few of which can be locked, barred or fastened, the perky narrator exclaims in mock horror: “What I should do if a Mutiny occurred I can’t think” (126).

The Mutiny had been transformed in the Anglo-Indian imagination into “a trope for the worst possible fate” (Collingham 113). While making light of things for her own purposes in writing, O.Douglas nevertheless reflects both this longstanding fear and tension and the more immediate situation of Edwardian India in which “some very dreadful things have been happening lately...” (116). Curzon's partition of Bengal in 1905 in an attempt to counteract rising political dissent had resulted in violent protests and two people of Olivia's acquaintance “have had bombs thrown at them” (264). She and Boggley are about to set out for Darjeeling – “that is to say, if no person seditiously inclined, derails the train or does anything horrid” (216).

But Olivia not only foregrounds the Mutiny, she is ostensibly attempting to write another novel about it. One of the roles she plays within the novel is that of the Anglo-Indian novelist. Although “the Mutiny had remained a favourite topic of writers on India and the British empire” (Wurgraft 75) throughout the 1880's and 1890's, Olivia thinks that “there is room....for a really good book on the Mutiny” (134) and believes she may be the one to write it. Predictably defeated in her efforts, she gently satirises not only her own pretensions and persona of writer but all her predecessors in the field and in so doing accurately hits her target. As Bhupal Singh explains:

The Mutiny so much abounds in moving incidents and deeds of heroism and barbarism, of comedy and tragedy, of love and

treachery, that it will never cease to appeal to students of history and literature. But it is so complex in detail, so extensive in range, and so profuse in deeds and men that any attempt to tell a consecutive story of it is difficult. Action is solid, narrative is linear, said Carlyle. That is why it is difficult to convert even a simple action into a straightforward narrative. But when history comes into contact with fiction, when fact clashes with fancy and when race prejudice and pride blur the vision, the complexity of the task increases beyond the powers of ordinary story-tellers. It is, therefore, not surprising that nearly all the Mutiny novels so far written are poor specimens of art. They aim at presenting as complete a picture of this cataclysm as possible. But they only succeed in collecting together a large number of scenes and incidents both real and imaginary, without being able to unify them into an artistic whole. (264)

Olivia found this for herself: her heroine is "a failure" (168) and she has to concede that "the Mutiny is perhaps too large a subject for me..." (214).

But her artistic instinct was sound in deriving her information "from Trevelyan's book on Cawnpore" (134). As Bhupal Singh comments, "Some English writers like Sir G.O. Trevelyan and Mr. Edward Thompson [father of E.P. Thompson] have tried to show the other side of the medal (i.e. the Indian experience of the Mutiny). But they have written histories not novels". (265) He concludes, "We await writers who will not only sing paeans of victory but write tragedies of defeat" (265). Olivia/O. Douglas is not that writer and soon knows she was never meant to be. Her increasingly despairing attempts provide part of the humour and charm of her book. Being Scots and unable to identify wholeheartedly with the given range of Imperial attitudes, she is temperamentally unfitted to be the kind of Anglo-Indian and Anglo-Indian novelist she apparently aspires to be.

Women's experience of the Raj

But her response to India is not only governed by her sense of national identity, it is also a gendered response. Though the story of the British in India has been written mostly in terms of the men, the women were there too and in recent years several well-documented studies have striven to set the record straight: Pat Barr's *The Memsahibs: The Women of Victorian India* (1976), Marian Fowler's *Below the Peacock Fan: First Ladies of the Raj* (1987), Margaret MacMillan's *Women of the Raj* (1988), and Mary Ann Lind's *The Compassionate Memsahibs* (1988) (Cowasjee 10), as well as Mary A. Procida's *Married to the Empire* (2002). Mention could also be made of the 1984 edition, with a foreword by Pat Barr, of Lady Wilson's *Letters from India*, first published in 1911. Born Anne Campbell MacLeod in Glasgow in 1855, daughter of the prominent divine, the Rev. Norman MacLeod of the Barony, Lady Wilson like O. Douglas brings a consciously Scots perspective to her eye-witness account of women's lives in India. O. Douglas refracts and confirms many of the experiences of these women through her humorous self-presentation and comedy while retaining a high degree of self-consciousness that will not allow her to identify in every respect with the memsahibs.

For example, she describes being carried in a "doolie", the palanquin or litter used to transport women in parts beyond the railway network:

a doolie is a kind of string-bed hung on a pole, with a covering to keep off the sun. It is carried by four men, and two others run alongside to relieve their companions at intervals. (151)

Though Margaret MacMillan (39) claims that this conveyance had disappeared by the end of the 19th century, Olivia gives an amusing account of her experiences in which, humorously exploiting the situation, she reflects the physical fears of the British woman in India:

for no apparent reason, we left the road, such as it was, and started across the trackless plain. There was nothing to be seen except an infrequent bush, no trace of a human inhabitation - nothing but the

wind blowing and the grass growing. Awful thoughts began to come into my head. I was all alone in India, indeed worse than alone, I was in the company of six natives most inadequately clothed: of their language I knew not one single word; I didn't even know if they were carrying me in the direction I wanted to go. (152-3)

A different kind of physical experience related to household servants who "had an unnerving tendency to move about the bungalow silently on their unshod feet", startling their mistress when she looked round and saw them watching her (Collingham 103-4). Olivia finds herself reacting in a typical way to her ayah:

"when I woke...I was filled first with vague astonishment and then with horror to find myself surrounded with filmy white stuff through which peered a black face. ...She embarrasses me greatly slipping about with her bare feet, appearing when I least expect her or squatting on the floor staring at me fixedly. ...The silence gets so on my nerves that I drop hairbrushes and things to make a little disturbance, and it gives her something to do to pick them up". (67-8)

Starting by querying the necessity of having "a troop of servants" (73), she quickly learns how she is supposed to address them ("*Lao* means 'bring' and *jao* 'go'. You never say 'please', and you learn the words in a cross tone – that is, if you want to be really Anglo-Indian" 74) and derives some amusement from seeing herself in this commanding role: "When men come to see us I cry, 'Qui hai?' and, when the servant appears, order 'Peg lao - cheroot lao,' and feel intensely Anglo-Indian and rather fast"(78). To control relations, the servants of the Anglo-Indian home were referred to by the name of their position (kitmutgar, pani-wallah, dhobi, syce, chuprassi and so on) except for the ayah or lady's maid, to whom Olivia gives the homely if inappropriate Scots name of Bella. But when Bella proves provoking on two occasions, Olivia discovers in herself a "most unladylike" (151) desire to slap her. This allows her to take off in the one case the liberal conscience of Home ("I who have constantly protested against any want of consideration in the treatment of

natives!" 151) and in the other the ideal of the self-controlled memsahib ("I jumped round on her, stamped my foot, and said, 'Bella. I shall slap you in a minute' " 249). The Anglo-Indian woman was supposed to rule by example and "authors of housekeeping texts routinely condemned physical chastisement of servants as unladylike, un-British and unlikely to yield the desired results" (Procida 191).

With the help of the domestic servants, the memsahibs made "immense efforts..... to create a homely and distinctively British feel in the Bungalow interior" and "by means of chintz-covered sofas, curtains, rugs, pictures, and photographs, many managed to evoke Home, thus creating a domestic atmosphere" (Collingham 168).

Here Olivia responds with complete approval. Throughout her fiction, "rich in descriptions of houses" (Forrester 260), she shows a consistent interest in interior decoration and the furnishings of the house, which is more than aesthetic. Domestic comfort and decorum are invested with something of a moral worth: "domestic life and all its routines are at the heart of her civilization" (Crawford 99), bringing order out of chaos or (in India) keeping the jungle at bay.

In the India of the time, conventions for married women were "looser" than in middle-class circles in Britain. Married women, though they may have been allowed to be experienced in the ways of the world, always had to remain ladies "which meant, at least before the First World War, not wearing imitation jewellery, perfume, or make-up" (MacMillan Margaret 52). Flirting was "a normal part of life in India" (MacMillan Margaret 123), occasioning gossip and malicious talk. Olivia, to her brother's amusement, quickly joins in the backbiting:

'She makes up', I say, 'and she had on a most ridiculous hat. Mrs Brodie says she's a most dreadful flirt.....[and] that she is horrid to other women and tries to take away their husbands. It is odd how fond Anglo-Indian women are of other people's husbands.' (89-90)

Part of the strain on women and the marriage bond came from the practice of sending children back to England to be educated: "Because of the unwritten law that British children must not stay in India after the age of seven, women faced the choice of

abandoning either their husbands or their children for years on end" (MacMillan Margaret 14). Kipling had already written about this in his short story, "Baa Baa Black Sheep", included in his volume of 1890, *Wee Willie Winkie*. Olivia touches on it too. Mrs Russel, contemplating her happy family life, regrets that "the children will have to go home very soon - the tragedy of Anglo-Indian life" (158). Olivia, on the one hand, is sympathetic. But on the other, combining a cool gaze with a warm heart, she believes that such a predicament is part of "the provocation there is to deteriorate" and concludes tartly that this is why women "very soon lose complexions, manners, and morals" (87).

But there were also some women who worked, among whom missionaries formed the largest single group (MacMillan Margaret 209). Olivia is taken by Mrs. Gardner, a missionary's wife "who has been many years in India and looks it" (141), to see a girls' school and some women in purdah, and the account she gives of their visit exactly matches MacMillan's description:

The missionary societies, run by men, encouraged their female workers to concentrate on Indian women, through special zenana missions....The trouble, as they all discovered, was that it was very difficult to persuade Indians that they needed saving. They visited the women in purdah day after day, trying to tell them little stories with a message....The missionaries made few converts, for all their work...Faced with the reality of India, many of the missionaries settled for less than winning the whole battle. They continued to preach but they also ran schools for Indian girls, they did medical work, and they looked after orphans. (MacMillan Margaret 210-211)

Despite or perhaps in reaction to her work of collecting for the Zenana Mission among her father's congregants in Glasgow (as described in *The Setons*), Olivia/Anna makes fun of two unmarried missionary ladies ("one [is] tall and stout, the other is short and thin; both have drab-coloured faces and straight mouse-coloured hair; both wear eye-glasses and sort of up and down dresses" 159) who regard her with disapproval as a Brand Unplucked from the burning.

According to Margaret MacMillan (52), the other group of unmarried women in India – young single girls – “should be innocent, but fun-loving, perhaps even boyish”. Olivia portrays as fitting the type both herself and her cabin-mate, G., “Geraldine Hilton”, in real life Gladys Helder (*Unforgettable, Unforgotten* 106). Enjoying each other’s company, they keep apart from the young men on board. Near the end of the book, in what could be viewed as a climactic incident, a civet-cat gets into the bedroom that the two girls share (251-253) and Olivia extracts every bit of fun from it. In her fright, she jumps out of her own bed and

how I accomplished it, paralysed as I was with terror, I know not, but I took a flying leap and landed on G., hitting her nose with my head and clutching wildly at her brawny arms, much developed with tennis, as my only refuge...

“Let go my arm, can't you?”

“I daren't” I said. “You're all I've got to hold on to”. (253)

And they spend the rest of the night together. The account is innocently given, though a modern reader, used to the hermeneutics of suspicion, might view it differently.

Olivia, then, is the amused observer of, and participant in, the life of women under the Raj. She casts herself as “only a *chota* Miss Sahib” (88), that is, one who is small and of insufficient importance to be noticed or criticized by others. Her “*chota*-ness”, as she understands, is her “great protection” (88), allowing her to watch the game and find entertainment. Her sense of herself as a woman corresponds to her sense of herself as a Scot: she is aware that she does not fully subscribe to the prevailing outlook and this gives her writing its satirical edge.

Arthur

Her humorous awareness of herself as a Scotswoman comes especially into focus with Arthur. If the identity of the author is teasingly problematic, so also - but in a less complex and less interesting way - is that of her correspondent. There is not much sense of who she is writing to. His name is omitted at the beginning of each letter and only revealed near the end (270). Even his gender remains unclear up to page 34. There is no indication of any special feeling, unless the fact of the correspondence itself, until suddenly and almost unprepared there is an uncertain declaration of love or "caring" (263-4). And significantly, the bond between them is their shared love and affection for Boggley, her brother.

It may be that Arthur is only a convenient recipient of the letters who also provides a conventional way of rounding off the novel with the sound of wedding-bells. Conventional - though in terms of Anglo-Indian literature, *unconventional*: Olivia is going Home to be married in reversal of the usual pattern of "the fishing fleet", which is "what they call girls who come out for the cold weather" in search of a husband (261). If, however, the relationship with Arthur is meant to be taken seriously, then it gives the book some sort of coherence or structural backbone (always weak in O.Douglas). Her passage to India is also a passage to self-knowledge. "I didn't know myself when I left England" (268); now she knows her heart. But the relationship is oddly passionless. Responding after a visit to the Taj Mahal to the young man's declaration of love, she writes, in what may be a calculated puncturing of the afflatus associated with romance in an exotic setting:

I don't know that I am in love - I don't like the expression anyway - but this I know, that if you were not in the world it would be an unpeopled waste to me. ...Is this caring? Is this what you want me to say?...I am not going to write any more, not because I haven't lots to say, but because writing much or talking much about a thing - being queer and Scots, it is hard for me to say love - seems somehow to cheapen it, profane it. (263)

Though the deflation of romance here has a generic purpose in subverting the Anglo-Indian novel, it also has its autobiographical aspect. Most of Anna Buchan's novels contain some sort of romance, but she never seems at ease with it or imaginatively engaged, or even specially interested. Normally reticent, in *Olivia in India* she provides a brief but important clue when she confesses, "My heart may be, indeed I think it is, full of the warmest instincts, but they have been *unwinged from birth* [my italics] so they can't fly to you". (270). Her emotional inhibition is the product of her background and upbringing in a Scottish Free Kirk manse, a point which she later hints at herself. As Mrs. Laidlaw, alias Mrs. Buchan, remarks in *Eliza for Common*: "it's never been our way to encourage talk about love-making" (266). The same is true of her brother John.. "Though there was a good deal of falling in and out of love in....[their] circle of friends, 'John and Anna never had affairs' " as their friend from their young days in Glasgow, the artist Katherine Cameron, remarked in later years to Janet Adam Smith (Smith 44).

In addition to this "erotic timidity" as Green calls it (193), awareness of national differences brings a certain tension or uneasiness into the relationship with Arthur. On the voyage, Olivia is dipping into Robert Louis Stevenson's *Memories and Portraits* the opening chapter of which deals with the differences between the English and the Scots and the Scots experience of being a "foreigner at home". Where "the speech of Englishmen is too often lacking in generous ardour, the better part of the man too often withheld from the social commerce, and the contact of mind with mind evaded as with terror", the Scotchman is "vain, interested in himself and others, eager for sympathy, setting forth his thoughts and experience in the best light" (Robert Louis Stevenson *Memories and Portraits* 8). Olivia writes to Arthur in similar vein: where she will "flop on any stranger's neck with protestations of undying affection", he has "a detached air, and often I have noticed you very unresponsive when people were trying to be amusing. Oh, I don't mean you are ever rude, but you are sometimes chilling" (99-100).

There is a further echo of Stevenson:

About the very cradle of the Scot there goes a hum of metaphysical divinity; and the whole of two divergent systems is summed up,

not merely speciously, in the two first questions of the rival catechisms, the English tritely inquiring, 'What is your name?' the Scottish striking at the very roots of life with 'what is the chief end of man?' and answering nobly if obscurely, 'to glorify God and enjoy Him for ever'. (9-10)

Olivia writes:

The only time I ever wished to be English was when I thought I might have dallied with 'What is your name?' instead of wrestling with such deep things as 'What is man's chief end?' (110)

And as if finally to establish the link between the two and thereby show us what her main theme or leading concern is, Olivia near the end of her book quotes the final line of Stevenson's essay: "We are so very different. You are so very English..... *My mind could never have anything but a Scots accent* [my italics]" (263).

Arthur may be based on a real person, as the other characters in the book are, but he is more likely to be a construction out of Stevenson, the personification of all the national characteristics of the English that differentiate them from the Scots and by means of which Douglas/Buchan can arrive at a clearer self-understanding of who she is as his binary opposite. In conversation with the present writer, Anna Buchan's great-niece, Lady Deborah Stewartby, suggested that "Arthur" was indeed a representative English name, taken from the Wellesley/Wellington family that John had married into. More, Anna's brother Walter had published a *Life of Arthur, Duke of Wellington*, in 1909. Arthur, then, for Anna Buchan may have been a type name and character. She uses the same name again in her next novel, *The Setons*, for the supposedly superior young Englishman who comes to visit Glasgow and falls in love with Elizabeth, the central character.



Fig. 3: Anna Buchan with Alistair

From *Unforgettable, Unforgotten* (1945), p.88

Peter and Boggley

Olivia's emotional centre of interest lies, not with Arthur, but with her brothers. In another deviation from the norms of Anglo-Indian writing, O.Douglas does not so much dwell on the mystery and exoticism of India as take the occasion to recall and depict family relationships. With Violet Jacob, by contrast, while "her family and friends were a source of security and pleasure", her relationships "remain essentially in the background" and the chief subject of her pages "might be described as India itself" (Anderson, Jacob 3). Her letters are "packed with detail, with her rich and sensuous perceptions of India" (3); and in addition, as "an exceptionally talented amateur artist", she "drew and painted many of the people and places she saw in India" (6). For O.Douglas, India has to make room for what occupies centre stage, a portrait of her family. Olivia in India has never left home.

Such family closeness, according to J.M.Barrie, is (or was) another Scottish national characteristic:

a Scotch family are probably better acquainted with each other, and more ignorant of the life outside their circle, than any other family in the world. And as knowledge is sympathy, the affection existing between them is almost painful in its intensity; they have not more to give than their neighbours, but it is bestowed upon a few instead of being distributed among many; they are reputed niggardly, but for family affection at least they pay in gold.

(*Margaret Ogilvy* 224)

This intense Scottish family feeling gives the clue to Anna Buchan's emotional make-up. In this first novel, Olivia devotes most of her fourth letter (16-22) to her youngest brother, Alistair, here called Peter, to whom she had been a surrogate mother [Fig.4]: "From the first he belonged specially to me" (*Unforgettable, Unforgotten* 67) because "Mother was busy":

It was strange to have a baby in the house...The baby was christened Alistair but he was seldom called by that name. The first

time John saw him, he said, "Hello! Peter!" and Peter he was for the first few years. When he began to develop a personality of his own he was re-named 'the Mhor' - Gaelic for 'the great one'.

(*Unforgettable Unforgotten* 67)

This same *laat lammetjie* - physically plain and graceless and a "lonely little soul" who "lived in a world of his own" - appears and re-appears with the same characteristics in a number of the novels: as Buff in *The Setons* (during the writing of this book, Alistair was killed at Arras), the Mhor in *Penny Plain*, Davie in *Ann and Her Mother*, and Bat in *The Proper Place* and *The Day of Small Things*. But in each case, the point is not only to "enlarge upon this brother of mine" (*Olivia in India* 21) but, as Debbie Sly argues, to "uncouple child-rearing from marriage" (14). Before going to India, Anna had kept house for her brother Walter in his own establishment in Peebles, and Alistair lived with them in a family of siblings - a *mise-en-scene* which she uses in *Penny Plain*. So *Olivia in India* once more sets a pattern which emerges more clearly in the books to follow: "apart from Davie, all the versions of Alistair and many of the children in the other books are motherless and....looked after by single women" (14). Thus, "although the majority of Douglas's novels do end in marriage, their emotional heart is elsewhere" (14) – that is, with her brothers.

Her brothers seem to have reciprocated. "It is really a mistake for a family to be too affectionate.....I am missing you horribly", William wrote to Anna when she left India (*Unforgettable Unforgotten* 117). Such strength of feeling, however, is hidden behind undemonstrativeness. When Boggley and Olivia met at Calcutta docks, "our greeting – what it is to be Scots! – was merely 'Hallo! There you are!'" (60). This emotional reserve may help to explain her adoption of a pseudonym.

The high point of her visit was a Christmas trip to Darjeeling to view the Himalayas, which, using biblical language, she invests with a quasi-religious significance. The "everlasting" snows are like "a city which lieth four-square"; as the light faded, "we turned and came down from the Hill of God" (129). The vision of Kangchenjunga towering alone into the heavens thus becomes a kind of epiphany, and the dust-jacket of the Nelson edition shows Olivia musing at her writing-table against the background of the snow-covered mountains [Fig.4]. William refers in similar terms to the same



Fig. 4: dust cover of Nelson edition of *Olivia in India* (1913)

shared experience in an article he wrote after a subsequent visit to Sikkim. "I have seen Kangchenjunga by moonlight from Darjeeling, and have thought it the *nunc dimittis* of scenery" until this later view from the Alukthana glacier, which was also like "a vision from another world" (Buchan William H. 482). His article was published in the prestigious *Blackwood's Magazine* in April 1912, along with a story by John who had also, about this time, successfully submitted Anna's manuscript to Hodder and Stoughton (*Unforgettable, Unforgotten* 131). What needs to be explained is why their sister chose not to publish her book under her own name as a supplement or companion piece to her brother's trailblazer. The reason may be that by the time *Olivia in India* appeared in 1913 William was dead, having succumbed in November 1912 while home on leave to a mysterious disease which the doctors were unable to diagnose or cure. While the book is dedicated "to the dear brother who is not here to read the record of the days he helped to make so happy", Anna's instinct would have been to keep her grief private and enshrine his memory by not linking their names together publicly. Poignantly, William was the first reader of the book which he occasions: Anna was able to put the proof-sheets into his hands as he lay in his Glasgow nursing-home. "I don't know what the reading public will think of it, but for a whole day it has made me forget my miserable self", he commented (*Unforgettable, Unforgotten* 136). The shadow may not lie across the book but it does lend a certain resonance to the author's pseudonym. When the book was published, Olivia like her Shakespearean namesake and prototype was mourning "a brother's dead love".

There is a curious connection here with a similar earlier Anglo-Indian book. In 1866, towards the end of her life, and after the publication of the two novels by which she is remembered, Emily Eden collected and issued under the title *Up the Country* her letters from India written while on an extended visit thirty years before. She was "especially attached" to her brother, George (vii). He "always came first in her affections" (blurb) and she opted for a "life of single blessedness", convinced that "the domestic harmony she enjoyed with her brother was most unlikely to be matched elsewhere" (viii). When he was appointed Governor-General in 1836, she accompanied him to India and while in Calcutta laid out the Eden Gardens named after her (which Olivia would drive to at sunset to listen to the band). From India she wrote regularly to her sister in England, "for the most part in the form of a journal" (v). As with Olivia, so with Emily Eden: "Her letters read, as the best letters do, like

intimate conversation, and like the best conversation they have their fair share of caustic remark, sweeping statement, flippant aside" (x). Likewise, brother and sister prefer each other's company and - a further parallel - each brother dies soon after returning home and the respective books are published posthumously, as a memory or tribute or record of a happy time together. Coming to one book after reading the other the reader experiences a strange sense of déjà vu: both books are full of references to "G", in the one case Olivia's cabin-mate Geraldine and in the other Emily's brother George. It is almost as if Anna Buchan has taken the one character and split it into two.

Relationship with John

But it is her relationship with John that is especially complex and brings into focus the question of her identity, not only personal and national but also literary. Her choice of pseudonym may have significance in this connection too. When John became engaged to be married in 1906, Anna tells us, she "very earnestly wished him well" (*Unforgettable, Unforgotten* 103); but this formal statement hides the wrench she experienced and her sense of loss. "As for me, 'a long time ago the world began', and since the world's beginning John had been my playmate, my comrade, my counsellor. To him I owed so much of the pleasure and interest in my life..." (103). In a letter of congratulations to her future sister-in-law, Susan Grosvenor, before they met, she struggles to find the right approach and ends with a direct appeal: "You will try to like me [illegible. - a little?] for John's sake?" In reply, Susie sends photographs but has obviously been cautious, if not cool, in her response. But Anna, writing again to say thanks, makes the best of it. "I do think it is nice of you to say you will try to care for us and that we shan't lose John". But in her autobiography (*Unforgettable, Unforgotten* 105), Anna does admit that "Had I not been so rich in brothers I might have felt a little forlorn when the couple departed to climb in the Dolomites" after their marriage in 1907. Instead, in the October of that same year, to fill the void in her life she departs for India and writes a highly personal and intimate book under the name of "Olivia" because, in another way, like her Shakespearean namesake she is mourning "a brother's dead love". It may be that, given "her obsessive use and re-use of family relationships" (Sly 13) in her novels, and especially that of John, what we

have here is the impetus and wellspring of her writing: she turned to writing to "season" that love

... which she would keep fresh
And lasting, in her sad remembrance.

Constantly aware of herself also in literary relation to John, she has to find a way of coping with "the intimate pressure of a famous male writer to whom she was bonded by love and admiration, as well as by public perception" (Crawford 97). (It has also to be said, however, that John looked after his sister's publishing interests, arranging with Hodder and Stoughton for successive cheap editions of her books.) She clears a space for herself, "swerv[ing] away from simply being set beside her brother" (97), by paradoxically disclaiming the role of writer altogether. *Olivia in India* starts the pattern of authorial self-deprecation. She warns her correspondent – and so the reader – not to expect "anything very wise or witty" from her, because her gifts are limited (22), while her alter ego, Olivia, purporting to be writing a novel on the Indian Mutiny, confesses:

It isn't so easy to write a book as I thought. No matter how much I try, my sentences seem all to stand up on end. I can't acquire any ease or grace of style. I read somewhere lately that young writers use too many adjectives, that good writers depend more on verbs. It has made me rather nervous and I keep counting both, but a certain dubiety in my own mind as to which is which greatly complicates matters. (167-8)

She contrasts both her anxious, amateurish attempts at authorship and the "chatty, informal" letters (Sly 9) that make up the real book with the dull but important book that her fiancé is currently writing in Germany. The same contrast between the professional male and the supposedly dilettante female comes in her autobiography. She and John are sharing a study at Broughton Green in 1919, he writing the history of the South African forces in the War and she *Penny Plain*. Knowing exactly what he was about, to John "it was a continual amusement to see me sitting down before a pile of paper without an idea what I meant to write about". He "could tell me how to spell,

and could always give me the right words of a quotation", but she "simply wrote doggedly so many words a day, counting them every little while to see if I had got the necessary number" (*Unforgettable, Unforgotten* 166-167). Aware of this "oppressive regard" (Crawford 91), she developed a conscious technique or literary strategy to win the amused sympathy of her readers. In effect, she says she is not a "writer", not like the real (men) writers she quotes and admires in her book; she is one of us, an ordinary woman who has had an extraordinary experience that she naturally would like to share with her friends to entertain them. She positions herself not only as the common reader but also as the common writer, about whom there is nothing pretentious or demanding or difficult. She began a talk on "Writers and Readers" with words which could apply more widely to her own writing too: "If we do not stay entirely in the shallows, I can promise you at least that with me you will never be out of your depth". The ploy paid off: "the enormous sale of her novels was to some extent due to Anna's marked talent for establishing a friendly relation with her readers" (and also, we could add, for disarming her critics). "Part of the reader's pleasure" in her novels is "the feeling of perusing a long letter from an old friend" (Reekie 26).

The epistolary form of *Olivia in India* is "well-suited to her range of effects" (Green 117) – anecdotal, conversational and lightly amusing. In this respect, she knew what she was doing. Green describes the book as "essentially a performance" and compares her to Barrie: each "author steps on stage at the beginning and bows off to applause at the end". The author is playing a part and the part she plays is - herself, "like, to take a similar case, Joyce Grenfell" (Green 117). That is, "O.Douglas was talking in Anna Buchan's own voice to the reader", and the voice and the persona were consistently "playful and pleasing" (118). It was an act, or an aspect of herself, chosen and cultivated. Thus, Olivia's announcement, "I am going to write a book" (134), while gently humorous in its naivety, can also be read as a half-serious statement of intent to turn author on the part of Anna Buchan and as a declaration of independence. "Olivia's question 'why not I?' is remarkable for being one of the few times a heroine, with the permission of the author, takes a decision to alter significantly the conditions of her life" (Beth Dickson 343); but in this case author and heroine are one. If Olivia/Anna cannot "be a man and have a career", she can at least have "fun" (*Olivia in India* 83) as a dramatic monologist.

She had to travel to and from the other side of the world to find herself as a separate person and as a writer. The family drama that is being played out has the effect of somewhat distancing the immediate setting in India, but the outcome is the emergence of O.Douglas from Anna Buchan.

In other ways, too, she carved out her own place as a writer independent of John or at least with the confidence to trust her own judgment. Where John invented, she remembered. She wrote *a la recherche du temps perdu*; and, like the author of *Swann's Way* and at much the same time (both books were published in 1913), had made the discovery of "involuntary memory" which is triggered by spontaneous sense impressions. Recalling the Hans Andersen book she had as a child and in particular the frontispiece - "a picture of a pine-wood, with a small girl in a blue frock and white pinafore and red stockings" - she explains to Arthur, visiting Germany, "your letter, with its tale of snow and great quiet forests, and the picture you drew me of the funny little girl with the flaxen plaits and the red stockings, made me remember it.....[and] gave me the passport and enabled me to creep once again inside its cover" (200-201).

Like Proust, she understood that time does not fade or pass from consciousness. Everything is preserved in memory and may be re-experienced through the senses. As with Proust, the sense of smell is particularly evocative:

In Rika....when Mrs. Royle took us to see her flowers, Boggley pulled a sprig of mignonette, sniffed it appreciatively, and handing it to me said -

'What does this remind you of?'

'Miss Aitken's teas!' I said promptly.

Always that scent takes me straight back to sunny summer afternoons when.... (189)

Thus, her journey outwards (to India) is also and at the same time a journey inwards; moving to and across India, she is also moving through what St. Augustine called "the fields and spacious palaces of my memory" (210). And in so doing, she finds herself and her literary method and *métier*: "I treasure up all sorts of memories, some of them very trivial and absurd, store them away in lavender, and when I feel dreary I take

them out and refresh myself with them" (36). Place this beside the opening paragraph of her final book, her autobiography, and the continuity from first to last is clear: "It is a help in dark days to remember bright beginnings..... what I remember most clearly looking back across the years is the night-nursery in the old manse in Fife: that seems to have been the spiritual home of my childhood".

In the preface to *Memories and Portraits* which Olivia is reading on the voyage, Robert Louis Stevenson says he "had no design at first to be autobiographical" but was "led away by the charm of beloved memories and by regret for the irrevocable dead; and when my own young face (which is a face of the dead also) began to appear in the well as by a kind of magic, I was the first to be surprised at the occurrence" (vii). For Anna Buchan too, as for the Stevenson of *Songs of Travel*, "home was home then....full of kindly faces" and "the day shone on my childhood" (Robert Louis Stevenson *Collected Poems* 256). Both writers share an Augustinian or Trahernian type of spirituality of memory: "The country where our home was in childhood, was full of mystery - is it not still like no other place in the world, a Holy Land?" (Congreve 153)

Olivia in India, then, consisting in part of Home Thoughts from Abroad, is as much a book of reminiscences (*Olivia in India* 193), prompted perhaps by the death of her father in 1911, as of travel. John wanted her to cut such passages; significantly (for her future literary career), her first reviewer, also called Douglas, particularly commended them. Among her papers comes this section revealingly scored out:

I showed the MS [manuscript] to my brother John, who said it wasn't bad if I put out all the stuff about my childhood, which no one would read. He offered the MS to Messrs. Hodder and Stoughton who gallantly said they would publish it, and when it slipped unobtrusively into the world it met with quite a kindly welcome. I shall never forget my amazed delight when James Douglas in *The Star* gave it a column of praise, *quoting the very bits my brother had wanted me to put out* [my italics]. That was a score for me. ("Writers and Readers")

It was a score, a blow struck for her authorial independence, a vindication of her literary instincts. In having the confidence to stand her ground with her brother - she was less subservient to him than she presented herself as being - she was becoming her own person. Whether by accident or design, she had found her subject matter and she stayed with it. She had opened up a seam which she was to mine in many novels.

Similarly, feeling it was not an inappropriate practice, she persisted in her use of quotation. Her "love of quotations", she tells us, "always exasperated" John (*Unforgettable, Unforgotten* 167), but the novel is replete with literary references and allusions. The discursive letter-form of *Olivia in India* is the perfect medium for book-talk and she knows that her readers will be very book-minded too. Not only could a writer then take for granted "a body of common knowledge or feeling to which he may make direct or indirect allusion confident that he will be understood, and not only this, but more or less accurately aware of the effect which the allusion will produce" (Grierson 12), but precisely in the period when Anna Buchan first started to write, there was "an atmosphere of public respect for literature unique in modern times....an astonishing number took literature seriously" (Fussell 157). Adducing evidence of "the unparalleled literariness of all ranks who fought the Great War" (156), Paul Fussell argues that in 1914 there was "no feeling that literature is not very near the centre of normal experience, no sense that it belongs to intellectuals or aesthetes or teachers or critics " (157-8). So Anna/Olivia's quotations and discussion of books in her writings, far from being either elitist or distracting, is precisely part of her popular appeal. She affords her readers the pleasure of recognition, of re-visiting old friends, of appreciating the humour in the literary nicknames she gives to people:

As she minced away, Mrs Crawley said meditatively 'the Rocking-horse Fly' and with a squeal of delight I realised that that was what she had always vaguely reminded me of. You remember the insect, don't you in *Through the Looking-Glass*? (49)

Because "British intercourse with literature ...was instinctive and unapologetic" (Fussell 161), she feels no need to explain why her brother was called Boggley. All her readers, she could assume, would be familiar with *Vanity Fair* and would savour

the contrast between William Buchan as he appears in her book and Thackeray's fat, vain, cowardly and foolish creation.

But among all the many other varied writers or books that she refers to – Shakespeare, Pet Marjorie, Lewis Carroll, the Irish RM, Kipling, Swinburne, Chaucer, "Sir Walter" – one is pre-eminent. *Olivia in India* has up to thirty allusions to the Bible and the reference is rarely given: she obviously took it for granted that her readers were as steeped in scripture and as familiar with the text of the Authorized Version as she was herself. She shared with her readers a common upbringing, outlook and discourse. A brief survey of *Olivia in India* in this respect shows that a biblical quotation is sometimes used straightforwardly for purposes of spiritual reflection or persuasion (perhaps combined with Bunyan). At other times, the Biblical allusion gives added resonance and richness to the writing, though she is not concerned about exact quotation: enough to give an approximation which will trigger off the appropriate associations. But the majority of the biblical allusions (fifteen out of twenty-seven counted) are used wittily. She is so much at home in the Scriptures that she can use them humorously and amusingly, without false or forced reverence and equally with no suggestion of irreverence either - like Scott, "who had occasion often to use the Bible in amusing connections, but he is never flippant or superior" (Moffatt 235). Her use of the Bible "lend[s] raciness and point" (Moffatt 10) to her writing and aligns her with a long native tradition (of which John too was part): "the powerful if partly hidden presence [of the Bible] supplies a dimension to Scottish literature which, though often remarked upon, has not received the scholarly merit it deserves" (Campbell "The Bible ..." 126).

She made a break with John and struck out for herself in her choice of subject, her "Hindoo Holiday" as J.R.Ackerley later entitled his 1932 book. John had not been to India, nor does it come within his purview. Later in his career, David Cannadine suggests ("John Buchan" 93), he may have "hoped" for the Viceroyship; but the appointment was not to be his. India remained Anna's terrain, referred to throughout her work – every novel has its Anglo-Indians returned Home – and briefly revisited in *Taken by the Hand* (1935).

Literary identity

Olivia in India, then, raises the question of the author's literary identity. What kind of writer is she and what kind of book is this? The young Anna Buchan seems to be trying different voices, presenting herself in different ways, exploring aspects of her own formation and personality and experience in order to find her metier and hence future direction. The novel can be viewed in different ways, read quite fruitfully from different angles. Ludovic Kennedy includes Part 1 in his anthology of sea journeys, as one of four "descriptions by women of life on board ocean-going ships" (Kennedy 77). One of his criteria for selection is "lively and stylish writing" (xviii), and the common factor is "people ... People with a sharp eye for character and situation, like Anna Buchan..... People with a nice edge of humour, especially about themselves....". (xix). He finds her "enchanting; a delightful writer and the sort of woman one would like to have known" (77).

The book has one dominant characteristic that no doubt reflects the author's own personality but, having once been critically noted, becomes part of her literary identity. Olivia (98) conventionally wishes Arthur happiness in the New Year and adds, presciently, Stevenson's little two-line poem, "Happy Thought", from his "A Child's Garden of Verse":

*The world is so full of a number of things,
I'm sure we should all be as happy as kings.*
(*Collected Poems*, 375)

Olivia's namesake, James Douglas, reviewing the novel in the "Evening Star", commented on its quality of happiness, and remarked that "when one found a happy book everyone should be told about it" (*Unforgettable, Unforgotten* 139). He may have shown Anna what the true spirit of her writing was and pointed her to her "great task of happiness", in Stevenson's phrase in "The Celestial Surgeon" (*Collected Poems* 131). Happiness – "her choice" ("Tributes to O.Douglas") - becomes a theme and issue in her later, more mature, writing (for example, *Pink Sugar*) and her conscious aim is to warm the hearts of her readers. "It's so wonderful, isn't it, to think of the sunshine and laughter that can lie between the two boards of a book" ("A Talk

about Books", used also in *Pink Sugar* 101). Such is the mark of an O.Douglas novel, as it is also the expression of her own sense of who she was and her sense of responsibility to her readers.

But a vein of pathos also runs through *Olivia in India* (as all her work) and an understanding sympathy with those who have suffered. There are scattered images of death: a burial at sea (22-3); the burning ghat (104); the Scottish fisherman who "never cam' in" after a storm (205); the "grey" Martins in the Mofussil whose two children had suddenly sickened and died, leaving "a little chintz-covered chair - empty but for a broken doll" (237); and in Calcutta a "couple in a tikha-gharry; the man a soldier, a Gordon Highlander, and on the front seat a tiny coffin" (265). A "happy" book it may be, but her sense of human mortality and mutability, of *lacrymae rerum*, is never absent. The humour of the book, then, serves a purpose: to affirm that life, in the Christian view of things, is ultimately a comedy and not a tragedy.

As her minister, A.G Reekie, comments:

Happy books are scarce. It is not given to many among the multitudes of all kinds of writers to produce a happy book. Though usually characterized as light literature, the writing of such a book demands special gifts as a human being as well as the essential talents of the writer. Anna's books were happy books, but they were not made so by the avoidance of the harsh realities of existence.There is sorrow and sadness, sickness and heartache, and many a glimpse of the unfortunate in her novels..... But the glow of these happy books indubitably sprang from their author's deep and passionate belief in her father's interpretation of life. (Reekie 26-7)

Olivia in India raises the question of who the author thinks she is. "I am beginning to wonder if I really am as nice as I thought I was", she ruefully reflects at one point (160). The nature of the Nice and the Good, touched on lightly in this novel, emerges as a serious concern in her later books. Her cabin companion on the return voyage has "a delightfully Glasgow 'weel-pleased' way" (277) which points towards *The Setons*.

The brief appearance of Anne, the nanny from Skye (203), shows her gift for racy Scots dialogue and heralds the succession of sharp-tongued Scots domestic servants in her books.

And there are other indications of what is to come. Her participation in the social rituals and gatherings of Calcutta serves only to confirm her in her love of simple pleasures and people, like tea ("the nicest time of the day, I think" p168) and a good fire. She will go on to show and share with her readers what Kipling in his "Children's Song" calls "Delight in simple things/and Mirth that has no bitter'springs" (*Puck* 306).

"I didn't know myself when I left England" (268) may apply to more than her feelings for Arthur. She has found herself as the subject of her own writing. "Everything you do", as the painter Dorothy Kay once remarked, "is a portrait of yourself" (Reynolds).

Chapter 2

I belong to Glasgow:

The Setons and Eliza for Common

Identity - national, literary, religious, personal – is again the central concern of O.Douglas's next book, *The Setons* (1917), a novel about the home and church life of a widowed Glasgow minister, the Rev. James Seton, and his daughter Elizabeth who keeps house for him and looks after her younger brother Buff, her two other surviving brothers being in India. As she shows in her autobiography, Anna Buchan draws much of the material of the novel from her own life as a young woman in her father's Glasgow manse in the 1890s and early 1900s. When her father died, she published a biographical sketch, together with a selection of his sermons and literary remains, in a volume entitled *John Buchan* and printed privately in Peebles in 1912; and then proceeded to "attempt to reconstructour home life in Glasgow" for her mother who was "sleeping badly at that time" (*Unforgettable, Unforgotten* 155). Since Susan Tweedsmuir confirms that Mr.Seton "is a clear picture of my father-in-law" (*The Edwardian Lady* 107), it seems reasonable to regard Elizabeth as a heightened self-portrait of Anna Buchan herself.

In the novel, the issue of Scottish national identity is foregrounded but rooted in the local, in the city of Glasgow with its "strong sense of shared identity" (J. H. Muir xxix). Accordingly, O.Douglas constructs a new literary identity: from being an Anglo-Indian novelist in *Olivia in India*, she becomes a Glasgow novelist in alignment with the new Glasgow aesthetic. Religion is an integral part of her identity and the book demonstrates the formative and cohesive power of Christian faith and practice. Finally, the highly self-conscious central character, Elizabeth, observes herself play the part and fill the role of a daughter of the manse but wonders who she is in herself and in relation to Arthur, the young Englishman who comes to visit and wins her hand.

National identity

In the late Edwardian, early Georgian period, devolution was the issue of the day in Scotland and a series of home rule bills came before Parliament between 1911 and 1913. The Scottish Exhibition of National History, Art and Industry, held in Glasgow in 1911, was “firmly nationalistic” in character (Kinchin and Kinchin 98), offering a “timely focus” (96) for the cultural renaissance which complemented this growing political nationalism. It was also, like its predecessors of 1888 and 1901, driven by a desire to “project the city’s identity and enhance its prestige” (96). In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Glasgow, the Second City of the Empire and Workshop of the World, was at the height of its prosperity, famed for its ships and locomotives, its engineering and iron works, as well as its trade and commerce and municipal achievements. “The city was proud of itself, abounding in confidence and assertion” (Checkland 40). Held with the aim of founding an endowed Chair of Scottish History and Literature at Glasgow University to place Scottish history “on a different plane from that which it had hitherto occupied” (Kinchin and Kinchin 95), the Exhibition represented a determined bid by Glasgow for the cultural leadership of Scotland.

Against this background, O.Douglas stages a discussion on national identity in *The Setons* (90-93). A young artist, Stewart Sinclair, calls at the manse to show Mr.Seton an old book of Scottish ballads, prompting the minister to contrast the respective ballad traditions of England and Scotland as representative of two different temperaments. The Scots themselves, Mr.Seton maintains, combine opposite or contradictory characteristics:

We’re a strange mixture...of hard-headedness and romance, common sense and sentiment, practicality and poetry, business and idealism. Sir Walter knew that, so he made the Gifted Gilfillan turn from discoursing of the New Jerusalem of the Saints to the price of beasts at Mauchline Fair. (90)

Curiously, John Buchan, in a lecture on “Some Scottish Characteristics” given later in 1921 and subsequently published in 1924, advances the same argument and uses the

ipsissima verba of the novel (John Buchan “Some Scottish Characteristics” 58-9), repeating with the same turns of phrase the points made by the several characters. He concludes with Elizabeth, word for word: “we have all of us, we Scots, a queer daftness in our blood” (John Buchan, “Some Scottish Characteristics” 70, *The Setons* 91). He may be paying his sister the compliment of quoting from her work, or she may be echoing his thoughts, or the words originate with their father. But the point of both the conversation in the novel and the lecture is to determine who or what has made the nation’s history. The names of a few prominent figures are mentioned. Mr. Seton/Buchan, like John Buchan later in his lecture, maintains that if the country was polled as to the type of Scot most chiefly admired by his fellow-countrymen, whereas he himself would support Scott, the romantic Burns would be more likely to get the vote than either the economist Adam Smith or the religious leader John Knox.

Apart from thus invoking names from history in this particular conversation, O.Douglas throughout the novel employs another literary device to engender a sense of national identity. The text contains songs and ballads, the words given in full, and the novel concludes with all present joining in the singing of the favourite Scottish Metrical Psalm, The Lord’s My Shepherd, to the tune “French”. This serves to “create an alternative cultural economy to that of the ‘genteel [English] world’ ” (Davis 194), asserting and reinforcing a sense of shared identity, an accent of mind within a larger British identity. The reader is linked to his heritage by being “required to become a performer, one who will re-embody the songs by singing them” (Davis 198), even if only in his head. Like Allan Ramsay, O.Douglas has built the participation of her readers into the meaning of the songs she has included in her book (Davis 190). The words are known and loved and at the Thomsons’ party “the familiar tunes cheered the company wonderfully”— except for the Miss Simpsons of “refined” accent who regarded “Scotch airs” as “common” and preferred “high-class music” (*The Setons* 24). But it is the very nature and function of Scottish songs, fusing words and melody, to “relish best with people who have not bestowed much of their time in acquiring a taste for that downright perfect music, which requires none, or very little of the poet’s assistance” (Allan Ramsay in the Preface to his Tea-Table Miscellany, qtd. in Davis. 191). Thus both the characters in the novel and the reader are drawn into a national community expressed through music.

Whether these strategies effectively create and express a sense of national identity is a moot point. Edwin Muir, in his discussion of Scott, makes a pertinent observation. He argues that Scott wrote in a "temporal Nothing.....dotted with a few disconnected figures arranged at abrupt intervals.....with a rude buttress of ballads and folk songs to shore them up and keep them from falling" (*Scott and Scotland* 12). The same could be true of *The Setons*.

But "Scottish identity has always had a clear, well-established local dimension" and "the local, even the parochial, has been the springboard of every attempt to establish or define a national consciousness" (MacDougall 212-3). To this end, O.Douglas portrays the life and character of the city of Glasgow, making overt use of a book, *Glasgow in 1901*, published to coincide with the Glasgow International Exhibition of that year, the largest Britain had ever seen. This book, which Perilla Kinchin describes in her introduction to the facsimile reprint of 2001 as a "quirky, intimate and affectionate portrait" of the city (J. H. Muir xxv), purports to be written by "James Hamilton Muir", the composite pseudonym of three young talented Glasgow men. They were *James Bone*, a journalist who used the formula of the book for his later *Edinburgh Revisited* (1911), also referred to in *The Setons* (160-1); *Archibald Hamilton Charteris*, a lawyer and son of the Professor of Medicine; and *Muirhead Bone*, brother of James, who wrote Part 1 (chapters 1-5) and also illustrated the book. O.Douglas parallels or reproduces in fictional form - or in the form of lightly fictionalized autobiography - some of the subject matter of the book. *Glasgow in 1901* opens with an imaginary traveller arriving in the city by rail from the South; and in a later chapter (chapter 6 of Part 11), Muirhead Bone discusses the architecture of the University, the Cathedral, and the Municipal Buildings. In *The Setons* Arthur arrives in the same way and in due course Mr. Seton shows him the sights of Glasgow. Elizabeth takes over the following day and they have a tour through Glasgow, taking in the University, on the top of an electric car. The trams, as featured in the novel, were "a particular jewel in Glasgow's crown" (J. H. Muir xvii). They were electrified after the Corporation took them over in 1894 and the fares reduced, in many cases by half. In these circumstances - "a halfpenny fare carries one just over half a mile, a penny fare for a mile and three-quarters, while for the maximum fare of threepence one may ride for five miles and a half" - the inducement to walk has "practically vanished" (J. H. Muir 58). (Mr. Seton, however, likes to walk, though Elizabeth

cautions him "don't try to save money by walking in the rain; that's poor economy" and asks him "have you lots of car-pennies?" *The Setons* 58-9).

Elizabeth and Arthur pass by the Broomielaw:

"Now", she said, "we are on the Broomielaw Bridge...and that is Clyde's 'wan water'. I'm told Broomielaw means 'beloved green place', so it can't always have been the coaly hole it is now. I don't know what is up the river – Glasgow Green, I think, and other places, but" – pointing down the river – "there lies the pathway to the Hebrides. It always refreshes me to think that we in Glasgow have a 'backdoor to paradise' " (*The Setons* 160)

- which is almost a compilation of quotations from *Glasgow in 1901*:

It is the Clyde you have seen, and where the faded sunset leads, is the pathway to the Hebrides.....The "wan water" of Clyde is to the native heart inexpressibly, unreasonably dear. It is the narrow way out of toil and labour, the "world elsewhere", the casement opening on seas ofadventure and romance. (3)

In the pure mists of elder days in Scotland, ere her sons had been called upon to endure much "smeekiness" in the cause of her national prosperity, the spot where our wharves and forges now stand was a "beloved green place". The name has that meaning, and during the long years when we were trampling its greenness out of sight we knew it not; yet if today the greenness has gone the place remains "beloved". (7)

Continuing their tour of the city, they have lunch in Elizabeth's "favourite haunt", the luncheon- or tea-room of a draper's shop in Sauchiehall Street. Tea-rooms had become a significant part of Glasgow's cultural life in the 1890's, "thanks largely to the entrepreneurial flair of Kate Cranston" (Kinchin and Kinchin 89). J. H. Muir expands: "Of tea-shops pure and simple, there are now not many in Glasgow.....The rest are hybrids - part restaurant, part tea-room; but, of course, unlicensed....You can lunch in Glasgow more cheaply....than in any other town in Great Britain. For 1s 4d

you can fill yourself drum-tight..." (169). Elizabeth, echoing *Glasgow in 1901*, tells Arthur that this "is where Glasgow beats every other town. For one-and-sixpence you get four courses" (*The Setons* 165). The majority of the patrons of the lunch-room are women, in town for the day from the country or the suburbs, discussing their purchases. After lunch, Arthur and Elizabeth also go shopping which Elizabeth claims is a "delight" to her (167).

The novel, then, like Muir's earlier book depicts the life and character of a great Scottish city but with this significant difference: Glasgow is seen through the eyes of a young woman who belongs to it and has access to public space in the same way as any of the three authors of *Glasgow in 1901*. O.Douglas thus registers a recent social change:

By 1900 a woman could have a day out: she could go to town on a train, shop, lunch in a department store, see a matinee and have tea with a friend: the train, the shopping experience, the woman-friendly place to lunch, the matinee and even the tea were all recent innovations. (Jane Stevenson, 24)

O.Douglas feels herself to be as much part of a flourishing Glasgow as J. H. Muir. Like him - Part 1 of his book is called "Glasgow of the Imagination" - she "imagines" Glasgow and answers to Alasdair Gray's complaint in *Lanark* :

'Glasgow is a magnificent city,' said McAlpin. 'Why do we hardly ever notice that?' 'Because nobody imagines living here,' said thaw. McAlpin lit a cigarette and said, 'If you want to explain that I'll certainly listen'.

'Then think of Florence, Paris, London, New York. Nobody visiting them for the first time is a stranger because he's already visited them in paintings, novels, history books and films. But if a city hasn't been used by an artist not even the inhabitants live there imaginatively. What is Glasgow to most of us? A house, the place we work, a football park or golf course, some pubs and connecting streets. That's all. No, I'm wrong, there's also the cinema and library. And when our imagination needs exercise we use these to

visit London, Paris, Rome under the Caesars, the American West at the turn of the century, anywhere but here and now. Imaginatively Glasgow exists as a music-hall song and a few bad novels. That's all we've given to the world outside. It's all we've given to ourselves.' (243)

Alasdair Gray, Glasgow artist and writer, seems to have forgotten or not to know about his predecessors of seventy or eighty years before - unless he is including *The Setons* among the few bad novels.

Literary identity

Rooting her sense of national identity thus in the local, O.Douglas also develops a new literary identity as a Glasgow novelist, adopting the new aesthetic associated with the name of Muirhead Bone. Muirhead Bone began his artistic career in the late eighteen-nineties with a kind of "visual journalism" (Trowles, no page numbers), pictorially reporting the day-to-day life and events of the city for the Glasgow weekly journal the *Scots Pictorial*. In a series of wash drawings he depicted local architecture, news and social events, portraying "human labour, social deprivation and industrialization" and providing readers with a variety of images - Glasgow's riverside wharfs, or a quiet tenemented back-street - rendered "with a sense of romantic sobriety" (Trowles). For *Glasgow in 1901* he did a series of similar pen-drawings - twelve full-page illustrations and fifty-two illustrations in the text. He exhibited in the Fine Art section of the Exhibition and also produced a folio of "Exhibition Etchings" which were reproduced by the well-known Glasgow photographers T.& R. Annan in their stand on site. Such was the success of both book and etchings that at the end of the year Bone, "with a helping hand from his friend John Buchan" (J. H. Muir .ix), went south to London but kept his links with his native city, and a decade later, probably to coincide with the 1911 Glasgow Exhibition, produced "Glasgow, Fifty Drawings", lavishly published this time, with notes on Glasgow by his friend A.H. Charteris.

The dominant colour of the drawings, reflecting the city, is grey. "Our grey stone...under rain and smoke...has weathered to a uniform tone of deeper grey...It is

doubtless a kind of adaptation to environment that leads our citizens to dress in colour of the darker shades, for grey is the prevailing tint on sky and building" (Bone *Glasgow* 8). The drawings thus "are the antithesis of romanticism, showing a city smothered in smoke, which appears like a haar from the sea" (MacDougall 131). Bone had consciously developed his own aesthetic, in contradistinction both to art nouveau and to the "Glasgow Boys". The former, represented in Glasgow by the Mackintoshes (Charles Rennie and his wife Margaret MacDonald), produced streamlined forms and meticulous colour harmonies, while the Glasgow Boys also used a "high lyrical key of colour" in reaction to their drab city. Their pictures "seem to our visitors inexplicable if considered as manifestations of our city....the heavy, ugly, provincial side of Glasgow cannot well be ignored" (J. H. Muir 28). The Glasgow Boys were close in spirit and subject-matter to the Kailyard school of writers. But Bone, working in white and black, sought to create a genuine urban art, a "new aestheticism" out of "the great *paysage intime* of Glasgow" (25).

"Paysage", not "passage": Bone is also a flaneur, but not so much in the fashionable areas as in the industrial outskirts and working-class districts. Walter Benjamin in his study of Baudelaire posed the existence of this new aesthetic observer, the flaneur, the stroller in the city.

And what happened in the city as one walked about with the only purpose of seeking out what it had to offer, is that it affected the imagination....the nineteenth-century city produced a revolution in aesthetic perception....The city expanded the range of the seeable. The art object was redefined...The eye began to take in far more than it had in the pre-industrial city.....This new eye was the result of the novel conditions of the bourgeois regime. Writers, poets, and artists found themselves in a world of economic values, imperatives, and products...The new regime incorporated new forms of capital, banking, commerce, and manufacturing; and the city that resulted was complex, dynamic, and expanding (Saisselin 20-1).

In applying this to Glasgow, Bone goes one step further. He knows that "it is not the fame of her towers or the beauty of her sunsets that attracts the traveller to Glasgow", who "may stroll about her streets...loungue in teashops...visit the parks....and yet feel that Glasgow itself has escaped him". No, "the greatness of the town is not so much an affair of well-built streets and warehouses, or municipal parks, as of creative work that transforms the iron ore brought in at one end into the machinery that throbs out at

the other. The glory of Glasgow is what the unknown 'working-class districts' contain....The pride of the place is in its working-man.....The touching ugliness of so much of it readily appeals to the imagination as something with no reflection either in literature or in art" (J. H. Muir 20-2).

Here then is Bone's "new aestheticism", the new artistic task he set himself – to bring a great manufacturing city into the province of art (J. H. Muir 25). His pictorial reporting of Glasgow was the equivalent of the French *feuilletons* or *physiognomies*, newspaper articles describing the life of Paris, which "were turned into volumes that were in effect literary panoramas of the new city and its population, habits, foibles: *Les Francais petits eux-memes*, *Le Diable a Paris*, *La Grand Ville* were only a few of the titles in which prose was supplemented by lithography to make known the discoveries of the new eye" (Saisselin 22). *Glasgow in 1901* represents the same progression, the same literary-visual panorama, and likewise implies a new kind of reader: "The representation of this new world also implied a new reader whose interests and curiosities went beyond the limits of accepted taste to cover all types of men and women" (22).

Anna Buchan not only had a personal link with Muirhead Bone through her brother, but was fully aware of his artistic aims and ideals and alludes to them in *The Setons*. The key passage comes in chapter 6, in connection with the young artist, Stewart Stevenson:

To be honest, Mr. Stevenson senior was somewhat astonished at the taste shown by his son's patrons. To him the Tuppence Coloured was always preferable to the Penny Plain. He could not help wishing that his son would try to paint things with a little more colour in them. He liked Highland cattle standing beside a well, with a lot of purple heather about; or a snowy landscape with sheep in the foreground and the sun setting redly behind a hill. He was only bewildered when told to remark this "sumptuous black", that "seductive white". He saw "no 'colour' in the smoke from a chimney, or 'bloom' in dingy masonry viewed through smoke haze". To him "nothing looked fine" save on a fine day, and he

the other. The glory of Glasgow is what the unknown 'working-class districts' contain....The pride of the place is in its working-man.....The touching ugliness of so much of it readily appeals to the imagination as something with no reflection either in literature or in art" (J. H. Muir 20-2).

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infinitely preferred the robust oil-paintings on the walls of Lochnagar to his son's delicate black-and-white work. (88)

Here O.Douglas is quoting from Part 1, chapter 3 of *Glasgow in 1901* where Muirhead Bone, masquerading behind the shared pseudonym, is obviously talking about himself and defending his work:

We defined the town as a colourless place, but, although this in the main is true, there are reservations to be made. The nature of colour would appear in these days to be grown a puzzle as insoluble as the nature of truth itself. Our painters are found prizing the Penny Plain far above the Twopence Coloured, and somewhat to the bewilderment of the ordinary man, they bid him remark that sumptuous black, this seductive white. To them the very smoke from a chimney is "colour", and the dingy masonry, viewed through the envelope of smoke-haze, has a "bloom" added to its tones whose quiet nuances yield a singular satisfaction to their eyes.But the beauty of the black-and-white of the dull days is of a reticent kind that appears only to the trained eye. The man in the street has a simpler faith. Nothing looks "fine" save on a "fine day". So it is only when the sun comes out that he begins to look about him. (16)

As a character Stewart Stevenson is not based on Bone, for where Stevenson is the only son of a prosperous father who had a "solid Ham and Butter business" (88) and no artistic interests, Bone was one of eight lively and later distinguished children brought up in modest circumstances by their journalist father. But Anna Buchan is clearly following Muirhead Bone's lead in her depiction of Glasgow. In her pages as in his drawings and writing, the city is grey and smoky and rainy. She has something of his eye for the subtleties of colour but she is more an observer of human scenes and the inhabitants of the city:

Elizabeth looked out at the prospect somewhat drearily. It was a dull November day. Rain was beginning to fall heavily; the grass looked sodden and dark. A message-boy went past, with his empty

basket over his head, whistling a doleful tune. A cart of coal stopped at the Kirkes', and she watched the men carry it round to the kitchen premises. They had sacks over their shoulders to protect them from the rain, and they lifted the wet, shining lumps of coal into hamper-like baskets and staggered with them over the well-gravelled path....(51)

She jumped in a tram-car and squeezed herself in between two stout ladies. The car was very full, and the atmosphere heavy with the smell of damp waterproofs. Dripping umbrellas, held well away from the owners, made rivulets on the floor and caught the feet of the unwary, and an air of profound dejection brooded over every one. Generally, Elizabeth got the liveliest pleasure from listening to conversation in the car, but today every one was as silent as a canary in a darkened cage. (60)

In this way, she adds detail to Bone's larger canvas:

Throughout his wanderings [the visitor to Glasgow] the strange colour of the sky has concerned him. It is luminously tinged with a stain as of iron rust, and seems to shudder and quicken in sympathy with some unknown force lying without the city. This is the ever-present sign of Glasgow's furnace cordon. Where colour might be expected to show on the facades which the lamps illumine, he finds none; a universal greyness runs from darkness into light, and back again into darkness. And into every impression there is something cast that is dark and sombre and northern. (J. H. Muir 6)

If *Glasgow in 1901* was "a graphic and faithful account of the city" that "warmly" reminded Neil Munro, re-reading it twenty-seven years later, of aspects of an older Glasgow and details of daily life at the time (J. H. Muir v and xxv), *The Setons* was something of the same achievement. As Anna Buchan reported, people "wrote from distant parts of the Empire saying they could never hope to see the 'blessed, beastly place' again, but now when the longing for it came over them, they could sit down

with *The Setons* and smell the rain in the Glasgow streets" (*Unforgettable, Unforgotten* 156). This echoes *Glasgow in 1901*: "Has not the mere thought of our rainy Broomielaw brought men's hearts to their mouths while they kicked their heels in painted lands, where 'soft lasceevious stars leered from thae velvet skies'? Their hearts were calling for the place, bleak, shrewd, kindly withal, place of all weathers that end in rain, home of all trades that end in furnace smoke and noise" (7). These same two sentences are reworked and developed from a womanly perspective in a passage near the end of *Olivia in India*:

Sometimes in the Eden Gardens at sunset, when we draw up to listen to the band, I watch the faces of the youths – Scots boys come out from Glasgow or Dundee – dreaming there in the Indian twilight while the pipers play the tunes familiar to them since childhood.....The peepul trees rustle softly overhead, the languorous soft air laps them round, the scent of the East is in their nostrils, but their eyes are with their hearts, and is this what they see? A night of drizzling rain, a street of tall, dingy, grey houses, and a boy, his day's work done, bounding upstairs three steps at a time to a cosy kitchen where the tea is spread, where work-roughened hands at his coming lift the brown teapot from the hob, and a kind mother's voice welcomes him home at the end of the day...(273)

Anna Buchan, then, in her novel was literary counterpart to Muirhead Bone in the same way as his brother James in *Glasgow in 1901*. James' "forte was atmospheric descriptive writing in the urban observer mode - a literary counterpart perhaps of his brother's fascination with the city as a subject for art" (x). Yet the name of O.Douglas has never been linked to Muirhead Bone. Carl MacDougall observes that "there is an interesting conjunction between art and literature, insofar as writers and artists seem to experience similar shifts in identity and perspective, apparent as a series of shared preoccupations and conjunctions...a shared vision". For example, "Henry Raeburn and John Galt, Horatio McCulloch and Sir Walter Scott, David Wilkie and Robert Burns, and William Johnstone and Hugh MacDiarmid occupied similar territories and

expressed common concerns" (29). A case could be made for postulating just such a conjunction between Muirhead Bone and O.Douglas.

Or between Muirhead Bone and Frederick J. Niven who published his novel, *The Justice of the Peace*, in 1914 as Anna Buchan was working on hers. The topography of Niven's novel, set in the 1890s, is also central and suburban Glasgow, with the river a constant presence, and he conveys the beauty of the industrial city. To a large extent the novel is autobiographical but also seems to draw on the life and artistic outlook of Bone. The central character, Martin Moir, is apprenticed, as Niven himself was, in his father's soft-goods warehouse, though he has artistic leanings. Glasgow, as his father concedes, "is getting an arty touch about it – New Art they call it" (28). It is the period of the Glasgow Boys who are referred to by name (Niven 240-1). But Martin, like the young Bone growing up in Partick, notices and studies the shipping and crafts on the Clyde. Thought at first to be colour-blind, Martin is told by a fellow-artist that he sees "tones" so well that he is "a colourist of the kind that puts colour into black-and white" (116). Later, having left Glasgow, he returns and does a painting of Dixon's Blazes, the famous Glasgow iron-works, and sends it to a Paris magazine. Then he holds an exhibition of his Clyde etchings for which, like Bone with his "Shipbuilders, Whiteinch" and "The Dry Dock", he has gone to the shipyards beyond Govan to "try to get acclimatized" and "get inside" what he wants to draw (Niven 366). By this stage, "all his pictures are low-tone; he created (so far as brush-work goes) a quiet minor world of greys and silvers, browns and old gold but his pen and inks, dry points, and etchings suggest to us, in their black-and white, a blaze of colour" (383). (Bone's etchings and dry points of city scenes between 1898 and 1907 had been catalogued by Campbell Dodgson in 1909.) The parallel continues when Martin marries the sister of an old art college friend, just as Bone married Gertrude, sister of Francis Dod.

If there is not a "conjunction" in MacDougall's sense between the artist and the two writers, Bone has clearly been an inspiration or liberation to both Niven and O.Douglas who see Glasgow through his eyes. Taking his lead from the Dutch masters, Bone saw it as his role to depict industrial urban and suburban life. Few artists before him had quite this vision. The Glasgow painters of his youth, chiefly a decorative landscape school, "did not paint Glasgow", he declared flatly ("From

Glasgow to London" 146). The same was true of literature. The turn of the century Scotland was "one of the most industrialized areas of the world", yet "it was rare to find writers dealing with the realities of the social experience" (Beth Dickson 49). Instead, the major Scottish writers of the period – George Douglas Brown, J. MacDougall Hay, Neil Munro and J.M. Barrie – "rarely acknowledge that they live in an industrialized country at all" (Beth Dickson 49). Bone, by contrast, responded to what he saw around him and had grown up with and gave confidence to the two writers to do the same. But where Niven has been recognized as an innovator "in his quiet way" (Burgess 95), *The Setons* has been critically overlooked though it too follows Muirhead Bone into the city.

Bone's influence and aesthetic come to fullest literary expression later in the work of Archie Hind in the 1960s. Mat Craig, the central character of Hind's *The Dear Green Place*, shares with O.Douglas a central concern with art and identity – what it means to belong to Glasgow and specifically to be a Glasgow writer. Something of a flaneur like Bone, he gravitates towards "that strange mixed landscape which occurs on the skirts of big industrial cities" (20):

As they sat near the edge of the dump overlooking the sluggish water they could look out through the smoke and dirt of the city to the countryside beyond.....Always as he sat on top of the man made ash heap, he wondered at the sight. It was the smooth dissolution of one scene into the other; the dust, smoke, chimneys, fires, locomotives, electric pylons mingling with and slowly changing to the beauty of the hills beyond. (236-7)

O.Douglas, however, complements Muirhead Bone by recording the experience of women not only in the public space but in domestic scenes. Muir sketches the "plain, unassuming" (158) man of business, his clothes and character and carriage, his bearing in the office and the street (156-8); *The Setons* opens with that same self-made man arriving home and calling for "Mamma". The Thomson family, to whom we are thus introduced, have risen socially and now live in a villa in Pollokshields though continuing to attend Mr. Seton's church in the Gorbals. The novel opens with an evening party at the Thomsons', followed in a later chapter by a ladies' afternoon

tea-party, in which O.Douglas affectionately conveys the unconscious humour of the conversations.

A flourishing Glasgow is marked by social mobility. Muir describes the rising man:

Their sons came home from English schools with strange collars and stranger accents, to twist, and reprove, and reform, and their daughters married, perhaps into the army. Then arrived the crowning honour of baronetcy and the country seat, and a long adieu was bid to the Glasgow man of old. But, after all, this change to something higher would not seem to have brought with it complete contentment. Sometimes, you feel sure, the good man longs for his early days when he lived in a circle with conventions less foreign to his origins, with habits more easy and perhaps more natural. (161)

O.Douglas rewrites the passage much more vigorously:

It is an instructive thing to watch the rise of a family. They rise rapidly in Glasgow. In a few years, you may see a family ascend from a small villa in Pollokshields and one servant – known as “the girrl” – to a “place” in the country and a pew in the nearest Episcopal church; and if this successful man still alludes to a person as a “party” and to his wife in her presence as “Mistress So-and-so here”, his feet are well up the ladder. A few years more and he will cut the strings that bind him to his old life; his boys, educated at English schools, will have forgotten the pit from whence they were dug, his daughters will probably have married well, and he is “county” indeed. (163)

In the scene in the lunch-room, bringing Muir’s stereotype to life, she gives us the first glimpse of Mrs. (later Lady) Jackson, wife of (Sir) Andrew Jackson:

A fat, prosperous –looking woman in a fur coat sat down at a table near and ordered – “No soup, but a nice bit of fish”....

A friend espied the lady, and sailing up to the table, greeted her with "Fency seeing you here!" and they fell into conversation.

"And what kind of winter are you having?" asked one.

"Fine", said the other. "Mr.Jackson's real well, his indigestion is not troubling him at all, and the children are all at school, and I've had the drawing-room done up – Wylie and Lochhead – handsome". (166)

But O.Douglas does not confine her purview to the more prosperous parts of the city; like *Glasgow in 1901* (Part III, chapter 4) she also shows us the poorer parts and the home lives of working people, which she knew for herself at first hand through assisting her father, minister of the John Knox Church in the Gorbals, with pastoral visitation.

In Glasgow, almost six out of ten lived more than two people per roomRooms in city tenements were about fourteen feet long and from six to twelve feet wide. They were badly lit, with no more than one window, which may have had sunlight blocked out by neighbouring buildings. Often the walls were roughcast, with no wallpaper. Space was at a premium, and pots, pans and other kitchen utensils would be hung up on the wall. There was little ventilation, and the first thing that would have struck the modern visitor was the smell. In the days before perfumed soap and deodorants, the smell of body odour was pervasive, cooking in such small spaces meant that smells from the stove lingered constantly; the air would often be damp, as washing was hung up to dry indoors.....(Finlay 46-8)

Living in such cramped conditions, most left the home when the opportunity arose, to pursue pastimes outside: "men would meet and talk in pubs and clubs, women would gather to chat in the entrance to closes or on the drying greens, and children would play outside" (48).

On Sunday between services, Elizabeth calls on the women at home to deliver tracts. She visits young Peggy Donald who is dying of consumption in a house on the second floor, giving a sympathetic human example where the historian gives generalizations:

Disease and bad health were other major problems associated with Scottish living conditions. Respiratory disease was the biggest killer, especially tuberculosis. Poor sanitation, particularly the widespread use of chamber pots and outside earth closets, encouraged disease. The close confined nature of the tenements and the back-to-back houses in the industrial towns meant that infections which passed by contagion spread like wildfire. (Finlay 48-9)

Another time she goes collecting for the Zenana Mission (Christian work among the women of India, as referred to in *Olivia in India*). Having travelled across the city from Pollokshields, she finds herself “in meaner streets – drab, dreary streets which, in spite of witnesses to the contrary in the shape of frequent public-houses and pawn-shops, harboured many decent, hard-working people” (60). At one house, “it was washing-day, and the mistress of the house was struggling with piles of wet clothes, sorting them out with red, soda-wrinkled hands, and hanging them on pulleys round the kitchen” (65). She calls on Mrs. Martin, feckless and shiftless, with “the sweetest smile and the dirtiest house in Glasgow”: “Mrs. Martin had removed her bodice, the better to comb her hair, and Elizabeth shuddered to see her lay the comb down beside a pat of butter” (69) and tries not to see the unmade bed and the sink full of dirty dishes - at four o’clock in the afternoon. On the street Elizabeth encounters a ragged boy, Bob, who has had no dinner and cannot go home because his father is drunk and will not let him in. Eliciting a promise from him that he will come to Sunday School, she takes him to a baker’s shop where he wolfs down “tupp’ny pies” (68).

It is therefore a misrepresentation to claim, as Robert Elliot does, that O.Douglas left to her male contemporaries “the grimmer side of the city” while her own novels of manse life “evoke[s] an atmosphere of faded curtains and prayer-book gentility” (qtd. in Rubio 158). The inappropriate use of the word “prayer-book” in connection with a Free Church manse is sufficient indication of uninformed reading. It could be argued, rather, that O.Douglas anticipates by thirty years the work of Edward Gaitens in

Dance of the Apprentices, his novel of 1948 which incorporates much of the material from his earlier book of short stories, *Growing Up*, 1942. Carl MacDougall, completely overlooking Frederick J. Niven and O. Douglas, maintains that Gaitens "followed Muirhead Bone into the city" and "began to publish stories which not only introduced an urban setting but did so with a lyric intensity, in a celebration of life and working-class dignity....deliberately moving Scottish literature from the rural setting it had occupied for more than 150 years" (29). While two of Gaitens's short stories are set in the Glasgow shipyards and could therefore be said to be following Muirhead Bone, the other stories and the novel are set in the homes and streets of the Gorbals and could be said with equal plausibility to be following O. Douglas or at least exploring the same terrain. Like her, Gaitens focusses on the burdens of working-class women and the sufferings of mothers. But where his Gorbals is Catholic, Socialist, violent, and alcoholic, the Gorbals of *The Setons* is Protestant and for the most part "respectable".

Anna Buchan, like Muirhead Bone made and shaped by Glasgow, complements his work by looking at domestic life and the experience of women. Adopting his aesthetic, she finds a new literary identity and takes her place as a Glasgow novelist alongside the male novelists who also followed his lead, Frederick J. Niven, Edward Gaitens, and Archie Hind.

Religious identity

But O. Douglas is concerned with another dimension of identity, both personal and communal, which links her with an older kind of writing, and that is religion. The motto of the city of Glasgow ("Let Glasgow flourish by the preaching of the Word and the praising of his Name") had been effectively curtailed to the first three words and "the prosperity of the city was no longer to be dependent on the preaching of the Word" (J. H. Muir 90). But O. Douglas champions the older spiritual outlook against the implicit materialism of the short form.

The Victorian-Edwardian period was an age of great and famous preachers who had their following and "were viewed rather as pop stars and footballers are in our own time" (Bradley *O Love* 17). Mr. Seton is presented as one of the "great.....company of the preachers", albeit one who neither sought nor received recognition. He preached

separate sermons in the morning and the afternoon; and although at an average length of twenty minutes they may have been comparatively brief, it is clear that, in common with his colleagues, he “would indeed have to spend many hours each week on the work of sermon preparation” (Blakey 61). In the Scottish Reformed Church, the sermon was the centre and climax of any diet of worship - “Preachers”, declared Calvin roundly, “are the mouthpieces of God” - and therefore had to be “carefully and prayerfully prepared to the point that it could be delivered fluently without recourse to reading” (Blakey 63). Mr. Seton “loved preaching” (238) and “preached without a note, leaning over the pulpit” (134). His sermons are a topic of conversation in the novel.

In this respect – her interest in preachers and preaching – O.Douglas may be compared and contrasted with the Kailyarders, the group of Scottish writers (Barrie, Crockett, and Ian Maclaren) who emerged, encouraged by Robertson Nicoll and his *British Weekly*, towards the end of the nineteenth century and portrayed “life as seen through the windows of the Free Kirk manse” (Blake 42). Two of them were themselves Free Kirk ministers and “the one who was not, James Matthew Barrie, adhered to the Free Church and dealt largely in scenes from clerical life” (Blake 18). Nicoll and the Kailyarders were targets of the English polemicist T.W.H.Crosland in *The Unspeakable Scot*. Mindful perhaps of his scarifying criticism, Elizabeth contests the idea, as conveyed by books and plays about Scotland, that “we....talk constantly about ministers” (181-2). But *The Setons* also conveys this impression. O.Douglas could almost have used Ian Maclaren’s title *Kate Carnegie and Those Ministers*, substituting the name of her own heroine for his. Where, however, “the location of kailyard is....in general rural (Campbell *Kailyard* 86)”, and “slightly out-of-date” (87), O.Douglas’s setting is urban and more or less contemporary. Here Maclaren himself may have paved the way or made the transition in his last book in the genre, *St. Jude’s*, published in the year of his death in 1907, in which his minister hero receives a call to a Glasgow church. O.Douglas’s aim is to show that the Church and the way of life associated with it have their place in the modern city too as formative of life and character. Her social values are conservative like those of the Kailyarders. In her, as in them, “churchgoing and Christian morality retain on paper the hold they were rapidly losing in real life” (Campbell *Kailyard* 87-8).

The longest chapter – and the fulcrum - of the book (chapter 10, 125-154) is given over to the longest day of the Setons' week, the Sabbath, when we see and hear Mr. Seton in action, the author fondly supplying much circumstantial detail which recalls the feel of the traditional Scottish Sunday. The morning service is preceded by the Fellowship meeting for young people in the hall, where amusingly inappropriate hymns are sung (128-131) – a passage which Robert Elliot, seemingly unaware of the affectionate irony, quotes (inaccurately) as typical of O.Douglas's "inane gentility" (Elliot 237). The Seton party proceed into the church and sit in the Manse pew, the pew for the minister's family, normally to the side of the pulpit and cushioned like all the others.

As the clock struck eleven the beadle carried the big Bible up to the pulpit, and descending, stood at the foot of the stairs until the minister had passed up. Behind came the precentor, distributing before he sat down slips with the psalms and hymns of the morning service, round the choir.

Mr.Seton entered the pulpit. A hush fell over the church. "Let us pray", he said. (*The Setons* 133)

A description follows of Mr. Seton's reverence in leading public prayer, then a part of his prayer. There is no fixed liturgy in the Free Church and in consequence "Mr. Seton had a litany of his own, and used phrases Sabbath after Sabbath which the people looked for and loved" (133). The hearts of the worshippers being thus prepared by these "preliminaries", Mr. Seton then "gave out his text":

The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king who made a marriage for his son, and he sent forth his servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, and they would not come. Again he sent forth other servants, saying, Behold, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and fatlings are killed, and all things are ready. *But they made light of it.* (134)

This is the text of a sermon which the Rev. John Buchan preached in May 1903. A version of it appeared in *The Christian Visitor*, the magazine of the John Knox Church, and Anna selected it as one of the seven sermons included in her memorial

volume of 1912 under the title of "The Reality of the Gospel" (217-225). She had the sermon to hand, then, and was familiar with it as she describes in *The Setons* the delivery and general content.

"He seemed utterly filled by the urgency of his message" (*The Setons* 134). The urgency of the message is reflected in the style of the printed sermon. Eschewing long involved sentences and turgid language, the preacher works with short simple sentences like a series of blows, varied to rhetorical effect with the occasional well-chiselled compound sentence. His language is consistently strong, clear and direct; and he has a fine ear or instinct, always under control, for prose-rhythms. As does his son, John, who, David Daniell suggests, acquired his "grasp...of prose rhythms...as much from the seventeenth-century masters as anyone" (111). Not "any one", surely, but his own father as he listened to him week by week in the pulpit. The Rev. John Buchan knows how to balance phrases and clauses to build to a dramatic climax:

It may seem a trifle to you now, when your cup is full, your sky clear, and multitudes of friends are about you; but when your strength fails under the attack of disease and your slumbering conscience is roused at last, and your feet begin to stumble among the dark mountains, you will find it no trifle to be slipping down the deep descent to perdition with no one to help or save. (Anna Buchan *John Buchan* 225)

This is classical pulpit oratory, but an oratory that does not draw attention to itself: "it was simple what he said: one felt that nothing mattered to the preacher but his message" (*The Setons* 135). Mr. Buchan had something to say – and knew how to say it. Arthur comments, "in the Church of England a man who could preach like your father would be a bishop" (144). What he said, however, was "simple" only in the sense that the sermon has one main point – not to make light of the gospel – elaborated and exemplified; the range and richness of biblical quotation and allusion, however, require a depth of knowledge in the hearers and a mature theological understanding.

Why does O. Douglas put this sermon, summarized, at the heart of her novel? What this sermon demonstrates is the belief system that largely prevailed in the Glasgow of

the time. Christianity provided a framework for society; the tenets preached and heard from the pulpit week by week formed the basis of personal and civic life. The novel draws a picture of the prevailing church culture; the sermon at the centre of the book points to its credal content and significance. And the novel in its own way is as “serious” and committed as the sermon: one calls to the other, or complements, as do father and daughter. Neither is “continually on the grin” (Anna Buchan *John Buchan* 218); both serve to reinforce the older view that the well-being of Glasgow is linked to the preaching of the Word and that the city will not flourish by material means only. The point is encapsulated in a telling illustration in the sermon:

The Holy Spirit is a reality. ‘Ah!’ says one, ‘we have never seen Him; He is a fiction of the priests.’ *Have you ever seen the electricity that propels the street-car?* (Anna Buchan *John Buchan* 220, my italics)

The flourishing Glasgow that had electrified its trams seven years before is still dependent for its continuing progress on unseen spiritual power.

What did these foolish men mean? Why should they act thus, and throw away the splendid opportunity? The parable gives the reason. They were well-to-do people. They had farms and oxen and merchandise. But, like the oxen, they looked down, satisfied with their fatness, oblivious to everything else. Their souls were so small that they could put them in to their money-bags. (Anna Buchan *John Buchan* 218)

(There may be an echo here of George MacDonald, in chapter 13 of *David Elginbrod*: “he took frae his soul, and pat intill his siller-bag” (61).)

Here is a caution against bourgeois complacency, a warning about seeking prosperity without spiritual wisdom. They made light “of the one thing needful, the thing that ought to concern them more than....merchandise” (Anna Buchan *John Buchan* 224).

From this angle, *The Setons* is a tract for the times, in its support of spiritual values and the role of the Church in a growing and developing Glasgow. Far from being “light literature” or fiction of the kind that the preacher deprecates— “a baseless

imagination that never had any being save in the mind of the author" (Anna Buchan *John Buchan* 219) –the novel is a portrait of a father and a way of life, remembered and valued and upheld. What he proclaims - "a religion that cleanses a neighbourhood" – she portrays: "It was a very bright bell she [Elizabeth] rang when she reached the top landing, and it was a very tidy woman, with a clean white apron, who answered it" (*The Setons* 60). The point is expanded on in O.Douglas's later, parallel novel, *Eliza for Common*, where Mr. Seton's duplicate, the Rev. Walter Laidlaw maintains:

It's not much good talking about better houses for the poor, until you can manage to put some self-respect into the people themselves. If you put your friend Mrs. Henry into one of those clean new houses she'd probably have it a pig-sty in a week. On the other hand, a decent, God-fearing woman can, in the worst slum, make her house shine like a good deed in a naughty world.

You must work from the heart out. (*Eliza for Common* 73-4)

Which is the task of the preacher and his role in the *polis*: Glasgow and its people, both rich and poor, will not truly flourish without the preaching of the Word. Where the Red Clydesiders sought to change social conditions and the economic system that produced them, Mr. Seton/Buchan labours to bring about a change of heart and outlook in the people by bringing a new spiritual principle to bear. He stands in the older, conservative tradition of Thomas Chalmers and the Free Church. Like the Free Church leaders who followed him, Chalmers was no narrow evangelical: among his many intellectual interests was the subject of political economy and "he wrote a substantial work on the subject" (Burleigh 315). But Chalmers believed that the Church "was specially called to save the working classes of Scotland from lapsing into heathenism and moral degradation" (Burleigh 321). During his own ministry in Glasgow from 1815 to 1823, he had been "appalled by the spiritual destitution of the masses of the people in his own parish" and "the remedy, he believed, must be sought in making the parochial system more effective in the cities" (320). To this end, new churches must be built and endowed in poor areas of the city – John Knox Church in the Gorbals was one of them – so that people deprived both materially and spiritually could come to know what Chalmers called the expulsive power of a new affection.

The light of the Gospel would drive out the old demons of dirt, drink, debauchery and dishonesty, and the respectable poor, endued now with the virtues of independence and self-help, would play their part in making Glasgow flourish and prosper. Mr. Seton fulfils his role by raising people's sights and offering them a transforming spiritual vision. "His eyes seem to see things beyond" (*The Setons* 145) and in visiting he never leaves the people "without reminding them that there is 'something ayont'" (238). He knows the pain of life and the realities of Glasgow but "he looks beyond and sees something so ineffably lovely – such an exceeding and eternal weight of glory – that he can go on with his day's work joyfullyI do believe that when he is toiling away in the Gorbals he never sees the squalor for thinking of the streets of gold" (*The Setons* 146). The sentiment is echoed by one of his parishioners: "he's seeing other things than our streets" (112). On him, as on Francis Thompson, "shines the traffic of Jacob's ladder/Pitched between Heaven and Charing Cross" (F.Thompson 327).

In 1997, an exhibition was held at the Mitchell Library on "Imagining a City: 20th Century Glasgow Writing". According to one section, "Major breakthroughs in Glasgow literature occurred in the 1960s and 1980s" and from then on, "writers have found the confidence to base their work in Glasgow but *extend its scope to infinity. They have looked at Glasgow and seen something beyond*" (my italics). In *The Setons*, published in 1917, the city of Glasgow is ultimately seen in the light of the city of God. The final chapter has as heading a quotation from Marcus Aurelius: "The Poet says dear City of Cecrops, wilt thou not say dear City of God?" For Cecrops, read Glasgow. If on an artistic level, Anna Buchan "imagines" Glasgow in Alasdair Gray's sense, on a spiritual level she subscribes to her father's vision.

Personal identity

Mr.Seton's sermon has another function in the novel: it serves to point up the ambiguity or ambivalence of Elizabeth's character and position. He preaches against "making light of it" but this is exactly what she is: light-hearted and "absurd" (her father's word). "Who is she?" - the question asked at the opening party (326) is the question she asks of herself in the novel. "Her name's Elizabeth Seton, and her father's the Thomsons' minister" (26): on one side of herself Anna/Elizabeth

identifies with her role and we see her in the novel conscientiously fulfilling her duties as the minister's daughter. But on another side of herself, she remains a free spirit with "impulsive ways" and "rapid heedless speech" (78).

O.Douglas wrote three novels about Glasgow ministers' daughters – or about aspects of her own background and upbringing at three different stages. In *Ann and her Mother* she recalls as a middle-aged woman her father's life and work and influence on her. In *Eliza for Common*, she depicts the young daughter in the context of the manse family, with an older brother at Oxford making his way in the world. But in *The Setons*, curiously, she pares the household down to father and young brother to whom at the age of twenty-eight she is a surrogate mother, writing mother and eldest brother out of the script in a parody of an eighteenth-century epitaph:

Sandy, the eldest, had died at Oxford in his last summer term, to the endless sorrow of all who loved him. His mother - that gentle lady - a few months later followed him, crushed out of life by the load of her grief....(49)

It may have been the full version of her father's sermon that gave Anna the idea of cutting her mother out of the novel. In a striking phrase, Mr. Buchan says of the spirit of lightness or irreverence that he is condemning, "it would pipe and dance upon a mother's grave" (Anna Buchan *John Buchan* 218). In the novel, her father, who has a boyish sense of humour himself, mildly remonstrates with Elizabeth for being light-heartedly irreverent. This interaction and flow of sympathy between them is part of the charm of the novel and could not have been sustained if Mrs Seton/Buchan (not a gentle lady) had been present too with her strong downward pull to practicality and common-sense. And older brother, John, too, as is made clear in *Eliza*, exercised a strong emotional pull.

But having (light-heartedly) cast off the oppressive presence of brother and mother, she is free to get her father in focus, or, rather, herself in relation to her father [Fig. 5]. She presents herself as the minister's daughter, literally stepping on to the stage – or stepping down out of her Romney portrait - for her first appearance when she stands up to sing at the Thomsons' party. Wendy Forrester thinks this is a structural fault, that the novel opens with the Thomson family at home rather than with Elizabeth

BY O. DOUGLAS

THE SETONS



Fig. 5: dust cover of Nelson edition of *The Setons* (1917)

directly (51); but O. Douglas' approach immediately casts Elizabeth in her role in the context of the church people. She is among them but not of them, as she moves around consciously helping and encouraging, soothing and complimenting and admiring, and making arrangements for church functions. The angle from which we are to see her is thus made clear at an early stage: she is her father's representative and right hand, a daughter of the manse, and specifically a daughter of the minister of the John Knox Church "down in the slums" (26). She is or is looked on as "an ideal minister's daughter" (188). But while conscientiously fulfilling her duties, she is aware in herself that her personality is not quite suited to her situation, which results in an element of wry humour and self-guying:

I'm sizes too large for the part. I have positively to uncoil myself like a serpent when I sit at bedsides. I'm as long as a day without bread, as they say in Spain. But I do try very hard to be nice to the church folk. My face is positively stiff with grinning when I come home from socials and such. An old woman said to me one day, 'A kirk is rale like a shop. In baith o'them ye've to humour yer customers!' (189)

'*Werena ma hert licht I wad dee*', she quotes (154). Is this a sudden revelation of the truth that the reader may have suspected? That Elizabeth's spirit would shrivel and die under the narrow constraints of her life if she did not have a light heart that could laugh at things and help her to rise above them? Which means, paradoxically, that her saving grace is the self-same quality that her father inveighs against in his sermon – lightness. "Elizabeth is just impudent enough to make her virtues tolerable to the reader" (Gamerman 190).

Throughout the book, Elizabeth endeavours to "make glad" but she thinks she herself may have "a heart too soon made glad" (154). That is, if she sees herself with a touch of self-dramatization or a hint of self-mockery as the Lady of Shalott, she also sees herself as My Last Duchess. On the one hand, she protests aloud that she is "a born spinster" (212) and "not in the least stifled "with her life (213) (while admitting to herself that she is "half-sick" of the restrictions of her life); but her knight, Arthur, appears and at the same time her life and everybody's life is "cracked across" (253) with the outbreak of the War. On the other hand, Sinclair Stevenson's young male

pride is offended by her indiscriminate joy and charm: “that she should be greatly interested in his work and ambitions was not surprising, but that her grey eyes should be just as shining and eager over the small success of a youth in the church was merely absurd” (180). It takes a woman, Mrs. Thomson, to recognize and commend her quintessential generosity of spirit: “She’s a grand praiser. Some folk make you lose conceit of your things, but she’s the other way” (113).

The unresolved tension or contradiction between the different sides of her nature gives an edge to these Scenes of (Glasgow) Clerical Life: she simultaneously identifies and distances herself, she is in them but not wholly of them. She knows she “has a taking way” (113) and can lighten up a room: the question Miss Hendry asks is the one, tongue-in-cheek, she asks herself: is she “too sweet to be wholesome, like a frosted tattie”? (113). The “mocking, inscrutable eyes” she turns on Arthur are turned to the reader as well.

The paradox is partly resolved by her father’s retirement and Arthur’s proposal of marriage. And presumably she would in the end have married Arthur and moved to a different kind of life. As it is, the novel has no real conclusion. The central character, highly self-conscious and constantly mocking her own attitudes and responses, is divided between the self that people think she is and the self that to her amusement she thinks she finds behind the scenes. Nor does the experience of love bring with it a liberating and unifying passion: “Well, you see, I’m a queer creature – affectionate but not very *loving*. I never think that ‘love’ is a word to use much if people are all well and things in their ordinary...” (259), as she explains to Arthur when they become engaged. Then the mirror in which she is looking at life is “cracked across” by the War. The author herself steps out of the frame and addresses us in the same apologetically sardonic tone as her heroine:

Personally I detest tales that end in the air. I like all the strings gathered up tidily in the last chapter and tied neatly into nuptial knots, so I should have liked to be able to tell you that Elizabeth became a “grateful” wife, and that she and Arthur Townshend lived happily and, in fairy-tale parlance, never drank out of an empty cup; and that Stewart Stevenson ceased to think of Elizabeth

(whom he never really approved of) and fell in love with Jessie Thomson, and married her one fine day in "Seton's kirk", and that Jessie's aspirations after refinement and late dinner were amply fulfilled. (253-4)

But the War here intervened and the author virtually admits defeat: "You know, of course, Gentle Reader, that there can be no end to this little chronicle?" (253) Factors intrinsic and extrinsic to the novel have combined to prevent an artistically satisfying end.

The outbreak of War

The typescript had been put aside at the outbreak of war until John encouraged Anna to take it up again after her younger brother Alistair was killed at Arras in 1917; and some of her own grief went into these last chapters. But this was not the original plan or intention. "It was supposed to begin in 1913, so the War came into it" (*Unforgettable Unforgotten* 155): rather, it began in 1913 *because* the War came into it and she dated it thus, or dropped the date into it, when she resumed writing and altered direction. Three-quarters of the way through the book, in chapter 15 in a novel of twenty chapters which till then had had no indication of date or time, the author rather obtrusively makes a point of telling the reader the year, preparing the way for her sudden announcement - or apostrophe - at the beginning of chapter 19: "You know that when a story begins in 1913, 1914 will follow....."(253). And a few lines on she directly gives the date of writing: "But, alas! As I write (May 1917) the guns still boom over there in France, and there is scarce a rift to be seen in the war-clouds that obscure the day". In what Martin Green calls one of her "finest structural devices" (136), the book, like the lives it portrays, is suddenly "cracked across" (253). The focus abruptly shifts and the tone changes markedly as she looks at the impact of the war on the family and community, while the War is continuing with no end in sight.

The question of identity, which in its various aspects has been the central theme of the novel, thus takes on a direct and urgent import. It is no longer theoretical but practical or, in her father's terms, pastoral. Elizabeth has earlier isolated the essential Glasgow

quality of “well-pleasedness” (164), which does not mean self-complacency, but, as in its biblical use, contentment, good-nature and whole-heartedness. Now this essential Glasgow quality becomes in effect a strategy to cope with the testing experience of War and bereavement. As Martin Green notes (136), the book, and especially the last two chapters, are about the sufferings of mothers. But to one mother “Evidently....’Galli Polly’ was a jovial sort of place, rather like Argyle Street on a Saturday night” (O. Douglas 262). Glasgow people, Elizabeth told her father, “gave a homely, cosy feeling to any part of the world they went to – even to the blasted, shell-strewn fields of Flanders and Gallipoli” (262). Similarly, O. Douglas perforce takes on another literary identity – that of a war novelist writing on the home front. As Martin Green observes, in this last part of her book she tells stories of great pathos, some of which are “worthy of Barrie” (136), to bring comfort to sorrowing mothers especially.

The question of her religious identity becomes more complex. In commenting on the different kinds of preacher, she reflects something of the divided attitude in the Churches over the War. The popular preacher, Mr. Johnston Christie, thumps the tub for war in patriotic fervour:

The Rev. Johnston Christie confined his usefulness to violent denunciations of the Kaiser from the pulpit every Sunday. He had been much impressed by a phrase used by a prominent Anglican bishop about the Nailed Hand beating the Mailed Fist – neat and telling he considered it, and used it on every possible occasion.
(270)

The prominent Anglican bishop was Winnington Ingram, then Bishop of London, who gave this message to the *Guardian* church newspaper:

Christ died on Good Friday for Freedom, Honour, and Chivalry, and our boys are dying for the same things....You ask for my advice in a sentence as to what the Church is to do. I answer
MOBILIZE THE NATION FOR A HOLY WAR. (Wilkinson 13)

On the other hand, the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Scots-born Randall Davidson, strove with a few other churchmen to keep a Christian conscience alive and gave a

ruling, generally regarded at the time as both authoritative and conspicuously sensible, that “the position of an actual combatant in our Army is incompatible with the position of one who has sought and received Holy Orders”. “The Archbishop of Canterbury says the clergy shouldn’t fight”, Elizabeth’s friend Kirsty Christie reminds her young minister husband, Andrew, in a vain attempt to stop him enlisting as a soldier rather than a chaplain (272). Andrew, however, rejects this line (“since when did an Anglican bishop direct your conscience and mine?”) and justifies his decision with reference to the idealistic principle of self-sacrifice: “Love and sacrifice – it’s the Way of the Cross, Kirsty. The ‘young Prince of Glory’ walked that way, and I, as one of His humblest ministers, will find my way by His footprints” (273).

Andrew is subscribing here to a dominant theological viewpoint. In the writings of British authors in the Victorian and Edwardian age, “we are presented with the fullest and deepest portrayal in Christian literature of the power of sacrifice” (Bradley *The Power of Sacrifice* 161). Even with the terrible loss of life in the early years of the War, this sense of the positive, redemptive power of sacrifice did not diminish. Henry Scott Holland, while admitting that for him the carnage in the trenches meant that “all chivalry, all generosity, all the glory of strife has gone”, yet went on to say

Right in the heart of hell, men have found a strange heaven. They have been nearer to the heart and mind of Christ than they had ever attained to in the life of peace. They have known what it was to give away their hope of life out of love of others.....they have been initiated into the secret of sacrifice, into the inner meaning of life through death. (qtd. in Bradley *The Power of Sacrifice* 199)

In the novel, this view is echoed by Elizabeth writing to Arthur –

To die for one’s country is a great privilege – God knows I don’t say that lightly, for any day I may hear that you or Alan have died that death – and to those boys the honour has been given in the very springtime of their days.

Most of us part from our lives reluctantly: they are taken from us, and we go with shivering, shrinking feet down to the brink of the River, but those sons of the morning throw their lives from them

and *spring* across. I think God will look very kindly at our little boys. (267) -

and by Kirsty championing her husband against her father, the Rev. Johnston Christie:

Yes, Andrew's a fool – a fool for Christ's sake, and you and I can't even begin to understand what that means in the way of nobility and courage and sacrifice, because we were born crawling things. Andrew has wings, and my only hope is that they will be strong enough to lift me with him. (273)

Mr. Seton sees it as his task to offer pastoral comfort when he visits the Thomson family. His successor, conventional and well-meaning, had preceded him and “clapped Robert on the back and told him he was proud of him, and proud of the great Cause he was going to fight for” (282). Mr. Seton does not attempt any theodicy in the face of Mrs. Thomson's protests at the meaningless loss of young life, or speculate about the life hereafter - Elizabeth had already, in a letter to Arthur, indicated the limitations of preaching in this respect (266). His words are of “healing balm” and reassurance. The last paragraphs of the book have a homiletical ring about them (do they come from father or daughter?) and Mrs. Thomson “took heart of comfort” (288).

Elizabeth herself, all self-consciousness forgotten, seems to find herself and her personal identity. She becomes (like her alter ego Anna Buchan) the district visitor for the Soldiers' and Sailors' Families Association:

To mothers who lost their sons she was a welcome visitor. They never felt her out of place, or an embarrassment, this tall golden-haired creature, as she sat on a wooden chair by the kitchen fire and listened and understood and cried with them. (261)

She suffers loss herself when a brother, Alan, like Anna's brother Alistair, is killed in action. His death is recorded with moving restraint:

It was in April that he fell, and at Etterick the blackbirds were
 “shouting” as the telegraph boy – innocent messenger of woe –
 wheeled his way among the larches. (280)

Thus the various aspects of identity which were the central concerns of the earlier part of the novel – national, literary, religious, personal - receive an unexpected resolution.

If *The Setons* began as portrait of manse family life in the halcyon days of Edwardian Glasgow, it ended by dealing with the impact of the War on the community as the War continued – that is to say, with an immediacy of response, the emotional wounds (including the author’s own) still fresh. Her next novel, written in three months between the Armistice and the Treaty of Versailles, seems at first to be a piece of light relief. Or it could represent a puckish reaction to the presence of John, who, sharing a study desk with her at this time, was engaged on his history of the South African forces in the war. Under his “oppressive literary regard” (Crawford 61), she withdrew into a charmed fairy circle. But there could be a further, artistically serious reason for her choice of subject. As Arthur leaves to enlist near the end of *The Setons*, Elizabeth sings to him “a little song out of a fairy tale – a sort of good-bye song” (214), expressing the hope that “all the gallant, kind, and true” will hear the fairy drum and “after many a fight and fall/Come home at last to fairy-land”. *Penny Plain* may be her version of a land fit for heroes.

Chapter 3
Scottish Fairy:
Penny Plain

In *Penny Plain* [Fig. 6], O.Douglas, in pursuit once more of a non-materialist sense of self, turns again to the supernatural but in a lighter vein. A soul naturally Christian, Anna Buchan had yet been aware since early childhood of another dimension of being, the fairy realm. The fairies, she claimed whimsically, came to her christening (*Olivia in India* 22). Now through multiple allusions and intertextual references they come into this her next book.

This new trope was first indicated in *The Setons*. Like the author, Elizabeth had been brought up on the Bible and the Shorter Catechism “varied by an abundance of poetry and fairy tales” (174). Aunt Alice, she recognized, intended to be “a sort of fairy godmother” (260) in bringing Arthur and her together. “She told me you were tall – like a king’s own daughter; that your hair was as golden as a fairy tale, and your eyes as grey as glass”, Arthur reports (212). Elizabeth would like Arthur to stay on in the Glasgow manse “after the fashion of princes in fairy-tale stories seeking their fortunes” (210), but instead as he goes off to the War sings him her good-bye song “out of a fairy tale” about how fairy songs and fairy gold quickly fade away and we “go back to realms of working day”, though

“all the gallant, kind , and true
 May happily hear the fairy drum.....
 [and] come home at last to fairy-land”. (215)

Elizabeth is linked in soul with the heroine of *Penny Plain*, Jean Jardine, the connection and identification being made clear by use of a common comparison. Elizabeth the parson’s daughter is first introduced to us as looking like a Romney (*The Setons* 25) while Jean reminds Pamela Reston “a good deal” of “Romney’s ‘Parson’s Daughter’ ” (*Penny Plain* 37). But where the tall golden-haired Elizabeth is a fairy queen, Jean is small and slight and elf-like. If each heroine in turn “seems a wishful projection of the author herself” (Gamerman 191), then the same soul is

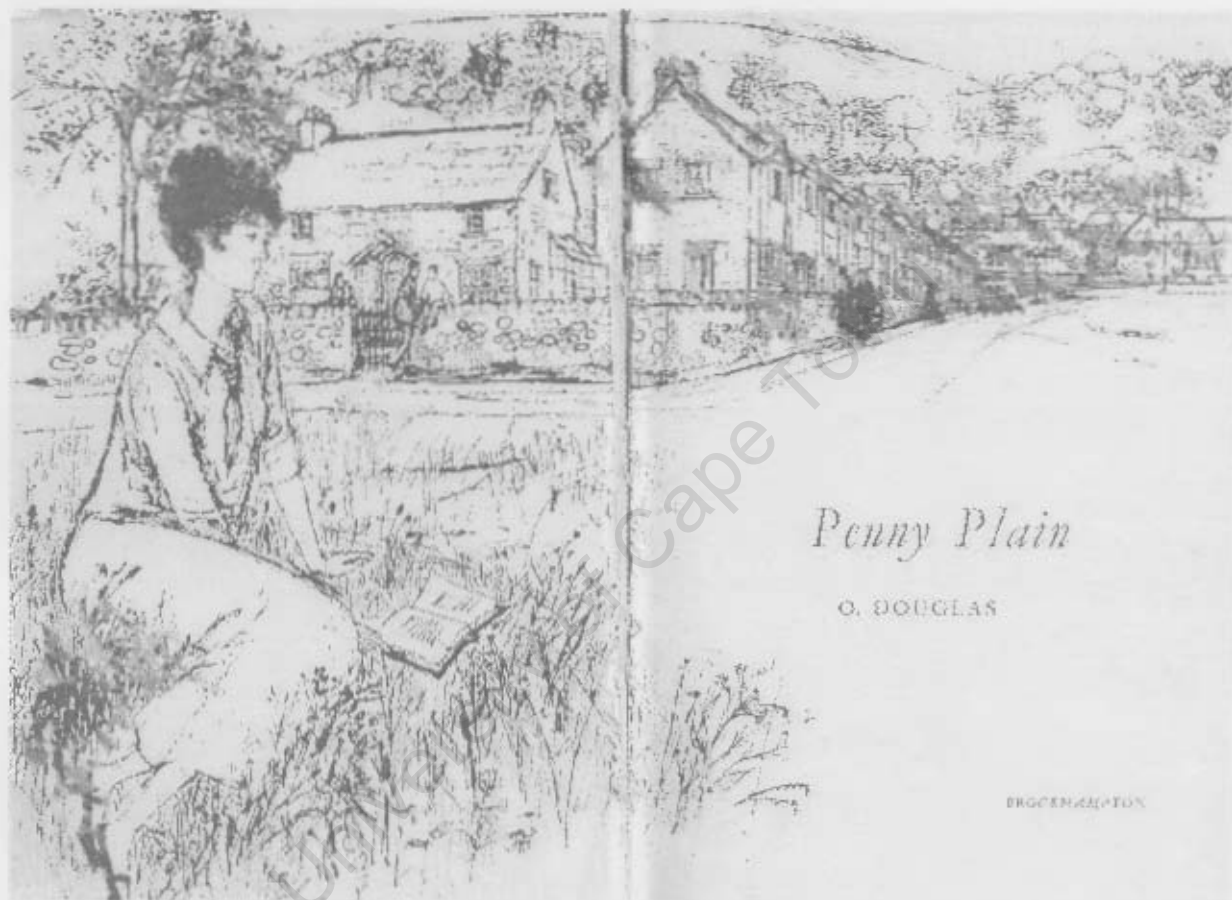


Fig. 6: Frontispiece of 1962 Brockhampton Twentieth Century Classics edition of
Penny Plain

clothed or expresses itself in a different body. This is the “shapeshifting” characteristic of fairies (Harpur 7).

While fairies remained peripheral in the earlier novel, in *Penny Plain* the theme is fully exploited as structural device, pattern of imagery, and repeated motif. The story itself is “all rather like a fairy-tale” (238). In the Border town of Priorsford, the young girl, Jean Jardine, has been left in straitened circumstances but responsible for her two younger brothers and a third child, nicknamed Mhor. An English aristocrat, the Hon. Pamela Reston, takes rooms next door and befriends the family. Her brother, Lord Bidborough, “Biddy”, visits and falls in love with Jean, but Jean rejects him as being too far above her. However, consequent upon a spontaneous act of kindness to a stranger, Jean is left a fortune; and when she meets Biddy again in Stratford, as contrived by Pamela who is keen on the match, she accepts him. After a whirlwind marriage, she goes as mistress to his ancient ancestral seat in England and enters into her fairyland.

For Martin Green, this is a “novelette, a story which overtly repudiates all claims to seriousness, by offering a wish-fulfilment of a blatant kind” (180). Here speaks the Leavisite with a typically cavalier disregard for the logic of genre. If the book is a version of fairy story, the element of wish-fulfilment is entirely appropriate. And O.Douglas may not have intended her book to be serious, but to be a *jeu d’esprit*, a light-hearted spoof. Written in three months in 1919, the book was published in 1920 when the mood was one of relief and temporary escapism (“It hardly bears thinking of yet – the War and the fighters” 62). The author means her readers to enjoy her novel with a willing suspension of disbelief as a modern fairy story for adults who needed something to beguile them in the immediate aftermath of the War.

A pastiche of fairy, an enchantment of the quotidian, an adult reworking of the nursery tales that the Buchan children had been brought up on – this view will emerge clearly when the book is placed against the appropriate literary background, which is not Mrs. Oliphant and the Findlaters and the nineteenth century tradition of fictional realism where Martin Green sets it but the (Scottish) tradition of Fairy, Folk and Fantasy.

Fairy

“Situated somewhere between angels and the human race”, fairies are known as “the People of Peace or Quietness, the Good People, the People of the Hollow Hills, the Shining Ones” (McOwan 579). As a child, Anna Buchan spent summer holidays in the Borders, wandering over the hills which were traditionally regarded as populated by fairies.

*We were two children, you and I,
Unkempt, unwatched, far-wandering, shy
Trudging from morn with early load,
While Faery lay adown the road -*

as John wrote in the commonplace book he presented to her, going on to say

*You in such lore were wondrous wise,
My princess of the shining eyes
(Unforgettable, Unforgotten 31).*

Anna Buchan’s connatural feeling for the world of fairy was in large measure due to the formative influence of her father. Mr. Buchan knew the classical texts of Hans Andersen and Grimm and modern writers like George MacDonald and would read them aloud to his children (*Unforgettable, Unforgotten* 54). But he also invented stories and characters: “sometimes he came to tea with us in the nursery and made believe there was a fairy called Annabel Lee in the teapot, carrying on conversations with her that sent eerie thrills down our several spines”. He knew, too, his Celtic mythology: “From father we heard of Angus the Subtle, Morag of the Misty Way, and the King of Errin, who rides and rides and whose road is to the End of Days” (*Olivia in India* 111). In his poem included in Anna’s memorial volume, John says of him “he saw the Good Folk dance” (Anna Buchan *John Buchan* 25).

The influence of her father must have been strengthened by an experience in her early adult life. Her friend the artist Katherine Cameron had had a solo exhibition in

Glasgow in late 1900, when she “made an excursion into the realm of fancy” and, as the art critic H.C.Marillier observed in *The Art Journal*, “old ballads and fairy mysteries furnish most of her themes” (Bill Smith 66). In 1902, following the success of the exhibition, the artist was asked by the publishers T.C. and E.C.Jack to illustrate a book for children, called *In Fairyland* and containing a number of familiar fairy tales edited by Louey Chisholm. Katherine Cameron had exhibited a miniature portrait of Anna Buchan at the annual exhibition of the Royal Scottish Academy in 1901; now she asked her to sit as one of the models for the illustrations of fairies. The same set of female features, closely resembling the photograph of Anna Buchan taken about this time (Fig. 3, opp. p.35), appears in *In Fairyland*. Louey Chisholm, as she explains in her introduction, had asked for “real” fairy pictures, “the kind of coloured pictures that make you feel in fairyland”. Not only during the sitting, but also seeing herself in the published book in the role of various traditional fairies, must have made Anna Buchan feel imaginatively in fairyland.

Some of the stories and scenes depicted in the book seem to have their counterpart in the novels or reflect aspects of her own life. For example, “the golden-haired Queen of Fairyland” (58) comes in a chariot drawn by winged mice and takes Tom Thumb away with her to make him well. Elizabeth Seton, casting herself in the role of Fairy Queen and diffusing sweetness and light wherever she goes, looks after her small brother, Bluff, and this surrogate single motherhood becomes a recurrent motif in the novels. Similarly, the last story, *The Wild Swans* (without illustration) deals with sibling relationships. Elise has been separated from her brothers whom she loved so much. They have been turned into swans, but Elise can save them if certain conditions are fulfilled. She succeeds, almost at the cost of her life. The love – and loss – of brothers is the emotional centre of the early novels, just as in real life two of Anna’s brothers died and the third, John, grew away from her and finally married.

There was originally another daughter in the Buchan family, Violet, who, although so much younger, was close to Anna but died young. The first story in *In Fairyland* is about two sisters, Anne and Fatima. Fatima has foolishly married the giant Bluebeard. When he is preparing to behead her, she calls to Anne, “Anne, sister Anne, run to the top of the tower and see if my brothers are in sight” (10). Anne/Anna is depicted on the top of the tower, gazing along the dusty road that ran by the shore of the deep blue

sea, watching for her brothers who arrive in time to save their sister. Portraying her thus in relation to absent brothers, this picture can be seen as psychologically significant for the novels. Where previously the family members had been united, now they are separate; and, deprived of the presence of her brothers, Anna's life lacked an emotional centre. Hence, the expression on the face here and in the other pictures – a sort of wistfulness, as she looks through magic casements on to fairy lands forlorn. In the novels, as John commented, Anna is always remembering, looking back to a shared family life. Her authorial identity was being formed.

But another story (52) is about a princess, depicted on the front cover of the book, who lived in a turret, "happy all day long", until she guilelessly admitted a man. Even before she opened the book, Anna Buchan was looking at herself as a virginal princess happily ensconced in a tower, just a few years after John had addressed her as "My princess of the shining eyes". The fairies taught the princess in the tower to sing and dance and play a fairy harp. But as Anna notes ruefully in her autobiography:

It is a misfortune for a minister's daughter to be entirely without music. Although I had had music lessons practically all my life I was no use at playing accompaniments and I couldn't sing a note. At social meetings specially, I felt my shortcomings sadly.
(*Unforgettable Unforgotten* 73)

There is then a hidden or inside irony in the first appearance of Elizabeth in "The Setons". She stands by the piano at the Thomson's party and "spoke to her accompanist, then, clasping her hands behind her, she threw back her head with a funny little gesture and sang" (25).

She sings of the mysterious figure of Jock the Piper who leads the children

fast and far

Down the hill and o'er the sea,

Through the sunset gates afar

To the land of Ought-to-be! (25)

Perhaps Anna saw herself in her writing as piping something of the same sort of fairy tune, conveying her readers not to Barrie's Never-Never land but to her father's land of Ought-to-be where the ordinary and commonplace are transformed and

glamourized. The illustration to the story of Rumpelstiltskin (Chisholm 173), depicting her as the poor miller's beautiful daughter who had to spin gold out of straw, could be viewed as the key to her art. She takes the most ordinary, everyday doings and makes of them something life-enhancing. Like her father, she is fully aware of the pain of life but is able to incorporate it into a larger spiritual overview. As with all fairy stories, those in *In Fairyland* have dark elements – erotic and violent – but Anna is portrayed as the Good Fairy, pure and unsullied, a thing not of earth, like the little mermaid depicted on page 62 who, bearing Anna's features, "suffered and endured" and so "raised herself to be a spirit of the air" and could therefore "strive for an immortal soul". Ariel and the Shorter Catechist are here met together.

Folk Tradition

Penny Plain, then, had its origins in Anna Buchan's upbringing and her imaginative experience as a young woman of fairyland and shapeshifting. But, further, through her father Anna was introduced to the Scottish folk tradition overlapping with fairy, which also helped to form and nourish her imagination:

Sometimes, laying books aside, he told us old tales that he had heard from his mother, who in turn had heard them from hers – of the Red Etain of Ireland who lived in Belligand, and who stole the King's daughter, the king of fair Scotland; and the pathetic tale of the bannock that went to see the world, with its cynical end: "Ah, well! We'll all be in the tod's hole in less than a hunner years".

(*Olivia in India* 111-2)

Folk literature is defined by David Buchan as "the literature of traditional culture, that is, the literature perhaps created by but certainly transmitted by word of mouth rather than written or printed document; it is the literature of tradition as distinct from the literature of print" (David Buchan 1).

In Scotland, there has been a long-running interaction of high and low literatures; in fact, many of the best Scottish writers have been

steeped in folk tradition. The medieval and early Renaissance writers show the kind of acquaintance with traditional material that one finds in other contemporary literatures, not surprisingly when one bears in mind that one of them, Sir David Lindsay, used to entertain his charge, the young James V, with the folktale of "The Red Etin" (David Buchan 12)

- which is the selfsame story with which, Anna tells us, her father entertained his children. By alluding to folk material and to some extent deploying it, Anna Buchan has positioned herself in the Scottish literary tradition which has remained rooted in the popular and demotic. Folk literature or oral tradition "has been the literature of the bulk of the Scottish people" (David Buchan 2), that is, before the days of universal literacy; and "it is often the folk tradition which has maintained the language and other distinctive expressions of the indigenous culture" (9). This is of significance in a small nation like Scotland which has "stood in a minority relation to a larger and....been strongly affected by the language and mores of the majority culture" (9).

Two changes occurred in this folk tradition in the nineteenth century, after the industrial revolution, and the Buchan family were on the cusp of them. First, "word of mouth tradition had many of its functions taken over by print, writing and 'official' education" (David Buchan 1); and with the advent of mass media in the twentieth century, live story telling as an art and pastime virtually disappeared. The Rev. John Buchan seems to have been an inspired teller and inventor of tales. The stories he heard from his mother as a child in the eighteen-fifties he passed on twenty to thirty years later to his own children, who must have been therefore almost the last generation to appropriate this oral inheritance. By mentioning such stories and referring to them, Anna Buchan aligns herself with her national folk tradition. Secondly, in the nineteenth century traditional material and practice devolved from adults to children: "the most complex of the narrative genres, the Marchen or wonder tales, became relegated to 'nursery tales' or, outside tradition, were prettified and rewritten into children's fairytales" (David Buchan 4). It was as nursery tales that the Buchan children imbibed their folk-lore; but it is the contention of this chapter that Anna, for amusement and enjoyment, took such nursery tales of the kind her father must have told and reworked them as the adult fiction of *Penny Plain*, in so doing

providing another variant on the theme (folk literature is characterized by multiformity) and bringing “low” and “high” culture, oral and printed, together in a new way.

One such tale supplies the main template, but there are also a few subsidiary ones. For example, after the opening panorama of Priorsford our view finally focuses on *The Rigs*. “It was a queer little house, and a queer little family lived in it” (8), which, if not *The Old Woman who Lived in a Shoe*, suggests *Snow White* and the Seven Dwarfs. Jean, a single girl, looks after her younger brothers and one day her prince comes along....Before that happens, however, their miserly and mercenary landlord, Peter Reid, who is unknown to them, arrives from the big city with the intention of turning them out. But he is softened and charmed by a spontaneous act of natural kindness on the part of Jean. Here the story resonates with “*The Well at the World’s End*”, which as children the Buchans would go looking for or their father would tell them about. In the version given by David Buchan (23-5), the king’s daughter is bonny and good-natured and does an act of kindness to a pony who takes her on her errand to the Well, where, looking down, she encounters three scabbed men’s heads. They ask her to wash and dry them, which she does readily. In return, they predict for her great riches. The story ends with a young prince coming and marrying the king’s daughter. *Sae ye see, bairns*.....and the moral is of course kindness. “The tenderest corner of Jean’s tender heart was given to shabby people” (44) and she is hospitable to Peter Reid whose appearance belies him, even presenting him with a rare song-book from which she has just sung for him a song his mother used to sing. Peter Reid is dying and has resolved to leave his fortune to “the first person who does something for me without expecting any return” (23). Jean having innocently fulfilled the conditions receives the great riches and in due course her prince comes and marries her.

But the book mainly uses *Cinderella* and the analogy is made explicit in chapter 18. On a day when everything has gone wrong, Mrs. Duff-Whalley and her daughter Muriel, who are cast as the Ugly Sisters, arrive at *The Rigs* and take in “Jean’s poor little home-made frock, the shabby slippers, the dull fire, the depressed droop of her hostess’s shoulders” (157). They remark that they had not seen her at the *Tweedies’* dance or the *Olivers’* theatricals, and Jean replies, “I hadn’t a dress that was good enough, and I didn’t want to be at the expense of hiring a carriage” (158). Like “great

weights crushing life and light out of her”, they are making her even more miserable when she hears Pamela’s voice and “it seemed to her that everything was transformed” (161). Pamela has already played the good fairy, brightening Jean’s life and changing her dress sense. Now she conjures up the prospect of parties and a good time in London.

“You’re a kind of fairy godmother to this little Cinderella. Only Jean must remember that it isn’t very nice to come back to drudgery after an hour or two at the ball,” and she [Mrs. Duff-Whalley] gave an unpleasant laugh.

“Ah, but you forget your fairy tale,” said Pamela. “Cinderella had a happy ending. She wasn’t left to the drudgery, but reigned with the prince in the palace.”

“It’s hardly polite, surely,” Muriel put in, “to liken poor little Jean to a cinder-witch.”

Jean laughed and held out a foot in a shabby slipper. “I’ve felt like one all day. It’s been such a grubby day, no kitchen range on, no hot water, and Mrs. McCosh actually out of temper. Now you’ve come, Pamela, it will be all right – but it has been wretched. I hadn’t the spirit to change my frock or put on decent slippers, that’s why I’ve reminded you all of Cinderella...”. (162)

Mrs. Duff-Whalley had her eye on Lord Bidborough for Muriel, but Pamela contrives that Jean should get him and the Ugly Sisters are left gnashing their teeth (though the author, as sympathetic and compassionate as her persona Jean, pauses to show their vulnerability and later, through the eyes of shrewd old Mrs Hope, lets us see Mrs. Duff-Whalley in a more positive light). Cinderella marries her prince; Penny Plain’s world is transformed. “The world was plain before I knew him, a poor penny world; but soon it was all covered with romance” – Stevenson thus gives the gist of the matter in the essay from which the novel takes its title, *A Penny Plain and Twopence Coloured* (Robert Louis Stevenson *Memories and Portraits* 138).

A variant of Cinderella, from Scottish folk lore, also seems to inform O.Douglas’s book. Rashie-coat was a king’s daughter who ran away from home to avoid being

married to someone she did not care for and entered into domestic service in another king's house. On Sunday when the family went to church, she was left to cook the dinner, but a fairy appeared to supplant her and told her to go to church too in her golden coat. The king's son saw her and fell in love with her, but she left "afore the kirk scaled" and he could not find out who she was. The next week, the same thing happened, though this time she was told to wear her coat made of the feathers of the birds of the air. The third week, when she wore her coat of "rashes" or rushes and her slippers, the king's son rose to follow her out of church. She got away but left behind one of her slippers.....And the story ends in the familiar way. (David Buchan 31-33). Significantly, it is not a ball that the fairy enables the kitchen skivvy to attend but church. The fairies are in the service of religion.

In *Penny Plain* the fairies, the Shining Ones, have souls, and the spiritual and the enchanted are as one. Biddy self-enacts "a fairy story called Rigmarole in Search of a Soul, which, I remember, was quite beautiful, but can't lay hands on anywhere". (125). He has no need to find it: his story is unfolding in *The Rigs* as he finds his soul and Jean. Pamela too has come to Priorsford in search of her soul and finds her lost soul-mate, Lewis Elliot. Likewise Peter Reid has come to make his soul before it is required of him. The stories intertwine. At one point, Pamela misunderstands and wonders if Jean will marry Lewis Elliot of Laverlaw, which "would be very nice and fairy-tale-ish" (81). But that would be to wander into the wrong fairy tale: Laverlaw, "indescribably green", "wears the fairy livery" of Thomas the Rhymer, while Jean is predestined (this being a Calvinist fairy tale) to be Cinderella.

Fantasy

If Jean is Cinderella or Rashiecoat, Pamela is playing out her Scottish fantasy story, *The Gold of Fairnilee*. The author, whom she leaves unnamed, was Andrew Lang, the Border belle-lettrist who figured prominently on the London literary scene up to his death in 1912 and produced in the eighteen-nineties and nineteen-hundreds a series of Fairy Books, mostly named after a colour (Blue, Red, Green, Grey, Yellow, Pink, Violet, Crimson, Brown, Olive, Orange, Lilac). Elizabeth Seton shows her familiarity with Lang in a letter to Arthur:

“This has been a nasty day”, she wrote. “The rain has never ceased – dripping *yellow* rain. (By the way, did you ever read in Andrew Lang’s *My Own Fairy Book* about the Yellow Dwarf who bled yellow blood? Isn’t it a nice horrible idea?)” (*The Setons* 229)

In chapter 2 of *Penny Plain* Pamela Reston, explaining in a letter to her brother why she has left London for Priorsford and the Borders where their mother came from, recalls

a story we liked when we were children, *The Gold of Fairnilee*. Do you remember how Randall (sic), carried away by the fairies, lived contented until his eyes were touched with the truth-telling water, and when Fairyland lost its glamour and he longed for the old earth he had left, and the changes of summer and autumn, and the streams of Tweed and his friends? (19)

Lang’s story describes the Borders home of the Kers of Fairnilee, where, after his father’s death at Flodden, young Randal grows up with his widowed mother and an adopted girl, Jeanie, who was brought back accidentally from a reprisal cattle raid on an English holding. One day Randal explores a fairy wishing well over the hills and does not come back. Years of famine fall on the land, and much of the family wealth is sold by the Lady Ker to support her people. After seven years, Jeanie revisits the wishing well and through courage and Christian faith wins Randal back from the fairies. He has with him a bottle of magic liquid that can descry all truth through concealment. This accidentally proves the means of saving the family fortunes, for it uncovers the legendary treasure trove of Fairnilee. Randal and Jeanie marry and the story concludes with their children “playing on the banks of Tweed and rolling down the grassy slope to the river, to bathe on hot days” (Manlove 138-9).

Deriving much of its power “from its foundation in Scottish legend and folk-tale”, Lang’s story is “rooted in at least three Scottish traditional ballads, ‘Lord Randal’, ‘Thomas the Rhymer’ and ‘Tam Lyn’” (Manlove 137). Pamela sees *The Gold of Fairnilee* as connecting with her own story. London, her fairyland, has lost its allure, and finding, deep down within her, that she is now “full of seriousness” (19), she means to possess her soul: “I’m not all froth, but, if I am, Priorsford will reveal it”

(20). Emphasising “reality over false glamour”; Lang’s story “is set amidst the hard realities of sixteenth-century Border life” (Manlove 139). *Penny Plain* has a similar setting and aim. As with *The Gold of Fairnilee*, “joy is to be gained.....only through loss and struggle” (Manlove 139) and the treasure earned through courage and faith. Pamela, after losing the love of her life for twenty years (though it is she who has been in Fairyland, not he) finds him again. Her brother, who has been restlessly travelling the world, comes home to himself. And Jean (possibly named after Lang’s heroine), having courageously borne her responsibilities in limited circumstances, inherits a fortune and marries Lord Bidborough.

The point is that “Fairyland and our world are not entirely separated” (Manlove 140). “Fairnilee” and “Fairyland” are similar names: Andrew Lang tells us that “Fairnilee” means “the Fairies’ Field”. Where Lady Ker, Randal’s mother, thinks that Christianity forbids her to entertain the existence of fairies, Jean Jardine, protégé though she may be of her strictly Calvinistic Great-Aunt Allison, is ready to admit the fairies into her world. O. Douglas is asking us quizzically, do you believe in fairies?

This is the same question put to us by James M. Barrie in *Peter Pan*, another influence or intertextual referent which O. Douglas humorously draws our attention to. Pamela writes to her brother:

I forgot to tell you that for some dark reason the Jardines call their cat Sir J.M. Barrie.

I asked why, but got no satisfaction.

“Well, you see, there’s Peter [the dog],” Mhor said vaguely.

Jock looked at the cat and observed obscurely, “It’s not a sentimental beast either.”(*Penny Plain* 38)

As Barrie moved from his Kailyard writing on Thrums to metropolitan fairy or fantasy literature, so likewise in a more modest way did O. Douglas, though with her the locations of town and country are reversed. After the solid, homely world of Glasgow, she creates something more whimsical set in the Dreamthorpe that is Priorsford. Like Barrie, O.Douglas lifts the curtain and we make of the story what we will. “When you’re poor you’ve got to dream” (51), Jean explains apologetically after

imagining how she “would creep about like a beneficent Puck” (50) if she inherited a fortune. And when that is what happens, she thinks she is “bound to wake up and find I’ve dreamt it” (165). But no, it has “really” happened. Is this fact, or fantasy like *Peter Pan* (“in part a wish-fulfilment fantasy” Manlove 146), or fairy-story? “It was told me I should be rich by the fairies”: the line from Shakespeare’s *The Winter’s Tale* provides the heading to chapter 18.

Of the twenty-five chapters of the novel, thirteen have headings from Shakespeare. As Manlove observes, while “*Peter Pan* has particular affinities with Shakespeare’s ‘dream-comedies’ *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* and *The Tempest*” (145), the pattern (of *Peter Pan*) is seen also in the pastoral comedy *As You Like It* (144). If Jean has something of Puck in her, Biddy has “more than a streak of Ariel” (*Penny Plain* 246). But they are also Rosalind and Orlando and the climax of the novel comes appropriately at an evening performance of *As You Like It* in Stratford where Jean has the room marked “Rosalind” in the Shakespeare Hotel. They decide to be married at once, now in the springtime, “the real ‘pretty ring-time’ ” because “it’s the way they did in the Golden World” (240).

Locating her novel, then, in something of the same world as Barrie, O. Douglas also follows him in other ways. As Wendy becomes a mother to the lost boys and keeps house for them, so Jean at age twenty-three is head of the household and looks after her brothers David and Jock and the outsider who is the youngest member of the “queer little family” (*Penny Plain* 8), Gervase Taunton, known as “the Mhor” (Gaelic for “the great one”). The Mhor is the Peter Pan of the story (it would have been too obvious to have named him Peter, so the name is given to his dog instead): “he was a handsome child, with an almost uncanny charm of manner, and a gift of make-believe that made his days one long excitement” (9). Like his namesake, he is “the quintessence of child” and “a current of joy at the heart of life” (Manlove 147). And it is through “the plastic medium of a child’s openly unconscious mind” (Manlove 150) that adult readers become part of a dream world. When we first meet Mhor, he is captain of a sea-faring vessel, sitting on an upside-down table; in chapter 14, the same room has become a wood near Athens and he is not only Bottom but combines “in his versatile person all the other parts” (118). The same odd or “different” little boy who features in the earlier novels (the significantly named Peter in *Olivia in India* has a

sort of familiar spirit, a fairy who lives up the chimney, and Buff in *The Setons* has a witch-like passion for cats) comes into his own in this novel as the high priest of the mysteries connecting with the world of fairy or imagination. Auspiciously finding six red puddock-stools, the Mhor proceeds to “make a fairy garden for Jean” (*Penny Plain* 46), thus foreshadowing and leading us to believe the fairy tale ending of the novel.

If Lang and Barrie have clearly left their imprint on O. Douglas, there may be yet other more general literary influences, among them George MacDonald, who was brought up on Calvinism and became a minister but, his outlook having broadened, lost his charge and had to survive by his pen. He wrote a number of fantasies for children, *At the Back of the North Wind* (1871), *The Princess and the Goblin* (1872), and *The Princess and Curdie* (1883), as well as a book of shorter fairy stories, *Dealings with the Fairies* (1867) which is presumably what the Rev. John Buchan read from to his children. Like Mr. Buchan, MacDonald’s gaze “is more towards the world that lies beyond this one” (Manlove 84). But he had also drawn many of his ideas on the imagination and the fairy-tale from the German Romantic writer, Novalis. “Our life is no dream, but it should and will perhaps become one”, MacDonald quotes in the final chapter of both of his adult fantasy books, *Phantastes* (1858) and *Lilith* (1895). For Novalis, the dream was the true form of reality and “everything is a fairy-tale”. But MacDonald “differs from Novalis vitally, in that for him this vision is not wonderful in itself, but because it is immediately shot through with the divine” (Manlove 85). For MacDonald, “the workings of the imagination are directly those of God inside man” and in this way, “the expressions of the imagination, which MacDonald calls fairy-tales, have God as their true author” (85). The only way to understand a fairy-tale is “‘unconsciously’ like a child, who lets it work freely on him” and “takes everything as it comes” (85 and 86). While Anna Buchan is not of a philosophical cast of mind herself, MacDonald seems to have spoken for her and explained how she can hold together Fairy and Faith. And Jean, like a child in age and appearance and response, takes everything as it comes and so enters into her Kingdom. *Penny Plain*, like *Phantastes*, could have been subtitled, “A Faerie Romance for Men and Women”.

O. Douglas' work can also be viewed against the broader background of the Scottish Celtic revival, which reached its apogee in the 1890s, though her explicit Christianity would set her slightly apart. There had been a growth of interest in folk-lore and traditional fairy-stories and between 1860 and 1862 John Francis Campbell published the four volumes of his *Popular Tales from the West Highlands*, including versions of the stories the Buchan children had heard from their father. The focus of the Celtic revival was on recovering the myths and legends of the pre-Christian period and Patrick Geddes' briefly-lived "Evergreen" magazine of 1895-6 had no specifically Christian dimension. The other leading writer was "Fiona Macleod" alias William Sharp whose "own religious sympathies were shown in the 'Pagan Review' which he founded in 1892, and to whose one and only issue he was the sole contributor" (Bradley *Celtic* 141). This may seem far removed from O. Douglas; but Pamela evokes the spirit of Fiona Macleod when she says the lilt in Jean's voice "makes one think of winds over heathery moorlands, and running water" (*Penny Plain* 37); and Sharp's nature writing faintly echoes in the repeated description of Jean as a "wood-elf" (12) - "rather small and brown, very light and graceful" (37), dressed on an "enchanted" evening in Stratford in "a white frock, the merest wisp of a frock.....with a touch of vivid green, and a wreath of green leaves for the golden-brown head" (231). Sharp called his interest in Celtic myth "The Green Life". His play, *The Immortal Hour*, was turned into a very successful opera by Rutland Boughton, first performed at Glastonbury in 1914 and then in London in 1920, the year when *Penny Plain* was published. It contains the beautiful "Fairy Song" in which fairies are referred to as "The Lordly Ones".

Double polarity

The lordly ones who transform the life of the little Scottish Calvinist, Jean Jardine, are the English aristocrats Lord Bidborough and the Hon. Pamela Reston. The story is built on the double polarity of Fairy and the Faith of the Free Church and, correspondingly, England and Scotland. Jean, like her author and progenitor, feels her soul drawn in both directions at once.

Anna Buchan's childhood was "a queer mixture of Calvinism and fairy tales" (*Olivia* 109), shaping her imagination accordingly. Elizabeth Seton's father (assuming the

identification with Anna's father) enjoys fairy tales as much as the little boy, Buff. Indeed, Elizabeth alleges mockingly, he "would rather read a fairy tale than a theological book" and she pretends that this is "a sad thing to have to say about a U.F.minister" (*The Setons* 77). The question here which she is playfully raising is whether faery lore can sit alongside Calvinist orthodoxy. A narrower tradition would deny their compatibility and preach against the old stories and fancies; but there is a broader tradition, associated with the name of the Rev. Robert Kirk, to which Mr. Buchan evidently belongs and of which Anna was fully aware. In *Priorsford* (240-1) there is a discussion round the lunch table on this "douce, middle-aged minister" who became chaplain to the Fairy Queen. Kirk, the minister of Balquhiddar in the Strathgryre area in the seventeenth century, published a pamphlet now internationally known and respected in the world of folk-lore, *The Secret Commonwealth of Elves, Fauns, and Fairies*. Originally written in 1691, it was edited by Sir Walter Scott in 1815 and again by Andrew Lang with commentary in 1893. Kirk, "though he believed that the Christian God overcame pagan belief..... gives the impression of accepting that much of the vibrant faery lore current in his time was largely true" (McOwan 579). With Mr. Buchan, it was probably more a case of accepting the world of fairy as imaginatively true, providing an enhanced outlook and way of seeing, which did not contradict the Christian vision but merged with it. Mr.Seton is both saint and Celtic visionary and the "other things" that he sees on the streets of Glasgow could be either angels or fairies (*The Setons* 112). The light that never was on sea or land that he "looks beyond" to is both the light of heaven and the light of an imaginative realm existing alongside and interfusing the world of everyday (*The Setons* 146). One is linked to the other: "In Thy light shall we see light" (Psalm 36) and "God has given to him His fairyland" (*Olivia in India* 272).

The world of fairy and the world of imagination are God's too. In a passage in *Olivia in India*, which *mutatis mutandis* could apply to her father, Olivia/Anna thinks of a London clerk, living in grimy or squalid conditions, who yet "is as happy as a king, for his mind to him is a kingdom", as he immerses himself in books and literature:

Instead of the raucous cries of the milk or the coal man, he hears the horns of Elfland faintly blowing, and instead of a window that can show him nothing but a sodden plot planted with wearied-

looking shrubs, he has the key of that magic casement which opens on perilous seas in fairyland forlorn. He will never do anything great in the world, he will never lead a forlorn hope, or marry the Princess, or see far lands; he will never be anything but a poor, shabby clerk, but he is of such stuff as dreams are made of, and God has given to him His fairyland. (272)

And the penultimate word "His" is significantly in the higher case: it is not the clerk's own fairyland or the product of his own imagination or indeed of human imagination, it is God's. God is the maker or "makar" of fairy too; He creates the world of fairy and gives it to his children to enhance, or transform how they view, the "real" world which otherwise would be weary, stale, flat and unprofitable. This is almost a Lockean or two-stage view of perception: things-in-themselves are plain, bare and basic, but we perceive them as having secondary or sensible qualities, which however do not inhere in the things themselves but are ideas in our minds. This Lockean view in turn fits well with the sort of severe Calvinism that looks on the world as devoid of beauty and goodness and glamour and goes on further to place an embargo on the imagination. Mr. Buchan, however, while he adheres to Calvinist doctrine and "knows how bad the world is" (*The Setons* 146), looks beyond and sees "something.....lovely". Embracing an iron adult creed he has retained his child's imagination. In short, he mixes Calvinism and fairy-tales: God has given to him, labouring in the Gorbals, His fairyland peopled by the Shining Ones who, like their namesakes in *Pilgrim's Progress* bring him joy and refreshment of spirit. Fairies and angels merge into one.

Penny Plain shows the same outlook and transforming vision. Brought up in strict Calvinism, all levity discouraged, by Great-Aunt Alison who had "come out at the Disruption" (36) (that is, left the Established Church on a matter of spiritual principle to help form the new Free Church), Jean was "an uncompromising little Puritan" (137). She had been taught "to regard everything from the point of view of her own death-bed" (37). The Jardine home in Priorsford like the Psalmist had "its eyes lifted to the hills" (8) from whence cometh its help. In this world and way of thinking, where the ultimate issues of the soul are predestined, there is no place for psychic agencies. Yet the good fairies in the shape of Pamela and Biddy intervene in Jean's

life and as agents of liberalization soften the austerities and bend the rigidities of the Free Kirk. Pamela appreciates beauty and cares for clothes and teaches Jean, who falls increasingly under her spell, that “there’s nothing actively immoral about powdering one’s nose” (58). Jean – like Anna Buchan? – feels pulled in both directions at once: back to where her roots are in the certainties and simplicities of Presbyterian living and, beckoned by the fairies, forward to a life of grace and charm at Mintern Abbas, Biddy’s English country seat. Biddy uses an image of her from the Song of Solomon which captures the ambiguity: “a garden enclosed is my love” (137). This, while picturing the soul of the Christian as hedged in and closed about, could also refer to a fairy garden of pleasure and delight. The tension holds unresolved to the end where, at her wedding on a May morning in the English village church “embowered among blossoming trees” (239), Mrs. Macdonald the minister’s wife from Scotland pushes aside the English organist and plays “O God of Bethel” so that some note of “saving severity” shall be heard (Green 185).

These two poles of Faith and Faery, looked at in relation to Scotland and England respectively, take on a wider importance in relation to the question of national identity. Anna Buchan is consciously Scots but in revolt against the unaesthetic creed that ugliness means respectability and “any attempt at adornment is ‘daft-like’ ” (54). Bella Bathgate, Pamela’s landlady, “is almost like a stage-caricature of a Scotswoman, so dour she is and uncompromising” (54). The good fairies that attend on Jean (Pamela and her brother, and Peter Reid) are English or come from England; Stratford, where she sees her first play, represents poetry and the magic of the theatre; and Mintern Abbas, her new home, is Fairyland itself – “it seemed to her the most perfect thing that could be imagined” (251). Everything about England is mellower and religion less fanatical. “The vicar was old and wise and tolerant, and said he would feel honoured if the Scots minister would officiate with him” at Jean’s wedding (240) – obviously a tilt at Cosmo Gordon Lang, the hardline Scots-born English Churchman, later Archbishop of Canterbury, who refused to allow the Rev. John Buchan to share in the wedding of his son, John, in London (Tweedsmuir, *The Lilac and the Rose* 145).

If Jean, like O.Douglas’s other heroines, is in some ways a projection of the author, it is tempting to speculate who could be the real-life counterparts of the others. Pamela

Reston is curiously akin to Pamela Glenconner, wife of Eddie Tennant, Lord Glenconner. The couple lived partly at Wilsford in Wiltshire and partly at Lord Glenconner's childhood home, (the) Glen near Peebles, which Anna Buchan knew and referred to familiarly in a letter to Susan in 1921: "Johnnie and Bill [Susan's children] have gone off with Walter today to fish at Glen". The widowed Sir Edward Grey, sometime Foreign Secretary in the Asquith administration but now at age sixty living quietly in the country, was a very close friend of the Glenconners, indeed the relationship has been described as a *ménage à trois* (Roberts 216); and when Lord Glenconner died suddenly in 1920, Grey and Pamela were married. In chapter two of the novel, as she speeds north in the train, Pamela writes to her brother to explain that she is running away from a "common-sense marriage" to "a politician, wise, honoured, powerful – and sixty" (18). In the borders, she meets up again with and eventually marries her true love who is living quietly in the country.....It is as if O.Douglas has taken the ingredients of the Glenconner story but mixed them differently in her own.

There are further interconnections. In their early married life, John and Susan Buchan had stayed at the Glen. In their lodgings in Edinburgh, they had been "fed on a rather stodgy diet of porridge, 'minced collops' and sheeps' tongues, and it was refreshing to come into a house where fruit of all kinds was on the table and where the conversation dwelt on poetry and literature". Glen was built in a "heavily Scotch baronial style", but "Pamela created her own atmosphere wherever she went" and "inside was all light and prettiness, and books were everywhere" (Tweedsmuir, *The Edwardian Lady* 87). In the novel, after her first plain and stodgy meal at Bella Bathgate's, Pamela proceeds to transform the "drab ugliness" (*Penny Plain* 54) of her rooms and, on befriending Jean, to transform her too, bringing "books and papers and chocolates and fruit" to The Rigs (54). Pamela Glenconner before her first marriage was one of the three Wyndham sisters portrayed as the Three Graces in a portrait by John Singer Sargent (Roberts 216); Pamela in the novel has the role of one of the Graces.

The re-glamourization of the world

It may be that Anna Buchan herself, like Jean, had been beguiled by the fairies when Pamela Glenconner/Reston, bringing a new magic, transformed her outlook on life, and her novel makes its own modest and popular contribution to just such a re-glamourization of the world.

In its own way the book is about the crisis characteristic of the post-War world and the twentieth century: threatened loss of soul. The new world, says the character Mrs. Macdonald (190), is worse than the old and the soldiers have died in vain. Pamela Reston had nearly lost her soul in "the abject vulgarity" of post-war London among the artistic, so-called "soulful", literary set, whose high-priestess her brother described as looking like a "decomposing cod-fish" (18-9). (Martin Green suggests that the brother is John Buchan and the codfish either Ottoline Morell or Virginia Woolf). Jean's soul needs to take wings and escape from limiting circumstances. The key to soul is imagination, "that traditional visionary view of the world" (Harpur 35-6) which Coleridge regarded as "the living power and prime agent of all human perception":

We have to cultivate a new perspective, or seeing through; and a sense of metaphor, as seeing double. We may even, if we are to shift our obdurate literalism, have to let in a bit of madness, give ourselves up to a spot of ecstasy. We can always make a start by trying to develop a better aesthetic sense, an appreciation of beauty, which is the first attribute of soul, and the way the world is ensouled can restore our vision. (Harpur 285)

In playfully counteracting our single vision, O.Douglas like "most poets" affirms "that if we only kept our eyes open we should discover that the true fairy-land is really our own world, or a part of it" (Noyes xiii). We recover soul by seeing the world again through the eyes of children and fairies:

The dressing-table had a row of three little drawers on either side, and in these Jean kept the small eatables that were to go into the

[Christmas] stockings – things made of chocolate, packets of almonds and raisins, big sugar “bools”. To Mhor a great mystery hung over the dressing-table. No mortal hand had placed those things there; they were fairy things, and might vanish at any moment. On Christmas morning he ate his chocolate frog with a sort of reverence, and sucked the sugar “bools” with awe. (143-4)

The only concern of the Primary Imagination, according to W.H. Auden, is with sacred beings and events. “They cannot be anticipated, he says – they must be encountered. Our response to them is a passion of awe....” (Harpur 36). Jock, Mhor’s elder brother, had outgrown such beliefs but did not undermine Mhor’s trust, for “he knew that the longer you can believe in such things the nicer the world is” (144).

What “nice” means is shown in Jean and her outlook. According to Pamela, she is “disgustingly fond of finding out the best in people” (109), with the result that for her “far more nice things happen than nasty ones” (120). She has a charmed view of life: “no suspecting of motives: looking for, therefore perhaps finding, kindness on every side. It is rather absurd in this wicked world, but I shouldn’t wonder if it made for happiness” (36). Jean, as the nouveau-riche and social climbing Duff-Whalleys recognize, has “the secret of happiness” (178). In such lore, she is wondrous wise. Anna Buchan, the “princess of the shining eyes”, holds together glamour with goodness, the aesthetic with the moral, Fairy with Faith (and England with Scotland).

She will go on to examine the nature of happiness and kindness and formulate an ethical viewpoint in *Pink Sugar*, but meantime she has a legacy of bereavement and unfinished business from the War to deal with. What, as she said earlier, “hardly bears thinking of yet” (*Penny Plain* 62), she turns to now in *Ann and her Mother*.

Chapter 4

Ghost of Time Past:

Ann and Her Mother

Like O. Douglas's other novels, *Ann and Her Mother* is about identity but considered in this case as an implicate or function of memory or the act of remembering. The author foregrounds the process of recall so that the movement of the book is constantly self-reflexive. She revisits the Free Church milieu of her childhood and youth in what is, not inappropriately, her most overtly Christian or religious novel. Indeed, her writing here has something of a devotional quality as she looks to the Rock whence she was hewn and the quarry from which she was digged, to her father and to the mother who bore her. She looks back in order to let go; she acknowledges and then relinquishes the way of life in which she was brought up. Her purpose in writing is a serious one: to minister balm and comfort to herself and her mother and her readers in the aftermath of the War. But the book also conveys the sense of the presence of the author hovering behind with raised eyebrow as she looks askance at both us and herself.

Ann/Anna, off the page as on it, is fortyish, unmarried and living with her mother. Mrs. Douglas is clearly Mrs. Buchan, widow of a Free Church minister and mother of a large family some of whom are no longer alive. Ann purports to be writing her mother's life for the grandchildren. In a somewhat implausible scenario, Mother and daughter, together with Marget their servant for many years, live artificially bracketed off from contemporary society in a remote glen in an isolated house which Ann has built by means of an inheritance and named "Dreams", a house that allows them to dream and talk of dear dead days and the departed with no knock at the door or other interruption. They spend the long winter evenings, when the curtains have been drawn against the loss of the light, bringing up the shades of the past. The present is etiolated and spectral, "an unpeopled world" (9), in which almost nothing happens and mother

and daughter are like “two little grey ghosts” (301). Such incidents as do occur become a springboard into Mrs. Douglas's own country, the past, alive and richly peopled. Much of the book consists of pictures and anecdotes of church life and “kirk folks” in the successive congregations which Ann's father served.

Both valedictory and ironic in tone, the book marks a transition in Anna Buchan's life, with the War as the turning-point. “The world that was ours is a world that is ours no more” (in the words of Laurence Binyon, 957-8): the United Free Church is about to be reintegrated with the Established Church and Ann/Anna herself is conscious of having changed. The novel works up to its climax, the death on active service during the War of Ann's brother for whom she and her mother have been in mourning; and the action of the novel, the recalling and reliving, takes place in November, the month of Remembrance. Like her mother, the author is laying the ghosts of her past to rest, and, as the title indicates, the book is bi-focal. But Ann puts her own name first: these memories, dreams, reflections “build up a face that ‘I have loved long since and lost awhile’, the face of what was once myself” (Robert Louis Stevenson, *Memories and Portraits* vii). Anna Buchan is in search of a sense of herself through the memory of her mother.

The memory of her mother

In thus giving the life story of her mother, Anna Buchan invites comparison once again with Barrie. Where *Peter Pan* has left its mark on *Penny Plain*, behind *Ann and Her Mother* stands *Margaret Ogilvy*. Barrie wrote about his mother after her death in tribute to her as the source, inspiration and central character of his writing.² He writes his mother's life as he remembers her telling it to him; but because he was with her in real life, he is part of her story as she is part of his. A constant presence in his fiction, Barrie's mother dominates, indeed occupies, his imagination. He identified so strongly with her that he saw himself in her place and appropriated her memories of childhood as his own. By contrast, Mrs. Douglas is still alive, and speaks for herself. Taking a critical interest in the progress of the book, she co-operates in the writing of it by exploring her memory and bringing forth from its storeroom things both new and old.

² By an old custom, married women in Scotland were still referred to by their maiden name.

Ann/Anna, too, although she also enters imaginatively into the heart and mind of her mother, remains her own person and through her mother's life self-reflexively weighs and considers her own.

Mrs. Douglas/Buchan is looking back at the prime of her life as minister's wife and mater familias. Her frame of mind is that of Job recalling happier times when "*The Almighty was still with me, and my children were about me*" as she quotes on page 177. This is the chapter in Job (chapter 29) that begins, in the Authorized Version that the Buchans would read, "*Oh that I wereas I was in the days of my youth*". "Youth", however, is a mistranslation of the Hebrew *choreph*. Other translations correctly render it as "prime" or (Jerusalem Bible) "autumn days". Mrs. Douglas looks back to a time of ripe fulfilment.

This autumnal quality gives the book its elegiac tone and colour. From the opening, it is permeated by the atmosphere of November when the leaves have dropped off the trees. Mrs. Douglas recalls arriving in Kirkcaldy in November. Likewise, Ann recollects Glasgow in November when the family first arrived there. November is not only the month of remembrance but of All Souls and the living dead. The Rev. John Buchan, Anna's father, died in November 1911 and her brother William on what was later to be Remembrance Day, November 11th 1912. Her youngest brother, Alistair, like Davie in the novel, was killed in the War at Arras. Ann accompanies her mother and helps her to go back to the land of shadows and memories where "those who are gone are so much more dear than those who are left" (8).

The contents of her memory correspond to the contents of Mrs. Douglas's room which is "like a museum": "so many mementoes of other days....photographs.....devotional books.....stucco figures" (3). In the novel, we are looking round this room, which on the one hand is confined and enclosed but on the other opens up to long vistas as the mind and memory bring the images to life. "The human mind is not, as philosophers would have you think, a debating hall, but a picture gallery" (Dixon 63) and the imagination of both mother and daughter play over the pictures on the walls of their minds. As in a gallery or museum, the pace varies: here, a long lingering look, there a cursory glance. The mementoes and photographs on the walls are an echo of Robert Louis Stevenson's "Memories and Portraits": "memories of childhood and youth, portraits of those who have gone before us in the battle" (Robert Louis Stevenson

Memories and Portraits vii). The devotional books have a significant role too. As in a religious community, the rhythm of the days at "Dreams" is marked by Mrs. Douglas's "readings" and evening prayers when the servants join them. In this way, the memories are hallowed and become sacred: remembering becomes an act of devotion, both to the dead - keeping faith with them - and to God, in thanksgiving "for what we have received". As with the stucco figures that have been frequently mended, so memories have been cherished and friendships even with the departed kept in repair. Like the stucco figure of Moses' head, the novel may appear to be turned the wrong way about: looking back on what is not. But to remember is to bring to life, in some sense. Or those we have known and loved remain alive in our memory, like Mrs. Douglas's old friend Miss Barbara Stewart:

What would I not give now to go into that room and see those whimsical, shrewd, kind eyes, and feel the wealth of welcome in those big soft hands as she rose to greet me, with shawls falling from her like leaves in Vallombrosa. (136)

The friend has gone but the immortal memory remains. In this regard, memory can be described as "the Holy Spirit of friendship", as General Smuts remarked in one of his letters to Lady Moore (van der Poel no. 743, 125), alluding to St. John's Gospel where Jesus, about to depart, promises to send the Holy Spirit to be with them instead. The memory, Smuts goes on, "is in some ways more effective and goes deeper than the presence itself... gentler, more spiritual..... and *softens* and sublimates the actualities of the presence" [my italics]. Which is exactly what Mrs. Douglas finds:

Mrs. Douglas sat looking into the fire. She was far away from the little house among the hills. She was young again and the husband of her youth was once more at her side. Pictures, *softened* and beautified by time, unrolled themselves before her eyes. Children played in a garden among flowers, their laughter and shouting came to her ears, she could see their faces lifted to hers; but no beckoning could bring them to her, for long ago they had grown up and gone away; they were but dream children who played in that garden [my italics] (11)

In this way, memory opens into another world or dimension of time. Frederick Buechner, who also works and reworks family memories in his writing, adumbrates the sort of mysticism of memory that he shares with Anna Buchan:

How they do live on, those giants of our childhood, and how well they manage to take even death in their stride because although death can put an end to them right enough, it can never put an end to our relationship with them. Wherever or however they may have come to life since, it is beyond a doubt that they live still in us. Memory is more than a looking back to a time that is no longer; it is a looking out into another kind of time altogether where everything that ever was continues not just to be, but to grow and change with the life that is in it still. The people we loved. The people who loved us. The people who, for good or ill, taught us things. Dead and gone though they may be, as we come to understand them in new ways, it is as though they come to understand us - and through them we come to understand ourselves - in new ways too. Who knows what "the communion of saints" means, but surely it means more than just that we are all of us haunted by ghosts because they are not ghosts, these people we once knew, not just echoes of voices that have years since ceased to speak, but saints in the sense that through them something of the power and richness of life itself not only touched us once long ago but continues to touch us. (21-22)

Ann and her Mother, then, is a novel positioned between two worlds, and the veil that separates them is transparent. The dead are omnipresent, alive not only in memory but in a timeless world that exists alongside the world of time:

Christmas to me, even now, always seems Rosamond's time. It is odd to think that she was only with us for five short years, and she has been away more than twenty, and yet the thought of her is always with me. She lives to me so vividly that it seems only yesterday that it all happened. (186)

A Book of Remembrance

A Book of Remembrance, *Ann and Her Mother* in looking back employs avant-garde literary techniques. First, in acting as interviewer of her mother and amanuensis, Ann anticipates by forty years the practice of oral history, where the historian interviews people and enquires about their life-experience, listening creatively and prompting and questioning as necessary, then transcribing and editing. This, as the social historian Paul Thompson demonstrates, results in "vividness of human detail" and opens up "forgotten areas of history where some of the key dynamics of social change lie hidden, and in particular daily life at work and in the home; and to those people most often missed by the records - the women and children of the household" (11). He argues, moreover, that the significance of oral history lies not only in the "explicit information that is conveyed" but also in "the form of its telling" (11). Following on from this, Alessandro Portelli's studies of form and meaning in oral history yield insights that may be applied to *Ann and Her Mother*. As narrators, Ann and Mrs. Douglas are "often quite creative with their handling of time", employing narrative devices "[more] akin to contemporary, even experimental literature, than to the linear disposition of historical narrative time". Thus, while 'traditional art may be said to place *the text in time*; avant-garde or modern art in general breaks the tradition and places *time in the text*' (Portelli 64). Neither Ann nor her mother is concerned to convey any sense of the period of time that elapses within or between scenes. What they seek to capture is the impression made on them by experiences or people. Where men "present their life as a series of self-conscious acts, a rational pursuit of well-defined goals" and "present themselves as the subjects of their own lives - as the actors", women

will talk at length about their *relationship* to such-and-such a person. Their own life-stories will include part of the life-stories of others. They bring into view the people around them, and their relations with these people. In contrast with men's accounts, women will not insist on what they have done; but rather on what relationships existed between themselves and persons close to them (Paul Thompson 193).

The analogy with oral history throws light on the novel in other ways too. "Historians often strive for a linear, chronological sequence; speakers may be more interested in pursuing and gathering together bundles of meaning, relationships and themes, across the linear span of their lifetimes" (Portelli 63). In the same way, Ann explicitly dispenses with dates and works with association of memories within the main divisions of her mother's life. Again, the novel shows what Portelli calls "shuttlework", that is, oral narratives going back and forth in time and using the past as a "repository of examples" for the present (65). Such usage is built into a mother-daughter relationship, but Mrs. Douglas is by nature admonitory and sententious even towards her adult daughter. As was Mrs. Buchan in real life: "she felt it her duty to keep up a fairly constant flow of precept, warning and reproof, coupled with much lamenting about her own life and frequent public examination...of her own shortcomings, of things done and things left undone" (William Buchan, *The Rags of Time* 53). In the course of the novel, Ann consciously reflects on her mother's experience - or their shared experience - and absorbs or repudiates the lessons and so forms her own outlook. From this angle, the novel is the story of the growth of a soul and the appropriation of an identity.

"In many ways, interviews are sustained acts of discovery, not only for the person being interviewed but even for the well-prepared interviewee" (Litter, quoting Edward Said). In effect, this is the elusive controlling idea that the author is in search of all the way through. In marshalling and managing her mother's memories and her own, she comes to understand more fully who and what have moulded and shaped her. "It's only afterwards you realize..." (251) - Ann here repeats her mother: "At the time I took it all as a matter of course, but afterwards I realized ..." (75). Both echo the Gospel of John, itself the fruit of memory and reflection: "At first, his disciples [including John] did not understand all this. Only after...did they realise..." (John 12: 16). Here is one of the key functions of memory: to enable a deepening apprehension through time. "Life is to be lived forwards but understood backwards", in Kierkegaard's dictum.

Similarly, "the fact that the interview takes place means that the narrator is recognized. 'Giving' time to interviewers is often a rare opportunity to 'take' time for oneself" (Portelli 62). And "the story builds the identity of the teller" (59). That is to

say, Mrs. Doulgas/Buchan emerges as a character by being encouraged to talk about herself. And from then on Mrs. Buchan had an identity in literature as in life. Not only does she re-appear as Mrs. Laidlaw, minister's wife and mater familias, in *Eliza for Common* (1928) and feature prominently in *Unforgettable, Unforgotten* (1945), but John too has a section on his mother (chapter 10, part 2) in *Memory hold the Door* (1940) though he adds little to what his sister has shown in her novels; the two siblings share a common stock of memories and regard their mother in the same light [Fig. 7]. Drawing on John's book only, Margaret Watt gives an account of Mrs. Buchan in her *History of the Parson's Wife* (1943) (193-5) while the Rev. A.G. Reekie, minister of the family church in Peebles, gives his own direct picture of her in chapter 1 of *Farewell to Priorsford* (1950). Daughter-in-law Susan Tweedsmuir makes a few tart comments in *The Lilac and the Rose* (1952) (143-5) in connection with the arrangements for her wedding to John but has kinder comments in her later books. Janet Adam Smith (*John Buchan*) refers to the autobiographies of John and Anna and *Eliza*. Granddaughter Alice in *A Scrap Screen* (1979) (136-138) and grandson William in *The Rags of Time* (1990) (51-54) give rounded portraits which corroborate (or are coloured by) what their father and aunt wrote. So there is something of a Synoptic Problem here in determining the literary dependence of these various overlapping and interrelated portraits of the one person. It could be claimed that *Ann and her Mother*, though strangely unacknowledged by the later books, except those of Martin Green and Wendy Forrester, is the main source and the foundation document that first "recognizes" Mrs. Buchan. Rereading the novel after his mother's death in 1937, John wrote to Anna that he found it a "great comfort" and a "wonderful record" and mused on how odd it was that the minister's wife of the John Knox Church in the Gorbals should have called forth messages of condolence from the King and the President of the United States as well as "Cardinals and Archbishops and Cabinet Ministers, and Lieutenant-Governors". "Mother in her later years" - that is, in the period following the publication of Anna's novel - "certainly was 'a queen and a widow'" (John Buchan Papers).



JOHN AND HIS MOTHER
Taken at Uitenhage by Karris.

Fig 7: Mrs. Buchan with son John

From *Unforgettable, Unforgotten*, p. 290

The book within the book

Mrs. Douglas is interviewed and her life story thus emerges because her daughter is ostensibly writing her biography. *Ann and her Mother* is a book about writing a book. *Tristram Shandy* (Sterne) is the seminal representative in English literature of self-conscious narration by a writer pre-occupied by the problems of writing and O. Douglas plays the same witty trick. In her case, the device serves to counter the "oppressive literary regard" of John and cover her own literary self-doubts and uncertainty, which she incorporates into her work by becoming an amused observer of herself as writer, ironically watching herself in the act of authorship. Where should she begin? Or should she dispense with a beginning "as the very best people do" in contemporary literature (*Ann and her Mother* 16)? Having put pen to paper, she finds that working with words is not easy: "that old *Life* of yours - I can't make it sound right.....I know so well what impression I want to give, but when I try to write it down it's just nothing - stilted, meaningless sentences" (157).

Thus, there is a book within a book, or literary twins jostling in the womb. There is the novel itself: an apparently artless book in which mother and daughter spend most of their time recalling the past. And alongside it is the "Life", the product of a shared effort that is being written primarily for the grandchildren: we look and listen as the writer records but we never get to read her script. We do, however, have the comments of a reader within the novel, Philip Scott, who speaks for brother John when he says her "language is too incorrigibly noble" (205). And Mrs. Douglas herself, the subject of the *Life*, suggests her daughter should "write in a more homely way" and "take the reader more into your confidence", which ironically is what in fact is happening (206). By a sleight-of-hand, the O. Douglas behind Ann draws the reader into a very intimate relationship: we are (apparently) not reading a finished piece of work but watching and listening as the material is assembled and put together, and we almost forget there is an author (O. Douglas) behind the author. But because of the deliberate coincidence of name, we are constantly mindful of "Anna" Buchan behind O. Douglas writing about herself as "Ann" Douglas. O. Douglas virtually disappears. In this way, Ann/Anna breaks down the wall between writer and reader as between author and character and lets us in on the writer's dilemmas - not only "how to begin", but "what to include" ("Mother", said Ann, 'you speak wisely, but how much of this is

to go down in your Life?' " (22)). She becomes constantly pre-occupied with how far they have got:

"Mother", said Ann one evening, "do you realise that we are not getting on at all well with your Life?.....Where we are, I don't know, but there are only three of us born - Mark and me and Robbie" (103)

- which faintly echoes the similar concern of Tristram Shandy: "I declare I have been at it these six weeks, making all the speed I possibly could, - and am not yet born" (Sterne 65). Or again:

"Ann, have you remembered to put in my Life about Alis and the others being born?"

"Goodness gracious, I have not," cried Ann. "But I haven't got to that time yet, have I? You shouldn't give me unnecessary frights, Mother". (258)

Like Sterne, she is apparently defeated in her efforts - but her defeat paradoxically means her success.

In sharing her quandaries (and teasing our minds a bit), O. Douglas like Sterne breaks down the division between literature and life. Instead of literary works being "things....for special people, and common folks like us may approach them only with awe and reverence....entities existing outside of us, already built and finished, and only waiting for us to learn them, to swallow them whole" (Portelli 282), *Ann and her Mother* is a book by and about self-professed ordinary people which the ordinary reader is given the sense of helping to bring about. In with the author and the subject on the work of selecting and editing, we are aware of what is not included: "Ye're no' gaun tae pit it doon in writin' are ye? Weel, that's a' richt ..." (293), and thus reassured, Marget the old servant feels free to give her opinion on the subject under discussion. Indeed, the reader of the novel is privileged over the grandchildren for whom the Life was ostensibly being written because much of Mrs. Douglas's most vivid talk does not get into the Life: Ann is "busy filling her fountain-pen" (81) or by

her own strict canon of "plainness" does not regard the material as significant. But such distractions from the task supposedly at hand help to make the book as we have it come alive.

If a comparison may be made with Sterne, a more direct influence can be found closer to home. Scott also played games with his readers by putting his art on display and baring his artistic presence. The elaborate apparatus of Prefaces, Postscripts, Appendices and Notes in the novels is "Shandean" in conception and content (McGann 114). Scott's method was first to create a real world "or rather the idea of a real world" (118) and then move from there into an imaginary world. So with O. Douglas: from the "real" though fictional world of their isolated house, "Dreams", mother and daughter escape into the phantastical world of living memory. Though readily conceding that she had never got through a volume of Scott (Report of a talk) - like both her heroines, Elizabeth Seton and Nicole Rutherford - Anna Buchan need have looked no further than the opening chapter of *Waverley* to see how the author has been incorporated into the book and discusses his own fictional procedures and genres. Accordingly, as Ann embarks on her mother's "Life" - and "'tis sixty years since" the story started - she pretends to air the question of style in conversation with her subject, rejecting as unsuitable various overblown styles and finally deciding "we must confine ourselves to a plain narrative with no thoughts, only incidents" (16) - which is exactly the opposite of what she does do. She thus sets up a tension, which provides the reader with some amusement, between the plain narration which she is ostensibly trying to produce and the meandering, reflective and richly inclusive text as we have it. Like Scott also, she makes a game of her book's authorship. Just as "The Author of *Waverley*" could engage different readers at different levels of awareness of his identity, so *Ann and her Mother*, while capable of being taken as a representative picture of manse family life, also shows to those in the know - though it was no secret - the Buchan family and the background and origins of John Buchan, brother of the writer.

But to what extent does Ann speak for Anna? Is this the "ventriloquism" of Scott or a self-mocking charade? Or is it all part of the "game of art" (McGann 117)? Both Scott and O. Douglas involve their readers in "a co-operative venture of fictional making" (118), even to Ann's discussing with her mother and so with us the arrangements for

the typing of the manuscript and its private printing (*Ann and her Mother* 295). As with *Waverley*, so with *Ann and her Mother*: "the telling of this tale and its reading, the writing of it, the publishing of it, the printing of it.....all have been incorporated into the work" (McGann 119). Thus, the reader is put "in the most self-conscious relation to the whole fictional [or biographical] enterprise" (119) and "the boundaries between fiction and fact have been made as porous as possible" (120). If Scott's ironic self-awareness and the constant presence of the author in his own work, even if hidden under a variety of names and guises, can be labelled by McGann as postmodern, the same word may be applied to the O. Douglas of *Ann and her Mother*.

Humphrey Carpenter's description of his book on Robert Runcie, former Archbishop of Canterbury, could apply to O. Douglas's book as well. "This is both a biography, and a book about writing a biography. It tells its own story of its origin, aims, difficulties and excitements" (5). The son of a bishop, Carpenter wrote his book as much to understand himself and the ecclesiastical culture in which he had grown up as his subject. If his is a postmodern-style biography, recording the interaction between writer and living subject, so is O. Douglas's, though hers is equally autobiography. She tells the story of both "Ann" and her "Mother" to understand herself and the ecclesiastical culture in which she was formed.

O. Douglas has a final trick in store. At the end of her book, she returns to nothingness the world she has called into being and brings us back to the "real" life at "Dreams". As Marget recognizes, "thae times are a' past, an' here we are sittin' an' a' the folk I've been speakin aboot are deid" (298). The spirits are dismissed and allowed to depart in peace:

... These our actors,
As I foretold you, were all spirits and
Are melted into air, into thin air....
... We are such stuff
As dreams are made on, and our little life
Is rounded with a sleep.

And at this point the author herself suddenly steps out of the frame and looks at us slyly and obliquely. The reader is no longer the looker-on: the roles have been reversed:

"I wonder who you think could possibly be interested in such an uneventful record? All about nothing, and not even an end -"

"I *wonder*," said Ann. (302)

If she has been (mockingly) self-deprecating throughout the novel, she now shows confidence in herself and her readers: we would not be there with her at the end as this insubstantial pageant fades if we were not interested.

Minister's Wife

The "uneventful record" is of the life of a minister's wife. Mrs. Douglas/Buchan was "a born minister's wife" (10), representative of a class and group of women who, largely unacknowledged, have left their mark on Scottish life and character. At the age of seventeen with "absolutely no training", she found herself in the position of First Lady of the church and Mistress of the Manse. The manse, large and roomy, was at the centre of the life of the congregation and of the district, providing an ever-open door for callers, putting up visiting ministers and preachers, and entertaining the members and office-bearers and hosting Elders' Suppers. Ann recalls an occasion when a dead silence fell on the room and "none of us could think of a single word to say" (95) - like the similar incident in Barrie's *A Window in Thrums* when a group of invited people sat cowed in the manse parlour drinking tea with the minister's wife, a "grand lady from Edinburgh" (123).

What the manse traditionally meant in Scottish life is summed up by Ian Maclaren in *Kate Carnegie*. "Among all the houses in a Scottish parish the homeliest and kindest is the manse, for to its door comes every inhabitant, from the laird to the cottar-woman..... the manse is another word for guidance and good cheer" (237-9). Robert Louis Stevenson (*Memories and Portraits*) set the pattern when he describes his grandfather's manse at Colinton as "a nest of little chambers...a well-loved house, the

image fondly dwelt on by many travellers" (67). And Amy Stewart Fraser, writing of her mother fifty years after Anna Buchan of hers, describes, in words that apply to both, the qualities required to practise the hospitality of a manse and to undertake the none-too-easy duties of a minister's wife:

She was a good hostess....and thrifty....With her thrift went a deep sense of the importance of maintaining the dignity of the Manse. Despite economies practiced in private, she contrived to present a comfortable front, and there was genuine warmth and kindness in the welcome extended to all who came to the manse, and a sympathetic ear to those who came for advice or help. She had no patience with ministers' wives in similar circumstances who moaned at straitened means, and adopted a dejected, self-pitying appearance....what she called "making a poor mouth"....[She] had to budget carefully, for the stipend was paid only twice yearly...[She was] never a penny in debt". (25-6)

The Scottish manse represented the ideal of plain living and high thinking and was a nurse of the traditional virtues. "Perhaps there is something in the word 'manse' that suggests, in itself, an atmosphere of piety and frugality and.....home-life where non-material values are honoured". The mistress of the manse is more than the minister's wife: "she is also the mother of the sons of the manse who have made a great name for themselves in the world by reason of their number and distinction" (Watt 156-7). The Rev. John Buchan, in a poem addressed to his wife, hails her as "Mother of men who'll make their mark" (Anna Buchan *John Buchan* 299). Martin Green points out that John Buchan with John Reith of the BBC and Cosmo Gordon Lang of Canterbury formed a contemporary trio of distinguished sons of the manse. If for them the manse, in Ann's words, was "a regular school for diplomatists", for her and for the same reasons it was a training-ground for novelists: "one learns to talk to and understand all sorts of people - just think what an advantage that gives one over people who have only known intimately their own class" (198). Her upbringing in a manse gave her material for her novels and impressed her with the values she depicted.

In her survey, Margaret Watt finds it strange that the "Parson's Wife" has not met with more recognition and gratitude in history and fiction. While she features

ambivalently in Trollope, by the end of Victoria's reign and in the years before the War "fiction did not concern itself much in the domesticities of the clergy" and she was eclipsed in the period following the War: "no one was much interested in her in the worlds of D. H. Lawrence and Aldous Huxley and the post-war intellectuals" (137). O. Douglas, never one to follow literary fashion in any case, bucked the trend - and, as she noted in her autobiography, twenty years later the book continued to sell, having gone through several editions. "In this world there must be quite a lot of people who like simple goodness" (*Unforgettable, Unforgotten* 177-8).

Scottish Church Life

Along with its portrayal of life in the manse *Ann and Her Mother* also gives a picture of Scottish church life and culture, complementing *The Setons* and *Eliza for Common*. For this there was a ready readership, created by the enormously popular writings of the Rev. John Watson ("Ian Maclaren") and then bereft by his untimely death in 1907. He too wrote of the life and characters of the Free Church both in a village (Drumtochty) and in Glasgow. Anna Buchan's writings in the same vein are redeemed by their humour and high spirits from the couthiness and sentimentalism of the kailyard school. Nor does she give the impression of exploiting her characters for emotional effect or, like J.M. Barrie, consciously staging them before the curious eyes of a more sophisticated audience.

The Free Church caught the literary imagination - in Maclaren, S.R. Crockett, and Anna Buchan, who gives a warmly sympathetic picture - perhaps because its story was essentially romantic: "The task that he [Thomas Chalmers] and the assembly set themselves from the start [1843] was a gigantic one, nothing less than that of producing a complete and exact replica of the Establishment they had left, relying on the resources which their faithful people would supply". The appeal met with astonishing success and "matchless" Christian liberality: "Nothing comparable had happened in Scotland since the days of King David 'the sair sanct'" (Burleigh 354). The Church and what it stood for inspired passionate and sacrificial loyalty among its members. Where the Established Church was maintained largely by endowments and teinds, the key to the life and growth of the new Free Church lay in the Sustentation Fund, referred to in *Ann and Her Mother* as in Maclaren's *The Days of Auld Lang*

Syne (45 and 317) and *St. Jude's* (162 and 225). Dr. Chalmers had worked out a scheme whereby congregations contributed according to their means to a central fund from which their ministers should receive what he called the equal dividend. Larger and wealthier congregations in addition to their contributions to the central fund would be expected to supplement their own ministers' stipends, which resulted in some churches becoming more desirable charges than others; but the ministers of the smaller and poorer congregations would be assured at least of a modest competence and would not be wholly at the mercy of their own people. (Burleigh 356). Where Ann's father had had "prosperous, well-attended churches" in Inchkeld and Kirkcaple, when he high-mindedly accepted a call to Glasgow "that was all changed" (*Ann and Her Mother* 153), and Mrs. Douglas could not help but be envious of other ministerial couples who were better off. She recalls a coat she had possessed in Glasgow:

My father bought it for me. I met him one day in Princes Street, and I must have looked very shabby, for he looked me up and down and said, 'Nell, surely the Sustentation Fund is very low,' and he took me into Jenner's and got me that coat and bonnet (129).

The Free Church quickly established itself as a spiritual and intellectual force in the land: "ideas of inferiority connected with the Free Church can only have endured among prejudiced persons ignorant of the quality of its ministers, of its missionary zeal, of its standards of giving, of the international reputation of its theologians" (Watt 189). It "provided a ministry zealous, orthodox, evangelical, narrow and strait-laced perhaps and self-consciously pietistic, but one that served Scotland well, and ...enhance[d] the dignity and raise[d] the status of the ministry generally (Burleigh 356). " Nor were their ministers socially inferior: Dr. Watts of the Etterick Free Church, "saint and scholar" (*Ann and Her Mother* 25), "was laird as well as minister, and they didn't live at the Manse, but at their own place, Fennanhopes" (*Ann and Her Mother* 33); Mrs. Douglas's predecessor at Inchkeld was "a niece of the late Lord Clarke" (50); and Dr. Struthers, senior minister of Martyrs' (the Glasgow church to which the Douglasses moved), was "a very rich man" who had a country estate, Langlands, and a personal man-servant, Samuel Thomson, "such a very superior, silver-haired, apple-cheeked gentleman's gentleman" (162 and 164).

Ann and her mother portray the Rev. John Buchan/Douglas - scion of a solid middle-class family in Peebles who married a Border farmer's daughter - as an example and flower of this ministry. The book could almost be read as a Parson's Handbook, as notes *Ad Clerum*, not least in the way it imaginatively uses and interprets Scripture. Though deceased and therefore not physically present in the novel, Ann's father is spiritually omnipresent. Ann, looking back, can now "see what a wonderful minister my father was. It was that air of surety, of steadfastness, that gave people such a lift, and that firm, comforting hand that touched things so gently" (52-3). He was "perfectly content" in "doing the King's work through the unfeatured years" (252-3), a phrase Anna takes from John's memorial verses on his father (Anna Buchan *John Buchan* 25). It was Mrs. Douglas who was ambitious for her husband and would have liked to see him become a popular preacher.

Picturing her father in the pulpit on his last Sunday at Martyrs', Ann recalled how she listened "for the swish of the silk of the Geneva gown" as her father "stretched out his arms wide over the people" (255) in benediction. This image - powerful, almost priestly - of the minister in the pulpit is recurrent in Scottish fiction of the twentieth century (*Cloud Howe*, the second volume of Lewis Grassie Gibbon's *Scots Quair* trilogy; Fionn MacColla's *And the Cock Crew*; Robin Jenkins's novel about the Disruption, *The Awakening of George Darroch*; A. Findlay Johnson's *Children of Disobedience*) and continues into the twenty-first century with James Robertson's *The Testament of Gideon Mack* in which, however, the minister makes a point of *not* getting into the pulpit (331). In each of these other novels "a dramatic climax is reached as the minister climbs into the pulpit to address the waiting and expectant congregation" (Storror 89). The minister in the pulpit, so much a part of Scottish religious experience and imagination, becomes a mediating figure: "there, in the pulpit, we see the Scottish Christ. The Minister in the Pulpit is our Calvinist crucifix, our Presbyterian icon" (88). The congregation meets God through the personality of the officiating minister. Ann's father, then, in some ways the presiding genius of her novel, is representative of a figure, sometimes revered but sometimes reviled, that has entered the Scottish psyche and "shaped our Scottish identity" (89).

The services of the Free Church, simple and austere, were built round the sermon. Traditionally, only metrical psalms were sung, from the Second Scottish Psalter of

1650 which remained intact and in use alongside moves to enlarge and supplement it. The General Assembly of the Free Church made the first official attempt at improvement in 1866, resulting in the publication in 1873 of "Psalm-Versions, Paraphrases and Hymns" which in turn led on to the "Free Church Hymnbook" of 1882 (Patrick 219). But when the Douglasses/Buchans moved to Glasgow in late 1888,

'Martyrs' was known as 'the scrapit kirk' because of its white unpainted seats. No hymn had ever been sung in it; rarely, if ever, a paraphrase. A precentor in a box led the people in the Psalms of David. Everything was as it had been for the last hundred years.

(*Ann and Her Mother* 153)

Gradually, however, "the service was brought into line with present-day ideas" (153). Mrs. Douglas professes herself "sorry" with the change, and "your father would have been very pleased to leave it as it was. He infinitely preferred the Psalms of David to mere 'human' hymns". (155). Obvious as were the literary defects of the metrical psalms, acknowledged by the General Assembly's Psalmody committee in 1866 (Patrick 222), yet for Ann "there's a lot in association" and "words you have loved as a child have always a glamour over them" (*Ann and Her Mother* 155-6). The metrical psalms have been such a formative influence that she is impatient with hymns: "imagine singing a chirruppy hymn when one might sing 'O thou, my soul, bless God the Lord,' to the tune of 'French' " (155) - echoing the sentiments of Sir Walter Scott in his *Journal*: "Let them write hymns and paraphrases if they will, but let us have still

"All people that on earth do dwell." (705)

In this respect, there may be some significance in the suggestive fictional name she gives to her father's Glasgow church, the John Knox Free Church in the Gorbals. Both in *Ann and Her Mother* and in *Eliza for Common* (where, however, the family is given the name of Laidlaw), the church is called Martyrs'. Martyrs is one of the oldest Scottish psalm tunes, first appearing in print in 1615. The tune, in the Dorian mode and described by Burns in "The Cottar's Saturday Night": as "plaintive", expresses the mood of *Ann and Her Mother* - the sadness of leavetaking and the sense of death and

mortality. It is associated with the Covenanters (Scott in "Old Mortality" (128) shows that the Covenanters entered battle singing Ps 76 to this tune) and Ann describes (254-5) a communion service in Martyrs', "the same service that the Covenanters held". And there are further overtones: Mr. Douglas, having been a martyr to his work, is now one of "the noble army of martyrs", and Ann and her mother, in recalling many of their friends from church circles down through the years, are conscious of being surrounded by a great a cloud of "witnesses" (Greek μαρτυροι - martyrs).

Other details of old church life and work are mentioned as they talk and mostly left unexplained because they would "awaken echoes in the mind of every Scottish reader" and "many, even, of the phrases used will delight by the childish memories they evoke" ("Ann and her Mother" *Glasgow Herald*). For example, once a year the elders would "purge the roll", that is, remove from the roll of communicant members those who had failed to attend church over a certain period. (" 'Purge the roll,' Ann murmured to herself, 'of all delicious phrases' " (94).) Having taken a "tirravee", people would sometimes send for their lines (272), that is, withdraw their membership to move to another church. We hear too about the "tea-meeting", a popular mid-week service-cum-entertainment when tea was served - in the pews - in the course of the proceedings, and the Wednesday evening prayer-meeting (55 and 71), and the Mothers' Meeting ("Mark always used to tell me that with me journeys ended in Mothers' Meetings" (228)). There are passing allusions, in the sale of work for Women's Foreign Missions (27) and in the snatch of a song -

Did you ever put a penny in a missionary box

A penny that you might have gone and spent like other folks? (99)

- to the enormous and sacrificial efforts that the Free Church put into missions, not least in the Eastern Cape in South Africa. It may have been by virtue of the missionary connection that Mr. Buchan was asked to do a nine-months' locum in Port Elizabeth in 1902 for a minister returning home on leave - an experience that widened Mrs. Buchan's outlook:

It did me a world of good to come across people who had never heard of the United Free Church of Scotland and who had no desire to hear about it, and who interested me enormously by the

way they looked at life...I hadn't, perhaps, realised that people might be opposed to everything I thought right and proper and yet be good people. (*Ann and her Mother* 228)

But the Free Church remained her world. She had loved to attend the General Assembly, the supreme decision-making body or "court" of the Church which met annually in May in Edinburgh; but now that "the excitements of a ministerial life" (27) were for her over, "the Assembly Hall is a place of ghosts to me" (202).

And not only to her. The society and way of life that are pictured in this novel are by the time of writing disappearing. "Recreating dear familiar things that were almost forgotten" ("Ann and her Mother" *Glasgow Herald*), Anna Buchan shows us, with both affection and amusement, the Free Church in its heyday, before the union with the United Presbyterians in 1901. She is writing as the now United Free Church moves towards final union with the Established Church in 1929, the old differences - more of spiritual principle and emphasis than doctrine - having faded from significance. Mrs. Douglas/Buchan, however, always the pragmatist, has doubts about the way things are going and sees value in the old rivalry between the Free and the "parish" church:

People may talk about union and one great Church, but when we are all one I'm afraid there may be a lack of interest - a falling off in endeavour. St. Paul knew what he was talking about when he spoke of 'provoking' one another to love and good works... (72)

- a view imbibed and reproduced, if with greater eloquence, by her son John in the book which he wrote, at the invitation of the Church of Scotland, in conjunction with Principal Sir George Adam Smith (father of Janet Adam Smith), to mark the occasion of the Union. (The illustrations and title-page were by Sir D.Y.Cameron, brother of the artist, Katherine, who were likewise children of a Free Church manse.)

What are the dangers of union, for dangers there are? It may involve, in Stevenson's mocking words, the

lack of a' sectarian fushion,
 an' could religious destitution.....

Particularism is apt to evoke the more strenuous loyalties....There may be a unison which is attained through a general lack of interest, a weary peace which is based not on a common faith but on a common apathy. No union is of any lasting value in which the whole does not absorb the honest loyalties formerly given to the parts. The only justification for the breaking down of particularism is a stronger faith in the fundamentals. Unless the union of the churches is attended not merely with a freedom from contention but with a positive increase of vigour and purpose, far better was the old sectarianism. (Buchan and Smith 217-8)

The words may be his own; the sentiments are his mother's.

The novel conveys the sense of the end of an era; the spiritual impulse that gave rise to the Free Church has played itself out and the institution, apart from a rump, is about to be absorbed back into the main body from which it first emerged. *Ann and her Mother* is a timely book, evoking memories and providing intimate snapshots of a period that is passing. The tone throughout is elegiac and valedictory. People then, complains Marget, were more interesting than now, and John too laments the

steady flattening out under the steam-roller of time of many familiar features in our Scottish landscape. Some of our ancient institutions would appear to be decaying, and there is a general loss of idiom and individuality in Scottish life. (Buchan and Smith 237)

It is such idiom and individuality that Ann seeks to record in her novel. At this mid-point of her life, she looks back at the way she was brought up and pays tribute to the outlook and attitudes in which she was raised but from which she is now departing.

The War

But if the tone is elegiac, this is particularly so because of the shadow of the War. Just as in *The Setons* “the lives of all of us cracked across” (253) at the outbreak of war, so for *Ann and her Mother* (277) “The War here intervened”. The War sets the atmosphere of the book; and the book captures (and this may account for its popularity) the immediate post-War mood, when the bereaved cast a longing, lingering look behind while adjusting to the altered conditions of their lives.

Such were the “terrible, almost unimaginable human losses of the war” that “it is not an exaggeration to suggest that every family was in mourning” (Winter 1-2). The War “brought the search for an appropriate language of loss to the centre of cultural and political life”; and while Modernism with its “multi-faceted sense of dislocation, paradox, and the ironic” expressed anger and despair, it yet “could not heal”. By contrast, “traditional modes of seeing the war” (entailing patriotism, glory, gallantry, sacrifice and the hallowed dead) “while at times less challenging intellectually or philosophically, provided a way of remembering which enabled the bereaved to live with their losses, and perhaps to leave them behind” (5). O. Douglas, drawing on Rupert Brooke's 1914 sonnet, *The Dead*, uses such heightened language to console her mother after the death of her son:

Our men whose sacrifice was accepted, and who were allowed to
pour out the sweet, red wine of youth, passed at one bound from
glorious life to glorious death....They know not age or weariness
or defeat. (*Ann and her Mother* 256)

In the face of universal bereavement, such language had enduring appeal and brought comfort. Thus, Winter argues, the divide between traditionalist and Modernist has been exaggerated: there was no sudden break or shift, but overlap and continuity. While O. Douglas belonged to the traditionalist camp by temperament and upbringing (and by alliance with brother John, official historian of the War), her book and its success may well have confirmed her in her outlook. In her later fiction, while constantly concerned with the effect of the War on individuals and the community, she does not change her point of view about “our country's bright cause” (*Ann and her Mother* 283).

The bereaved would receive, in addition to the official telegram, a standard letter from an officer in the dead man's unit containing "three stock messages: the man in question was loved by his comrades; he was a good soldier; and he died painlessly" (Winter 35), which, even if known not to be wholly true, at least ministered balm. At the same time, the bereaved wanted to know more: "many yearned to share the last moments of their man; to know what he knew; and at least for a moment to attempt to feel what he felt" (35-6). Thus, in the novel Mrs. Douglas continues "to think of the child - he was little more - waiting there in the darkness for the signal to attack. He must have been so anxious about leading the company, so afraid" (283). But Ann reminds her of what "Captain Shiels wrote and told us, that while they waited for the dawn Davie spoke 'words of comfort and encouragement to his men'. And comfort and encouragement are the twin keynotes of an O. Douglas novel, as if her own experience of bereavement - the loss in all of four family members as recounted in the course of the novel, what Wendy Forrester calls her *Four Wounds* (61) - formed her as a writer and provided her with her artistic task in the post-War era: "to comfort those in trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received", to put it in biblical terms. Mrs. Douglas becomes a representative figure: "I am only one of millions of mothers who will go mourning to their graves" (*Ann and her Mother* 285). The book is part of the process of remembering and grieving not only for Ann and her mother but for all contemporary readers.

Another non-modernist response at the time to the trauma of loss and grief was the growth of spiritualism, promoted by well-known public figures such as Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and Sir Oliver Lodge whose book about his son killed in the War, *Raymond*, was a best-seller, going through a dozen printings between 1916 and 1919 and republished in abridged form in 1922 (the same year as *Ann and her Mother*). Spiritualism made a powerful appeal to those coping with the pain of bereavement: in the words of Kipling,

*The road to En-dor is easy to tread
For mother or yearning Wife. (Verse 361)*

Also popular was the phenomenon of psychic photography, offering visions of the dead on Armistice Day hovering above the living. One such photograph was taken from the wall of Richmond Terrace in Whitehall during the two-minute silence of

1922 (Winter 73). In this context, O. Douglas's book can be seen as putting forward the orthodox Christian position and remedying the deficiency noted by Viscount Halifax, the prominent Anglican layman, in his condemnation of *Raymond*: "such books as those of Sir Oliver are the Nemesis which comes from our neglect of the dead" (qtd. in Winter 63). In fact, she goes remarkably far in her imaginative exploration of the Communion of Saints:

'compassed about with a great cloud of witnesses'. I have a notion that all the great army of men who down through the centuries have given their lives for our country's bright cause were with our men in that awful fighting, steeling the courage of those boy-soldiers....And Father and Robbie were beside him, I am very sure, and Father would know then that all his prayers were answered for his boy....when he saw him stand, with Death tapping him on the shoulder, speaking 'words of comfort and encouragement to his men.' (283)

Here she may have taken her cue, or found the confidence to write along such lines, from Canon J. Paterson Smyth's enormously popular *The Gospel of the Hereafter*. First published - by Hodder and Stoughton, Anna Buchan's publishers - in 1920, in pastoral response to the waste of young life in the War and the sufferings of mothers, the book went through at least twenty-eight British editions in the inter-war period. Here was an evangelical Christian opening up and pushing to the limits the subject of life after death and the sense of the presence of the departed. Anna Buchan likewise presents a sympathetic main-stream Christian alternative to spiritualism.

In sum, the immediate repercussion of the War was a deepening and extension of the traditional language of loss and consolation. "Millions needed all the help they could get" (Winter 76), and O. Douglas provided some of it.

The Rule and Exercises of Holy Dying

The novel contains, Kailyard-style, a number of deaths and death-bed scenes, of the young as well as the old, with appropriate spiritual reflections and insights into sometimes obscure biblical texts. It could be read, after Jeremy Taylor, as a book about Holy Dying. Was O. Douglas, like the writers of the Kailyard school, inclined to sentimentalism? Could it be said of her, as of Ian Maclaren, that "a disproportionate space is given to descriptions of deathbeds" and "the feelings are deliberately and cruelly harrowed by an accumulation of pathetic incidents and words" (Nicoll 180)? Maclaren/Watson "himself was aware of this" and put forward the following explanation:

We ministers rarely see the brighter side of life. We are tolerated at weddings, I admit; we are more at home at funerals. People do not ask a minister to share family festivities. He most often hears painful disclosure, and meets death from day to day. This is apt to have a very sobering effect on his mind (Nicoll 180-1).

In this respect, Ann is her father's daughter and like him "had an uncanny gift of pathos" (*Ann and Her Mother* 255). Yet these passages in her book, while deeply felt, are marked by emotional restraint, and each scene is carefully constructed to arrive at a quiet but moving close. Though the context is explicitly Christian, there is also a hint of ironic detachment. For example, she shows us the family sitting round the fire and reading aloud from Stevenson and Barrie on what turned out to be her father's last night on earth. The atmosphere is one of peace, security and contentment:

That Saturday night when we sat around the fire my heart was singing a song of thankfulness.....And as I looked at you and Father smiling at each other in the firelight I said in my heart, like Agag, "*Surely the bitterness of death is past!*" and the next day Father died. (268).

The biblical reference to Agag (1 Samuel 15) is precise and pointed: Agag came to Samuel "delicately" or lightly stepping, unprepared for the blow that fell suddenly. The point, or the effect, is duplicated a page later: her father may have died

appropriately “on the Sabbath afternoon, at the hour when his hands had so often been stretched in benediction” and in November when, with a suggestion of the pathetic fallacy, “the sun was going down behind the solemn round-backed hills”. But he was only

taken before the storm broke. Three months later the cable came that broke our hearts. Robbie had died after two days' illness on his way to Bombay to get the steamer for home. (268-9)

In reality, William Buchan came home and died in a Glasgow nursing-home after several months of illness. Anna Buchan, as novelist and not ultimately family chronicler, has here deliberately altered and telescoped the facts for the purpose of heightening the challenge to faith that death poses. “There's not much doubt about death's sting”, as she comments (*Ann and her Mother* 275). Her attitude is more complex and serious, even subversive, than the Kailyarders. But then the War has “intervened” and there can be no easy comfort or trite explanation.

It may be that behind the book, and colouring the tone of it, lies another hidden and private loss that set the future course of Anna Buchan's life. Questioning why she remained single, biographers have speculated on a possible romantic interest in her life. Sheila Scott thinks she “must surely have had opportunities of marrying” (37), while Wendy Forrester wonders if the Arthur of *Olivia in India* is drawn from life (41). Her minister, the Rev. A.G. Reekie, feeling bound to “respect her reserve”, only comments that “every life has a private agony” and acknowledges that “it is improbable that Anna's life was an exception”. He directs our attention to *The Proper Place*, where Nicole, learning of the death of her lover, with startling vehemence hurls a cry at the parish minister, “Does Christ mean anything to you?” (Reekie 31). Her nephew, William Buchan, lifts the curtain to reveal more:

I think, but can only really surmise since the evidence is scanty, that Anna, when young, loved and was loved by an extremely handsome and charming young minister, who went joyfully off to the 1914 war as an army padre, won the Military Cross, and was killed in action. There is some evidence of his affection for Anna and so, had he survived the war, life for her might have taken a

different turn. For the young minister was brilliant as well as brave and [had] a future in the Scottish church....(*Rags* 44).

In the Buchan family circle was just such a young minister, two or three years younger than Anna, Robbie Macmillan. Robbie was one of five children brought up in the Free Church manse in Ullapool and there seems to have been something of a family friendship between the Buchans and the Macmillans. John was a familiar acquaintance of Robbie's. Walter, the brother with whom Anna lived at Bank House, was a friend from student days of Ebenezer Macmillan who was called to South Africa to become minister of St. Andrew's, Pretoria. Among the Anna Buchan papers are copies of letters from the later 1930s and early 1940s to another brother Neil who appears to be an old friend. Indeed, there may be a covert reference to this brother under a slightly altered name in an otherwise unexplained reference on page 266 of *Ann and Her Mother* where Mrs. Douglas recalls a remark passed by "Neil MacDonald" in "his soft, Highland voice" when "he was staying with us once".

Robbie had gained his doctorate at the age of twenty-eight for a thesis on Kant's Critique of Judgment. At the outbreak of war he left his parish to become an army padre, serving first in France and later in Salonika. Then, training as a combatant, he was commissioned as an officer in the Seaforth Highlanders and, like Alistair Buchan, killed at Arras in 1917. John Buchan spoke at his funeral in words that Anna echoed in *The Setons*:

How are we to speak adequately of those who have made the great sacrifice? He has given his life for his country. Do you realize the tremendous meaning of that phrase? Most of us do not give our lives. They are taken from us slowly, bitterly, unwillingly. (J. Lang 9).

Anna reworks the passage in a letter that Elizabeth Seton writes to Arthur:

To die for one's country is a great privilege.....Most of us part from our lives reluctantly: they are taken from us, and we go with shivering, shrinking feet down to the brink of the River, but those

sons of the morning throw their lives from them and *spring* across.

(*The Setons* 267)

Dedicating a volume of sermons in 1935 to his brother Robbie “who went the way of sacrifice”, Ebenezer Macmillan acknowledges that he owes to his brother the “original suggestion” of three sermons, including one based on a rather recherché text from Jeremiah (ch.12 v.5) - “How wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?” (that is, “how will you face trouble and disaster?”) (E. Macmillan, Preface). A passage from the sermon, which gains significance in the light of Robbie's decision to go and fight and his subsequent death, is reproduced at the front of the book opposite the title-page as, presumably, the master-thought of the whole book and expressing the outlook of the dedicatee:

There are times and situations in life when the only chance of success is to risk everything at the point where failure seems inevitable. It is not a simple question of profit or loss. No moral decision ever is. It is the alternative of everything to lose and nothing to gain, nothing, except that we have not played false to the highest that we know.....

Anna Buchan uses the same text from Jeremiah as the heading for the penultimate chapter of *The Setons* dealing with the effect of the War on the community and the rising casualties. In the course of the chapter Elizabeth's friend, Kirsty, remonstrates with her young minister-husband, Andrew, who feels he must enlist as a combatant. Andrew explains: “don't think I am going with a light heart.....But because it is such a wrench to go, makes me sure that I ought to go” (273). When he is reported missing, O. Douglas comments in her own voice: “[Kirsty's] face has grown very patient, and I think she feels that if Andrew never comes back to her, she has wings which will some day carry her to him” (275).

In two other of her novels, she uses the name Robbie for men who died young. In *Ann and Her Mother* she gives it to her brother William; in later novels, Mirren Strang the novelist has a son called Robbie who is killed in the War. But there is one further significant connection. In *Eliza for Common* (1928), in a scene that may owe something to Chapter 3 of *A Window in Thrums*, Mrs.Laidlaw (alias Buchan) is giving

a party and wants to be found reading when her guests arrive. Dashing into the room and sinking into a chair, she calls for a book and feigns absorption in what happens to be handed to her, a volume with the forbidding if alliterative title of *The Crowning Phase of the Critical Philosophy* (94). O. Douglas omits the name of the author, who is - R.A.C. Macmillan. For this is Robbie Macmillan's book, the book of his doctoral dissertation published in 1912.

If these scattered hints and clues serve to show that Anna Buchan loved and lost Robbie Macmillan, then not only is an extra dimension of pathos added to the book but it can be understood why Ann, like Nicole Rutherford later, has resolved on spinsterhood. Not that she has succumbed to self-pity - on the contrary, she "braces" herself (as her mother puts it) by reflecting thus:

As you get older you realize that you have *no right to bliss*, and must make the best of what you have got.....It is a most miserable business to be obsessed by one's woes. The only thing to do is to stand a bit away from oneself and say, "You miserable atom, what are you whining about? Do you suppose the eternal scheme of things is going to be altered because *you* don't like it?" (291)

As part of the strength and comfort she can now offer others, O. Douglas propels her readers into facing the enigma of death and taking its measure. Her novel is a kind of *memento mori*, a handbook on dying, a spiritual preparation. As Marget comments after her Bunyanesque dream of heaven: "I'll mind ma dream an'it'll help me when ma time comes to gang" (299). But more importantly, readiness for death is readiness for life. Those who remain, having acknowledged death, are now able to move on; after the months of suspended living in "Dreams", the flow of life resumes at the end of the novel. This occurs after the final climactic recall of the death of Davie in the War, not obviously unexpected though "nothing told us he was no longer in the world" (283). Given the news when visiting a friend, Mrs. Douglas's response is superbly understated: "You neither spoke nor cried, but stood looking before you as if you were thinking very deeply about something, then 'I would like to go home', you said" (285). Later, she is able to reflect "that there is something very heartening about the continuity of life" and goes on to talk about her grandchildren, who bear the names as

well as the likenesses of the intervening generation. Rory "came into the world the day his grandfather went out of it" (300).

The world of the dead, that is, contains within itself the seeds of new life, as in the natural order. In the opening chapter, Mrs. Douglas and Ann are sitting in their living-room on a night in November ("with the fields like sponges, and the road a mere Slough of Despond, and the hills covered with mist most of the time, and the wind coming down the glen howling like an evil spirit" 5) going through a seedsman's catalogue and picturing the delphiniums in their garden in the summer to come. The grey that is "the colour of a November sky" (12) is counterpointed by the green of the Green Glen where their house is (is there an echo here of Jane Findlater's *The Green Graves of Balgowrie* which neatly encapsulates the idea of life from the dead?). Ann, we are told several times, like her cat Tatler has grey eyes: she embodies the spirit of autumn and the dying year and at the end (293) turning "serene grey eyes to her mother" declines the possibility of fruitful union with Philip Scott who is in any case a wraith-like figure. But having laid the ghosts of the past to rest and attained to a greater degree of acceptance and serenity, Ann can then resume her life in the present. "Middle age brings its compensations" (291). New life has sprung up: the "seeds" of the opening page have germinated and produced in the closing page.

Similarly, Mrs. Douglas is set free for the next stage of her life. Aged sixty (as Mrs. Buchan was too at this time), she is presented as if her life is played out. She has no future, no expectation of any change or development. She is her past - "her brood gone from her/her thoughts still as a mill". But according to John,

she rose above her sorrows and her frailty, and the last twenty years of her life [i.e. from the time when *Ann and her Mother* was written] were not only, I think, the happiest, but the most active (John Buchan, *Memory Hold the Door* 252).

She could have said with biblical Job (42:12) that the Lord blessed the latter part more than the first. It is as though, in collaborating on the book (which presumably she did) and revisiting earlier scenes, Mrs. Buchan was released from her past with its sorrows and tragedies and her soul brought out of prison.

Memory, its function and process, is the key to the book. Ostensibly, Ann's purpose in writing the *Life* of her mother is to provide a family memoir "so that the children when they grow up will know what a queer little grandmother was theirs" (12); in practice, the project is also therapeutic and helps both mother and daughter, as those left behind, to relinquish their old life, to die to it, recognizing that the past is indeed another country and they do things differently there. On the last pages the fire which has been the centre of the book and its making, almost a symbol of inspiration and an invocation of the shades, is "going out rapidly". Ann in kneeling at the hearth describes herself with ironic ambivalence as a "vestal virgin in a temple"(301). She may have rejected the possibility of natural issue, but in attending to the sacred fire she has had literary issue. She has brought forth, from what is not, a living work of literature.

Transition

She claims to have marked out her literary terrain. "Why shouldn't I become the writer for middle-aged women?" (220), she asks tongue-in-cheek, producing books that are "pleasant without being mawkish" (219). While there is an element of self-guying here, the reviewer in *The Glasgow Herald* took it at face value: "this is a book for the middle-aged, revealing dear, familiar things that were almost forgotten" ("Ann and Her Mother"). With a hint of self-mockery, she maintains she knows who she is writing for: a class of reader whose tastes and needs are not being met by contemporary writers. "Nowadays nobody writes the sort of book I like", complains her mother, "I do like a book that is clean and kind" (219). The criterion of admission to the *Life* as to the novel, from among the various characters in search of the author, is kind-heartedness, supposedly reflecting Mrs. Douglas's own nature which has no "acid" in it but is "just like strawberry jam" (250). But this comes with the suggestion of saving irony in the comments of Philip Scott, the reader within the novel, as Ann reports them to her mother:

"What he objects to most is the sweetness of it. He says, 'Put more acid into it.'"

"Into me, does he mean?"

"I suppose so. Mr. Scott evidently finds you insipid. We must change that at once. Tell me, now, about all the people you hated and who hated you".

Mrs. Douglas looked bewildered, and more than a little indignant.

"Nonsense, Ann. I'm sure I'm very glad to hear you have made me sweet - anything else would have been most undutiful....". (250)

Anna Buchan's next novel, *Pink Sugar*, is a defence of her mother's view of life and literature and that of "People like Ourselves" (the title of the 1938 omnibus edition of *Penny Plain*, *Pink Sugar*, and *Priorsford*) but she brings to that defence an ironic detachment and self-scrutiny that give the book an edge. Similarly, while *Ann and Her Mother* is a deeply felt book, the pathos is set off against the ambivalence of the authorial attitude.

The most explicitly Christian of her novels, appropriately so for the subject, *Ann and Her Mother* yet represents for Anna Buchan a transition both in her life and writing. While Martin Green draws attention to the influence of Barrie on the young Anna, the Anna of *Olivia in India*, the middle-aged Anna has moved closer in outlook to Ian Maclaren, whose favourite motto was "Be kind, for everyone is fighting a hard battle" (Nicoll 125). Developing a critique of evangelicalism, in *Kate Carnegie* (1896) Maclaren gives a scarcely disguised portrait of himself as a young man at the Free Kirk Divinity College, reacting against his "smug, self-contented, unctuous" fellow-students who had an eye mainly to the material opportunities of the ministry (171), railing against "the pharisaism of his church, against the provincialism of his college, against the Philistinism of Scottish life" (173), and reaching out to a more Catholic form of Christianity which "each of the arts hastened to aid" (174). Similarly Ann, looking back on her evangelical Free Church upbringing, takes issue with her mother on revivalism and conversion, two of the fundamentals of evangelicalism (*Ann and Her Mother* 117). Showing distaste towards the typical evangelist lacking in social refinement, she pillories him as - "some one with a smug face and a soapy manner, and a way of shaking hands as if he had a poached egg in the palm" (120). She is moving towards a broader outlook based on the classical triad of the good, the true and the beautiful. Just as Anna's youthful eyes had been opened to the place of beauty in life, when she tried to refurbish her parents' drawing room (42-44), so now she has

come to regard the world as being made “[un]pleasant” by “[un]tutored minds and manners”. (199). She has moved from being a daughter of the Free Church to heir of the Scottish Enlightenment, as becomes evident in her next novel, *Pink Sugar*.

University of Cape Town

Chapter 5
Heir to the Scottish Enlightenment:
Pink Sugar

With this novel, O.Douglas breaks new ground and looks at new aspects of her Scottish identity. First, she shows herself now to be a daughter not so much of the manse as of the Scottish Enlightenment. Second, she reveals a strong sense of place and turns to a particular part of the Scottish landscape which remains the setting for most of her future novels. Third, she finds and explores, with Scottish referents, the fictional genre which she adopts and sticks to: what Nicola Humble calls “the feminine middlebrow novel”. Throughout she maintains that *There is something to be said for the pink sugar view of life....* (166), asking both her characters and her readers the question, *Don't you think we were meant to be happy?* (166). With today's new “politics of happiness” (Toynbee 2006) and psychology of happiness, the question has once again become topical.

Scottish Enlightenment

Kirsty, a young woman of independent means, returns to her roots in the Scottish Borders where she rents and refurbishes a house near the village of Muirburn. She tries to do good in the community as well as temporarily providing a home for three motherless children. Finally she marries her war-wounded landlord. What on the surface appears to be a pastoral romance or a wish-fulfilment story, an enjoyable light read, a country idyll with no serpent in the garden or canker in the bud, is on another level an examination and defence of a certain outlook on life. The author is almost apologetic in tone, or self-deprecatory; and the title of the novel is not so much “outrageous” (Green 186) as self-mocking, as if to placate or propitiate cynical modern critics. The subject of the book – “her own favourite” to date among her novels (Lochhead) - is close to the author's heart. Her first novel, published before the War, was described by a friendly critic as “happy”; is it still possible or credible to produce “happy” work in the post-War world?

“Happy” is the word often used in connection with the work of the contemporary Scottish novelist, Alexander McCall Smith, who has been described as offering his own brand of “soothing benevolence” and has publicly “rapped the ‘miserabilism’ of low-life Scottish fiction”. He asks, “Why should we not feel good? Why should we not see how powerful is love, how healing is forgiveness, how cheering is humour?” If his idea of literature is “weirdly simple-minded” (Tonkin), the same could be said of O. Douglas. But their work can be defended when it is seen in its appropriate intellectual context - the ethical tradition of the Scottish Enlightenment.

Both writers give popular expression to this tradition- he consciously as an Edinburgh academic and legal philosopher, she from her general cultural inheritance and also perhaps through her reading of Jane Austen, who in many respects shared the outlook of the school. “Commentators have been...impressed by parallels – verbal and otherwise – between the novels [of Jane Austen] and works by Hume and Smith” (Knox-Shaw 348). Austen heeded the advice of Hutcheson, “father of the Scottish Enlightenment”, to “observe men in their common settings” (Knox-Shaw 347) and with Hume and Smith studied moral behaviour in everyday life. Similarly and from an even “sunnier” aspect, O. Douglas looked at how benevolence or the desire to promote happiness works out in the society she describes.

Typically, in an Austen novel, “central characters find their sympathies enlarged as their chastened pride leads them to a firmer grasp of the world around them” (Knox-Shaw 353). The plot-line of *Pink Sugar*, though developed lightly and humorously, is Kirsty’s growth towards self-knowledge. Till she came to Muirburn, she “didn’t know much about how people lived” (164), but she is “anxious to help” and prides herself on being able to do good and increase the happiness of others. Hutcheson identified both virtue and happiness with benevolence. Anticipating Bentham and the utilitarians, he held that the most excellent disposition is that “calm, stable, universal goodwill to all” which makes one determined “to desire the highest happiness of the greatest possible system of sensitive beings” (Sidgwick 201). While Kirsty may not be calm and stable, in Hutcheson’s lights her heart is in the right place: “I mean to make just as many people happy as I possibly can...I mean to live for others” (*Pink Sugar* 11). But towards the end of the novel, a chastened Kirsty reflects with comic ruefulness on her failures:

“When I came to Little Phantasy I meant to do so much”, she moaned, “and I’ve been such a hopeless failure. I was going to be a mother to the children, and I wasn’t wanted. I was going to cherish the village people, and they won’t be cherished. I tried to save dear little Nannie Tait, and I couldn’t. I was going to make Carty and Rob Brand happy, and I’ve done Rebecca out of a home. And now,” she turned reproachfully towards her suitor, “and now you come and offer to marry me out of pity”. (299-300)

The novelist is testing against the ambiguities and recalcitrances of life the neat formula of the philosopher: “that action is best which procures the greatest happiness for the greatest numbers, and the worst which in a like manner occasions misery” (Sidgwick 201). But eudaemonism does not fit easily with some of the dour unyielding villagers. Mr. Dixon the carter gruffly points out the material basis of morality: “it’s fine and easy to be guid if ye’re comfortable” (95). And Kirsty, momentarily uncertain of her ground, remembers Becky Sharp’s remark that she could be good if she had £2000 a year. “Your living for others, my dear, makes life very difficult for your friends” a friend points out to her (256) and another gives the advice, “Don’t expect too much, and don’t try to do too much for people” (23) - a common-sense corrective to philosophical high-mindedness. O.Douglas makes fictional comedy out of the gap or contradiction between intention and consequence, while sharing Hutcheson’s belief that kindness is the greatest moral quality or sentiment and happiness the summum bonum and one a large part of the other.

Towards this end, the virtues of “social agreeableness” and “amiability” rank high (see MacIntyre on Jane Austen 224). In O.Douglas as in Austen, much time is spent on “calling” and conversation for their own sake as the characters study to please. Alan Crawford, for example, father of the motherless children, has a very “engaging” manner and appears to exemplify Newman’s idea of a gentleman: “He had such a kind, interested way of talking to everyone. He deserved to be popular, for he had the gift of being able to say nice things that were also true; he had the knack of finding some attractive trait in unattractive people and bringing it into notice” (44). But Kirsty’s moral sense conveys to her that “he is perhaps a little bit too facile” (51) – is it coincidence that he shares a surname with Jane Austen’s Henry Crawford? - and she

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is clear in the end that she cannot marry him, not even for the sake of the children. Pink Sugar does not rule out, indeed requires, acuteness of judgment. But for O. Douglas as for Hutcheson, "kind good-will" remains "natural" (Hutcheson 44) and moral goodness "consists principally in the social and kind affections carrying us out beyond ourselves" (149).

Such affections flow from the "sympathetic sense", by which we enter into others' joys and sorrows. Courtesy is important here, as "the natural dress of virtue, the indication of those affections which are truly honourable and lovely" (Hutcheson 112). Hume too, following on from Hutcheson, regards good manners as "a kind of lesser morality, calculated for the ease of company and conversation" (209): society expects and demands "an attention even to trivial matters, in order to please" (265). Hume is echoed by McCall Smith: "Good manners depended on paying moral attention to others; it required one to treat them with complete moral seriousness, to understand their feelings and their needs" (McCall Smith 158). And in *Pink Sugar*, the virtue is represented by the "mid-Victorian" Anthony Hays and their "truly delightful" manners (70).

Hume takes up from Hutcheson also the idea of sympathy – the soft and tender side of benevolence, the fellow-feeling with the happiness and misery of others - as the basis of morality: "these principles of humanity and sympathy enter....deeply into all our sentiments" (231). Thus, Kirsty feels "heart-sorry" (*Pink Sugar* 50) for the wounded and angry Colonel Home whom she softens and rather abruptly converts ("there is something to be said for the pink sugar view of life", he concedes (166)) and finally marries. Similarly, the initially unresponsive Mrs. Tait, mother of the dying Nanny, in the end "canna' say enough about how kind she's been" (218). Kirsty's elderly and crotchety Aunt Fanny is won over by the Anthony Hays: "the quiet dignity....combined with the real warmth and kindness of their eyes, pleased her mightily" (70). And on the last pages of the novel even the stolid, "strictly utilitarian" Rebecca, sister of the minister, who has made a virtue of her unhappiness, wavers in her conviction that "it was not for her to cultivate the flowers of politeness and gentleness, and the desire to please" (310). The novelist, that is, exemplifies the philosopher's theories of how the "feelings" of love and tenderness "being delightful in themselves, are necessarily communicated to the spectators, and melt them into the

same fondness and delicacy” (Hume 257). The flow of sympathy strengthens social bonds which in turn promote human happiness and welfare.

These ends are to be achieved through the social exchanges of everyday life. Adam Smith’s *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, following Hume, yields “a more worldly account of sociability than had yet been current” (Knox-Shaw 347). Covering what Smith calls “the void of human life” (41), that is, “everyday life as a domain emptied of metaphysical structures” (Duncan 44), the practice of sympathy leads to

satisfaction in all the little occurrences of common life, in the company with which we spent the evening last night, in the entertainment that was set before us, in what was said and what was done, in all the little incidents of the present conversation (Adam Smith 41)

which is almost an apologia for an O. Douglas novel where nothing other than ordinary things happen. In this connection, “nothing is more graceful than habitual cheerfulness, which is always founded upon a peculiar relish for all the little pleasures which common occurrences afford”. We “readily sympathize” with such cheerfulness: “it inspires us with the same joy, and makes every trifle turn up to us in the same agreeable aspect in which it presents itself to the person endowed with this happy disposition” (Adam Smith 42). Or as Kirsty puts it more simply, “when one person is happy, he or she helps all the people around. It’s like a fire lighted” (139). And on the principle that “one finds what one looks for” (166), she finds mostly kind hearts and gentle people in Muirburn. What Smith proposes and O. Douglas disposes is a “structural dynamic” of sympathetic exchange as a “fundamental principle of human nature” (Duncan 41).

Such exchange turns on what Smith calls “propriety”, that is, a sort of balance of sympathy between what we think of ourselves and what we endeavour to imagine others think of us – seeing ourselves in the mirror of the other. At a climactic point in the novel, such an exchange takes place between two characters who are in a dialectical relationship: Kirsty, all sweetness and light, and Rebecca Brand, worthy but plain and ungracious. Rebecca tells Kirsty:

Your great idea is to have every one pleased and happy around you so that you may feel pleased and happy. It's a form of selfishness.....You're not the sort of person who would ever mean to hurt any one. You would always want to shower gifts on people and be kind to them and pet them, but did you ever think how irritating unwanted kindness can be to the recipient? Did you ever think how much more grace it requires to be a receiver than a giver? From the first I could feel you saying to yourself, " O, the poor plain good little thing! I must be kind to her and try to brighten life for her a little".....And you talked away about how you loved living in a homely simple way, trying to put yourself on a level with me.....(252)

Later, Rebecca, regretting her failure to sympathise with what Kirsty is trying to do, reflects that there might be a "happy mean" (310), that is, in Smith's terms, a "point of propriety", that would result in an accord of feeling. But at the time she is unyielding:

'You never liked me', said Kirsty.

'Is it necessary that *everyone* should like you?'

Kirsty winced at the tone. 'Of course not', she said quickly. (252)

If it is the case here, as Martin Green suggests, that "Anna Buchan has built into her story a very pertinent criticism of herself, as person and as writer" (188), then she is confirming Smith's insights in what is perhaps his most distinctive contribution to the developing ethical tradition. When, Smith says, I try to examine my own conduct, either to approve or condemn it, "I divide myself, as it were, into two persons", defendant and judge, or agent and the spectator "whose sentiments with regard to my own conduct I endeavour to enter into, by placing myself in his situation, and by considering how it would appear to me, when seen from that particular point of view" (Adam Smith 113). As with the author, so with her characters: at the end of the novel, Rebecca Brand supposes herself the spectator of her own behaviour (in Smith's terms) and "endeavour[s] to imagine what effect it would, in this light, produce upon" her (Adam Smith 112). Having "never really doubted that she was a thoroughly estimable

person” with “a soul above mere prettiness” (*Pink Sugar* 310-1); she now sees that “anybody else could have managed to buy some pretty things for her room....With something like a shock Rebecca realised that it was self-complacency that had made her keep everything as it had been” (311). Replacing the ugly ornaments on her dressing-table, she

went into the kitchen and made a pudding for the early dinner, not a plain rice pudding as she had at first intended, but a bread pudding with jam on the top, and switched white of egg to make an ornamentation. (312)

With this homely symbolism the book concludes: pink sugar has triumphed – or at least won the first round.

Kirsty and Rebecca are representative of two different moral outlooks - respectively, Enlightenment and Free Kirk - that are contrasted throughout the book in relation to churchmanship, the upbringing of children, the pleasures of life, death and judgment, and ultimately the nature of God Himself. But the divide is in the heart of the author. These are the two sides of Anna Buchan’s own nature and inheritance: like the philosophical movement, both the author and her novel are in “reaction from Calvinism” (192), for which, though, she has retained sympathy and amused affection. But she has moved towards a more positive and Hutchesonian view of human nature which “is indeed chargeable with many weaknesses.....but ‘tis free from all ultimate unprovoked malice; much influenced by some moral species or other, and abounding with some sorts of kind affections” (Hutcheson 110-1). Her book is an attempt to portray virtue, understood as benevolence and happiness, in “all her genuine and most engaging charms”: in Hume’s words, “the dismal dress falls off, with which many divines, and some philosophers have covered her; and nothing appears but gentleness, humanity, beneficence, affability; nay, even at proper intervals, play, frolic, and gaiety” (279). The play and frolic and irony, particularly in relation to Kirsty herself and the tongue-in-cheek title, help to save the novel from being saccharine or chocolate-boxy and to realise the author’s “sole purpose” which is “to make her votaries.....cheerful and happy” (Hume 279).

Or is it indeed the case that this novel and O. Douglas's other books paint too sugary a picture of life? The self-same question has been asked about Alexander McCall Smith (Batten), in many ways her spiritual heir and successor. A recent review of one of his books notes that though "not very much happens" it "reinforces the decency of the world". His characters are "people who rejoice in the ordinary decency of life. They do the right thing and they come off best at the end" (Crocker). Similarly, Kirsty believes that "things are bound to come right in the end in spite of so much that is ugly" (166). Describing herself as a "sentimentalist" (166), she reclaims the word "sentiment", which has declined since the time of Hutcheson, Hume and Smith:

Surely we want every crumb of pink sugar that we can get in this world. I do hate people who sneer at sentiment. What is sentiment after all? It's only a word for all that is decent and kind and loving in these warped little lives of ours.....(167)

Such moral virtue, in individuals or society, is an enhancement of life, a flowering of the human spirit. In this light, the significance of pink sugar becomes clear: rather than being sweet and cloying, it represents the end-result of a long process of moral refinement. It stands, therefore, for the ideal of polite and cultivated society, delineated by the eighteenth-century philosophers, that has to be first attained by labour and effort and then maintained by practice. After the War, O. Douglas is aware of the black chasm that can open up in the ground beneath.

Her outlook is close to that of McCall Smith (though where he is mellow and benign, she hints in her title at a light self-satire). A pointer to what he is doing may be given in his recent novel, "*The Sunday Philosophy Club*" (my italics) set in Edinburgh. He too, like the O. Douglas of *Pink Sugar*, stands for the moral tradition of the Scottish Enlightenment. Scorning "aggressive, vulgar, debased" attitudes, he has "shunned sensation while painting old-fashioned.....virtues" like "compassion, faith and fortitude" of the sort that leads to happiness for both self and society (Tonkin). Whether Anna Buchan was conscious of embodying such a philosophical system is a moot point. Perhaps what we have here, in Carl MacDougall's term, is more of a "conjunction" (29), similar to and parallel with a conjunction of another kind –

between O. Douglas and a landscape painter whose life overlapped with hers, James McIntosh Patrick.

Physical landscape

Anna Buchan's work from this point on may be viewed as part of the "new kind of self-conscious regionalism in fiction" in the early part of the twentieth-century (Keating 330). Where "Lawrence turned repeatedly to Nottinghamshire, Bennett to the Five Towns, Wells to the Home Counties" and of course Joyce, even in exile, to Dublin, O. Douglas took Peebles and the Scottish Borders as her own and made Priorsford, her fictional name for Peebles, "one of the best-loved places in modern fiction" (editorial introduction to "Such an Odd War"). Not all regional fiction was realistic: "there was also a far gentler evocation of local manners and customs that looked back to *Our Village* and *Cranford*, and.....was greatly enjoyed by large numbers of readers" (Keating 332). O. Douglas provided a Scottish version, but her sense of place and landscape was integral to her outlook on life as well.

From where she sat she could see the sun shining on the Hope Water through a willow which "grew aslant the brook", dipping its grey velvet pussy-pads into the shining ripples. Above, the ground rose steeply in a tangle of larch and rowan-trees – larches for the spring, and rowans for the autumn. There was comfort in the sight....(*Pink Sugar* 78)

Kirsty feels "almost too happy" in "Little Phantasy" (151), the house she has taken the lease of in the Borders where Anna Buchan herself lived. The landscape is hospitable and adapted to human habitation, providing comfort and, as the name of the Water suggests, hope. Its kindly nature makes for kind and happy people, the product of their environment: inscape and landscape correspond.

O. Douglas's vision of a pleasant rural landscape sympathetic to human life has its visual counterpart in the work of an artist whose life overlapped with hers, James McIntosh Patrick. He painted what he knew: the farmland roads of the Carse of Gowrie and the areas around Dundee. His enormously popular paintings present an

unchallenging, comfortable view of nature, a sort of dream image or “little phantasy”. The countryside is serene and homely, and there is scarcely a rain cloud anywhere. (O. Douglas, while mostly lyrical, cannot resist one satirical chapter (chapter 17), on “a pouring wet day, and the Sabbath” when, all diversion forbidden, Kirsty stands looking out at “the drenched, grey world” 192).

At different periods in Scottish cultural history, as Carl MacDougall maintains, there appears to be a correspondence between writer and artist that is not contrived but coincidental, as if each independently is responding to the world or experiencing it in the same distinctive way. Each one therefore reinforces the other and together they help to define the outlook of the time. In the case of O. Douglas and Patrick, both can be seen as reacting against wild Highland landscapes and elemental forces – the dramatic representations of mountain, loch, sea and sky that have been exported as the dominant image of Scotland - and portraying instead scenes that are softer and more domesticated.

And more reassuring to the human spirit after the traumatic disruption of war. In chapter 1, Kirsty describes a visit to the battle-sites:

It was an April day, with blinks of sun between wild beating showers of rain. My feet sank in the mud – *Somme mud*, how often I had read of it! There were the hats and long trench boots lying about, and here and there stood a frail wooden cross. Every inch of the ground had been black with the blood of our men – I could hardly put one foot before another as I thought of what each step must have meant to them as they struggled up against pitiless fire. On the summit there were three tall crosses – like Calvary...A party of four, two women and two men, had got out of a car and were walking over the ground near me. The men evidently knew the place of old, and one said to the other in tones almost of awe, “D’you see? There are *cowslips growing in the shell-holes*”. (9)

The cowslips represent the gentle things of nature that minister peace and happiness, like “the sound of the water, the crying of birds, and the sweet-scented air” (114).

Kirsty chides Colonel Home, the morose survivor of the War, for being ungrateful and unresponsive. He likes “to stare piercingly at all the terrible things in life”, while she turns away her head and looks at foxgloves. “One finds what one looks for” (166).

McIntosh Patrick, too, found what he looked for, in his case after the Second World War. Neither for him nor for her the “grandeur of soaring snow-peaks or dark lochs shadowed by majestic mountains” (*Pink Sugar* 177); instead, for both, the “pastoral beauty” of their own part of the country – the Borders in her case, the Angus countryside around Dundee in his. Coincidentally, in 1930, each was profiled and their work discussed in newspaper articles which were part of two different series, respectively “British Women Writers of Today” in *The Bulletin* and “Our Artists and their Work” in the *Dundee Evening Telegraph* (qtd. in Ron Thompson 17). Marion Lochhead in *The Bulletin* (October 23rd, 1930) viewed Anna Buchan in her context in Tweedside and in relation to John:

Mr. Buchan, however far he roams, cannot forget ‘the grey hills that cradle Tweed’; and the “O. Douglas” novels have something of the appeal of good letters written by a sympathetic sister at home to a brother abroad.

The word “cradle” suggests home and tranquillity and security. Earlier in the year, on April 14th in the *Dundee Evening Telegraph* McIntosh Patrick (1907-1998), thirty years younger than Anna Buchan, had already been identified as a significant landscape painter (“The Scottish Landscapes of J. McIntosh Patrick.”), though most of his subjects at this stage are conventionally concerned with the grandeur of nature. But in the 1930s he produced paintings, synthesized from sketches, of a pastoral landscape that was welcoming and reassuring; and after the Second World War, which he spent close to the Fronts in North Africa and Italy, he began to paint out of doors with his “easel in the field”. “Now if you go back and look at my early pictures, which were made up in the studio, you’ll find that they are the same only I didn’t realise at that time that you could find what you wanted in nature” (Billcliffe 29). One finds what one looks for, and he was looking to replace “the image of a wild and dramatic landscape with a more douce and settled vision” (Billcliffe 29-30). “He never wished to paint difficult pictures and sees little point in painting squalor and

misery” (30). In other words, he also thinks there is something to be said for the pink sugar view of life, and it is a view that for him as well as Anna Buchan rises out of nature itself: “Some artists see nature as gloomy and threatening. I don’t. I’ve always thought Nature a tremendously dignified sort of show, not at all frivolous, but a happy kind of thing...” (Ron Thompson 6). And the word “happy”, like the word “beauty”, echoes through his *obiter dicta*. On gardening: “have things in the garden that look happy”, he urged. On personal relations: “If people tried to be more friendly with each other without being false about it, instead of scowling as if each other wasn’t there, everyone would be much happier” (Ron Thompson 84 and 87). And on the same television programme of 1978, he gave it as his opinion that “we should teach people at a very young age that they had been born into a beautiful world. The ugly bits in it are the bits we did and we have made”. And a remark that sums up his whole outlook: “the world is a wonderful place. I simply can’t get enough of it” – the same sentiments as those of Kirsty in “Pink Sugar”: “Don’t you think we were meant to be happy?” (166)

There seems, then, to be an extraordinary kinship of spirit between Anna Buchan and James Patrick (sic!), or “conjunction” in MacDougall’s term (29). Together they express and help to shape the ethos of mid-twentieth century Scotland, which, representing something of the legacy of the Kailyard, may be described as “homeliness” or “couthiness”. One, like the other, “appears content to explore and re-explore places close at hand [and] familiar” (Ron Thompson 95). Each of them, painter and novelist, is rooted in a particular locality which helps to make and shape them, and their work bears testimony to place-names. “The titles of his paintings are a gazetteer of Angus farms and Perthshire hills, a litany which has been repeated with endless variations for forty years” (Billcliffe 29). O. Douglas has the same repeated litany of local names:

So Kirsty, nothing loth, named over the heights that guarded
Priorsford – Cademuir, Hundlehope, the Black Meldon.

“And these are our own Muirburn hills – Ratchell, so bare and
rubbed-looking, and Trehera leaning against it, and Hill o’ Men,
and big, hump-backed, solemn Cardon.....”. (45)

Each “got great satisfaction out of the bit of the world he [or she] was born into and never found anything better” (Ron Thompson 109); each delighted in the features of which landscape is composed, the small roads and byways, bridges and streams, as much as in the landscape itself.

The same description could be used interchangeably of the work of both: “charming portraits of domesticated rural settings” (Ron Thompson 3). Some of the scenes in *Pink Sugar* read like descriptions of Patrick paintings which give “a naturalistic rendering of the view in front of the painter” (Billcliffe 28):

Folding his arms on the parapet of the bridge he said, “This is the view I like best. You get the sweep of the river in front, and the green hillside with its grey boulders and whin-bushes, then Hawkshaw, battered but undefeated, with its bodyguard of ancient yews – don’t they look like the straggling remnant of an army? – and behind the Hawkshaw woods.”

Kirsty nodded. “they were clever people who planted that wood with its contrasts. The larches seem to laugh among the solemn pines...”. (*Pink Sugar* 162)

She shares his painterly eye for colour: “Tweed, like a broad silver ribbon in the sunshine, unwound itself, now between yellowing cornfields, and now through green marshy places, while the hills glowed like misty amethysts” (*Pink Sugar* 176). Similarly, in many of Patrick’s post-1960 works “the detail has been softened to the point of suggestion rather than deliberation as his brush became more loaded with paint” (Billcliffe 30). Throughout his work, Patrick used the same device of “a lane or hedge to lead the viewer into the painting” (28): for example, his “December Sunshine, Angus” shows a lane and its wall turning into the picture, a stream alongside it and trees following the curve of the road. O. Douglas’ scenes likewise show a sense of composition as well as “sincere feeling” for the qualities of the landscape (Billcliffe 28):

Of all the lovely glens in the pleasant land of Upper Tweeddale
there is none more lovely than Hopecarton. To reach it you must

leave the highroad at the beginning of Hopecarton village.....turn to your left, and cross the bridge, pass the school and the schoolhouse, follow the burn for a hundred yards or so, and you will find yourself in the “greenest glen shone on by the sun”.

It is narrow to start with, and the hills rise steeply on either side, but as you follow the burn the glen widens, and there are stretches of emerald turf running into the heather, banks of fragrant thyme, and one white hawthorn-tree which now, in the sweet o’ the year, stands snow-white, enchanted. (*Pink Sugar* 107)

Or:

It was a delightful walk from Little Phantasy to Hawkshaw Castle: down the garden by the side of the Hope Water to the bridge, a little way along the dusty highroad, and a short steep climb to the old keep. There was a cart-road which made a more gradual ascent, but Kirsty preferred the little path through the whins and the bushes of broom, green broom. (151)

What O. Douglas says of one of her characters (“Mr. Alan Crawford is by way of being an artist, and he sees things in pictures” 178) is true of the novelist herself. But she has a stronger sense of history than Patrick and historicizes her landscape (“That is Hawkshaw Castle, and there Mary Queen of Scots once stayed. Did you ever know anything so thrilling? It’s like living in a ballad” 19). This may be a reflection of the land itself, for “as soon as one is within sound of the Tweed one can feel the presence of history in the landscape” (Edwin Muir, *Scottish Journey* 45). More, “this landscape.....has a curious enchantment, the intimate magic of toy scenery invented by a child. These hills, so large in design and so small in scale, seem to be formed to be the home of fairies and gnomes; and the legends which have gathered round them are a real expression of the natural quality they possess”. (Edwin Muir, *Scottish Journey* 49). Thus, the Rev. Robert Brand remarks, “Don’t you know that Merlin once lived here, Merlin the Wizard?....This place is full of fairy-lore. Isn’t it odd to think that there is practically nothing changed in this green glen since Merlin ‘sang his wild songs in the morning of the world’”? (*Pink Sugar* 119). So where Patrick

approaches the land realistically or naturalistically, O. Douglas sees it (through the eyes of Jean Lang?) as a “Land of Romance”, where memory is a continued presence.

O. Douglas’ response to the landscape is matched in kind if not in articulation by that of another artist, her fellow-Borderer William Johnstone (1897-1981). The Eildon Hills, of which he has several powerful paintings, “made him an artist”, as he once remarked to Duncan MacMillan, who provides the following gloss: “with their mysterious symmetry, their associations with Thomas the Rhymer and, before him, with the battles of the Picts and the Romans, and even King Arthur, they do have an extraordinarily powerful presence in the landscape of his childhood” (Duncan MacMillan 64). Reminiscent of the Border hills, his major painting, “A Point in Time”, an abstract which he worked on between 1929 and 1938, is darkly evocative of “the continuing presence through time of the former inhabitants of his native landscape and his own identity with them” (64-5). Though Johnstone and O. Douglas may share a cultural inheritance and something of a psychical sensibility, his work is altogether more complex; and indeed Carl MacDougall suggests a conjunction or “shared vision” (29) between Johnstone and Hugh MacDiarmid.

O. Douglas’ affinities remain with James McIntosh Patrick. Together they break with the tradition in Scottish art and literature of using the landscape to reflect conflict and inner turmoil. Instead, their landscapes breathe gentleness and peace and minister balm to the spirit. If it is true that McIntosh Patrick’s is the dominant view of contemporary Scottish landscape – he was certainly “the most popular Scottish landscape artist of the 20th century” (“James McIntosh Patrick.”) - then O. Douglas reflects and reinforces that position. The same adjectives, “charming” and “cosy” and “comforting”, are used of both. Neither followed the trends of the time but remained faithful to their individual vision. They preferred an uncomplicated approach to their art, seeming to take their cue from the children’s hymn “The world looks very beautiful and full of joy to me”. You see what you are looking for.

Taking happiness, then, as the key to life in both the ethical and the created order of things – finding a harmony between moral and natural philosophy – O. Douglas needs a suitable fictional vehicle to convey her vision of life, and she finds it in the emerging “feminine middlebrow novel”.

The Feminine Middlebrow Novel

Nicola Humble has sought to establish a distinctive identity for this kind of fiction in the period from the end of the First World War to the mid-1950s. She argues that the cultural, social and political significance of such middlebrow writing has been “crucially” overlooked. Discussing the work of over thirty disparate writers, she looks at their shared concerns and suggests that a generic identity emerges through “a complex interplay between texts and the desires and self-images of their readers” (5) – and, we could add, the self-images of the authors too. Much of the material consists of “an enjoyable feminine ‘trivia’ of clothes, food, family, manners, romance, and so on” (5) – what Kirsty’s friend, Blanche, describes in a quotation as “the comfortable commonplaces, the small crises, the recurrent sentimentalities of domestic life” (*Pink Sugar* 6) – but this is combined with “an element of wry self-consciousness that allowed the reader to drift between ironic and complicit readings” (5). O. Douglas is not included but seems to fit the type. Martin Green may remark dismissively, “If one looks through the contemporary issues of the newspaper, *The Bulletin and Scots Pictorial*, one can see all the material of her [later] novels in unprocessed form”, consisting of “recipes and advertisements of clothes and furnishing...”. (214-5); but *Pink Sugar*, even in its title, also teases with a hint of self-mockery. O. Douglas specifically shares three of the common features of these novels: the creation of a domestic space, the exploration of new gender roles, and a “determined intertextuality” (Humble 47).

Domestic space

The woman decorating her home is a “much-repeated scene in the feminine middlebrow” (Humble 143), filling the gap left by the modernist literary project “which displaced a fully realized material environment in favour of subjective experience” (108). Further, “the woman’s ability to transform her surroundings is read as an index to her personality and creativity” (145). O. Douglas’ interiors reflect the outer landscape:

"I like a lot of colour in a country room, and I thought the white-panelled walls could stand the tulips and parrots. Isn't it luck that there should be a good oak floor when we have so many rugs?...."

Blanch laughed. "Yes, but I like best the big one in the middle. It makes me think of a meadow of bright flowers....But it's all charming: the dark old mahogany, and the white walls, and the bright chintzes, and the gentle colours of the rugs". (*Pink Sugar* 3)

Kirsty has chosen the part of the country she wants to live in and now she is furnishing and decorating her house in keeping with her natural environment. She loves blue, the colour of the sky, because "it's a happy colour" (13). One of the children's rooms "had pale primrose walls....and the chintz had a demure old-world pattern of bunches of primroses on a grey ground" (75).

The key word here is "old-world". The feminine middlebrow describes domestic space in "obsessive, coded detail" and "constructs the home as a text to be read for its ideological import" (Humble 108). O. Douglas is clearly not among the moderns. Indeed, she could be following the prescriptions of Lady Colin Campbell in her *Etiquette of Good Society*, 1898:

Elegant refinement should reign predominant, cheerfulness should go hand in hand with taste....Tables must be placed here, there, and everywhere, and yet not seem in the way: flowers or plants in vases, scattered about....But the drawing-room will not be complete, nor yet have its properly comfortable look about it, unless there are plenty of books to be found on the tables.....(Nicholson 105)

or of Mrs. H.J. Jennings who, in *Our Homes and How to Beautify Them*, 1902, insisted on what she called "The Grammar of Decoration":

The general effect should be restful, even, and devoid of any startling distractions....it wants judgment, well-considered care, a

reverent taste, a nice sense of colour, and a knowledge of what goes with what. (Nicholson 105)

Likewise for O. Douglas, interiors have to be tasteful, comfortable, lived-in, bookish, light and airy. Under the influence of the Glasgow art movement, Anna Buchan as a young woman had refurbished her parents' mid-Victorian drawing room – a formative experience which she recounts in three of her books: *Anna and her Mother*, *Eliza for Common*, and *Unforgettable, Unforgotten*. Now, she is consciously maintaining standards of taste over against the Art Deco style of the nineteen-twenties:

Before one could say Nijinsky the pale pastel shades that had reigned supreme on the walls of Mayfair for almost two decades were replaced by a riot of barbaric hues – jade green, purple, every variety of crimson and scarlet, and, above all, orange. (Osbert Lancaster, qtd. in Humble 114)

Garsington Manor, for example, after Lady Ottoline Morrell had redecorated it, was, according to Virginia Nicholson, daughter of Quentin Bell, variously described by visitors as “patched, gilded, and preposterous” and a “fluttering parrot-house of greens, reds, and yellows”, while Vanessa Bell, mother of Quentin, painted her bedroom at Charleston black with red stripes down the corners and the Bells’ front door in Gordon Square was “a startling bright vermilion” (Nicholson 115). The pink sugar style, by contrast, represents decorum, gentility and quiet taste, nothing that jars or shocks (although Bank House in Peebles had its famous red front door). Art does not exist for its own sake; it has to enhance life, and add to the natural world, and be pleasant to the eye of the beholder, as well as serviceable and restful.

Pink Sugar, then, becomes an aesthetico-moral standard by which characters are judged. The McCandlishes’ drawing-room, “like a show drawing-room in a furniture shop” (*Pink Sugar* 56), is not lived in; and, clear give-away, “Mrs. McCandlish did not care for many books lying about – nothing, she thought, gave a room such a littered look” (57). Lady Carruthers, vainly attempting to follow fashion, offends by her “bizarre raiment” (61) and has lost sight of the humanscale in her domestic furnishings (“Everything in the room was large....Kirsty felt crushed beneath it all”

179). The Griffith-Thomsons, dull and unimaginative, are introduced to demonstrate the blighting effect of people who “have nothing within themselves” (277). By contrast, Mr. and Mrs. Anthony Hay with their “delightful welcoming way” (188) have “a friendly entrance-hall, shabby as to furniture, but gay with flowers” (186). They represent civility, courtesy, and ceremony:

Mrs Hay laughed. “anybody can pour out tea surely; there is no art in it”. She was warming each cup with a little hot water which she poured back into the slop basin before she filled the cups with tea. The tea-pot stood on a little Dutch stand, four-square, with transparent porcelain sides through which glowed the light of a floating wick; it kept the tea hot without letting it boil. Mrs Hay had a white lace scarf over her white hair. Her rosy face wore an absorbed expression as she filled each cup carefully with fragrant tea, while a maid, standing beside her with a salver, carried them round one at a time. (187)

Described as “Victorian”, the Hays also represent the reassuring continuity of an older and more gracious way of life after the shock of the War and in face of the newer Bohemianism with its threat to the ordered forms of social life

Typically, the Bohemian was too busy living for art to notice the filthy mess.....The pigsty interior carried messages of rebellion, distaste for decorum, and determination to live outside the conventions. (Nicholson 102)

The view of life that Anna portrays in her books and, tongue in cheek, labels “Pink Sugar”, John aspires to live out in his English country house. His son William, in language that echoes his Aunt Anna, describes his father’s library at Elsfield:

Like many platitudes, the one about books furnishing a room is perfectly true. There is something about light falling – daylight or firelight or lamplight – on well-kept bindings, a variety of quiet colours; something about the faint smell of polished leather, and

paper and print, that gives a sense of security, a feeling of friendliness and fullness, with no more than a gentle hint that books are not there simply as furniture, but to encourage adventures of mind and heart. (William Buchan *John Buchan: A Memoir* 25)

This is exactly the style and ethos that the young Bohemians were reacting against. John Buchan, however, was not heir to his adopted way of life but had deliberately recreated or imitated it when he bought Elsfield after the War, consciously harking back to the Edwardian country houses he had first known when he went south of the Border as a young man and seeking now to preserve this way of life in the face of the economic forces threatening its survival. Ironically, his wife, Lady Susan Grosvenor, who was to the manner born, lacked some of the necessary accomplishments:

Suffice it to say my mother was not much good with indoor flowers....So my father took over. He liked to see flowers about the place.....cut flowers properly arranged in vases. He arranged them himself, sticking out the tip of his tongue, and arranged them very well, shedding on them the same powerful beam of concentration as he did on any other small job which might be conducive to *civilized order and general pleasantness*. [my italics] (25)

Pink Sugar opens significantly with Kirsty “arranging daffodils in a wide bowl”. (1)

When Anna’s writing is seen in conjunction with John’s constructed way of life, a whole series of cultural binary opposites comes into view. What the Buchans are to be identified with can be defined over against the other: decorum and bohemianism; convention and fashion; rural and urban; (Scottish) country life and (metropolitan) city life; family ties and individualism; rootedness in a community and a free-floating life-style. The Buchans stand for what the Book of Common Prayer calls “the maintenance of order and right living”, which promotes happiness and peace. Life, like nature, is meant to be pleasant and harmonious. One reflects the other and art is the servant of both, in attending to the garden or the landscape and in caring for personal and domestic appearances.

Kirsty Gilmour was standing at the toilet-table in her blue and white bedroom.

All the windows stood wide open, and the chintz curtains swayed gently in the warm wind. The room was dainty with spotless muslin covers and cushions. A great bowl of roses stood on the dressing-table. Kirsty herself was a vision of delight in a soft white dress and a shady hat trimmed with roses. (150)

“A vision of delight” – there is the pink sugar view of the world, in which the physical landscape matches personal and social life.

New gender roles

But, further, the feminine middlebrow “had a significant role in the negotiation of new class and gender identities”. Its very “feyness and frivolity” allowed it to explore new gender roles “which were otherwise perceived as dangerously disruptive of social values” (Humble 5). O. Douglas introduces several options. On the one hand, Kirsty, trying to convince herself that she could marry Alan Crawford for the sake of the children and “encourage him to go away a lot” (190), realises that would be a travesty when she recalls with a sigh the intimacy and comradeship of Pamela and Lewis Elliot. But on the other hand, Aunt Fanny, happy and contented, asserts “with quite unusual firmness” (233) that she has never regretted not marrying. A significant passage – significant for an understanding of the work of O. Douglas – occurs in chapter 18, when Kirsty in a London hotel encounters a woman, “sufficient to herself” and “with an air of well-being and content that was most comfortable to behold”, who, it transpires, lives and shares her life and work with a woman friend – “a man and a brother if ever there was one” (206). The words come from a popular symbol of abolitionism in the eighteenth century, the Wedgewood medallion, promoting the freedom of the slaves – ironically on the sugar plantations. In context, the phrase speaks of the liberation of women (or at least of those women who are financially independent) from the bonds of marriage. They now have a choice. They can *choose* to marry or to remain single or there is the possibility of a radical alternative to marriage, one which was as good as and equal to conventional marriage (as the slave was as good as and equal to his master) and within which there was equality and

companionship. Similarly, in a later novel, *Jane's Parlour*, the young Car observes and compares two different kinds of couple in a hotel dining-room:

At the next table sat two middle-aged women, plain of face and rather shabby as to clothes. They were absorbed in studying a map and deciding on a route. Probably, thought Car, they had jobs and lived together, getting away on Saturdays in their little car. They had quiet eyes and contented voices, and the girl envied them. She envied still more a young couple at another table, a girl with a laughing face and a boy who gazed at her adoringly. (344-5)

It would be misleading to read back into O. Douglas our twenty-first century conception of civil unions or same-sex marriages; but it remains the case that “female friendship plays an increasingly important part in Douglas’s work” (Sly 16) and here and there she indicates some sort of life partnership. The point is that singly or in tandem spinsterhood is affirmed as being a normal state of life – which it was of necessity for many women after the huge losses of men in the War. “Can’t I have a beautiful full life without a husband and family?” (*Pink Sugar* 208) was a pertinent question in the nineteen-twenties. Anna Buchan writes out of her own experience as a single woman to encourage all such others. As the tall lady in the hotel asserts, “I could hardly be happier that I am” (208). However, Kirsty finally accepts a proposal of marriage, as does Carty the children’s governess. But the novel ends with the spinster Rebecca Brand, “who faces the loss of her role (which was also Anna Buchan’s) as her brother’s housekeeper when he marries” (Sly 17), resolving to change her outlook on life. She realises she “need envy no one” (*Pink Sugar* 310), just as the tall lady could say she had “never envied any woman her husband” (208), and “it was in her own hands” to make her life rich.

A woman’s worth does not lie in a husband and family, though single women as householders can still have the happiness of children and being responsible for them. In what to a modern reader seems like a challenge or alternative to the conventional family, the pattern is emerging in the novels of a single heroine with children, or families without fathers. Child-rearing is uncoupled from marriage; men are not domestic necessities, at least not for those women with their own means of support.

But there is no sense of the rejection of men or rebellion against societal norms. Marriage, if it occurs, does not confer happiness; it crowns a happiness and fulfilment that are already there. Or conversely, “matrimony, in the case of a significant number of minor characters, seems to be, not the ideal goal of every woman, but a fall-back strategy for inadequate girls who aren’t up to the challenge of becoming a spinster” (Sly 15).

Independence of life is linked with home-ownership. If Anna Buchan was never herself a householder but moved from her parents’ home to her brother’s in Peebles, her heroines enjoy property rights. They are happily settled in their own homes or acquire and furbish them – homes that “seem to function as symbolic reflections of their occupants’ psyche” (Sly 14). Ann builds her “Dreams” in an isolated glen (*Ann and her Mother*); Jean Jardine owns and runs the family home, The Rigs, in Priorsford (*Penny Plain*); Kirsty leases the significantly named Little Phantasy and decorates it in accord with her own taste and ideas; Nicole Rutherford recognizes the Harbour House as her spiritual home when she first sees it (*The Proper Place*); and in *The House that is Our Own*, Isabel finds a new purpose and happiness in life when she acquires Glenbucho Place – and only afterwards does she meet and marry the previous owner.

The women’s world O.Douglas portrays is not in opposition to the man’s world but situated within it and fully accepting of its ways and norms. Though her novels may be profoundly “women-centred”, knitting together author, characters and readers “in a supportive and largely female community” (Sly 18), they are “avowedly conservative” (Sly 5). But women, or the women without men, take their place as self-sufficient and self-respecting equals. They are “happy and secure in their own identities, and recognized as important and valued members of their community” (Sly 15).

Intertextuality

One of the shared pleasures of this largely female world is reading, “a fundamental trope” in the feminine middlebrow novels “which demonstrate a continual pre-occupation with different types of writing and different readerly relationships to it”

(Humble 46). Novels “continually refer to other novels”, building up an intricate network of connections between texts and establishing the values and conventions of the genre. In O. Douglas, attitudes to literature become almost a touchstone of moral or even spiritual worth. Mrs. Duff-Whalley artlessly gives herself away when she remarks to Mirren Strang that writing is “a nice pastime” (*Pink Sugar* 139). She believes that her daughter Muriel could write if she tried because she has an “interesting” and “racy” style – “lots of dashes and exclamation points” (140). By contrast with the Rev. Robert Brand who longs to take in the Times Literary Supplement and borrows books from Colonel Home and Mirren Strang, the Rev. Norman McCandlish stands exposed as “not a great reader” and a man with “no passion for books” (57) who in consequence, it is indicated, does not write his own sermons. O. Douglas cannot resist treating him with withering sarcasm:

One book-case held all his belongings. There were many volumes of sermons by popular clergymen, and “Aids to Preachers”; several shelves were filled by well-bound editions of standard authors, but the minister evidently distrusted his own taste in modern literature, for whether in biography or poetry or fiction it was but poorly represented. (57)

But most of her characters love to read and share their experience of books. “It has been widely observed that the most unrealistic aspect of television soap operas is the fact that the characters themselves never watch television soap operas; unlike most consumers of popular culture, Douglas’s readers find their own activity reflected and thus validated by the texts they consume” (Sly 10).

But the author also validates her own novels in the same way. Her novelist-character, Mirren Strang, becomes her mouthpiece:

I’m sure I don’t know what made me write. It was in the War. I did what work I could, but I had some spare time when one simply did not dare to have spare time – and the thought came to me to write a book, something very simple that would make pleasant reading – you see, there’s nothing of Art for Art’s sake about me. I thought

of all the sad people, and the tired and anxious people, and the sick people. Have you ever had any one lie very ill in a nursing home while you haunted lending libraries and bookshops for something that would help through sleepless nights for him? If you have, you will know how difficult it is to get the right kind of books. Merely clever books are no use, for a very sick person has done with cleverness. You need a book very much less and very much more than that. So I tried my hand and produced "The Penny Whistle". I had no thought of money or anything else when I wrote it, and because it was a real cry from my own heart it touched the hearts of quite a lot of people. So I went on writing....(103)

But O. Douglas is not to be identified totally with her novelist-character. Mirren Strang confesses to have taken a dislike to the heroine of the particular novel she is writing in tandem with the novel we are reading: "she is a well-meaning creature", like Kirsty, "but she takes after Bunyan's creation 'the deplorable young woman named Dull' "(260). There is here again a suggestion of wry self-consciousness on the part of O. Douglas - and of ironic detachment. The Times Literary Supplement critic ("Pink Sugar"), taking Kirsty's advice ("if critics would read the books in bed they would always find something good in them" 106), may have confirmed that "the effect was most agreeable. It did not lead to sleep, but to a charitable view of the whole world...."(488). But O. Douglas, as she obliquely indicates, is aware that her book is not quite as simple as that. "After you've said my books are pleasant there isn't much more to say, is there?" Kirsty robustly replies "Lots" (105).

O. Douglas also positions herself and her writing in relation to the Findlater sisters, whose *Crossriggs* Kirsty is sandwiching with an unnamed contemporary novel that is "diabolically clever, but it slimes over things like a snail" (104). Mirren reads *Crossriggs* once a year and is "always desperately sorry" to finish it. Also daughters of a Free Church manse, these "spinster ladies", Kirsty points out, are not "in the least mawkish or miss-ish. They can beat the 'courageous but delicate' writers at their own game". But they "make you hate nastiness" and affirm niceness and offer strong, authentic comfort as bracing as "clean salt air" (104). Perhaps taking his cue from this

passage, Angus Macdonald couples the Findlaters and Anna Buchan and discusses them briefly, if problematically and rather patronizingly, as examples of Kailyard:

I am not contemptuous of this type of literature; in some hands it has reached quite a high level, both of pathos and of humour....and the ladies who have touched the subject have frequently adorned it. I can read at least part of the novels of "O. Douglas" (Miss Anna Buchan) and of the Misses Findlater with enjoyment; they can write well, and often very shrewdly (Miss Buchan in a style which reminds me of her brother), and they have had the good taste to see that the tradition must be modified and to some extent purged of its sentimentality. Yet even they are overweighted by the tradition....(163)

O. Douglas appears to share with the Kailyard writers a fondness for death-bed scenes, particularly of the young. Nannie Tait succumbs to consumption in the now dilapidated Hawkshaw Castle, the real-life Neidpath Castle associated with Mary Queen of Scots, in one of the finest passages in the book (end of chapter 21) with its two resonant motifs. The Queen's cry, "Would that I had died at Jedburgh", is combined with Bunyan's "silver slippers", used here as a symbol of the life of social pleasure in the big city that Nannie has been untimely deprived of. But whereas unexplained early deaths and pathetic situations are found in the Kailyard simply as tear-jerkers or for sentimental reasons, the pathos, as Anna Buchan recognised, being "apt to degenerate into 'the mild saut tear beloved in Zion' " (*Unforgettable, Unforgotten* 74), *Pink Sugar* is written against the background of the War and the holocaust of young lives and

the shadows are there because she knew so well the grief and the burden of existence. The happiness in her books is secured, despite the misfortunes, because she cherished every gleam in the dark, every joke in the gloom, every comfort in the struggle. (Reekie 26)

Within *Pink Sugar* she indicates her distance from the Kailyard in an allusion to Barrie. Kirsty complains that:

the village people aren't like book village people. I thought I would find a Jess and a Leeby in every cottage, but so far I've come across nothing but very stolid matrons. (99)

Muirburn is not Thrums and O. Douglas offers her critique of Kailyard as Kirsty learns not to look at life through literature. Unlike the Kailyard writers, she is not "chiefly concerned with stereotypical views of Scotland made humorously attractive for a readership which comprises many non-Scots" (Beth Dickson 341). But significantly some of the key books and writers, real or fictional, that she refers to in *Pink Sugar* are Scots and not metropolitan or even English. Her kind of feminine middlebrow is taking on an identity of its own, part national and part-ethical.

She is advocating a set of values and portraying a group of virtues - endurance, philanthropy and "contentment within a small community" (Beth Dickson 342) - that are productive of happiness. She had a "positive psychology" before psychotherapy coined the term. "By learning to express gratitude, to savour the day's pleasures and to nurture native strengths, a people can become more absorbed in their daily lives and satisfied with them" (Carey). As such "research" has "suggested", so O. Douglas demonstrated. Her books are about "good, gentle, scrupulous people who live on the bright side of life" (*Pink Sugar* 105), like the readership she is writing for. Her readers may not be intellectual, but neither are they sentimental; they have a bedrock of moral seriousness and want fiction that reflects or reinforces the decencies of life but at the same time gives pleasure and enjoyment.

In this light Anna Buchan considers the criticism of lack of plot in her books. John suggested the Burke and Hare murders, but Anna had the sense to stick to "the ordinary experiences of the average man or woman" (*Unforgettable, Unforgotten* 160, quoting Hardy), especially woman. She turned her lack of plot to her advantage, it became part of her success, because it allowed her to hold the mirror up to the quiet, uneventful lives of that largely-ignored section of the reading public, unrebelling women, especially widows and spinsters of whom there were many in the inter-war period and whose lives are made up of "the trivial round, the common task". She took "potentially stultifying conventions" and made of them the "expression of a humanly

satisfying life” (Beth Dickson 340) which was her own life. Her writing is a symbolization of her experience which accords with that of “millions” of (other) ordinary people who thereby “get immense comfort and pleasure” (*Unforgettable Unforgotten* 160). She quotes Kipling in defence of the simple tale-teller:

All’s well – all’s well aboard her – she’s left you far behind,
With a scent of old-world roses through the fog that ties you
blind....
She’s taking tired people to the Islands of the Blest.

And she adds, “in the war years, people needed any comfort they could get” (160).

From within her own novels, speaking through her characters some of whom are writers themselves, she tilts at fashionable litterateurs (“The world’s not as full of clever people as you would think, it’s only that the few there are are very vocal” (*Pink Sugar* 103) and offers a riposte to the current critical outlook: “the world is full of simple plain people who like plain things, and who are often very bewildered and unhappy” (104). “Plain people” is a much more broadly-based category than Virginia Woolf’s “Common Reader” who already belongs to the world of critical discourse. The plain reader, innocent of any literary theorizing, knows what a book is for: it does not exist for its own sake or in a special realm of art; it is there to comfort, strengthen and help; and while this may not be the final word on literature, it is arguably the first. So swinging from self-deprecation to a sort of uncertain defiance, Mirren Strang/Anna Buchan is ready to concede that her books may be “a sort of soothing syrup” (104). But if they are written with integrity and bring pleasure to people, the accusation is beside the point. O. Douglas champions her readers who “need” her (*Unforgettable, Unforgotten* 176) over against the critical establishment who would dismiss her work. She justifies her books as making for the greater happiness of a great number of people, and happiness is the end of life and literature alike: “It’s so lovely to think of all the sunshine and laughter that can lie between the two boards of a book” (101). Novels add to the sum total of happiness, by making both characters and readers happy. Or - here she challenges the reader as well as Colonel Home - “are you like Charlotte Bronte, who complained that life was bitter, brief, and blank’?” Or like

Rose Macaulay who, in her “brilliant” book, yet summed up life as a tale “Told by an Idiot”? (288)

O. Douglas can make such contestations, still within the feminine middlebrow, because the form is hybrid, “comprising a number of genres, from the romance and country-house novel, through domestic and family narratives to detective and children’s literature and the adolescent *Bildungsroman*” (Humble 4). *Pink Sugar* may represent yet another such genre, as the text itself signals. Colonel Home’s house is called “Phantasy” and the dowager house that he leases to Kirsty is called “Little Phantasy”. Kirsty creates her dream-home and fills it with children; Rebecca, too, “had been dreaming dreams about the Laird of Phantasy” (309). Mirren Strang, while deflating Kirsty’s dreams of helping people and doing things for a grateful village, at the same time is living in her imagination as a writer and providing “mild domestic fiction” (100) for the enjoyment of her readers. *Pink Sugar* can be viewed as Anna Buchan’s modest personal “phantasy” of owning her own house and having the means to appoint it as she will, of living comfortably with the society of friends and children, and of having all her domestic needs looked after. This is the function of the novelist as she saw it: to enhance and heighten life imaginatively; to provide a little phantasy that is rooted in ordinary life but goes beyond it; to offer a wish-fulfilment; and so to add to the sum total of human happiness. As with George MacDonald, author of *Phantastes*, so with Anna Buchan: the kind of phantasy that will fulfil this purpose, the quality of the imagination that needs to be brought to bear, is, broadly, Christian – but of a more humane and sympathetic kind than she had been brought up in. G.K. Chesterton, who also has this kind of imagination, provides the heading for the penultimate chapter of the novel: “The popular preference for a story with a happy ending is not a mere sweet stuff optimism; it is the remains of the old idea of the triumph of the dragon-slayer, the ultimate apotheosis of the man beloved of heaven” (289). The novel concludes with Rebecca seeing her room and her life with new eyes and making a “symbolical” (312) act of change and renewal. It is the apotheosis of *Pink Sugar*, the triumph of a particular brand of “soothing benevolence” (Tonkin).

O. Douglas has explored the ethical ideals of the Scottish Enlightenment, located her imagination in the gentle landscape of the Scottish Borders, and found the fictional form in which she feels at home. In so doing, she has unfolded new aspects of her life

and being and cultural inheritance. That is, her sense of identity is not essentialist but cumulative, as her sense of herself shifts and changes. "We always change in and to ourselves", remarked John Wesley on sitting for his portrait (323). In the various self-projections (rather than self-portraits) in her series of heroines, O. Douglas changes in and to herself and to her readers. A significant such change seems to take place after *Pink Sugar*.

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Chapter 6

Scottish Unionist:

The Proper Place (1926), *The Day of Small Things* (1930), *Taken by the Hand* (1935), *Jane's Parlour* (1937), *The House That is Our Own* (1940).

According to her biographer Sheila Scott (in conversation with the present writer), O. Douglas “got snobbier as she got older”. Martin Green makes the same observation but puts it more diplomatically: she “shifted her class loyalties” (189). In part, O. Douglas as writer was “participating in the general gentrification of the English imagination between the wars; vivid cases being Dorothy Sayers and Evelyn Waugh” (160). But Anna Buchan herself had moved into new social circles and much of her own life now as well as her novels centred on county families. For Green, this represents in literary terms a “serious diminishment” (219): her writing is not as sharp or felt, and there is less satire or bold wit (160).

On the other hand, it could be argued – and it is the contention of this chapter – that this new stage of her life and career marks an imaginative expansion and a widening of her range. She extends her sympathies to a different class of people many of whom find themselves going down in the world. She has become aware of the dynamics of social change and wider socio-economic questions. In this period, her brother John was involved in public life, sat as a member of parliament for eight years, and ended his career as a prominent Imperial statesman. In step with him, in this second half of her literary career, O. Douglas’ “old concern for public issues” (Green 224) comes into fuller expression in a series of novels that may be characterized as “political” as over against her “church” novels (*The Setons*, *Ann and Her Mother*, *Eliza for Common*). In them, she espouses the Unionist views of Stanley Baldwin who “rescued Conservatism from the hands of those who wished to make it the instrument of privilege and recreated it as a great national creed” (Bryant 179) and declared in 1923 shortly after becoming Prime Minister for the first time, “we in the Unionist Party are as anxious as anyone who speaks in the name of Socialism to do all in our power for the betterment of our people” (105). In similar vein, O. Douglas declares, speaking through one of her new heroines, Nicole Rutherford, “every decent person is a Socialist....I’m a Tory Democrat if there is such a thing” (*The Day of Small Things*

169). O. Douglas is reaching after a cohesive view of society, not pitting one class (or nation) against another but seeking to reconcile and unite.

Scotland and Scott

Unionism was the dominant political outlook of interwar Scotland. (Up to the late 1950s, the Conservative Party in Scotland was referred to as the Unionist Party). The period following the Union of the Parliaments of Scotland and England in 1707 had seen what Linda Colley calls “the invention of Britishness” and the development of an “explicitly British national sentiment” (x, xi), made more prominent and acceptable by the growth of Empire and the two World Wars. In this context, a new term was created and promoted for Scotland, North Britain, abbreviated to NB, which Anna Buchan seems to have accepted and used. A Buchan uncle, who appears to have been the renegade of the family, died in Australia in 1940. His headstone reads as follows:

In Memoriam
 Thomas Henderson Buchan
 of Peebles, NB
 At St. Paul's Rectory 1923-1938
 “Well Done Good and Faithful Servant”
 Obit.3.10.40, Aetat 79
 A Kindly Scot Lies here.

Anna Buchan suggested the addition of the last line in a letter to Australia of 23rd February 1941 in which she took responsibility for the expenses. Presumably therefore she approved of the other words, including “NB”. (Lee 9).

Yet in a paper headed “My Scotland”, she seems more ambivalent:

The few Englishmen who journeyed to North Britain entered upon the expedition with the air of heroic courage with which a modern traveller sets forth to explore the wild regions of a savage land.

On the one hand, the use of “North Britain” here may reflect both her own attitude and the outlook of her times, which accepted, for example, the name of the “North British” Hotel in Edinburgh, mentioned in her novels. On the other hand, the tone of

the paragraph is overall sarcastic and some of her characters are self-consciously nationalistic, as if they feel their Scottishness is threatened and must be worn as a badge. Behind this lies Scotland's sense of inferiority: "we were the poor relations of our rich English cousins", she says in the same paper, until Union opened up opportunities in England itself and more widely in the Empire. O. Douglas never questions the union of the two countries; the bond is fully accepted and supported. But she is constantly aware of the dual national identity of the Scots and hovers ironically between the two.

Scottish Unionism, as Stanley Baldwin pointed out in 1930 in his address to the Edinburgh Scott Club Dinner (*This Torch of Freedom* 165-7), was largely the creation a hundred years previously of Sir Walter Scott with his twin loves of Scotland and England. Scott was an admirer of Maria Edgeworth, regarding her as the interpreter of Ireland who by her writings "had helped to make more easy the passage of the Union" (that is, the Union between Ireland and Great Britain in 1801) (165). He thought he could do the same for Scotland. His opportunity came when he was put in charge of the ceremonial arrangements for the visit of King George the Fourth to Edinburgh in 1822, the first reigning monarch to set foot in Scotland since Charles I. Hoping to stir the old monarchical feeling of Scotland and attach it to the Hanoverian sovereign (John Buchan, *Sir Walter Scott* 240), he dressed the king in a kilt and made him propose a toast to "the Chieftains and Clans of Scotland" (Baldwin *This Torch of Freedom* 166) – which also had the effect of bringing the Highlands into a closer relation with Scottish life (John Buchan, *Sir Walter Scott* 242). Though all this initially felt "strange" (Baldwin, *This Torch of Freedom* 166) to Scotsmen themselves, a tradition had been invented, the visit was an resounding success, and "the monarchy had won a new popularity in Scotland" (John Buchan, *Sir Walter Scott* 242). As Gladstone later observed, "Sir Walter had made Scotland", even if he had made it in his own image (qtd. in Baldwin, *This Torch of Freedom* 166).

Scottish and English upper-class life became conjoined. There had been a "gradual melding and blending of the separate elites of England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland into a new supra-national formation" (Cannadine, *Aspects of Aristocracy* 25). Now the Scottish national belonged to two worlds at the same time – and was sent to school in England:

Sir Walter said Border Scots was a fine foundation for Eton, and so it proved. The boys came home from school speaking correct English, but always able, at a moment's notice, to drop into the speech of their childhood. (*The Proper Place* 24)

O. Douglas felt a close affiliation with "Sir Walter" – not the Scott of the novels, but the Scott of the *Journal* which he kept intermittently in the last years of his life. Whereas in his novels he employed what he called "the Big Bow-wow strain", his *Journal*, appropriately, records "the involvements and feelings and characters of ordinary life" (155), sometimes in Edinburgh or London but mostly in Abbotsford, the large country house he had built in his ancestral Borders, where he lived on terms of easy familiarity and mutual respect with his employees. "The servants, indoors and outdoors, were like members of one family", especially the loyal Tom Purdie who in the style of old Scots retainers "used complete freedom with his master" (John Buchan, *Sir Walter Scott* 221).

O. Douglas's later novels revolve around the life of similar country houses in the Borders. Such "Places" function as a microcosm of her ideal of British society in which the different nations and classes are united in mutual respect and dependence. Kathryn Eliot, the English-born lady of the house in *Jane's Parlour*, is "profoundly" interested in everything that happens in her own home, where in an echo of John Buchan's description of Scott, "the servants, in the house and on the estate, were her friends" (133) and she "talks to her servants and people about the place as if they were blood relations" (246). Likewise, Lady Jane Rutherford, from an English aristocratic family, enjoys "going quietly in and out among her old friends in the cottages" on the estate and does the same with her neighbours in the Fife village of Kirkmeikle where she has to move to later for financial reasons. (Significantly or coincidentally, Rutherford was the maiden name of Scott's mother.) Referring to the "new people in the old places", Lady Jane comments that "that's apt to be where the difference comes in," that "there is no link between them of shared experience" and they are unlikely to "try to establish relations with the people who serve them" because "they are mostly people who have made their own money, and they look at everything from a business

point of view, which means that they want their money's worth and have no use for sentiment" (*The Day of Small Things* 172).

In these later novels, then, O. Douglas reflects Scott's Unionist views of the relations between Scotland and England and between different classes of people.

Baldwin

Scott also proved a formative influence on the views and way of life of the most persuasive advocate of Unionism in the inter-war period, Stanley Baldwin, leader of the Conservative and Unionist Party, three times Prime Minister, and dominant influence in the National Government of 1931-35. Baldwin's speeches and addresses, mostly extra-parliamentary, on Britain and the Empire and a variety of social, cultural and literary topics, were collected and published in a series of volumes: *On England* (1926), *Our Inheritance* (1928), *This Torch of Freedom* (1935), and *Service of Our Lives* (1937).

Becoming a very wealthy man through his family business, Baldwin in 1902 acquired the property of Astley Hall in his native Worcestershire, where he too lived the life of a country landowner. The house had "eight indoor servants, a butler, ten gardeners and a chauffeur" and "the estate was some hundred acres with tenant farms". Baldwin "liked.....talking to farmers and farm labourers" (Young 11). Like Scott he felt rooted in the land and the community. In an address to the Edinburgh Sir Walter Scott Club in 1930 Baldwin acknowledged that Scott's *Journal* along with Lockhart's *Life of Scott* had been "the companions of my pilgrimage" (*This Torch of Freedom* 157) and in the same speech talking of Scott unwittingly gave a portrait of himself and the attitudes he had brought to his political office: "The industrial revolution was far from him; he was the soul of feudalism in its highest sense. His scheme of society was feudal alike in its simplicity and its nobility" (168-9). While to twenty-first century ears this may sound reactionary and indeed objectionable, Baldwin was using the word "feudal" in a broader sense to indicate a society which though unequal was yet based on mutual support and service. To show what he meant, he referred to Scott making work "for a score or more of additional labourers on his estate" to save them from destitution (169). In the same way, Baldwin himself continued to pay the wages

of old men who sat on the handles of their wheel-barrows and smoked their pipes. When Scott faced bankruptcy, he remained loyal to those who were dependent on him – “this news will make sad hearts at Darnick and in the cottages at Abbotsford”, as Baldwin quotes from the *Journal* (169).

Baldwin, then, took Scott as his role-model and exemplar; they shared the same view that society is united when each person “realized his duty to his own community, and fulfilled it” (169). He believed that not the structure but what he thought of as the spirit of an older form of society could offer a solution to contemporary problems and it was in this way that he countered Socialism. Claiming to understand the appeal of Socialism and eschewing adversarial politics, Baldwin articulated a view of society as inclusive and interdependent, one to which all belonged and in which all had a role. He took as his model of the ideal society the iron-works of his family business and the life of the countryside. For him, the countryside was a “stable, organic, harmonious Burkeian” community, “well ordered in its ‘cohesive inequality’ ”, in which “identities were individual and personal, and were reinforced by a shared sense of ancestral roots and historic associations” (Cannadine *Class* 139). Here, he was convinced, lay the best antidote to the “unnatural, shallow, and transient” divisions of the modern world (139). His aim was not to return to the world he had known as a boy and young man but to restore what he regarded as its more wholesome and consensual outlook.

Thus, Unionism for Baldwin meant in the first place the union of classes (in England). The Unionist Party was “unionist in the sense that we stand for the union of those two nations of which Disraeli spoke two generations ago; union among our own people to make one nation of our own people at home” (qtd. in Cannadine *Class* 138). He made his appeal not to any one class or group of people over against the others but to the nation as a whole. “I want to be a healer, and I believe that as these things have to be done through the instrumentality of parties, the Unionist Party is the one upon which the country must lean if it desires these ends” (Bryant 105). He rejected the division of Englishmen into classes: “the gentry....the middle classes....the lower classes” – these were “old invidious expressions” (Cannadine *Class* 138). He felt there was only one thing “worth giving one’s whole strength to, and that is the binding together of all

classes of people in an effort to make life in this country better in every sense of the word" (Baldwin, *On England* 12-13).

Unionism for Baldwin also meant the Union of England and Scotland. The Union depended on each side maintaining its self-respect and sense of itself while freely recognizing and accepting the strengths and qualities of the other. It was a union in which, Chalcedonian-like, the two were to be acknowledged as two "without confusion, without conversion, without division, never to be separated", the differences being in no way removed because of the Union but rather the characteristic property of each being preserved. Let the Scotsman, said Baldwin on the occasion of receiving the Freedom of Edinburgh in 1926, be content to be a Scotsman and not attempt to be anything else. "Let him contribute to that common stock that makes up the character of the British race" those "sound and peculiar characteristics of his own": the thrift that "arises from independence of character and determination to stand on one's own feet"; the love of education for its own sake; and the spirit of adventure that has taken him to the Dominions and into the Government services of India and the East. Such "magnificent" material is "complementary and supplementary to the gifts that the Englishman brings, making it one complete and great whole" (*Our Inheritance* 38-40). If the Union was to be strong and vital – if Scotland and England are to continue to do what Scott enabled them to do and "smile at each other across the Border" (*This Torch of Freedom* 167) – then Scotland needed to have a sense of its own national identity. It was precisely because Baldwin was so confirmed in his own Englishness that he could be trusted as leader of the whole. He had "no axe to grind" (*The Day of Small Things* 101). When he said "England" he meant England, and when he said "Great Britain", he meant Great Britain. Indeed, in himself he represented Union, his mother, as he often pointed out, being half-Welsh and half-Scottish.

But further, Unionism for Baldwin also meant the union of the British nations in the Empire. The Report of the Committee of Inter-Imperial Relations to the Imperial Conference of 1926, which Baldwin presided over, formulated a conception of the Empire in which the Crown was central. The formula, as Baldwin explained in a speech in Ottawa the following year, was founded on two principles: the essential

equality of status of all the self-governing parts of the Empire, and the unity of the whole Empire under the Crown (*Our Inheritance* 197).

It was this view of society, the nation, and the Empire that O. Douglas identified with and endorsed in her later novels, as this chapter aims to show. She was in sympathy with Baldwin's political aims. He "realised early the struggle that must result to repair the cracks in the foundations of our civilization, and to restore to the country that level of prosperity which she had enjoyed before the War" when "we felt the foundations of civilization in Europe *cracking*" (*On England* 46, my italics). John Buchan uses the same word when describing how a change came over the scene in 1917: "Ancient constitutions began to *crack*, old faiths to be questioned, potent, undreamed-of powers to be released. Everywhere in the world was heard the sound of things breaking". (*The King's Grace* 183). So, earlier, did O. Douglas in *The Setons* (1917): "in that year [1914] certainty came to an end, plans ceased to come to fruition - ...in fact, the lives of all of us *cracked* across" (252). What Baldwin tried to do politically, O. Douglas depicts people doing in their personal lives – holding things together in changed and changing circumstances.

She was in sympathy too with Baldwin the man. Apparently ordinary and unpretentious, he gave voters a comforting sense of reassurance in an age of anxiety. The pipe invariably in his hand or mouth "had a tranquillizing, homely and pacifying effect" (Bryant 120). "Comfy" was a vogue word of the age of Baldwin and when he took to broadcasting his style was "as appropriate to the listener's sitting-room as a comfy armchair" (Young 47), unlike, for example, Lloyd George who continued to be demagogic behind the microphone. "Comfortable" was also a favourite word with O. Douglas. For her in the domestic sphere, as for Baldwin in the political, comfort is only attainable as a result of good order and management.

She shared too his feeling for the country life. Baldwin was a countryman, rooted in Worcestershire and love of locality and the history of his own landscape as Scott and the Buchans were in the Borders. This was the source of all his political thinking. Reflecting on "the tradition of service in a free country by free men" (*This Torch of Freedom* 26) which though always "aristocratic" was "never oligarchic" (65), he identifies this tradition, quoting the legal historian F.W. Maitland, as "government by

justices of the peace – government, that is, by country-gentlemen” (64). The ideal remains in the 1930s novels of O. Douglas: Tim Eliot not only puts his efforts into retaining ownership of his estate, Eliotstoun, but plays his part in local affairs (*Jane’s Parlour*), while Andrew Jackson fulfils his parents’ hopes and ambitions by adopting the role and responsibilities of the position his father has bought for him (*The Day of Small Things, Jane’s Parlour*).

For Baldwin, “England is the country and the country is England” (*On England*, 6) and came to him through his senses. He could prove lyrical in his evocation of the sights, sounds and scents of the English countryside as in his speech, published in his 1926 volume, at the Annual Dinner of the Royal Society of St. George in 1924: “the tinkle of the hammer on the anvil in the country smithy, the cornrake on a dewy morning, the sound of the scythe against the whetstone...the sight of a plough team coming over the brow of a hill.....the smell of wood smoke coming up in an autumn evening” (7). O. Douglas has a remarkably similar passage about the Border countryside in *Pink Sugar*, published in the same year as Baldwin delivered his speech:

She heard the first stirrings of life in the village – the *tinka tink* from the smiddy, the lowing of the cows going to be milked, the clatter of cans as they were brought to the back door....She smelt the woodsmoke from newly-kindled fires...(89)

O. Douglas, then, is in accord with Baldwin’s outlook, both political and personal, and his sense of rooted values, and her later novels echo and endorse his views, sometimes openly. In this light, the dates of publication may be significant, coinciding as they do with the highs or lows of Baldwin’s political career. Baldwin, man and name, could almost be viewed as a marker and framing device in what comes to be a series of novels. If *The Proper Place* (1926) is the prelude or trail-blazer, the series opens with *The Day of Small Things* (1930) in which Baldwin’s political leadership is paid tribute to, and closes with *The House that is our Own* (1940), set in the year of Baldwin’s retirement.

John and Susan Buchan

Baldwin's views were also shared by John Buchan who adopted a similar way of life. Impressed with the English country houses where he had been a guest as a young man, Buchan in 1920 acquired Elsfield, an Elizabethan manor house near Oxford, and, while commuting to his London publisher's office, like Baldwin – and like Scott before him - also set up as country gentleman. He entertained the leading political and literary figures of the day, looked after his estate, and cared for the employees and the villagers in their cottages. Working closely with Baldwin from the time he first took office in 1922, Buchan later himself sat as Unionist M.P. for the Scottish Universities from 1927 to 1935. G.M. Trevelyan dedicated his *Ramillies and the Union with Scotland* to "that true Scot, John Buchan" in "a pledge of 'union' and friendship". To mark the Silver Jubilee of King George the Fifth and Queen Mary in 1935, Buchan published *The King's Grace*, an overview of the reign, in which the King is seen as the embodiment and anchor of the British nation. The Union is expressed in, and held together by, common loyalty to the Crown, the "mystical, indivisible centre of national union" and "the point around which coheres the nation's sense of a continuing personality" (12). The Crown is also the binding force of the Empire and the apex of the whole hierarchical structure. Something of the same outlook is reflected in his sister's novels of the period.

But Susan, John's wife, "another 'vanished' woman writer" (Sly 13), may have been a more direct influence. Susan's relatives "were mainly landowners in a large or small way who moved to and from the country" (Tweedsmuir "Anna" 41), and it is this stratum of society that she portrayed in her own fictional work. Initially, her relationship with her new sister-in-law appeared not to have been easy. Apart from the emotional complication of Anna's strong attachment to John and her sense of loss at his marriage, the two women "literally spoke different languages" (40) and came from different worlds. Significantly, all that Susan knew of Scotland was what she had glimpsed "by staying in several large country houses, amongst parties of people assembled for shooting and fishing" (41). At this stage, Susan tells us, "Anna was not much interested in my life, and I felt it was up to me to understand hers". The passage of the years, however, brought them closer. They "wrote weekly to each other" (47) and, in addition to family news and daily doings, presumably shared literary interests

and discussed their work. Certainly their books of this period show a remarkable convergence and similarity of theme.

Both would appear to subscribe to the contemporary literary cult of the country house, as represented by such novelists as Francis Brett Young, Evelyn Waugh, P.G. Wodehouse, and Vita Sackville-West. But whereas in such writers "it is the mansion, rather than the inhabitants, which dominates the story" through a haze of nostalgia and sentimental deference (Cannadine, *Aristocracy* 243), Susan and Anna focus more on the inhabitants and show them as sensible, adaptable and resilient, trying to maintain their values in the face of social change or adversity. While deeply concerned with contemporary problems and mass unemployment, both writers believed that the spirit and attitudes of the older type of organic community could yet provide the answer, that the old values still held good.

Arabella Takes Charge, Susan's children's book of 1934, is set in the context of changing times and financial stringency: "England's going down with the old families breaking up" (5). Jane, a widow, may have to sell her country house in order to educate her children, who consist of one girl, Arabella, and three boys, Jim, Bill, and Sam. The children (like the young Buchans, Anna and her three brothers) are very naughty and often in trouble. Arabella joins in all her brother's activities and is especially close to Jim (as the young Anna was to John). The children devise a plan to save the situation and, in the absence of their mother who has gone to London, open the house to the public. Inevitably, there is a burglary, by an unemployed man (as in *Priorsford*). But in the end mother remarries and the house is secured for the family.

Conservative but like Baldwin no social reactionary, in *The Scent of Water* (1937) a novel for adults, Susan Tweedsmuir (as she had now become), draws on her own experience as a social activist in the Welsh valleys. The central character, Margaret, goes to visit and help a friend working in a "Settlement" in a Welsh mining village where many people are out of work. She has been prompted by a remark of her aunt-guardian with whom she lives in London: "You young people don't come in contact with the poor as we did.....We all did some piece of work, like teaching in the Sunday School or visiting sick people...We ran in and out of the cottages in the village as children and the village people were all our greatest friends" (20). The old order may

be changing and the old hierarchical society may be under pressure, but its contemporary representatives are ready to adapt and adopt a wider sense of social responsibility.

The Silver Ball (1943) is a novel of country life between the wars, a life "which can never again be the same" (4) because new economic forces have come into play in consequence of the War. After her husband's death, Katherine Gray has sacrificed herself to keep her country estate; but her son Richard, the heir, goes to London, marries a girl-about-town who has no interest in the country, and subsequently sells the estate. The new owner of the estate, London-oriented, is indifferent to his cottagers and ready to evict them. Katherine moves to a small house on the estate where she "jogged along intent on small duties" (53). Her daughter-in-law, Margaret, hard and selfish and materialistic, "does not care much" for the poor (32). Nor does she know how to behave: "She was never taught manners. Her mother was divorced by her father, and she never had any home life" (147). To amuse herself during a stay in the village, Margaret makes a set at a young man. (A similar suggestion of marital disloyalty, new and daring for O. Douglas, occurs in her final novel, *The House that is Our Own* (1940)). In the end, all is satisfactorily resolved when Katherine conveniently marries another landowner and so regains her proper place.

Women and social class

O. Douglas and her sister-in-law Susan Buchan (Tweedsmuir) share a common outlook and set of social values and there seems to have been some literary cross-fertilization. Both of them look at the effect of social change on a particular class through the eyes of the women of that class who are often the main actors and agents. O. Douglas had not only come to know the country house for herself through her annual visits to Elsfield but her own social position and sense of self-identity had altered. The renegade uncle, visiting Scotland in 1926, wrote back to Australia:

I did not see Anna when I was in Scotland as she was staying in Gala Lodge her country house about ten miles from Peebles on the River Tweed. She had some swell people with her, the Hon.

something Grosvenor etc., so I suppose she thought I would not fit in....(Lee 6)

While this is carelessly said – Gala Lodge did not belong to Anna but had been inherited by her mother and was not a country estate but a substantial villa on the main road leading out of Broughton – Thomas Buchan is nevertheless indicating O. Douglas's shift in social status. She writes as something of an insider when she shows us what her nephew calls this "principled, well-conducted class of gentlefolk", and especially its women, "courageously, humorously, accepting the decline of a way of life which once they thought enduring" (William Buchan, *The Rags of Time* 44-5).

In writing about such people, O. Douglas could be thought of as elitist. But there are different Scotlands and Border lairds have their place as much as the urban working-classes who have featured prominently in twentieth-century literature. The crux surely is in the treatment and O. Douglas clearly rejects exclusive or snobbish attitudes. She shows her dislike of the cool and socially calculating Barbara Jackson (in *The Proper Place*, *The Day of Small Things*, and *Jane's Parlour*) and lampoons as the embodiment of outrageous snobbery the nouveau-riche social climber Mrs. Duff-Whalley, a recurring character, who may be based on a real-life character in Peebles. One of her favourite characters is the blue-blooded Nicole Rutherford who, "born expansive", wants "to know everybody there is to know, butcher and baker and candlestick-maker" and "even the people who live in the smart villas" (*The Proper Place* 75-6). But the touchstone by whom all are judged is Mrs. (later Lady) Jackson, a generous-hearted Glasgow woman devoid alike of class-consciousness and self-consciousness who though she has risen on the social scale remains natural, unaffected, comical and "warms the world" (*Jane's Parlour* 254). With her broad humanity, racy speech, and unconscious kindly humour, she lifts every scene in the novels in which she appears. She is neither ashamed of her origins nor proud in her new position:

You see, though Mr. Jackson has been so successful and we live in style and all that, we're plain people, indeed it's not so long since we were working people. My own father rose from being a workman to a master, so did Mr. Jackson's. It's just the way of the

world, some rise and some go down. I wasn't envious when I was down, and I hope I'm not proud when I'm up. (*The Day of Small Things* 202)

Humorously complaining of her daughter-in-law's "duchess of a head housemaid" (*Jane's Parlour* 315), Lady Jackson relates at the lunch-table that

When she brought me in my tea this morning I fair cowered in my bed. I hardly dared say good-morning to her, me that likes a chat with the maids, just by way of showing an interest, you know. And it's not just show either for I like to hear about their homes and if they've a mother living. I was awful pleased once when I was able to help a chambermaid in a hotel who told me she'd got into a scrape. But Barbara's duchess encourages no liberties.

O. Douglas here is the counterpart of Henry Grey Graham who observed in his classic *Scottish Men of Letters in the Eighteenth Century*:

High-born ladies of those days did not keep aloof from the common affairs of the common people; they spoke the broad Scots tongue themselves, and the work of byre and barn, the wooings of servants and ploughmen, were of lively interest to them in their parlour and drawing-room.....(327)

Complaining that up until very recently in Scottish social and historical writing the existence of women has gone "unremarked", their contribution to family and community "unnoticed", Joy Hendry comments that "the liveliest and most detailed account of the texture of life for a clever, ennobled Scotswoman comes from Henry Gray Graham, a century ago" and he "even manages to work in lively accounts of the antics of women of the 'lower orders' " (131). But if O. Douglas is located in this literary context, she can be viewed as helping to fill the lacuna. She looks at the lives of well-to-do or independent women, how they respond to social change and shoulder their responsibilities, what role they play in shaping things, what they do for the betterment of all. She believes and aims to show that the older social ideal of mutual

support and consensual communal identity could still provide the answer to contemporary problems.

The Proper Place

"The massive sale of land, houses and works of art in the aftermath of the first World War portended the end of the traditional, ordered, stable rural world in Great Britain" (Cannadine, *Class in Britain* 127). *The Proper Place* is saturated with this sense of change, and opens with the sale of an ancestral home. Whereas in *Pink Sugar* Kirsty has moved into a house and plans to redecorate, in the later novel the last remaining members of the Rutherford family prepare to depart. Round the walls of the drawing-room are portraits by distinguished painters of Rutherford ancestors, one of whom "fell at Flodden" (18). The very essence of aristocracy according to Edmund Burke (qtd. in Cannadine, *Aspects of Aristocracy* 1) is "the family and the sense of interconnection between the generations dead, living and yet unborn". Just as people are suddenly removed from their proper place when the note of the flute sounds in the Hans Christian Andersen tale from which the title is taken, so as a result of the War there has been serious social and personal dislocation.. Lady Jane Rutherford, having "lost everything" (17), moves with her daughter, Nicole, and niece, Barbara, whom she has also brought up, to a fishing village on the Fife coast. "Rutherford" is bought by a prosperous Glasgow couple, the Jacksons, who have an only son of marriageable age, Andrew. With a view to match-making, Mrs. Jackson invites Nicole to visit. But Nicole in a twist of fate succumbing to a cold, Barbara takes her place and succeeds in capturing Andrew. Meanwhile, Nicole has met and pledged her troth with Simon Beckett, an Everest climber who, on going back for a second expedition, falls to his death. The novel ends disconcertingly with the vivacious, charming Nicole settling into a life of spinsterhood with her mother, while the proud Barbara presides over "Rutherford", the Jacksons senior having returned to their proper place, Glasgow. While it may be true that "love between a man and a woman isn't the only thing in life" (314), the novelist ironically refuses to conclude with the obvious, perfect marriage to which the story seems to be leading and which would restore Nicole to her proper place.

The unpretentious Mrs. Jackson, remaining reassuringly herself, is portrayed with affectionate humour. She finds herself, as do author and readers, in a new world of twenty bedrooms, ten servants, no stair carpet, and a butler who, Mrs. Jackson thinks, looks suitably more like a dignified Episcopal clergyman rather than a U.F. elder (31). The Jacksons are the new people “coming in like a tide” (16) and, states Nicole, “there is no room any more for our sort”. But in contrast to her cousin Barbara who is only half a Rutherford and has “no desire to impress the natives” (78). Nicole, the true aristocrat, is also the true democrat who, like her mother, lives in easy harmony and mutual charity with their new neighbours in Fife as before with the servants and tenants on the estate.

But such disturbance of degree in the changed circumstances of the times is unsettling to the soul of the individual and society alike. “There maun be something far wrang”, remarked the old Border woman whom the Rutherfurds befriend in Fife, “Rutherfurds awa’ frae Rutherford and livin’ cheek by jowl wi’ Betsy Curle! The thing’s no’ canny” (46). The heritage now endangered is not only material – lands and property and a “Place” – but spiritual. The one is bearer of the other; the country house is repository and trustee of a set of values represented by those whom Nicole describes as the “respectable” aristocracy:

...from novels and the daily papers you would think the ‘aristocracy’ were thoroughly debased, engaged all the time in being divorced, and spending hectic days and nights gambling, drugging, swindling and dancing at night clubs – all that sort of thing! And, I suppose, it’s true in a way of a certain section, a small but very vocal section. But you would be amused if you met the members of my mother’s family and their friends. Some, I admit, are not bright and shining lights, but the majority are quite hopelessly respectable, and full of ‘high ideels’, working away obscurely and conscientiously to leave the world a little better than they found it: husbands and wives quite loving and loyal; children brought up to respect the eternal decencies; master and servants liking and respecting each other! (*The Proper Place* 191-2)

It is this aristocracy that is in decline. "There's nothing so pathetic", remarked Mrs. Jackson on one occasion, looking at Lady Jane and Nicole, "as to see the decay of the real aristocracy". But, "aware of some incongruity" in what she has just said, she qualifies her statement: "decay is mebbe hardly the word in this case, but you know what I mean. And it's wonderful, mind you, to see how happy Lady Jane and Nicole make themselves in Kirkmeikle" (*The Day of Small Things* 143). Acceptance of circumstances is what O. Douglas looks for and values in her characters, whether aristocratic or middle-class.

Jane's Parlour

The struggle of the landowning classes to retain property and position becomes the dominant motif of *Jane's Parlour* (1937), the companion volume to *The Proper Place*. There are also glimpses of the middle-classes living in reduced circumstances, the old India hands whose income now "is exactly halved" and the elderly spinster dependent on dividends who is now "a good deal poorer than I once was" (153). And there is concerned awareness of the people "who have been on the dole for years, never getting quite enough to eat, growing shabbier and shabbier, losing self-respect – all those villages in Wales, the Durham coalfields, places on the Clyde" (200). But the novel is concerned in the main with the Eliot family in their increasingly "threadbare" Border country house and their relationships with the inhabitants of other such houses in the area. Caroline or Car the daughter goes to London to study drama; and brings home for the Christmas vacation an English friend, Gwen, from a very different, "suburban", background. Gwen casts eyes at George, heir to one of the country estates and an obvious match for Car, who however has lightly turned him down. Eventually, after a motor accident which acts as a denouement, all eyes are open and all revert to their proper place. Car and George marry, thus ensuring inheritance and succession; and Gwen, her mother having pointed out that George and the Eliots are "not our sort" (349), makes instead an appropriate suburban match. Each class, then, however they described themselves, had a sense of who they were and where they belonged in the traditional order of things now under threat. The Rutherfurds are bequeathed Newby, another country estate, and so return to their proper place in the Borders. The wheel has come full circle. But for how long? "Who'll succeed us?" Alison Lockhart asks in chapter 7 (79). "Who will come after us?" somebody asks in the last chapter. There is

a sense of impending dissolution. The colonies offer an outlet for the energies of the younger generation – the young couple at the end marry and go off to the Colonial Service in Uganda – but that way lies no long-term salvation.

But so long as the centre of the rural society holds, things will not yet fall apart. There is a continuing sense, even in this society under pressure, of the interdependence of rich and poor and the mutuality of obligations. Katharyn Eliot discusses with her husband two of the domestic servants inherited from her mother-in-law:

“The Bertrams are very much our concern. I can remember Jock’s grandfather in that cottage”

“Of course, darling, they’re our concern. All the people on the place are our concern”. (303)

Alison Lockhart, another landowner, goes to visit the sick and elderly mother of her head-gardener whom she describes as her “old friend” (376).

But values, both personal and property, are changing. “Upperclass families who were entirely dependent on the income from their land found themselves in difficulties” when rents began to sink in the early 1920s and “continued to sink until the end of the 1930s” (Girouard 300). Where once she wrote “simply for the love of it” (*Jane’s Parlour* 14), Kathryn Eliot now (“I fear”) does so “mostly for money”:

Times are so bad that some of the farmers [i.e. tenant-farmers] simply can’t pay their rents. And we have a lot to keep up, as you know, with two boys at Eton, one at Oxford, two girls who need endless help over and above their allowances. Tim says hopefully that things show signs of beginning to improve, but I’ve precious little hope of it myself....Tim spends next to nothing on himself, and he let most of the shooting this year – a thing he simply hates having to do. I try to do with as little as possible, though what I get must be good for I hate cheap clothes. Happily, tweeds last practically for ever (14-5).

As a result of such care and thrift, the Eliots “can still live in a dignified way” in their own house (15). But Mrs. Armstrong, victim of a fate that threatens them all, has lost her own country home and is reduced to running a boarding-house in London. She “tries not to let the paying-part of it embarrass me” (278). Money may be an unworthy motive, but changing circumstances must be accepted, even if reluctantly. The old values are yielding place to the new.

In his survey of interwar British society, John Buchan draws attention to a “forgotten” group, the “embarrassed middle-classes”, and comments that “when a young man of that class was unemployed, he was the care of nobody” (*The King's Grace* 306-7). But the remaining Borders families close ranks and accept the three Armstrong boys as their class responsibility. In acceptance of social and economic reality, they rule out Oxford and instead discuss possible “openings” for them in business, for example the Hudson's Bay Company. “In these days a job is a job, and one can't pick and choose” (*Jane's Parlour* 54). And “you can't expect Oxford to give you a business training” (46). Among the younger generation, the old class divisions are perforce breaking down – a trend which John Buchan, himself essentially classless, approves of:

There was visible, too, one incontrovertible gain from the War. It had done much to break down class barriers and kill a shoddy gentility. The young man of the educated classes today is at home, as his father could never have been, in a Hull trawler, or working on the soil with unemployed miners, or lending a hand with the Canadian harvest. He is tougher in fibre, more resourceful, more human. (*The King's Grace* 312-3)

As if taking her cue from this passage, O. Douglas has Sandy, the eldest Eliot boy, sign on as a deck-hand on a trawler before going up to Oxford. John Buchan's own son, Johnnie, spent a year in the Arctic with the Hudson's Bay Company, returning aboard the *Nascopie* to Churchill where he was met by his family (as O. Douglas describes in her later novel *The House That is Our Own*).

Buchan was one of the “many Tories during the 1920s and 1930s [who] thought of British society in terms of individuals rather than conflicting social groups” (qtd. in Cannadine, *Class in Britain* 137). Baldwin was another. Growing up knowing his father’s workers, he had learned “a profound sympathy with and affection for the common man, of whom I am one” and “another very useful lesson, and that is that a man is a gentleman by what comes from within”. (*On England* 20). So too with Anna Buchan, as comes out in her portrayal of Lady Jackson. When one of the Eliot boys thinks of her as “vulgar”, his mother reminds him that he has not “lived long enough in this world to recognize, when you see it, true kindliness and honest worth” (107).

The Day of Small Things

If *Jane’s Parlour* is a companion piece, *The Day of Small Things* is the sequel to *The Proper Place*. Althea, a smart cold young socialite from London, comes to stay with the Rutherfurds in Kirkmeikle; and through their gracious influence softens and thaws, takes an interest in the small doings of the community, and finally marries Charles Walkinshaw, heir to a local country estate and prospective Unionist Parliamentary candidate. A “nice” young man, Charles exemplifies O. Douglas’ understated moral formula as analysed by Green: he is “moderate, humorous, discreet, light in touch”, showing that gentle irony that “a truly nice person directs against even his/her niceness” (6-9).

He is a man after Baldwin’s own heart. Belonging like Baldwin “not so much to a caste as to a locality” (Bryant 53), he prepared himself for Parliament after Oxford by “going around the world more or lessit’s as well to know something of India, and our Colonies, and all that” (*Day* 101). But he was equipped and qualified in the main by being rooted in his own community. Like Baldwin, he was not one of the intelligentsia (“The word ‘intelligentsia’”, Baldwin once threw out in a speech, “always seems to me to bear the same relation to intelligence that the word ‘gent’ does to gentlemen” Bryant 92) who have a certain “chrystalline hardness in the soul” divorcing them “alike from nature and the soil and from the rough contacts of workaday humanity” (118). But like his leader, he understood “the great art of governing men, not by coercion, but by tact, persuasion and understanding” (148). His politics were moderate, as he himself was modest, in the mould of his leader who had

had greatness thrust upon him. Baldwin would have preferred “a private existence in the country, where he could read the books he wanted to read, lead a decent life and keep pigs” (100). Charles understands and approves:

It seems to me his great strength lies in the fact that the sooner he stops being Prime Minister the better he'll be pleased. He doesn't want anything we can give him. He's doing this job, because it seems at the moment to be his job and nobody else's, and he'll be mighty thankful when he can put it down. (*Day 101*)

Set, as internal evidence reveals, in the aftermath of the General Strike of 1926 but before the passing of the Extension of the Franchise Act in 1928, the novel shows awareness of the social problems of the period, particularly unemployment. “It must be most demoralising to have to loaf all day”, Charles thinks, and is prepared to dispute with people who assure him “Oh, they like to idle” (155). Cowdenden, a grimy coal-mining community in the area, was especially afflicted by poverty and unemployment. “Some of the pits are closed, and thousands idle” and those who are working “have hardly been getting a living wage for some time”, Charles explains. But “isn't it largely their own fault?” objects Esme Jameson conventionally: the miners “pulled down their house with their own hands” when “they went on strike, [they] ruined their pits and lost their market” (102). Such an explanation, however, as Nicole maintains in a similar conversation later with Mrs. Heggie, “doesn't get anywhere near the root of the matter” (159). Charles, like Baldwin, is not unsympathetic towards the miners. He would be “Labour tomorrow if I thought they could do more to help things, but from what I see – I don't pretend, mind you, to see very clear or very far – our crowd, the Unionist Party, though they sometimes seem absolute stick-in-the-muds, do most in the end” (102).

One wet night, Charles takes Althea and Nicole in the Daimler, “chauffeur and all” (165-9) to the back street hall with broken stairs where, incongruously, he is rehearsing a local production of *Iolanthe*, the Gilbert and Sullivan comic opera that turns on the English class and political system. (Anna Buchan, in her role of President, would have been involved with the production by the Peebles Philharmonic Society in 1926, as Wendy Forrester (79) mentions). The humour and satire of

Iolanthe, which within the opera act as a dissolvent of false class attitudes and serve to unite the different strands of society, have the same function within the novel. The unlikely cast of miners, “very rough” (165) and with Fife accents, have taken triumphantly to the part of the peers - “a good deal better-looking than any peers I ever saw”, comments Nicole (168). She points out that one member of the chorus of peers singing with gusto

Bow, bow, ye lower middle classes!

Bow, bow, ye tradesmen, bow, ye masses!

is “a leading Socialist, red as blood, a leveller. But I expect after this when he thunders at meetings he won’t be able to be so bitter, and perhaps will laugh a little at himself” (168-169). Gilbert and Sullivan, Nicole observes, are “the cure for Communism” (168). They relativize class divisions and enmities and do not let us take them – or ourselves as defined by them – seriously. Further, there is an implicit parallel between Charles and *Iolanthe*’s son, Strephon, who is put into Parliament by the Queen of the Fairies and seeks to introduce social legislation that will break down class division. The chorus in the opera *Spurn not the nobly born* - what Nicole refers to as “the plea of blue blood” - could be Charles appealing to his working-class voters. Through the production of the opera Charles and “those men are getting to know each other, learning to understand each other”; and as a result, he “like[s] these fellows apart altogether from their votes” (156). *Iolanthe*, then, provides an oblique comment on the novel and the production is an ironic device allowing O. Douglas to convey her political views with humour.

But in the forthcoming election (of 1929), young women too were to have the vote. In line with his policy of unity and inclusiveness, Baldwin was preparing to introduce his Equal Franchise Bill, which would extend the vote to women under thirty. For this measure, the Prime Minister was violently criticized: “it was believed that in doing so he was weighing the scales heavily against his own party: that the young women of the factories would vote solid for Labour” (Bryant 162). But in Cowdenden, the “chorus of *Iolanthe* will vote solid for Charles” because he “a man and a brother” with them: “they’ll take anything from him, he has such a nice human way of going into fits of laughter over mistakes and awkward moments” (*The Day of Small Things* 187). In the event, Baldwin or Baldwin’s party lost the 1929 election and he was blamed for letting the Socialists in with the “Flapper” vote. “In the eighteen months after his

defeat at the polls he stood lower in the esteem of his countrymen than at any time since he had assumed the Premiership in 1923" (Bryant 167). In 1930 the Press Lords Beaverbrook and Rothermere waged a campaign to get "bumbling Baldwin" to go from public life – the same year as O. Douglas published *The Day of Small Things* in support of him. The following year, in the face of the economic crisis, the National Government was formed with Baldwin readily agreeing to support and play number two to Ramsay MacDonald. Baldwin practised what he preached – reconciliation and unity in the service of his country. In Charles's words, "it's something to have a leader like that", that is, one who puts his country first, and adds "*a bit of Old England*" (*The Day of Small Things* 101 my italics).

Charles can say this in Scotland and in a Scottish constituency with no sense of incongruity, because Unionism is the opposite pole of nationalism. Baldwin is the leader of a Kingdom that is "United" under the Crown. The then King, George V, according to John Buchan, had added personal graciousness: "he has given ceremonial the bloom of friendliness....he has diffused a spirit of simplicity and charity...his quick sympathy and kindness have warmed the country". In sum, "With the Queen and his family to aid him, he has made Britain not only a nation but a household" (*The King's Grace* 320). Anna echoes her brother's views (or vice versa), again with a hint of affectionate irony, in and through the homely Mrs. Jackson in conversation with another woman. The Royal Family is "an example to the whole country"; the King is "so affable", the Queen "regal" and yet "so motherly" (*The Day of Small Things* 144). Presciently, there is mention of "the little Duchess [of York]", a "sweet creature" - who succeeded to the throne after the Abdication - and "the baby", the current monarch. So long as there is an incumbent on the throne, in this view of things, so long will there be not only an England but a United Kingdom. Sir Walter had been more successful than he had realised.

Taken by the Hand

Taken by the Hand reverses the usual pattern whereby a Scots exile or descendant returns home and finds his or her soul. Instead, Beatrice Dobie, orphaned, shy, but a wealthy heiress in her early twenties, leaves Glasgow to go and live with her step-brother Sir Samuel – a Member of Parliament - and his family in London. Having been

“brought up in circles that believed in solid sense and avoided persiflage” (238), she finds herself out of place among her superficial and socialite relations. But she makes friends with a family of Scots origin in a country village and finally marries the son of the family, a steady and reliable young schoolmaster. Built on a series of contrasts of class, character, destiny, setting, and way of life, the book has three narrative centres: London, Glasgow (related mostly through letters), and Twixt Bears, the village “in the heart of old England” (164) where Beatrice comes to feel at home. The book can be read as a study of Scots in England. O. Douglas asks if Scots can cross the Border and remain true to their best selves. In metropolitan society, they are liable to lose their soul; in the country they will find values and a way of life that they can identify with. The country, as Baldwin held, “represents the eternal values and the eternal traditions from which we must never allow ourselves to be separated” (Baldwin, *This Torch of Freedom* 122).

The novel contains some typical irony. The portrayal of Beatrice may have been intended originally to be tongue-in-cheek. Described by two different people as “too deprecating” (9 and 209), she represents in life one aspect of the literary persona of O. Douglas who throughout her work up to this point has been consistently and ironically self-deprecating. Beatrice is thus a projection not of Anna Buchan but of O. Douglas, who now as it were turns back on herself and gently mocks the pose she has assumed. If O. Douglas has pretended to have no real talent for literature, Beatrice is presented as having no real talent for life. When she meets on the train to London a woman who fulfils the type of the O. Douglas heroine - single, self-sufficient, making decisions for herself - it dawns on Beatrice that she herself is always regarded as needing to be “taken by the hand”. “Kind Mrs. Lithgow had urged her that morning to eat more breakfast ‘because, you know, you’ve a journey before you’, and she had been sent early to bed the night before for the same reason” (57). Though Beatrice like most other O. Douglas heroines is financially independent, ironically she is a kind of anti-heroine. She is not drawn, however, without sympathy; and as the novel goes on the sympathy displaces the irony, as if the attempt at a sustained ironic treatment of Beatrice proved uncongenial to O. Douglas. Nicole Rutherford may have spoken for O. Douglas when she said, “Someone once told me that I was meant to be satirical but that I varnished all my statements over with so many coats of the milk of human kindness that they became without form and void” (*The Proper Place* 292).

O. Douglas's gift was more for incidental, inconsequential or a flash of illuminative irony. To the village grandee concerned that her son's fiancé is not "one of ourselves", not "brought up our way", but a modern intellectual who "will read nothing but Virginia Wolff [sic] and other highbrows" (*Taken by the Hand* 246), Beatrice, as a Scot innocent of the nuances of the English class system, cautiously demurs, "I don't think I quite know what you mean. I myself come of Glasgow stock, plain business people, with no pretension to...". Mrs. Stopford breaks in, "Ah, but you're Scots, and that makes all the difference". At one stroke, the English class system is ironically relativized if not demolished.

There is, too, affectionate irony in the account of a Scots wooing and wedding. At the same time as Beatrice's romance, her old nurse in Scotland is to be married at the age of fifty to the village blacksmith, a widower who

it seems last summer [he] had enjoyed the few words we used to have in passing and he had me in his mind when it came to replacing the first Mrs. Gordon. As he says, it's both cheaper and better to have a wife than a housekeeper..... (113)

On the occasion itself, the bride "felt like bursting into tears any minute.....wondering if I was doing right taking him" which "was silly, for, of course, I was very glad of the chance". However, she "cheered up fine afterwards" and toasts were drunk "in lemonade". The minister, though "a dry sort of man", made "a beautiful speech about Mr. Gordon and....couldn't have said more if it had been his funeral". When the couple leave for their honeymoon at a temperance hotel in Princes Street, "I didn't take my good clothes away with me, they might have got spoilt, just wore my navy costume and my old coat with the fur collar, quite good enough for sight-seeing" (256).

In addition to this trademark irony, *Taken by the Hand* also ventures into political satire. At a dinner-party in Sir Samuel's house (92-3), Beatrice briefly encounters a Member of Parliament named Leathen (curiously similar to John Buchan's "Leithen"), who is a hypocritical, self-complacent version of Baldwin. "There is

nothing I enjoy more than an evening by the fire with a book but” – unlike Baldwin – “I seldom or never get such a treat”, such are “the engagements that pursue one”. Like Baldwin, he is much in demand as a speaker and describes “the variety of the subjects I’m asked to speak on – anything from the problems of the Far East to Infant Visiting” (92). In the same year as *Taken by the Hand*, 1935, Baldwin’s publishers issued a third volume of his talks and speeches gathered from newspaper reports. The thirty-seven speeches, ranging in topic and occasion from Empire Day to the Fiftieth Anniversary of The Boys’ Own Paper and the Baptist Union Superannuation Fund Dinner, show Baldwin’s facility and adaptability, what the blurb of the book refers to as “his unerring instinct for the common touch” and his “homespun wisdom...uttered in...plain style” – the qualities that the pseudo-Baldwin, Leathen, unabashedly lays claim to:

I seem to have the faculty of suiting myself to my company – at least, I’m told so. I mean to say, I can be grave and weighty over important matters, but I’ve a light touch at women’s meetings, and at whist drives and so on I’m positively an acquisition. (*Taken by the Hand* 92)

The fictional Leathen is satirical foil or counterpart to the real Stanley Baldwin and the identification becomes clear in his final remark: “Look at me, if I weren’t in the House I’d be mouldering in the country, thinking of nothing but crops and breeding pheasants” (93). Which is where Baldwin would rather have been if he had not become Prime Minister: he “really did like leaning over a gate and scratching a pig”, wrote J.C.C. Davidson (qtd. in Young 11).

Sir Samuel Dobie is also set off against Baldwin both as business-man and as politician. For Baldwin, the paternalism of his family business, where he knew every man by name and nobody ever got the sack, remained his social ideal. By contrast, Sir Samuel has no bond with his employees other than the cash-nexus:

“There’s no place for sentiment in the modern world...I’ve been blessed – or cursed – with a feeling heart, and when I’ve got to tell men who’ve been all their lives in the business, who thought they

were safe for life....that we can't afford to keep them on and must replace them by younger, cheaper men – I assure you, Beatrice, it makes me deeply wretched”

“But *must* you dismiss them?” Beatrice asked. “Couldn't you keep them on – perhaps at a lower salary – till you see if things improve?.....If the heads of the business still have money to go on with, I do think it's up to them to help on their men.”

Sir Samuel gave a short laugh as he said, “Ah, my dear girl, it's easily seen that you know nothing about business questions; business isn't a charitable institution”. (*Taken By The Hand* 35-6)

But it was essentially the approach of the innocent Beatrice that under Baldwin's economic advice the National Government adopted in the financial crisis of 1931: all Government employees and civil servants were kept on but wages were reduced, in the hope of things improving.

Where Baldwin “never sought the office [of Prime Minister]...never planned out or schemed” for his life but had “one idea, which was an idea that I inherited, and it was the idea of service – service to the people of this country” (*On England* 20), Sir Samuel is the newer kind of thrusting, self-serving politician and a Scotsman on the make. O. Douglas lets him reveal himself in a sort of satirical monologue:

“I can't be sufficiently thankful that I struck out for myself....Of course, I began very quietly, but gradually I got on. And I was ambitious. Even as a youth I saw Parliament before me....I was lucky, I acknowledge that. Things just seemed to fit in – with a well-directed push from me here and there!” He laughed gleefully and then sobered, as if he felt his theme too big for levity, and continued:

“Well, I got to be noticed and talked about as a man who'd get on; my opinions were known to be sound and moderate, and I was asked to stand for Parliament. I had plenty of confidence, so I accepted. I didn't get in, but I put up a jolly good fight, and learned a lot. So when the next election came, I got a constituency with a

good sporting chance. I worked like a nigger and made everyone work with me – result, a thumping majority. And I’ve sat for it ever since. I’ve always had a knack of managing people without letting them know they were being managed, and down at Lettington they eat out of my hand. I’m popular with all parties. They like my Scots decency and trust me, and yet I’m not too much of a Scot, if you know what I mean. I’m not always flinging myself about over the rights of Scotland. I don’t blench when people talk about England when they mean Britain. I’m very well satisfied with what I’ve got out of England...” (78-80)

He may have got much out, but he has failed to add value and so to fulfil the ideal of Union. For Baldwin, “One of the sources of the great strength of our country in every part of the kingdom is that there are men who have no personal ambition for themselves to get where the limelight is brightest and publicity is greatest” (*On England* 63); but Sir Samuel is a self-made man who has planned and directed his career to his own ends.

But he retains enough of his Scottishness to be able to recognize the solid worth of Beatrice’s fiancé, Scots-born Christopher, who embodies Baldwin’s values and way of life and like him is a countryman, a pipe smoker, and a great reader – though not of Virginia Woolf. For “this is the literary age of Baldwin” when most readers “read the sort of thing he did”, that is, “probably not Virginia Woolf” (Young 81-2). Christopher likes Scott and Jane Austen, who were the first people Baldwin hoped to meet in the next world (Bryant 158). When we first meet Christopher, he is dressed like Baldwin on his estate in “grey flannel trousers, a brown coat, and large boots” (159). Later he goes to “cut a lot of holly and ivy and cart it along to the church” (172) for the Christmas services. He is described by others as “decent” and “decency goes right through and lasts to the end” (354). Baldwin defines decency as that considerateness or thoughtfulness for others “which contributes so much to the humanity of communal life” (*The Englishman* 21). In line to succeed the headmaster of the school where he teaches, he and Beatrice will reside in the grounds in an eighteenth century dower house that has only recently had bathrooms and electric light put in. Beatrice is the one woman in Christopher’s life as he in hers and their

union is clearly destined to be like that of Stanley and Cissie Baldwin who “lived together, seldom separated, in love and amity for over half a century” (Young 16). By contrast, the marriage, splashed all over the society pages of the newspapers, of Sir Samuel’s daughter Elaine to a stunt airman full of “dash and daring” (366), will only be a “thrill”, that is, “not very permanent” (365). The Scottish-born Christopher represents the continuity and stability of Baldwin’s England and “the basic virtues of truthfulness, integrity and good humour on which her genius had always rested” (Bryant 99).

In another way too the book may have Baldwin’s impress on it. In an unexpected turn of the plot near the end of the novel, Beatrice accompanies Mrs. Stopford on a short visit to India. This may partly be a device to precipitate Christopher into proposing to Beatrice. But O. Douglas may have felt prompted by current events to gather up the threads of India that have been running through her novels and complete the pattern. As in her first novel, a young girl takes a passage to India and encounters a variety of people on board ship and on land. Only now India “isn’t what it used to be” and the Indian Civil Service is not such a good prospect for a bright young man as the Colonial Service, according to Mrs. Sellars whose “people were all in India” (236). No longer the Jewel in the Crown, India now “seems such a hopeless proposition” (330) and the newspapers are discussing “Indian rule – or misrule” (331). The background here is the Government of India Bill which under Baldwin’s leadership was finally enacted in 1935, the year in which the novel was published. But the future of India had been much discussed since the Simon Commission was launched by Baldwin in 1927. Baldwin himself believed that India must be guided into self-government and towards eventual Dominion status but his views split his party and in 1931 “once more his leadership was at risk” (Young 89). The novel is set in 1932 (“My father died thirteen years ago – 1919” 156) when the Viceroy, Lord Halifax, was pursuing Baldwin’s conciliatory policies. Many old India hands were disillusioned and their views are given voice by Beatrice (alias at this point O. Douglas herself, thinking of her brother William?):

Most of the things they worked so hard for have been scrapped....It isn’t as if we had grudged India our best brains and some of our finest young men, and they work themselves to death

without seeing any fruit of their labours. Everything is done with the best intentions, and yet everything seems to work out wrong. I'm terribly sorry for those poor "sun-dried bureaucrats" who will go home to live in Sidmouth or somewhere and have nothing to do but play golf and rage over the *Times* or the *Morning Post*....(330)

"They don't want to look forward" (330) because India belongs to the old Empire despite Baldwin's efforts to bring it into the new. In John Buchan's view, "The first British Empire ended with the loss of the American colonies, the second with the first shots of 1914. During the political interregnum of the war the third slowly came into being" (*The King's Grace* 272). However it is now clear that the beginning of the end of the second empire came with the shots at Amritsar, the 1919 massacre in India, while the post-war attempt to work out the details of the new imperial doctrine represented an ultimately unsuccessful attempt to reform and preserve. There was to be no third empire. The Statute of Westminster in 1931 had given each Dominion full sovereign power. But India never attained to dominion status. Instead, the Quit India campaign led to Partition and independence as a republic within the Commonwealth (as the Empire had now become). It is as if O. Douglas herself in this brief revisiting of India is taking her leave of what had been always a part of her spiritual horizon. She is ready now in her final novel to turn from the past to the hope of the future of the Empire as represented by Canada.

The House that is our Own

In *The House that is our Own*, the last of O. Douglas's novels, the young Althea Whiston has named her puppy Stanley Baldwin: "Rather an angel, isn't he? I christened him myself, for I thought we had to do something about Mr. Baldwin's retiring" (103). Just as the Mhor in *Penny Plain* named his dog Peter and his cat "Sir JM Barrie", so here too O. Douglas obliquely indicates her frame of reference. Baldwin retired covered with glory in 1937 just after the Coronation. But the book came out in 1940, when Baldwin was unjustly made the scapegoat after Dunkirk and the bombing of British ports and cities. There was a "despicable campaign" in which he was accused "of not preparing the country for war, of betraying his trust, of being a traitor, practically of conspiring with Britain's enemies" (Young 145). In the novel, O.

Douglas reminds her readers of the celebrations three years before, with a united Britain under the undisputed leadership of Baldwin and a young King and Queen making “triumphal progress” (213). She implicitly defends his reputation, along the lines of J.C.C. Davidson, his colleague and firmest friend in the political years, who later commented:

By 1937-8 Baldwin would have got Labour first to agree to some measure of direction of labour into defence interests, and I think when the situation had got as far as Munich he would have formed an absolutely united people facing Germany, and it is possible that there might well not have been war; I very much doubt that Hitler would have faced a showdown with a united Britain. (qtd. in Young 144)

The book opens in London, in a women’s world of clothes, interior decorating, shopping, tea-parties, books and knitting. Isobel Baillie – thirty, financially independent, and single – though “absolutely pure Scots by blood” (27) was born in England and has lived all the time in London but feels the need now to acquire a place of her own. “Going out to meet adventure” (58), like a man going to the colonies, she makes her way on the recommendation of her friend Kitty to the Border village of Glenbucho as “a good place to view Scotland from” (58). The historical but rundown house, Glenbucho Place (based on Kilbucho near Broughton, as referred to first on page 227 of *The Setons*), is for sale. Taken by the romance and beauty of the house, Isobel buys it and settles into the village community, where she enjoys the peace and quiet and “compelling charm” (81) of the country after the noise and speed of London. When major repair work has to be done, Isobel accepts an invitation to join a family on a trip to Canada. There she meets the son and heir of the house, Gideon, who, under financial pressure, has emigrated to make a new life. She does some travelling in Canada and finally, after a misunderstanding between them, becomes engaged to Gideon. Glenbucho Place returns to its rightful owner and the couple will divide their time between it and Canada, between the old country and the country of the future. With its “traditions and age-old memories” (271-2), the house represents the compelling pull of the past; Canada, the call of the future.

The country house, as in *The Proper Place* (1926) and *Jane's Parlour* (1937), is the central feature of the novel. But where "the country houses portrayed by [John] Buchan, Wodehouse and others are mellow, dignified, creeper-clad, lawn encompassed, and bathed in perpetual sunshine.....exactly like the houses that were to be seen week after week and page after page in *Country Life*" (Girouard 303), the Scottish Borders house of Glenbucho, "grey, scarred, weather-beaten" with crow-stepped gables, has an austere, almost elegiac, beauty and is witness to the events of 1745 when Scotland was still a house divided against itself. O. Douglas's sympathies are likewise divided between "the cause of the young Prince who came over the seas to trust his fortunes to his people" (77) and the contemporary King George about to be crowned. Glenbucho points to the unresolved tensions in Scottish history. It also symbolizes the dilemma of a nation caught between its long history and contemporary economic exigencies: it "dreamed contentedly in the evening sunshine" (75) while its fate hung in the balance - it may have to pass into the hands of "strangers". Now closed up and deserted, though "there was yet nothing desolate about it", the house has been entrusted to the care of Mr. and Mrs. Bruce, a loyal retainer "born on the place" (69) and "set" on it (67) and his wife. Where "folk now [don't] care much for anything but makin' money" (67), the Bruces retain that "feudal feeling", that "love for a family and a place", which Isobel thought had died out. Just as, Mrs. Bruce laments, "near all the old families have left the district", so most of the land of Glenbucho has had to be sold, only "the home farm" remaining (69).

The book consciously harks back to older values and to a way of life now rapidly passing away, to an ordered hierarchical rural society where grieve and laird and shepherd and ploughman (62) live together in mutual interdependence but each in his proper place. Isobel's purchase of the property can only be a temporary stop-gap and the wider social and economic threats remain. On the periphery are the mass hungry and unemployed as represented by the Coopers whom Isobel engages to look after her newly-acquired property and brings from Glasgow to the peace and salubrity of the countryside. O. Douglas shares something of Baldwin's vision of the countryside as not only a place of wholesome quiet but "a place of order, simplicity and nobility, where everyone knew their place, and which functioned on the basis of reciprocal rights and obligations" (Cannadine, *Class in Britain* 139).

The novel is set against the background of the Coronation in 1937 when, after the shock of the Abdication, the traditional order is re-affirmed and, according to Isobel, “the watching nations” saw Britain “like a great golden galleon, all lit up and crowded with happy people”. The crowds in the London streets are a “wonderful sight in themselves”, and “The British Empire keeping festival isn’t a sight to be missed” (104). The Coronation repeated the success of the Silver Jubilee in 1935 – a “new-old” royal ceremonial “invented to augment the ‘traditional’ dramatic representations of the social hierarchy” (Cannadine, *Class in Britain* 141) – when “the world saw Britain rejoicing as one great family” (*The House* 45) under King George V who “has made Britain not only a nation but a household” (John Buchan, *The King’s Grace* 320). O. Douglas’s language echoes Baldwin’s. In one of his last speeches in the Commons on May 5th 1937, a week before the Coronation, he said:

The whole world has its eye today on London. The whole world is represented in London, and they are all coming here to be with us in what, to the vast majority of our people, will be a period of rejoicing for many days. (*Service of Our Lives* 141)

And on May 24th to the Combined Empire Societies: “I have never known such a feeling of the family in London as at this time of the Coronation.....the family under the headship of our King” (155). The family here is the family of the Empire, the family of British nations, which “in a world still suffering from the shock of war..... stands firm as a great force for good” (*Our Inheritance* 71). Imperial feeling is strong in the novel; indeed, the title of the novel, *The House That is Our Own*, could also refer to Britain and the Empire. “Small as our island is”, declares Isobel (and it could be Baldwin speaking), “its sons are all over the earth, and everywhere British rule means justice” (266).

In the interwar period, the Empire was at its greatest territorial extent, and “hierarchy was reinforced in Empire, and Empire still reinforced hierarchy”. In Canada, as in New Zealand and Australia, the “elaborate rituals” of the viceregal regime were based on rank and station. Though “governors general remained overwhelmingly aristocratic or royal in background”, John Buchan (at the request of Mackenzie King, the Prime Minister) was appointed to Canada in 1935 and relished his ceremonial duties

(Cannadine, *Class in Britain* 142). But Anna, visiting with her mother in 1936, retained the same sense of fun and subversive humour as on similar occasions in India thirty years before:

Luncheon and dinner were more or less formal meals, guests being practically always present. We had all to gather shortly before a meal in the drawing-room, and when an A.D.C. announced "Their Excellencies" the men present bowed and the women curtsied. It reminded me of the advice of the Duchess to Alice, "Curtsey when you're thinking what to say". The legs of people in court circles must, one supposes, attain to a great degree of pliability, but mine never seemed to be in the right position at the right moment, and I was always rather surprised to find that I had not disgraced myself by toppling over..... (*Unforgettable, Unforgotten* 198-9)

It was this trip and the subsequent one in 1939 that Anna made use of in her novel, when she sends her heroine to Canada. She responded to Canada as John did – and as Baldwin had.

And Canada responded to her, indeed in a sense was more her country than John's. Although by all accounts he made a success of his job, he "originally had stronger feelings for both India and South Africa than he had for Canada" (Green 204). And according to Janet Adam Smith, it was Anna rather than John that was well known in Canada as a popular novelist. She mentions that on the previous Governor-General's farewell tour in the prairies, one of his A.D.C.'s found a good deal of ignorance as to who "this Col. Buchan" was. Nor did mention of his books help. But when the A.D.C. remarked, "He's the brother of O. Douglas", that rang a bell (380). Green generalizes: "O. Douglas had a large overseas public in the Empire, because of the migration of Scotsmen there....It was said that in some parts of Canada John Buchan was identified as the brother of O. Douglas; and the present Lord Tweedsmuir says that his aunt's books sold very widely in Canada" (206). It was as if Canada was waiting for her, to complete her development as a novelist.

Canada

Visiting Canada for the Diamond Jubilee of the Confederation of Canada in 1927, Baldwin was “thrilled” (Bryant 164) by all he saw and impressed by the “buoyant optimism” of the country (Baldwin, *Our Inheritance* 177). Where Britain is rich in history and tradition, Canada has a “great future” (76): “the future is with you” (194). Though benefiting by British experience – and he pays special tribute to the Scottish contribution (180) – “Canada is without many of the troubles which beset us. She has not that number of inherited difficulties which every old country must have. She has been able to start afresh. We cannot do it in the same way” (177).

Canada helps to fulfil his vision of empire as a union of independent British nations. Broadcasting from Downing Street on Empire Day (May 24th) 1927, he calls on the people of the British Isles to “make our unity such a reality that men and women regard the Empire as one, and that it may become possible for them to move within its bounds to New Zealand, to Australia, to South Africa, to Canada, as easily and as freely as from Glasgow to London or Bristol or Newcastle” and to “build up the new nations overseas..... and to make the whole a great force for righteousness in the world” (69).

John Buchan holds the same views and expresses the same sentiments. Addressing the Empire Club in Toronto in the course of an earlier personal visit to Canada in 1924, Buchan spoke of “the new and true view of Empire – an empire of independent nations” (John Buchan, *Some New Elements* 9). It is possible that Buchan, who had worked out a theory of dominion nationalism while engaged with Milner on the reconstruction of South Africa, may have helped to shape or at least to articulate Baldwin’s views: he is known to have drafted speeches for him. But both thought alike and were working towards the same goal: “the spiritual unity of the whole British Empire” (Baldwin *This Torch of Freedom* 196), though Buchan may have given more weight to separate nationalisms.

Buchan used his time and platform in Canada as Governor-General to promote Canadian nationalism within the Empire and helped “to invent Canada as we know it today” (Henshaw 23). He continually emphasized “that Canadians should strive to

develop a distinctive Canadian culture ‘which cannot be a copy of any one old thing, but must be a new thing created by blending all the different traditions in this great country’” (18). At the centre of his thinking was Scotland, land and people and history. As both Scottish and British, Buchan himself had a distinctive national identity within a larger one. But that national identity was of fairly recent origin, forged from the union of two diverse cultures and languages (Lowland and Highland). Here was a model for Canada, as it sought to develop its own sense of itself as an independent Dominion within the Empire. From the two main streams of French-speaking and English-speaking (the latter itself an amalgam) would come one new culture, and a unifying factor in the process would be the northern frontier. To promote interest in the North, which he regarded “as a defining icon of national identity and as a frontier of development” (Henshaw 18), Buchan undertook a highly publicized trip to the Arctic in 1937. The call of the North and the wide open spaces resonated with Buchan, not only from his experience of the veldt in the Transvaal but from his innate love of the Borders countryside. For Buchan (as for Baldwin), rural life and the natural environment as opposed to city life were the springs of cultural renewal and personal regeneration. In *Sick Heart River*, his final novel published posthumously in 1940, the two leading characters, one British (Sir Edward Leithen) and the other French-Canadian, “escape from their respective city lives to find moral redemption in their journeys to an uncharted part of the North” (Henshaw 25).

For O. Douglas as for Buchan and Baldwin, Canada was a revelation, an unexpected new world. In Isobel’s words:

I hadn’t realized the size of Canada. I can only gasp at everything I see. We got to Winnipeg on Friday morning and stopped for two hours. Mr. Lamont took us for a drive, and, instead of the cow-town I had ignorantly expected, I found a city with wide streets, full of great shops, many handsome buildings, a fine park, and a zoo.
(280-1)

Baldwin gave similar compliments to Winnipeg in a speech he made there on “The Romance of the West” during his visit of 1927 (*Our Inheritance* 155f.). Isobel is the more ashamed of her ignorance because Canada and Scotland are so “closely linked”

(265) and “you can hardly call Canada foreign parts” (242). Notable on the one hand is this easy and confident imperial assumption that Canada ranks, effectually, as another Scottish county. But on the other O. Douglas’ responsiveness to the unfamiliar is both unusual and salutary. She and Gideon go on a train-trip to “the Frozen North” (283) where there is, in the words Buchan put into the mouth of King George VI during the royal tour of 1939, “a field of enterprise for youth which will take generations to exhaust” (Henshaw 25). At Churchill on the Hudson Bay she watches the boat come in - “I shall never forget it: the starlight, the breath-taking air, the faces of Indians and Eskimos, the growling of the huskie-dogs, above all the newness of it, seemed to transport one out of oneself” – and talks to a young man returning, like her own nephew Johnnie, from a year in the Arctic (283). She describes visits to Scottish and English settlers who had made a new life for themselves in remote places “in this vast marvellous country” (292)³. Canada represents a liberation of spirit, a release of energy and a new start for people of British stock like Isobel and Gideon, weighed down by the problems of an old society and the difficulties of the post-war period. The War dogged the ministries of Baldwin and cast its shadow over the novels of O. Douglas, as also in the later thirties did the coming war; Canada, “the kindest place on earth” (278), meant sunlight and space and an open society. Isobel felt she “began to live” when she got to Glenbucho, though this section of the book has a nostalgic, even threnodic, air; now in Canada she knows what it means “to be free to live where one pleased, with no beloved old house to tear one’s heart” (76). Baldwin could be speaking for the two leading characters of *The House that is our Own*, Isobel and Gideon, when he said, on returning from Canada, “I cannot tell you what it is to go out from Europe into a country that not only has no hereditary problems hanging like millstones round its neck, but where everyone is full of hope...” (*Our Inheritance* 193).

Her horizons thus expanded O. Douglas invokes the new world to redress the balance of the old. As well as rounding off her oeuvre, which began in the old Empire and finished in the new, Canada resolves some of the issues of these later novels. If Glenbucho represents the old divisions of Scottish history and a social order that, for all its merits, has no future, Canada offers a way out. The poverty and unemployment

³ John Buchan championed the idea of encouraging emigration to Canada as the antidote to growing unemployment (Lownie, “John Buchan: Conservative Politician” 32)

that she has been concerned about appears to be without remedy; but to hand now is Canada, a land of opportunity that needs people to build it up. The issue of class and class relations is left behind: in Canada, all are “new people” (Baldwin, *Our Inheritance* 193). The train trip to Churchill is a microcosm of this new society: “all kinds” of people are going to work in the North and at every halt “all the passengers get out and walk about and talk to each other” (281). The underlying tensions in British Unionism, where Scots like the young Althea in the novel have to insist on their Scottishness, fall away: the Union of Scotland and England gives birth to a new country and Unionism is now made fruitful. The novel reveals something of the formation of a new national identity out of the old elements: the different national groups, Scots or English, maintain their old identities even as they assume a new local one. O. Douglas, that is, shows us her brother’s policy taking shape.

David Cannadine, however, argues that his Canadian appointment represented a professional disappointment to Buchan. “Like many an ambitious Scot since the Act of Union with England in 1707, Buchan took the road south, and went out to the Empire, in search of fame and fortune”, but “it is not clear that Buchan ever satisfactorily worked out who he really was” (Cannadine, “John Buchan” 90). He finished his career and his life in 1940 with a sense of failure, explored at length in his final novel. But the opposite may be the case with his sister. If her final novel, now that John has died, does not noticeably suffer from the lack of fraternal editing, it may be that Anna Buchan had herself been liberated, or had finally come into possession of her own, or reached acceptance of herself and her role in life and literature. Just as *Pink Sugar* concludes with the reflections of a spinster, Rebecca Brand, who has been won over to the view of life that novel defends, so *The House That is Our Own* ends with the thoughts of another spinster, the middle-aged shopkeeper Agnes Home, who may, as Wendy Forrester suggests (120), give us Anna Buchan’s artistic credo and her last word on herself. Dealing out her wares, Agnes Home has given each customer, as O. Douglas each reader, “something they did not pay for and were only dimly aware of – a beam of loving-kindness from an honest heart” (*The House* 318).

The words take us back via Lady Jackson to *The Setons* and Stevenson’s *The Celestial Surgeon*. Like Agnes, Anna Buchan has not faltered in her great task of happiness and the “House” has become “Home”. Glenbucho is once again the home of the rightful

heir; Scotland has found its home in the Union; the British in Coronation year (and in 1940) have become as men who are of one mind in a house; the Empire is a home for all British people; and Canada has provided a new home for Isobel and Gideon - and for the imagination of the novelist, who now concludes her creative work by looking forward with hope rather than backward with regret. Anna Buchan's spiritual journey was an Aeneid rather than an Odyssey: in the end she came home to a place she had never been in before, her "proper place" which she had made peculiarly her own. She had found that other country, "most dear to them that love her, most great to them that know" (in the lines by Cecil Spring-Rice). We "may not see her King", but "her fortress is a faithful heart"

And soul by soul and silently her shining bounds increase,

And her ways are ways of gentleness and all her paths are peace.

In her narrower sphere of personal life, she may have been in the end more successful than her brother on his wider stage in resolving the question they both in different ways had to deal with – personal and national identity. If in the end his was a "sick" heart, hers was an "honest" and "faithful" heart, at peace with itself.

She concludes her autobiography, her last published work, thus:

To the happy man, it has been said, all times are times of thanksgiving, and it is with deep gratitude that this pilgrim looks back on the way that she has come. (*Unforgettable, Unforgotten* 243)

FAREWELL
to
PRIORSFORD



And Farewell to
O. DOUGLAS

Fig. 8: dust cover of *Farewell to Priorsford* (1950)

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