

THE ROLE AND STATUS OF WOMEN IN THE FICTION
OF
JAMES LESLIE MITCHELL / LEWIS GRASSIC GIBBON

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OF
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By

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ABSTRACT

James Leslie Mitchell's critique of modern society, a society which nurtured aggression, colonialism, religion, racism, and gender bias, was rooted in his background, experience and commitment. Being a revolutionary writer, he held progressive and visionary views, and claimed his works were propaganda, carrying messages to reshape society on ancient values and socialist principles.

In his Scottish short stories (written under his pseudonym Lewis Grassic Gibbon) wives and daughters were neglected and ignored, yet forced to do menial tasks on the farm. Women in his English stories and novels were better situated and educated, taking an active role in their own development, showing determination to exercise free will and develop self-awareness, and encouraging others to emancipate themselves. A number of characters accepted atheism and Communism, and believed in Diffusionism wherein people were simple, co-operative, without malice.

Undoubtedly, Mitchell/Gibbon's crowning achievement was A Scots Quair. Chris Guthrie embodied the qualities of his earlier heroines. She loved the soil but disliked the workings, preferred the accuracy of English words and deplored the crude talk of the farming communities; yet she was impelled to carry on as a farmer. Chris was married three times, widowed twice, separated once, had one son, and few friends; and lived in a croft, a manse and a boarding house. She abhorred war, favoured birth control, had a glimmering of the Golden Age, and exhibited the attitudes, beliefs and opinions of her creator.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ASH	<u>A Scots Hairst</u>
ASQ	<u>A Scots Quair</u>
CH	<u>Cloud Howe</u>
COM	<u>The Conquest of the Maya</u>
GG	<u>Grey Granite</u>
GH	<u>Gay Hunter</u>
HAN	<u>Hanno or the Future of Exploration</u>
IS	<u>Image and Superscription</u>
NAU	<u>Nine Against the Unknown</u>
ScS	<u>Scottish Scene or The Intelligent Man's Guide to Albyn</u>
SPA	<u>Spartacus</u>
SR	<u>Stained Radiance</u>
SS	<u>Sunset Song</u>
TD	<u>The Thirteenth Disciple</u>
TGB	<u>Three Go Back</u>
.....	
APJ	Aberdeen Press and Journal
ABA	Aberdeen Bon Accord
CM	Cornhill Magazine

GLOSSARY

blether	talk foolishly
blither and blah	long-winded empty talk
brave (braw)	fine
braw	brave, fine
Broo	Labour Exchange, Unemployment office
chave	struggle physically, exert oneself
coarse	rough
childe (chiel)	young man, fellow
crack	talk, chat, gossip
cry	call
daftie	half-witted person, mentally handicapped
dram	glass of whisky
dinna	don't
dominie	schoolmaster
douce	sweet, grave (adj)
eirde	iron age dwelling. earth-house
fash	annoy, anger, trouble oneself
fee'd	hired as servant, employed
fop	dandy
gabble	gossip, idle talk, garrulous
gang	go, gait, way of walking
gey	very
girling	complaining
glaikit	thoughtless, silly person
goodson	son-in-law
gomeril	foul, stupid person
gowk	simpleton, lout
greet	weep, lament, cry
hairst	harvest
heuch	hook
hoast	cough
ilka	ordinary, everyday
keelie	rough male city dweller, a tough
kenned	knew
kittled up	moved, aroused, (made angry)
leathering	beating with leather tawse

midden	dunghill, compost heap
midden heap	refuse heap, ash pit
mucker	street cleaner
peesie	peewit, lapwing
pig ree	pigsty
quair	quire, gathering of sheets of paper
quean (quine)	young girl, lass
scunner	disgust, loathing, sickened by
shoggling	shaking, wobbling, tottering
skelping	spanking, leathering
smeddum	spirit, energy, vigorous common sense
snippet	<i>fr. snipe</i> , cheat, fraud
soos	state of disorder, dirty mess
sozzled	intoxicated
speak	talk of the place
stick	put up with
stook	set up sheaves in bundles of 10-12
swack	active, lithe, supple
sweir	lazy, unwilling to work
tabu	taboo
thole	bear, suffer
tink	tinker, vulgar person
trauchle	hard work, drudgery
trig	trim, neat, well turned out
wame	belly
wean	child, young child
whin	furze, gorse
WRI	Women's Rural Institute
wynd	narrow lanes

NOTES

Colquhoun is pronounced Ca-hoon

The author is referred to as James Leslie Mitchell for those works written under his own name, and as Lewis Grassie Gibbon for his Scottish stories and novels. He used both names for Nine Against the Unknown, which he claimed was a collaboration "between these two cousins".

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The death of James Leslie Mitchell on February 7, 1935, one week before his thirty-fourth birthday, was an inestimable loss to Scottish literature. He was a prolific writer who had to his credit, in the last seven years of his short life, an impressive and diversified range of output, including novels, short stories, essays, reviews and poetry, as well as non-fictional writings in history, anthropology and archaeology. His lasting fame, however, rests on the trilogy of novels which form A Scots Quair, written under the pseudonym, Lewis Grassie Gibbon, which is a slight variation of his mother's name, Lillias Grassie Gibbon (Campbell: viii), an apt and authentic name for the writer of a book on the North East of Scotland (Munro: 43).

To a large extent, his themes reflect personal experience and observation in the depressed socio-economic conditions of Britain after the Great War. As a strong humanitarian, Mitchell was opposed to the cruelty, violence and inequity of what he perceived as an exploitative capitalist system (Campbell: 10). Adopting the ideas of the Diffusionists, he visualised an idyllic past so as to contrast it with the dismal present, disfigured by such deep-seated social evils as greed, poverty, alienation, intellectual deprivation and sexual discrimination; and he envisioned a future anarcho-communist society which would be free of these blemishes (Campbell: 29).

One of the shortcomings he abhorred was the secondary status and unjust treatment of women in modern society. Considering his political views it is not

surprising that Mitchell had an enlightened progressive view of women's potential and capability. He was interested in the role of women and concerned with the unfairness meted out to them in a paternalistic society. Throughout his writings he portrayed a sympathetic attitude towards women -- a radical departure from the stereotypes in much contemporary literature. This study will trace the development of Mitchell's heroines, their functions and treatment, with one chapter devoted to characters in some of his short stories, one to the English novels, and one to the women in A Scots Quair.

James Leslie, the third son of James McIntosh Mitchell and Liliass Grassie Gibbon, was born on February 13, 1901, at Hillhead of Segget, a croft in Auchterless, Aberdeenshire. Both parents came from a long line of crofters and could trace their ancestors in these parts for over three hundred years. The family lived at "The Hillies" until Leslie was seven. He had been enrolled at the local school for only a few months when the lease on the croft expired and the family moved temporarily to Aberdeen (Munro: 7).

In 1909, the Mitchells leased the small holding of Bloomfield, Kincardineshire, two miles above Arbuthnott, in the Howe of the Mearns. The surrounding area of moors and farmland was home to Leslie Mitchell for the rest of his childhood, and later provided the background for Sunset Song (1932) the first novel of the trilogy, A Scots Quair (1946) (Munro: 81). Much to the dismay of his father, Leslie spent his free time roaming the countryside instead of working on the farm. He was entirely different from the other children: quiet, lonely, reserved, and always engrossed in a book. By mutual agreement, his older brother did Leslie's farm chores in exchange for help with his schoolwork (Munro: 9), an arrangement which suited the studious youngster who saw the

land as a source of exploration, and whose reading ranged indiscriminately from romantic to science fiction. The boy's enthusiasm for learning and his interest in history, including prehistory, were encouraged by the Headmaster of Arbuthnott School, Alexander Gray, who recognised the ability, lively imagination and vivid writing style exhibited in his pupil's youthful compositions (Young: 4), although he was well aware of the boy's individualistic attitudes and occasional truculence. At home, Leslie was reproached for neglecting his filial obligations, and was not encouraged to consider further education. Fortunately, Gray helped to persuade James Mitchell to allow his talented son to take up a bursary to Mackie Academy in Stonehaven. Unfortunately, the early promise he showed at Arbuthnott was not maintained. Leslie betrayed a somewhat contemptuous attitude towards the system, showed very little interest in the subjects offered, except English, was critical of the school and its standards and, within a year, had left under a cloud (Munro: 27).

Rather than return to a rural life and "get a fee" as an agricultural labourer, young Mitchell obtained a position as a junior reporter with the Aberdeen Journal (Munro: 24), a surprising appointment for one who had not even completed a year of secondary education. His impressions as a cub reporter, in and around the squalid dock area, were important to Mitchell's personal development, especially his latent radicalism (Munro: 25), and helped to cement his resolve to become a writer. After two years with The Journal, however, he accepted a better paying position with the Scottish Farmer, in Glasgow, where he was again struck by the plight of the working masses in this heavily industrialised area. Although he had to do freelance work, including theatre reviews, to supplement his income of £2-5/- per week (Munro: 28), his

employment with the Farmer was abruptly terminated after four months, because of irregularities in an expense account (Gifford: 45).

Resisting his parents' entreaties to settle on the farm, Mitchell joined the Royal Army Service Corps, in August, 1919. This solved not only the problem of earning a living, but also had the further benefit of enabling him to travel abroad to the Middle East and Central Asia (Campbell: 6). He soon found, however, that there were also serious drawbacks to army life, especially in the loss of privacy, the crudity of barrack existence, and the tedious discipline. He received an honourable discharge from the army in 1923; but after a trying five months' stint as a civilian, Mitchell joined the Royal Air Force, as a clerk (Gifford: 46). In 1925, he married Rebecca Middleton (the daughter of a near neighbour at Bloomfield) in Fulham Registry Office. In keeping with the discriminatory rule then in force, Rebecca was obliged to resign from the Civil Service on marriage (Munro: 42), and the couple had some bitter experiences in finding accommodation and raising a young family on meagre service pay. In 1929, he left the Air Force with the rank of Corporal. The Mitchells decided to remain in the South, eventually buying a house in Welwyn Garden City, and making only occasional visits to Scotland (Campbell: 7). Throughout this period, Mitchell persevered with his writing and had a variety of pieces published, but his determination to make his way as a writer is best illustrated by the persistence with which he revised Stained Radiance (1930), his first novel, until after twenty rejections it was finally accepted (Graham: APJ 28/5/66).

Certain aspects of Mitchell's character and personality are worth noting. As a boy he was introspective and bookish, preferring reading to participating in sports. He was clearly intelligent and creative, displaying a confidence in his

ability to rise above his lowly station, overcome the limitations of his home environment and make a reputation in the literary field (Munro: 139, 161). While he recoiled from the land as a focus of manual labour, he loved it as an essential part of nature. In his youth he enjoyed climbing and walking around the countryside, observing natural phenomena and collecting or examining prehistoric relics (Gifford: 43), a manifestation of his interest in the past. He also had a talent for noting the idiosyncrasies of local worthies (Campbell: 10), the raw material for character studies which appear in the later Scottish novels and short stories (Young: 4).

In proportion as Mitchell outgrew the pedantry of his adolescent years, together with the occasional propensity to display erratic behaviour, he matured into a friendly, generous individual, a genial host who possessed a good sense of humour (Campbell: 8). Although he was an individualist, in the sense of having strong opinions which he delighted to impart to others, he was neither abrasive nor dogmatic, and was more than willing to listen to other people's views (Munro: 134), in the earnest search for truth. Earning a reputation as a writer went hand in hand with broadening his connections with a growing circle of literary friends and acquaintances, and he took much satisfaction from these intellectual contacts (Campbell: viii). Nevertheless, he was not inclined to show false modesty in the face of his accomplishments, but it should be added that his increasing recognition as a writer of significance did not bring riches or even prosperity to him and his family, merely a moderate degree of comfort (Graham: APJ 28/5/66).

Even this modest sufficiency was a decided improvement on the bare subsistence afforded his parents and their neighbours from the hard, unhealthy

toil on small holdings in the north (Munro: 4) (ScS: 295). And it was far better than the near destitution he suffered in the period following his dismissal from the Scottish Farmer, which twice drove him to enlist in the armed forces.

From a broader perspective, Mitchell was acutely conscious of the dreadful suffering and hardship which had to be endured by many of the working classes and their families as he had observed in Glasgow (Gifford: 58; ScS:137-8; Munro: 2, 26) a centre dominated by heavy industry and large scale manufacturing, and disfigured by serious urban blight. Among less commendable legacies of the nineteenth century were marked extremes of wealth and income, substandard housing and inadequate social provision. Following a brief post-war boom, a serious downturn set in, from 1920 on, characterised by falling prices and profitability, faltering international trade, increasing non-competitiveness, growing structural imbalance or maladjustment, rising unemployment, backward looking government policies, and worsening social conditions. This deterioration in Britain's economic performance was evident in the decline of the great basic industries which had been the foundation of the country's former superiority and supremacy; and this sorry state of affairs was exacerbated by the onset of the world slump in 1929 (Campbell: 28) together with the continuing inability on the part of the authorities to apply remedial measures. Such was the dismal, dispiriting background against which Mitchell wrote.

Given Mitchell's strong left-wing leanings, it was perhaps natural for him to be impressed by the doctrine called Diffusionism (G.E. Smith: 7), in which a school of prestigious inter-war anthropologists sought to give scientific validity to an ancient tradition going right back to the Greeks; and which has been

carried on into the modern era by, for instance, the writers of the Enlightenment, the Utopian socialists, Marxists and anarchists; the central theme being human perfectibility through universal education and provision of a suitable environment. A brief summary of the Diffusionist thesis will suffice to illustrate its attraction for one who was critical of and appalled by the status quo. Primitive man, the theory postulates, lived in a Golden Age wherein his true nature was given full rein (Bold: 128). He was essentially good: honest and upright, courteous and generous, merry and contented (Massingham: 16-17). He lived as part of a family group, co-operating with the others for subsistence and survival, as in a community of modern anarchists (Young: 13). These nomads collected food wherever they found it and gave scarcely a thought to conserving their supplies for the morrow.

As hunters and foragers, they had no cause to think of or resort to private property. Accordingly, they had no laws or judges, no compulsions, punishments, governments or social classes, no religions, social organisations, marriage ceremonies or burial rites, no wars and no violence (G.E. Smith: 22; Massingham: 9). They had no knowledge of arts or science but did have an aptitude for elemental pictorial art and for basic crafts. In this familial association, men and women were equal, complementing and supporting each other in matters of mutual group life (Massingham: 17).

Civilisation, the argument runs, resulted from an abrupt and decisive qualitative change in the way people worked for and earned their sustenance. The transformation was occasioned by the adoption of crop cultivation and cattle rearing, thought to have originated initially in the Upper Nile Valley (G.E. Smith: 31). Men ceased to be wanderers and settled in villages. Other

developments then followed more or less rapidly. New occupations emerged, especially crafts relating to cloth making, metal working, house construction and shipbuilding. A complex social organisation evolved encompassing private property, formal laws and a state to enforce them through penalties for infringements, and monarchy backed by religious establishments (Massingham: 35). Cultural ideas arose as manifested by speculation in the arts and sciences, in response to the demands of the new conditions and aided by the growth of language and the invention of writing and mathematics. Aspirations and values were completely transformed, with altruism, co-operation, freedom, innocence and peacefulness, giving way to selfishness, competitiveness, subservience, guile and aggression (G.E. Smith: 24). A revolution in external circumstances had overcome natural goodness and brought in its train a multiplicity of evils associated with the advent of king worship, social stratification and colonial aggrandizement.

Although Mitchell was no theorist in politics, economics or philosophy, nevertheless he was able to formulate a consistent point of view relating to the wrongs and defects of the capitalist society, set out the relationships, interactions and workings of a superior system and devise a means to bring this ideal community into existence. His strong moral attitude taught him that capitalism, which he condemned unequivocally (Malcolm: 12), was a bad system in that it entailed enrichment of the plutocrats and denial of the proletarians, together with social elitism for the one, and social deprivation for the other.

He championed a model system or scheme designed to elevate the common man, eliminate poverty, oppression, exploitation and injustice and initiate freedom and equality. This Utopia required the abolition of private

property, legislative rules, and constitutional laws, eventually to produce a stateless situation for society -- the ultimate aim of anarcho-communism. It is difficult to say what Mitchell's political stance really was, because he put forward ideas that were an amalgam of several beliefs. That being so, it is simpler to classify him as a radical, left-wing socialist (David Smith: 112).

Since he advocated revolution, he scorned mere redistribution of wealth and income, for such marginal changes were always intended to appease the workers. He was not satisfied with tokenism, and was very critical of the supposed socialism of the Fabianism of the British Labour Party whose policies amounted to mere tinkering with capitalism, instead of bringing in a whole series of decisive measures with the specific aim of transforming the system politically, economically and socially. An example of this ineffectual reformist attitude was the defeatist behaviour of right-wing trade union leaders during the General Strike of 1926. By contrast, Mitchell applauded the Bolshevik revolution (Malcolm: 3; Campbell: vii, 47-55).

He was aware that to reinstitute the Golden Age of Diffusionism would be impossible (Young: 23). Historical changes leading up to the present, embodied in the dialectical processes of growth, decay and development, would have to be recognised and tackled with determination and commitment. Consistent with his political bias, he favoured strengthening workers' organisations, encouraging militant political action by exceptional leaders so that workers would be able to take control from the ruling class. He also envisaged extending the powers of the State in order to destroy capitalism, achieve the anarcho-communist goal, establish a classless society and abolish the State itself (Malcolm: 21).

Despite a strict Presbyterian upbringing, Mitchell tended in his youth to be a sceptic with regard to religion. It was natural for him to be more interested in science and the way it can increase one's knowledge of the universe (Munro: 142). His mature anti-religious stance was a follow-through from the doctrine that religion runs counter to science and rationality, produces false consciousness and stands as a pillar of the existing order. He frowned upon all religion while acknowledging that the "humble and the poor had often found real comfort in the Kirk" (Munro: 134). But consolation did not change the fact that religion was irrelevant to the human condition.

It is not easy to reconcile Mitchell's conflicting opinions on nationalism. On the one hand, he was highly critical of nationalism which he associated with fascism (see letter to Neil Gunn November 2, 1934, Young: 20). He was particularly opposed to nationalism in small countries where it promoted exclusiveness in language and culture, but did nothing to alleviate the suffering of the poor (Malcolm: 7; A Scots Hairst [1967]: 91-92) and raise the standard of living. On the other hand, he took pride in Scottish culture, so that he would accept nationalism if it meshed with socialism or communism. In this connection, he saw it as a way for Scotland to win freedom from England (Malcolm: 7). Of course, he was emotionally attached to Scotland, as evidenced by his writing on Scottish themes and in his use of dialect. For Mitchell, true political nationalism could be a liberating influence, given that it combined egalitarianism and individualism.

Built into his writings, as a matter of course, were Mitchell's positions on politics (Munro: 134; Campbell: 49), religion and nationalism. He condemned novels and art forms of an escapist nature as superficial. By contrast he claimed

to be a revolutionary writer and acknowledged all his books to be explicit or implicit propaganda (Munro: 76; Left Review: Feb. 1935), his art as anarchy (Malcolm: 25). He saw religion as anti-social and unnatural (Young: 18; Sunset Song: 313). His use of vernacular in his Scottish fiction, more appropriate than English for local descriptions, reflected his spontaneous and genuine affection for his native land.

Although Mitchell's reputation rests mainly on novels, and in particular on A Scots Quair, his other works were important for personal development and satisfaction and, of course, income. A short summary will show the scope, direction and focus of his writing. Between 1924 (when his first published piece "Siva Plays the Game" won first prize in a short story competition and appeared in T.P's and Cassell's Weekly, on October 18) and 1935, Mitchell published two books of short stories, eleven novels, three books on anthropology and exploration, articles, reviews and poetry, and a collection of essays and short stories in collaboration with Hugh McDiarmid. In this collection, entitled Scottish Scene or The Intelligent Man's Guide to Albyn, Mitchell's contribution covers some of his *bêtes noires*: politics, religion, nationalism; and his concerns: freedom, justice, nature. Eleven works were written under his own name, yet he is best remembered for the smaller body of writing under the pseudonym, Lewis Grassie Gibbon. As in the novels, Mitchell's short fiction can be classified as either English or Scottish. Almost all the stories contain serious themes later developed in his longer fiction. The English tales range from Eastern romances to tales of mystery, intrigue and corruption; the Scottish deal with pressing problems of peasant life in the Mearns.

Short fiction provided Mitchell with an opportunity to experiment with

various literary techniques: use of narrator, folk voice, linguistic approach. The English collection, subsequently published in two volumes: Calends of Cairo (1931) (dedicated "To my Father and Mother"), and Persian Dawns, Egyptian Nights (1932), contain Mitchell's strong condemnation of sexual, religious and moral discrimination, and of social bigotry based on creed and colour. His negative opinion of the inhibiting Calvinist view of religion was first seen in "For Ten's Sake" (originally entitled "Ten Men of Sodom" but changed at the suggestion of Leonard Huxley for the benefit of certain "gentle readers") (Munro: 52). In it he emphatically denounced Calvinism for its "repression of natural instincts" (Young: 155) and its adherence to "the ancient and cruel God of sacrifice" (Cornhill Magazine, v 68: 258).

In another story, "Thermopylae", the author's long-standing proletarian sympathies are evident in the political dispute between immigrant Greek workers and exploitative, profiteering landowners, and in the efforts of a workers' commune to move towards a "fully integrated, self sufficient community" (Malcolm: 59).

Five Scottish stories were published in 1933, three of which appeared in Scots Magazine. These stories were written in less than six months under his pseudonym because, as he wrote to a friend, "I've invented this fellow Grassic Gibbon, so I may as well make him work for me" (Munro: 142). The basic themes and plots are similar to the English stories, while setting, characterisation and narrative technique bear a strong resemblance to Sunset Song. Gibbon/Mitchell drew on his own personal experience of life in the Mearns in depicting some of the problems facing these characters: the harsh reality of the conflict between man and nature, in "Clay", and the damaging effects of

civilisation on the innocent, in "Greenden". By contrast, one of the most successful stories, "Smeddum", is a simple character study of a strong-willed, independent, just and generous matriarch.

Mitchell's consistent radicalism is obvious in most of his writings. As previously noted, those early years as a cub reporter in Aberdeen and Glasgow reinforced his left-wing tendencies and social commitment (Malcolm: 71), aptly expressed in his condemnation of the dehumanising living conditions to be found in these cities, but especially in Glasgow where: "The hundred and fifty thousand eat and sleep and copulate and conceive and crawl into childhood in these waste jungles of stench and disease and hopelessness" (ASH: 84).

Malcom Maudslay, the hero of The Thirteenth Disciple (1931), echoes the author's own concern about the need for reform when he relates that in reading: "the limpid ... verse of William Morris, he had discovered the socialists ... Here were people who, like himself, had shuddered in sick horror at the sight of the dehumanized and wandering" (TD: 60). Mitchell's army experience added to his conviction that deplorable social and economic conditions drove many young men to sacrifice themselves by joining up, a sentiment expressed by John Garland: "He hated the Air Force he had enlisted under the compulsion of hunger and unemployment. His stomach had conscripted him more surely than any Man Power Act could have done" (SR [1930]: 30).

These two autobiographical novels spell out Mitchell's love-hate relationship to the land, his hatred of poverty and injustice, his radicalism and belief in Diffusionism. He clearly identifies himself with Maudslay's search for the purpose of life and his quest to find the symbolic 'City of the Sun' (TD: 286). In this way Mitchell conveys his disillusionment with contemporary life, but

offers the vision of mankind's salvation to escape from the fate to which civilisation is heading.

Three of four romantic novels share a common theme: to remodel and regenerate society. In them, Mitchell does not expound rational principles so as to project individuals backwards to a primitive state; instead he suggests that knowledge is the precondition of necessary improvement for present and future generations. He explores this idea in Three Go Back (1932), in which time travellers are transported back to the age of primitive man; in Image and Superscription (1933), with the possibility that a golden age is possible today; and in Gay Hunter (1934), set in the distant future, in which he argues that the horrors of the twentieth century -- as he experienced them in the 30's: war, poverty, fascism -- will only get worse unless mankind casts off the trappings of 'civilised society' and the individual returns to his "essential self" (Young: 66). In two of these romances, it is the heroines who embrace Diffusionism and seek to promote change, although in each case her mentor is a primitive male: Clair Stranlay adopts the lifestyle of her primitive lover, Aertes, in Three Go Back, while in Gay Hunter, the heroine of that name sees the advantages of a new primitive lifestyle in a post-apocalyptic world with her lover, Rem, who also happens to understand English.

Naturally, Mitchell's best non-fiction argues, for example in The Conquest of the Maya (1934), that perfectibility was inherent in Mayan society. The contrast underlines the degeneration of modern times. He concludes, in Spartacus (1933), that the slaves' rebellion against their Roman masters is proof positive of the cruelty and injustice inherent in such a 'civilised society'.

Nine Against the Unknown, a collection of short biographies of explorers,

continues the search for nirvana. The reality of the quest is summed up in Nansen's comment on the universal truth of human life (Malcolm: 36): "... seeing himself a lonely figure in the wastes of a little planet wheeling about a little sun, without guide or light or surety or safety, unaccompanied by God or devil, hope and fear but the staves he carves for himself" (NAU: 295). The introduction to Nine Against the Unknown, his last published work, contains the following lines from Tennyson's "Ulysses":

Come, my friends,
 'Tis not too late to seek a newer world.
 Push off, and sitting well in order smite
 The sounding furrows; for my purpose holds
 To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths
 Of all the western stars, until I die.
 It may be that the gulfs will wash us down;
 It may be we shall touch the Happy Isles.

Ironically, these same lines appeared in the introduction to Hanno or The Future of Exploration, his first book. He had come full circle.

The following chapters, dealing with his fiction, will focus on the role and status of women and the way in which they try to establish their own identities on two levels: social and personal. Mitchell was aware of the social injustice which conditioned women's lives; one example from personal experience was the hardship caused when Rebecca had to resign from the Civil Service on marriage, yet this rule did not apply to men in the Service. The thesis will examine women's prospects and opportunities, not merely in the social milieu but also with respect to their family relationships. In Chapter 2, I will examine those aspects in some short stories; and in Chapter 3, four English novels. In Chapter 4, I will analyse A Scots Quair. A conclusion follows.

CHAPTER TWO

SHORT STORIES

Mitchell's criticism of contemporary society reflected his belief that in ancient time men lived in harmony with nature --free of political constraints; he also emphasised his scorn for organised religion, which undermined the freedom of the individual. The inhibiting mores of traditional male-dominated families (a product of 'civilised society') denigrated women, notably in Scottish rural areas, by denying or refusing the young opportunities for education beyond their class; by demanding subservience to men, and by acquiescing in the double standard of morality assumed by the Church.

Women, with few exceptions, had little opportunity to establish their own identities. In the 1920's, especially in farming communities of Scotland, women were at the mercy of the dictates of husbands or fathers. Wives had neither the freedom of will nor the independence of action to make their own decisions; they were no better than chattels, with no more rights than hired hands. If a husband were also a religious bigot, submission was demanded 'in the name of the Lord'. Since there was no hope of changing male attitudes, wives had no choice but to endure the 'known' present, or leave and face an 'unknown' future. A third option, of course, was suicide.

The writings to be examined in this chapter fall into two groups: Scottish stories, and English stories. Four Scottish stories: "Greenden" (1932), "Clay" (1933), "Sim" (1933) and "Smeddum" (1933), (written under his pseudonym, and after Sunset Song) are set in the Mearns, and depict family relationships in

which wives are neglected and daughters ignored. English stories to be considered: "Vernal" (1930), "East is West" (1930), "It is Written" (1930), and "The Road" (1929), are set in the Middle East. The female characters are for the most part, young, English, middle-class, educated women who tend to fare better than their Scottish counterparts.

SCOTTISH STORIES

Scottish stories echo Gibbon's assumption that a Golden Age was swept away by the advent of agriculture and supplanted by a system of private property, exploitation and greed (Young: 29). In his essay "The Land" (ASH: 66) he argues that farming is no life for modern man or woman. "It belongs to a different, an alien generation" (ASH: 69). "Real land" as distinct from "agricultural land" is "... unstirred and greatly untouched by man, unknowing ploughing or crops or the coming of the scythe." (75). In the Scottish stories, modern man evades the "real land" but pays heed to the earth and clay that will yield him rewards. Gibbon's own experiences reflect his awareness of the heart-breaking toil of farming in Scotland and the dichotomy of the 'land' as defined.

Central to the theme of "Greenden" is the contrast between a realistic farm setting and a symbolic image. The one describes the Den: a forty-five acre farm of ill-red clay, lying low in the woods, wet, old, dark and oppressive, closed in by trees, brown plants and whins, "smothered away from the world" (36), the sad result of man's efforts to cultivate the soil; the other pictures a gap in the trees, beyond Greenden, revealing the green hills of the Grampians, miles away, shining in the light of the setting sun, untouched by man.

Characters in this story also present contrasts. Ellen and George Simpson are city folk from Glasgow. Ellen, young and innocent, has come to this farming community only for the sake of her husband's health. He is insensitive to her needs; their neighbours are ungenerous and thrive on malicious gossip. Though apprehensive about the move, Ellen insists that they settle on a farm, after hearing the hymn, "There is a Green Hill Far Away", thus apparently conquering her *angst*.

Despite their initial difficulties, the new environment brings about a marked improvement in George's lungs, and in his attitude to the land. He learns how to work the soil, helps his neighbour, Murdoch, to build a barn, spends his evenings with Murdoch's daughter, leaving his wife at home alone. Ellen knows nothing about farming or of the requirements of a farmer's wife. Although she has been "so frightened since the first hour here" (37) paradoxically she responds to the Land, and is sensitive to the natural world around her. Loneliness, however, exacerbates her qualms; she feels claustrophobic, isolated and imprisoned in this 'green den'. Ellen's only consolation is her 'vision' of the 'green hills' from the kitchen door through a break in the trees. Denied even this small comfort when, with George's help, Murdoch's barn goes up and blocks her view of the world beyond the Den, Ellen commits suicide.

Her tragedy is a combination of marital neglect, isolation, a sense of estrangement and a serious concern for external forces encroaching on her space. Ellen is clearly an ingenuous person who does not understand the reality of her situation but believes in her 'vision'. She might even be seen as a victim of civilisation, who made the ultimate sacrifice to restore George's health. She

realised that he could dispense with her because "he's safe now" (37). Unfortunately, Ellen's suicide has no moral value. George has already formed an association with his neighbour's daughter, and "if it weren't for that snippet of a creature, Ellen" the Murdochs think him "as fine a goodson as you'd meet" (35).

As the title suggests, "Clay" refers to a major problem in any farming area. For Rob Galt, clay begins as a challenge when he leases the farm at Pittaulds, and ends as an obsession. Known as a young man who thrives on hard work, "a fine, frank childe.... kindness itself" (ASH: 17), Rob treats his wife and daughter with affection.

They have been settled for less than a week when twelve-year old Rachel notices a 'queer like change' in her father. Instead of playing with her before dinner, he takes her out in the rain to help him pull two loads of turnips. Gradually he spends less time at home, working long hours and transferring his devotion from his family to the land. He no longer spoils his wife and daughter but snaps "short-tempered at his dark-faced wife" and goes out to the byre "with a scowl of ill-nature" (19). He talks to his neighbours about his fields as if they are women "to prig and pat afore they come on" (21). He claims that the new park he is trying to clear, is "fairly a bitch... sly and sleeked, you can feel it as soon as you start in on her" (21).

Although Rachel tries to please her father by doing farm chores, at harvest time he makes his wife and daughter work like hired hands, cutting, binding and stooking, with little thanks. When the Dominie suggests that Rachel could win a bursary to go to college, Rob immediately dismisses the idea,

and to Rachel's disappointment, considers it "a small bit thing to greet over" (22). Soon afterwards Rachel is fee'd out in Segget.

Galt's progressive alienation parallels the difficulties he encounters with each new challenge on the land, the latest being an untouched "three or four acre, deep-pitted with holes and as rank with whins as a haddock with scales" (20). For Rob, "it fair cried to have a man at it" (20). His familial neglect reaches a new low when he ignores his wife's pleas to get a doctor although she is terminally ill with cancer. Rachel finally persuades Rob to 'look in' on his wife, on her deathbed; when he does he merely reports on the harvest and his need to get back to work. The mourners at the funeral take his solemnity to express thoughts of his wife, until he cries out "It's LIME I should have given... the park on the brae" (25).

Rob continues to break land unused since the Flood. One November day he uncovers "an eirde of olden time, an earth-house built by the early folk" containing human bones, "a litter of flints and a crumbling stick in the shape of a heuch" (26). He tells Rachel, "I knew that some childe had once farmed up here... I'd like to have kenned that childe, what a crack together we'd have had on the crops!" (26).

Standing there soaked to the skin, Rob catches his death of cold. After all his struggles to break the clay he has no resistance left to fight "the black hoast that took hold of his lungs" (26), and within three days Rob is dead. Considering her father's efforts and commitment, and regardless of the bitterness he has caused them, Rachel naturally decides that he should be buried in the eirde house "by the bones of the man of old time" (27). Moreover, Rachel cannot hate him. The force that drove Rob Galt to set his priorities merely repeats how men

since ancient time have endeavoured to tame the land and enrich it. Now that she is free, Rachel will not stay at Pittaulds, but will go "to the life that was hers, that was different" (27). Her father has shown that "All life -- [is] just clay that awoke and strove to return again to its mother's breast" (27).

"Sim" is another character study of a farmer with a fixation about work, whose selfishness and arrogance often damage his family. Unlike Galt, Sim Wilson's aim is not to improve the soil but to get material rewards for specific goals, and to prove that he can achieve his desired objectives. His intermittent positive applications leave him with intervals where he is lazy and unproductive, alternating between 'swack' and 'sweir'. He disdains those labourers who slave to profit owners but chooses to work when he likes. "Show me a thing that is worth my trauchle and I'll work you all off the face of the earth" (ASH: 41), but according to the foreman Sim has "a bigger power for lazing around than a pig in a ree" (42).

Two years after meeting Kate Duthie, who rejected a proposal coming from a mere labourer, Sim has saved enough to buy and improve the run-down farm of Haughgreen. Kate is impressed. She now sees herself as "a braw farmer's wife" and agrees to marry him. Sim quickly reverts to a spell of laziness, and Kate becomes no better than unpaid help. He rises to the occasion when his daughter, Jean, is born. Sim immediately becomes a slave-driver to himself, his wife and two hired hands to make "a braw life for this lass ... give her an education and make her a lady" (47). Unfortunately, Jean is a 'daftie' and will remain a bairn of three for the rest of her life.

Now he can hardly 'thole' Jean or his 'withered up' wife. A second daughter, Jess, turns out to be bright, intelligent and healthy; Sim transfers all

his affection and attention to her. At eighteen, Jess is a student, 'haughty and neat'; all he had hoped for. Ironically, it is the 'daftie' who indicates the folly of Sim's misplaced 'trauchle' when she points to her sister sitting red-faced by the fire. Then the father sees plain enough "the way she was in" (41). Too late he recalls his schoolboy boast: "I'll know what I'm getting into ere I gang it at all" (41).

"Smeddum" (in this context, a word with no precise English equivalent) portrays an energetic, independent, spirited, determined and unconventional individual. It differs from the other Scottish stories in highlighting the wife and mother. The role of provider is reversed here. Meg Menzies does all the work around the farm because her husband, Will, is not only 'bone lazy' and 'sly as sin' but also an alcoholic who drinks himself to death.

A mother of nine, with four still at home, Meg has a hand "that skelped her way through life" (ASH: 4) ruling her family with an iron fist and her neighbours with a sharp tongue. She thinks nothing of skelping her daughter, Jean, when she is accused of stealing money from the manse where she is a maid, then threatens to do the same to the minister's wife for falsely accusing Jean.

Meg's brash behaviour offsets her simple code of justice: wrongdoers are punished according to their acts whether against her children or committed by them. Her son, John, protests when she forces him to do the honourable thing and marry the pregnant Ag Grant. Meg tells him that "it needs smeddum to be either right coarse or right kind" (8), and John lacks both. Only Kath rebels with impunity and, like her mother, scorns conformity. She takes up with a married man, then goes off to Australia, and finally plans (with financial aid from her

mother) to emigrate to Canada with Jock Robb. Perhaps she will marry Jock later, depending on his qualities and her mood.

Meg surprises the family by informing them that she will help the young couple. Kath is "free ... to make her own choice the same as myself" (14). Meg had not married their father, because she could never make up her mind; she had stayed with Will from choice not convention. This reasoning represents a woman's right to self-determination, freedom of will and independence of action. Meg Menzies is a "humorous personification of Mitchell's anarchist ideal of self-sufficiency." (Malcolm: 71).

In these Scottish stories Gibbon has, like Hardy, combined elements of season, place, and rural customs to explain the behaviour and attitude of his characters in particular situations and circumstances. The tragedy of the naïve Ellen Simpson, in her response to the land, is in sharp contrast to the will and determination of Meg Menzies, while Rachel Galt's realisation of her father's obsession is summed up in one of Gibbon's recurring themes: nothing endures but the land.

ENGLISH STORIES

Mitchell's English stories lack the realism and credibility of plot and character of his Scottish writings. Although the themes are more universal, he leaves problems unresolved or contrives outcomes that serve his ends but do not always justify his means. Religious bigotry and racial prejudice are evident in four English stories, the actions set in Egypt, revolving around heroines who are young, attractive, intelligent and prepared to assert their independence.

"Vernal" (1930) demonstrates the distorting effects of Calvinism on sexuality. A retired preacher, ironically named Freeman, who lives by the creed of the "ancient and cruel God of sacrifice and supplication and the bitter codes" (CM 68: 258), is determined to thwart his daughter, Norla, from developing her own interests and personality.

In his youth, Freeman believed he was "created by God for his purpose" and, encouraged by his parents, prepared for the church. At twenty-five he fell in love and married Mary, enjoying marital bliss for a short time. But shortly after the birth of their daughter the "restraints and tabus came back to him ... bred of his own repressions and tortured inhibitions" (258). He felt unclean and lustful for enjoying conjugal pleasures, and from then on denounced the sins of the flesh.

After six years, his fun-loving wife left him and their daughter to go off to France with a Russian aristocrat, but when he died within a year Freeman ignored Mary's pleas for help. Although Norla was then raised in an atmosphere of repression and religious hysteria, at twenty, she was more interested in sunsets than in souls. She had to fight for her right to attend college and even take drawing lessons. Unlike Rachel, Norla both fought and won (262).

Moving to Egypt with his daughter for his health's sake, Freeman again tries to keep a tight rein on her, but with little effect. She is attracted to a Russian artist. Freeman forbids her to see him again, threatening that "whatever loose blood you inherit from your mother, I'll see that it's held in check" (266). Norla does not yield, and marries her freethinking Bohemian. Freeman's immediate acceptance of her marriage is contrived by the appearance of the ghost of Mary, who had just died in a Cairo brothel; an about-face indicating his religious cant.

By contrast, "It is Written" (1930) posits the arguments of a believer and a non-believer in their search for personal spiritual happiness. Twenty-year old Gillyflower Arnold is educated, independent, and an atheist; a geologist funded by the Egyptian government to lead a search for oil in the desert. Godfrey Steyn, aged thirty, an army clergyman, is disillusioned by the shams of peace and plenty in the aftermath of torture and suffering in World War I. Steyn hopes to find meaning in life by searching for the tomb of Polyorthes, said to contain the last testament of Christ (CM 68: 515).

Gillyflower, a scientific rationalist, exhibiting wisdom beyond her years, verbalises her concern about an oil monopoly, (circa 1925) when the world's fuel is growing scarcer every year. She contends that oil should not be exploited by a single company or government, but be controlled by a World Board to encourage economic co-operation and greater international understanding among nations (520).

She scoffs at Steyn's faith in the lost script, and his palaeolithic belief in the worship of light and fear of darkness. "What good had belief in gods ever done", she asks, when it is more important "to bring order and decency into human life" (521). She questions how finding an ancient parchment will help Steyn's beliefs when he has lost faith at his own failure. According to Gillyflower's logical mind, perpetual life is found in the cyclical process of birth, life and death. Unfortunately, their initial theological concerns are unresolved. Gillyflower and Steyn simply agree on a limited interpretation of God as a powerful force against evil which they can both support.

"East is West" (1930) is an appropriate title for an exposé of racial prejudice and discrimination found in the colonies among the English upper

classes. Reg Melfort is a prime example of colonial mentality and unwarranted snobbery. He owes his rank and position to his grandfather who made a fortune from rum in Jamaica, bought a commission for his son and thus instituted a military tradition for his heirs in Britain. Reg, born in India and "raised on the usual pap", has "less imagination than a wombat" and the "colour, caste and class prejudice of a taboo-ridden Brahmin" (CM 68: 137).

His sister Joyce, unencumbered by male attitudes and expectations, is left to pursue her own interests. She is not interested in breeding, social status or false notions of grandeur, preferring instead to think of life as an adventure. When Reg and Joyce come to Egypt to visit a distant cousin, Joyce meets Simon Mogara, an aeronautical engineer, and immediately takes an interest in his ideas and experiments in ornithography. But when she becomes engaged to Mogara, the grandson of a Goanese half-caste, Reg forbids her to continue the relationship. Provoked by Reg's bigotry, Dr. Adrian, his cousin, tells him that his own wealthy grandmother had been a "white mulatto" from Jamaica.

"The Road" (1929), relates Jane Hatoun's martyrdom in Egypt, as the result of her insistence on enshrining women's rights in a country where women are still treated as "cattle-slaves and dolls" (CM 67: 342). Jane's Egyptian father had been expelled from El Azhar University where he was a student, for "heretical beliefs and liberal views" (341). Her parents were killed in a train accident when she was a baby and she was brought up by an aunt, a member of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood and a friend of Ruskin and Morris. Jane was given a liberal education and believed that "the New Age was nigh when all men would be free ... and all women not only the equals of men, but the

goddesses to inspire" (342). In 1899, aged twenty-one, Jane, determined to be a missionary, set out for Egypt.

In Cairo she recruited intelligent women and urged those of the harems to learn reading and writing, to demand freedom and to organise a Women's League of Al-Islam. Such proposals were anathema to the Cairo establishment (342). Kidnapped by the Bey and herself enslaved in a harem, Jane went mad and suffered deliberate torment, ridicule and persecution. A sudden imagined miracle supposedly cured her madness. In her vision she spoke in Arabic and called herself The Prophetess of God come to deliver the women of the world. She was not preaching war on men, but simply calling for sacrifice and selflessness to follow 'El Darb' the mystic road to the City of God (347) which leads to "a life free and eager... beyond the prisons of fear and cruelty" (346). Her appeal to Woman to pave this Road was "not as the lover or mother of men but as the dispossessed half of humanity which has never asserted individual existence" (347).

In the absence of the Bey, during a cholera epidemic, Jane walked freely in the Palace, where a young, enlightened Turk, spoke to her in English and offered to help her escape. His kindness and compassion triggered a rational response. By now, however, the women in the harem depended on her; she could not leave them. When the Bey returned, intending to satisfy his animal instincts, his wife, Zuria, attacked him with a knife in defending Jane, who then drove the knife into his heart. Both women were murdered by the Bey's henchmen and thrown into the Nile. In the women's legends of Cairo, Jane Hatoun is regarded as a martyr.

CHAPTER THREE

ENGLISH NOVELS

Stained Radiance (1930) and The Thirteenth Disciple (1931) are two thinly-veiled autobiographical novels in which the female characters with strong Scottish backgrounds are conditioned by their ties to the land and to their families. They choose to live away from Scotland but need to return to their roots to develop and retain self-awareness. Two romantic novels, Three Go Back (1932) and Gay Hunter (1934), depict women for whom Diffusionist theories have shaped their ideas and determined their attitudes and actions.

Mitchell's first novel, Stained Radiance: A Fictionist's Prelude, (which predates his short stories), introduces a number of themes that are further explored and developed in his later works. Thea Mayven, an exiled Scot, is the female counterpart of Mitchell himself: she comes from strong peasant stock in North East Scotland, is imbued with inherited Calvinism, and ambivalent about her homeland. She prefigures Chris Guthrie, of A Scots Quair, in her peasant 'class' reaction to society: "vague indifferent republicanism, vague indifferent contempt of royalty and all the peasant's dislike and distrust of the working-class" (SR: 18). Thea enjoys the cosmopolitan life of London, but as a foreigner; her romantic ideas of the peasant compel her to return to her roots each year. She loves the land, the sunrises, the sound of lowing cattle and the scent of heather. Because of her education, she hates the squalor of peasant life, the talk of cattle diseases and the smell of uncleaned byres (18). Nevertheless, she is drawn back to the land to renew her strength and values. Thea's attitude

foreshadows the dichotomy facing Chris Guthrie in Sunset Song when she thinks of the land.

Thea shares a flat in Chelsea with Norah Casement and Ellen Ledgeworth. The uncertainty these girls feel in their lives is reflected in their lack of sexual fulfilment and personal enrichment. Norah Casement, twenty-three years old, Irish, good-natured, good-hearted, and irresponsible, is fond of young men and given to Irish expletives (23). Underneath this brash front, Norah is scared of the world. Her latest boyfriend, James Storman, Secretary of the Anarcho-Communist Party, whom she later marries, practises his beliefs with an almost religious fervour that blinds him to reality. Although a doctrinaire Marxist his own inhumanity lets him exploit his own wife. When Norah has a baby, Storman becomes disillusioned with the Party. He leaves to become manager of a large firm, with a good salary, and the chance to move out of Peckham. John Garland, who joins the Communist party because of his disillusionment with society, takes over as Party Secretary.

Ellen Ledgeworth, a twenty-eight year old milliner, is a very placid individual who walks "like a sedate cow" (30). But Ellen has very firm ideas: she does not believe in the Old Testament, thinking it silly. She has a run-of-the-mill job, at the high-class millinery establishment of Cocotte Soeurs, with little ambition to better her position until she meets Robert Gayford, the dissolute, disowned son of one of their customers, Mrs. Gayford (52). Her womanhood 'discovered' Ellen (placid as ever) smartens her appearance and shows vigour and initiative in her work. Within two months, she has been rapidly promoted, and soon makes a reputation as an accomplished artistic designer -- to no less than a Royal patron (232). When her employer, Mrs Streseman Mullins, asks

Ellen to explain the change, she replies, "There's been an alteration in my private life... Perhaps it's done me good. I have a lover" (233).

Mrs. Gayford, forty and independently wealthy, has been trying to 'create a sensation' for over twenty years (48). A recent convert to Communism, she addresses meetings on Free Love, Woman's Right to the Illegitimate Child, and Christ an Impostor. She writes letters to the Red Republic urging the British proletariat to support the communist struggle in Latvia, and signs cheques for aid to Latvia (which somehow end up at the Blackshire Miners' Association). One of Ellen's first jobs at Cocotte Soeurs, was to take a selection of hats to Mrs. Gayford who asked whether Ellen belonged to the union. When Ellen replied that she did not choose to belong to any, Mrs Gayford threatened to have her fired and to report her to the Garment Workers' Union. As she was leaving, Ellen passed James Storman on his way to keep an appointment with Mrs Gayford to solicit £800 "to buy arms for Latvia" (56). Mrs. Gayford's life and interests change when she meets Andreas von Koupa, a wanderer, artist and writer of poetry, through his association with James Storman. She finds the 'sensation' she has been seeking in marriage to Koupa, and he finds the golden egg.

Thea's life in the city is an odd mixture of promises, possibilities, and cramped, disturbing realities. Sex is a remote, occasionally disgusting thing, and to be disregarded. "Politics implies remote personalities; religious emotion, hysteria: God and his existence, an improbable unpleasantness" (18). Thea's insecurity is also manifest in her relationship with John Garland, novelist, cynic, sceptic and disillusioned airman who (like Mitchell) sees life as Absurd and devoid of any spiritual meaning (45).

Garland, son of a Unitarian minister, exhibits a singular lack of faith in any ideological system, secular or religious, but actually prefers "the cold air and frozen spaces of atheism" to the illusory and inhibiting comfort of Christianity (229). He is convinced of the absurdity of human life in a universe devoid of spiritual meaning (Malcolm: 86). His narrow outlook is evident in his affair with Thea, "the only reality in Life" for him (SR: 112). She is the dominant partner, and he agrees that sex is disgusting, 'beastly vile' (78), an attitude which explains their general dissatisfaction.

On a visit to Thea's family in Scotland, they forget the oppressive atmosphere of London as they watch men and horses haymaking. They recognise the importance of 'the Lanc.' and its value for modern life. John and Thea learn to be natural with one another and to acknowledge their sexuality. Thea, in particular, has developed a new awareness of physical love (77), and this, together with their acceptance of nudity when they swim naked in the sea, helps them to overcome the psychological effects of their guilt-ridden puritanism (121).

Back in London, John tells Thea that he has been posted to Egypt, and she informs him that she is pregnant. They are married and have to search for a place for Thea to live before he leaves. Garland had never saved a penny-piece and Thea now dreads her prospects of managing on an Air Force allowance, a mere pittance, when she can no longer work.

Garland contrives his discharge (by shooting himself in the hand) when he learns that Thea is desperately ill, brought on by malnutrition and eclampsia. Their child is stillborn. Garland's pessimistic view of life is exacerbated by Thea's suffering and the indifference of landlords and hospital staff. He is now

convinced of the existence of God, "only, God was a Devil" (265). Thea's remarkable recovery does nothing to change John's mind. Instead, he views their predicament in the context of the plight of the working class, and joins the Anarcho-Communist Party (282).

Although Thea suggests that John is just hitting back at society for their misfortunes, she follows his lead and becomes a Party member, as a way of improving the lot of the under-privileged. "We'll do great things... Even though it's a hopeless fight against immortal evils" (284).

The Thirteenth Disciple: Being a Portrait and Saga of Malcom Maudslay In His Adventure Through The Dark Corridor focuses on two main characters: Domina and Malcom. Domina Riddoch, the orphaned niece of the schoolmaster in Leekan, raised and educated in France, is much more enlightened and unconventional than the native Leekans. She talks favourably of the period of the Golden Age, anticipates romantic idealism and the emancipation of women. Domina's feminist thoughts and feelings arise from her personal experience and from her expressed rebellion over the patriarchal status quo (TD: 205). Her anarcho-feminist world view assumes the liberation of all individuals, men and women. She is particularly critical of male control of religion, state, marriage, wherein civilisation has ruined man. She has no intention of getting married, but is prepared to have children out of wedlock (44).

At thirteen she shocked Leekan, when she first arrived, by bathing daily and walking about the schoolhouse naked in hot weather. She had a passion for swimming in the nude and for mentioning 'awful things' in the girls' playground. At seventeen she was seduced by a boy officer in the Gordon Highlanders who was killed in France, a few months later, in 1916. At twenty-

five, on a return visit, Domina still shocks Leekan. Gossip has it that she was co-respondent in two divorce cases but has no plan to marry either individual (184).

Malcom Maudslay, born in Leekan, is the product of a cold, comfortless, Calvinist home life, and the intransigent puritanism of a school environment. As a child of nine, Malcom heard all kinds of strange explanations of procreation from his schoolmates, so he asked his mother where babies came from. Her only reply was to call him "a *dirrty* little beast" (31). Aware of a terrible *faux pas* Malcom never forgot that incident; it left him with a permanent scar on his confidence.

He tried to find meaning in his life by seeking an escape through adventure or quest, but his military experiences in the Great War, especially the trauma of the trenches, have left him physically and mentally exhausted. He is haunted by the memory of his friend, Sergeant John Metaxa, an advocate of Diffusionism, impaled and screaming on a barbed-wire fence in France. To end his agony Malcom had killed him (160).

Four years after the war, in London, Malcom is depressed, disheartened and in despair. He goes back to Leekan to try to recover his values. Domina, his former classmate, is there -- still exhibiting her primitive qualities -- but she is more mature now, and has knowledge of Diffusionist principles. She plays a key role in liberating Malcom from his inhibitions when she tells him that the Golden Age was no myth, but a reality, where people lived contentedly before the advent of agriculture. Given that development, civilisation burst on the world, and life was thereafter demeaned by the activities of kings and priests, by wars and inequities. Domina advises Malcom to read Grafton Elliot Smith, Massingham and Perry, the main proponents of Diffusionism.

In her final indictment of modern society, Domina reminds Malcom that nothing will be changed if they have to depend on the old religions and the useless political parties. She sums up her opinion of the major parties of the day: "Conservatives sighing for the eighteenth century, the Liberals dreaming of a chloroformed world in side-whiskers and crinolines, the Labour Party -- like a Nonconformist dinosaur, with its nice little respectable brain in its spine, not its head!" (238). Her explanation of the mess in which the modern world finds itself finally attracts Malcom and he embraces a Diffusionist vision. When he is invited to accompany a well-known explorer to Mexico and Guatemala, Malcom readily agrees. As assistant secretary of the Hanno Society, he had already soaked himself in Maya lore (230), and this expedition will provide the opportunity for his personal quest to find the 'City of the Sun', the key to the secrets of life and death.

Before he leaves for Central America, and the Maya ruins of Tula, Tollan, "City of the Sun from which all the great heroes set out" (261), Malcom and Domina are married. Sadly, Malcom dies within sight of his goal, just when Domina gives birth to their son (286).

Two romantic science fiction novels, Three Go Back (1932), and Gay Hunter (1934), extol the virtues of a diffusionist panorama: complete freedom; no organisation or laws; no taboos or neuroses; the innate goodness of man (Young: 49). In Three Go Back three characters, in 1932, are catapulted back into a primitive society of 20,000 B.C. where they are accepted and live with a band of hunters. This ideal existence compares favourably with the flawed, aggressive civilisation they have left. Gay Hunter has a similar plot except that

three time-travellers are projected twenty millenia into the future, to a "post apocalyptic world" (GH: i), and a new breed of primitive hunters.

Three Go Back recounts the cosmic accident wherein the airship, *Magellan's Cloud*, en route to New York, disappears over the lost continent of Atlantis; only three passengers survive, finding themselves on a desolate beach. Clair Stranlay, thirty-three, born in the slums of Battersea, moved up to become a successful author of 'titillating best sellers' (Young: 47). Her cynical view of life is attributable to the death of her soldier-lover torn to pieces on a barbed wire fence at Mametz, during the Great War. Sir John Mullaghan, Tory M.P., aristocrat and militarist, is head of a large armaments firm. Although seemingly unsympathetic, Sir John is sensitive and concerned; he mourns the death of his twelve-year old daughter, raped and murdered by a tramp. Dr. Keith Sinclair, an American militant pacifist, was deported from Germany for trying to institute a League aimed at preventing an arms build up. Clearly the two men are diametrically opposed.

After wandering for three days, seeing a sabre-toothed tiger and finding the fresh bones of a Neanderthal, they are convinced they have been thrown back into the Stone Age. The men agree that the ancient warrior was the armaments manufacturer of the period, but Clair thinks that the primitive had "some elemental contacts with beauty that we've lost forever" (TGB: 103). Their first actual encounter with tall, naked hunters puts the trio at a disadvantage. Clair bites the arm of a native who puts his arm around her, while Sinclair and Mullaghan adopt an arrogant and aggressive pose (118). The natives, by contrast, are friendly and unreserved. Clair recognises the Diffusionist character of their society and is impressed by the simplicity and kindness of these people.

Contemplating the prospect of living among them for the rest of her life -- among horse flesh and fires -- but without books and material comforts (149), Clair decides to remove the last vestige of civilisation, and sheds her clothes (151).

A marked societal difference continues in the annual mating feast. At a communal gathering, the men and women are separated for once; a man simply walks up to the woman he wants, and she accepts or rejects him. A woman may choose a man in the same manner. These associations may be renewed each year, but only by mutual consent, not contract. Clair is chosen by the young hunter, Aertes, and they go off into the woods on their 'honeymoon'. Although she claims that this means 'fulfilment of her desire' (170), mere physical attraction is the basis of their relationship. They cannot talk to one another, or share cultural experiences. Her lack of clothes, conversation and comfort still has to be tested.

Before the social disparities can be addressed or explored, a severe earthquake partly destroys their paradise, brings about a major continental shift and presages the Ice Age. The hunters of the Golden Age have to move south, but are attacked by marauding Neanderthals. At the height of the onslaught, Sinclair and Clair wake up suddenly to find themselves on a beach, having travelled forward through time to the twentieth century. Sir John had died earlier of food poisoning. Sinclair and Clair now intend to devote their lives to spreading the gospel of Diffusionism.

In the dedication to Christopher Morley, in Gay Hunter, Mitchell states that this novel is not a sequel to Three Go Back but a "companion piece" that is "neither prophecy nor propaganda". Even so, the plots are similar. In Gay Hunter, however, three characters dream themselves 20,000 years into the future

to a society of happy hunters; not primitives, but survivors of a post-apocalyptic world, destroyed by atomic warfare and subsequent disasters. While this novel may not be prophetic, it does contain an undercurrent of political propaganda on the pros and cons of Fascism.

Gay Hunter, twenty-three, an American archaeologist attending a conference in England, is well-read, well-travelled, and well-informed on the socio-political situation in Britain in 1934: poverty, strikes, hunger-marches, police brutality and rumblings of war, heightened by the growing fear of Fascism (GH: 10). She is convinced that fascism resulted from the "lunatic blitherings of Sigmund Freud, not the funny little Mosleys or Hitlers or Mussolinis" (8). Her pessimistic view of contemporary life, in contrast to her awareness of the Diffusionist theory of the inherent goodness of man, is put to the test when she meets retired Major Ledyard Houghton, an officer in the Fascist Defence Corps, who decries the present social system, mainly because it lacks sufficient order, discipline and national culture (13). Gay proposes that they might see what the future holds, by citing J.W.Dunne's, An Experiment with Time, which suggests that one can will oneself into the future on the point of sleep. He visualises a future with a highly-structured organisation, while she envisions a simpler life. They agree to try the experiment that night.

Next morning, Gay awakens to find herself lying naked on the grass. Like Thea, Domina and Chris, she soon enjoys this new sense of freedom and awareness of her 'essential self'. She meets Houghton and his friend, Lady Jane Easterling, a patroness of local fascists, who also tried the experiment. They are both naked and ashamed, and their first act is to make themselves grass skirts.

When they all realise that they have travelled aeons ahead of the twentieth century, Gay welcomes the idea of starting life anew in an idyllic setting. The other two are aggressively determined to transform 'this desert' into an ordered state, to introduce "discipline and breed" and put "the scum in their places again" (13). They feel that they must be near London, and set off.

On her own Gay meets a savage-looking hunter, named Rem, who happens to speak English. His obvious sincerity and natural goodness support Gay's understanding of Diffusionism, and she goes off with him to join the rest of his Folk. Meanwhile, Houghton and Lady Jane encounter some hunters. His reaction is not unexpected: he kills one, steals his weapons, recruits forty hunters, and introduces military training for their march on London, to establish Houghton's brand of authoritarianism.

Rem explains to Gay that their community arose after a long period of darkness and horror. The only record of the catastrophes that preceded this new Golden Age is the Voice of the Tower, a machine which recounts (in English) the collapse of the world's civilisations through wars and riots. It is from this contraption that the Folk learned their English, but since the machine is losing power and wearing out, only Rem and an old singer still use the language. Besides, the ferment and anguish of past societies are best forgotten (81). The Voice describes the rise of Great Hierarchies and military states, which necessitated the creation and control of Sub-men, akin to Brave New World. The inhuman treatment of these creatures, including mating and breeding in pens (87), scientific manipulation, exploitation and suppression, together with dissension among Hierarchies, led inevitably to world-wide revolt of the Sub-men and the total destruction of the Hierarchies (88).

After listening to these revelations, Gay's one desire is to escape from all human contact, because she now regards the Folk as degenerate survivors of "the filthy human race, slow-witted, beastly and brainless" (90). But after a week of wandering, indifferent to danger, and near starvation, she is rescued by Rem and nursed back to health. She falls in love with him. A brief 'honeymoon' persuades her of the importance of a natural free relationship and reminds her, as Domina had been reminded, of the unjust demands made on women through the ages. Suddenly, she recalls Houghton's plan to construct a fascist regime. The thought that "nothing endures" (142) does not lessen her alarm, and she rallies Rem and the hunters to pursue Houghton and wreck his embryonic despotism.

The grandeur that had been London is now supplanted by massive, towering, steel ruins, but with a notably untouched, gigantic phallus where the dome of St. Paul's once rose. Giant sewer rats are the last survivors there. Houghton has already repaired some machines, and produced a workable instrument, namely a fire beam to torch and scorch the Folk's territory. But his efforts backfire, and before Gay and the hunters reach the city, there is a huge explosion and conflagration. Another potential civilisation has destroyed itself.

Gay's dream of a long and happy life with Rem suddenly and inexplicably ends when she wakes up in contemporary England. Although she is glad to return to the comforts of the twentieth century, she is determined to keep the memory of that golden age as a guide for her future.

CHAPTER FOUR

A SCOTS QUAIR

The three novels that make up the trilogy, written under the pen-name Lewis Grassie Gibbon, entitled A Scots Quair, (Sunset Song, Cloud Howe, and Grey Granite) are developed on three parallel planes. On a personal level, the trilogy traces the growth of the heroine, Chris Guthrie, from adolescence to maturity, and death. From a social standpoint, it moves from a close-knit crofting community, to the class divisions of a small town, thence to the anonymity of a large industrial city. As an historical epic, the Quair mirrors the changing face of Scottish society, through the complexity of economic development, from a rural (quasi-feudal) system to the profit-based capitalist system (Malcolm: 120; 132). The changes which take place in A Scots Quair were caused by war, greed and exploitation, and resulted in the loss of traditions, death of a community, the end of an era. These effects are observed, felt and expressed through Chris whose personal history symbolises the socio-economic transformation in Scotland.

These patterns are clearly defined in the chapter headings of the three novels. In Sunset Song, agricultural terms depict the seasonal tasks on the land, from 'The Unfurrowed Field' to 'Ploughing', 'Drilling', 'Seed-Time', and 'Harvest'. Metaphorically, this sequence simulates the life of Chris, from girlhood to motherhood (138). Cloud Howe continues personal and social advancement in the small mill town of Segget. Cloud-names as chapter headings ('Cirrus', 'Cumulus', 'Stratus', and 'Nimbus') reflect the growing political awareness of the

inhabitants and of the dreams of the 'imported' spinners who are dissatisfied with their lot but whose radical ideology cannot be reconciled with that of the business establishment. Grey Granite epitomises the cold, heartless atmosphere of a large industrial city. 'Epidote', 'Sphene', 'Apatite', and 'Zircon', are the various elements that constitute granite. These headings indicate the corresponding aspects of an impersonal society.

In the Prelude to Sunset Song, the background of Diffusionism is reiterated in the chronicle of Kinraddie's history from the raising of the Standing Stones by the Picts, through the ravages of wars (with the English), religious persecutions, and social inequity. The focus on the long traditions and community spirit of crofters in the Howe of the Mearns sets out the activities of the various, colourful, local worthies who will be neighbours of John Guthrie and his family when they move in to their farm of Blawearie in 1911. Guthrie and his wife come from a long line of crofters near Echt in Aberdeenshire; not surprisingly, their fifteen year-old daughter, Chris, has a strong affinity for the soil. She has only one close friend in Kinraddie, Marget, the daughter of Chae Strachan, a neighbour. They attend Duncairn College together. Chris, having shown promise at Echt, has won a bursary and is looking forward to a career in teaching. Marget is 'fine to know', bright, intelligent and frank. She tells Chris the facts of life that she has learned from Chae, things that seemed awful at first but make sense (things that could never be discussed at home). Chris assumes it is because Chae is a socialist, and thinks everyone should be equal, that Marget calls him by his first name. He wants his daughter to be a doctor. As he sees it "life came out of women through tunnels of pain, and if God had planned women for anything else but the bearing of children it was surely the saving of

them" (SS: 45). Before going off to medical school, Marget warns Chris of what to expect from lads at harvest time, and how to avoid it. In a moment she grabs Chris, "He'll hold you like this... and kiss you like this" (46). Chris feels strange and shameful in turn and later blushes to think of it. She feels ill at ease when she thinks of *her* father's attitude.

With Marget gone, Chris has no one else. The other girls her age are 'gowks and gomerils' chasing around the barns at night with the ploughmen (47). At Duncairn College she encounters discrimination for the first time. The fawning 'English-speaking' teachers favour the ill-prepared offspring of the gentry (hoping to be accepted by that group themselves), and are condescending to the children of farm folk, in particular to Chris, despite her obvious talent and ability (SS: 43). She sees herself as "two Chrisses": a studious Chris, using English words "so sharp and clean and true", who "hated the land and the coarse speak of the folk" (32); the other Chris could almost cry for the "smell of the earth in your face... the beauty of it and... the Scottish land and skies" (32). These sentiments echo the nostalgia felt by Thea Mayven (SR: 18) when she was in London.

Chris also experiences a family situation similar to Rachel Galt, in "Clay". Both girls' hopes are frustrated by their fathers. Guthrie and Galt are so preoccupied with the land that they ignore the plight and pleas of their wives: Rob Galt's wife, neglected by him, dies of cancer; John Guthrie, with the added burden of the distorted Calvinist doctrine, refuses to practise birth control. Chris recalls, as a teenager, hearing her mother plead with her father not to have any more children, that four were enough. Guthrie replied: "We'll take what the good God in his Mercy may send to us, woman" (SS: 28); another difficult

pregnancy and traumatic childbirth follows, and her mother has twins. Faced with a sixth pregnancy, Jean Guthrie kills her infant twins and commits suicide. Although Marget Strachan is what Chris could have become if she had finished college, Chris now has to assume full-time onerous, demanding, domestic duties. She is also fearful of her father's lusting after her. He quotes from the Old Testament: "You're my flesh and blood, I can do with you what I will" (107). After his death, Chris, like Rachel, takes a more tolerant view of her father. She remembers his struggle with the land (and its owners) to provide sustenance for his family; and all the fine things he had done in the past before "his own flesh grew over-bitter, and poisoned his love ... only [his] God had beaten him in the end" (114).

When Chris learns that John Guthrie has left her all his possessions, including £300, she first considers going to college again to "get her degrees, come out as a teacher and finish with the filthy soss of a farm" (116). Her next thought, however, is that "she could no more teach a school than fly" (118), because she would always yearn for this life, for 'the smoke of the wood fires', the 'needs of the beasts', but more importantly, because she knows that nothing endures but the land. "Teaching lasted but as a breath ... but the land was forever" (117). This mystique of the land remains with Chris throughout her life, and explains why she finds solace in the Standing Stones, "the only place where she could stand back from the clamour of the days" (106). Nevertheless, her resolve to run the farm by herself makes her 'the speak' of Kinraddie.

This decision to stay at Blawearie is central to Chris' development. She stands for the 'Elder People' who prefer the simple life (Gifford: 80), although even then she had a love/hate relationship with the land. By rejecting the world

of learning and culture she is committing herself to the vagaries of Nature. In marrying Ewan Tavendale (foreman at Upperhill Farm) at the end of 1913, she is marrying the land itself, because Ewan 'had the land fair in his bones' (Young: 89). Ironically, Ewan's replacement at Upperhill is the young James Leslie -- Mitchell's own given names!

On New Year's Eve, the night before her wedding, Chris sits by the window watching the stars and thinking of things "she'd no need to think on" (SS: 144), of how her life and Ewan's would pass and "the land change and change again in the coming seasons and centuries... and all her love and tears for Ewan not even a ripple on that flood of water in the times to be" (144). With these almost prophetic thoughts, she looks at her reflection in the mirror, systematically removes her clothes and, like Thea, Domina, Clair and Gay, sees herself as someone other than herself, but "of the folk of olden time"; never again would she be herself (144). Afterwards, Chris recalls the first days of her marriage as 'going into a dream', not waking from one, until Ewan has to leave (for a day) to take corn to the mill. That incident is another reminder that 'nothing endures', especially not a dream (67). She is back to the reality of everyday life.

When first aware that she is pregnant, Chris feels the need to be alone and goes off by herself. It is the last time she thinks of herself as Chris Guthrie, her *own* person. Subject to mood swings, she is afraid of silence at night, as well as of the natural daily sounds of the farm. She later thinks of her mother, by her own name Jean Murdoch, as another woman who had faced the same fears that she is now experiencing, except that her mother, once married, had no control over her life (174). Chris goes through mood changes that Ewan cannot

understand, and she cannot explain. She does not tell Ewan of her condition and he is unable to sense it. Misunderstanding leads to insults and physical conflict. Chris runs off across the moors to the Standing Stones.

In August, 1914, they hear rumours of war with Germany but they are too busy with the harvest to give it much thought. Chris knows that men and women differ in their attitude towards war. Right after the outbreak of war, young James Leslie is the first local man to go, and first to die (189). Their neighbour Chae Strachan, an avowed socialist, is "fell excited" at the prospect of fighting Prussians and bringing about socialism (188); Long Rob of the Mill, a pacifist, thinks it is hysteria for ordinary folk to "yammer about King and country. If Belgium were invaded, it got what it needed. What about the Congo and the Belgians there?" (191). Such talk leads people to think of Rob as pro-German, including the hypocritical Rev. Gibbon with his sermonising about tinks and traitors (192). The community spirit is destroyed when Rob is attacked and his house stoned. As a conscript, he insists on his rights as a pacifist, but is jailed, ill-used and, after going on a hunger-strike, sent home a wreck (215). Despite Chris' consistent anti-war point of view, Ewan goes off to Aberdeen to enlist without telling her. He was unable to stand the taunts of his two-faced neighbours, who stayed home and prospered (209).

Before he left for a safe chaplain's job in Edinburgh, the sanctimonious minister, the Reverend Stuart Gibbon, who had preached about God sending a curse for the world's sins, was discovered by Munro of Cuddieston, seducing the Gordoun quean, the fee'd maid at the Manse, behind a bush (73). Hearing a noise, Munro had thrown a stone into the bush before he realised what was going on. Later, returning drunk from a trip to Aberdeen (where he had

seduced a barmaid), the Rev. Gibbon told the station porter that Kinraddie was a terrible place. A man couldn't lie down with a quean without some 'clod-hopping crofter' throwing a stone at him. It just showed that the people in Kinraddie had no respect for God or the kirk (83). Even at Chris and Ewan's wedding he had been found in the hay with a maid from the Mains, "kissing her like a dog lapping its porridge" (158).

Another farm girl (with Chris' potential) is Maggie Jean Gordon, 'a fine quean, with no English airs' (243). Maggie attends Stonehaven Academy in preparation to be a teacher. Her father, old Gordon of Upperhills, and one of Guthrie's neighbours, has profited from the war, 'making silver like dirt', becoming so 'fine and genteel', and speaking only English at home. He hates socialists and has helped to break up the Ploughmen's Union. In 1918, when the Secretary of the Farm Workers' Union is put up as a candidate at the General Election, old Gordon and his wife go off to help the Coalition. Meanwhile, a young doctor has come to the district to canvass for the Labour candidate. At Upperhills, Maggie Jean invites him in and they immediately 'hit it off'; she helps him to convince her father's workers to vote Labour. Despite her father's displeasure and his opposition, she marries her 'Labour doctor' and moves to Edinburgh to organise the Farm Servants' Union (242).

Chris finds happiness and contentment in marriage and motherhood, with their son Ewan, only to have them threatened and destroyed by war. Malcom Maudslay's description of army life in The Thirteenth Disciple is exemplified in Ewan's behaviour. A country lad, exposed to the crudity of barracks life, coarsened by the army, drilled in debauchery and drunkenness, he changes into a brutal individual who mistreats Chris on his one and only leave,

before going to France. He leaves without saying goodbye and they never meet again. Ewan is shot as a deserter. Chae Strachan, their neighbour, who had been in the same camp, tells Chris that the night before he died Ewan had come to his senses, and realised that "it was just daft to be there" (234); he should have been back on the farm instead of wasting time in the trenches. Relieved to know that Ewan's last thoughts had been of Blawearie and his family, Chris goes off to the Standing Stones. In an almost mystical experience she sees Ewan coming up to meet her, and hears him say: *Oh lassie, I've come home!*

The "Song" in the title Sunset Song is the story of the last hunter-farmers who had the land in their blood, carried on traditions of community and loyalty handed down for countless generations, and who remembered the free days when church and state did not exist (Gifford: 80). The actual song "The Flowers of the Forest" which greatly affected Chris as a schoolgirl, awakened in her a deep concern for the fate of the Covenanters and of the ancient dead (93). At her own wedding, she sings this song (to the surprise of the guests) as a mark of man's mortality. It is heard again at the memorial service, at the Standing Stones, conducted by the new minister, Robert Colquhoun, for the four Kinraddie men killed in the Great War: Chae Strachan, Long Rob, Ewan Tavendale and James Leslie. The "Song" is not only a lament for the dead, but also a dirge for the end of the crofting community. These men, whose names are inscribed on the Stones, might be called the last representatives of the 'Elder People' who aimed, to no avail, to keep the old ways of life. It is at the Stones that Chris always finds solace in times of stress and trouble: the deaths of her parents, the twins and Ewan. At this site overlooking Kinraddie, she comes again and again to maintain a close association with the land, and to keep her

links with it, and the past. Her losses are also felt by the community; for the men who were killed, maimed or blinded, were their sons. They were also the Last of the Old Scots Folk (252). Kinraddie's life source is ruined when the woodsmen cut down the woods and leave the farm lands unprotected. Those who are left have switched to large-scale farming, sheep raising and poultry farming. Will Guthrie, Chris' brother, who has been farming in the Argentine, sums it up: "... this country? It's dead or it's dying -- and a damned good job!" (213). But Scotland is not dead.

Robert Colquhoun understands from his own war experiences, the sacrifices made by the men involved in the war, and in the memorial service exhorts the living to search for the 'morning star', the promise of a new day for Kinraddie (252). These four men "died for a world that is past... not for this that we seem to inherit" (252). The way of the future lies in change, and Colquhoun adds a socialist perspective which anticipates political action in the following parts of the trilogy.

Cloud Howe, the second novel in the trilogy, is the link between the apolitical attitude of the crofters in Kinraddie (Sunset Song), and the radical zeal of the trade unionists and workers under the exploitative capitalism in Duncairn (Grey Granite). The novel also sets out the intermediate stage of social advancement between country and town (Malcolm:143), and the personal development of Chris Tavendale, now Colquhoun, wife of the newly-appointed minister in Kinraddie, and two years later the minister in Segget.

Overlooking the town stands the ruined Kaimes, a fortification set up when Segget was no more than a camp with earthen walls and freestone dykes (CH:1). For Chris, Kaimes is the closest thing to the Standing Stones; it will be

her refuge now. When she thinks of the parks that she and Ewan had sown and reaped in Blawearie, and where sheep are now pastured, she has no regrets at leaving. "She was finished with that life that had been ... the old sad dream that was done" (CH: 9). But for someone with her background who had little time for the kirk or for religion, Chris muses that it is "funny to think she had married a minister, that this was the Manse, that she was its mistress" (10).

Chris is still a central character but no longer at the centre of the action, when she finds that Segget is a community without wisdom, conscience or charity (Watson: 390). As the wife of the minister she is merely an observer on the edge of society, neither part of the establishment in the 'New Toun', nor accepted by the spinners (the incomers) in the 'Old Toun'. Although the antagonism between these two groups does not endear Chris to either, as an uprooted peasant herself, she has a natural empathy for folk who have to work and struggle for their livelihood. The issues facing the townspeople of Segget emanate from Britain's economic and political problems in the 1920's, particularly the grave difficulties and consequences confronting workers, rather than on the destruction of the old way of life of a peasantry rooted in the primitive past (Young:107).

When Robert was invited to try for the vacancy at Segget, (the old minister who was always 'fair sozzled', died of drink), Chris reminded him of the reputation of the town: "... it's a dirty hole,/A kirk without a steeple,/a midden- heap at ilka door/ And damned uncivil people" (CH: 22). In that case, if he gets the call, Robert will make them both civil and clean. In one of his first sermons, referring to a flint that young Ewan found on the Kaimies, Robert talks about the history of the area, and how men had died for things they thought

would last; but neither their names nor their dreams remain as more than 'a clamour and babble' on little things. Likewise, Segget will be remembered by future generations, not as a town of antique times, but as no more than a gabble of a horde of apes ... trapped in a pit. "Let us see that we clean our pit-corner.. of hatred, fear, malaise, squabbling of drunken louts in the streets, poor schools, worse houses. We can alter them NOW". With this sermon Robert launches his campaign on Segget (62). He certainly raises a 'fair speak'. Hairy Hogg, the Provost, is incensed that Robert looked at him when he talked of apes; Melvin, the publican, resented his preaching against a dram now and then. Rob Moultrie, the saddler, said: "What do you expect? He's gentry and dirt with his flat-patted hair; speaking to God as if he were speaking to a man next door... a Tory mucker... that would interfere in our houses and streets" (62). They'd fair made a mistake in getting this childe .

Robert's worry for the welfare of his fellow man entails a declaration of a socialist imperative for change. His campaign against social unrest and inequality, sustained by a near-Marxist view, is well-intentioned but out of touch with reality (Malcolm: 146). In his efforts to drum up support for political action to help the spinners, he antagonises both the old and the new. The workers distrust him because ministers stand with the 'toffs'; middle-class people mistrust him because of his radical leanings. He expects too much. Even poor, common folk are politically naïve and conservative, and oppose any kind of change. The local council sees no need for Robert's daft-like reforms: improving the drains in the West Wynd, putting in lighting in Segget at night, or inspecting the mills. In a sense, there is what could be called small town class-warfare.

In the 'more civilised' town of Segget -- further removed from the Golden Age -- Robert sees the workers as the most repressed group with bleak prospects, following the introduction of industrialised methods of production. They are hostile to the townspeople, and have little time for Robert's idealism. His efforts on their behalf meet with little success although he knows that 'only the lower classes can improve their own lot' (CH: 99).

Rather than attempt to cooperate with and persuade the spinners, Robert hopes to enlist the help of the educated middle class., especially Stephen Mowat, the English Laird and millowner who has just returned from London. Mowat tells Robert of his intention 'to fee a big staff' and bring back the 'good old days' of the gentry, and 'buck up the village' (109). During his recent visit to Italy he had seen the country awakening and regaining its soul ... its old leaders back -- with "discipline, order, hierarchy -- all that... Why not Scotland?" (112). He looks at Chris, suggesting that "Mrs Colquhoun would surely approve". Chris, however, hears her father saying "come out of that quean, with your dirt of the gentry" (109), and from her history books she visualises the tragedy of 'her folk' mowed down by landowners like the Mowats, the way the gentry kept order at Dunnottar Castle (torturing the covenanters in the dungeons while they danced above). This 'snippet of a fop' would bring back worse (113). Instead, she asks, "What's going to happen when you and your kind rule us, again? If it comes to a push between you and the spinners I think I would give the spinners my vote." (112). Later, during the Miners' Strike, Mowat asks Robert to join the OMS, a volunteer army, to keep the miners from dictating to the country. Robert asks Chris what she thinks. She looks at Mowat, at his class that had reduced Segget

to a place of dirt-hungry folk -- in sheer greed and sheer brag, and says, "No!" (154).

Chris speaks out on another occasion when a few of the local gentry come to lunch at the Manse. Mrs Geddes, the Dominie's wife asks if she has thought of joining the WRI and visiting the parishioners. Chris reminds her that she was once a crofter's daughter and "what a nuisance we thought some folk, visiting and prying and blithering about socials, doing everything to help us, except to get out and get on with the work" (108). When Jeannie Grant, the schoolteacher, applauds these remarks, and says Chris must be a socialist too, Chris shakes her head. She knew nothing about it. Again she is reminded of the two Chrisses. In church, when a choir member apologises for missing a service, Chris tries to put her at ease by simply saying "dinna fash"; with this response, she risks being called a 'common-like bitch'. If she answers in English, she is accused of putting on airs (16).

Apart from these incidents, Chris keeps a low profile, even when the scandalmongers in Segget (who are even worse than those in Kinraddie), start spreading rumours about Robert and her. When the Colquhouns moved into the Manse, their maid, Else Queen, seemed a sensible enough girl. But when she allowed Dalziel of Meiklebogs to take her to his house for tea after a dance, she thought she was a match for this 'shy' old mucker with his silly looks. Instead, she was raped and made pregnant, but there was nothing she could do. Meiklebogs denied it, and no one would question the veracity of this church elder, an obviously 'decent childe'(83). Gossip has it that Robert is responsible, because according to Peter Peat, "Colquhoun is a disgrace to Segget. Instead of being a good Conservative, he is a Labour tink" (140). In other words, it is all

right to think bad things about the minister, since he is not a Tory. When Chris is again pregnant, it is rumoured that Mowat is the father; he had bragged that "if the proud Mrs Colquhoun needed a bairn he would give half a year's profit to provide one" (140). Chris dismisses it all: "folk were like that if they had neither books nor God nor music nor love nor hate as stand-bys, -- you turned to telling scandal, to brighten your days and give you a thrill" (154).

Initially, Chris can identify with Robert's idealism. Although she is neither religious nor political, she can appreciate his belief that Christ was no godlet, but a leader and hero. But while Robert followed his God steadfastly, he was getting Him further and deeper into disfavour, by preaching the cause of the miners to the élite in Segget. When it was clear that the miners were going on strike in May, he pointed out that this would be a test case, the triumph of greed or the triumph of God (Malcolm:146). Robert imagines that the General Strike will "usher in a new era of man made free at last" (CH: 150). His political idealism, once strong enough to overcome the hostility, vulgarity and mockery of the spinners (the group he was most anxious to assist), collapses with the failure of the Strike. His disillusionment with the sell-out of the Leaders makes him moody and withdrawn, even from Chris, and his practical sense is replaced by a religious mania. Before he goes off to a ministers' meeting to discuss the reason for the sharp drop off in attendance at services, Chris asks him why they need a meeting, when it is obvious that 'times have changed'. Robert sneers, "Isn't that profound?" (173). On his return from the ministers' meeting he tells Chris that he met Him on the road.

Every time one of his plans fails, Robert retreats into himself and into this dream of a Sorrowing Face. When he asks Chris, "And don't you believe?" she

can only say, "I don't know, I don't know"(180). After Robert's disclosure of seeing "the Figure" coming down the road, and telling her that he looked on the face of God, Chris goes out for a long walk on the moors to get away from the thought of Robert and this Fear that has been haunting him since the War. On her way she meets a troubled Cis Brown, and invites her to come with her. Cis wants to tell her something. Chris knows what it is; she suggests that she will get Robert to help, but Cis feels that men don't understand, because it is not their concern. Chris agrees. The past few years have made Chris less tolerant of menfolk. "They were clumsy from the day they were breeked to the day they took their breeks off for the last time" (179). In any case, this is not the sad tale of Cis alone, but a tale as old as the Howe, all the similar tales of men and women since the world began. "Where you slept or ate or made your bed made little difference", since men were "passing as the clouds themselves"(179). "Oh, we're such fools -- women...to worry so much about men and their ploys, the things that they do and the things that they think!"(178). In expressing this Diffusionist point of view, Chris is clarifying in her own mind her response to Robert's question. She will not pretend or change, even for Robert. She has found her answer on the moors. Whatever happens she will hold on to her own convictions, and not follow a cloud (181).

Chris recalls Robert talking about the end of the peasants' age - the sunset of the land. He told her about the Golden Age, 4,000 years ago, when men roamed free and naked in these hills. Listening to him now, she is not so sure. Robert's dreams are "like pillars of clouds, which swept through the Howe of the world, and which men took for gods, but they were just clouds" (149). When she first told him that they were having a baby, his immediate reaction

was: "Oh, Chris Caledonia, I've married a nation" (145). He had looked forward to the future with enthusiasm. But with the end of the Strike and the death of their baby, Robert deteriorates both physically and mentally. Chris is taken aback when, echoing her father's viewpoint, Robert chastises her for giving advice on birth control to Else, although they had followed the same practice themselves (198). Yet this is mild compared to the stir she raises at the WRI, when a 'socialist creature' from Dundon offers to give a lecture on birth-control. Mrs. Geddes is appalled. Everyone is against it at once, except the 'tink bitch' the minister had wed. As the folk knew, IT meant "murdering your bairns afore they were born, most likely what *she* herself did" (205).

The meanness of the townspeople also contributes to the dissension and division in the town. They do not like socialists, especially those who are friendly with queans. Their enmity is directed against Jock Cronin, a railway porter and trade unionist who is friendly with Jeannie Grant, the socialist schoolteacher. "You know what they did. They didn't believe in homes or in bairns, they'd have all the bairns locked up in poor houses" (72). With the introduction of the draconian Means Test, many workers are on the dole, and in dire straits. Help is denied even if one individual in a family has a small pension, so that in some cases three people are trying to live on ten shillings a week. Millowner and landlord Mowat, now bankrupt, has absconded with a bank loan. His creditors are forcing rent payments 'through the nose', and have already evicted two or three families. The Kindnesses, a young couple with a new baby are thrown out during a storm. No one offers shelter. Even "Feet" Leslie, the local policeman, who knows them well, calls them tinks and turns them out of an empty building; so they are forced to spend a night in a pig ree.

In the morning they find that their baby has been bitten by rats, and later it dies (213).

MacDougall Brown the local postmaster, a member of the Salvation Army, is well enough regarded in town, although no one has much time for his brand of religion. His daughter Cis, 'bonny and trig, with a grave douce face' is very popular; although she attends college she does not put on any airs or graces (51). All that changes when she and Alec Hogg, the Provost's son, have to get married. Cis is suddenly "a foul creature" condemned as nothing better than a tink (183). Ake Ogilvie, the joiner, points out that what bothers them is that Cis represented the girl that *they* might have been, pure and clean, and they liked her for what they had now lost (183).

Segget's biggest claik, Ag Moultrie, is the daughter of Rob Moultrie, the saddler, a coarse old brute who claims he is not her father; he had married her mother only to save her shame. Ag has a tongue for news that is awful, and spreads idle chatter like manure. Ake calls her the Segget Dispatch, because she knows everything that happens in the town, and much more that doesn't (39). When she sees Chris walking down from the Kaimies in the early morning, a place where only spinners and queans went at night to do things worse than smoke, all Segget hears that the minister's wife had been out all night on the Kaimies with a spinner, and had been seen 'cuddling and sossing in the grass' (39). Like Long Rob in Kinraddie, Ake is the voice of reason in Segget, but when he points out that this is all nonsense, he is ridiculed for his common sense.

By now Robert's sermons no longer carry a message for change. He preaches from the Sermon on the Mount, that Christ still walks the earth, and that it is up to everyone to find in himself what the world denied, the love of

God. The congregation think him a fair scunner. He used to get everyone 'kittled up' thundering his politics from the pulpit (although nobody believed a word he said). Now he just blethered away in the mists (182).

As the focus moves to Ewan, her son, Chris wonders if his interest in the men of ancient times (126), his education as the son of a manse, and the influence of his parents, will prepare him for his future. As a boy he dreamed of being an archaeologist, but now thinks that unlikely, given the fact that he would need a lot of money (which he does not have), that jobs are scarce and the world in a quagmire. Ewan hasn't thought about working yet, and as for the mess, he will do nothing about it unless he must. He has been reading books on socialism, but thinks Ramsay MacDonald "all blither and blah" (172). This opinion is confirmed at the next Election when the Labour Government is thrown out and MacDonald throws in his lot with the Tories, promising in his 'holy-like voice' (like a sheep) "that the country could yet be saved" (205). Now that MacDonald has jumped to the side of the gentry, Segget expects to see fine innovations. The only changes so far are that Mowat, the Laird, is ruined and the whole of Segget mortgaged to the hilt. Old Cronin is found dead; devastated by his son Jock's departure to Glasgow as a Labour bureaucrat, while he was living in abject poverty (his dole having been cancelled), he had been without fuel for days and nothing but a pot of potatoes (209). Meanwhile the *Mearns Chief* newspaper continues to report fulsome accounts of social events.

Robert recovers his senses when he hears of the tragedy of the Kindness baby. Unfortunately he contracts a cold riding his bike through a driving rainstorm, to Stonehaven, to fetch a doctor for the child. A few days later he is really ill, compounded by the effects of the gassing he suffered in the war. He

insists on taking the service although Chris pleads with him, this once, to stay at home. "It's you or the kirk, Chris, and I'm the kirk's man" (216). At the end of the service he stares down the kirk as though Someone stood there. Blood appears on his lips and he collapses, before Chris can reach him. She looks at the congregation and tries to speak, but all she can say is: *It is Finished* (222).

Once again, Chris is alone. This time she faces a bleaker world. She has already faced an identity crisis, and found not two Chrisses as she had dreamed of in Sunset Song, but the different Chrisses she has become in reaction to the different situations and men (Ewan, Long Rob, Robert) in her life. Of one thing she is certain; she will always remain herself, in some vital way, untouched by circumstance (Watson: 390).

At the beginning of each novel of the trilogy, Chris reflects on her impressions of the environment. In Sunset Song, soon after their move to Blawearie, the young Chris is full of optimism and promise. Lying on the moors on a June day, she takes particular note of the yellow broom, the pale purple heather and, in the east against a cobalt blue sky, the shimmer of the North Sea (SS: 25). In Cloud Howe, she goes up to the ruined Kaimies on the first morning in Segget. It is May and she looks at the eastern sky and the new day, and thinks of her new life as the minister's wife (CH: 8). From Segget, the lights of Laurencekirk glimmer and glow as the mists come down. There is no 'eastward' looking in Duncairn. Grey Granite opens with the ominous description of a city shrouded in smog. The only place for Chris to climb are the forty Steps on Windmill Brae leading to Ma Cleghorn's boarding house. She looks at her reflection in the mirror hanging over the bend in the Steps, at an older self, merging with the background of street walls dripping with yellow fog, and the

acrid taste of an ancient smoke (GG: 1). The name of the city emphasises its stoneyness: Dun means a defensive homestead of the iron age, and cairn, a pyramid of loose stones.

Reduced to near penury when Robert dies, Chris is left with £150 to start anew. There is little sadness in Segget at her misfortune. Robert was cremated at his own request; but the Provost says their poverty is a judgement on the 'coarse brutes both' who agreed to burn the minister in a creamery (crematory) (GG: 5). Ewan has decided to move to Duncairn to get a job, instead of going to college, and Chris agrees to go with him. Segget gloats even more to hear that the 'proud bitch' from the Manse is helping to run Ma Cleghorn's boarding house (9). Duncairn, a city of factories, fogs, depression and desolation, offers little comfort or consolation to Chris. Sim "Feet" Leslie, the policeman in Segget, now a sergeant, has been transferred to Duncairn and taken rooms at Ma Gleghorn's. He is the link with their past, spreads tales about them, and contributes to Ewan's later misfortunes. No one can find solace in the church in this city. The Reverend Edward MacShilluck, a caricature, preaches platitudes on Sunday morning about the importance of purity, chastity and clean living. After lunch, he uses his maid, Pooty, for his creature comforts, creeping into her room 'shogging' his mouth like a teething tiger (202). Pooty puts up with it for years, but eventually leaves, taking the church funds as her wages, "with a little bit extra for sticking your dirty habits for so long" (213).

Chris has to adjust quickly to the menial tasks imposed upon her, not unlike the work on the farm except that, as actually a landlady, she is at the beck and call of strangers who put on airs since they are paying for her services. She speaks Duncairn now, while the boarders try to speak English. There is little

depth to the odd assortment of small-minded boarders. Miss Murgatroyd is 'awful genteel' with her pensions and respectability, serving tea for the whist drives at the Unionist Club (11). Miss Ena Lyons, the typist, overly made-up, "baggie a bittie below the eyes and a voice like a harried pea hen" (13) is empty-headed, snobbish and vindictive. There is comic, if savage, satire in the voices of these individuals (Watson: 391). A University student 'awful keen on music and jokes' cannot communicate with Ewan on an intellectual level, but when he tells Miss Lyons about a concert he attended, she also claims to like music, with a 'Catchy Choon' (14). Two reporters, a salesman, the policeman, and then a teacher make up the roomers. Apart from Chris the only real character is Ma Cleghorn. Like Meg Menzies, she is a truly down-to-earth, no-nonsense, individual. She is warm, generous and kind, but very perceptive about the idiosyncracies of her lodgers. When she wonders why she keeps a lodging house, Chris laughingly says 'boarding house', but Ma retorts that it's not boarding this lot want but 'leathering' (10). At first, Chris feels sorry for Meg Watson, the young maid. Ma is forever shouting and swearing at her, and treating her worse than dirt; but it doesn't seem to bother Meg. On the other hand, Ma never sends her out for errands in the rain, sees to it that Meg gets extra helpings of meat, and if she has too much work to do Ma berates her, and then pitches in and helps.

In this setting Ewan stands aloof. At meals he ignores the others, lost in thought or in a book. He has no time for Miss Murgatroyd or her generation, nor for her politics and Scottishness. Ewan is a mirror image of the English Chris, and his actions reflect the dichotomy she still faces: to move into the outside world, or retreat into herself. He has learned self-possession from his

mother, and inherited some of the stubbornness of his grandfather. As a child he recoiled from his father when he came home on leave, drunk, and abused his mother. Unlike his mother he had not acquired any commitment to the land, being too young when he lived on the farm. He readily accepted the middle-class ethics of his step-father, with the opportunity to pursue his own interests in flints and archaeology, and is now more able to fit into city life.

Ewan starts at the steelworks of Gowans and Gloag stoking the furnaces, and finds it stimulating both physically and mentally. He can ignore the unpleasant aspects of the work as well as the hostility of the working-class labourers who resent his 'gentry' apprentice status and his booklearning. Their level of 'learning' is limited to the stories of women and their "silly unfortunate bodies, about babies and death and disease and dirt" (37) which elicit nothing but loud guffaws.

At this time Ewan gets to know the new boarder, Ellen Johns, a schoolteacher and a socialist, another young woman, like the English Chris, who tries to bridge the cultural divide and fails (Campbell: 105). Ellen appears shy and reserved, with a cool kind of courage (GG: 39); she tries to educate her pupils with intelligent common sense. Rumour among the Unionist Ladies, via Miss Murgatroyd, has it that Ellen is over-quick with the strap, and is telling the bairns the 'queerest and dirtiest things' about people's insides; how food is digested and how the waste comes out. On top of that, she has been explaining the Bible away, as good as saying there is no God at all, but that the world really began with a fire (57). The Ladies have complained to the Education Authority. When Chris asks why she is reading a Manual on Birth Control, Ellen says she

expects to need it some time; she doesn't plan to have children because there are too many unwanted babies already (85).

Ellen breaks through Ewan's reserve and self-possession and introduces him to Socialism (49). He has always thought of Socialism as "a measly whine, MacDonaldish stuff and politicians' patter"(49). He prefers to think of a world of simple men before the calamity of civilisation befell it, with kings and culture. Ellen cries out: "But then you're a Socialist [for] if there were ever a time without gods and classes, there could be that time again" (48). Ewan agrees that one can think of Socialism as history making, and "the working classes to be captured and led: all right, I'll give the keelies a chance" (49).

Sergeant "Feet" Leslie, covers the factory and congested slum area of Footforthie, where men live "off the Broo and Ramsay MacDonald"(9). Not content with the 'largesse' they receive from the system these men, stirred up by Socialists, are threatening to riot. The officer will soon put them in their place. His opportunity comes when the unemployed march in the city. The procession is on its way to the Town Hall to see the Provost, when it is turned back at the Royal Mile. Ewan's political involvement begins almost by chance. He has just come out of a bookshop when he recognises the Segget policeman, who grabs a young keelie by the collar and cracks him on the skull with his baton. The lad screams and the crowd goes mad. Mounted police charge and men go down under horses' hooves. Ewan reacts instinctively when he sees a brewery lorry full of empty bottles; he yells to the marchers and they swarm over the lorry and arm themselves (63).

From an educated, idealistic Socialist, albeit a cool, priggish youth (Campbell: 58), Ewan soon develops into a committed communist. He loses his

idealism when he is wrongfully accused of drowning a blackleg during the strike, and throwing pepper at the police. On Sergeant Leslie's orders, Ewan is brutally beaten and tortured, and experiences a vivid identification with all suffering humanity (Watson: 391). From here on he is committed to fight for the under-privileged. The keelies and their Cause is the equivalent of his mother's commitment to the land. He becomes a communist agitator, and in the growing climate of unemployment, hunger, violence, unrest, and police brutality, becomes utterly ruthless and sectarian in his devotion to the cause (Calder: 125). The negative side of this dedication is that he sneeringly rejects Ellen when she has to compromise her socialism in order to keep her position.

Chris meanwhile, verging on middle-age, still retains her anti-religious beliefs. Appalled at the slum conditions she sees in Duncairn, she wonders whether, as Robert believed there is a God, why that God doesn't tell the poor to fill the 'wames of their weans' than the stomach of some parson clown in a Manse (GG: 31). Religion is a fairy tale, which hurts life and death, but she acknowledges that it is no concern of hers what others do. Her enduring attachment to the land and the peasantry is clearly evident when the unemployed worker, Watson, tells her to enjoy her money while her class can still survive. She flares up. "My class? It was digging its living in sweat while yours lay down with a whine in the dirt" (32).

His daughter, Meg Watson, the maid at Ma Cleghorn's, is confronted with a desperate situation. She lives with her family in Paldy Parish, a jumble of warrens and wynds in Duncairn. Her out-of-work father forever complains about having to support five children, gets drunk to forget his problems, then beats his wife. Her mother is always girning about lack of money for food.

Meg's parents nag her constantly, and want all her wages. Nothing pleases them. She has to share a bed with her sisters, and often wonders why her parents had so many children when they couldn't afford to look after them. She hates the reek and smell of Paldy, longs to get out of it, get a decent job, nice clothes and have some fun (21). Despite their overcrowded quarters, her mother takes in a lodger and he seduces Meg. Her brother Alick, an apprentice at Gowans and Gloag, thinks that Ewan Tavendale, whom he resents, is really responsible for his sister's condition, and betrays him to "Feet" Leslie. When he finds out his mistake, Alick goes off to enlist.

Overworked and overtired, with her partner Ma Cleghorn ill and not expected to last long, the monotony of her daily routine makes Chris fear for the future in this "weary life of Duncairn... to bide and trauchle, for years" (113). Ake Ogilvie, the Segget joiner, has come to Duncairn and is boarding with them. There is something 'clean and crude as the smell of rain' about Ake that reminds Chris of the life she knew before she became part of the gentry in Segget (70). When Ma Cleghorn dies, Ake proposes to Chris to help her keep the boarding house. She accepts, but only after Ake uses his influence with the Provost, in the case of the wrongful arrest and prosecution, to save Ewan from a prison sentence, and let him off with a fine. Marriage on these terms could not last. Within a few months, Ake offers Chris her freedom and emigrates to Canada. "Now she'd finished with men or the need for them" (204).

It is difficult not to feel that Chris has been defeated (Watson: 392). Her third marriage has ended; she has turned her back on society, the city and her son, to return to Cairndhu, the croft where she was born. Her oft repeated 'nothing endures' is now rephrased as 'Change' which could not be prevented or

stopped by men, hate, love or compassion. She sees this Change as Deliverer, Destroyer and Friend in one (220). Yet in the end it is clear that Chris and Ewan both seek to recapture something of that Golden Age which Robert described. For Chris it means returning to the ways of her ancestors; for Ewan, moving forward into the future away from Scotland and all things Scottish, to involve himself in the international scene of political struggles and social organisations. He will lead the hunger march to London (215).

On their last evening together, Ewan tells Chris that he has found that 'sure stark creed, clear and sharp as a knife' that Robert had been seeking (218). But Chris sees their faith as just another dark cloud, or a great rock to push up a hill. All beliefs are part of history, that will be superseded as others were before them (D. Smith: 127). As they go their separate ways, Ewan says: "There will always be you and I, I think, Mother. It's the old fight that maybe will never have a finish, whatever the names we give to it -- the fight in the end between FREEDOM and GOD" (218).

Settled again at Cairndhu, Chris climbs to the top of the Barmekin. From her seat on the summit she reviews this final move, the last road she has taken "concerning none and concerned with none" (219). Sitting still, while the lights go out and the rains come beating down on the stones, Chris no longer feels the touch of the rain or hears the sound of the lapwings (220).

CONCLUSION

Mitchell's early death removed a writer whose literary achievement was acknowledged to be of a high standard: biographies of noted nineteenth century explorers, including Mungo Park, Magellan, Nansen; archaeological books and articles on Maya ruins; novels and short stories (written between 1928 and 1932) which appeared alongside such names as: Gunn, Huxley, Lawrence, Maugham, Priestley and Waugh (Budge: ix).

According to Mitchell it was unnatural for a Scottish writer to use English, for to do so implied that he "did not *write* himself, but *translated* himself" (ASH: 144). He found the Scottish language/dialect a satisfying medium for his Scottish fiction, because it was not so far removed from standard English as to make it unintelligible to English readers. His declared intention was "to mould the English language into the rhythms and cadences of Scots spoken speech, and to inject into the English vocabulary such minimum number of words from Braid Scots as that remodelling requires" (ASH: 154). Although certain Scots words have no specific English equivalent their meanings are suggested by their sounds. Much of the enjoyment of A Scots Quair, especially Sunset Song, arises from the fact that it is narrated mainly by Chris, but also by various anonymous voices of crofters, in a prose form that echoes the tempo and shape of the Scots tongue in the North East of Scotland. It must be said that Mitchell's own English writing was somewhat stilted, short on versatility and genuine emotion.

Although he spent four years in the Middle East, Mitchell had virtually no contact with the native population. Stories with Egyptian settings ostensibly depicted scenes in that area, but were lacking in local colour. The individuals,

mainly English, were wooden and had little awareness or understanding of the region's culture and customs. By contrast, given his crofting background, Gibbon knew the land and the people who worked on it. But he had no working knowledge of city dwellers. Apart from physical descriptions of setting and characters, individuals -- whether officials, workers or a minister -- appeared as cardboard figures or caricatures, with no meaningful relationships or even humorous interactions to bring them to life.

Prior to the publication of Sunset Song in 1932, most Scottish novels and stories were of the kailyard type, characterised by idyllic, static pictures of rural bliss, with congeniality, happiness and cosiness. Kailyard fashioned stereotyped communities with relationships and divisions simply accepted: minister and dominie both were held in great esteem. Only two novels, The House with the Green Shutters (1901) by George Douglas Brown, and Behind the Bonnie Brier Bush (1914) by James MacDougall Hay, strongly attacked these artificial images; instead, introducing tales of evil, hypocrisy and spitefulness into small close-knit villages. Thus, the traditional mould had been broken for Gibbon. Reviewers who still opted for the old sentiments condemned Sunset Song as 'coarse and shocking' (Murray: 11).

Again and again, Mitchell re-iterated that man is naturally irreligious, that religion, rather than being based on knowledge and rationality, was created by man for purely utilitarian purposes. Men first worshipped agricultural gods in the hope of achieving fruitful harvests. In the process they followed a mirage of lasting significance. Later, worship led to the most vicious aberrations, weakening men's power and personal responsibilities, and damaging their ability to improve and progress. Religion, in reality, stands for sham morality,

impregnated with selfishness, cruelty and meanness. While it may help men to suffer their fate, it also narrows their vision and widens their prejudices. Mitchell's negativism concerning religious creeds provides examples in his writings of myths and illusions, falsehoods and prejudices; of men intolerant of other people's freedom; of ministers preaching clichés supposedly based on moral principles while following immoral practices.

Mitchell argued that the Golden Age had a historical foundation wherein primitive man evolved and lived in peace and harmony, without such social constraints as organisations and gods (ASH: 124). Modern civilisation, he claimed, destroyed man's natural goodness. Instances are provided in his science fiction novels, as well as in the Quair (CH: 149). The primitivism of the Golden Age is not to be thought of as reversing the flow of history, and to be resurrected in the modern age, but its values are to be gauged as perfect norms for the betterment of the present and future actions (Young: 71). Mitchell used the novel as a battleground for his own conflicting emotions (Campbell: 55), and as a vehicle to convey his own reasoned opinions.

Even as a youth Mitchell had a radical bent and his critical attitude was strengthened by his own experiences as he matured. He read widely, and was determined to become a writer of quality. Although he was not trained in economics or politics, he applied his left-wing propensities to study and assess the repugnant Capitalist system. Clearly, it introduced advanced technologies, and produced goods and services on an unprecedented scale, but its short history enhanced the class struggle between exploiters and exploited, between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. Private property owners, in business, used

governments to organise society in their interests, to amass indecent wealth alongside straitened circumstances.

Between the wars, society was afflicted by a severe economic decline, as seen in deep depressions, high unemployment, systemic poverty, financial crises, and lack of confidence. The politicians and bureaucrats were unable to tackle and solve the many problems. It might then be thought that with such a dreadful shortfall in performance and the economy a shambles, that the workers (the worst hit) would struggle towards the ultimate goal of creating a new Socialist society. Unfortunately, many obstacles, some personal, others institutional, but mainly the persistence of Capitalist ideology, weakened and forestalled their aim and resolve. In the novels discussed above, there are several cases, on the economic side, of the hardships and repression of the workers damaged by the technological changes in the factories; of men involved in strikes and in hunger marches, their difficulties compounded by police brutality. On the political side, a number of people, both men and women, adopted Socialist positions, although some defected for monetary reasons or for job security. Some men joined the Communist movement, one becoming a militant agitator and involving himself in the international scene.

Although Mitchell did not intend or desire to cause a split or break in the traditional literary interpretation of women's functions, he does make it clear that he identified himself with the fact that women had been placed in an inferior social position. He situates them at the centre of his work and shows how they can operate effectively in a normally male dominated world. What is required is a division of labour between men and women so as to replace the dogmas of the dominant religion in Scotland. His English novels depict women

as better educated and with opportunities denied their Scottish counterparts. They were, therefore, better able to make free choices and decisions for themselves; and they were brought up or educated away from their families.

In his Scottish tales, those girls who were able to complete their education, most likely trained to be school teachers and to be well-regarded by the community -- unless they exhibited Socialist tendencies. Girls who lacked education invariably became servants with no chance for self-improvement, remaining in service until they married or became pregnant. Even the means of avoiding this latter situation was denied them because attitudes in these communities, determined by religion, were set against any method which interfered with 'God's will'. Men insisted on their right to father children and ignored the strains and agonies that women faced and endured giving birth under such primitive conditions. Birthing was the punishment inflicted on women as a result of men's claims to the pleasures of the flesh.

Women had the innate ability to adjust and to cope; but those who were capable and independent tended to be single or widowed. Unhampered by the demands of spouse or family, they could operate efficiently in a patriarchal society. Mitchell was undoubtedly influenced by the feminist movement of his day, and from personal knowledge he knew the inequities of a system which discriminates against and penalises women.

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