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Utopianism and Joanna Baillie

About This Volume

This volume of *Romantic Circles Praxis Series* includes an editor's introduction and an essay by Regina Hewitt, as well as essays by Thomas McLean, Robert C. Hale, William D. Brewer, and Marjean D. Purinton.

This volume contextualizes work by and work about Joanna Baillie with respect to revisionist thinking about utopianism. Since utopianism has become a positively valued concept within sociological, legal, and other fields, its implications for an understanding of Baillie's approach to social change/social problems, as well as for an understanding of scholarship recovering Baillie for contemporary purposes, deserve to be explored.

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Utopianism and Joanna Baillie

Utopianism and Joanna Baillie: A Preface to Converging Revolutions

Regina Hewitt, University of South Florida

1. This volume brings together two revolutions in scholarship—one involving the recovery of a concept, the other the recovery of an author. In the revolution that is changing the methods and goals of the social and political sciences, geography, and law, the concept of utopianism, once banished as daydreaming, is being welcomed as a serious strategy for advancing social change. Despite skepticism about whether utopian thinking can and should survive in a world where socialist experiments have failed, capitalism is stalking the globe relentlessly, and postmodernism has evacuated grand theories and metanarratives, the concept has found new advocates who are redefining its relevance. David Harvey, Wayne Hudson, Russell Jacoby, Ruth Levitas, Martin Parker and Lyman Tower Sargent, among others, have moved away from the view of utopias as “blueprints” of a *polis* to be accepted or rejected and toward views of utopias as springboards for criticizing some particular state of affairs and speculating about alternatives.^[1] Taking this redefinition farther, Lucy Sargisson has posited “transgressive utopianism” to characterize the social organizations fostered by feminist, ecological, and other practices that avoid “blueprints” but that nevertheless challenge things as they are and create options for making them different (*Utopian Bodies* 15, 30).^[2] In the revolution that is expanding the Romantic-era canon, Joanna Baillie, once exiled beyond even the marginal territory of “minor” writers, is being repositioned as a significant dramatist and poet. From vanguard studies by Anne Mellor, Catherine Burroughs, Marjean Purinton and William Brewer, we learned that Baillie was a key player in the theatrical public sphere (or counter-public sphere), a questioner of gender roles as astute as Mary Wollstonecraft, and a writer as innovative as Wordsworth or Byron. We have continued to learn about Baillie’s life, situation and priorities from Judith Slagle’s biography and edition of Baillie’s letters; from Myers’s and Burwick’s research into the legal and medical contexts in which and with which she worked; and from Carlson’s, Cox’s, and Gamer’s analyses of the conventions of genre and gender she deployed.^[3]
2. At first glance, these two revolutions appear to have little in common. No one has claimed that Baillie is a utopian writer. But if we recognize utopias by their function as springboards rather than by their form as blueprints, we should be making that claim. Baillie’s work has many functionally utopian aspects: most prominently, the stated intention of her *Series of Plays* on the passions (according to the *Introductory Discourse* published with the first volume) is to bring about a “more just, more merciful, more compassionate” society whose members have greater respect for all humankind (*Works* 4). In this projected society, people would be able to control their emotions, preventing them from becoming self-destructive obsessions and turning them instead to socially fulfilling purposes. The plays in the *Series* (and arguably those outside of the *Series* too^[4]) focus critical attention on impassioned interactions, asking spectators to imagine how the scenes might have unfolded differently if the participants “foresee[n]” the approaching “tempest” and taken reasonable measures to palliate its effects (*Works* 11). By bringing together these scholarly revolutions, we gain a new way of understanding Baillie’s designs and of analyzing the features and implications of her works. Despite the increasing number of studies, much remains to be learned about this writer, and this *Praxis* volume enlists utopianism in the ongoing exploration.
3. Much, too, remains to be learned (or acknowledged) about the utopian aspects of scholarly recovery work, which is now so prominent that scholars who publish on traditionally canonical figures sometimes feel a need to explain their choice.^[5] The effort to place Baillie, along with other formerly

neglected writers, in the Romantic-era canon shows a utopian opposition to a given order.^[6]

Resisting the idea that a small number of male poets can justly represent the period, it imagines an alternative order including women and men, English and Celtic heritages, elite sonneteers and popular novelists, dramatists and journalists. In recovery work, then, present desires for justly balanced human relations are projected into scholarship, and they are satisfied in the expanded canon to a greater extent than they are (yet) satisfied in lived experience. Far from allowing a “presentist” confusion of historical and current ideas to compromise research, the ongoing process of adjusting the canon requires a nuanced separation of historical, current, and projected values. It inaugurates a process of change in lived experience by introducing into our present understanding of the period a set of relations that reflects a consciously cultivated departure from historical or prevailing patterns. Like a fictional utopia, a revised canon is a springboard into an alternative world. The scholarly practices that enable such leaps deserve to be acknowledged as positively and strategically utopian.

4. This *Praxis* volume celebrates and continues the efforts of Baillie scholars to educe the implications of her work for our world. In the remainder of this preface, I elaborate on the features of the new utopianism that can enrich our understanding of Baillie’s career-defining *Series of Plays*. For the most part, I proceed by juxtaposing the utopian features with statements from the *Introductory Discourse*, sharing Sargisson’s belief that “interesting . . . things happen when [different ‘bodies of thought’] meet” (*Utopian Bodies* 28). At the end, I preview the essays that follow in the volume, commenting on how they contribute to an understanding of “utopianism and Joanna Baillie.”

* * *

5. As already mentioned, the shift away from structure and toward function or process is the most salient feature of the new approach to utopian studies. While some scholars still favor associating the term with the genre of works exhibiting detailed descriptions of an ideal polity discovered by some traveler(s) after an extraordinary voyage, many others prefer to apply it to works or practices that conduct thought experiments involving aspects of the authors’ or actors’ society.^[7] For Martin Parker, a sociologist who reads utopias as about organization (i.e. patterns of behavior) rather than structures, all utopias from More through the present “are thought experiments which alter key organizational variables” (222). Moving even farther away from structural priorities, Russell Jacoby criticizes “blueprint” utopias for their authoritarian prescriptiveness and recovers an “iconoclastic” utopia tradition rooted in Romantic philosophies and Jewish mysticism and exemplified by Ernst Bloch. “Iconoclastic” utopias are strongly critical of the present but offer only abstract or spiritual hints about the nature of a preferred alternative. For Jacoby, this “imageless” approach is more respectful of the decisions of individual future actors and grows out of the respectful reluctance to represent or name the deity: it approaches what is good or holy only apophatically—“by negation” (xiv-xvi, 32-36, 147). Such revisionist trends in utopian studies supplement attention to the so-called classic or genre utopias with attention to many less schematic—or “non-totalist,” O Hudson’s term—examples of social critique and innovation.^[8] This shift away from structure allows us to categorize Baillie’s plays as utopian. Though they do not detail the governments and institutions in invented polities, they do depict the interactions of people in imaginary settings that evoke interactions in the spectators’ world; the purpose of the depictions, explicitly theorized in the *Introductory Discourse*, is to criticize certain behavior patterns and to arouse a desire to change them.
6. Some feminist utopian studies go beyond supplementing the traditional political genre to critiquing the genre itself for preserving a masculinist bias in favor of the public sphere. This critique, especially as developed by Sargisson, is worth investigating in light of the importance of the public/private sphere distinction for studies of Baillie and other Romantic-era women writers. Though the conceptual distinction between public and private spheres does not always accurately apply to lived experience in particular times and places (as Romanticists know from Mellor’s challenge to Habermas in *Mothers of*

the Nation), the dichotomy nevertheless lingers in theory. It has been (and may still be) used to exclude women from politics. By extension, relegating anything to the private sphere serves as a strategy for making it “politically irrelevant and impotent.” Anything so relegated can be ignored as trivial or “treated” as deviant (*Utopian Bodies* 55-60). For Sargisson, utopianism challenges such taken-for-granted dualisms behind conventional thinking. It crosses the line between public and private. “Utopia, the no place that is a good place, is an other-place” with respect to the conventional distinctions in society (59). It does not accept the “other”-ing of the private. Blending feminism with ecology, Sargisson posits the household as a utopian frame of reference for social relations and concentrates on how ecologically oriented “intentional communities” serve as spaces in which criticism of public/private distinctions can be expressed and in which alternatives can be enacted.^[9] Such communities, for instance, reject typical valorizations of private property and exclusive ownership (76-116).

7. A textual or literary parallel to Sargisson’s treatment of intentional communities can be found in Nicole Pohl’s reading of country house poems. Like Sargisson (whom Pohl cites only in passing 12), Pohl sees utopianism as concerned with the conceptualization of people in “socio-political space,” including the “enclosure” of women within masculinist designs (2, 1). For Pohl, manipulating the country house genre gives women writers the opportunity to challenge the hierarchies of gender and economics implied by the country house ideal. Writers like Sarah Scott and Mary Hamilton springboard from these poems and create “spaces of resistance” within the traditional household ideal. They “recode” the use and effects of space: instead of showing off wealth and power in reception areas, feminist versions dedicate those halls to reading and painting; instead of ascribing their identities to their status as wives, women occupants achieve their identities by cooperative artistic and social work (67-87, 10).^[10] Such subversions of normative household arrangements and routines, whether in fictional communities of women or intentional communities of ecological activists, introduce into the present culture of their writers, members, readers, or observers criticisms of those dominant norms, and they show that alternatives are conceivable. Even if no one believes that the given alternatives are perfect, the very fact of their existing and displacing the norm allows them to serve a positive utopian function (*Utopian Bodies* 154).
8. Baillie’s resistance to norms that exclude women from public roles is strongly voiced in her *Introductory Discourse*: “I believe there is no man that ever lived, who has behaved in a certain manner on a certain occasion, who has not had amongst women some corresponding spirit, who, on the like occasion, and every way similarly circumstanced, would have behaved in the like manner” (*Works* 9n§). Her plays give women significant, though often not perfect, roles. While Jane De Monfort and the Countess Albini, who may evoke Mary Wollstonecraft (Mellor, “Joanna Baillie” 565), are strong and admirable, Annabella in *Witchcraft* and Elburga in *Ethwald* are strong but obsessed and selfish figures. By creating a variety of women characters, Baillie resists the gender essentialism that offers a biological justification for relegating women to the private sphere. Baillie herself wanted to participate in the public world of the theater and believed that gender discrimination limited her success: “John any-body would have stood higher with the critics than Joanna Baillie,” she remarked in exasperation in the later years of her career (*Letters* 9).^[11] Baillie defied gender stereotypes in her selection of topics as well as in her creation of strong female characters, for she wrote about the public and masculinist topics of wars and trials in ways that Byron found powerful and convincing.^[12]
9. Though Baillie’s topical choices follow partly from the conventions of tragedy and comedy with which she worked, she can be seen as “recoding” (to borrow Pohl’s term) the incidents and interactions so as to resist rather than reinforce expectations. Independently of Pohl’s conceptualizations of utopian strategies, Carlson and Friedman-Romell have argued that a reworking of expectations goes on in Baillie’s military plays (particularly *Henriquez* and *Constantine Paleologus*), which turn into critiques of aggressive, war-mongering cultures. As Purinton has shown (in her essay on *The Tryal* as well as in

her essay in this volume), Baillie's comedies likewise can be read as indictments of conventional domestic arrangements, and I explore that possibility with specific reference to Pohl's utopian "recoding" in my essay in this volume. In this preface, I wish to apply Pohl's notion of recoding space to Baillie's treatment of scenes of public execution in her *Introductory Discourse*.

10. Baillie scholars have found it difficult to interpret Baillie's arguments that people do not watch executions because they take "pleasure . . . from the suffering of a fellow-creature" but because they want to see "a human being bearing himself up under such [extreme] circumstances"; that people's curiosity about the thoughts and feelings of prisoners is predominantly sympathetic; that people learn about their own natures by observing others (including such unfortunate others as prisoners); and that such observations prove the predominance of "kindness" over "cruelty" in human nature and experience (*Works* 2-4). Skeptical readers (who include Myers, Leach, Carney, and Forbes) see Baillie struggling to resolve tensions between the opposing forces of sympathy and curiosity without quite managing to do so. For Myers, this imperfect resolution is positive because it exposes the cruelty that *does* exist in judicial processes, and because it reveals the complexity of the interactions between judges (in the professional as well as the general sense) and those being judged: judicial scrutiny cannot be only sympathetic; it requires some distance and difference ("Speculations" 125, 127; "Theatre" 97-101, 106; "Medico-Legal Discourse" 342). For Leach, the tension is ethical (in a Levinasian sense) because the failure to know or sympathize fully preserves the "irreducible alterity" of the person being observed (639). While skeptical readings are keen and accurate in realizing that Baillie's assertions about kindness are not supported by historical evidence or current experience, an alternative interpretation is possible if we take the assertions as constructions rather than descriptions.
11. As I have argued elsewhere, Baillie's exaggerated emphasis on sympathetic views of prisoners may participate in the "humanity-mongering" strategy of reformers who lobbied for (and eventually obtained) changes in criminal laws, trial procedures, and treatment of prisoners. Baillie's assertions do not describe the attitudes that most people exhibit but the attitudes that reformers wanted them to adopt (*Symbolic Interactions* 59-60). This line of interpretation can be further developed by drawing on Pohl's concepts of utopian "resistance" and "recoding." The sites of the prison and the scaffold were coded in Baillie's culture to encourage certain ways of thinking and acting: officially, they were supposed to inspire respect for the law; in practice, they licensed a carnivalesque release of fear of its power.^[13] Baillie's *Discourse* systematically excludes both the official lesson and its carnivalesque inversion. In Pohl's utopian vocabulary, it turns the site of the scaffold into a "space of resistance" that Baillie "recodes" with alternative meaning. The spectators she invents demonstrate the alternative attitude of sympathetic curiosity and focus on the humanity they share with the prisoner. The counterfactual scene in the *Introductory Discourse* exhibits the features of critique and creativity that Sargisson finds in utopian writing (*Utopian Bodies* 30, 50-52): it implies a criticism of the attitudes that are written out of the scene, and it creates a different mode of observing and acting. Baillie's readers, like readers of all utopias, can reinscribe conventional attitudes if they wish, but they can also critically evaluate the norm and open their minds to alternatives, either the sympathetic one presented or others that might follow conjecturally. Baillie's scene is functionally utopian as long as it moves spectators to think seriously about how a just, merciful, and compassionate society would treat lawbreakers and inspires them to try to align their society's practices more carefully with their values. To sum up this assessment in terms favored by other utopian scholars, one might say that Baillie's scene is "heuristic": its importance attaches to its ability to advance criticism of some feature of a familiar world and to arouse a desire to change that feature; the alternative it posits is not to be embraced as an ideal but to be used for the "heuristic" purpose of stimulating comparisons and unsettling the assumption that what exists is necessary or inevitable.^[14]
12. Baillie's preoccupation with justice is itself characteristic of utopian thinking. Though her allusions to prisoners, executions, and sympathy are most often compared to Adam Smith's (when literary or

philosophical contexts are sought—as, for example, by Myers, Carney, Murray), we might do well to remember that More's *Utopia* reflects critically on the use of capital punishment for theft. So closely linked are justice and utopianism that Sargisson ventures this generalization about all utopian undertakings: all utopias “seek (in some way) to create a just society” (“Justice” 322). By that criterion, Baillie's pursuit of a “more just, more merciful, more compassionate” society qualifies as utopian, but Sargisson's analysis of justice can be extended to Baillie's work in additional ways. In the article positing the criterion of seeking justice (an article about intentional communities in New Zealand), Sargisson distinguishes between substantive justice—the principles or characteristics such as equal rights or shared property that represent the concept to the group—and procedural justice—the methods such as consensual decision-making by which the members enact their beliefs. If we extend this analysis of utopianism as concerned with both substantive and procedural justice to Baillie, we gain further reasons to classify her work as utopian. Not only does she pursue the substantive goal of justice combined with mercy and sympathy, she also specifies a procedure—control of the passions—by which to approach it (*Works* 9-11).

13. This procedure of expecting social change to follow from personal or attitudinal change used to be scorned by most political scientists and sociologists and even by Romanticists who believed that we should criticize rather than perpetuate “the Romantic ideology.” More recently, however, the idea that change starts at mental and personal levels has won much more favor in all fields.^[15] Most utopian scholars (with the exception of David Harvey, whom I mention below) share Sargisson's view that a change in “mindset” is the most important step in any transformations, though no one emphasizes the importance of “paradigm shifts in consciousness” (*Utopian Bodies* 15, 50, 94) as much as she. This new acceptance of personal transformation as sociologically significant might well be part of the new acceptance of the private sphere as politically significant on which I commented earlier.
14. Coincidentally, control of the passions was one of the procedures identified by Robert Owen, the Romantic-era champion of cooperative industrial communities, as necessary for the transformation of society he imagined. In *A New View of Society*, Owen approaches social reform through the transformation of individual character. When people learn to be rational, “all the irritating, angry passions . . . will gradually subside and be replaced by the most frank and conciliating confidence and good-will” (21). People who attain this control are better able to live and work together, better able to create a harmonious society. (New Harmony was the name of one of the intentional communities inspired by Owen's teaching.) Though Owen and Baillie coincide in making control of the passions central to their views of just societies, they diverge over the means by which it would be attained. Owen relied on lessons taught in his educational system; Baillie had more confidence in the theater.
15. If personal transformation by itself is considered an inadequate utopian strategy, Baillie's situating her utopian project in the theater may enhance her credibility as a utopian thinker by balancing personal transformation (i.e., the control of the passions) with an existing collective cultural institution. Criticism of utopias that slight either collective or personal dimensions is the starting point from which David Harvey calls for a comprehensive “spatiotemporal” or “dialectical” utopianism. Working with the real world problem of urban blight in Baltimore, Harvey advocates a “revitalization of the utopian tradition” of imagining and hoping for a different world to unsettle the assumption that there is “no alternative” to allowing market forces to take their toll on modern cities (98). But he cautions against reducing the utopian revival to the invention of a new city plan to be imposed on the existing space and its inhabitants. That procedure would, he maintains, repeat the errors of spatial, materialized, or classical utopias, from More's foundational city through current gated communities, that pay too much attention to a collective ideal and not enough to the ways in which such ideals lock individuals into an unyielding grid (98-106). He does not, however, favor merely inverting collective and individual priorities. Such is the error of “process” utopias that focus on individual fulfillment at the expense of the collective. In this category Harvey places the otherwise incompatible utopia of the marketplace

that capitalists court and the utopia of nature that supersedes collectives and institutions for deep ecologists (106-110).^[16] What Harvey calls for is “spatiotemporal” or “dialectical” utopianism that adapts processes to spaces and their inhabitants, that balances individual and collective needs (110-20). An example of a spatio-temporal approach might well be found in Baillie’s dramatic plan, which sees personal transformation—control of passions—emerging in the institutional context of the theater and moving into the existing sociolegal system of the audience as it affects judges, advocates, magistrates (singled out in the *Discourse* [Works 4]) and other office holders.

16. The spectators at Baillie’s dramas might be compared to the visitors who conventionally travel to genre utopias. Regarding these characters, Sargisson explains that they contribute an “estranged” perspective that facilitates the critical function of utopias (*Utopian Bodies* 8-9). Distanced from the familiar world that their author wants to resist but not part of the alternative world in the text, commune, or theater, these figures gain an unusual perspective from which to evaluate both orders of things. They can begin to see problems with arrangements they have otherwise taken for granted, and they can begin to imagine the benefit of seeking some alternative. Readers of the *Introductory Discourse* are put in the position of visitors to another world when they encounter Baillie’s sympathetically curious crowds around scaffolds and prisons. If reader-visitors notice that these crowds do not behave in familiar ways but conjecture that the unfamiliar kindness is superior to the norm, and worth cultivating, they have activated the utopian estrangement of the text. To take virtually this same example from one of the plays, we can consider the crowd scenes in *Rayner*. As Gamer has pointed out, the crowd waiting outside the court to hear the verdict in Rayner’s trial exhibits the sympathetic behavior Baillie valorizes in the *Discourse* (Gamer 140-41). This scene (3.1) contrasts with the highly unsympathetic attitudes of the two hired executioners who boast about the high-ranking men they have killed and revel in their own celebrity status (5.1.412-13). Visitor-spectators at the play should feel estranged from both extremes and begin to evaluate them in comparison with the norm from their own world that the drama “call[s] up in the mind” (*Works* 13).
17. The comparative exercise that Baillie assigns visitor-spectators amounts to a “thought experiment,” a practice associated with utopianism (for example, in the quotation from Parker at the beginning of this section) albeit not unique to it. Thought experiments actually have a long history in philosophy and physics, which is treated by Gendler and Sorensen. The most helpful source for understanding Baillie and utopian thought experimenting (since Parker does not elaborate) is a more interdisciplinary one—Peter Swirski’s *Of Literature and Knowledge: Explorations in Narrative Thought Experiments, Evolution, and Game Theory*. Though he is concerned mainly with narrative, Swirski locates all thought experiments—even those in science and philosophy—on a continuum because they “differ . . . not in kind but only in degree,” and he maintains that “the narrative use of counterfactuals is not confined to any specific author, genre, period, country, or level of literary acclaim” (8, 13). I suggest that the “narrative” setting the conditions for Baillie’s experiment is the *Introductory Discourse*; it explains the procedures that the audience carries out.^[17]
18. The main, and most controversial, procedure in Baillie’s as in all thought experiments is the derivation of “real” knowledge from “unreal,” imaginary, or fictive scenarios. Critics of thought experiments sometimes argue that one cannot “milk real knowledge from unreal cows” and that the conclusions drawn are merely personal ^[18] and have no validity in the empirical world (Swirski 6). Swirski counters this criticism at two levels. At the more superficial level, he argues that real knowledge can come from imaginary or literary cases, because all learning is active rather than passive. No matter what people are studying/reading/observing, they do not just absorb its contents or imitate its actions. They go through active processes (Swirski lists five adapted from Sorensen), which include “recollecting” analogous cases and “rearranging” elements in the given and other cases. Thought experiments offer controlled variations for people to work with. Literary experiments in particular ask readers to learn about human nature by “trying to understand the actions and thoughts of the characters

that star in them”; reader response “starts with the identification of the characters’ mental and emotional states” (90). The correspondence between Swirski’s position on how readers learn about human nature from literary thought experiments and Baillie’s position on how spectators learn from drama seems clear enough to require no elaboration. The point I would stress with respect to both positions, and extend to how readers/observers learn from utopian examples, is that people *generate* knowledge.^[19] Whether literary or scientific, knowledge is what people create through their mental activities, using texts, facts, counterfactuals, and other elements. It is this active sense of knowing that enables Swirski to argue that literature is “an instrument of inquiry” (5-6).

19. At a deeper level, Swirski grounds his position in evolutionary psychology, arguing that “our aptitude for imagining other worlds is rooted in evolutionary adaptation” (7). Specifically, humans who could “contemplate imagined actions and their consequences” were better able to survive and this adaptive ability became part of the genetic make-up of their descendants (75-85). As a result, literature can be considered “a form of functionally adaptive behavior” or at least an “exaptation—an evolutionary by-product” because it fosters the imaginative ability people need to survive in the world (71). Though I find Swirski’s co-evolutionary theory plausible and applicable to Baillie’s comedies (as I show in my essay in this volume), I have separated his points about knowledge generation from his theoretical basis as I do not believe the former necessarily depends on the latter. One might easily accept the idea of active learning as an explanation for how an audience uses utopian literature, including Baillie’s, to criticize and reform their own world without agreeing that they are genetically predisposed to do so.
20. An additionally relevant (to utopianism and Baillie) example of thought experimenting occurs in Michael Hill’s borrowing of the process for sociology. Hill’s purpose is utopian, though he does not attach that term to it. His purpose is to facilitate disciplinary change by encouraging colleagues to speculate about what sociology would be like if it had been “founded on the principles of observation and action advocated by Harriet Martineau” instead of on the principles of scientific detachment that did indeed form its basis (14). (Martineau and Baillie were, incidentally, acquainted with each other—a point to which I return below.) A list of characteristics of the alternative sociology comprises the exceptional, imaginary case by which to evaluate the disciplinary norm. Hill’s expectation is that colleagues can change their beliefs about how the discipline ought to be by evaluating the alternative; the specific characteristics on the list correspond to specific normative features that appear comparatively troublesome and in need of revision (14-16). Of course, it is possible that colleagues will affirm the norm, but the experiment is conducted in the hope that the result will be otherwise.
21. One reason for this hope is the danger containment function that Hill introduces into his analyses of thought experiments ^[20]—a function that Baillie also raises in the *Discourse*. According to Hill, thought experiments contain the danger of speculation, making it safer to entertain unconventional ideas. Because the experiments are not carried out on human subjects, they allow researchers to consider programs that might have damaging consequences and avoid or amend them before they have done harm (5-6). Though Hill does not follow through with applying the danger containment function to his own example of Martineauian sociology, the application can easily be deduced. The exceptional or unfamiliar features of Martineauian sociology might appear dangerous to anyone on first acquaintance simply because they depart from the norm. If asked to implement such changes immediately, few people would leap at the opportunity. But given the chance to ponder the possible advantages, more people might see the innovative features in a positive light and be willing to modify existing practice as a result. Danger containment might thus be a typical and salutary function of utopian thought experiments. It is clearly a function of Baillie’s dramatic project, which gives spectators the chance to see the damage done by uncontrolled passion without having to experience it. “We cannot,” she writes, “listen to the voice of reason and save ourselves” once a passion has become a driving force. But having had the benefit of a dramatic example, “we can mark its [i.e., a given passion’s] rising signs, we can know the situations that will most expose us to its rage, and we can

shelter our heads from the coming blast” (*Works* 11).

22. More should be said about Hill’s selection of Martineau as a founding figure for a new sociology, which shows the practice of utopian scholarship but does not venture as far as it might beyond the disciplinary border. Like others who have been instrumental in winning recognition for Martineau as the first woman sociologist (Hoecker-Drysdale, Lengermann and Niebrugge-Brantley), Hill is performing recovery work. The resultingly expanded canon of founding sociologists, like the expanded canon of Romantic-era writers, reflects present desires for more justly balanced human relations. In particular, both canons try to compensate for earlier exclusions of women. But Hill leaves uncontested some aspects of Martineauian sociology that tie it to traditional practices within the field that are now being challenged by other revisionists. For instance, Hill’s Martineauian sociology “would insist on logically ordered and carefully reasoned expositions of social processes and situations” and it would not treat discourse “as a primary source of empirical evidence” (14). In contrast, narrative and performative sociologists are questioning these very hierarchies of logic, reason, and evidence.^[21] The lingering familiar elements in Hill’s reformed sociology are probably necessary for his larger purpose of getting colleagues in the area to credit Martineau at all, and they do not prevent his alternative from challenging some bad habits (his logical expositions are opposed to reliance on “simplistic, ad hoc formulas”) and replacing detachment with “active concern for oppressed peoples” (14). In calling attention to the lines that Hill does not cross, I am indicating how utopian thought experiments can lead beyond the specified alternative, for I suggest that Baillie is a more radical predecessor for a new kind of sociology than Martineau.^[22] Baillie’s dramatic studies of social interactions avoid the theorizing in Martineau’s prose, for which Baillie criticized Martineau’s *Society in America*: While approving of the “descriptive part” of that work, which she found “marked with genius & often with good feeling,” Baillie objected to the “political discussions, always referring to abstract principles” (*Letters* 945).^[23] Moreover, Baillie’s commitment to facilitating audience response shows more confidence in spectators’ ability to learn than does Martineau’s commitment to distilling lessons in *Illustrations of Political Economy*. To take Hill’s thought experiment further, we have to move into more interdisciplinary territory, to join literature with sociology.
23. Moving in that direction, we will encounter Andrew Abbott’s “lyrical sociology,” a pairing of poetry and sociology named with deliberate reference to *Lyrical Ballads* (71). Though Abbott mentions neither Baillie nor drama, the coincidence of his program with Baillie’s is striking, particularly as their goals converge in the concept of sympathy. In a somewhat disorienting manipulation of categories, Abbott opposes the lyrical to all narrative forms—newly personal ethnographies as well as traditional quantitative studies that tell the stories of personified and determining variables (70-82). For Abbott, lyrical studies do not tell stories; rather, they make vividly and emotionally present the “state of being” of the persons or communities being studied (75). Springboarding from Wordsworth’s evocations of rustic life, Abbott finds lyrical qualities in such books as E. P. Thompson’s *Making of the English Working Class*, which fulfills its “promise to bring to life those who are ignored” (81), and Michael Bell’s *Childerly*, which shows how residents of that village felt about gentrification and other changes in their environment (75-76). The value of lyrical studies lies in their ability to rein in researchers’ and readers’ tendency to privilege their own subjectivities at the expense of the subjectivities of the people being studied and to interpret the experiences of those people according to a larger narrative suited to the research project. Lyrical studies provide an alternative to this totalizing use of narrative or theory. Abbott’s statements about the effects of this alternative are worth quoting in full, for it is in this elaboration that the consonance with Baillie emerges:

The lyrical text directly confronts us with the radical chasm between our own here and now and that of its subjects. Yet while the lyrical text shows us this chasm clearly, the chasm itself is crossed by our moral recognition of the common humanity we share with those we read about. The central emotion

aroused by lyrical sociology is precisely this tense yoking of the vertigo of indexical difference with the comfort of human sympathy. (95)

What Abbott wants to infuse into the practice of sociology is what Baillie wanted to infuse into the practice of law and the treatment of prisoners—an awareness of common humanity, or in her words, “respect [for] ourselves, and our kind” (*Works* 4).

24. The convergence of purposes seems more important than the different means—lyric and drama—by which they would achieve it. Since Abbott does not mention drama, I can only speculate as to where he would place it with respect to lyrics and narratives, but it would be consistent with Baillie’s *Discourse* to align drama with lyric. When she contrasts narrative and drama in the *Introductory Discourse*, she singles out the immediacy of the characters’ presence to the audience as an advantage of drama. As Abbott values lyrics for conveying emotional states of being, Baillie values drama for giving us characters whom we can “expect to find . . . creatures like ourselves” and who must “speak directly for themselves” (*Works* 7). Abbott’s claims for the experience of human sympathy are open to the same kinds of questions that skeptics raise about Baillie’s claims for sympathetic curiosity, so it is instructive to notice how he answers them. He concedes that the personal and emotional focus “can easily degenerate into voyeurism or exoticism or routinism or disillusionment.” But, he considers these “pathologies” that do not compromise the healthy strain. Since all methods can generate pathologies, the possibility of these problems associated with lyrical sociology should not undermine its non-pathological use and value (96). If Baillie’s exaggerations of sympathetic responses are less troublesome when we read them as part of a utopian construction, the same might be said for Abbott’s. Abbott’s project is clearly an example of utopian scholarship. It criticizes the existing discipline for insensitivity toward the human beings who make up society, and it creates an alternative to correct it.
25. Since utopianism is now an acknowledged strategy for change, it is a bit surprising that neither Abbott nor Hill makes explicit reference to it, but the omission should remind us of the longstanding hostility toward utopianism that existed in sociology. Though the study of how people enact their social imaginings should be at the center of that discipline, until recently, its investment in defining itself as a science of the real world led it to keep utopianism at arm’s length. Early sociologists defined their subject in terms of the genuine possibilities of society as opposed to utopian fantasies while Marxist sociologists paired utopianism with ideology in their polemics against false consciousness.^[24] But much sociological research now recognizes the power of the imagination as a part of reality as well as the power of symbolic resources. To mark the turn of the millennium and set an agenda for the disciplinary future, the journal *Contemporary Sociology* devoted an issue to utopianism. It features commissioned essays on solutions to such problems as hunger and violence as well as elaborations on the concepts of democracy and justice. Though claiming that the issue tries to remain within the bounds of the “sociologically feasible,” the co-editors nevertheless end their introduction with the statement “we can create only worlds that we can imagine” (v).
26. In addition to the direct recovery of utopianism in *Contemporary Sociology*, recent disciplinary turbulence has created a number of hybrid fields that are promising spaces for unconventional inquiry. The hybrid field of sociolegal studies is particularly relevant as a context in which to study Baillie, given her singling out of “judges, magistrates, and advocates” as an audience for her work and her goal of pursuing justice. In their Introduction to *Between Law and Culture: Relocating Legal Studies* ^[25], the co-editors call attention to law as the “expression of culture” (Goldberg et al. xxiv). Instead of seeing law as the stabilizing regulator of culture, they see it as an element in always fluctuating cultural negotiations over possible actions and identities in society (ix-xxv). Arguably, it is just such negotiations over permissible behaviors and roles that Baillie sought to influence with her plays.
27. Another example from sociolegal studies further illustrates the seriousness with which creative

interactions are now taken. In “Law, Politics and the Subaltern in Counter-hegemonic Globalization,” Boaventura de Sousa Santos and César Rodríguez-Garavito announce their intention of treating the sometimes weak and poorly organized protests of disadvantaged workers against globalization as genuine acts of resistance. Taking them as anything less—particularly dismissing them as idealistic or utopian (in the older pejorative fashion of the social sciences)—is itself an intellectual power play: it is a way of denying the validity of protests that do not live up to earlier established criteria of resistance in social movement theory. It trivializes this resistance so as to rule out of the realms of actuality and even possibility the notion of effective opposition to the new economy. Defiantly, de Sousa Santos and Rodríguez-Garavito propose a “sociology of emergence” in which reality includes “what is possible . . . no matter how incipient” (17-18). The willingness of these two sociologists to educe social change from cultural expressions and to turn the tables on colleagues who require ideas to achieve material success before they will notice them offers a lively example of the recovery of utopianism and the rising credibility of the imagination. “[R]eality cannot be reduced to what exists,” they assert (17). Such a defense of incipient and emerging realities can give us confidence in crediting Baillie’s work with utopian functions.

* * *

28. Each essay that follows in this volume participates in a utopian project of recovering Baillie by offering new material about her life or innovative insights into her works. Though they seldom refer to utopianism explicitly or schematically, they proceed in the spirit of the new utopianism to seek justice for this author, calling for complete editions of her poems and plays, more attention to her presence among her contemporaries, and further evaluations of the ideas, purposes, and implications of her works. While appreciating the efforts that have already given Baillie a respected place in Romantic studies, they approach scholarship on Baillie as a creative process that is open to repositionings and uneasy with fixed structures.
29. Repositionings are most evident in Thomas McLean’s “One from Many: A New Chronology of Joanna Baillie’s Letters,” which is located in two different but linked sections of *Romantic Circles*. The “Chronological Listing” itself takes its place among other documents of its kind in the “Scholarly Resources” circle while McLean’s introduction appears with the other reflective essays in this *Praxis* volume. As the essay explains, the “Chronology” merges information from letters McLean has discovered (and will soon publish) with information from Judith Bailey Slagle’s edition into a comprehensive listing of all known letters. McLean’s “Chronology” can serve as an alternative index to the previously published volumes since its organization by time complements Slagle’s organization by circles of correspondents. It proposes alternative dating for some letters as well. Since the “Chronology” in the “Resource” circle is searchable, it can serve as a springboard for many investigations into Baillie’s whereabouts and acquaintances over the years, and the fluid structure of the electronic form (itself a utopian departure from the constraints of print) can incorporate new information should more letters surface. Annual updates and corrections will be possible if developments warrant.
30. Repositionings of a different kind are effected by Robert Hale’s “[S]hak[ing] the dwellings of the great’: Liberation in Joanna Baillie’s *Poems* (1790),” which corrects the imbalance of attention to Baillie as a playwright with a reminder that Baillie was also a poet. Hale places poems from Baillie’s first published volume in the context of the revolutionary age in which they appeared. His readings of the texts reveal a subtext of social critique that supports a view of Baillie as a reformist—and utopian—writer. The poet who appears in Hale’s essay is, like de Sousa Santos and Rodríguez-Garavito, sensitive to the injustices suffered by the laboring classes and willing to foster incipient protests against their oppression and incipient ideas for fairer treatment.

31. William D. Brewer's "The Liberating and Debilitating Imagination in Joanna Baillie's *Orra* and *The Dream*" pairs the relatively familiar play *Orra* with the less well known *Dream* to shed new light on Baillie's resistance to gender stereotypes and the development of transgressive gender roles in the plays. In Brewer's reading of *The Dream*, Leonora emerges as a strong and effective actor against patriarchal power in contrast to Orra who imagines a matriarchal utopia that ends in madness. Brewer's warning against too simplistically positive a view of utopian imagining is comparable to David Harvey's skepticism about personal transformation as a sufficient utopian strategy. By examining the complex dynamics within and between the two plays, Brewer shows that Baillie did not underestimate the difficulty of changing patriarchal structures.
32. Marjean D. Purinton's "Feminist Utopianism and Female Sexuality in Joanna Baillie's Comedies" shifts attention from the tragedies to three relatively less studied comedies, reading them as protests against the masculinist norms of female sexuality being codified by medical professionals in Baillie's time. Positing and analyzing alternative characterizations of women in these plays, Purinton argues explicitly for affinities with Sargisson's views of utopian thinking as a means of unsettling the dualisms and oppositions that limit human relations.
33. Finally, my own essay on "Joanna Baillie's Ecotopian Comedies" looks at another group of the comedies (with some overlap in attention to *The Second Marriage*) for the ways in which they meld utopian and ecological concerns. As Sargisson's intentional communities and Pohl's country house poems are sites in which social and gender hierarchies can be contested and alternative organizations tried, so scenes in Baillie's comedies criticize domineering, aggressive, and self-aggrandizing interactions and create opportunities for more cooperative households to be established.

Notes

¹ The context for Sargent's essay is notable: it appears in a volume organized to "rehabilitate" the concept of utopia in the postmodern, post-Soviet world and to celebrate the centennial (and continuing vitality) of the Karl Ernst Osthaus Museum, which was founded "as an aesthetic-artistic counter-model to the social utopias of the nineteenth century" and meant to promote "the redesign of social life through art" (Rüsen, Fehr, Rieger ix). Disjoining utopianism from totalitarian states is also important to Jacoby, who argues that utopian imaginings of peaceful and prosperous societies can be distinguished qualitatively from fantasies of political, religious or racial domination (8-22, 82).

² Sargisson formulated "transgressive utopianism" in *Contemporary Feminist Utopias*, but I will most often cite the concept as she further developed it in *Utopian Bodies*.

³ Given the remarkable growth in scholarship on Baillie, it is no longer feasible to give a complete list of studies. Additional works will be cited as they become relevant to points developed later in this essay.

⁴ In *Symbolic Interactions*, I argue that the plays in the *Series* as well as those published as "miscellaneous" share the overarching purpose of studying situated behavior in all its intellectual and emotional complexity. In some cases, a particular passion is spotlighted, but the plays never suggest that people experience only one emotion at a time. Baillie was exasperated by reviewers who inferred the latter idea from her work and then criticized her for it (*Symbolic Interactions* 30-31; Baillie, *Letters* 12).

⁵ For instance, the Preface to Tilar J. Mazzeo's conceptually and analytically innovative study of plagiarism includes an explanation for why the study focuses on canonical rather than recovered authors.

⁶ Laura Mandell's "Canons Die Hard," published when recovery work had just advanced sufficiently to be reflected in anthologies, includes reflections on the ideals sought by expanding the canon. Though she does not use utopian terms, she did include an "imaginary table of contents" to represent an anthology centered on women writers in contrast to anthologies merely adding them to an existing formation. (I refer to this page in the past tense as the link was no longer active at my date of access.) In more theoretically influenced meditations, Wang analyzes the tension between biologically and culturally centered approaches to recovering women writers, with the former involving a simple "recuperation" of female figures and the latter having the potential to "reorder . . . literary history" and "reinstate . . . forgotten categories of" thinking (116). He urges greater attention to the challenging of biology and essentialism in Mary Wollstonecraft's thought that aligns her work with "Enlightenment utopian politics" (122-43, 183).

⁷ Despite acknowledging utopias as thought experiments, Kumar still argues for keeping the term for the genre type, and despite acknowledging that utopias are not "blue-prints," he maintains that they must delineate a society fully and be judged by the extent to which "we feel we want to live in it" (176). The eight-volume set of *Modern British Utopias* recently edited by Gregory Claeys also focuses exclusively on the genre type.

⁸ Revisionist trends also recognize non-Western forms of utopianism. Hudson criticizes Kumar not only for relying on structure but for limiting utopianism to European traditions (20). Leading the way toward global dialogue is Qian Ma's *Feminist Utopian Discourse in Eighteenth-Century Chinese and English Fiction*.

⁹ By "intentional communities," Sargisson means "bodies of people who have chosen to live—and usually work in some way—together" because of their shared political or spiritual values (*Utopian Bodies* 29). Sargisson has researched such communities in the United Kingdom (*Utopian Bodies*) and New Zealand ("Justice Inside Utopia?", *Living in Utopia*) extensively. The household, the structure/institution associated with women in the private sphere, can be a site for the convergence of feminism and ecology partly because of the derivation of the latter term from *oikos* (household) and partly because feminism often parallels the patriarchal domination of women with the domination of nature (*Utopian Bodies* 56, 18).

¹⁰ Sargisson also deals with the question of identity in connection with utopian transgressions of the self/other dualism and the property/gift dualism.

¹¹ Without denying that Baillie is probably correct in believing herself to have been a victim of gender discrimination, we should not lose sight of the fact that she nevertheless enjoyed a very successful career. As Slagle's biography details, some of her plays were performed, and she was well known for her published dramas, poems, and charitable editing.

¹² Brewer's "Joanna Baillie and Lord Byron" addresses Byron's conflicted reactions to the ability of Baillie, a woman, to write tragedies, which he considered a masculine accomplishment.

¹³ Gatrell details attitudes and behaviors surrounding public executions during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

¹⁴ Hudson pointedly uses the term "heuristic," but a sense of heuristic function (and sometimes casual use of the term) appears in most new approaches to utopianism.

¹⁵ To give just one example of the turn in Romantic-era studies from deploring ideology, I would single out Anthony Jarrells's *Britain's Bloodless Revolutions*, which undertakes a positive investigation of the ways the literature of the period legitimates nonviolent change. In sociological studies, James M. Jasper's *Art of Moral*

Protest and Brian M. Lowe's *Emerging Moral Vocabularies* both recognize individual and emotional convictions as factors in social policy and social change even when they are not openly joined to social movements. Lowe includes an anecdote about his mother's refusal to buy or wear fur even though she had no connection with animal rights activists (xi-xii).

¹⁶ For different reasons, Sargisson is also highly critical of deep ecology. Her objections center on its being insufficiently "transgressive of the oppositional Self/Other relation." In her view, deep ecologists presume that they, but not all other humans, can know nature. Their position is "a subsumption of Otherness" with imperialistic implications (*Utopian Bodies* 134).

¹⁷ Here, I use "narrative" differently and more simply than Forbes, who argues that Baillie "attach[es] the passions to narrative" in the plays so as to make them meaningful and manageable rather than "aberrant" (44).

¹⁸ This dismissal of the personal imagination might well be added to Sargisson's examples of the use of the public/private dichotomy to trivialize a body of knowledge and/or a group of thinkers.

¹⁹ Defining knowledge as performed or performative would also be in keeping with Baillie's immersion in the theater and the focus on performativity in many studies of her work. A sense of performance itself as vital to Baillie's presentation—and modification—of gender roles was introduced in Burroughs's *Closet Stages*, and notions of performativity inform such other examinations of her as those by Crochunis ("Authorial Performances"), Forbes, Leach, and Purinton ("Women's Sovereignty"). Analyzing contemporary performances, Jill Dolin argues that the alternative reality audience members experience deserves to be called "utopian."

²⁰ This function appears in Swirski, though less prominently, as the "phenomenology of peril" (97).

²¹ A thorough overview of these trends can be found in Denzin and Lincoln's *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. In a separate article, Denzin credits performative approaches with opening "a positive utopian space" where solutions to social problems can be imagined (196).

²² I first ventured this suggestion in "Joanna Baillie at Hull-House," published before Hill's essay.

²³ Baillie consistently thought that Martineau was a bit too extreme in her theoretical commitments. Though she signed Martineau's petition for U.S. copyright protection of U.K. authors, Baillie suspected that Martineau's zeal to have women writers sign would defeat the purpose of getting Congressmen to take the document seriously. For her part, Martineau admired Baillie's intellect but considered her a figure of the past even in the 1830s (Hewitt, "Joanna Baillie at Hull-House" 125). Martineau was 40 years younger than Baillie.

²⁴ My *Possibilities of Society* explores the thinking of five early non-Marxist sociologists (Durkheim, Mead, Simmel, Tönnies, and Weber). In Marxist sociology, contentions over utopia and ideology have a long history including the work of Adorno, Althusser, Mannheim and others. But new approaches to utopianism have moved away from these controversies. Kumar explains that movement as a widespread acknowledgment that ideology is everywhere and as a result of a substitution of the concept of "discourse" for the concept of "ideology" (172-73).

²⁵ This volume contains the essay by geographer David Harvey that I cited above.

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Utopianism and Joanna Baillie

The Liberating and Debilitating Imagination in Joanna Baillie's *Orra* and *The Dream*

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1. Except for a two-act drama on hope, the third volume of Joanna Baillie's *Plays on the Passions* (1812) is entirely devoted to the passion of fear. Whereas the protagonists of the previous tragedies in her series are all male, the title character of *Orra* "is a woman, under the dominion of Superstitious Fear" (*Dramatic and Poetical Works* 228). In *The Dream*, General Osterloo faces execution with a guilty conscience, and he is so horrified at "the prospect of being plunged almost immediately by death into an unknown state of punishment and horror" (*Works* 230) that he expires. Normally courageous, Orra and Osterloo are driven, respectively, to madness and extinction by their fearful imaginations. Obsessed by their visions of the world of death, they lose the ability to function in the world of the living. Baillie invites comparisons between these two tragedies on fear, which are both set during the fourteenth century in or near Switzerland and feature protagonists whose names begin with the letter O. [1] Scholars have, however, tended to overlook the close relationship of these texts, and while a number of recent essays have focused on *Orra*, *The Dream* has been relatively ignored. [2] In this essay, I consider these two plays on fear as complementary works that explore gender roles, the vulnerability of patriarchal power, and the capacity of the imagination to inspire utopian visions, awaken the conscience, or overwhelm with horror. Whereas Orra's madness liberates her from conjugal bondage but compels her to kneel before a male character's "powerful eye" (5.2.110), Osterloo's terror paralyzes, emasculates, and kills him. [3]
2. In both *Orra* and *The Dream*, Baillie challenges the traditional belief that women are more prone than men to paroxysms of fear. [4] She explains in her address "To the Reader" that she chose to write a second tragedy on fear with a male protagonist because she was "unwilling to appropriate this passion in a serious form to [her] own sex entirely, when the subjects of all the other passions hitherto delineated in [her *Plays on the Passions*] series are men" (*Works* 229). She rejects the essentialist view that women are more vulnerable than men to "the dominion of Superstitious Fear" and contends that even an unsuperstitious man of the nineteenth century would succumb to terror if he were "lodged for the night in a lone apartment where a murder had been committed" and "circumstances [arose] to impress him with [the] belief" that "the restless spirit from its grave might stalk around his bed and open his curtains in the stillness of midnight" (*Works* 228). Moreover, she maintains that if "any person" in this Gothic situation were "entirely devoid of Fear, we should turn from him [*sic*] with repugnance as something unnatural—as an instance of mental monstrosity." She points out that Orra's fears "have nothing to do with apprehension of personal danger, and spring solely from a *natural* horror of supernatural intercourse" (emphasis mine). Although Baillie slips into essentialism when she writes that she does "not believe that women, in regard to uncertain danger, [. . .] are so brave as men," she claims that experience has shown that "on the scaffold [. . .] women have always behaved with as much resolution and calmness" as their male counterparts (*Works* 229). [5] She suggests that the "universal passion" (*Works* 228) of fear operates similarly in most individuals, regardless of their gender. [6] In some cases, however, soldiers about to be executed have been overwhelmed by terror, whereas women in the same situation have behaved calmly (*Works* 229). During the French Revolution, Charlotte Corday (Jean Paul Marat's assassin) and Marie Antoinette comported themselves with courage and dignity as they were conducted to the guillotine. [7]
3. Although Orra is afflicted with medieval superstitiousness, her attitude toward gender roles is progressive for the fourteenth century and even for Baillie's time. As an heiress, she objects to

marriage because under coverture her husband would be master of her possessions and herself. Addressing two male friends, one of whom is a potential suitor, she complains that coverture requires her to “consign [her]self / With all [her] lands and rights into the hands / Of some proud man, and say, ‘Take all, I pray, / And do me in return the grace and favour / To be my master’” (2.1.3–7). Rather than accepting the subservient role of wife, she aspires to remain single, preside along with Theobald of Falkenstein as co-burger of Basle, and “hold [a] little, snug, domestic court” (2.1.142) during the winter with her female attendants. Recognizing that a marriage of equals is not possible during the fourteenth century (2.1.50–55), she chooses the relative freedom of spinsterhood. In fact, she tells her guardian Count Hughobert that she would rather wed a dead man, who would presumably be an undemanding spouse, than the Count’s boorish son (2.2.68–71).^[8] In refusing to obey her guardian’s demands and her father’s “dying will” (2.2.52), she defies two paternal figures and asserts her right to at least a degree of self-determination.

4. To terrorize Orra into submission, Count Hughobert and the treacherous Rudigere confine her to Brunier’s castle, which is reportedly haunted by a murdered hunter-knight. Before being imprisoned, Orra hears the tale of the hunter-knight from a servant and realizes that she is descended from the knight’s assassin: “in [her] veins there runs / A murderer’s blood” (2.1.185–186). In fact, her ancestor’s crime may have been committed in the chamber in which Rudigere incarcerates her (3.2.27–29). When Theobald, Orra’s misguided rescuer, enters the castle through an underground passage in the guise of the “spectre-huntsman” (3.4.78) and approaches her, she shrieks and loses consciousness. Her gender identity wavers and the boundary between the living and the dead dissolves in her mind as the deceased hunter-knight, like her a victim of tyrannical injustice, seems to materialize to seek vengeance against his killer’s surrogate.^[9] She identifies herself with both the male murderer, her ancestor, and his male victim. After she goes insane she veers between martial defiance and abject terror. Identifying Hughobert’s wife as an animate corpse, she glares at her fiercely. “Come not again,” Orra warns,

I’m strong and terrible now:
 Mine eyes have look’d upon all dreadful things;
 And when the earth yawns, and the hell-blast sounds,
 I’ll ’bide the trooping of unearthly steps
 With stiff-clench’d, terrible strength. (5.2.96–102)

According to the stage directions, after making this speech Orra holds “*her clenched hands over her head with an air of grandeur and defiance*” (Orra 162). She metamorphoses from a Gothic heroine passively awaiting deliverance to a hyperactive maniac who believes that she needs to protect men by dragging them away from “The fierce and fiery light” (5.2.45) and the imaginary legions of the advancing dead (Orra 164). Viewed within historical context, her momentary submission to Banneret Hartman is not necessarily an instance of feminine docility: as Frederick Burwick has pointed out, Hartman’s ability to subdue Orra with his eyes recalls Dr. Francis Willis’s ocular control over the insane King George III (63). In madness, she appears to have achieved a measure of freedom: Theobald vows that she will never “suffer [. . .] / The slightest shadow of a base controul [*sic*]” (5.2.117–118) over her. She has escaped the bondage of matrimony but not that of her paranoid visions.

5. Gender role shifts are more pronounced in *The Dream*, in which a female aristocrat and her serving-woman prove to be far more intrepid, energetic, and resourceful than the macho military protagonist. The tragedy begins in the monastery of St. Maurice where two monks claim that a mysterious male figure has appeared to them in recurrent dreams and delivered an ultimatum: unless a member of the imperial army is selected by lot to spend a night in the monastery and undergo “penances for the expiation of long-concealed guilt” (1.2.262) the entire community will die of the plague.^[10] Count

Osterloo, an imperial general, arrives with his troops, agrees to the lottery, draws the black lot, and remains behind to suffer the penances. After the Prior has a large skeleton with a missing right hand exhumed from an unmarked grave in the monastery's vaults, Osterloo remorsefully confesses that he killed the grave's occupant, who turns out to have been the Prior's brother. The vengeful Prior orders him to be decapitated, without absolution, before sunrise. Although courageous in the battlefield, the general does not possess the "passive endurance" that would enable him to withstand his terror not only of summary execution but also of "the awful retributions of another world" (*Works* 229). He deteriorates rapidly from a domineering and vigorous soldier into a feeble and fearful old man.

6. In contrast, Leonora, a Marchioness Osterloo once loved, and her servant Agnes act courageously and decisively in their attempts to rescue him. Unlike Orra, Leonora has been "hurried into [an unwelcome] marriage" (2.4.270) and has performed the role of the proper lady, remaining faithful to her much older husband and preserving his children's inheritance following his death. When she hears, however, of Osterloo's predicament, she immediately resolves to rescue him, even if his deliverance costs all of her "jewels and everything of value in [her] castle" (2.4.271). Her attendant Agnes devises a plan to free the general: Leonora, dressed as a monk, will access his prison chamber through a secret passage and release him. This scheme recalls Theobald's masquerade and rescue of Orra with male and female roles reversed. In her masculine garb, Leonora feels "an energy within [her] that bids defiance to fear" (2.5.271). When she enters Osterloo's cell, he "*seems absorbed in the stupor of despair*" (stage direction 3.1.272). She can scarcely recognize him, and he mistakes her for a monk, but when she tells him that she has come to rescue him, he immediately regains his strength and energy. Osterloo, like Leonora, possesses what Baillie calls "great active courage in opposing danger" (*Works* 229). He breaks open a locked door with "Supernatural strength," but after being recaptured he again becomes "feeble and listless" (3.2.273). The serving-woman Agnes is not, however, ready to despair: she informs Leonora that the imperial ambassador has arrived, and the Marchioness asks him to intervene on Osterloo's behalf. She succeeds in halting the execution, but the general's terror has already killed him. The tragedy's most heroic figure, Leonora subverts the Prior's theocratic tyranny by masquerading as a monk, penetrating into the monastery, and bringing in secular forces to prevent Osterloo's beheading (although not, it turns out, his death). Her swift evolution from a dutiful aristocratic widow and mother to an adventurous cross-dresser contrasts sharply with the general's rapid decline from a powerful military leader to a bewildered valetudinarian. They exchange gender roles as Leonora becomes the intrepid rescuer and Osterloo, who helplessly "*burst[s] into tears*" in his cell (stage direction 3.1.272), finds himself in the position of an imprisoned Gothic heroine.
7. As Julie Carlson has pointed out, *Orra* "reveals not only the illusion of paternal law but the gullibility that founds [. . .] it" (211). *Orra* and *The Dream* suggest that patriarchal control was fragile even during medieval times: both tragedies feature subterranean passageways that allow characters bent on liberating a prisoner access to Bastille-like edifices. In *Orra*, Hughobert relies on the advice of "drones" who "cheat, deceive, [and] abuse [him]" (1.3.1–2). Verbally dominated by Orra and annoyed by her mockery of his son, he complains that "There is no striving with a forward girl" (1.3.114). Following the suggestion of one of his self-interested "drones," he resorts to terrorism to impose his will. His co-conspirator Rudigere betrays him, however, and unsuccessfully attempts to force Orra to marry him rather than Hughobert's son. Denouncing Rudigere as a "ruthless tyrant" (4.3.9), Orra courageously repels his advances, choosing to experience a night of terror rather than be the wife of a "Vile reptile" (3.3.93). Her superstitious fears, not Hughobert's strength, give him what little power he has over her. The count fails, however, to coerce Orra into marrying his feckless son and only heir, who ultimately is slain by the dying Rudigere. After Orra goes insane, Hughobert recognizes his culpability and declares that "A murd'rer is a guiltless wretch" compared to him (5.2.103). The play ends with Orra's dragging Hughobert and Theobald away from the living dead "*in all the wild strength of frantic horror*," (stage direction *Orra* 164). Hughobert's attempt to chart his ward's destiny results in disaster for both of them, and he remorsefully repudiates his paternalistic ambitions.

8. In *The Dream*, Osterloo's swift degeneration and the imperial ambassador's sudden revocation of the Prior's "seigniorial power" (3.3.275) also suggest the vulnerability of patriarchal power. Although Osterloo "has been known to punish even his greatest favourites severely for a slight offense" (1.2.261), he has long escaped retribution for his premeditated ambush and murder of a one-armed man whose only offense was to have successfully courted the general's beloved. His moral authority over his soldiers is fraudulent because to maintain it he must conceal his dishonorable crime, and his military authority evaporates when he sends them away and enters the monastery to undergo unspecified penances. Once he confesses to the murder of the Prior's brother, he becomes completely subject to the vengeful clergyman's will. As Regina Hewitt has explained, "Osterloo, like most prisoners, loses the ability to affect his fate. He becomes the object of others' interpretations rather than a subject who joins in the creation of meaning" (81). The ruthless Prior who condemns Osterloo to death is another vulnerable patriarchal figure. He relies on a powerful matriarch, the Abbess Matilda, to provide troops to protect him and the monastery (2.2.269). The cross-dressing Leonora undermines his authority by impersonating one of his monks, entering his prisoner's cell, and reporting his "treacherous and clandestine" activities to the imperial ambassador (3.3.275). His obsessional desire for vengeance, like his victim's obsessional fear, is ultimately self-destructive. After Osterloo's death, the imperial ambassador vows that the Prior will be punished for making "the general weal of the community subservient for [his] private revenge" and predicts that he will be replaced by the scrupulous and unsuperstitious monk Bernardo (3.3.276). Moreover, Osterloo's men have sworn to avenge their general if he does not return to them safely. The Prior's authority, like Hughobert's, is illegitimate, transitory, and dependent on superstition and terrorism. In each tragedy, the abuse of patriarchal power recoils upon the patriarch.
9. As Baillie notes in her address to the reader, Orra's and Osterloo's fears are intensified to the point of hysteria by their powerful imaginations. According to her, individuals like Orra "who possess strong imagination, quick fancy, and keen feeling, are most easily affected by [superstitious] fear." Osterloo succumbs to "the horror he conceives on being suddenly awakened to the *imagination* of the awful retributions of another world" (emphasis added, *Works* 229). As already shown, the protagonists' highly suggestible imaginations make them acutely vulnerable to patriarchal terrorism. When combined with the passion of fear, the imagination acts as a powerful and destructive accelerant, but an individual who completely lacks a fearful imagination is, in Baillie's view, "an instance of mental monstrosity" or of "unmanly and brutish stupidity" (*Works* 229–230).
10. Of the two fourteenth-century protagonists, Orra is clearly more imaginative and nonconformist. Before her incarceration, she imagines herself as the ruler of a matriarchal, benevolent, peaceful realm in which she is unmarried and autonomous, peasants are nurtured, and men forswear "military rivalry" (2.1.52). When she receives her inheritance, she proposes to make her castle a festive refuge for "way-worn folks," "[be]nighted" and "noble travellers" (2.1.110–111, 122), neighbors, and unemployed and worn-out military veterans. She emphasizes that she and her ladies will *not* be "Solemn, and grave, and cloister'd, and demure" (2.1.124) and pictures a world without war in which old soldiers are honored, live in "cheerful freedom" (2.1.118), and pass the time reminiscing. Her plan to shelter "The worn-out m[e]n of arms" (2.1.113) addresses a serious social problem that literally haunts the neighborhood of Brunier's castle, where Franko and other impoverished soldiers have been reduced to bandits frightening travelers away from their hideout with "wild-goblin-sounds" (3.1.32). When, however, Hughobert consigns Orra to Brunier's castle, her imagination becomes more somber and martial. Her vision of retired men-at-arms frolicking in her house gives way to an ominous night sky in which she sees "The semblance of a warrior's plumed head" leading a legion "Of fainter misty forms" (4.1.20, 24). A dystopian nightmare populated by the "spectred [*sic*] dead" (4.3.94) replaces her utopian fantasy of rural prosperity and peace (2.1.24–39), and her increasingly necrophiliac imagination creates a Gothic world that conflates hell and heaven: "the damn'd and holy, / The living and the dead, together are / In horrid neighbourship" (5.2.208–210). In the tragedy's last scene it

appears, however, that Hughobert will implement at least part of Orra's progressive social agenda. He, Franko, and the other outlaws are reconciled (5.2.5–9), and Orra's scheme to create a refuge for unemployed men-at-arms promises to become a reality.

11. Unlike Osterloo, Orra finds “a joy in fear” (2.1.174) and revels in “stories [. . .] of ghosts and spirits” (2.1.144). For her, fear is a stimulant as well as a weakness. Her “joy in fear” recalls Edmund Burke's famous definition of the sublime, which he asserts “is built on terror” and engenders both “delight” and pain in the person who experiences it (134). According to Burke, sublime objects strain the percipient's eye: “the whole capacity of the eye, vibrating in all its parts[,] must approach near to the nature of what causes pain, and consequently must produce an idea of the sublime” (137). In the tragedy's last scene, Orra's “restless eye-balls move” (5.2.172) incessantly to take in her panoramic nightmare vision. Her joyful terror enables her to experience the sublime and thus engages her aesthetic sensibility even as it dissociates her from reality. The sublime is produced by obscurity as well as terror, and Osterloo's “Incomprehensible and dreadful” (3.1.272) conception of his judgment before God is “dark, uncertain, confused, terrible, and sublime to the last degree” (Burke 59). As Burke explains, obscurity is far more “*affecting* to the imagination” (emphasis Burke's) than “clearness of imagery” (60). But although extreme fear allows Orra and Osterloo to experience the sublime, it compromises their receptivity to words, which, Burke points out, can produce poetic ideas of the sublime. Terrorized by the prospect of Brunier's castle, Orra tells one of her suitors that she “hear[s] [his] voice, but not [his] words” (2.2.128), and after her trauma in the castle language becomes virtually indecipherable to her. Desperately trying to awaken her from her swoon, Theobald exclaims that “Words are vain!” (5.1.172) and discovers that she no longer recognizes his voice (5.1.167; 5.1.181). As the play closes, Orra imagines a legion of blind, “lipless,” uncommunicative cadavers who “clatter” their jaws in a “mockery of speech” (5.2.220–221).^[11] Facing execution and, he believes, God's imminent judgment, Osterloo cannot understand what is being said to him. He hears meaningless “words through a multitude of sounds” and then “many ringing sounds” (3.3.275). For Orra and Osterloo the realm of sublime terror features visual rather than verbal signs and thus separates them from human intercourse.
12. Whereas Orra has no fear of dreams, which she regards as indistinct and incoherent (2.1.224–230), but dreads the incursion of the dead into the living world, Osterloo is terrified by the monks' recurrent dream and events in the afterlife.^[12] Osterloo, like Orra, becomes obsessed with the dead that “hover near” (*The Dream* 2.3.268), but his imagination is less vivid, more theophobic, and more paralyzing than hers. His conception of his post-execution encounter with the “assembled host” of the dead is elliptical and sublimely obscure: “Oh, the terrible form that stalks forth to meet me! the stretching out of that hand! the greeting of that horrible smile! And it is thou, who must lead me before the tremendous majesty of my offended Maker! Incomprehensible and dreadful! What thoughts can give an image of that which overpowers all thought!” (3.1.272). Osterloo's murder victim is reduced to an undefined “form” with an outstretched hand and “horrible smile” and his reference to his judgment before God is abstract and imageless. Orra's apocalyptic vision, rendered in blank verse rather than prose, is much more graphic and pictorial. “In grave-clothes swath'd are those but new in death,” she informs her horrified audience, “And there be some half bone, half cased in shreds / Of that which flesh hath been; and there be some / With wicker'd ribs, thro' which the darkness scowls” (5.2.214–217).
13. Neither Orra nor Osterloo are able to pray or find religious consolation (*Orra* 4.3.40–41; *The Dream* 3.1.272), but unlike Orra, the general is terrified of his “offended Maker,” a stern patriarch whose judgment he believes will be as harsh and unyielding as the Prior's. For Orra, “the Lord of all existing things” (4.3.32) is, for some unknown reason, inaccessible to her during her imprisonment, and her account of the damned consorting with the holy is inconsistent with Christian theology. Terrified by her vision of the living dead, Orra becomes hyperkinetic, twice dragging male characters backwards to protect them, shrinking in horror from the Countess, kneeling, and running up to console Hughobert.

In contrast, Osterloo becomes increasingly infirm and immobile, losing his ability to interpret words, express himself, and see before he passes away on the executioner's block. Physically indomitable, he proves to be mentally fragile.

14. Considered together, *Orra* and *The Dream* present a quasi-medieval world in which terrifying situations affect individuals according to their temperament rather than their gender, the power of a guardian, count, general, or prior can evaporate in an instant, and the fearful imagination can be easily manipulated into creating its own nightmares. Baillie portrays the imagination ambivalently: this potent and transformative mental faculty enables Orra to envision a matriarchal and pacifistic utopia and a rewarding civic career as a co-burgher but also inspires her nightmare of the living dead. It awakens Osterloo's slumbering conscience but also annihilates him. In *Orra*, the protagonist's untrammelled imagination reinforces her determination to avoid the constriction of aristocratic medieval marriage and pathologizes her manic-depressive tendencies and her fascination with terrifying visions. Her madness frees her from matrimony but enslaves her to her sepulchral fantasies. Although Osterloo's imagination temporarily sharpens his moral vision by compelling him to reflect on the enormity of his crime, in the end it enervates him and extinguishes his selfhood. Baillie's tragedies on fear present the imagination as a dangerous but potentially enlightening faculty that magnifies an unconventional woman's preexisting tendencies and reveals the fragility and the humanity of a conscience-stricken imperial general.^[13] In the struggle against patriarchal power, alert pragmatists like Leonora and Agnes are more effective than fantasists like Orra and Osterloo, whose obsessional fears transform them, respectively, into a maniac and a corpse.

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Notes

¹ *Orra* takes place “Towards the end of the 14th century” and is set in Switzerland and “on the Borders of the Black Forest in Suabia [Swabia],” a region in southwest Germany (*Orra* 134), and *The Dream* is set in “the middle of the 14th century” and in Switzerland (*Dramatic and Poetical Works* 260). The exclamation “O!” and its homophone “Oh!” are, of course, common expressions of fear.

² Regina Hewitt’s analyses of these two tragedies are atypical: she briefly discusses *Orra* after a more extended treatment of *The Dream* (78–86). Sean Carney’s examination of Adam Smith’s influence on Baillie’s plays contains the only recent extended comparison of *Orra* and *The Dream* (238–243). His analysis, unlike mine, does not consider the role of gender in the works.

³ All quotations from *Orra* are taken from *The Broadview Anthology of Romantic Drama*, ed. Cox and Gamer, rather than from *The Dramatic and Poetical Works*. I have used *The Broadview Anthology* rather than *Works* for *Orra* because I prefer using a carefully edited version of the play with numbered lines (*Works* is a compilation rather than an edition and lines of verse are not numbered in it). A modern scholarly edition of Baillie’s complete works is sorely needed.

⁴ As Mark S. Micale explains, hyperemotionality and the “disease” of hysteria have been associated with femininity since ancient times (68–70).

⁵ Baillie does not supply a rationale or evidence for her theory that women are more fearful than men of “uncertain danger.” Possibly she believed that women are more prone to magnify potential danger through their imaginations, or that women are less sanguine than men regarding the outcomes of possible threats. In her later play *The Phantom: A Musical Drama* (1836) the heroine encounters a “real” ghost and conducts a somewhat nervous but rational conversation with her (1.4., *Works* 578–79). This scene appears to contradict Baillie’s claims about the universal terror of ghosts in her 1812 address “To the Reader,” but it should be noted that the phantom is the heroine’s deceased friend and thus relatively unthreatening, and the heroine falls into a swoon when the spirit departs.

⁶ Baillie’s character Bernardo asserts that “The bravest mind is capable of fear” (*The Dream*, 3.3.274).

⁷ Baillie clearly had the French Revolution in mind when she wrote her address “To the Reader.” To support her claim that Osterloo’s death from fear at the scaffold “is not entirely invention,” she cites “Miss Plumtre’s [sic] interesting account of the atrocities committed in Lyons by the revolutionary tribunals” (*Works* 230; see vol. 1 of Anne Plumtre’s *A Narrative of a Three Years’ Residence in France, 1802–5* [1810]). For an account of Corday’s trial and execution, see Schama 737–741; for a brief description of the Queen’s execution, see Lever 304–305.

⁸ Carlson points out that “*Orra*’s preference for ghosts expresses a feminist indictment of the inadequacies of

living men who are inherently warlike and scheming, and contingently stupid (Glottenbal) and base (Rudigere)” (212). Orra does not appear, however, to indict Theobald.

⁹ As Diane Long Hoeveler notes, “The gender dynamics here have transformed a male victim into a female one” (121).

¹⁰ Since *The Dream* is a prose drama, parenthetical citations will refer to act, scene, and page number from *Works* (rather than to line numbers). Scenes 4 and 5 in Act 2 are misnumbered in *Works* as 3 and 4; my citations correct these errors.

¹¹ Nathan Elliott writes that “Speech and sight are presented as useless in the last image of [*Orra*].” (99)

¹² Bernardo notes that the dream was revealed by one monk to another, and the monk who originated the “dream” derived it from the deathbed confession of the man who buried the murder victim (2.2.266).

¹³ For a discussion of the humanizing effect of Osterloo’s fearful imagination, see Hewitt 82–83.

Utopianism and Joanna Baillie

One from Many: A New Chronology of Joanna Baillie's Letters

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1. Judith Slagle's 1999 *Collected Letters of Joanna Baillie* (Madison, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1999; 2 vols.) includes more than eight hundred Joanna Baillie letters from collections in the United States and Great Britain and presents Baillie as an engaged correspondent at ease with many of the era's venerable figures, including Walter Scott, Samuel Rogers, Lady Byron, and Sir John Herschel. Slagle's decision to organize letters by correspondent allows readers to focus on Baillie's interaction with important literary and cultural figures, and it helpfully focuses attention on lesser-known writers from Baillie's circle, most notably Mary Berry and Margaret Hodson. As Slagle notes in her introduction, her "purpose is to establish a circle of Baillie's friends, some of whom are women writers about whom we know very little" (xiii). The edition certainly succeeds in this central purpose.
2. There are, however, some drawbacks to this approach. Grouping letters by correspondent gives value to certain relationships based only on the number of letters that an editor is able to locate. Baillie's letters to two recipients, Scott and Hodson, take up four hundred pages, more than a third of the total two volumes. By contrast, the *Collected Letters* includes only four letters to Felicia Hemans and none to either Anna Barbauld or Maria Edgeworth. Baillie seems to have had long and lively relationships with these three women writers, and they do appear frequently in letters to other friends. Yet the format of *Collected Letters* makes it difficult to get a sense of their developing friendships. Furthermore, the *Collected Letters* relegates recipients who only figure in a handful of letters to a final "miscellaneous" group. This section includes Baillie's correspondence with many major figures of the era, including William Wordsworth, Robert Southey, and Edmund Kean. Yet these letters are grouped by library rather than chronology, which makes any sort of narrative difficult. Finally, for scholars focusing on a single period in Baillie's life, or in following the publishing history of a particular volume, the format of the *Collected Letters* can be challenging.
3. To supplement the *Collected Letters*, I have assembled and ordered the eight hundred letters from Slagle's two-volume edition, about forty letters that were printed previously but not included in *Collected Letters*, and two hundred unpublished Baillie letters that I have located in the past few years. I have listed the letters chronologically, including only the date, the watermark, the place of writing, the recipient, and the first page of the letter's location in print.^[1] Footnotes provide explanations for the two hundred cases where I have assigned new or more precise dates; letters with uncertain dates appear at the end of the chronology. I have not been able to examine the manuscripts of all of the published letters in person, but I hope to do so in order to check postmarks and watermarks, particularly for those letters where a definite date is currently impossible. Most of the letters listed here that were not included in the *Collected Letters* will appear in a forthcoming volume I am preparing for Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, *Further Letters of Joanna Baillie*.
4. What do we gain from such a listing? The most immediate gain is the ability to read much of Baillie's surviving correspondence in chronological order. We can focus on significant moments in her later life and career: the Edinburgh performances of *The Family Legend*, Baillie's diligent gathering of contributions for the 1823 *Collection of Poems*, or her later efforts to promulgate Unitarian beliefs. We can follow her reactions to the Napoleonic conflict and its aftermath, the reform movement, and the reign of Queen Victoria. And we can more easily observe the rhetorical shifts in Baillie's writing on politics, religion, or literature.

5. But the structure of this chronology also gives a new vantage point from which to view Baillie's life and times. What's most interesting perhaps is what's not here: letters from early in Baillie's career. Baillie's circle of notable acquaintances was already impressive in the 1790s, due in part to the celebrity of her uncles, the Edinburgh medical doctors William and John Hunter, and the growing fame of her brother Dr. Matthew Baillie. During that decade, Baillie published anonymously a collection of poems (1790) and the first volume of her *Series of Plays*, which appeared in 1798 and reached a second edition in 1799. But Baillie was only discovered to be the author of the plays in April 1800, after the premiere of *De Montfort* at Drury Lane. The first letter in the chronology dates from just after this event—the first moments of Baillie's public fame. Given Baillie's relative obscurity before the discovery, it is perhaps understandable (though still odd) that no earlier letters have come to light. But this means that we have no epistolary evidence of Baillie before the age of 37 and very little regarding her early literary friendships, or the writing and publishing of her early poems and plays. Even the first decade of the nineteenth century seems spotty: considerable stretches in 1804, 1806, and 1808 are represented by a single recipient; and few letters survive from the months before or after the 30 September 1806 death of Baillie's mother.
6. Only after 1810 does the reader get a sense of Baillie's daily life, her literary and social circles, and her professional and political interests. When the correspondence begins to fill out, the chronology suggests how her correspondents change over time. Some long-lived friends, like Hodson, George Thomson, and Lady Byron, remain present throughout; others disappear or pass away, succeeded by new, younger acquaintances like Andrews Norton or Anna Jameson. Baillie's interest in and friendships with Americans (like Norton and George Ticknor) and religious figures are a notable addition to the later correspondence.
7. The chronology seems to show how infrequently, over a long life, Baillie travelled beyond London or Hampstead: Hampstead, Red Lion Hill and Hollybush Hill refer to the homes of Agnes and Joanna Baillie; Grosvenor Street, Cavendish Square, and Sunning Hill refer to London and area residences of Matthew and Sophia Baillie. This is somewhat misleading, however: a look at the actual letters suggests rather that Baillie traveled frequently in the 1810s and 1820s—Scotland, Wales, and France, but most often to Devon to visit her friend Anne Elliot—but wrote few letters when away from London.
8. Almost every year, from 1800 to 1851, is represented by at least a few letters. In general, the number of surviving letters per year increases slowly but steadily, reaching a high point in the early 1840s. But few years surpass thirty letters, a reminder (despite Slagle's heroic efforts) of how few Baillie letters have been identified thus far. The fact that Baillie has only recently regained scholarly attention suggests to me that many more of her letters survive, both in uncatalogued library collections and in dusty attics. Unlike Byron, Keats, or Wordsworth, the name Baillie might not immediately inspire an archivist, whether professional or amateur. But much of what remains is now available to readers from two distinct but equally useful vantage points. Just as Judith Slagle's edition made possible my own research, so I hope that this chronology will encourage scholarly work in new directions: to systematically identify letters written *to* Baillie; to think about Romantic-era Hampstead in new ways; or to re-examine the links between science, religion and literature in early nineteenth-century Britain and the United States.
9. Offering this chronology on-line rather than in print has obvious benefits. It makes the chronology immediately accessible to anyone with internet access. Names and dates can be searched, errors corrected, and new information added. As new letters appear, they will be added to the chronology. I encourage readers to contact me (thomas.mclean [at] otago.ac.nz) with suggestions, corrections, or additions.

A Chronological Listing of the Letters of Joanna Baillie

Notes

¹ Two letters previously identified as Baillie's are not hers and thus do not appear in the chronology. In the *Collected Letters* Slagle prints "a fragment of a letter to Thomas Noon Talfourd" (CL 1100) but suspects the handwriting is Agnes Baillie's. This is in fact a portion of a complete letter at the Huntington Library (TA 192) to Talfourd from Charles Babbage. In my article "Joanna Baillie in New Zealand: Eight New Letters" (*Keats-Shelley Journal* 54 [2005] 33-42), I included an unsigned 16 August 1813 letter to Mary Berry attributed to Baillie. I was wrong to do so; recent research suggests that the writer is almost certainly Berry's and Baillie's friend Anne Seymour Damer.

Utopianism and Joanna Baillie

Feminist Utopianism and Female Sexuality in Joanna Baillie's Comedies

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1. The notion of Utopia is usually that of an ideal place that exists in imagination. In terms of Romantic writers' deployment of "utopian," however, the word suggests more than geographic displacement or imaginative worlds removed from reality. Regina Hewitt has pointed to the deployment of utopianism as a conceptual space in which present social conditions can be criticized. Hewitt explores this use of utopianism in tandem with what she terms "symbolic interactionism," an interpretative position that Romantic-period writers found useful for analyzing and social processes and relationships.^[1] My reading of Joanna Baillie understands her plays as informed by feminist utopian thought that, as Lucy Sargisson in *Contemporary Feminist Utopianism* asserts, refers to "a way of seeing and approaching the world and to subsequent ways of representing what is perceived of the world" (1). For Sargisson, feminist utopian thought is multidisciplinary; it is expressed in a literary or textual artifact, and its methodology is transgressive. In other words, its function is to challenge and critique patriarchy, and the dominant relations and political realities that emanate from patriarchal structures (*Contemporary* 10-22). Baillie's dramas certainly fulfill these definitional features of feminist utopianism. As Hewitt has suggested, feminist utopianism, like symbolic interactionism, seeks to create new conceptual spaces in which radically different ways of being can be imagined and in which different distributions of power, including sexual power, can be conceived (*Contemporary* 17-21).
2. Feminist utopian texts are dynamic, imperfect, speculative, metaphoric and open-ended. They contribute to critical engagements with political issues (*Contemporary* 25-37), and like feminism, they have a radically subversive potential; they can function as catalysts of revolutionary thought. Like feminism, this utopianism drives texts towards estrangement from prevailing standards of normalcy, appropriateness, conventionality. A feminist utopia creates and operates inside a new place or space that had previously appeared inconceivable so as to posit the possibility of different social, sexual, and symbolic relations (*Contemporary* 40-42). Like the pedagogical goals Baillie articulates for her plays in her introductory discourses and notes, a feminist utopia seeks fundamental paradigm shifts in the consciousness of the present so that social transformation can occur (*Contemporary* 42-57).^[2] Sargisson summarizes the ultimate function of feminist utopian thought that I argue informs and underpins Baillie's dramas as that which "creates a space, previously non-existent and still 'unreal,' in which radically different speculation can take place, and in which totally new ways of being can be envisaged. In this space, transformative thinking can take place, and paradigmatic shifts in approach can be undertaken." (*Contemporary* 63). In this essay, I want to explore the ways that three of Joanna Baillie's comedies project feminist utopian thought engaged with early nineteenth-century debates about women as sexed and sexual beings: *The Match* (1836), *The Second Marriage* (1802), and *Enthusiasm* (1836).
3. Theatrical comedy is an interesting genre for this discussion because scientific concerns with corporeality and sexuality could be played out in the utopian theatrical spaces of the stage and the performative body. Like masquerade, theatre granted license for transgressive female sexualities and female sexual autonomy, ways of being that differed from the period's prescriptive and increasingly encoded norms of "femininity." Kristina Straub has argued, for example, that theatrical gender-bending made visible an awareness that feminine sexuality and gender identity could stray beyond the boundaries that were at the end of the eighteenth century emerging to define the sphere codified as female behavior (135-141). According to Sargisson, feminist utopias often focus on satire and irony,

and she notes that while feminist utopianism has profound implications, it operates with “a subtle lightness of touch” (*Contemporary* 229). Even in comedic and satiric forms that suspended the stability of this dominant gender ideology, it remained particularly complicated for Romantic women playwrights to portray a body scientifically sexed as female and discursively gendered as feminine that might challenge prevailing medical accounts that devalued the female body as an aberration deviating from the male anatomical “norm.” At this time, medical science emerged as a discourse and practice that exerted powerful influences on codified “feminine” and “masculine” behaviors, roles, and bodies. According to Karen Harvey, the scientific and medical discourses of the late eighteenth century reimagined women as sexually passive, but she emphasizes that what emerges at the beginning of the nineteenth century are diverse representations of the female body. Female bodies therefore inspired both fear and desire, creating considerable unease about female sexual desire (102-110).

4. Sexuality, as Roy Porter has demonstrated, was pervasive during the eighteenth century, and by the Romantic period, the public was fascinated with sexual anatomy, with reproduction, with erotic experience, and with the nature of masculinity and femininity (“Mixed Feelings” 1). Physiological myths characterized women as sexually insatiable, notions that can be traced to the numerous medical handbooks of the day (“The Literature of Sex Advice before 1800” 135-40). During the early nineteenth century, a fundamental shift in the definition of “sex” emerged, and the study of woman, her nature, her body, became the focus of scientific research with a significant reinterpretation of the female body in relation to that of the male, resulting, as Thomas Laqueur has shown, by 1800, in the old single-sex model which held that women had the same genitals as men, the only difference being their location, being challenged by a two-sex model based on the discoverable biological differences between male and female. The two-sex paradigm situated male and female as complementary but oppositional pairs, and the body of woman became the form upon which social relations were battled and redefined (154-63). Richard Sha reminds us, however, that the early nineteenth century experienced what he terms an “epistemological panic” that simultaneously engaged and resisted knowledge of human sexuality. Following Porter, Sha suggests that biological sex, as well as the boundary between normal and abnormal sexuality, was more fluid than oppositional during the Romantic period with both paradigms of hierarchy and complementarity at work. As sexuality, a term that Arnold Davidson explains does not appear in the OED until the late nineteenth century, was a concept undergoing the pressures of transition, the coherently gendered subject was also provisional and performative (37). Although there was no monolithic account of female sexuality during the Romantic period, discourses about sexuality derived from those concerned with anatomy and diseases, with a woman’s sexuality frequently linked to her reproductive system. Heterosexual coupling vitally promoted the social construction of the bourgeois, nuclear family, and the paragon of “motherhood” was exalted as the role for women, whose duty it was to fashion the morality of family and nation.
5. As medical science became developmentally “professionalized” and male-dominated, women increasingly became the object of the medical (male) gaze. The physician’s examination progressed from the conventional visual inspections and narrative accounts of symptoms to bodily penetrations with his hand and instruments. From the early nineteenth century, new diagnostic technology, such as the stethoscope and forceps, became available, and despite the diagnostic advances these instruments might bring, this invasion of “private spaces” on the female body often confounded the boundaries between “professionalism” and impropriety. Visual inspection of female genitalia became important in determining normal and abnormal categories of sex, with aberrations such as hermaphrodites and eunuchs as examples of medical pathology. Nineteenth-century scientists regarded hermaphrodites as deformed women, a grotesque form aligned with the female sex. As we have seen, the female sex was already devalued by prevailing medical accounts as an aberration deviating from the male anatomical norm. Women were, therefore, paradoxically perceived by science as sexually deficient, and as a result, incapable of erotic desires, or as sexually grotesque and consequently dangerous for their hypersexualized appetites. The theatre, then, allowed women playwrights to challenge the physical and

social limits of female bodies. A number of the period's comedies "perform" seemingly conventional "happily-ever-after" marital conflicts whose closures ensure, or imply at least, romantic love and heteronormative marriage, but carefully placed characters in those comedies suggest that female sexuality might be more improvisational and diverse than dominant and legitimate medical science wished to promote. If we read these comedies through the feminist utopian lens, then the ironic estrangement created by these characters makes the plays critical, transgressive, and open-ended.

6. Joanna Baillie was well connected to the medical and scientific discourses of her day that placed women in anatomically and socially inferior roles. Her uncles, Drs. William and John Hunter, and her brother, Matthew Baillie, were renowned anatomists and physicians. The day's medical opinions were discussed in her home and enacted in the family's anatomical theatre, the Hunter School of Anatomy on Windmill Street in London, the site of scientific teaching and medical experimentation as well as dissection.^[3] Baillie dedicated her second series of the *Plays on the Passions* (1802), which includes *The Second Marriage*, to her brother Matthew (Burwick 49). It is not surprising, therefore, for medical motifs and notions to find a place in her drama. In Baillie's comedies, what might appear as conventional treatments of heterosexual courtship and marriage, may, in fact, playfully challenge the medical and mythical discourses that sought to limit female sexuality. Despite the conventional domestic conflicts and stock characterizations of these comedies, they seriously confront the period's scientific treatment of women and female sexuality. Baillie's comedies suggest fluid female sexualities that are not necessarily linked to identity and that are not tucked neatly into taxonomies of biology that were becoming increasingly fixed during the nineteenth century. The women of Baillie's comedies are not all fair maidens turned maternal wives; some might even be identified as Tommys, invert, spinsters, enthusiasts, or prostitutes, but they point to the possibilities of rescripting cultural and medical meanings of female desires and erotic experiences. Although these women are embedded in scripts of normalizing and normative relationships, their place as aberrant characterizations undermines totalizing discourses, medical and social, that sought to contain them. Michèle Cohen has pointed out that the period's discourses about the sexed mind constituted the male intellect as higher, deeper, and stronger than that of the female, and that part of that strength was his access to knowledge (i.e. science) (81). The estrangement from prevailing discourses about the sexed mind created by Baillie's comedies therefore contributes to anxieties about what constituted masculinity and femininity, and how the culture might define male and female sexuality in medico-scientific terms.
7. Catherine Burroughs reads *The Match* as a gentle mockery of the bluestockings' salon sessions and their intellectualism, but my reading of Baillie's comedy perceives feminist utopian thought at work in its criticism of female sexuality. In *The Match*, 32-year-old Latitia Vane seeks to live as a single distinguished woman, in a house of her own, as "the patroness of arts, the encourager of genius, the loadstar in society" (1.2.687). She seeks to invert gendered values and roles so that she might act "as a man" in society. Furthermore, Latitia wants a house on her own terms, one that has a "closet" for her curiosities. It "will be," explains Latitia, "a cheerful spinster's house, where literati will assemble, amateurs sit in council, curiosities be examined, poems read, and all the bon-mots of the town be repeated!" (1.4.689). Latitia might appear to be a caricature of a bluestocking or an "unsexed Amazon," a parodic representation of radicals like Mary Wollstonecraft and Mary Hays. Andrew Elfenbein has delineated the analogy between the Romantic genius, the alienated, marginalized artist, and homosexuality, the man or woman who shatters conventional gender categories (7-8), and so in this sense, Latitia portrays the Romantic genius asserting individuality in the face of conformity, gender and aesthetic. Like other independent-minded characters of Romantic comedy by women playwrights, Latitia refuses to put on the vestments of a husband.
8. Baillie's comedy complicates Latitia's "genius" when it places that genius in question. Latitia determines to secure a phrenologist, Dr. Crany, to read her nephew Lawry's head so that she might suggest what education would be best suited to his talents. Dr. Crany admits that while his "science is

still in its infancy” (2.3.693), it is nonetheless a proven one—“proved by a successive inspection of the skills of distinguished men, from remote antiquity down to the present day” (2.3.693). Brightly quips factitiously, “...what a saving of time and of reason there will be, when, instead of inquiring the past actions and propensities of a man, you have only to run over his head with your fingers and become acquainted with his character at once” (2.3.693). Dr. Crany performs his examination of Lawry’s head, his fingers “the organ of inspection” (2.3.694), and pronounces the boy fit for the study of mathematics. Thornhill retorts, “No wizard could have guessed better” (2.3.24). Dr. Crany is next invited to examine the head of Sir Kunliffe, and he discovers that Cameron “has the organ of destruction on his head” (2.3.695). Then the good doctor mysteriously disappears. Brightly rationalizes, “Who will live in amity and confidence with one who is scientifically proved to be predisposed to deeds of cruelty and destruction? (3.3.701). Indignantly, Sir Cameron wonders whether Dr. Crany has persuaded Latitia “that some terrible propensities are revealed on the surface of my pericranium” (2.4.696). He recalls the indignity of the examination by Dr. Crany: “His filthy fingers sprawling over my head for such a villaneous purpose: it is abominable” (2.4.696). These enactments of phrenology serve as paradigmatic analogues to physicians’ examination of women’s organs in which “filthy fingers” penetrated private spaces in “abominable” probings, frequently of little medical merit. Baillie’s comedy puts the medical profession, phrenology and gynecology, legitimate medicine and quackery, under examination and suggests that the same improbable practices that characterize the “proven science” of phrenology might be questionable in other “proven” medical sciences as well.

9. Besides phrenology, other connections have been made between discourses of medicine, science and utopianism. Bishop George Berkeley, for example, in his 1744 utopian treatise, *Siris*, delineates his vision of a world cured of imperfections by tar-water. Carole Fabricant explains that, in *Siris*, Berkeley adopts the role of a physician capable of restoring ailing patients to a state of utopian health. His tar-water treatments, says Fabricant, were by their very nature a “challenge to the status quo, pushing against the narrow bound of any one class’s self-interest by articulating the vision of a society transformed through its embrace of the collective good” (278). According to Fabricant, Berkeley maintained a strong commitment to his utopian idea, even though it was framed in what we would now identify as quackery. While Baillie’s own medical knowledge may question the legitimacy of phrenology as science, her satire of it in *The Match* may, like Berkeley’s tar-water, function metaphorically as utopianism. Because phrenology and tar-water seem so far-fetched, we may not easily recognize the utopian potential to which they point and the critical posture they assume in relation to the “masculine” domain of medical science.
10. As I have indicated, medicine was becoming increasingly professionalized during the Romantic period, but there were just as many instances of quackery as there were legitimate science. The “non-normal” sciences, in fact, were theatricalized during the period and made the substance of itinerate lecturers, exhibitionists, and “peep” shows. Miracle cures and fast-acting elixirs were pandered to the public, regardless of their efficacy or unconventionality. The boundary between legitimate and illegitimate science was a fluid one, and both occupied center stage of public attention. Baillie’s comedy *Enthusiasm* plays with British and French fascination with Mesmerism. According to T.C. Williams, the theory of animal magnetism was so widely accepted by 1790 that to consult a somnambulist or a mesmerist for problems of disease and health was almost a common practice. The movement brought an ever-growing band of entertainers who exploited “magnetic sleep” for the purpose of well-paying stage performances (61-62). In Baillie’s play, *The Second Marriage*, Lady Worrymore, the former Arabella Gosling, is a high-toned, ardent enthusiast. She is hyper-enthusiastic about everything, whether it is her new husband’s parliamentary speech upon the Corn Bill, his portrait by Mr. Rougeit or Hugh’s juggling antics. Lord Worrymore finds his new wife quite a change from the demure Magdalene, his deceased first wife. His comments about Lady Worrymore’s exaggerated enthusiasm reveal her preoccupation with the period’s normal and non-normal sciences, including phrenology and anatomy:

Her boudoir is studded round with skulls like a charnel-house; and bold and dirty creatures from St. Giles come into her very dressing-room, with their rickety brats in their arms, to put their large misshapen heads under her inspection, as the future mighty geniuses of the land. Speaking birds, giraffes, and lectures upon Shakespeare have followed one another in succession, to say nothing of her present little imp of a juggler; and all in their turn are the sole occupiers of her ardent admiration. (1.1.591)

Lord Worrymore is jealous that his wife's enthusiastic attentions have turned from him and his accomplishments to others whose relationship to her is not intimate. In an incident with Hugh, Lady Worrymore rewarded his juggling stunts with so much cream and comfeti, making him sick and feverish. She is, after all, not a single, independent woman, like Latitia of *The Match*, for she has her wifely duties to perform. Her affections were not directed solely to her husband. Like the Duke of Ferrara in Robert Browning's "My Last Duchess," Lord Worrymore is himself afflicted with what Lady Shrewdly diagnoses as "his own obtrusive eagerness for praise" (1.1.593). Lady Shrewdly predicts that Lady Worrymore may "get tired of this hurricane of enthusiasm, after two or three tricks have been played upon her credulity" (1.1.592), and she sets in motion a plot to have a draft of one of Lord Worrymore's parliamentary speeches submitted to his wife for criticism but under the guise of having been written by the Irish orator O'Honikin, impersonated by Francis Blount.

11. Blount puts on a bombastic and convincing performance—a performance that is as moving as mesmerists' demonstrations. A servant observing the show remarks, "I've seen the stage doctor at Barth'lomew fair, but he is but a joke to it" (2.4.603). We learn about Lady Worrymore's enthusiastic response through a conversation between servants. One asserts that Blount's reading was so impassioned that Lady Worrymore "has nearly as hard work in admiring him as he with his eloquence..." (2.4.603). The servant adds, "Heaven help her to a sorberer way of commending folks, for her body's sake! She'll be in a fever by evening" (2.4.603). Another servant disagrees that Lady Worrymore is weakened by the orator's intoxicating performance: "...she's an able-bodied person enough, for all that she casts up her eyes, and smells at her bottle of salts so often" (2.4.603). Lady Worrymore's physiological and psychological reactions to Blount's performance recall accounts of those enthusiasts who witnessed magnet therapy. Women frequently experienced orgasmic convulsions, followed by a state of languor and happiness. According to Mary Terrall, it was generally believed that under the influence of their powerful and excitable imaginations, women could produce effects on their own bodies, sometimes resulting in a sexual crisis due to the "total disorder of the senses" (263). Mesmeric treatments were seductive, much like Blount's speech, Hugh's juggling acts, the Shakespeare lectures, and her own scientific experiments were to Lady Worrymore.
12. Although Lady Worrymore comes to pardon the frolic, she makes an effort to rationalize her enthusiasm by assuming the role of the weak and dependent female that medical science, and Lord Worrymore, might have scripted for her to follow. For when Lady Worrymore discovers that her "personified Eloquence" (3.3.611) is Francis Blount and that the discourse she has admired is actually of her husband, she holds her head to one side, assumes an air of diffidence, and says: "...the tremor of my nerves has rendered me quite unfit, for the last twelve hours—O, much longer!—to judge of any thing. It is better for me to take care of my own fragile frame, than to concern myself with what is, perhaps, beyond the power of my poor capacity" (3.3.611). Lady Shrewdly perorates what might appear to be Lady Worrymore's and the audience's lesson: "A wife who has taste enough to admire the talents and genius of her own husband, is most happily endowed" (3.3.613). But Lady Worrymore's reply, the final line of the play, places Lady Shrewdly's statement in a different context, for she says "(gravely and demurely) I suppose she will be reckoned so" (3.3.613). Like the phrenology that *The Match* puts into question as a paradigmatic analogy to gynecology, *Enthusiasm* offers mesmerism as paradigmatic analogue to medically proscribed femininity. Legitimate science found it useful to the

socially constructed notion of gender dichotomy and complementarity to find medical causes for female weakness, and Baillie's comedy suggests that the same scrutiny to which mesmerism and enthusiasm were being subjected might be applied to medical understandings about female sexuality that were not so easily associated with quackery. Like tar-water and phrenology, enthusiasm or mesmerism here functions as feminist utopian thought by offering what Sargisson call alternative "unruly thinking" (*Contemporary* 128) seeking to unsettle "scientific" paradigms. Judith Slagle maintains that the comedy is about male/female relations (265), but I argue that these superficial sexed positions betray a much deeper utopian critique about how medico-science defined oppositional and hierarchal sexualities. Baillie's deployment of mesmerism as a metaphor of utopian thought destabilizes the culture's dominant relations between mind/body and suggests different enactments beyond that binary dynamic.

13. Joanna Baillie was probably well acquainted with the ongoing disputes between reputable medicine and quackery about women's bodies and sexuality. The anatomical display and descriptive discourses about women's bodies brought both normal and non-normal sciences to the brink of obscenity. John Roberton, a surgeon of dubious qualification who practiced as a specialist in venereal diseases in Edinburgh and London, was involved in a public debate with Edinburgh surgeons, including John and William Hunter and his archrival, Matthew Baillie. Baillie believed that medicine should be asexual, and Roberton's belief in the sexual foundation of medicine reflected changes in how the functioning of the female body was understood. Roberton rejected the older (William Hunter) notion of the uterus as an independent organ and advocated ideas about the active nature of female organs of generation and female sexuality. His iconoclastic ideas were considered obscene by more conservative surgeons. Imagine the outrage when Roberton dedicated his 1811 treatise *On the Diseases of the Generative System* to Matthew Baillie. The two began an acrimonious correspondence that Roberton prefixed as a separate pamphlet to the fourth edition in 1817. Matthew Baillie called Roberton's publication an "obscene book,"^[4] adding, "I hope I shall not be readily suspected of encouraging so gross a violation of morality and decorum."^[5] Roberton countered, "...the greater part of a physician's professional duties are really what you would term obscenities."^[6] As Roberta McGrath has pointed out, the Roberton/Baillie correspondence emphasizes the slippery boundary between the medical and the sexual. Roberton's work made medicine appear to be sexual at its core; furthermore, both medicine and pornography depended on similar visual imagery for their understanding of sexual subjectivity (40-50).
14. The socio-medical solution to this conflict seemed to create separate classes of women—some for passion, some for pleasure. By the 1830s, there was a clear division of labor between sexualized working girls and sexually anaesthetized middle-class women, women (McGrath 51) who, like Lady Worrymore, had been robbed of their enthusiasm. It was also in the 1830s when spinsterhood began to be recognized as a serious social problem. Bridget Hill points out that "there was no acknowledged place for the single woman" (11), a condition that Baillie would understand personally. The place of the spinster, the asexual woman, is the subject of Baillie's comedy *The Second Marriage*, despite its being identified as a play about the passion of ambition. Middle-aged Lady Sarah marries Anthony Seabright so that she might be respectably married and so that he might find her familial and friends' connections helpful in his quest to secure political, social, and economic advancements. For Sarah, it is her first marriage, but for Anthony, it is his second, a "convenient marriage" (1.2. 201) only nine months following the death of his first wife, Caroline, who had richly fulfilled her maternal role by providing Anthony with several children.
15. Sarah is certainly not welcomed into the Seabright household, and the ways in which the characters talk about her gives us a sense of societal views toward spinsters, even spinsters turned stepmothers. The Reverend Beaumont refers to Sarah as "a disagreeable vixen" who will tyrannize over Seabright's family (1.2.201) as "an ungracious step-mother" (3.1.211). For Beaumont, Seabright "has married a woman who is narrow-minded naturally," a disposition strengthened by her circumstances, for "she has

long been left, as a single woman, to support high rank upon a very small income, and has lived much with those to whom begging and solicitations are not disgrace” (3.1.212). Susan Beaumont asks her husband, “Do you think I will ever enter the house where that woman [Lady Sarah] is the mistress, unfeeling, indelicate, uncivil?” (3.1.213). Sophia Seabright laments to her father about her stepmother: “But she will never be so good as my mother: she will never love you as my mother did” (1.3.204). Anthony reluctantly comes to recognize, “...I have taken to my bosom—I have set over their innocent heads, a hard-hearted, narrow, avaricious woman, whose meanness makes me contemptible, whose person and character I despise!” (5.3.226). His new wife’s “minute economy” irritates Anthony that he admits, “it comes across me every now and then like the creeping of a spider: it makes me mad” (3.2.214). Even the Seabrights’ gardener refers to Lady Sarah as a “hanged jade!” (2.2.207), “as unlovely a looking piece of goods as ever I looked upon. See how she stares at everthing about her, and curls up her nose like a gherkin!” (2.2.205).

16. When Seabright learns that Sarah is in no position to increase his finances, he is willing to send her packing North to her old Scottish castle. Vowing to make his sister independent of Anthony, Lord Allcrest announces: “I come to rescue my sister from a situation unworthy of a daughter of the house of Allcrest, and she shall go home with me” (5.3.226). Anthony shouts at his brother-in-law: “Take her in heaven’s name! I received her not half so willing as I resign her to you again” (5.3.226). The stage directions indicate that Anthony takes “(*Lady Sarah’s hand to give her to her brother, which she pulls away from him angrily, and going to Lord Allcrest, gives him her hand as an act of her own.*)” (5.3.226). Sarah will return home, a married spinster now, not legally single, not legally divorced, not even a stepmother, for she is not afforded occasional visits with Tony and Sophia Seabright, the children with whom she eventually made some maternal connections. Words spoken by Lady Sarah throughout the play also shed light upon her characterization, her sexuality, her complicated female role in the play as well as in the Seabright home. She first appears in scene two of act two, criticizing her new husband. She says to Anthony: “...you are too profuse, and too careless, in every thing” (2.2.207). Sarah has engaged Mrs. Pry to lay down some new prudent and frugal regulations for the family. She is highly critical of Sophia who resists the advances of Sir Crafty Supplecoat. To her young step daughter, she says: “When a young lady is industrious, and is not always reading nonsensical books, or running up and down after children, or watering two or three foolish flower-pots on her window, she can do a great many things for herself, that enable her to appear better dressed than girls who are more expensive” (2.4.208). It is ironic that Sarah gives Sophia advice about the role of the beauty myth in the marriage market, an economy that she has obviously not negotiated well. She may be aware that young Sophia has adapted to a maternal role better than she, for she chastises Sophia’s choice of vestments: “What gown is that you have put on to-day? It makes you look like a child from the nursery” (2.4.208). Alluding to Supplecoat, Sarah adds, “...it is of great importance to have a daughter of a large family well and early settled in life” (2.4.208). Admonishing Sophia’s “nursery-school breeding,” Sarah curiously instructs, “Don’t be uneasy! You have little chance, I’m afraid, of being molested by him” (2.4.210), an allusion, perhaps, to a violent crime committed against herself at an earlier time in her life. According to Bridget Hill, where violent crime against women was concerned, most cases of rape went unreported as women were unwilling to face the publicity associated with accusations (107-108). Here Sarah projects onto Sophia her own anxieties about what it means to be a woman who has no place, via marriage and motherhood, in a family. What we see in the characterization of Lady Sarah is the pathology of spinsterhood, its poverty, its sexual deprivation, its potential for abuse.

17. Despite her brother’s insistence that medicine was asexual, Joanna Baillie’s comedies side with Robertson in their assertion of the intricate connections between medicine and sexuality. Catherine Burroughs reads *The Second Marriage* as a comedy expressing an “ideology of domestic insularity” (163), but Baillie’s play may pose this ideology ironically in the context of medical science’s public presentations of sexed bodies and gender roles. It is not a coincidence that she is writing her plays at

the time when medical science made bodies into texts, scrutinizing and examining their organs, skeletons, and brains to discern what passed as male and female. Baillie's texts have, in turn, provided us with the bodies from which we can discern the complicated relationships between theatre and science, between performance and sexuality, relationships in which feminist utopianism underpins the conceptual analysis and social relations performed by an emergent ideology that cast female sexuality as the "other." It was not only medicine that at the end of the eighteenth century and beginning of the nineteenth century turned to science for its utopian potential. Post-industrial revolutionary machines similarly fascinated the public as "other" in contrast to their humanness. Mechanical humans, such as the automatic chess player designed in Hapsburg in the 1760s, captivated spectators as much as theatricalized bodies put on display by medicine. According to Simon Schaffer, these mechanical humans were captivating commodities as well as metaphors for social order. These "production utopias" were aimed at reducing human labor and became models for self-management. They projected masculine knowledge of mechanically determined laws (129-150). In this utopian space, bodies were transformed into self-regulating machines. These utopian bodies, like those we have seen in Baillie's comedies, gesture toward the creation of transgressive inversions and subversions of codifying phenomenon and offer, what Sargisson, call spaces where a new utopian consciousness can be articulated (*Utopian Bodies* 70).

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Notes

¹ See Regina Hewitt's *Symbolic Interations* 119-124; "Improving the Law," 50-55; Michael Wiley's *Romantic Geography* 44; and Lucy Sargisson, *Utopian Bodies* 6-12.

² In a Marxist analysis of culture, Fredric Jameson asserts we must recognize the simultaneously ideological and utopian functions of an artistic text. According to Jameson, all class consciousness and all ideology are utopian by their very nature insofar as they express the unity of a collectivity 286-99. Sargisson's feminist utopia, on the other hand, advocates an open-endedness and multiplicity that differs from the unity of Jameson's socialist utopianism.

³ See Frederick Burwick 48-50 and Victoria Myers 340-341 for a discussion of the Baillie family backgrounds in medicine.

⁴ Quoted in Brenda White 417.

⁵ John Robertson 19.

⁶ Robertson 27.

Utopianism and Joanna Baillie

"[S]hak[ing] the dwellings of the great": Liberation in Joanna Baillie's *Poems* (1790)

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1. Alluding to phrases from Joanna Baillie's *Introductory Discourse*, Jeffrey Cox comments that "with her turns to the 'middling' ranks in her plays" Joanna Baillie "might seem to be a 'leveler' in literature," but he cautions that "we should be careful" in how far we push the notion of Baillie as "embracing 'democratic' principles" since "she does not extend the appeal of her plays to those below that middle" ("Staging" 161).^[1] Elsewhere, Regina Hewitt notes the difficulty of defining Baillie "as liberal or conservative" and comments that "Baillie's letters attest to some affiliation with the Whig party, though she enjoyed a close friendship with the zealously Tory Sir Walter Scott" ("Stardom" 8).
2. Baillie was certainly no radical Jacobin, but in my estimation, a reading of Judith Bailey Slagle's *The Collected Letters of Joanna Baillie* points to a left-of-center political ideology interested in expanding freedom. We might see this concern for expanding others' freedom as anticipating her interest in "sympathy which most creatures... feel for others of their kind" which numerous critics have explored in her *Introductory Discourse* (DPW 1).^[2] Baillie's letters demonstrate that she greatly sympathized with the "starving weavers" and "turbulent spinners" who were victims of the Peterloo Massacre in 1819 (*Letters* 1.395), supported the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts in 1828 (*Letters* 2.916), was very much in favor of the 1832 Reform Act which she said would "rid us of the rotten Boroughs" (*Letters* 2.625, 924, 928), and applauded Peel for the repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846 (*Letters* 2.510, 971). Slagle and others have noted that Baillie sympathized with George III during his illness (*Life* 179), which to some might suggest a right-leaning ideology, but in the nineteenth-century portion of her life, she was "accustomed to think and call [herself a] Whig[]" (*Letters* 2.510).^[3] Indeed, in a letter to Scott in 1810, she jokingly admonishes him for his party affiliation: "I know no good Tories are for but serving as a balance against wrong-headed republicans" (*Letters* 1.258).^[4]
3. While most critics focus their efforts on Baillie's life and plays after the 1798 publication of the first volume of *A Series of Plays*, exploring and understanding Baillie's political ideology becomes all the more difficult if one is interpreting her anonymously published collection *Poems*. J. Johnson published *Poems* in 1790 and it includes twenty-three poems, many of them thematically grouped in twos, threes and fours.^[5] After Baillie became famous as a dramatist, she re-collected, re-ordered, and in some cases revised these poems as a part of *Fugitive Verses* in 1840 with a second edition in 1842. She included this abridged re-collection in *The Complete Dramatic and Poetical Works of Joanna Baillie* in 1851. Interestingly, Baillie says in the preface to *Fugitive Verses* that the poems "have undergone very little more than verbal corrections, with the expunging or alteration of a line here and thee, and have never (but on one occasion noticed in a short note,) received the addition of new thoughts" (DPW 772).^[6] In most of the revisions Baillie seems true to her word about not adding "new thoughts" which suggests that the political ideology expressed in *Poems* in 1790 stays fairly consistent fifty years later in *Fugitive Verses*; however, as I will later show, she does make some changes to the collection which suggest a slight modification from her political views in 1790.
4. 1790 was a politically significant year—it was the year after the fall of the Bastille, the same year Helen Maria Williams published *Letters Written in France*, sympathetically chronicling the events of the French Revolution, and Burke published his *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, warning of its consequences. According to David Duff, most of the public held consensus approval or at least tolerance of the revolution in the early days despite Burke's cautions (28). Many British citizens viewed it as France's version of the Glorious Revolution of 1688 while others saw it as the arrival of

"new heavens and a new earth" (*Isaiah* 65:17).[7]

5. Knowing Baillie's views on the French Revolution at its outset is impossible since, as Slagle tells us, none of her early letters survive (*Letters* 1.18); however, I would like to engage in a close reading of *Poems* to suggest that the young adult Baillie (she would have been around 28 when *Poems* was published) sympathized, like much of the public, with ideals of *liberté, égalité, and fraternité*. I will consider the class politics of *Poems* in terms of her poetics and representations of people of different classes and nature's power. Ultimately, I will argue that even though some of the poems depict some ambivalence about the class system, the early Baillie ultimately critiques that system and subtly encourages rural workers to resist the stifling roles of the eighteenth-century class system.

* * *

6. Baillie's title explicitly articulates her aims:

POEMS; WHEREIN IT IS ATTEMPTED TO DESCRIBE CERTAIN VIEWS OF NATURE AND OF RUSTIC MANNERS; AND ALSO, TO POINT OUT, IN SOME INSTANCES, THE DIFFERENT INFLUENCE WHICH THE SAME CIRCUMSTANCES PRODUCE ON DIFFERENT CHARACTERS.

With her interest in "rustic manners" she writes out of a tradition interested in rural and country life with forerunners such as Oliver Goldsmith's "The Deserted Village" (1770), William Cowper's *The Task* (1785), and in particular, Robert Burns's *Poems, Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect* (1786).[8] The interest is most clearly displayed in the opening poem "A Winter Day" and its companion piece "A Summer Day," both which examine life in a rural village at different times of the year. As in Goldsmith's "The Deserted Village," Baillie explores rural life in general terms examining stock characters. However, in poems such as "A Reverie," "A Disappointment," and "A Lamentation," she gives particular characters voices of their own to express their experiences of love in ways similar to Burns's character studies. As I will later suggest, Baillie writes about these rustics in ways that resonate with Goldsmith, Cowper, and Burns's political ideologies as well.

7. Baillie elucidates her own democratic political ideology most clearly in "An Address to the Muses." She begins the poem conventionally with a typical neoclassical apostrophe:

Ye tuneful sisters of the lyre,
Who dreams and fantasies inspire;
Who over poetry preside
And on a lofty hill abide
Above the ken of mortal flight,
Fain would I sing of you, could I address you right. (73)

She continues in the next stanza to evoke standard classical references: *Temples, battles, wine, lovers' woes*, and poets with *upcast eyes*. However, she indicates that this emphasis on nature (the "valley" and "forest" [74]) and pagan Religion ("rites and oracles" and "sacred fane" [75]) is how the muses "pow'r of old *was* sung" (73, my italics). The new, neoclassical poets seek the muse "in the shelved room . . . the dusty nook . . . [and] the lettr'd book" (75). Baillie emphasizes the importance of imitation so prevalent during the eighteenth century, the copying of classical models of verse and application of those forms and rules for a poet's own verse. Both the "youthful poet" and the "tuneful sage" of her day rely on this indirect method of inspiration. However, when the speaker seeks the muses' help, when her attempt at "studied talk is done," she discovers that the product is "rugged" verses which "the learned" scorn (77).

8. Baillie not only criticizes her neoclassical precursors' and contemporaries' methods, but she also implies that their ways do not work for her and that there are other ways to produce poetry. She refuses the avenue of "Grecian lyre" and "heathen fire"; the muses inspire her via a direct intercourse between nature and her imagination: "in earth, and air, and ocean wide" and "the answering changes in the human mind" (78). We can see the resonances of nature and psychology with Wordsworth clearly here, except this collection was published eight years before *Lyrical Ballads*. Certainly Baillie was influenced by second-phase eighteenth-century poets like James Thomson, who appreciated natural settings in his *The Seasons*, but Thomson's attention to Nature was much more visually than psychologically complex. Baillie illustrates the psychological relationship between subject and object in "To Fear" in the way she depicts a traveler walking through a rural churchyard at night and displays the interaction between his mind and the natural scene.[\[9\]](#)

9. She attends to another psychological issue, memory, in a later stanza of "Address to the Muses":

From you, when growling storms are past,
And light'ning ceases on the waste,
And when the scene of blood is o'er,
And groans of death are heard no more,
Still holds the mind each parted form,
Like after echoing of th' o'erpassed storm. (79)

Like Cowper in *The Task*, she says the original impression of nature inspires the poet, but her memory of it allows her to convert the experience into poetry—as she says in the next stanza, the scene "within the bosom still remains" (79). Again, she anticipates Wordsworth, in this case his definition of poetry as "emotion recollected in tranquillity" (148). However her attempt to liberate her readers by offering an alternative view of poetic production based on personal experience instead of an inherited model precedes Wordsworth by a decade.

10. Baillie's theory of who can be a poet is also egalitarian. She observes in all classes of people a capacity to be inspired by nature and to create poetry: "Full many a breast with pleasures swell"; however, most of these people "ne'r shall have the gift of words to tell" (79). She says the muses via nature visit "the learned sage, and simple child," "him who wears the monarch's crown" and "the unlettr'd artless clown." However, they "add but to the bard the art to tell" (80). Again, she anticipates Wordsworth who says the poet is like the common person, but the poet has a "more lively sensibility" and that at least in terms of "liveliness and truth" the poet's language actually "fall[s] far short of that which is uttered by men in real life" (48-9). Both *unlettr'd clowns* and *monarchs* have felt the muses' "secret power", but only the "bard," who is never clearly positioned, has the technique—"the art to tell." She creates such sensitive souls in the ballad "The Storm-Beat Maid," a character similar to Cowper's "Crazy Kate" and Wordsworth's Margaret from "The Ruined Cottage."

11. Baillie, like Cowper and Burns, acknowledges a different, middle- and working-class audience than those neoclassical poets she alluded to earlier. She wants to speak to those "who feel and never sing" (81)—the people who can be inspired by nature, but who cannot express that experience. However, she will not use the "studied talk" she mentioned previously, but instead, speaks to her audience "With simple words" (81). The difference from first and second phase eighteenth-century poets is obvious, yet her language, in theory and practice, seems much more egalitarian than Cowper's sometimes stilted diction of *The Task* and Thomas Gray's mixture of Latinate phrases and common speech in "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard."

12. Baillie's theory of poetry aims to liberate her audience, herself, and other poets because she elevates the working class as a subject worthy of poetry, describes a method of poetic production that is "anti-

classical" and anti-authoritarian, presents the figure of the poet as classless, and embraces "simple words" instead of "studied talk" to reach a wide audience of readers.

* * *

13. But Baillie does not only espouse a liberating poetic theory in 1790; she also practices a "leveling" ideology using three primary strategies: she praises members of the working class for their character and hard work and chides people in higher classes for the problems of the poor, she equalizes members of different classes in light of Nature's power, and she presents class hierarchy as an obstacle to "true love."
14. In "A Winter Day," the collection's first poem, Baillie inspires respect for the working classes and blames the upper classes for the problems of the poor. The poem commences with a "labring hind" who

Dreams of the gain that next year's crop should bring;
Or at some fair disposing of his wool,
Or by some lucky and unlook'd-for bargain.
Fills his skin purse with heaps of tempting gold,
Now wakes from sleep at the unwelcome call,
And finds himself but just the same poor man
As when he went to rest.—
He hears the blast against his window beat,
And wishes to himself he were a lord,
That he might lie a-bed.—(1-2)

Baillie begins the collection with a character who longs for class mobility—from a middle class merchant who accumulates "heaps of tempting gold" which seems like a realizable goal to the unattainable "wish" to be "a lord." She takes care to emphasize how the hind and his family work hard all day long, yet they seem to just get by, despite their best efforts. In the 1840 revision in *Fugitive Verses* (and in subsequent editions), Baillie glosses the word *hind* as "somewhat above a common labourer,—the tenant of a very small farm, which he cultivates with his own hands" (DPW 772). Baillie's note elevates the status of the hind and emphasizes his independence—he is not simply a farmhand, but an agent who works "with his own hands."

15. Later in the poem, Baillie introduces an old soldier who roams the countryside and seeks shelter with the hind's family. Even though the hind does not have disposable income, he hospitably welcomes the soldier and "bids him stay, and share their homely meal, / And take with them his quarters for the night" (13). It is no accident that in the next stanza Baillie emphasizes that the hind and his wife are industrious even during their leisure hours as the wife "turns her spinning wheel" and the hind "a little basket weaves" (13). They are not like "the lord" the hind "wishes" to be in the opening poem who has ample leisure time to "lie a-bed," and Baillie implies with her very positive rendering of the hard-working hind that this lazy, lordly status is not that desirable.
16. Later in the poem, Baillie's narrator calls attention to the universal appeal of "mankind[']s" "stor[ies] of himself" with the community that gathers at the hind's house. These stories emphasize sympathy towards others (helping a neighbor avoid being duped into buying a cow) and an individual's success because of personal skill (winning a horse race or corn binding contest) (14). While these stories instill feelings of pleasure and pride with their valuation of community responsibility and individual achievement, when the soldier tells his "tales of war and blood," the listeners "gaze upon him, / And almost weep to see the man so poor, / So bent and feeble, helpless and forlorn" (15). The veteran has

been deserted by the wealthy men whose interests have been best served by his sacrifice and is left to the working poor who struggle to eke out a living for themselves. Baillie emphasizes the soldier's sad state further stressing that he is alone because the sons who might have sheltered him in his old age are in "honourable, but untimely graves" because they became soldiers too (12). While Baillie does not lodge a direct attack against moneyed classes, the way she presents the working poor as rescuers of the pitiable, old veteran implies a critique of the rich.[\[10\]](#)

17. Baillie continues to esteem the industry of the rural working class in "A Summer Day" (the companion poem to "A Winter Day") and lodges a subtle critique against the upper classes. In one section, she spotlights a scene of community field work noting that "The old and young, the weak and strong are there" and says that:

The village oracle, and simple maid,
Jest in their turns, and raise the ready laugh;
For there authority, hard favour'd, frowns not;
All are companions in the gen'ral glee,
And cheerful complaisance still thro' their roughness,
With placid look enlightens ev'ery face. (22)

Baillie establishes the working class with its own sub-hierarchy, but then levels that power structure by saying that authority "frowns not" in this setting and idealizes a "cheerful" community working together in peace. The *hard favour'd authority* that the workers have presumably seen in the faces of the landed gentry is absent here. While Goldsmith, in "The Deserted Village" was critical of the rich who supported enclosure acts that robbed the poor of communal lands and forced them to flee to America for new lives, Baillie presents the rustics as a co-operative community working together to benefit each other.

18. More directly than in "A Winter Day," Baillie criticizes the upper classes for their ill treatment of the aged in "A Summer Day." Here, the victim is a loquacious old man who rambles a bit. The members of the community "fret not at the length of his discourse, / But listen with respect to his remarks." On the other hand, Baillie adds,

The silken clad, who courtly breeding boast,
Their own discourse still sweetest to their ears,
May grumble at the old man's lengthened story,
But here it is not so.— (29)

The working class esteems the old man for his wisdom and advice while people with "courtly breeding" would denigrate him. Baillie's sympathy continues to go towards works, character, and deeds and not inherited social position.

19. In her pioneering book on Joanna Baillie, Margaret Carhart says that the only influence of Burns on Baillie is his "The Cotter's Saturday Night" on her "A Winter Day" and "A Summer Day" (70). All three of these poems present the rural working class as noble and criticize the wealthy, yet Burns's poem is certainly more of a Scots poem than Baillie's. His Scots dialect is characteristically much more pronounced, and his class critique, unlike Baillie's, is presented with a cry for Scottish nationalism:

O Scotia! my dear, my native soil!
For whom my warmest wish to Heaven is sent!
Long may thy hardy sons of rustic toil

Be blest with health, and peace, and sweet content!
And, oh! may Heaven their simple lives prevent
From luxury's contagion, weak and vile!
Then, howe'er crowns and coronets be rent,
A virtuous populace may rise the while,
And stand a wall of fire around their much-lov'd isle. (172-80)

Here, Burns values the "sons of rustic toil" of "Scotia," and criticizes the presumably British and noble "contagion" of "luxury" which he associates with "crowns and coronets." In "A Winter Day" and "A Summer Day" Baillie has no direct references to Scotland and her use of the dialect is more subtle than Burns's—her critique is more class- than nation-centered.^[11] In her later "Metrical Legend on William Wallace," as Nancy Goslee has argued, Baillie does combine an interest in Scottish nationalism with "lovingly detailed portrayals of rural work" (58).^[12]

20. Baillie explicitly displays Nature's ability to raze class distinction in "Thunder" by describing the effects of an approaching storm on all creatures, regardless of their status. As the storm approaches,

Wild creatures of the forest homeward scour,
And in their dens with fear unwonted cow'r.
Pride in the lordly palace is forgot,
And in the lowly shelter of the cot
The poor man sits, with all his fam'ly round,
In awful expectation of thy sound. (108-9)

Both *lordly* and *lowly* anticipate and fear the storm's destructive power. Once it arrives, Baillie more directly describes the storm's leveling power:

The lightning keen, in wasteful ire,
Fierce darting on the lofty spire,
Wide rends in twain the ir'n-knit stone,
And stately tow'rs are lowly thrown.
Wild flames o'erscour the wide campaign,
And plough askance the hissing main.
Nor strength of man may brave the storm,
Nor shelter skreen the shrinking form;
Nor castle wall its fury stay,
Nor massy gate may bar its way. (111-12)

Natasha Aleksyuk compares the 1790 and 1840 versions of "Thunder" and argues that the "The angry energy of the storm" parallels "the energy of the mobs in Paris," which are "directed at both the church and the nobility." She comments that lightning "attacks the 'pointed spire' [lines 64] of the church... throws aristocratic 'stately towers' [lines 66] to the ground... [and] rends 'in twain the iron-knit stone' [lines 65] of the church" (134). Furthermore, she asserts that Baillie's characterization of the lightning's "ire" as "wasteful" suggests a critique of the French Revolution.

21. While Aleksyuk's interpretation that the architectural elements are metonymies for powerful institutions is insightful in explaining the revolutionary power of the storm, I disagree with her interpretation of this moment as a "critique" of the revolution. Her reading hinges on the word *wasteful* which she interprets as profligate, but *devastating* or *destructive* are more consistent denotations of *wasteful*, particularly in light of a subsequent passage which describes how the storm places all people on an equal playing field:

It visits those of low estate,
It shakes the dwellings of the great,
It looks athwart the secret tomb,
And glares upon the prison's gloom;
While dungeons deep, in unknown light,
Flash hidious on the wretches' sight,
And lowly groans the downward cell,
Where deadly silence wont to dwell. (112)

Baillie places "those of low estate," alongside those who live in "great dwellings," the dead, and prisoners. If one agrees with Akeksiuk's direct connection of this passage to the French Revolution (as I do), the mention of the "low estate" and the five lines she devotes to the dungeons seems to allude to the Bastille and implies particularly strong support for the revolutionary storm. The storm is powerful and destructive, but it is completely natural.

22. In the companion poem "Wind," Baillie continues to flatten class distinctions by focusing on a storm's impact on architecture and people. As in "Thunder" "tow'r[s] and "spire[s]" are forced down just as "social home[s]" are "uncovr'd"—Nature does not distinguish among the status of the structures it topples (118). Likewise, when the storm arrives, "The peasants leave their ruin'd home" and

Low shrinking fear, in place of state,
Skulks in the dwellings of the great.
The rich man marks with careful eye,
Each wasteful gust that whistles by. (120)

As in "Thunder," Baillie emphasizes the destructive power of Nature to raze class distinction, although in this poem she emphasizes how the wind instills fear in all classes.

23. Baillie also attempts to level the class system by presenting class position as an obstacle to true love. Once again, she relies on companion poems, "A Reverie" and "A Disappointment" to launch her critique. In "A Reverie," she presents Robin, another poor, rural laborer, who dreams of marrying "Nelly fair" (57). Robin's first words explain why they cannot be together:

Ah! happy is the man whose early lot
Hath made him master of a furnish'd cot;
Who trains the vine that round his window grows,
And after setting sun his garden hoes;
Whose wattled pales his own enclosure shield,
Who toils not daily in another's field. (58)

Robin longs for a higher status that would have enabled him to inherit a furnished home and his own farm so that he does not have to work "in another's field." The word *lot* has denotations of both *inheritance* and *fate* which point to his class-determined situation. He continues lamenting his position and longs for wealth to gain respect from his neighbors, to buy things for his imagined wife, and to make life easier for her. Then he snaps back to reality and asks the rhetorical question:

Ah, Nelly! can'st thou with contented mind,
Become the help-mate of a lab'ring hind,
And share his lot, whate'er the chances be,
Who hath no dow'r, but love, to fix on thee?" (59)

Robin alludes to an answer to his rhetorical question when he recounts a meeting in which he "pass'd Old Hodge's cottage in the glade" with Nelly and "wish'd both cot and Nelly made for me" (60). Nelly's reaction suggests that she loves him and wants to marry him. As Robin abruptly awakens from his reverie at the sound of Nelly's voice, the narrator closes out the poem suggesting that the two will unite despite his want of property. However, the obstacle that has prevented (and continues to prevent) the lovers from marrying is the fact that Robin was born into a very poor class which has sealed his lot.

24. In "A Disappointment," Baillie presents William, another rustic worker separated from his beloved because of his poor financial state; however, in this poem, the lover has a much more negative attitude about his beloved. In his experience, a lad "Who thinks with love to fix a woman's will" is "simple" because "keep[ing] his pockets bare" by "spend[ing] half his wages on pedlar's ware" is the only way to keep a lover (63). His case in point is Susan who clearly loved him but left him for "Rob," a "hateful clown" whom William and Susan used to mock, but whose "pockets" are "line[d]" with "more gold," whose "cottage" "store" never "lacks," and "round" whose "barn thick stands the sheltr'd stacks" (64). William emphasizes that Rob's fortune is what has made him the groom, noting that "the lots were cast" and calling him a "lucky swain." Baillie stresses the harmful social effects of William's lot when he kicks his own dog in frustration at the end of the poem.
25. In "A Storm-beat Maid," Baillie presents her clearest critique of the class system by depicting a poor woman who had been jilted by a nobleman but who inspires him to overcome society's expectations and dedicate himself to her. Baillie characterizes the maid with strength and independence by introducing her traveling fearlessly across the landscape at night during a cold, winter storm. When she arrives in the morning at a castle where a wedding celebration is beginning, she speaks to no one, but walks "straight into the hall" and "sat her on the ground" (100). The servants refuse to dismiss her inhospitably on the day of their master's wedding, so a page reports the arrival of this very beautiful, but not "courtly" (103), woman to him. The lord gradually realizes that this must be his former lover:

"So soft and fair I know a maid,
There is but only she;
A wretched man her love betrayed,
And wretched let him be."

Once the lord actually sees the maid, he openly confesses how he has wronged her:

"O cursed be the golden price,
That did my baseness prove!
And cursed be my friends advice,
That wil'd me from thy love!"

"And cursed be the woman's art,
That lur'd me to her snare!
And cursed be the faithless heart
That left thee to despair!" (105-6)

In these two stanzas, Baillie critiques the class system that led the lord to desert his beloved maid. The "golden price" is the dowry that his noble bride (whom he will now jilt) enticed him with, and certainly the "friends [sic] advice" is the pressure that his courtly comrades placed on him to leave the storm-beat maid. Interestingly, he also blames the noble woman to whom he proposed marriage saying that she "lur'd [him] to her snare!" However, the lord acknowledges some personal responsibility because his "faithless heart" "left her to despair." The lord ultimately proclaims

Yet now I'll hold thee to my side,
Tho' worthless I have been,
Nor friends, nor wealth, nor dizen'd bride,
Shall ever stand between." (106)

He will resist the pressures of the class system and follow his heart. Even though Baillie implies here that love has the power to raze class distinctions, she never clearly says the lord will marry the storm-beat maid, nor does she resolve what will happen to the newly jilted bride. The fact that these loose ends are not tied up suggests the story's lack of realism; however, we can also interpret it as Baillie's wish that true love and not position be the primary impetus for marriage, or perhaps even that women might have roles outside of marriage or that the institution of marriage itself should be reconfigured. My analysis of this poem fits into the conversation about limited gender roles in Baillie's plays that critics such as Catherine Burroughs, Anne Mellor, and Marjorie Purinton have initiated.[\[13\]](#)

* * *

26. As I mentioned in the introduction to this essay, Baillie re-collected, re-ordered, and revised *Poems* into *Fugitive Verses* in 1840. Overall, in the preface, Baillie seems committed to the ideas she presented in the original collection. Baillie claims that the poems "have undergone very little more than verbal corrections... and have never (but on one occasion noticed in a short note,) received the addition of new thoughts" (*DPW* 772). While some of the changes suggest that she may have had some reservations about her old thoughts (see footnote 4 for complete changes), other changes suggest a commitment to the ideals of her youth.
27. The only substantive change, the "one occasion," Baillie confesses to making in 1840 concerns "A Winter's Day" (originally titled "A Winter Day") in which she added a section on "family worship" (*Dramatic and Poetical Works* 775). She characterizes her omission of "The Evening Exercise" of prayer as a "great omission, for which I justly take shame to myself" (775). With this addition she does not focus on a submission to the authority of a higher power, but continues to show how the community of workers comes together in "evening exercise" (*DPW* 775). With this self-conscious addition to the poem, Baillie reinforces the apparent ideology of her younger years by valuing community.
28. Other changes suggest a shift in Baillie's attitude. One of the poems she deletes from the collection is "Wind." While she may have omitted it because it is too close to the theme and style of its companion poem "Thunder," the omission implies that she may have had reservations about overemphasizing the power of nature to raze class distinction, particularly with architectural references alluding to the French Revolution, the year after the Chartists reforms failed to pass Parliament (1839) and resulted in widespread rioting. As Natasha Aleksyuk has argued, Baillie also seems to pull back from the leveling impulse of her early years with her 1840 revisions of "Thunder": "into a subdued form, more palatable to early Victorians," (132-3). Aleksyuk explains how Baillie removed references to birth and the female body as they are associated with the violent storm and shifts, except for stanzas three and four, from couplets to blank verse. The reduction of the revolutionary force by deleting "Wind" and revising "Thunder" suggest that she may have had more radical ideas in her youth than she did at age seventy-eight.
29. Baillie also omits "The Storm-beat Maid" from *Fugitive Verses*. With this deletion she removes the most extreme class critique of the 1790 collection by removing a repentant nobleman who values love over wealth and status in his selection of a partner and a complex conclusion to a poem that questions traditional gender roles. The only clear principle she mentions for including certain poems in *Fugitive Verses* is that they "regard the moods and passions of the human mind" (*DPW* 772), and so she implies

that the poems that she did cut were eliminated because they were not psychologically complex. However, as my analysis has shown, the storm-beat maid is a rich and complex character and the lord's reaction to her arrival provides an interesting exploration of human motivation for love. The reason why she chose to delete the poem must be for another reason, perhaps because the class critique is too overt.

* * *

30. I have discussed just a few of the ways that this collection suggests that the young adult Joanna Baillie held a more liberal than conservative ideology. With the title of the collection and the poem "To the Muses" she argues for a liberating poetics by raising the working class to a subject worthy of poetry, presenting an "anti-classical" and anti-authoritarian means of poetic creation, figuring the poet as classless, and valuing "simple words" over "studied talk" to reach a broad audience. With the characters and situations of many of the poems she criticizes class hierarchy by extolling the working class and disparaging the upper classes, underscoring Nature's power to level class distinction, and marking hierarchy as a barrier to "true love." Furthermore, an examination of her revisions complicates our understanding of Baillie's possible ideological shifts over time.
31. If we had letters from the 1780s and 1790s, we could certainly develop a better sense of Baillie's actual ideology. These letters might show how her attitudes evolved once Louis XVI was executed, war was declared, the Terror began, and Napoleon took control; these letters could complement the left-of-center portrait revealed by the letters after 1800. However, even without this biographical information, her poetics and the characters she depicts in *Poems* suggest that she may have been quite radical at the dawn of the Revolution. Her poetry expresses considerable sympathy with the working class and seems very much in harmony with the democratic ideals of the French Revolution.
32. While we will probably never find Baillie's early letters, we should be able to have a collected edition of her poems. Jonathan Wordsworth's Woodstock facsimile edition is the only reliable edition of Baillie's *Poems* available, and the availability of the George Olms Publishers 1976 reprint of *The Dramatic and Poetical Works* which includes *Fugitive Verses* is limited. Two internet companies have published reprints of *Poems* and *Fugitive Verses*, but these texts have no scholarly apparatus or named editor. Having a modern edition of Baillie's complete poems would greatly enhance scholars' ability to explore her complex and interesting poetry, provide us with a more complete picture of her imaginative power as a poet, and fill out the portrait of Baillie as dramatist that has emerged over the past several years.

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Notes

¹ Elsewhere, Cox writes about "a gold ring containing hairs taken from the head of Charles I" that Baillie gave him and inscribed with the word *Remember*. Cox believes that "this recollection of a king beheaded by revolutionary forces is less "a sign of some shared Romanticized Jacobinitism than of a common anti-Jacobinism" ("Baillie, Siddons, Larpent" 31).

² *Sympathetic curiosity*, one of the central tenets of Baillie's dramatic theory, has been a rich avenue of exploration for critics of the plays. See, for example, Brewer's "The Prefaces of Joanna Baillie and William Wordsworth," Yudin's "Joanna Baillie's Introductory Discourse as a Precursor to Wordsworth's 'Preface to Lyrical Ballads,'" Henderson's "Passion and Fashion in Joanna Baillie's 'Introductory Discourse,'" Burroughs's, *Closet Stages*, Forbes's "'Sympathetic Curiosity' in Joanna Baillie's *Theater of the Passions*," and Judson's "'Sympathetic Curiosity': The Theater of Joanna Baillie." Few, if any critics, have applied this important theoretical concept to her poetry.

³ One might account for Baillie's sympathy for George III because her physician brother Matthew attended him.

⁴ In her comparison of Scott's *The Bride of Lammermoor* to Baillie's *Witchcraft*, Hewitt interprets Baillie as somewhat progressive in her attitude about the Poor Laws: "Less fearful of unrest than Scott, or perhaps more fearful of oppression, Baillie directs her criticism at the abusers of power and their self-sacrificing victims" ("Bewitching" 348).

⁵ Baillie published the poems in the following order in 1790: "A Winter Day," "A Summer Day," "A Night Scene" in three parts, "A Reverie," "A Disappointment," "A Lamentation," "An Address to the Muses," "A Melancholy Lover's Farewell to his Mistress," "A Cheerful Tempered Lover's Farewell to his Mistress," "A Proud Lover's Farewell to his Mistress," "A Poet, Or, Sound-Hearted Lover's Farewell to his Mistress," "The Storm-Beat Maid," "Thunder," "Wind," "An Address to the Night--A Fearful Mind," "An Address to the Night--A Discontented Mind," "An Address to the Night--A Sorrowful Mind," "An Address to the Night--A Joyful Mind," "To Fear," "A Story of Other Times--Somewhat in Imitation of the Poems of OSSIAN," "A Mother to Her Waking Infant," "A Child to His Sick Grandfather," and "The Horse and His Rider." In the 1840 *Fugitive Verses* and the 1851 *The Dramatic and Poetical Works of Joanna Baillie* she deletes "The Storm-Beat Maid," "Wind," "An Address to the Night--A Fearful Mind," "An Address to the Night--A Discontented Mind," "An Address to the Night--A Sorrowful Mind," "An Address to the Night--A Joyful Mind," "To Fear," "A Story of Other Times--Somewhat in Imitation of the Poems of OSSIAN," and adds "Fragment of a Poem." She changes the order of the poems as well, most notably moving "To the Muses" to the four spot which gives her aesthetic theory more prominence.

⁶ I cite the *Dramatic and Poetical Works* version of the preface because the original 1840 version is not widely available, no scholarly edition of *Fugitive Verses* exists.

⁷ See Duff's "From Revolution to Romanticism: The Historical Context to 1800" and Dawson's "Poetry in an Age of Revolution" for brief and lucid discussions of the impact of the French Revolution on Britain during the 1790s.

⁸ In the 1840 preface to *Fugitive Verses*, Baillie takes special pride in a reviewer's comment that her early

poems "contained true unsophisticated representations of nature" (771).

⁹ A number of critics have examined the psychological complexity of Baillie's plays. See, for example, Purinton's *Romantic Ideology Unmasked* and Forbes's "'Sympathetic Curiosity' in Joanna Baillie's Theater of the Passions."

¹⁰ This criticism is consistent with Hewitt's observation in "Scott, Baillie, and the Bewitching of Social Relations" that Baillie "celebrates" her wealthy ancestor, Lady Griseld Baillie's "personal commitment to relieving the sufferings of those left destitute by war" in "The Legend of Lady Griseld Baillie" (345).

¹¹ Leith Davis comments on the complexity of Burns's politics: "In works such as 'The Cotter's Saturday Night' and 'Scotch Drink,' Burns speaks of his allegiance to Scotland. Yet in other poems such as 'The Author's Earnest Cry and Prayer, to ... the Scotch Representatives in the House of Commons,' he harnesses this patriotism to the larger enterprise of representing Britain" (623). It is worth noting that Baillie only uses the word *Scotland* in footnotes in *Fugitive Verses* and never in the poems, and so her interest in Scotland as a nation appears to be much more muted than Burns's. A comparison of Burns and Baillie's collections could yield important insights into the work of both poets and become a valuable contribution to literary studies of eighteenth century Scottish literature.

¹² In the conclusion to her essay, Goslee comments that "*Metrical Legends* as a volume becomes destabilized. Its conservative, pan-British nationalism, even imperialism, like its affirmation of a separate domestic sphere of heroism for women, is unsettled, even subverted, by the liberating potential of the Wallace legend" (63) which points to the complexity of her attitudes about liberation in the context of British nationalism. In "Staging Baillie" Cox addresses this complex split between revolution and British nationalism in the context of her staging of *The Family Legend* in Edinburgh in 1810 (see especially 160-64).

¹³ See, for example, Burroughs's *Closet Stages*, Mellor's *Mothers of a Nation* (especially chapter two "Theatre as the School of Virtue"), and Purinton's *Romantic Ideology Unmasked* (particularly chapter five on *Count Basil* and *De Monfort*).

Utopianism and Joanna Baillie

Joanna Baillie's Ecotopian Comedies

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1. Though the term “ecotopian” evokes the environmentally “good place”/“no place” in Ernest Callenbach’s novel, the concepts that it combines appear together in many other spaces: ecology and utopia make good partners, according to Lucy Sargisson, because both criticize the dominant ways of thinking and living in the modern, western world, and both seek “paradigm shifts in consciousness” issuing in different attitudes, values, relations, and behaviors (*Utopian Bodies* 15). There are many “green literary utopias,” and many “intentional communities” pursue ecological goals.^[1] Ecocritical and utopian studies have also been partners in revising their scope: both have moved away from genre and structure—the literal delineation of a polity or the literal description of nature—as the criteria for inclusion in the given category, and both now take more interest in any work or act that provokes thought about relationships among all beings in the world.
2. The transition in utopian studies is detailed in the essay (“Utopianism and Joanna Baillie: A Preface to Converging Revolutions”) introducing this *Praxis* volume. The transition in ecocriticism has been noted and advocated by Karla Armbruster and Kathleen Wallace (among others) in their collection of essays titled *Beyond Nature Writing*. In their Introduction, Armbruster and Wallace argue that ecocriticism should be paying more attention to the human presence in nature, to “nature and culture as interwoven rather than as separate sides of a dualistic construct” (4). Their reference to overcoming dualistic thinking aligns their goals with Lucy Sargisson’s, whose “transgressive utopianism” likewise resists familiar binary oppositions.^[2] Studies of landscape such as Rachel Crawford’s and Kenneth Olwig’s offer comparable cautions against separating nature from culture. Physical space includes social, political, and legal space, they tell us; landscape is “mindscape” (Crawford 13; Olwig, xxxi, 17, 62). Our definitions of natural spaces—“wilderness,” for example—are cultural creations that we often experience through the kind of dramatic staging that Adam Sweeting and Thomas Crochunis (in Armbruster and Wallace’s volume) have analyzed.
3. If the broadening of utopian studies makes it possible to consider Joanna Baillie’s work within that category (as this *Praxis* volume does), so, too, does the broadening of ecocriticism open opportunities to approach Baillie in new ways. Referentially, only *The Alienated Manor* among her plays, a few of her poems, and her pamphlet on kindness to animals deal explicitly with “nature.”^[3] But all of her dramas deal with the cultural direction of biological impulses—i.e., the learned behavior of controlling one’s passions—and with the interactions of humans with and within a socio-physical environment. When ecological interest is understood to encompass the latter concerns, the applicability to Baillie becomes quite evident. The claims I venture in this essay about Baillie’s “ecotopian” aspects proceed from such an expanded view of ecocriticism and its alliance with utopian studies.
4. Article-length scope does not permit me to cover all fourteen plays (eight tragedies, five comedies and one “serious musical drama”) in the *Series* that Baillie wrote and published intermittently from 1798 to 1836. In what follows, therefore, I proceed selectively. First, I look at the ecological aspects of the aims of the *Series* as Baillie presents them in the *Introductory Discourse* published with the first volume. I concentrate on the type of “Characteristic Comedy” that Baillie theorized in the *Discourse*, arguing for its affinities with the *Comedy of Survival* theorized in the ecocritical work of Joseph Meeker. Though I consider briefly how each of the comedies in the *Series* furthers the project’s aims, I devote most attention to *The Second Marriage* and *The Alienated Manor* because they deal explicitly with the “recoding” of natural and cultural spaces, public and private spheres, in ways that clearly show the

intersection of ecological and utopian thought.[4]

Evolving Comedy

5. Even before Armbruster and Wallace called on all ecocritics to move “beyond nature writing,” Karl Kroeber encouraged Romanticists to see the complex interactions of humans in the environment as central to ecologically oriented studies of the period.[5] Kroeber investigates one means of refiguring the nature-culture dichotomy through the concept of co-evolution. As he explains in his essay on *Northanger Abbey*, co-evolution refers to the ability of the human mind to affect biological processes. For example, syntactical language and reflexive consciousness enable people to give meaning to information about the world: they can grasp, share and create new knowledge; they can envision alternatives to their current identities and situations, and they can try “to change [their] behavior or the environment or both” (“Biopoetics” 99-100, 110).[6] Kroeber finds in literary works such as *Northanger Abbey* the most compelling uses of language to reflect on and generate new reflections about human interaction. He argues that such works shed light on the adaptive and maladaptive implications of cultural practices; they encourage awareness of and participation in the continual processes of adjusting to the social and natural environment in which we live (110).
6. Turning from Kroeber’s analysis of Austen to Baillie, I find an especially prominent concern with the evolution of reflexive consciousness. According to the *Introductory Discourse*, God “implanted” a “sympathetic propensity” in humans, but people must cultivate it if they are to realize its use. It takes stimulation by “circumstances” (a recurrent term in the *Discourse*), especially circumstances scripted in dramatic literature, to prompt people to “reason and reflect” on human affairs and to develop sympathetic responses to them (2-4).[7] Baillie credits sympathy, once activated, with the power to help people adapt to social life. It enables them to recognize what they have in common with others (“to know what men are in the closet”)—even with “fellow-creatures” who have been stigmatized as criminals (5, 3). Baillie’s observations suggest a co-evolutionary theory of morality: through conscious sympathetic effort, people can become less selfish and “more just, more merciful, more compassionate”; more “respect[ful] of [them]selves” and their “kind” (4). I accent the developmental strain in Baillie’s *Discourse* lest her reference to sympathy as God-given tie her to earlier design theories of the universe. The point is important in light of Kroeber’s argument that evolutionary awareness must be evident for a way of thinking to qualify as ecological.[8] Baillie’s use of both teleological and evolutionary references places her between two epistemic systems, but the tendency of her thinking favors development over design. Moreover, her well documented interest in her uncles’ and brother’s medical work[9] makes it likely that she would be familiar with and attracted to innovative ideas linking mind and matter.
7. One might read each play within the Series as a study in the evolution of emotional control, of sympathy emerging to balance self-interest. In each play, Baillie delineates how a selected passion (love, hate, ambition, jealousy, fear, remorse, hope) grows into an obsession threatening the survival of the afflicted protagonist. Her purposes are predictive and corrective. For Baillie, drama works by analogy: the represented characters and actions should remind spectators of people and events in their own experience and invite them to draw comparisons (4, 13). In the case of the “passions” plays, watching the gradual stages by which an emotion can overwhelm the mind and body of a character should enable spectators to identify early signs of emotional imbalance in their experiences outside of the theater; armed with that knowledge, they should be able to “combat” the problem before it becomes too strong to change (10-11). Such a scenario treats both unconscious physical processes and conscious redirection of them as natural for humans: passions arise unbidden, but people can control them to some extent. Baillie’s plays encourage inquiry into the best means of control to create a sympathetic culture.

8. Despite the combat metaphor in the *Discourse*, Baillie does not advocate aggressive approaches to self-control or to instructing others. In the *Series of Plays*, both tragedies and comedies represent aggressive behavior and heroic ideals as selfish rather than noble. The undermining of heroism is arguably the most innovative and most explicitly feminist feature of her tragedies, as scholarship by Julie Carlson (on *Henriquez*), Beth Friedman-Romell (on *Constantine Paleologus*) and Susan Bennett (on *Witchcraft*) has shown. In the vocabulary of Sargisson's and Pohl's new utopian studies, it might be said that Baillie critiques or resists the dominant value system of her culture and creates an alternative, "recoded" version in her plays. In the vocabulary of ecocriticism, it might be said that she shows aggression to be maladaptive behavior, to be unsuited for the evolution of human relations in the world. [10] Adaptive alternatives emerge more fully in the comedies, which offer some generic precedent for departing from lofty ideals. Baillie took a particular interest in comedy, and her *Introductory Discourse* includes a theory of "Characteristic Comedy" that shares some elements with Meeker's *Comedy of Survival*.
9. Meeker presents comedy as both a mode of behavior and a literary genre, and he finds it more "universal" than tragedy "because it depends less upon particular ideologies or metaphysical systems" and more upon "the biological circumstances of life" (15). [11] In other words, comedy represents the characteristic behavior of the human species. It situates human society within the larger natural environment, taking the boundaries between culture and nature, humans and animals, to be flexible (51, 62). Ambiguity and interdependence define the terms of existence in this world; wit and creativity the mode of response to them (37, 62-69). Comic actors, whom Meeker models on the picaresque hero in contrast to the tragic or pastoral hero, are not at odds with the world because they do not think in terms of oppositions or polarities. Instead of seeing themselves as pursuing transcendent ideals outside of society, they see themselves as seeking welfare within it (60). Though Meeker does not make utopian comparisons, his rejection of dualism and of ideal structures aligns him with Sargisson and others who associate utopianism with the fostering of unconventional behaviors, beliefs and organizations. The pragmatism of comic actors does not necessarily reduce human conduct to physical gratification because human nature includes intellectual aspects. In Meeker's words, "superior mentality merely permits the picaresque hero to become a better animal, not to transcend his animality" (62). Comic actors use their uniquely human characteristics, which include "consciousness, intelligence, language, imagination" (69)—and compassion (71), a crucial trait aligning Meeker with Baillie to which I return below—to cope with the threats and difficulties that inevitably affect all creatures in a system not designed to favor individuals. While part of their energy goes into "self-defense," part also goes into "playing with others and with [their] surroundings" (69). Realizing that individual welfare may best be achieved by living in harmony with others, comic actors do not seek power or domination (16, 69). Instead, they try to "mak[e] the best of whatever the world may offer" (69). Tragic heroes perish because their aggressive and idealistic striving is maladaptive; comic actors survive because their responsive interactions are adaptive.
10. Meeker's examples range from Dante's *Comedy* through Grimmelshausen's *Simplicissimus* to Mann's *Felix Krull* and Heller's *Catch 22*. As this historic range shows, writers need not have a consciously ecological view or plan to portray the human condition in ways we may later understand through ecology. We may add Baillie's comedies to this list without attributing ecological prescience to her. But our evaluation of her achievement is enhanced when we interpret her plan for "Characteristic Comedy" in ecological terms. However embryonic Baillie's ideas about evolution may have been, she did write with the intention of describing and promoting humanely adaptive behavior in the world. Like the legal utopian theorists (de Sousa Santos and Rodríguez-Garavito) cited in the preface to this volume, she refused to reduce reality to the power structures that exist.
11. As Meeker sees comedy as having a biological rather than idealistic focus, so Baillie sees it as properly centering on the "original distinctions of nature" rather than on the "adventitious distinctions . . . of

age, fortune, rank, profession, and country” (13). She believes that popular forms of the genre, which she lists and analyzes as satirical, witty, sentimental, and busy or circumstantial comedies, have sacrificed the appropriately human focus to a fascination with superficial manners and mannered technique. With her “Characteristic Comedy,” she proposes to restore the emphasis on people “as we find them in the ordinary intercourse of the world, with all the weaknesses, follies, caprice, prejudices, and absurdities which a near and familiar view of them discovers” (12-13, 11). While she shows fashions and manners, social situations and personal traits, she balances them against a more comprehensive sense of the human condition (or in her words, she keeps them “in due subordination to nature” 14) so as to provoke thought about interactions across these changeable divisions. By raising questions about what is essential to human nature, Baillie facilitates discovery of how many traits and distinctions are actually learned and therefore available for conscious evaluation and modification.[\[12\]](#)

12. In keeping with the design of the *Series of Plays* on the passions, the comedies portray how the characters develop emotionally and intellectually in response to occurrences in their environment. The successful characters, like Meeker’s picaresque survivors, use their wits and imaginations to create ways of living cooperatively with others. They control emergent traits of fear (*The Siege*), jealousy (*The Alienated Manor*), ambition (*The Second Marriage*), hatred (*The Election*), and self-love (*The Trial*) that threaten to put them in opposition to others. They do not live up to ideals; they adapt to circumstances. The comedies further Baillie’s goal of having spectators reflect on the dramatized conduct, along with the analogies it “call[s] up in the[ir] mind[s],” by showing unchecked passions as ridiculous in appearance and consequences (13). Such a representation, she argues, can do more to discourage self-indulgence than precepts, “moral cautions, or even, perhaps, . . . the terrifick examples of tragedy” (14).
13. Baillie’s enlisting comedy for moral instruction, albeit by example rather than precept, would seem to separate her from Meeker, who declares that “comedy literally has no use for morality” (15), but this declaration applies primarily to the idealistic systems that cultures have set up in opposition to nature (70). In the broader sense of taking responsibility for others, morality clearly does figure in the comedy of survival. Both Meeker and Baillie single out compassion or sympathy (their usages are equivalent[\[13\]](#)) as the touchstone by which to recognize behavior that conduces to human development, not just to the promotion of individual interest. According to Meeker, “compassion for suffering may be the most serious emotion” experienced by picaresque heroes. . . . [and they] make[] little distinction between [their] own misfortune and that of others, treating both with solicitude and resignation” (71). Though they are not idealistically self-sacrificing, they prefer to solve their problems without harming others, and they often try to help other victims in addition to themselves. Their concept of responsibility applies to the well-being of humanity in the world; it is a larger concept than self-interest or altruism, and it moves away from the opposition between self and other implied by the selfish-altruistic dichotomy. It values the survival of the self along with others (64-71). If utopianism can be defined by its revisionary views of justice (as Sargisson [“Justice”] posits), then Meeker’s comic actors are utopians who redefine justice as an inclusive and cooperative condition of being.
14. Baillie’s comedies reorient people from relying on principles or pursuing ideals toward adapting strategies. The strategies of comedy—disguise, dissembling, compromise—are, as Meeker points out, the strategies of subordinate and oppressed people. Women, slaves, and victims of poverty seek non-threatening ways to fulfill their needs; powerful heroes, in contrast, “impose [their] will upon others” (16). Baillie does not merely replace familiar condemnations of deception with approvals, for doing so would merely invert the values assigned to behaviors in abstract systems.[\[14\]](#) In the *Discourse*, she criticizes the “continual lying and deceit” in Busy or Circumstantial Comedy, finding its “moral tendency” to be “pernicious” (12). In her Characteristic Comedy, deception is still often negative. One cannot evaluate the characters’ strategies apart from their motives and circumstances, and that embedding of value judgments is, I maintain, the hallmark of adaptive ethics and ecological (or

ecotopian) thinking. Sympathy serves as a guideline for evaluating the strategies used in particular situations. The judgments apply in the situations, not to the strategies abstracted from them. Dissembling and evasion can be acceptable if they allow people to live in harmony and avoid confrontation. They are not acceptable when they promote the interest of one person at the expense of others.

15. A clear example of the need to judge situated behavior rather than abstractions can be found in *The Siege*. In that play, the seemingly positive ideal of plain-speaking becomes negative when it is used for unsympathetic, self-righteous pronouncements. Concomitantly, deception is allowed to have some positive effects when it is used to prevent victimization. *The Siege* unsettles the distinction between honesty and falsehood, showing the cultural ideal of absolute honesty to be inhumane or “utopian” in the old-fashioned, pejorative sense. The new utopian attitude seeks to create just and merciful interactions through which people can live with each other.
16. *The Siege* opens with a discussion of plain-speaking between Walter Baurchel, who takes pride in always practicing it, and his brother the Baron Baurchel, who finds that practice “savage,” “brutified,” and unsuitable in “civilized Europe” (1.1.227). Walter’s self-proclaimed refusal to let his “tongue . . . be bridled by another person’s feelings” differs from the candor with which his brother and his friend Dartz sometimes speak. When they are plainly critical of him, they speak with the sympathetic motive of persuading him to adapt, as they have, to a social environment that can require veiled statements. “Away with the honesty that cannot afford a few civil words to a friend, who is doing his best to oblige you!” the exasperated Dartz exclaims to Walter; “As much duplicity as this amounts to, would not much contaminate your virtue” (2.1.282).
17. Episodes in *The Siege* explore the problem of determining when to use deception in social life. The subplot involving a ruse to expose the insincerity of Countess Valdemere’s professed love for Baron Baurchel is easy to evaluate. By disguising himself as a jeweler’s assistant and learning that the Countess would gladly exchange his portrait for the value of its frame and that she mocks his poetry behind his back, the Baron saves himself—and possibly others—from being the victim of the Countess’s greed. The main plot involving a ruse to expose the boastfully brave Count Valdemere as actually quite fearful is more ambiguous. Irritated by Valdemere’s bragging about his own courage and disparaging that of others, Dartz and the brothers Baurchel plan to test his bravery by staging a mock siege of the castle, which Valdemere’s position—and his bragging—will require him to defend. They guess rightly that he will run away from combat, and their scheme has some positive results: it “cure[s] . . . Valdemere] of arrogance and boasting” (5.2.297) and more importantly of the sense of superiority behind those airs. That self-image had more detrimental effects than irritating the conspirators, for it made Valdemere feel entitled to seduce a servant, and the conspirators seek just compensation for her as well as satisfaction for themselves as part of the plot. Like the tragedies that undermine the heroic ideal, this comedy “recodes” heroism to exclude aggression and exploitation. Baillie accepts the value of self-defense but does not reward it with entitlements that allow the warrior to take advantage of others. The play demands self-restraint even of the relatively harmless conspirators.
18. Since the conspirators take pleasure in humiliating Valdemere—priming his fear with invented reports of dreams of destruction and even having one dress up as a fortune-teller to prophesy his death—their conduct is ethically questionable. The ruse may have avoided open confrontation, but it did not avoid hidden aggression. In the final scene, the truly brave soldier Antonio, who has defended the castle from the real siege that occurred at the same time as the mock attack, likewise defends Valdemere from the conspirators’ scorn. Speculating that Valdemere may have been braver if “differently circumstanced,” [15] Antonio chastens them for “sport[ing] wantonly with a weakness of our nature in some degree common to all. We admire a brave man for overcoming it, and should pity the less brave when it overcomes him” (5.2.297). Antonio’s sympathetic and contextualized approach to evaluating the

behavior of both the conspirators and their victim shows him to have achieved control of his own passions, and it models the kind of behavior that sustains human communities.

19. Significantly, Baillie does not give the comedy a stock happy ending. Valdemere neither forgives nor refuses to forgive the conspirators. He asks instead that they not seek forgiveness “at present”: he acknowledges his faults, but he also protests the mercilessness of their correction. Accepting this, Walter states that forgiveness in time is “as much as we can reasonably expect” (5.2.299). The characters in *The Siege* have learned to live with each other. Their somber and tentative adaptations make the conclusion more ecologically sound than would their full and immediate reconciliation. The stock ending would uphold an unnatural ideal of forgiveness, making culture suppress nature; Baillie’s ending lets culture work with nature as people gradually adjust to each other in their social environment.
20. A similar disruption of idealizing occurs in *The Trial*, a comedy on love with an exuberant plot teeming with too many disguises to detail here.[\[16\]](#) The observation I wish to make here about *The Trial* relates to its questioning of the ideal of love as blind to its object’s shortcomings. In the play, such an ideal is treated as a self-indulgent obsession. The conventionally happy ending, projecting the marriage of Agnes and Harwood, actually depends on an unconventional demonstration that he would love her less if she were a violent-tempered slanderer and that she would love him less if he were not appalled by such an objectionable character. This comedy encourages skepticism about love as an exclusive passion that ignores other people and values in the world; it directs romantic love by social sympathy, so that lovers remain able to adjust their perceptions of each other by broader criteria. By the end of *The Trial*, Agnes and Harwood look forward to finding mutual satisfaction in a future that includes social service: they agree that he should reject the life of an “idle gentleman” and practice law as “the weak one’s stay, the poor man’s advocate” (5.2.76). They are poised to establish a responsible household, a functional rather than a structural utopia.

Evolving Housekeeping

21. The question of responsible housekeeping with which *The Trial* concludes organizes the plots of two other comedies in the *Series*. *The Second Marriage* and *The Alienated Manor* explore the consequences of mistaking ownership and status—structural signs of achievement—for success in human relations. In questioning the kind of interactions that traditional social structures foster, these plays take up issues that are central to green utopianism. The very term “ecology” itself, coined by Ernst Haeckel late in the nineteenth-century, emerged from a change in thinking about the economy of household affairs. Commenting on Haeckel’s blending of socialism and science, William Howarth describes “ecology” as a new way of managing one’s dwelling place: “from *oikonomia* to *oikologia*” is a shift from “house mastery to house study, a shift that changed species from resources into partners of a shared domain” (73). Considering ecology and utopianism, Sargisson sees intentional communities as crossing the boundary between the household (*oikos*) or private sphere and the polis or the public sphere, realizing that the two condition each other—even, or especially, when the private is believed to be a separate haven from public, political affairs (56-75). Approaching these communities, Sargisson asks, “what happens when the home is a consciously and intentionally politicised space?” (60). This question is likewise the starting point for *The Second Marriage* and *The Alienated Manor*. The answer is that the home is a dystopian, ecologically dysfunctional place when notions of status, possession, and resource exploitation structure its occupants’ relationships, but homes can become functional ecotopias when personal values reorganize those structural markers, overcoming the public/private dualism. Ecotopias, whether among Sargisson’s intentional communities or Baillie’s comic households[\[17\]](#), are not non-politicized households but alternatively politicized households.
22. *The Second Marriage* focuses on the politicization of the household from the very first scene, which

presents a gardener uprooting flower beds cherished by the first and now deceased wife of Anthony Seabright to make room for more practical plantings preferred by Lady Sarah, the second wife, who would sooner count cabbages than admire rose-trees (1.1.198-99, 2.2.205). Seabright's motive for marrying Lady Sarah is transparently political. He admits as much to his daughter Sophia, stating, "I don't marry now to be beloved" but to form an alliance with the "sister of Lord Allcrest . . . [who] is related to the first people of the country" (1.3.204). Even the gardener knows that Seabright aspires to win "his lady-wife and the borough together" (1.1.199), and throughout the play, Seabright preoccupies himself with signs of rank and privilege, quizzing his former brother-in-law, the minister Beaumont, about the career of a friend who likewise made a strategic marriage (1.2.201), and pressing Lady Sarah for the genealogy behind the family ring she wears (2.2.206).

23. Seabright's conception of human relations is entirely instrumental: he expects a person's position in the public socio-economic structure to determine the content of private interactions. He looks forward to rising high enough that people will be "forced to respect him" despite their "unwilling[ness] at first to acknowledge the superiority of him who has been more nearly on a level with themselves" (2.3.208). Lady Sarah shares this orientation. As she explains to Seabright while writing letters to influential people she does not like, "if people would be attend to it, every acquaintance that they make, every letter that they write, every dinner that they give, might be made to turn to some advantage" (3.2.214). She is eager to repeat the pattern of strategic alliance by marrying Sophia to Sir Crafty Supplecoat and to implement a strict household budget—rationing the servants' use of butter and cream, lessening the quality of the medicinal cordials for the poor, and even having Seabright write on scrap paper and buy less wool from his constituents—in order to save money to pay for higher offices (2.2.206-07).
24. Beaumont, who deliberately looks for good in everybody (2.2.205, 5.3.228), explains Lady Sarah's meanness as an effect of the way she had been "circumstanced" before her marriage when she lived as a dependent spinster in the household of Lord Allcrest (3.1.213). Circumstantial explanations are crucially important to Baillie's conceptualization of character, and scholarship on *The Second Marriage* has referred to this point to generate sympathetic interpretations of this unsympathetic figure. Burroughs and Slagle read the play as exposing the other characters' meanness toward Lady Sarah, seeing her as treated unfairly by her new family as she struggles to learn the role of a wife (Burroughs, *Closet Stages* 163; Slagle 103), and Purinton (in her essay in this volume) shows how anxieties about the nature of the spinster distort Sarah's behavior and the other characters' interactions with her. Though my reading is less forgiving, it is consonant in treating her as one of Baillie's strong but flawed female characters who belie idealizations and essentializations of women.[\[18\]](#) Lady Sarah herself embraces and enacts economic priorities in ways that reveal the personal, social and ecological tolls they take, and it is the acceptance of such priorities by any character that the play criticizes.
25. The more Seabright gains in the public sphere (election to Parliament, a baronetcy, an offer of high office), the more he loses in his household. Baillie captures this contradictory condition with what we would now call ecological metaphors. Seabright exclaims:

[I]s there no getting on in this upward path of honour, unless we tear our way through all these briars and nettles?—Contention and misery at home! is this the price we pay for honour and distinction in the world? Would no honours take root on my untoward soil, till I had grubb'd up every sprig and shoot of comfort to make room for them? It were better to be a panniered jack-ass and pick up my scanty provender from the ditch, than be a garter'd peer in such a home as this.—I had once a home! (4.4.221)

Seabright's home has become a mere extension of the political arena that Baillie consistently associated with conflict and contention. *The Election*, her comedy on hatred, indicts the political process that unleashes that uncontrolled passion in the candidates, their wives, and their households.[\[19\]](#)

26. An affectual orientation that contrasts with Seabright's instrumentalism is represented in *The Second Marriage* by Seabright's daughter Sophia. Sophia defines success entirely in terms of caring relationships within a household. Trying to help her siblings cope with the loss of their mother by stepping into that role herself, she aspires only to "overlook the household matters and order every thing in the family as [Seabright] would like to have it"; her greatest hope is that he "will put confidence in" her (1.3.203). Though Sophia's orientation seems preferable to Seabright's, the play reveals it as an opposite extreme that cannot simply be endorsed. Sophia, for instance, takes no notice of any public context for the household. When Seabright faces bankruptcy, she cheerfully embraces the prospect of the family being beggars together (5.3.225) and when help from his first wife's uncle enables Seabright to set up a more modest household, Sophia quickly idealizes the happiness they can enjoy together even in the "lowliest cottage in England" (5.3.227). Despite its emphasis on relationships, Sophia's utopian cottage is still more structural than functional. In another context, the reference to the cottage might introduce an ecological or even ecotopian alternative to the "improved" estate (such as the one in *The Alienated Manor* on which I comment below[20]), but Sophia's outlook doesn't adapt to any new circumstances so much as it clings to the former behavior patterns in her family.
27. The opposed orientations represented by Sophia and by Seabright/Lady Sarah co-exist in the play as competing ways of "recoding" the household. The different versions of the space that they suggest closely resemble the different codings of the country house that Pohl details in *Women, Space, and Utopia*. In Pohl's reading of texts from Ben Jonson's "To Penshurst" to Sarah Scott's *Millenium Hall*, country house literature has consistently examined tensions between the emotional and economic bases of community. Country house poems are usually coded to present the household as a place in which dwelling with others fulfills the physical and emotional needs of the self. Modeled on the aristocratic ideal of balancing power between the country and the court (an early version of the private vs. public dilemma), this notion of the dwelling place can be and was used to endorse the households of more bourgeois and commercial owners when they remained open to non-economic relationships (53-64). According to Pohl, women writers like Sarah Scott recoded the country house space to make it more fulfilling for women who could never fully enjoy the legal ownership and control of such estates. This alternative coding emphasizes what people can do ("social capital") to create a community rather than what they can possess or what bounty they can extend ("economic capital") to do so (70-88). Baillie's *Second Marriage* participates in a similar recoding of dwelling places. It calls for an adaptation of the personal priorities cherished by Sophia to the public sphere in which the household is situated. Instead of being structured by the public economy and hierarchy, the household must challenge that dualism and move toward a more integrated—and thus ecological—culture.
28. The process of making Seabright's household more habitable is spurred by characters whose kinship with the family is distant or figurative, indicating that Baillie is not merely reverting to old ideals of literal consanguinity. The adaptive characters are Beaumont and Morgan, relatives of Seabright's first wife, and Robert, her "foster-brother" (1.1.199), who is something more than a servant but less than a guest in Seabright's house and who has the traits of Meeker's tricksters. Robert helps the servants organize a campaign to frighten Lady Sarah into liberalizing her rations and regulations. While his appearing in the disguise of a devil and orchestrating ghostly noises and visions seem objectionable, they are presented in the play (as in Meeker's theory) as the desperate measures of victims who have no other means to resist oppression or seek justice. Though the campaign is morally ambiguous, like the conspiracy to frighten Valdemere in *The Siege*, the play places Robert in a favorable light: he decides not to disguise himself as the first Mrs. Seabright because he believes that doing so would be disrespectful (4.2.218) and he wants most of all to prompt the second Mrs. Seabright to be kinder to the children (4.3.220). When Seabright becomes bankrupt, Robert offers his own money to help repair the damage, an offer made unnecessary by the more ample donation from Uncle Morgan (5.3.227-28).

29. As in *The Siege*, deceptions that help characters live with each other appear more tolerable than moral ideals that create divisions and conflicts. Selfish deceptions, however, are condemned. In fact, a selfish deception brings about Seabright's ruin: against the wishes and knowledge of the frugal Lady Sarah, Seabright has entered into a risky scheme to profit from the price of salt—ironically, a household preservative—and he is ruined when the scheme fails. The economic disaster allows for a qualifiedly happy ending. Seabright has the chance to start over in a modest cottage where he and his extended family can live in “respectable and useful privacy” (5.3.226). In effect, the ending offers the opportunity to politicize the household differently, making it a functional utopia where dwelling with others fulfills individual and collective needs.
30. Readings that focus on Lady Sarah as a victim are most troubled by the fact that she returns to her brother's house rather than live in reduced circumstances with Seabright (Burroughs, *Closet Stages* 163; Slagle 103). But as the stage directions emphasize, Lady Sarah *chooses* this course of action (5.3.226). She cannot or will not give up her ambitions or adapt to the new situation; she will not even sympathize with Seabright. While Sophia attempts to make him feel better, Lady Sarah only scolds him for being in a “hurry to get rich” instead of following her slower but surer savings plan (5.3.226). Though the exclusion of Lady Sarah casts a shadow over the end of the comedy, it also allows the play to avoid the unnatural and immediate reconciliations typical of stock comedies (and not typical of Baillie's comedies) as well as the reductionism of structural utopias. Instead of showing a reformed Lady Sarah, Baillie shows that Lady Sarah has the capacity to reform. Before leaving with her brother, she attempts to make peace with Seabright by asking to have one of the children live with her. Warming to human relations, she still retains an instrumental orientation and treats the child as a means to an end. But disappointment is avoided when a plan for frequent visits satisfies all (5.3.227). Compromise and negotiation, key characteristics of the comedy of survival, have bridged oppositions and adjusted untenable ideals.
31. A similar movement from treating a home as a status marker to treating a home as a dwelling place is traced in *The Alienated Manor*, which investigates the practice of housekeeping as mastery and shows it to be harmful—not only to the land and people Mr. Charville wishes to dominate but to Charville himself. In trying to control his possessions, Charville becomes consumed by jealousy, but true to comedic type, the play allows him to reject his economic priorities and adopt a more ecological outlook. Because Charville's desires manifest themselves especially in his effort to “improve” the landscaping on his estate, the play is more referentially connected to environmentalism than any of Baillie's other works, but it is not necessarily more conceptually ecological if we understand ecology in the broader sense that I have been using throughout this essay. Nevertheless, it is helpful to contextualize the play with respect to the trends toward “improvement” that dominated land management for decades before Baillie wrote. Its popularity furnished her with symbols, terms, and clichés through which to expose the dystopian effects of such mastery on the human and non-human beings it affected.
32. The Parliamentary enclosures and the Highland clearances of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were driven by the “ideology of improvement” (to borrow Saree Makdisi's phrase 78)—the desire to make land yield surplus profit or prestige for an owner. The Enclosure Acts, which took land out of common use and fenced it in for private cultivation, tied agriculture to commerce. As Crawford details, Parliamentary enclosure (unlike earlier, less formal versions of the process) was often carried out by scientific surveys and road-widening projects that all aimed to decrease the number of workers needed for farming or animal husbandry, to curtail the independence of laborers, and to move goods to market efficiently. Lost in the pursuit of productivity were the customary rights of rural residents to sustain themselves by farming or grazing in open fields (Crawford 37-64).^[21] Without denying differences between England and Scotland, one can observe a similar trend in land management in northern Britain, and doing so is important in light of Baillie's Scottish roots and lifelong attachment to

the country she had left at an early age. Analyzing agrarian improvement in Scotland, T. M. Devine stresses the change in attitude behind the acts of clearing tenants off the land. Land had been redefined as “as asset to be exploited” by individuals rather than a source of “welfare” for all (158). Joining this attitude with imperial designs, Makdisi sees the Scottish clearances as a “rehearsal of the multitudinous practices of ‘improvement’” staged and restaged throughout nineteenth-century Britain (79).

33. The most “predatory” form of enclosure was imparkment, the fencing in of wide landholdings to create prestigious estates (Crawford 43). In a study of the politics of landscape, Nigel Everett explains imparkment as the indulgence of privilege. Its “emotional appeal” lay in possessing what “others do not and generally cannot enjoy” (39). Understandably, albeit not excusably, ostentatious landholding was favored most by new Whigs whose wealth and power came from trade. By commodifying land, such figures could literally and symbolically take the traditional source of sustenance, authority, and belonging away from those with inherited title to it (Everett 45). In the vocabulary of Baillie’s play, they could alienate it, i.e., transfer it to themselves, for the primary meaning of the term in the title comes from the legal use of “alienation” to denote sales, gifts, and other non-hereditary conveyances of property.^[22] Charville comes to possess the manor by ruthlessly exacting payment for a debt. For Charville, as for his contemporaries outside the theater, demonstrating possession of what they had acquired became their most important goal.
34. Possession was shown by dominating the land and its inhabitants through such procedures as cutting down trees, altering the course of a stream, or moving cottages—or even whole villages—to suit the owner’s view. Ironically, artificial ruins were often placed over the sites of such genuine destruction. In another political study, Kenneth Olwig compares the landscaping of vast estates to the scenery at earlier court masques: both constructed settings to showcase elite power (100-17). The artificiality of the grounds “masked” the local, natural features of a place, substituting the abstract, ideal designs of owners and improvers (100-17; cf. Everett on “ideal nature” 40). In contrast to these New Whig improvers, Tories and Old Whigs rejected the commodification of land, treating it instead as a resource they held in trust for others (Everett 16). They cultivated relationships of benevolent paternalism instead of individualistic enterprise. Though we must be wary of oversimplifying the political dichotomy or crediting Tory landlords with living up to their “benevolent” image,^[23] we must also remain aware of these general tendencies that politicized or “recoded” homes before and during Baillie’s time. Attitudes toward improvement did divide (or were popularly perceived to divide) clearly enough along party lines for Baillie to use them in characterizing the candidates in *The Election*: the Whig candidate, Freemantle, “cut[s] down the old gloomy trees” and straightens the stream on his estate, thus displeasing his neighbor, the Tory candidate Baltimore (2.3.113-14); Baltimore in turn scoffs at Freemantle’s importing plants and hiring a botanist as “abominable ostentation” (4.1.122). Since *The Election* focuses on the hatred that arises from political contention itself, it does not develop its references to improvement, but the usefulness of these references as thumbnail sketches for the candidates testifies to the opposing attitudes we must keep in mind to appreciate the critique of possessiveness and suggestion of more generous alternatives in *The Alienated Manor*.
35. When the curtain rises, we find Sir Level Clump, the “improver” or landscape architect employed by Mr. Charville, discussing with Charville’s neighbor Crafton his plans for the estate. Sir Level’s plans include “clearing away the underwood, and cutting / out that heavy mass of forest trees into separate groups,” which would, he rhapsodizes, give the place “a very elegant, tasteful, parkish appearance.” Comparing the forest in its natural form to “a rude untamed clown,” he aims to turn it into “a gentleman” (1.1.337). It is tempting at first to consider Sir Level the “villain” of this play and to wonder how Baillie could create such a caricature in a “characteristic” comedy that purports to delineate ordinary human nature, but Sir Level only carries out his employers’ wishes. Like the modern real estate developer whom Lyn Lofland defends from charges of villainy, Sir Level could not carry out such extreme plans if many other and more powerful people in his culture did not encourage him to do

so. Blaming the architect, then, is a form of scapegoating, deflecting blame from others in society and avoiding it oneself. As a caricature, rather than a fully developed character, Sir Level Clump is the repository of his society's desires. He can be dismissed from the stage when those desires change, but not before.

36. The characters, in contrast to the caricatures,[\[24\]](#) are dynamic figures able to respond to their circumstances and alter their responses in ways crucial to the play. In keeping with the goals of the *Series of Plays* on the passions, *The Alienated Manor* dramatizes Charville's jealousy as a likely response to his situation as a landholder. That situation is strategically evoked by the opening scene's attention to his landscape designs, which identifies him with ambitious New Whigs before he appears on the stage. His jealousy emerges within this situation and is thus not only a personal emotion but a culturally conditioned one. Curbing it requires reassessing the value of aggressive acquisition, mistakenly assumed to be adaptive. Less possessive and more adaptive alternatives are modeled by Charville's wife, sister and neighbors. Though their behaviors have some flaws, they are more conducive to mutual survival. Spectators who rise to Baillie's challenge to analogize and reflect find themselves confronting the damaging implications of their social, commercial, and legal systems.
37. When we first meet Charville, we find him improving his wife's appearance by putting flowers in her hair. Though she protests that "they look awkward, affected, and silly," she agrees to wear them because Charville takes her resistance as a sign that she does not love him (1.2.339). Charville cannot bring himself to accept his wife's own identity or give her space for her own development. He cancels trips to remain at home with her, eavesdrops on her conversations, reads her letters, and even disguises himself as a servant in his own house to spy on her. The exasperated and plain-speaking Mrs. Charville tries to discuss this conduct with him, exclaiming: "I hate a man who is so selfish that he must engross his wife's attention entirely. What do you think of the matter?" Instead of answering her question and confronting the problem of his obsession, Charville sulks over what he construes as her rejection of his love (1.2.339).
38. In its negative portrayal of the subordination of women, *The Alienated Manor* has much in common with *Witchcraft*, *The Match*, and other plays by Baillie that have been studied in feminist terms for their resistance to patriarchal domination. As those plays protest (in Purinton's readings) the ways in which the medical profession limits the range of normal behavior for women, *The Alienated Manor* protests the legal system that limits women's personhood. But the ecological dimension of *The Alienated Manor* goes beyond this gendered protest to question the very value of possessiveness. Charville's possessiveness has the same effect on his relations with everyone and everything in his environment as with his wife. It is alienating in several senses of the term. Legally, it causes him to transfer their existence to his domain. Ethically, intellectually, and emotionally, it estranges him from others.
39. An alternative attitude (or a "recoding") is represented by Mrs. Charville. She paints butterflies and sketches bats, taking an interest in the creatures in their own right rather than as resources to be managed. Her conversations about her nature studies pointedly contrast her attitude with her husband's: "He," she says, "looks at no creatures but those which are bred in his kennels and his stables" (2.3.345-46)—in other words, those which he possesses and controls. Baillie does not hide the shortcomings of Mrs. Charville's interest in nature. It is rather superficial, possibly cruel or careless insofar as it involves capturing the bat she sketches, and not much different from her interest in writing parodies of sentimental novels or speculating about her neighbors' love letters (2.1.342; 3.2.350-51).[\[25\]](#) Nevertheless, as is suitable for a character in a comedy of survival, Mrs. Charville recognizes the separate existence of other beings because such recognition is what she wishes her husband to grant her. Within *The Alienated Manor*, she exhibits one plausible strategy for cooperative survival that does not depend on possessiveness. Similar alternatives are also exhibited by male characters, notably Crafton and his nephew Freemantle.

40. In *The Alienated Manor*, Crafton and Freemantle are the adapters rather than aggressors. It was their relative who lost the manor to Charville; moreover Charville has purchased at a discount some other portions of Crafton's family estate and has bankrupted, through gambling, a cousin of Freemantle. The security of Freemantle's own modest estate is somewhat uncertain as the papers documenting his title are lost until the end of the play. Despite these disadvantages, Crafton and Freemantle are not openly hostile to Charville. Knowing that Charville acted meanly, Crafton nevertheless remains on civil terms with him: "one must keep up some intercourse with the world as it is," he remarks; "the grass would grow on my threshold, were I to confine my visits to the immaculate" (1.1.337). In this tolerance, he contrasts with his cousin's servant who tries to shoot Charville in revenge for his taking advantage of his employer (5.2.358). But Crafton does not resign himself to injustice. He is resourceful—crafty, as his name implies—and like the stock comedic rogues and tricksters who are Meeker's survivors, he turns to deception to gain some compensation for his family. The plot he hatches shows the compassion for all sufferers, including himself, predominant among Meeker's list of traits. Crafton would like his nephew to succeed in marrying Charville's sister, not only because it would make his nephew happy but because it would bring some property back into the family and might also irritate Charville enough to make him want to move away and sell Crafton's estate back to him at an affordable price. For his part, Freemantle wishes simply to put the gambling incident out of his mind because his love for Mary is more important to him (1.1.338). Both know that Charville expects his sister to marry a richer man than Freemantle. Crafton advises Freemantle to use Charville's jealous love of all his possessions, including his wife, to his (Freemantle's) own advantage: Freemantle should court Mrs. Charville's favor so that she will persuade her husband to accept Freemantle's marrying Mary (1.1.338-39). The plot goes awry because Charville thinks Freemantle is seducing his wife.
41. Evaluating Crafton's dissembling by motives and circumstances, the play tends to exonerate him, though he himself apologizes for it at the end and believes it makes him unworthy to regain the property (5.3.360). His sympathetically motivated plot, however, contrasts favorably with Charville's jealously motivated attempts to disguise himself to spy on his wife (3.1.349; 3.2.349-50). Through other contrasts between Charville and Crafton throughout the play, Baillie presents an alternative to Charville's possessiveness in Crafton's less acquisitive attitude. When Crafton wishes to buy adjacent property, he first ascertains whether Charville wants it as well because he will not compete for it (3.1.348). Further, he is willing to use what resources he does have to help his nephew and other relatives (4.3.356), and he has made it known, to Sir Level's dismay, that he will reverse the improvements on any property he does acquire (4.4.355). Were it not for the selfish aspect of his part in the courtship plot, he would seem to represent the benevolent Tory or Old Whig ideal that Everett opposes to the New Whig improver. Making him less than ideal, Crafton's human flaws make him a better model of adaptive behavior. That he later regrets his selfishness and refuses to press his advantage against Charville suggests moral growth. Mutual survival becomes possible at the end of this play.
42. Before that conclusion, however, Charville nearly destroys himself. The more obsessed with controlling his property he becomes, the more "warped" (to use the term his sister applies [4.4.356]) he becomes in his judgments of other people. When called upon to serve as magistrate in a wife-beating case, he projects his jealousy into the situation, dismissing the woman as "a hypocrite, and a liar and a jade" who deserves whatever punishment her husband chooses to inflict (4.3.355). Unhappy in all his personal relations, he finally wishes to sell the very property he has so wished to dominate so that he can leave the environment in which he can no longer function (4.3.354-55). He considers suicide (5.1.356-57). Through Charville's disintegration, Baillie disrupts the correlation between success or survival and aggressive, individualistic, acquisitive behavior. In *The Alienated Manor*, as in Meeker's comedy of survival, such behavior is maladaptive. Charville's dominating attitudes threaten his success and his very existence.

43. Because *The Alienated Manor* is a comedy, it brings Charville back from the brink of destruction and, as in *The Siege*, makes it possible for the characters to learn to live with each other. Once Charville learns that Freemantle loves his sister, not his wife, he sees that his selfishness interfered with his judgment. He admits that he must change his attitude and restore the manor to Crafton. Crafton and Mrs. Charville join him in resolving to be more considerate of others (5.3.360). Just as reconciliation does not come immediately at the conclusion of *The Siege*, so genuinely improved relations in *The Alienated Manor* are a goal requiring ongoing efforts to be at home with others in the world.

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Notes

¹ "Green literary utopias" is the term Werner Christie Mathisen applies to Callenbach as well as Ursula Le Guin's *The Dispossessed* and Marge Piercy's *Woman on the Edge of Time* (110); "intentional communities are bodies of people who have chosen to live—and usually work in some way—together," pursuing some "common aim or commitment," according to Sargisson (*Utopian Bodies* 29), who has extensively studied intentional communities with ecological commitments (*Utopian Bodies* 29-53, Sargisson and Sargent).

² Timothy Morton's *Ecology Without Nature* also argues against the separation of nature from culture, using deconstruction to undermine the "ecologocentricism" that makes "nature" a sacred place uninhabited by humans (1-28, 84-94). Morton presents his approach as anti-utopian (3, 21-24), but he uses "utopian" only as a negative term for unrealistic thinking or mistaken idealism. He does not cite Sargisson or address revisionist utopianism.

³ David Perkins alludes to Baillie's pamphlet and her poem "The Kitten," in his book on *Romanticism and Animal Rights*. A more detailed view of the pamphlet was presented by Judith Bailey Slagle at the 2007 NASSR Conference ("Emergence of Animal Rights"); Slagle's biography of Baillie remarks on the environmental consciousness in *The Alienated Manor*.

⁴ As I indicate in "Utopianism and Joanna Baillie," Nicole Pohl's concept of "recoding" spaces and

Sargisson's challenge to the separation of public and private spheres are central to new utopian studies. I return to these points in my analyses of Baillie's comedies in this essay.

⁵ In Kroeber's theory and practice, "ecological literary criticism concentrates on linkages between natural and cultural processes" (*ELC* 1). It considers, for example, how Romantic poetry counters assumptions about human alienation with assurances that humans belong in the world; it studies how Romantic narratives depict adaptive and maladaptive behaviors and how they inspire readers to modify their own attitudes, actions or situations (*ELC* 5, 13; "Biopoetics" 99-114). Contributions by Kroeber (and numerous other scholars) to ecocriticism are dismissed by Joseph Carroll, whose *Literary Darwinism* takes a more reductionistic view of the relationship between nature and culture, a view in which older scientific attachments to "progressive findings" and a "determinate causal order" still prevail (46-49). I offer an alternative view of the evolution of ecocriticism in "Reconciling Opposites."

⁶ Published after Kroeber's article, Richerson and Boyd's *Not by Genes Alone* offers further explanation and advocacy of co-evolutionary thinking. Co-evolutionary theory also grounds Peter Swirski's analysis of how thought experiments work.

⁷ Citations to the *Introductory Discourse* as well as to the plays are from Baillie's *Dramatic and Poetical Works*. Because the edition has no line numbers, plays are cited by act.scene.page.

⁸ Kroeber argues strongly for designating as "ecological" only thinking that is informed by evolutionary concepts (*ELC* 26-28; "Proto-Evolutionary Bards" 167). Interesting possibilities are arising, however, for deploying "ecological" as an antonym for "exploitative" in pre-nineteenth-century thinking. Fine examples include Diane McColley's "Milton's Environmental Epic" and Richard Pickard's "Augustan Ecology." I suggest that these possibilities are not necessarily incompatible with Kroeber's position insofar as they do not confuse the ecological with design theory but apply it strategically to cultural relations.

⁹ Scholarship situating Baillie in medical contexts includes works by Burwick, Dwyer, McMillan, Myers ("Medico-Legal Discourse") and Purinton ("Feminist Utopianism"; "Socialized and Medicalized Hysteria").

¹⁰ Richerson and Boyd also support the idea that aggression can be less adaptive than more sympathetic responses, and as I treat in detail below, so does Meeker.

¹¹ Though Meeker's position is itself arguably an ideology, its value is not diminished by that acknowledgment.

¹² Catherine Burroughs has explored at length the ways in which Baillie's work facilitates the evaluation and modification of gender roles, especially in the context of the private theatrical often staged in women's "closets" (*Closet Stages*; and on comedy in particular see her article on *The Tryal*). Additionally relevant scholarship by Purinton addresses Baillie's awareness of and resistance to the restraining influence of gender norms.

¹³ There may be reasons to separate the meanings of the terms in other contexts, but they seem to be interchangeable in Baillie's and Meeker's works. Both stress the idea of feeling or suffering along with another. The more nuanced treatments (such as those by Carney, Leach, Forbes, and Myers ["Theatre of Cruelty"]) of Baillie's sympathy and its resonances with versions of the concept in the philosophy of Adam Smith (and others) do not preclude consonance with Meeker.

¹⁴ Sargisson distinguishes inversion from the genuinely critical and creative rethinking evident in utopianism:

“inversion of hierarchy is not . . . sufficient to challenge the existence of hierarchy” (*Utopian Bodies* 130-31).

¹⁵ Baillie repeats the phrase “differently circumstanced” in *The Second Marriage* (3.1.212). Cf. her use of “similarly circumstanced” in the *Introductory Discourse*, which I quote later in this essay.

¹⁶ For a fuller analysis of this play’s disruption of gender conventions, see Purinton’s “Women’s Sovereignty.”

¹⁷ Placing Joanna Baillie in a “counter-public sphere,” Mellor paved the way for an understanding of Baillie as resisting the conventional separation of public from private. Mellor’s *Mothers of the Nation* shows the public/private dichotomy to be inapplicable to the situation of numerous other Romantic-era writers.

¹⁸ What Adriana Craciun says about her decision to write a book on violent women furthers an understanding of Baillie’s unlikable female characters. Craciun seeks a more complex view of women than that implied by “feminism’s persistent ideology of the consolation of women’s natural nonviolence and benevolence” (9).

¹⁹ On *The Election*, see Purinton’s article containing that title and my *Symbolic Interactions* 183-88.

²⁰ As I explain below, but as most readers of this essay will already know, “improvement” represents a range of land management practices by which owners radically altered natural terrains and displaced poor residents in order to annex the territory to their estates. Studies by Crawford and Everett comment on a contrasting “cottage system,” which favored the enclosure of small plots to be cultivated independently by people of modest means. Both scholars believe that the cottage ideal, which fostered respect for the small household in which all members enjoy moderate bounty, had some influence in curbing the extremes of “improvement” (Crawford 38-40; Everett 74-82).

²¹ For more technical agricultural details, see Overton. Oddly, *The Alienated Manor* gives no example of the notorious conflict between owners and the villagers they deprived of grazing, farming or gleaning rights, but Baillie had already used such an episode in *The Trial* to emphasize the possessiveness of one of the suitors, Mr. Royston, who protected his improved property by “prosecuting widow Gibson for letting her chickens feed amongst his corn” (2.1.55).

²² Crawford identifies alienable property as the chief means of upward mobility for a middle class with money but without inherited land (44). My article “Improving the Law” explores the legal dimensions of *The Alienated Manor*.

²³ The caution against “ideological oversimplifications” comes from Kroeber’s review of Everett’s book, though the review is predominantly positive (232-33). Everett often uses “benevolence” and “improvement” as antonyms, a usage I borrow when it sheds light on *The Alienated Manor*.

²⁴ The play contains another caricature, the German philosopher Smitchenstault, who represents the fixation on the aesthetics of the sublime and picturesque that helped make improvement fashionable. Though more concerned with the picturesque, both Olwig and Crawford comment on the related vogue for the sublime and its impact on land use (Olwig 159-75; Crawford 67-69).

²⁵ The superficial Mrs. Charville might be contrasted with the more dedicated women naturalists in Sylvia Bowerbank’s study who want to advance to the study of natural philosophy, which was reserved for men, or who develop an “ethics of caring for nature” (142-43). That Baillie does not endorse the affinity between women and nature assumed in the approaches Bowerbank studies as well as in the ecofeminism of our own time is consistent with the rejection of gender essentialism stated in her *Introductory Discourse* and

demonstrated in her plays. Sargisson strongly criticizes ecofeminism for inverting rather than rethinking dualisms (*Utopian Bodies* 22; “What’s wrong with Ecofeminism?” 59-61).