

2010

Mirren's Autobiography: The Life and Poetry of Marion Bernstein (1846-1906)

Edward Cohen

Rollins College, ecohen@rollins.edu

Linda Fleming

Edinburgh Napier University

Follow this and additional works at: http://scholarship.rollins.edu/as_facpub

 Part of the [Feminist, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Commons](#), and the [Literature in English, British Isles Commons](#)

Published In

Cohen, Edward H. & Linda Fleming. Mirren's Autobiography: The Life and Poetry of Marion Bernstein (1846-1906). *Scottish Literary Review* 2 (2010) 59-76.

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by Rollins Scholarship Online. It has been accepted for inclusion in Faculty Publications by an authorized administrator of Rollins Scholarship Online. For more information, please contact rwalton@rollins.edu.

**Mirren's Autobiography: The Life and Poetry of Marion
Bernstein (1846-1906)**

In 1990, almost a century after her death, Marion Bernstein was resurrected when Tom Leonard reprinted a selection of her poems in *Radical Renfrew*.¹ Others of her works have since appeared in several prominent studies of Scottish verse, including *Mungo's Tongues*,² *Glasgow Poets Past and Present*,³ *A History of Scottish Women's Writing*,⁴ *The New Penguin Book of Scottish Verse*,⁵ and *The Edinburgh History of Scottish Literature*.⁶ All of her poems in these recent volumes were published in Bernstein's only book, *Mirren's Musings*, 1876.⁷

Despite Bernstein's rising popularity, many of her poems remain uncollected and many details of her life remain cloaked in mystery. Beginning with a consideration of her longest poem, first published in 1880, we propose to establish what can now be known of her life and work:

Mirren's Autobiography

I was born the sixteenth afternoon of September,
In a year that's too long past for me to remember;
And what does it signify *where* I was born?
It might have been under some wild hedgerow thorn,
Or perhaps in a palace, perhaps in a cot, 5
Or among the small fairies, in some unknown grot,
In England, Wales, Ireland, or land of the Scot,
France, Germany, Russia, or Turkey; but what
Does it matter about the particular spot?
I was born in some one of these places, if not 10

In another; and that's about all I have got
To say of that highly blest part of the earth
Distinguished by little Miss Marion's birth.
I look back to the days that rolled o'er my young brow,
When the sun brighter shone than it ever shines now; 15
When my strength and activity won me the name
'Little Sturdyboots' long ere my first trouble came.
Oft the north wind in summer-time piercingly blows,
And it blights ere it's blooming some half-opened rose.
So the cold breath of sickness prevented my prime, 20
And caused me to fade ere my blossoming time.
The weakness too surely increased day by day,
Till no more I could join my companions at play,
And I'd wistfully watch them while sitting alone,
And build for my solace a world of my own, 25
Filled with bright airy castles, while Hope whispered long
Of the grand things I'd do when I grew well and strong,
But alas! though long hoped for, that time never came,
And I grew up to womanhood feeble and lame.
Oh! womanhood, sweet is thy blossoming time 30
Of a whole life the summer, the joy, and the prime.
But thou camest to me without sunshine or bloom,
Thou camest like winter, with coldness and gloom,
No more from the threshold of home I could stray
To feel the warm sun on a bright summer day; 35
Thou did'st bring to my frail limbs a heavier chain,
And for years on my couch I was doomed to remain.
Oh! 'twas sad through the first years of youth thus to languish
And how bitter and sore was my physical anguish!
And helpless and drear loomed the future before me, 40
While darker and darker the cloud lowered o'er me;
But though gloom reigned around, *inner light* rose to cheer me,
For the Presence of God ne'er had seemed half so near me.
And to feel that blest Presence was sweeter than health,
It was brighter than sunshine, and better than wealth; 45
It was joy amid sorrow, and peace amid pain
Perfected; and never before or again

Have I felt thus the power of our Father to cheer
 The soul 'mid the worst that can trouble it here.
 For still as pain lessened, and health would improve, 50
 That gladdening Presence would farther remove.
 'Twill return, I doubt not, if I need it again,
 But 'twould make earth too bright were it now to remain.
 Now no more I'm bedridden, or pain-racked, or ill,
 Yet, too feeble to walk, I'm a prisoner still. 55
 As the wounded in battle are borne from the plain
 Inactive to languish, while comrades are slain,
 So am I laid aside from the battle of life,
 While stronger ones struggle and fall in the strife.
 But my life now is peaceful, and little of pain 60
 Comes to ruffle its calmness, or make me complain;
 And the worst glooms that darken its sunshine I find
 When the sorrows of others o'ershadow my mind.
 Like a flower confined to its stem, I have stayed
 Long confined to my home; like a flower I fade; 65
 And as withered flowers crumble to dust where they lay,
 And the wind passes over and sweeps them away,
 So I wither, and so, soon, my memory must
 Pass away, when my form shall lie mould'ring in dust. 69

This poem appeared in the first volume of a celebrated series, *Modern Scottish Poets*, compiled annually between 1880 and 1897 by D. H. Edwards.⁸ In his head-note on Bernstein, Edwards observes that she is 'vague on the subject of her birth' and implies that her reticence may be ascribed to her vanity. Another reason may be that she was not born a Scot.⁹

Although the particulars of Bernstein's life are sketchy, it is clear from the public records that she was born in London, in 1846, to Theodore Bernstein, an emigrant from Preußen, and Lydia Pulsford, an Englishwoman.¹⁰ In the 1851 census she was identified as Mary Anne Bernstein, age four, living with her parents and her elder sister Lydia in Marylebone.¹¹ In the 1861 census, in which her name was recorded as Maria Bernstein, she was living in Hastings with her widowed mother, her sister, and her younger brother Theodore.¹² By 1874 the family had relocated to Glasgow, and her name surfaced again when she began to publish poems in the weekly newspapers. She quickly established a reputation not only as a champion

of women's rights and of social justice but also as an oddly reclusive figure.¹³ Confined by poor health to her bed or to her room, she nevertheless interacted with a circle of local poets, and for three decades she wrote verses on events and issues reported in the press. In 1898, in her application for financial support from the Indigent Gentlewomen's Fund, she acknowledged that she was not a 'Scotch-woman' but asserted that she had 'lived in Scotland for over twenty-four years.'¹⁴

In Bernstein's preface to *Mirren's Musings*, she wrote that the poems in her collection were composed during 'a long period of physical affliction' when she was 'unable to walk' and 'hardly capable of any greater exertion than that required for reading, writing, and conversation.'¹⁵ It is difficult from these symptoms to diagnose the cause of her disability. However, the evidence presented in 'Mirren's Autobiography' – of the sudden onset of her illness in childhood and of the steadily increasing weakness in her constitution – suggests that she may have been stricken with infantile paralysis. In the nineteenth century, the aetiology of the disease was as obscure as its prognosis was uncertain. In most cases, as apparently in Bernstein's, the attack occurred in the midst of good health. In some victims, the loss of power quickly subsided and complete recovery ensued; in others, the paralysis persisted until atrophy occurred and the affected limb or limbs remained crippled throughout life. Bernstein represents herself as having grown up 'to womanhood feeble and lame':

Oh! 'twas sad through the first years of youth thus to languish
And how bitter and sore was my physical anguish! ('MA', ll.38-9)

In her mid-thirties, she continued to experience alternating episodes of pain and relief, but little improvement in her mobility or engagement in society:

Now no more I'm bedridden, or pain-racked, or ill,
Yet, too feeble to walk, I'm a prisoner still.
As the wounded in battle are borne from the plain
Inactive to languish, while comrades are slain,
So am I laid aside from the battle of life,
While stronger ones struggle and fall in the strife. ('MA', ll.54-9)

As the years passed her health continued to decline. In her application for a grant from the Royal Literary Fund, submitted in 1904, she complained that the progress of her writing had been hindered by 'physical weakness.' In a letter of recom-

mendation attached to the application, one of her sponsors, the minister of St Matthews Parish, Glasgow, described Bernstein as 'enfeebled by bodily infirmity'.¹⁶

While a glance at several titles in *Mirren's Musings* – including 'The Great Passover' and 'Friday Evening Hymn' – appears to support the notion that Marion Bernstein was Jewish, a reading of these and other religious poems in the collection confirms her Christian orientation.¹⁷ Her repeated references to God's 'Presence' in 'Mirren's Autobiography' suggest a general spirituality, but at least a score of her poems refer to Christ or address Christian themes or cite passages in the New Testament. 'Friday Evening Hymn' – according to its subtitle – was 'Composed on Good Friday, 1874.' And poems such as 'To an Atheist' and 'First Paraphrase' strike Messianic chords. In November 1876 a notice of *Mirren's Musings* appeared in the *Review and Herald*, a publication of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church, which described the poems as 'lively and racy' and the poet herself as 'one of those who have recently embraced the Sabbath in Scotland.'¹⁸ Although there was no Adventist congregation in Glasgow, until the 1920s, there was a small community of 'Sabbath-Keepers'. In July 1879 J. N. Andrews, an American on a mission to establish the church in Britain, wrote in his journal: 'On arriving at Glasgow, we visited [. . .] Miss Marion Bernstein and her mother at 5 Dunrobin Place, Paisley Road. Miss Bernstein has observed the Sabbath many years; her mother commenced its observation only a few years since.'¹⁹ Bernstein expresses her commitment to the Saturday Sabbath in a number of poems, especially 'The Sabbath of the Lord':

Our God a holy name hath given
To but one day of all the seven –
 The Sabbath of the Lord;
Then why despise the seventh day,
Why take its sacred name away,
 And why that name accord
Unto a day God hath not blest,
A day on which He did not rest:
 If children of the Lord,
Why think you His commandment strange,
Why strive His ordinance to change,
 And trample on His word? (*MM*, p.107)

It is difficult to say how fully Bernstein embraced the Adventist doctrines. In one

of her most famous poems – ‘A Dream’ – she advocates acceptance of ‘every sect’ and forgiveness for any ‘erring opinion’. As the years passed, moreover, her religious views became increasingly conventional. In several poems, on storms and shipwrecks, she prescribes faith as an antidote to loss of compass. Heaven, she concludes, seems nearer to the living for the presence there of the dead.

From the time she arrived in Scotland, Bernstein found a cordial audience for her verses in the pages of the *Glasgow Weekly Mail* and the *Glasgow Weekly Herald*, and in the poetry columns of these papers she created her own space of agency and identity. Published every Saturday, both papers reported national news of interest, regional news of a social or sensational nature, and local records of births, marriages, and deaths. The lion’s share of each paper was given over to advertising. Content of this sort not only suggests that the papers were aimed at readers with wide-ranging interests and modest expectations, but also reflects the rise in literacy among a bourgeois class in an increasingly urbanised Scotland. Bernstein published her first poem in the *Weekly Mail* on 28 February 1874 and quickly joined a coterie of regular contributors to the paper. In the poems that she submitted during the ensuing months, she addresses a number of social, economic, and political concerns, including temperance, anti-slavery, domestic violence, and poor living and working conditions among the labouring classes. Unlike the staid *Weekly Herald*, whose editor never infringed upon the literary domain, the *Weekly Mail* regularly printed a column adjacent to the poetry in which its editor offered sharp criticism or gentle consolation to authors whose verses he rejected. But from the first he admired Marion Bernstein’s wit, and it was he who playfully gave her the name ‘Mirren’ – presumably after the patron saint of Paisley – which she embraced and eventually adopted for her collection of *Musings*.

‘The press, in all its manifestations, became during the Victorian period the context within which people lived and worked and thought’ – according to Joanne Shattock and Michael Wolff – ‘and from which they derived their sense of the outside world.’²⁰ For Bernstein, often confined to her sickbed, the newspapers were her principal sources of information and inspiration alike. More than most nineteenth-century newspaper verses, many of her poems reflect views expressed and stories reported in recent issues, and the result is a ‘shared public discourse of current events.’²¹ For example, when the editor of the *Weekly Mail* complained that he had tired of reading conventional poems on country scenes and encouraged submissions on city life, Bernstein responded – in ‘A Song of Glasgow Town’ – by condemning the urban blight:

On every side I see

A crowd of giant chimney stalks
 As grim as grim can be.
 There's always smoke from some of them –
 Some black, some brown, some grey.
 Yet genius has invented means
 To burn the smoke away.
 Oh, when will Glasgow factories
 Cease to pollute the air;
 To spread dull clouds o'er sunny skies
 That should be bright and fair! (*MM*, p. 54)

Similarly, in 'Wanted in Glasgow' – in which every line ends in a rhyme with 'Clyde' – she laments the pollution of the river. In another poem – 'Gas on the Stair' – she complains about the inadequacies of the city's public services. And in several – 'A Woman's Logic', 'The "Wetted" Sex', and 'A Rule to Work Both Ways' – she rails against the cases of wife beating reported repeatedly in the papers.

Occasionally, Bernstein weighed in on immediate issues. In October 1878 the Clyde Shipbuilders' and Engineers' Association averted a general strike by agreeing to reductions in the workers' wages and in their working hours. In early November, however, the *Weekly Mail* reported that, rather than accept these reductions, a few squads of riveters had walked out. In 'The Govan Riveters' Strike', Bernstein rebukes the strikers:

Ye riveters of Govan,
 Who stay at home at ease,
 And live upon the 'strike fund'
 As idle as you please,
 While wiser men, and better,
 Who lazy ways don't like,
 Must starve through keeping idle,
 Because you're out on strike.²²

While the poet's position on the strike may seem antithetical to the sympathy she often expresses for the working classes, it is consistent with the political perspective shared by many Glaswegians of differing social backgrounds, who regarded strikes as threats to the wealth and progress of Clydeside. As Tom Leonard observes, 'A radical in one tradition might be conservative in another. Marion

Bernstein, though a pioneering feminist in her work, attacked Govan shipyard workers for striking.²³ She took a more popular stance, in 1883, when the Napier Commission was hearing testimony from the crofters and cottars who had been driven from the Highlands during the clearances. For several months the Scottish newspapers published extracts from the evidence – many sarcastic in tone and incendiary in substance – which included personal recollections of violent disposessions and dislocations. The *Glasgow Weekly Mail* quoted a clergyman who had deposed that ‘the management of most Highland estates was despotic in its nature’ and that ‘one man’s will ruled whole parishes’ (4 August 1883, p.3); and the *Oban Times* declared with satisfaction that ‘the Highland lairds are on their knees’ (11 August 1883, p.5). Such statements inspired ‘The Highland Laird’s Song’ in which Bernstein levels a rare indictment against the hereditary landed classes:

I have a very large estate,
All for me, all for me;
My cares are small, my wealth is great,
All for me, all for me.
Once other people shared my land,
And rented holdings far from grand,
But I have made them understand
It’s all for me, all for me.

The refrain – ‘all for me, all for me’ – recurs through all three stanzas and portrays the lairds as greedy, arrogant, and contemptuous of the common people.²⁴ In addition to its appearance in the *Weekly Mail* (25 August 1883, p.3), this poem was printed in the *Christian Leader* (23 August 1883, p.3), and in the *People’s Journal for Glasgow and Edinburgh* (25 August 1883, p.2), two of the most liberal papers in Scotland.

Marion Bernstein had great sympathy for the working classes. In ‘A Song for the Working Man’ she writes:

Oh! there’s nothing in life so gay
As labour and simple fare,
If you’re able to pay your way
Untroubled by cank’ring care.
But labour beyond one’s strength

Turns work from a joy to pain,
And tasks of a cruel length
May well make the brave complain. (*MM*, p.13)

She herself, however, lived a middle-class life. On her parents' marriage certificate, her father is identified as a professor of languages, his father as a teacher, and her mother's father as a gentleman.²⁵ The nature and extent of Bernstein's education are difficult to ascertain. Valentina Bold suggests that she occupies a 'place within the Scottish autodidactic tradition'.²⁶ But Florence Boos insists that 'she almost certainly received some formal education'.²⁷ In the census enumerations, post office directories, and other public records in which her name appears, she is identified as a 'teacher of music' and even as a 'professor of theory and harmony'. When she was able, she gave private music lessons in her home, both to the general public and to students at the prestigious Park School for Girls.²⁸ She resided, moreover, at addresses in Glasgow associated with the middle classes; in 1891, for example, when she and her mother shared a four-room flat near the university in Great George Street, her neighbours were a clerk, a milliner, an accountant, a scoutmaster, a master mariner, a naval officer, a naval engineer, and a student of theology. In 'Mirren's Autobiography' Bernstein reveals that – having found 'peace amid pain' – she has renounced self-pity and has embraced the 'sorrows of others'. The subjects of her poems, therefore, are often working-class people: those who possess little more than their own labour power, who lack autonomy over their working conditions, and who exercise little or no agency in their lives: a husband separated from his wife and bairn in 'The Scottish Emigrant', a railway worker who falls asleep at the switch in 'The Pointsman', even an impoverished Dubliner interred grotesquely in 'Coffining the Pauper'.

Bernstein's most persistent theme, however, was her concern for the rights of women. Lynn Abrams has insisted that the beginnings of organised feminism, examined in the context of Enlightenment debates conducted by female intellectuals about feminine attributes, had by the mid-nineteenth century been translated into protests about the discrimination experienced by women in everyday life.²⁹ Many of Bernstein's poems reflect this preoccupation with gender matters, and Elspeth King has asserted that 'Bernstein was a feminist some twenty years before the term was in general use'.³⁰ She was outspoken on a number of points having to do with the rights of women, including the broad issue of female emancipation, and many of these are intimately related to the vibrancy of Scottish feminism in the late Victorian era. Chief amongst them was the question of the

franchise:

A Woman's Plea

To do our duty is our right,
 A right we'll never yield,
For duty done is virtue's might
 And honour's shining shield.
To vote for all that's right and just,
 To vote down all that's wrong;
These are our rights. For these we must
 Cry out in speech and song.

To be a safeguard to the weak,
 To curb the pride of power,
To give just honour to the meek,
 And poverty to dower;
These are the aims of righteous laws;
 But if the laws are wrong
Our votes must right them. That's our cause,
 Our work, our prayer, our song.

Though oft oppressed, our steadfast hearts
 Will never be afraid,
The strength a righteous cause imparts
 Will keep us undismayed.
For O! the world is full of need,
 The world is full of wrong;
For freedom to do good we plead
 With pen, and speech, and song.³¹

Callum Brown observes that, during the nineteenth century, ideal qualities associated with religiosity came to be gendered as feminine and that 'the nature of womanhood was represented as highly dependent on religious qualities'.³² By expressing her views in moral terms, Bernstein both affirms her Christian convictions and establishes her personal identity as a woman. 'Heartfelt religious beliefs' – according to Bold – 'underpinned Bernstein's desire for social

change'.³³

Most distinctive about Bernstein's feminist project, a compendium of verses on gender inequities and gender relations, is that she expressed her opinions so forthrightly in the public sphere. She addressed the franchise issue initially in a fragment – 'Oh! I wish that all women had power to vote' – and later in the first three stanzas of her most frequently reprinted poem, 'A Dream':

I dreamt that the nineteenth century
 Had entirely passed away,
 And had given place to a more advanced
 And very much brighter day.

For Woman's Rights were established quite,
 And man could the fact discern
 That he'd long been teaching his grandmamma
 What she didn't require to learn.

There were female chiefs in the Cabinet,
 (Much better than males I'm sure!)
 And the Commons were three-parts feminine,
 While the Lords were seen no more! (*MM*, pp. 101)

Boos unpacks this poem as a 'utopian-feminist fantasy'³⁴ and Bold construes it as a reworking of 'the visionary tradition of Ramsay, Burns, and Hogg from a woman's perspective.'³⁵ Neither reading, however, comes to terms with the radical nature of Bernstein's vision. 'Women were often reluctant radicals,' Bold continues, 'attempting to reconcile piety, and a desire for respectability, with an acute awareness of social injustices'.³⁶ But Marion Bernstein was never reluctant to express her views on the issues that mattered most to her.

On 6 September 1884 a great demonstration was organised in Glasgow, and 64,000 working-class men and rural householders marched through the streets to Glasgow Green, where another 200,000 citizens had gathered to cheer them in their pursuit of universal suffrage for men. The tide of protest was strong, and by the end of the year the number of eligible voters in Scotland would swell to more than half a million. Women, on the other hand, would remain excluded from the rolls. In her poem 'On the Franchise Demonstration of the 6th Inst' – published in the *Glasgow Weekly Herald* – Bernstein addresses her female readers

and chastises them for their passivity:

Women of Glasgow,
What do you mean?
Why were you idle
All through such a scene?

Where were your banners?
Where were your trades?
Have women no need
Of political aids?

Much work for small wages,
Great wrongs, which few note,
Are yours, till you right things
By getting the vote.

Now, when are you going
To make such a show
For feminine franchise,
I'm anxious to know?

Lay sewing and cooking
Aside for one day;
Assemble by thousands
In splendid array.

I don't mean in dresses
Of costly expense;
I mean in the splendour
Of bright common-sense.

Prove your right to the vote
By the thousands who crave it;
And with steady persistence –
To ask is to have it. ³⁷

Missing from this poem is the humour of Bernstein's earlier verses on the pursuit

of civil rights for women. There is instead a rising anger, some of it directed at the women of Glasgow who were derelict in their duty to themselves, some of it directed at the cultural moment when few women were as courageous as Bernstein in expressing their awareness of the injustices they suffered.

In 'Mirren's Autobiography' Marion Bernstein presents her personal history more evasively than effusively. The particulars that she reveals have to do with her childhood illness, with her consequent lameness and confinement, and with the Christian faith that sustained her as the years passed. But little emerges of her adult life. What is known is that when J.N. Andrews visited her in 1879 he found Bernstein and her mother in 'circumstances of distress'³⁸; that, after their mother died, Marion and her sister spent their last years moving frequently from one Glasgow address to another³⁹; and that, as her health deteriorated and she was no longer able to teach, she was reduced to subsisting on paltry pensions from local philanthropies. It is not surprising, then, that she came to regard Robert Burns as a kindred spirit:

Robert Burns

While others will tell of thy triumphs,
Thy genius, and thy fame,
I can only think of thy sorrows
Whene'er I hear thy name.

I think of the heart of a poet
Always unfit to bear
Sad poverty's heavy burden
Of sordid, ceaseless care.
Poor Burns! how thy sensitive nature
Fretted beneath the strain
Of want and debt and dependence,
A threefold, galling chain.

It crushed the strength of thy spirit
With more than Arctic cold,
It froze thy heart into stillness
Ere forty winters old.

Ah! the price of thy meanest statue

Might then have changed thy fate;
Dost thou see the wealth that is lavished
Over thy grave, too late?

Dost thou witness how oft the poet
Is deemed of little worth
Till the voice of the minstrel is silent,
And the spirit passed from earth?

Nay, methinks thou hast brighter visions
Than the passing shades of Time;
Thou seest the things eternal
The realities sublime.

Where thou art they think not of sorrow,
Such thoughts have passed away,
As the shadows of morning twilight
Flee at the dawn of day!⁴⁰

Bernstein shared the egalitarianism for which Burns was lauded at the end of the nineteenth century, and in this lament she expresses sympathy and empathy alike for his ‘threefold galling chain’ of ‘want and dependence and care’. Writing ostensibly about him, she strikes a distinctively self-reflexive note: ‘I think of the heart of a poet / Always unfit to bear / Sad poverty’s heavy burden / Of sordid, ceaseless care.’

Physical disability and social injustice were Marion Bernstein’s constant concerns. They were counterbalanced, however, by her faith and by her poetic gifts. Although her couplets and other regular rhymes are now out of fashion, a poem like ‘Mirren’s Autobiography’ – composed principally in anapaestic tetrameter and punctuated with witty enjambments – reveals her verbal mastery. After 1880 the pace of her poetic production slowed.⁴¹ She suffered recurrences of the symptoms associated with the illness she had contracted in childhood, and her eyesight began to fail. No longer able to teach or to escape the confines of home, she lived on an annual income of £16.10d in grants from the Indigent Gentlewomen’s Fund and Colquhoun’s Bequest to Incurables. Bernstein died on 6 February 1906, and for the better part of a century her memory did ‘pass away’. But the recent recovery of her poems, from the margins of Scottish literary his-

tory, has restored the voice of a complex and courageous nineteenth-century woman.

Notes

- 1 *Radical Renfrew: Poetry from the French Revolution to the First World War by Poets Born, or Sometime Resident in, the County of Renfrewshire*, ed. by Tom Leonard (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1990), pp.296-303.
- 2 *Mungo's Tongues: Glasgow Poems 1630-1990*, ed. by Hamish Whyte (Edinburgh: Mainstream, 1993), pp.141-43.
- 3 Edwin Morgan, *Glasgow Poets Past and Present: The Story of a City* (Hamilton, NZ: University of Waikato, 1993), p.8.
- 4 Valentina Bold, 'Beyond "The Empire of the Gentle Heart": Scottish Women Poets of the Nineteenth Century', in *A History of Scottish Women's Writing*, ed. by Douglas Gifford and Dorothy McMillan (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997), pp.246-61.
- 5 *The New Penguin Book of Scottish Verse*, ed. by Robert Crawford and Mick Imlah (London: Penguin, 2000), p.367.
- 6 Alan Riach, 'The Literature of Industrialisation', in *The Edinburgh History of Scottish Literature: Enlightenment, Britain, and Empire (1707-1918)*, ed. by Susan Manning (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), pp.236-43.
- 7 Marion Bernstein, *Mirren's Musings* (Glasgow: McGeachy [and] Bernstein, 1876); hereafter cited as *MM*.
- 8 *One Hundred Modern Scottish Poets*, ed. by D.H. Edwards (Brechin: Edwards, 1880), pp.52-53; hereafter cited as 'MA'.
- 9 The final volume includes several indexes. Marion Bernstein is listed in the indexes of the poets and their poems, but not in the index of their birthplaces. In 'Mirren's Autobiography' and in her responses to Edwards's inquiries, she may have withheld her place of birth to ensure the inclusion of her work in the collection.
- 10 GRO: England and Wales Registration Indexes; Index of Births, 1846: Bethnal Green, London; Vol.2, p.19.
- 11 UK Census Enumeration Returns for London, 1851: Marylebone. PRO: folio ref:

HO107/1490/-F899

- 12 UK Census Enumeration Returns for Sussex, 1861: Burgh of Hastings. PRO folio ref: RG9/0562/-F111.
- 13 When *Mirren's Musings* was reviewed in the *Mail*, the editor commented on the inclusion of Bernstein's portrait: 'It is not a very good one, we should think, but it will serve to gratify the longing curiosity expressed and felt by so many regarding the personal appearance of the writer who, by turns, amused and lectured them in our columns from week to week' (*Glasgow Weekly Mail*, 24 June 1876, p.7).
- 14 Records of the Royal Society for the Relief of Indigent Gentlewomen of Scotland, Summary Sheets of Applications to the Trustees of the Fund for the Year 1898, Application No. 51. We are grateful to the Society for permission to cite this record.
- 15 Bernstein, pp.[iii]-[iv].
- 16 Royal Literary Fund, Form of Application for an Author, File No. 2686, 4 October 1904.
- 17 Some years ago Elspeth King wrote of Bernstein: 'It is obvious from her surname and the allusions in her poetry that she was of Jewish origin.' (*The Hidden History of Glasgow's Women: The Thenew Factor* (Edinburgh: Mainstream, 1993), p.84.) More recently, however, Linda Fleming has observed that 'Marion Bernstein's religious beliefs appear from her writing to be more Christian in orientation, so her relation with possible Jewish ethnicity is elusive.' (*The Biographical Dictionary of Scottish Women: From the Earliest Times to 2004*, ed. by Elizabeth Ewan, Sue Innes, Sian Reynolds (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), p.34.) 'Whatever her ancestry,' Florence Boos concludes, 'several affirmations in *Mirren's Musings* suggest that she was a Christian' (*Working-Class Women Poets in Victorian Britain: An Anthology* (Peterborough: Broadview, 2008), p.338.)
- 18 *Advent Review and Herald of the Sabbath*, 30 November 1876, p.176. The notice was written by U[riah] S[mith], 1832-1903, editor of the paper and an advocate of religious liberty, the abolition of slavery, and noncombatant status for Adventists.
- 19 *Advent Review and Herald of the Sabbath*, 17 July 1879, p.28. John Nevins Andrews, 1829-1883, was one of the leading figures in the new church and its first official missionary to Europe. There is evidence that he had met Marion Bernstein and her mother during his first visit to Glasgow in October 1874.
- 20 *The Victorian Periodical Press: Samplings and Soundings*, ed. by Joanne Shattock and Michael Wolff (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1982), pp.xiv-xv.
- 21 Natalie M. Houston, 'Newspaper Poems: Material Texts in the Public Sphere.' *Victorian Studies* 50.2 (2008), p.239.
- 22 *Glasgow Weekly Mail*, 14 December 1878, p.7.
- 23 Tom Leonard, 'The Buried Voices: Forgotten Scottish Poets on Class and Gender', in *Hidden Voices*, ed. by Frances Campbell (Glasgow: Lapidus, 2007), p.17.

- 24 Bernstein's assault on the lairds is unusual because 'poetry of the nineteenth century demonstrates a tendency to blame factors, tenants, tacksmen, sheep-farmers, and even sheep [for the dislocations] but rarely individual landowners' (T. M. Devine, *Clanship to Crofters' War: The Social Transformation of the Scottish Highlands* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), p.215).
- 25 GRO: England and Wales Registration Indexes; Index of Marriages, 1843: Marylebone, London; Vol. 1, p.166.
- 26 Valentina Bold, *James Hogg: A Bard of Nature's Making* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2007), p.262.
- 27 Florence S. Boos, 'Cauld Engle-Cheek: Working-Class Women Poets in Victorian Scotland', *Victorian Poetry* 33.1 (1975), p.68.
- 28 Two letters written in support of her applications for pensions, from headmistress Georgina Kinnear and from assistant headmistress Margaret Braid, confirm that Bernstein taught music at the Park School in Glasgow.
- 29 Lynn Abrams, *The Making of Modern Woman: Europe 1789-1918* (Harlow: Longman, 2002), pp.265-96.
- 30 King, p.84.
- 31 *Glasgow Weekly Herald*, 20 January 1883, p.2.
- 32 Callum Brown, 'Religion', in *Gender in Scottish History since 1700*, ed. by Lynn Abrams et al (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), p.101.
- 33 Valentina Bold, 'Beyond "The Empire of the Gentle Heart": Scottish Women Poets of the Nineteenth Century', in *A History of Scottish Women's Writing*, ed. by Douglas Gifford and Dorothy McMillan (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997), p.257.
- 34 Boos, *Working-Class Women Poets in Victorian Britain*, p.339.
- 35 Bold, 'Beyond "The Empire of the Gentle Heart"', p.257.
- 36 Ibid.
- 37 *Glasgow Weekly Herald*, 20 September 1884, p.2.
- 38 *Advent Review and Herald of the Sabbath*, 17 July 1879, p.28.
- 39 Bernstein resided at 5 Dunrobin Place, Paisley Road, from 1874 to 1879. Thereafter, she lived at various addresses in St George's Road, Rupert Street, Sandyford Place, Great George Street, West Regent Street, Elderslie Street, and St Vincent Crescent. She died at 15 Kildonan Terrace, Ibrox.
- 40 *Glasgow Weekly Herald*, 29 January 1887, p.2.
- 41 Although Bernstein had promised in *Mirren's Musings* to publish a second volume of her verse, she never did so. Her last poem – 'St Vincent Loch' – appeared in the *Glasgow Weekly Herald* on 19 September 1903.

