

Critical Nationalism: Scottish Literary Culture Since 1989

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## **Abstract**

This thesis is a critical study of Scottish literary culture since 1989. It examines and interrogates critical work in Scottish literary studies through a ‘critical nationalist’ approach. This approach aims to provide a refinement of cultural nationalist literary criticism by prioritising the oppositional politics of recent Scottish writing, its criticism of institutional and state processes, and its refusal to exempt Scotland from this critique.

In the introduction I identify two fundamental tropes in recent Scottish literary criticism: opposition to a cultural nationalist critical narrative which is overly concerned with ‘Scottishness’ and critical centralising of marginalised identity in the establishment of a national canon. Chapter one interrogates a tendency in Scottish literary studies which reads Scottish literature in terms of parliamentary devolution, and demonstrates how a critical nationalist approach avoids the pitfalls of this reading. Chapter two is a study of two novels by the critically neglected and politically Unionist author Andrew O’Hagan, arguing that these novels criticise an insular and regressive Scotland in order to reveal an ambivalent, ‘Janus-faced’ nationalism. Chapter three examines representations of Scottish traditional and folk music in texts by A. L. Kennedy and Alan Bissett, engaging with the Scottish folk tradition since the 1950s revival in order to demonstrate literature and music’s ambivalent responses to aspects of literary and cultural nationalism. Chapter four examines texts by Janice Galloway, Alasdair Gray and James Kelman, analysing the relationships they construct between gender, nation and class. Chapter five examines three contemporary Scottish texts and elucidates an ethical turn in Scottish literary studies, which reads contemporary writing in terms of appropriation and exploitation.

## Introduction

### Cultural Nationalism and Literary Criticism

This purpose of this study is to evaluate Scottish literature and Scottish literary studies since 1989, focusing on the literary nationalist discourse which has been prominent in critical readings of literary texts. It argues for an alternative way of reading these texts, in terms of an anti-authoritarian, ambivalent and antagonistic relationship to nationhood.

1989 has proved a crucial year for both Scottish literature and cultural criticism. Craig Beveridge and Ronald Turnbull's *The Eclipse of Scottish Culture* provided an influential critique of previous work in Scottish Studies, using the framework of Frantz Fanon's postcolonial thought.<sup>1</sup> Cairns Craig's short 'Preface' to this work, discussed below in this introduction, proved an important and influential piece of criticism in its own right. In literature, 1989 saw the publication of James Kelman's novel *A Disaffection*, which was shortlisted for the Booker Prize – a prize he would eventually win, amid controversy.<sup>2</sup> Janice Galloway's influential novel *The Trick is to Keep Breathing* was also published during 1989. Both these authors have become part of an established national literary canon. They are frequently invoked in critical claims that Scottish writing during this era acted as the forerunner of political devolution and a surrogate for nationhood in the absence of a parliament – claims which chapter one of this thesis will explore in depth. Consequently, 1989 was the height of what Liam McIlvanney has termed a 'watershed' in Scottish literature, characterised by novels of working-class identity which have 'become a centre of sorts' in subsequent critical work.<sup>3</sup> This study aims to critique the cultural nationalist

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<sup>1</sup> Craig Beveridge and Ronald Turnbull, *The Eclipse of Scottish Culture: inferiorism and the intellectuals* (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1989).

<sup>2</sup> For a full analysis of Kelman and the Booker Prize, see Mary McGlynn, "'Middle-Class Wankers'" and Working-Class Texts: The Critics and James Kelman', *Contemporary Literature* Vol. 43, No. 1 (Spring, 2002), pp. 50-84.

<sup>3</sup> Liam McIlvanney, 'The Politics of Narrative in the Post-war Scottish Novel', in Zachary Leader (ed.), *On Modern British Fiction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 181-208 (p. 184-85).

agenda of Scottish Studies criticism since 1989, and to re-evaluate major and new literary texts in light of an approach I term ‘critical nationalism’. In particular, it criticises a tendency in cultural nationalist criticism to elide literary and state politics. This introduction will introduce this approach and provide a critique of the dominant, established critical narrative.

### **State, Nation, Nationalism: Ernest Gellner’s model**

According to Ernest Gellner, nationalism ‘is primarily a political principle, which holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent’.<sup>4</sup> Although more recent philosophers of nationalism have taken issue with this statist conception, Gellner’s recognition that the state and the nation are distinct from each other is significant. For Gellner, the state is ‘that agency within society which possesses the monopoly of legitimate violence’:

The ‘state’ is the specialization and concentration of order maintenance [...] The ‘state’ is that institution or set of institutions concerned with the enforcement of order (whatever else they may also be concerned with). The state exists where specialized order-enforcing agencies, such as police forces and courts, have separated out from the rest of social life. They *are* the state.<sup>5</sup>

For Gellner, nationalist movements do not arise as a response to ‘stateless nationhood’: a condition which has often been an epithet for Scotland’s status in the years between the 1707 Act of Union and the 1997 referendum.<sup>6</sup> Rather, it is opposition to the boundaries, forms and functions of the present state which engenders nationalism:

[T]he problem of nationalism does not arise for stateless societies. If there is no state, one obviously cannot ask whether or not its boundaries are congruent with the limits of nations. [...] Nationalisms have generally fulminated against the distribution of political power and the nature of political boundaries, but they have seldom if ever had occasion to deplore the absence of power and of boundaries altogether. The circumstances in which nationalism has generally arisen have not normally been those in which the state itself, as such, was lacking, or when its reality was in any doubt. The state was only too conspicuously present. It was its boundaries

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<sup>4</sup> Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2008), p. 1.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 3-4.

<sup>6</sup> See, for example, David McCrone, *Understanding Scotland: The Sociology of a Stateless Nation* (London: Routledge, 1992).

and/or the distribution of power, and possibly of other advantages, within it which were resented.<sup>7</sup>

In this elaboration Gellner conceptualizes nationalism as opposition to the current version of the state, which challenges not only the state's boundaries, but the hierarchies which it enables. In Gellner's model, the relationship between class and the state is endemic to the condition of modernity. He conceives of the state as 'a stable, specialized order-enforcing institution', with a presence which is 'inescapable', since its enforcement of order is embodied in the maintenance of the class system as an 'unbelievably intricate general division of labour and co-operation'.<sup>8</sup> The disruption of this order – particularly in the form of the atomization, fragmentation and existential crisis of the industrial male working-class in the deindustrialised nation – is a key feature in the literary texts I have chosen for examination within this thesis. These texts engender antagonisms which interrogate class and gender hierarchies. This interrogation has been recognised by cultural nationalist critics as a significant feature of Scottish literature in the twentieth century (see below). The texts examined here are oppositional towards the state institutions which reinforce these hierarchies. Conventional cultural nationalist readings subsume this opposition to the institutions of the British state as expressions of national difference in the absence of Scottish statehood. By contrast, my own critical nationalist approach – informed by Gellner's recognition of nationalism as opposition to the current incarnation of statehood – recognizes that it is the form of British statehood, and the class and gendered divisions of labour and society that it reinforces, which are opposed within these texts.

For Gellner, where the state is defined as an order-enforcing institution formally separated from the rest of society, the nation is far more intangible and elusive. As a modernist philosopher of nationalism, arguing that nationalism arises due to particular conditions in modern industrialised societies, he clearly states his anti-essentialist position: 'Having a nation is not an inherent attribute of humanity, but it has now come to appear as such'.<sup>9</sup> Gellner's model of the nation

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<sup>7</sup> Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, p. 4.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

argues for a homogeneous culture as a crucial characteristic: ‘Two men are of the same nation if and only if they share the same culture, where culture in turn means a system of ideas and signs and associations and ways of behaving and communicating’.<sup>10</sup> Thus homogeneity is a central feature of Gellner’s model of the nation. He argues that nationalism only arises for social units defined by a literate, homogeneous culture:

Nationalism is a species of patriotism distinguished by a few very important features: the units which this kind of patriotism, namely nationalism, favours with its loyalty, are culturally homogeneous, based on a culture striving to be a high (literate) culture; they are large enough to sustain the hope of supporting the educational system which can keep a literate culture going; they are poorly endowed with rigid internal sub-groupings; their populations are anonymous, fluid and mobile, and they are unmediated; the individual belongs to them directly, in virtue of his cultural style, and not in virtue of membership of nested sub-groups. Homogeneity, literacy, anonymity are key traits.<sup>11</sup>

For Gellner it is the role of the nation-state to maintain this condition of homogeneity, in a ‘mutual relationship of a modern culture and state’ where ‘the culture needs the state; and the state probably needs the homogeneous cultural branding of its flock’ in order to sustain a modern, industrial, capitalist economy.<sup>12</sup> In this mutual relationship it is the role of the state to reinforce the homogeneous culture of the nation in order to maintain the world order of nation-states, which is posited by Gellner as the condition of industrial, capitalist modernity:

[W]e see that an overwhelming part of political authority has been concentrated in the hands of one kind of institution, a reasonably large and well-centralized state. In general, each such state presides over, maintains, and is identified with, one kind of culture, one style of communication, which prevails within its borders and is dependent for its perpetuation on a centralized educational system supervised by and often actually run by the state in question, which monopolizes legitimate culture almost as much as it does legitimate violence, or perhaps more so.<sup>13</sup>

Gellner affords culture a central place in his theorization of nationalism. In this respect his arguments differ from those of his fellow modernist philosopher of

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<sup>10</sup> Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, p. 6.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 132.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 134.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

nationalism, John Breuilly, who argues that nationalism is a political – rather than a cultural – phenomenon: ‘To focus upon culture, ideology, identity, class or modernisation is to neglect the fundamental point that nationalism is, above and beyond all else, about politics, and that politics is about power’.<sup>14</sup> For Breuilly, ‘[t]he term “nationalism” is used to refer to political movements seeking or exercising state power and justifying such actions with nationalist arguments’.<sup>15</sup> However, the Scottish texts which have been read by cultural critics as indicative of literary nationalism do not fit easily with either of these statist models. As this thesis will show, their anti-hegemonic, recalcitrant energies demonstrate an opposition to the homogenizing forces of the state in Gellner’s model, and to the monopolizing state power which Breuilly tells us is the ultimate end of nationalism. Their textual oppositions to the homogeneous, the hegemonic, the established and the institutional cannot be accounted for by recourse to either Gellner or Breuilly’s models of nationalism. For Breuilly, ‘Nationalism is one particular response to the distinction, particular to the modern world, between state and society. It seeks to abolish that distinction’.<sup>16</sup> However, rather than abolishing the distinction between state and society, the texts explored in this thesis foreground this distinction as a site of antagonism and resistance. In these texts the ‘mutual relationship’, through which state and nation maintain homogeneity and a monopoly of legitimate culture in Gellner’s model, is continually challenged by the emergence of the marginal and the ‘illegitimate’, who rage against the established order enforced by the state.

These influential, statist arguments for the condition of nationalism have been opposed by more recent theorists and critics. Homi Bhabha and David Lloyd’s interrogations of established models of nationalism, explored below, inform my concern with the relationship between the state and various interest groups, social movements and identities within the nation. I am proposing critical nationalism as a reading strategy which focusses on characters’ relationships to the state, to the institutions which are maintained or owned by the state, and to the

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<sup>14</sup> John Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1982), pp. 1-2.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 374.

nation's civic and social institutions – including education, nationalized healthcare, social housing, the care system and the armed forces.

### **Rationale for Parameters of Chosen Texts and Thesis Overview**

This thesis focuses on texts published in the period from 1989 to the present day. However, because this has been an immensely productive era for Scottish literary writing, it has been necessary to be selective in my choice of texts for the purposes of space. My own extremely limited capabilities in reading Scottish Gaelic have meant that Highland texts have been excluded from my study. Anglophone Highland texts of the era in question, such as Iain Crichton Smith's novel *The Dream* (1989), his short story collection *Thoughts of Murdo* (1993), and Kevin MacNeil's debut novel *The Stornaway Way* (2006) frequently contain sustained critique of institutionalised social practice. These texts implicate the regional identity of the Western Isles – particularly of Lewis – in the curtailment of action and identity. The critical nationalist approach this thesis demonstrates can be usefully applied to texts of Highland, as well as Lowland, origins. However, because it is my intention to provide a revisionist account of – and contribution to – Scottish Studies, the texts I have chosen to examine generally share the urban and vernacular qualities of the texts which are privileged by the established cultural nationalist critical narrative. The nationalization of urban texts by established cultural critics has been aided by the heightened linguistic distinction provided by the use of urban vernacular language and formal experimentation in the work of authors such as James Kelman, Janice Galloway and Alasdair Gray. For Homi Bhabha, the urban environment is of particular significance in the national narrative, engendering emerging identities and solidarities:

[I]t is to the city that the migrants, the minorities, the diasporic come to change the history of the nation. [...] [I]n the west, and increasingly elsewhere, it is the city which provides the space in which emergent identifications and new social movements of the people are played out. It is there that, in our time, the perplexity of the living is most acutely experienced.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Homi K. Bhabha, 'DissemiNation: time, narrative, and the margins of the modern nation', in Homi K. Bhabha (ed.), *Nation and Narration* (London: Routledge, 1990), pp. 291-322 (p. 319-20).

This thesis shares Bhabha's concern with emergent identifications and new social movements in an urban context. Through its focus on urban texts, this thesis aims to critique the claims of cultural nationalist criticism from within the established, urban- and vernacular-focussed, parameters of the most prolific and controversial debates within recent Scottish literary studies.

The novel and poetry are generally privileged in studies written by leading cultural critics, including Robert Crawford's *Devolving English Literature*, Cairns Craig's *The Modern Scottish Novel: Narrative and the National Imagination* and Christopher Whyte's *Modern Scottish Poetry*.<sup>18</sup> Aiming for a more inclusive, updated approach to Scottish literary writing, I have endeavoured to more fully incorporate short fiction and drama into my study. Confines of space, coupled with my desire to accommodate drama, short fiction and song-writing, have meant that poetry is – regrettably – not represented here.

The remainder of this introduction elucidates the critical nationalist agenda which this thesis will introduce and demonstrate, followed by a critique of existing work in the field of Scottish Studies. My first chapter conducts a re-reading of work by James Kelman and A. L. Kennedy, two Glasgow writers who are frequently read in terms of parliamentary devolution. It argues that Kelman's novel *A Disaffection*<sup>19</sup> and Kennedy's short story 'The role of notable silences in Scottish history'<sup>20</sup> implicate national institutions in the containment and prevention of agency and action. My second chapter provides a reading of two novels by Andrew O'Hagan, a politically Unionist novelist and journalist whose works have been unduly neglected by Scottish cultural criticism – despite his frequent Booker Prize nominations. My third chapter contains a reading of Scottish song in the traditional idiom and an analysis of the instrumental performance practices of the 'folk fusion' genre. Established in the 1980s as an extension of – and a reaction to – the Scottish folk revival of the 1950s, folk

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<sup>18</sup> Robert Crawford, *Devolving English Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992); Cairns Craig, *The Modern Scottish Novel: Narrative and the National Imagination* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999); Christopher Whyte, *Modern Scottish Poetry* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004).

<sup>19</sup> James Kelman, *A Disaffection* (London: Vintage, 1999). First published 1989.

<sup>20</sup> A. L. Kennedy, 'The role of notable silences in Scottish history', in *Night Geometry and the Garscadden Trains* (London: Vintage, 2004), pp. 62-72. First published 1990.

fusion eschews several established aspects of folk performance (such as the communal folk session and the repetition of anonymous, aurally transmitted tunes) in favour of new compositions and performances which draw on the conventions of more commercial genres such as rock and metal. The anti-establishment, anti-institutional critical nationalist mode of reading proposed by this thesis has wider than literary significance, and has been particularly prevalent in the lyrics and performance practices of contemporary folk performers.

Chapters four and five focus predominantly on women and female identity in the chosen texts. Cultural nationalist critics have continually privileged male writers and protagonists in their establishment of a national canon predicated on urban texts. Through their focus on writers including Alasdair Gray, Tom Leonard, James Kelman and Irvine Welsh, they have posited a largely West-of-Scotland, working-class masculinity as central to an emergent literary canon, which is in turn posited as instrumental to emergent statehood. In my readings of female-authored texts, including those by Galloway and Alison Miller, protagonists respond critically to institutional social practices which privilege masculinity. For Anne McClintock, ‘The needs of the nation are identified with the needs, frustrations, and aspirations of men’.<sup>21</sup> McClintock argues for a need to integrate feminism with liberatory nationalism through a critical process which modifies and rejects exclusionary traditions:

If nationalism is not deeply informed, and transformed, by an analysis of gender power, the nation-state will remain a repository of male hopes, male aspirations, and male privilege.

All too often, the doors of tradition are slammed in women's faces. Yet traditions are not the sacrosanct and timeless essences of a people; they are social inventions often of very recent origin – both the outcome and the record of political contests and power. In a nationalist revolution, both women and men should be empowered to decide which traditions are outmoded, which should be transformed, and which should be preserved.<sup>22</sup>

Critical attitudes towards social practices received as traditional are exhibited in all the texts explored by this study. For McClintock the nation itself constitutes such a social practice, which is produced by the institutions of state and civil

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<sup>21</sup> Anne McClintock, “‘No Longer in a Future Heaven’: Women and Nationalism in South Africa’, *Transition* No. 51 (1991), pp. 104-23 (p. 105).

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 122.

society, since '[n]ations are elaborate social practices enacted through time, laboriously fabricated through the media and the printing press, in schools, churches, the myriad forms of popular culture, in trade unions and funerals, protest marches and uprisings'.<sup>23</sup> The ways in which these institutionalized social practices exclude women are overtly criticized in Janice Galloway's novel *The Trick is to Keep Breathing*<sup>24</sup> and her short story 'Fearless'<sup>25</sup> – both explored in the fourth chapter of this thesis. The other short stories included in this chapter demonstrate a similar concern with women's exclusion by institutions associated with Scottish nationhood. In the Alasdair Gray and James Kelman stories examined here, women are denied access to working-class spaces and radical class discourse. As explored below in my introduction, working-class identity and radical politics have been established by cultural nationalist literary critics as foundational to a national literary canon. For McClintock, 'The singular contribution of nationalist feminism has been its insistence on relating the feminist struggle to other liberation movements'.<sup>26</sup> Galloway's story 'the bridge' evokes potential solidarity between marginalised female identity and marginalised national identity, and relates women's cultural agency to their political agency.<sup>27</sup>

A potential solidarity between liberation movements is also enacted in the formal construction of Alison Miller's novel *Demo*, explored in my fifth chapter.<sup>28</sup> The intertextuality of the novel's dual narrative evokes a solidarity between the protagonists' stated anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist politics and the emergence of radical, female, political agency. The other two texts explored in my fifth chapter demonstrate critical opposition to traditions of nation and identity. Gregory Burke's celebrated play *Black Watch* critiques Scotland's role

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<sup>23</sup> Anne McClintock, "'No Longer in a Future Heaven": Women and Nationalism in South Africa', p. 104.

<sup>24</sup> Janice Galloway, *The Trick is to Keep Breathing* (London: Vintage, 1999). First published 1989.

<sup>25</sup> Janice Galloway, 'Fearless', in *Collected Stories* (London: Vintage, 2009), pp. 110-15. First published 1991 in *Blood*.

<sup>26</sup> Anne McClintock, "'No Longer in a Future Heaven": Women and Nationalism in South Africa', p.121.

<sup>27</sup> Janice Galloway, 'the bridge', in *Collected Stories* (London: Vintage, 2009), pp. 287-301. First published 1996 in *Where You Find It*.

<sup>28</sup> Alison Miller, *Demo* (London: Penguin, 2006). First published 2005.

in imperialism, demonstrating a Scottish working class which is willingly complicit in the enforcement of hegemonic power.<sup>29</sup> My reading of Jenni Fagan's debut novel *The Panopticon* reads her anti-authoritarian protagonist Anais as recalcitrant to exploitation and containment by any construction of identity. However, it also suggests some limits of this recalcitrance, in terms of the text's relationship to an established national canon.<sup>30</sup> The final part of the thesis elucidates an 'ethical turn' in contemporary Scottish literary studies, which interrogates a vogue for working-class, vernacular texts.

In *Gender and Nation* Nira Yuval-Davis responds to nationalist philosophers' belated acknowledgement of the role of women in nationalism, arguing that 'women did not just "enter" the national arena: they were always there, and central to its constructions and reproductions'.<sup>31</sup> She argues that a consideration of women in terms of their access to the state is central to an understanding of the hegemonic nation, because 'it is the differential access of different collectivities to the state which dictates the nature of the hegemonic national ethos in the society'.<sup>32</sup> Despite this emphasis on the state, she is also focused on the civil and social domain, reminding us that:

It is not only economic relations, but political and social as well, which operate there and which inform and are informed by the state. Political parties, social movements and trade unions are not part of the state even if they are often organized and focus their activities on the state. Education and media can be owned or not owned by the state and can have ideological projects which are to a larger or lesser extent autonomous from the state.<sup>33</sup>

Yuval-Davis's emphasis on the 'formal and informal organizations, associations and institutions in civil society' is shared by this thesis, informing its readings of female characters and their access to the spaces and institutions of the nation at the levels of both state and civil society.<sup>34</sup> Her demands for an intersectional approach focused on women asks that we 'consider the issue of women's citizenship not only by contrast to that of men, but also in relation to women's

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<sup>29</sup> Gregory Burke, *Black Watch* (London: Faber, 2007).

<sup>30</sup> Jenni Fagan, *The Panopticon* (London: Heinemann, 2012).

<sup>31</sup> Nira Yuval-Davis, *Gender and Nation* (London: Sage, 1997), p. 3.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 82.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

affiliation to dominant or subordinate groups, their ethnicity, origin and urban or rural residence'.<sup>35</sup> This consideration of women in relation to other group affiliations is also appropriate as an approach to Scottish texts since 1989, since the textual enfranchisement of the urban, working-class woman has been a central feature of this writing. A concern with women's relationship to the community, the nation, the state and other political and social institutions – such as trade-unionism and radical, workerist politics – is shared by many of the texts studied in my last two chapters, which also consider the relationship between female agency and the Scottish literary canon.

### **Antagonism and Ambivalence**

For Anthony Giddens, the nation-state is 'a bordered power-container [...], the pre-eminent power-container of the modern era'.<sup>36</sup> In his model the role of the state is to ensure 'internal pacification', in order to secure the 'formalized monopoly over the means of violence' which both Giddens and Gellner – drawing on Max Weber's monopoly of legitimate violence – view as a defining characteristic of the state.<sup>37</sup> The differences, antagonisms and mobilizations within the nation, which might otherwise lead to conflict, are contained and suppressed by disciplinary state institutions. However, for Cairns Craig, it is these antagonisms which define the nation, since 'Scotland might stand as exemplar of the fact that nationalisms and national cultures are always multiple, not because they are "hybrids", but because they are bounded accidentally and within these boundaries there are always alternative versions of the national culture'.<sup>38</sup> Hybridity and internal competing interests within the nation do not oppose nationalism for Craig, but are instead definitive of the plural nationalisms which inhabit any nation and which he associates with the recalcitrance of the marginal: 'The nation is always the host to multiple nationalisms, to marginal and

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<sup>35</sup> Nira Yuval-Davis, *Gender and Nation*, p. 68.

<sup>36</sup> Anthony Giddens, *The Nation State and Violence: Volume Two of A Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1985), p. 120.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Cairns Craig, 'Scotland and Hybridity', in Gerard Carruthers, David Goldie and Alasdair Renfrew (eds), *Beyond Scotland* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2004), pp. 229-53 (pp. 250-51).

antagonistic communities'.<sup>39</sup> These antagonisms are foregrounded by my critical nationalist reading agenda. However, where these antagonisms constitute the embodiment of the nation as bounded argument for Craig, in my critical nationalist readings the nation is also the subject of their critique. Constructions of national identity and the practices associated with national life are frequent targets within my chosen literary texts, which oppose nostalgic, idealized, exclusionary, elitist or repressive constructions of Scotland.

Craig's work frequently acknowledges the influence of Tom Nairn. For Nairn, nationalism is irrevocably ambivalent, and is the result of an 'uneven development' in which territories respond to the 'unforeseeable, antagonistic reality of capitalism's growth into the world'.<sup>40</sup> As part of this process, peripheral territories respond to domination by aspiring to 'catch up' with a 'Progress' identified with metropolitan centres, which favours 'particular places, classes and interests'.<sup>41</sup> In Nairn's model, the masses within territories perceived as 'backwards' are 'excluded from the action' of capitalist progress, 'trampled over rather than taught the rules of the game; exploited rather than made partners'.<sup>42</sup> The desire to 'catch up' with material progress causes the 'peripheric elites', who constitute the few privileged members of the 'backwards' territory, to utilize the indigenous culture of the region in order to construct a populist nationalism.<sup>43</sup> For Nairn this process is driven by the desire for self-determination in the form of autonomous institutions: 'Since they wanted factories, parliaments, schools and so on, they had to copy the leaders somehow; but in a way which rejected the mere implantation of these things by direct foreign intervention or control'.<sup>44</sup> For Nairn culture is integral to this self-determination, since nationalist mobilization is driven by 'the people and peculiarities of the region: its inherited *ethnos*, speech, folklore, skin-colour, and so on'.<sup>45</sup> In order to enact 'the conscious formation of a militant, inter-class community rendered strongly (if mythically)

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<sup>39</sup> Cairns Craig, 'Scotland and Hybridity', p. 249.

<sup>40</sup> Tom Nairn, *The Break-Up of Britain: Crisis and Neo-Nationalism*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (London: Verso, 1981), p. 337.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 338.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 339.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 339-40.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 339.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 340.

aware of its own separate identity vis-à-vis the outside forces of domination', it is necessary for the 'new middle-class intelligentsia of nationalism [...] to invite the masses into history' through the use of a populist, mass, folk culture.<sup>46</sup> In Nairn's model, culture is utilized by a newly-awakened nationalist elite in order to mobilize the masses in terms of their national identity. For Nairn this creates an antagonism between nationality and class, and a scenario where capitalism's uneven development perpetuates this antagonism whilst maintaining a 'triumph' of nationality over class:

In the world of nationalism things are different. Its war-like circumstances constantly engender real antagonisms between nationality and class. And in these conflicts – as long as the primary contradiction of the world economy dominates it – the position of nationality will remain stronger.<sup>47</sup>

However, the literary texts examined here resist the domination of the national in narratives of identity. My readings foreground antagonistic and ambivalent responses to the 'particularities' of national culture and tradition which Nairn argues are mobilized by nationalism.<sup>48</sup> The anti-hegemonic energies of these texts respond to a domination which is not exerted by external control, but which is the internal domination of nationality over rival social formations. These are subordinated by the nation as 'specific ideological form':

That ideological form must become an a priori condition of communication between individuals (the 'citizens') and between social groups – not by suppressing all differences, but by relativizing them and subordinating them to itself in such a way that it is the symbolic difference between 'ourselves' and 'foreigners' which wins out and which is lived as irreducible.<sup>49</sup>

For Etienne Balibar nationalism engenders a particular form of social change, in which the nation-state becomes the vehicle for reform:

In the case of national formations, the imaginary which inscribes itself in the real in this way is that of the 'people'. It is that of a community which recognizes itself in advance in the institution of the state, which recognizes that state as 'its own' in opposition to other states and, in particular, inscribes its political struggles within the horizon of that state –

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<sup>46</sup> Tom Nairn, *The Break-Up of Britain: Crisis and Neo-Nationalism*, p. 340.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 355.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 340.

<sup>49</sup> Etienne Balibar, 'The Nation Form: History and Ideology', in Etienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein, *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities* (London: Verso, 1991), pp. 86-106 (p. 94).

by, for example, formulating its aspirations for reform and social revolution as projects for the transformation of ‘its national state’.<sup>50</sup>

However, the texts examined by this study do not present the state and its institutions as the vehicle for social and political change, but as the containment of such change. Their oppositional energies are directed at the social and civil institutions of Scotland. These include the autonomous institutions of Scottish civil society – including church, law, and national bourgeoisie – which for Tom Nairn exemplify a unique ‘Scots pattern [...] of a distinct civil society not married to “its” State’.<sup>51</sup> In Nairn’s account, Scotland has been subject to a ‘foreign, much stronger State and political system [which] was imposed on Scotland by the Union’.<sup>52</sup> However, in the texts studied here, the dominant British state is not the only target for oppositional critique, which instead focusses on the politics and injustices of Scotland’s institutions.

Where Nairn argues for a separation between civil society and state, he also acknowledges that the distinction between them is often unclear:

To understand any society as a whole, one must always distinguish between its ‘State’ or political and administrative structure, and its ‘civil society’. The latter comprises, for example, its most characteristic non-political organizations, its religious and other beliefs, its ‘customs’ or way of life, its typical jokes, and so on. It is not easy to sum up all that is denoted by this Gramscian category, and there are things which will not fit neatly under either heading. But this is relatively unimportant. What matters is that they are distinguishable, and that the singular identity of a modern society depends upon the relationship between them.<sup>53</sup>

In the texts examined here, both state and civil institutions are subject to critique. Where – in Gellner’s formulation – the role of the state is to maintain a status quo of socio-political hierarchies and culture, the national, institutionalized social norms and practices criticised by the texts examined here are viewed as complicit with this maintenance of a dominant and elitist social order. Nairn affiliates critique of the state with emerging nationalist mobilizations, arguing that ‘[i]t should be the task of independence movements in these various countries to work out an analogous critique of the dominant state’.<sup>54</sup> This ‘task’ is a primary focus

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<sup>50</sup> Etienne Balibar, ‘The Nation Form: History and Ideology’, p. 93.

<sup>51</sup> Tom Nairn, *The Break-Up of Britain: Crisis and Neo-Nationalism*, p. 135.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 135-36.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 132.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 76.

of my critical nationalist approach. For Nairn, opposition to the current British state form and to its institutions is the goal of a progressive, new configuration of nationalism:

Although of course not an absolutist state, the Anglo-British system remains a product of the general transition from absolutism to modern constitutionalism: it led the way out of the former, but never genuinely arrived at the latter. [...] It is a basically indefensible and unadaptable relic, not a modern state-form. In its prolonged, empirical survival it has of course gathered many of the latter's aspects and appearances; but this must be distinguished from authentic transmutation, via a second political revolution. No less evidently and profoundly, the modern history of the British state is about the absence of such a change: although in one sense a question of comparative structural analysis, this recessive character is also written openly upon the institutions, rituals and self-advertisement of the system, in ideological terms.<sup>55</sup>

In this account, Nairn associates institutions and ritualistic traditions with the self-maintenance of an archaic British state which contains change, reform and radicalism. The 'real historic aim' of such a state is 'to change just as much as is necessary for everything to go on as before'.<sup>56</sup> My readings of the texts examined here demonstrate their critique of this containment of change, through a critique of institutions which are complicit with state preservation of conditions of internal pacification. For Nairn the nationalist challenge to this archaic state formation and the social structures which maintain it is radical and revolutionary, since '[i]t would entail the radical removal of the entire traditional apparatus of state and civil intelligentsia'.<sup>57</sup> This radically transformative nationalism is invoked by the 'nationalism' in 'critical nationalism', which reads the critique enacted by Scottish literary texts as a demand for radical transformation of the state and civil life.

However, in Nairn's model nationalism is not unproblematically progressive, revolutionary and counter-hegemonic. Instead it is characterized as Janus-faced and ambivalent, since 'the substance of nationalism is always morally, politically, humanly ambiguous'.<sup>58</sup> As a result of this ambiguity, the

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<sup>55</sup> Tom Nairn, *The Break-Up of Britain: Crisis and Neo-Nationalism*, p. 75.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 58.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 56.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 348.

counter-hegemonic energies of nationalism cannot be separated from the hegemony it aims to achieve:

Real, uneven development has invariably generated an imperialism of the centre over the periphery; one after another, these peripheric areas have been forced into a profoundly ambivalent reaction against this dominance, seeking at once to resist it and to somehow take over its vital forces for their own use.<sup>59</sup>

For Nairn, all nationalisms are characterized by ‘[f]orms of “irrationality” (prejudice, sentimentality, collective egotism, aggression, etc.)’.<sup>60</sup> This is as a result of nationalism’s dependence on cultural forms, which Nairn characterizes as backwards and regressive:

[I]t is through nationalism that societies try to propel themselves forward to certain kinds of goal (industrialization, prosperity, equality with other peoples, etc.) *by a certain sort of regression* – by looking inwards, drawing more deeply upon their indigenous resources, resurrecting past folk-heroes and myths about themselves and so on. [...] nationalism in this sense can be pictured as like the old Roman God, Janus, who stood above gateways with one face looking forward and one backwards. Thus does nationalism stand over the passage to modernity, for human society. As human kind is forced through its strait doorway, it must look desperately back into the past, to gather strength wherever it can be found for the ordeal of ‘development’.<sup>61</sup>

There is an anti-culturalist aspect to Nairn’s work that sees culture not as the agent of progress in a nationalist world, but as a necessary yet undesirable tool for nationalist mobilization. The cultural ‘collective unconscious’, to which nationalism appeals in order to develop mass mobilization, is for Nairn an atavistic energy which becomes uncontrollable – and which he associates with the historical ‘irrationalities’ of fascism and genocide.<sup>62</sup> The double-faceted nature of nationalism as both emancipatory progress and irrational regression is engaged with by the readings in this thesis. The texts analysed here display an ambivalent relationship to the nation, both in terms of the state-supporting institutions which have conventionally been considered as markers of Scotland’s autonomy in the absence of full statehood, and in terms of the repetitive, institutionalized practices

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<sup>59</sup> Tom Nairn, *The Break-Up of Britain: Crisis and Neo-Nationalism*, pp. 340-41.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 348.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 348-49.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 348-50.

of civil life characterized as ‘national’. For Eric Hobsbawm, these practices are the foundations of the nation, which he conceives of as ‘invented tradition’:

‘Invented tradition’ is taken to mean a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past. In fact, where possible, they normally attempt to establish continuity with a suitable historic past.<sup>63</sup>

Behavioural practices posited as ‘national’, and the repetition, ritualization and formalization of these, are resisted within several of the texts explored here. Andrew O’Hagan’s work in particular engages with the regressive character of hegemonic constructions of Scottishness, critiquing national traditions in terms of progression and regression. As demonstrated in chapter two of this study, his novel *Be Near Me* and his essay ‘Scotland’s Old Injury’ critique Scotland as a site of cultural stagnation, and demand a progressive transformation.<sup>64</sup> An ambivalent and often oppositional attitude towards the nation is foregrounded throughout my readings of literary texts, which explore how they critique its regressive, irrational aspects. My aim is to demonstrate that these literary texts enact a critique of the social injustice they associate with the nation and the institutions through which nationalist mobilization and national identity are realised and maintained.

### **Postnationalism**

Instead of repeating the cultural nationalist readings which argue that these texts are ciphers of a devolutionary energy, I argue that they demand a more radical transformation of state and social forms. One example of a transformed model of statehood is explored by Richard Kearney. His study *Postnationalist Ireland* argues that the case of Northern Ireland presents us with the need to rethink sovereignty and the model of the nation-state which has traditionally constituted the end of nationalist mobilization:

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<sup>63</sup> Eric Hobsbawm, ‘Introduction’, in Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (eds), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 1-14 (p. 1).

<sup>64</sup> Andrew O’Hagan, *Be Near Me*, (London: Faber, 2006); Andrew O’Hagan, ‘Scotland’s Old Injury’, *The Atlantic Ocean: Essays on Britain and America* (London: Faber and Faber, 2008), pp. 19-30.

[T]he dual claims of absolute sovereignty exercised over the same territory by two sovereign governments are inevitably condemned to conflict. Unless, that is, the understanding of sovereignty is radically revised and superseded. By extension, the claim of either national government to ‘represent’ both Ulster communities (British and Irish) as ‘one and indivisible’ is doomed to failure. No matter how it is viewed – as part of a United Kingdom or of an eventual United Ireland – the pluralist character of Northern Ireland defies the equation of absolute sovereignty with a unitary body. Hence the need (i) to separate the notion of nation from that of state; (ii) to acknowledge the co-existence of different identities in the same society; and (iii) to extend the models of identification *beyond unitary sovereignty* to include more inclusive and pluralist forms of association – such as a British-Irish Council or European Federation of Regions.<sup>65</sup>

Scotland’s historical and political situation is, of course, somewhat different from that of Northern Ireland. However, Kearney’s observations that new models are needed in order to better understand the current political climate are apt for a study of Scottish literature since 1989, which frequently expresses discontent with existing models of statehood and identity. For Kearney identity and state forms continue to be interrelated, each informing the transformation of the other:

In the new European dispensation, nation-states will, arguably, become increasingly anachronistic. Power will be disseminated *upwards* from the state to transnational government and *downwards* to subnational government. In this context, future identities may, conceivably, be less nation-statist and more local and cosmopolitan.<sup>66</sup>

For Kearney, the constitutional possibilities engendered by the constitutional transformation of Ireland anticipate a new world-order, in which the nation-state loses its primacy subject to supra-national political structures. He poses an ‘alternative theoretical model’<sup>67</sup> based on anticipated supra-national alliances, including a European Federation of Regions and a British-Irish Council.<sup>68</sup> He argues that, through recent developments in international law, ‘the increasing *interdependence* of states – accompanied by a sharing of sovereignties in the interests of greater peace, social justice and economic exchange – qualified the principle of absolute independence for the nation-state’.<sup>69</sup> Within the new world

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<sup>65</sup> Richard Kearney, *Postnationalist Ireland: Politics, Culture, Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 24.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19.

order, which Kearney anticipates as resulting from this increasing interdependence, conventional nationalist arguments for autonomous nation-states become redundant or impractical. Instead a radically different solution is posed by Kearney, which is informed by local, international and global political alliances. He anticipates a model of statehood which is more inclusive and pluralist, whilst not dismissing nationalism entirely. He insists that '[t]o critique the nation-state is not to repudiate all forms of nationalism', reminding us that 'certain forms of nationalism have served, historically, as legitimate ideologies of resistance and emancipation'.<sup>70</sup> Kearney's critical attitude to the nation-state informs my readings of the texts under consideration in terms of their interrogation of national institutions associated with the state and civil society. However, the critical nationalist reading I am proposing is aligned with the resistant qualities of nationalism which Kearney invokes here. Thus, despite its critique of the institutions of the nation-state, critical nationalism retains this quality of nationalism as it is conventionally understood. The emancipatory qualities associated with nationalism by Kearney have also been foundational to the cultural nationalist critical narrative's establishment of a modern Scottish literary canon, which claims that subaltern resistance to marginalisation characterises modern Scottish writing (explored below in this introduction).

Along with several philosophers of nationalism, Kearney is keen to distance his thought from essentialism and ethnic nationalism, aligning his work with Benedict Anderson's modernist conceptualisation of the nation as 'imagined community'.<sup>71</sup> This preference for civic, modernist conceptions of nationalism rather than ethnic, primordialist theories leads, Kearney argues, to the realisation 'that nationality may actually be strengthened by its decoupling from ethnicity and permitted to find more appropriate forms of expression than the nation-state'.<sup>72</sup> Kearney's eschewal of ethnic, essentialist nationalisms and his insistence on the significance of postnational identities are expanded by Eleanor Bell. Bell argues that modern Scottish writing works against 'reductive formulations of nationhood' by 'highlighting the need for alterity and the impossibility of

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<sup>70</sup> Richard Kearney, *Postnationalist Ireland: Politics, Culture, Philosophy*, p. 57.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 58.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

assimilation, the need to recognise strangeness from within'.<sup>73</sup> Through her readings of philosopher Zygmunt Bauman, Bell argues that Scottish literature is engaging with a postmodern and postnational condition that is an 'in-between state', characterised by the breakdown of a nation-state which is increasingly 'under general scrutiny'.<sup>74</sup> Bell's emphasis on 'a "divorce" between state politics and citizens' is central to her understanding of this condition.<sup>75</sup> Critical nationalism focuses on this disjuncture, viewing the politics of its chosen texts as recalcitrant to state politics. For Bell, postnationalism invokes 'a critical interrogation and self-consciousness' of the nation's 'basic tenets [...] in order to assess their present viability'.<sup>76</sup> The critical nationalist agenda proposed here is informed by postnationalism's interrogation of the nation's tenets.

In spite of Bell's opposition to cultural nationalist readings, Stefanie Lehner has observed that 'neither Kearney's model, nor [...] Bell's account, dispense with the nation as the most privileged socio-political category'.<sup>77</sup> This current study is also primarily concerned with the nation as a dominant and privileged category, and repeats the tendencies of these postnationalist critics to privilege the nation as primary referent. Thus critical nationalism does not dispense with a nationalist paradigm, despite its revisionist aim to foreground the divisions and antagonisms inherent within the nation. Willy Maley and Sarah Neely have critiqued postnationalism's ambivalent response to nationalism:

[T]he critique of nationalism has always gone hand-in-hand with the persistence and pervasiveness of national identity. This can create a mix of patriotism and paranoia, as commentators cautious about the nation-state find themselves caught up, as citizens or subjects, in a political entity they would like to see as outmoded. [...] We would dispute whether a move away from nationalism is anything other than wishful thinking on the part of an educated minority.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Eleanor Bell, *Questioning Scotland: Literature, Nationalism, Postmodernism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), p. 120.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 25.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 29.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 139.

<sup>77</sup> Stefanie Lehner, *Subaltern Ethics in Contemporary Scottish and Irish Literature: Tracing Counter-Histories* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p. 7.

<sup>78</sup> Willy Maley and Sarah Neely, "'Almost afraid to know itself': Macbeth and Cinematic Scotland', in Eleanor Bell and Gavin Miller (eds), *Scotland in Theory*:

Instead of repeating a desire to ‘move away from nationalism’ whilst continuing to privilege the nation as a category, this study recognizes the nationalist implications of its own parameters. It aligns itself with cultural nationalist criticism’s claims for an autonomous and distinctive Scottish literary canon, recognizing that these *are* nationalist claims. However, it also embodies a postnationalist recognition of the divisions within the nation that Michael Billig posits as characteristic of the postmodern nation. In his critique of postnationalist arguments for the decline of the nation-state, Billig argues that ‘nationalist and internationalist habits of thought [...] can be, and frequently are, intermixed’.<sup>79</sup> For Billig, ‘the processes of globalization, which are diminishing differences and spaces between nations, are also fragmenting the imagined unity within these nations’.<sup>80</sup> My readings foreground these fragmentations and divisions within the nation in the postnationalist era of globalization. For Billig this fragmentation enables emergent identities:

The state, declining in its powers, is no longer able to impose a uniform sense of identity. With the pressure for national uniformity removed, a variety of other forces is realized. Within the national territory, multiple narratives and new identities are emerging. Local, ethnic and gender identities have become the site for postmodern politics. [...] National identity no longer enjoys its preeminence as the psychological identity that claims the ultimate loyalty of the individual. Instead, it must compete with other identities on a free market of identities.<sup>81</sup>

Billig’s account of the decline of the nation’s authority in postmodernity challenges Nairn’s view that nation triumphs over class. In the postmodern era, he argues, new identities emerge to compete with dominant, national narratives. It is this antagonistic competition between emerging identities and national narratives which critical nationalism emphasizes and analyses.

However, Stefanie Lehner has criticised postmodern cases for plurality and emergence, arguing that arguments such as Billig’s further nationalism’s marginalisation of recalcitrant, subaltern identities by reabsorbing them into a discourse of pluralism:

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*Reflections on Culture and Literature* (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2004), pp. 97-106 (p. 98).

<sup>79</sup> Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism* (London: Sage, 1995), p. 129.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 132.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 133.

[R]ather than indicating a truly ethical effort to relate to, or address, what is radically other [...] such postnational and/or postmodern celebrations of difference efface the continuing inequalities and disenfranchisements by translating them into a grammar of pluralism and inclusiveness.<sup>82</sup>

Through readings of Scottish texts in terms of ambivalence and antagonism towards the nation, this study aims to answer Lehner's demand for 'a sustained critique of the ideological constituents and oppressive structural components of and within the national whole' – a demand which she sees postnationalist reconfigurations as failing to address.<sup>83</sup>

### **Scotland and New Nationalism**

For Michael Keating, Scotland provides an example of a new nationalism which does not have the congruence of nation and state as its ultimate aim.<sup>84</sup> Like Kearney, Keating recognises the decline in the authority of the nation-state, and views the majority preference for Scottish devolution within the United Kingdom as evidence that 'the electors are ahead of constitutional experts in realizing the limitations of traditional categories and are searching for some new formula to express their national identity, in a world in which those categories have lost much of their meaning'.<sup>85</sup> He seeks to recover minority nationalisms from their association with statehood, arguing that 'given the transformation of the nation-state, civil society is as important a sphere as the state for the nation-building project'.<sup>86</sup> The literary texts examined by this study are also engaged with civil society and its instrumental role in nationalism. My readings chart their ambivalent responses to Scottish civil society and to its institutions, which are often upheld by cultural critics as the carriers of Scottish national autonomy in the absence of a state. This oppositional attitude to nationhood demands transformation at the level of civil society – the level which Keating claims is crucial to new nationalist movements. He aims to recover minority nationalisms

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<sup>82</sup> Stefanie Lehner, *Subaltern Ethics in Contemporary Scottish and Irish Literature: Tracing Counter-Histories*, p. 7

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 46.

<sup>84</sup> Michael Keating, *Nations Against the State: The New Politics of Nationalism in Quebec, Catalonia and Scotland* (Hampshire: Macmillan, 1996).

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xi.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xii.

from claims of archaism and regression, arguing that ‘they represent modernizing and democratizing movements in the face of archaic states’.<sup>87</sup> In my readings, this drive towards modernization and democratization is located in the substantial critique of civil institutions which features throughout modern Scottish writing. For Keating, as for Cairns Craig, institutions are central to understanding nationalism. By viewing civil institutions as of central importance, the state is undermined as the end of nationalism, and becomes just one institution amongst many which provide a ‘link between individual and community’.<sup>88</sup>

For Keating, Scottish nationalism is defined by this undermining of statehood:

There is majority support in Scotland neither for the nationalist/separatist nor for the unionist/British option. Rather, majority opinion here, as in other stateless nations, is searching for a postsovereigntist option in which Scotland can negotiate its place within the wider unions to which it belongs. This is not, with due deference to the title of this volume, a matter of postnationalism. Nationalism is alive and well, with nationalist parties in office in the three devolved territories of the UK and both main British parties seeking a new British national project. What has changed is that nationalism is no longer necessarily associated with the creation of an independent state. Even within the political parties there is some willingness to explore the middle ground.<sup>89</sup>

Like Kearney, Keating poses a ‘postsovereigntist option’, which opposes Gellner’s understanding of the ends of nationalism as a unity of national culture and state. He demands a widening of the conception of nationalism:

It is necessary to separate nationalism conceptually from the state. Then we can recognize that there are nationalisms which do not aim at the creation of states; we can also see nationalism as a phenomenon of continued importance as the classic nation-state gives way to new and more complex forms of political interdependence.<sup>90</sup>

Like John Breuilly and Tom Nairn, Keating views the case of Scotland as a new or neo-nationalism, which is deemed ‘very different from [nationalist

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<sup>87</sup> Michael Keating, *Nations Against the State: The New Politics of Nationalism in Quebec, Catalonia and Scotland*, p. xii.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>89</sup> Michael Keating, ‘The End of Union? Scottish Nationalism and the UK State’, in Keith Breen and Shane O’Neill (eds), *After the Nation* (Hampshire: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010), pp. 103-19 (pp. 116-17).

<sup>90</sup> Michael Keating, *Nations Against the State: The New Politics of Nationalism in Quebec, Catalonia and Scotland*, p. 18.

movements] of the nineteenth century'.<sup>91</sup> For Breuille these new nationalisms are characterized by advanced and upwardly-mobile populations, since '[t]hese nationalist movements draw not on peasant or traditional working-class support so much as on a managerial, technical and administrative middle class and a mobile, young, often skilled working class'.<sup>92</sup> Identity provides a crucial mobilizing factor for these new nationalisms, since '[t]hese groups can exploit some form of regional identity to put pressure on central government or seek autonomy for their region'.<sup>93</sup> Where Breuille insists that the social mobility created by the New Towns policy has played a crucial role in creating the classes which mobilize nationalism, he denies any role for culture in Scottish nationalism, arguing that 'the absence of a strong cultural nationalist movement' as a consequence of the sentimental treatment of Scotland's traditional culture in the nineteenth century has led to a more 'pragmatic' – rather than cultural – nationalism in the twentieth century.<sup>94</sup> The cultural nationalist criticism which the second half of this introduction explores opposes this view, designating culture as the carrier of Scottish autonomy in the absence of a state. In the context of recent cultural criticism and the role it has played in establishing a Scottish literary canon, Breuille's claim that 'there is no distinctively Scottish literature', stated in 1982, is clearly inaccurate and outdated. However, Breuille concurs with other commentators that Scotland's institutional identity is a definitive factor in Scottish nationalism:

The argument for the preservation of a distinct Scottish identity is on much stronger grounds at the level of institutions. The Union of 1707 preserved the Church of Scotland and a separate legal and educational system. The clerical, legal and teaching professions may have been unionist in politics but they retained a peculiar Scottish identity. Industrial labour may have committed itself to the British labour movement but there was a Scottish TUC. The Scottish Independent Labour Party was long associated with the Home Rule movement.<sup>95</sup>

Administrative devolution to Scotland has been a process with a history that extends far beyond the referenda of 1979 and 1997, and has been a feature of

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<sup>91</sup> John Breuille, *Nationalism and the State*, p. 279.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 293.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 295.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 288-89.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 283-84.

Scotland's history throughout the twentieth century. Beginning with the 1885 creation of a Secretary of State for Scotland, and the establishment of a Scottish Office to which further economic and administrative powers have been devolved throughout the latter half of the twentieth century, the process of devolution precedes the politically-nationalist literary revivalism of the early twentieth century.<sup>96</sup>

Keating, Breuille and Cairns Craig agree that these preserved and devolved Scottish civil institutions have become a dominant arena for Scottish nationalism. Keating in particular views civil society as instrumental, arguing that '[n]ation building has taken place as much within civil society as the state. [...] [T]he national project, in the contemporary world, cannot be carried by governmental institutions alone. Rather, it must be rooted in civil society'.<sup>97</sup> For Keating, the supersession of the state as the object of nationalism enables alternative social movements and emergent collective identities:

It is [...] necessary to link different political arenas, since collective identity and the capacity to mobilize no longer correspond to the framework of the state. New social movements, challenging the dominant logics of state and market, are evidence of a new type of politics but there is no obvious outlet for it. One way in which new and rediscovered forms of collective identity can be linked to action to sustain a new social project is provided by a new territorial politics, which seeks to link the diverse arenas of policy and to confront the challenge of global economic change. These include the new minority nationalisms, no longer tied to the model of the nation-state.<sup>98</sup>

For Keating the new minority nationalisms, amongst which he counts Scotland, signify a new kind of territorial politics characterised by their opposition to state authority and market capitalism. The emergent identities which enact this opposition are not congruent with the nation-state, but form sub- and supra-national solidarities, which are the chief actors of this oppositional nationalism. Such oppositional, emergent identities have been recognised by several established literary critics as a feature of recent Scottish writing. As explored below in this introduction, cultural nationalist critics have identified 'subaltern' groups as the main actors in literary forms of this opposition. In particular,

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<sup>96</sup> John Breuille, *Nationalism and the State*, p. 284.

<sup>97</sup> Michael Keating, *Nations Against the State: The New Politics of Nationalism in Quebec, Catalonia and Scotland*, p. 218.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 41.

working-class masculinities undergoing profound change after de-industrialisation, and female identities which are recalcitrant to the dominant logic of the state, are central to cultural nationalist arguments and to my own. However, where much cultural nationalist criticism subsumes these groups as part of a resurgent national tradition, a critical nationalist reading strategy – informed by Keating’s conception of an emergent, oppositional nationalism – highlights their resistance to containment by dominating forms, both institutional and literary.

### **Nationalisms Against the State**

In *The Break-Up of Britain*, Tom Nairn anticipates a central role for Scotland in the establishment of ‘a new, fairer, more federal British order: not the dingy, fearful compromise of “devolution” but a modern, European multi-national state’.<sup>99</sup> For Nairn this transformation can only come about by means of ‘an analogous critique of the dominant state’.<sup>100</sup> This recognition of critique as definitive of new nationalisms forms the basis of critical nationalism. Nairn argues that the ends of this critique are ultimately social, viewing transformation of statehood as a means to this larger end: ‘If the social revolution is on the agenda of the heartland at all, then it would be enormously advanced by the disintegration of the state’.<sup>101</sup> Throughout *The Break-Up of Britain* Nairn theorises his anti-state neo-nationalism, arguing for a radical transformation within the heart of the British establishment, rather than the furthering of a devolutionary process viewed as ‘changes [which] were at heart ways of preserving the old state – minor alternations to conserve the antique essence of English hegemony’.<sup>102</sup> For Nairn Scotland is a potential member of a disruptive ‘middle-class’ of nations, with neither First nor Third World status in terms of development. These nations are ‘the trouble-makers of the existing international order’, characterised by ‘collision with the main lines of the geopolitical order’.<sup>103</sup> Like Keating, Nairn sees emergent Scottish nationalism as a challenge to the

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<sup>99</sup> Tom Nairn, *The Break-up of Britain: Crisis and Neo-nationalism*, p. 91.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 76.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 90.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 63.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 183.

existing world-order of nation-states, and to the dominant social, economic and political forms which this represents.

David Lloyd also argues for oppositional ‘nationalisms against the state’, which correspond to emancipatory social movements, rather than the order of nation-states, in their potential to mobilize alternative socio-political forms:

[I]f the nationalisms with which we are in solidarity are to be emancipatory, rather than fixed in the repressive apparatuses of the state formations, it is their conjunctural relation to other social movements that needs to be emphasized and furthered, at both theoretical and practical levels. The possibility of nationalism against the state lies in the recognition of the excess of the people over the nation, and in the understanding that it is, beyond itself, within the very logic of nationalism as a political phenomenon to open and mobilize alternative formations.<sup>104</sup>

Like Kearney’s postnationalism, Lloyd’s proposed ‘nationalism against the state’ is concerned with the need to separate the notion of nation from that of state, and shares Kearney’s desire to recognise an ‘excess’ which disrupts unitary notions of the nation-state in the form of pluralities of identities, interests and emancipatory social movements. For Lloyd the role of the state in nationalisms represses and contains this excess, since ‘it is the superordination of the state form that puts an end to the processes of articulation and conjecture that maintain nationalism differentially as an element of broader, more complex, and often internally antagonistic social formations’.<sup>105</sup> The dominance of state-oriented tendencies in hegemonic groups or parties within nationalist movements should, for Lloyd, be countered by the recalcitrant, anti-statist energies of the social movements with which nationalism should align itself:

[I]t is important to recognize that other social movements are not necessarily entirely absorbed or otherwise dissolved in the hegemony of state-oriented nationalisms. On the contrary, they persist as distinct elements of the struggle or as recalcitrant tendencies for the state. But they do so, not as particles of the pre-history of nationalism awaiting absorption, but as active constituents of the modern, inflected just as is nationalism by recent history, though with different ends and correspondingly different narratives.<sup>106</sup>

Recognition of these antagonistic and recalcitrant narratives is essential to my proposed critical nationalist reading agenda, which enables a re-reading of recent

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<sup>104</sup> David Lloyd, *Ireland After History* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1999), p. 36.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*

Scottish texts by foregrounding their recalcitrant, anti-statist energies. Rather than absorbing the works of writers such as James Kelman, Janice Galloway and A. L. Kennedy into a state-oriented Scottish nationalism, as is enacted by the cultural nationalist narrative critiqued below, my readings are aligned with Lloyd's recognition of the people as antagonistic excess, recognising the presence of this excess within the literary texts under analysis. This excess opposes containing and excluding constructions of nationhood, and criticises the containing institutional apparatuses of the state.

Lloyd's consideration is both defensive and critical of nationalism, defending nationalisms from hegemonic Western philosophical models which view them as resurgent and regressive. He argues that nationalisms should not be viewed as 'a futile protest against inevitable cultural modernity or economic transnationality' but as progressive movements 'which, globally, are not resurgent but continuous, not fixated, but in transformation'.<sup>107</sup> However, he also critiques nationalism's tendency to subsume and contain other social movements, and sees the role of the nation-state as pivotal in this containment. In his critique, modernist nationalist philosophies such as Gellner's, which see the nation-state as the historical end of nationalism and a crucial stage in historical narratives of modernity and progress, are complicit with an elitist historiography which relegates alternative forms of mobilization:

[W]here the nation-state is assumed as the proper end of historical processes, only one line of development can be seen as the properly historical in history. Accordingly, movements whose struggles precede chronologically or coincide with nationalism, but are not identical or entirely isomorphic with it, can only be seen as *proto-nationalist*. [...] [P]opular movements are absorbed into the historically progressive trajectory of nationalism, so that what is significant in them is the set of traits which lend themselves to national ends. Other traits which may indeed be incompatible with nationalism, such as modes of organization and communication, and certain kinds of spiritualism, are relegated to the residual space of historical contingency.<sup>108</sup>

For Lloyd, modernist nationalist philosophies are complicit in a historiography which relegates other social movements, viewing the nation-state as the result of forward-moving historical progress whilst subsuming the progressive energies of

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<sup>107</sup> David Lloyd, *Ireland After History*, pp. 19-20.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24.

other emancipatory liberation movements under the banner of nationalism. He is concerned with positing an ‘alternative materialist history of nationalism in its relation to other social movements’.<sup>109</sup> These alternative social movements are characterised by their recalcitrance to triumphalist, statist historiography. I want to suggest that this same recalcitrance is also characteristic of Scottish literature since 1989, despite cultural nationalist criticism’s frequent complicity with triumphalist, statist narratives. Lloyd argues that nationalism is a transformative mobilization, rather than a ‘defence of traditional modes of social organization’ – such as the nation-state.<sup>110</sup> As this thesis will show, the literary texts under consideration mount a critique of these traditional social structures, on the levels of both form and content. Lloyd’s reading of Walter Benjamin suggests that alternative social formations and social movements threaten the state with an ‘alternative system of legality or rationality’ which it cannot accept or accommodate; an irrationality that the state itself has produced through its homogenizing drive.<sup>111</sup> Thus, a nationalism which is informed by other emancipatory social movements challenges the homogenizing state, with a view to its transformation.

Lloyd gives class and gender as the two most evident examples of identities which are subordinated to nationality, viewing their mobilization and politicization as significant sites of potential resistance to – or support of – nationalism:

[W]ithout doubt the desire of nationalism is to saturate the field of subject formation so that, for every individual, the idea of nationality, of political citizenship, becomes the central organizing term in relation to which other possible modes of subjectification – class or gender, to cite only the most evident instances – are differentiated and subordinated. [...] The challenge that both feminism and class politics present to nationalism is commensurate with the resistance that they must ultimately pose, ideologically and practically, to the state; or, to reverse the terms, the power which nationalism has historically proven to have in containing alternative social movements of whatever kind may be derived from its intimate conjunction with the state. For it is a peculiarity of nationalism that of all modes of potentially counter-hegemonic formations none is

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<sup>109</sup> David Lloyd, *Ireland After History*, p. 25.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27.

more thoroughly reinforced or sanctioned by the formations it ostensibly opposes.<sup>112</sup>

In my examination of cultural nationalist literary criticism below, I will show how critics have embodied this tendency to exploit gender and class politics in order to reinforce cultural nationalist claims. Lloyd seeks to ‘not simply dismiss nationalism but rather [rearticulate] it with those movements which it has sought to supersede and which are, in effect, its constitutive antagonists’.<sup>113</sup> This thesis aims to provide a similar re-articulation within Scottish Studies, by foregrounding the antagonistic aspects of the relationship between gender politics, class politics, nation and state in the texts under consideration. Resistance to the homogenising drive of the state informs my investigation, which puts particular emphasis on the antagonistic energies of the social formations that Lloyd tells us are superordinated by this homogenization, but which nonetheless ‘persist as distinct elements of the struggle or as recalcitrant tendencies for the state’, and which have ‘different ends and correspondingly different narratives’ to the conventional nationalist end of independent nation-statehood.<sup>114</sup> These distinct elements and recalcitrant narratives come to the fore particularly in the literary texts’ critique of the institutions of civic nationhood and ideological state apparatuses, which are viewed in the texts as complicit with the simultaneous exclusion and containment of women and the working classes.

### **Oppositional Monologism**

These alternative identity formulations find their expression in Scottish literature formally. Donald Wesling’s aim to derive a connection between Scotland’s constitutional status and its novelistic structures leads him to describe the predominant structure of the Scottish novel since 1979 as ‘a clever, oppositional form of monologism’.<sup>115</sup> Neil McMillan has critiqued this as a misreading of Bakhtin, arguing that for Bakhtin monologism is ‘a stylistic term applicable to certain poetic genres and types of official state discourse, and therefore

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<sup>112</sup> David Lloyd, *Ireland After History*, p. 27.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33.

<sup>115</sup> Donald Wesling, ‘Scottish Narrative since 1979: Monologism and the Contradictions of a Stateless Nation’, *Scotlands* 4: 2 (1997), pp. 81-98 (p. 87).

inadequate to any discussion of novelistic forms'.<sup>116</sup> Rather than posing the monologism he notes in Scottish novels as akin to an official state discourse, Wesling notes a contradiction between the unstable formal styles of the modern Scottish novel and the values of the state:

The person who is in line with official state values is stable, because for him or her inward and outward speech coincide, everything is sayable. By contrast the person who identifies with unofficial values [...] is unstable, because of the clash between inward and outward speech and the need to confine much of verbal behaviour to the unsayable, inner, silent self.<sup>117</sup>

The antagonistic relationship between authoritative state forms and experimental, unstable novelistic forms informs my thesis. Where the traditional novelistic structure has been read by Benedict Anderson as analogous to the form of the nation as imagined community, the experimental formal innovations of Scottish novels demand an update to this reading. If traditional nineteenth-century novelistic formal structures demonstrate membership in a national community, the monologue-driven, modernism-inflected, highly introspective and interior forms of the modern Scottish novel demonstrate a recalcitrance and resistance to incorporation within hegemonic forms, including overarching narrative trajectories, national communities or hegemonic statehood. For Anderson the form of the novel and the newspaper have 'provided the technical means for "representing" the *kind* of imagined community that is the nation'.<sup>118</sup> However, Anderson asks us to consider specifically 'the *old-fashioned* novel, a structure typical not only of the masterpieces of Balzac but also of any contemporary dollar-dreadful'.<sup>119</sup> The structure typical in the contemporary Scottish novel is often rather different from those traditional structures invoked by Anderson. Anderson's use of the novel form as an allegory for nationhood relies on 'societies [...] of such firm and stable reality that their members [...] can even be

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<sup>116</sup> Neil McMillan, 'Heroes and Zeroes: Monologism and Masculinism in Scottish Men's Writing of the 1970s and Beyond', in Daniel Lea and Berthold Schoene (eds), *Posting the Male: Masculinities in Post-War and Contemporary British Literature* (Rodopi: Amsterdam and New York, 2003), pp. 69-89 (p. 73).

<sup>117</sup> Donald Wesling, 'Scottish Narrative since 1979: Monologism and the Contradictions of a Stateless Nation', p. 87.

<sup>118</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, 2nd edn (London: Verso, 2006), p. 25.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.* [my emphasis].

described as passing each other on the street, without ever becoming connected'.<sup>120</sup> It is this sense of society and community that the monologue-driven form of the Scottish novel departs from in its development of a structure that refuses simultaneity. Its characteristic features, as described by Wesling and explored throughout the chapters of this thesis, demonstrate an unstable condition of crisis and inner conflict. Where for Anderson the society of the novel is 'embedded in the minds of omniscient readers' since '[o]nly they, like God, watch A telephoning C, B shopping and D playing pool all *at once*',<sup>121</sup> no such omniscience is granted to the reader of the modern Scottish novel. The recalcitrance of this form to the construction of 'a social organism moving calendrically through homogeneous, empty time' means that, unlike Anderson's 'old-fashioned' novel, the experimental Scottish novel does not enable us to conceive of 'a solid community moving steadily down (or up) history'.<sup>122</sup> Instead the condition of the modern Scottish novel is one of stasis. Its protagonists are highly atomized, isolated individuals, which are constructed through a strongly focalized narrative voice which is either first person or 'might as well be first person'.<sup>123</sup> The narrative adherence to this voice makes it impossible for the reader to ever obtain the position of 'omniscience' through which they can observe the 'steady, anonymous, simultaneous activity' which characterizes Anderson's model of the novelistic structure as national allegory.<sup>124</sup> In several of the novels, plays and short stories explored in this thesis, instead of 'homogeneous empty time' we are presented with fragmented time: non-linear structures of flashbacks and fantasies, omitted episodes and circularities.

In *Nation and Narration* Homi K. Bhabha suggests that Anderson's 'horizontal' conception of the temporalities of the nation as imagined community risks essentializing and homogenizing the nation. For him, horizontal temporality is disrupted by cultural difference. Through a reading of Julia Kristeva's essay

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<sup>120</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, p. 25.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>123</sup> Donald Wesling, 'Scottish Narrative since 1979: Monologism and the Contradictions of a Stateless Nation', p. 81.

<sup>124</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, p. 26.

‘Women’s Time’ – and several other creative and theoretical texts – he makes a case for a national time which is not Anderson’s community-creating simultaneity, but a temporal ‘splitting’ in which the performance of national life by subjects of cultural difference modifies and erases the ‘pedagogical’ narrative of the nation which has been inherited from the past:

We then have a contested conceptual territory where the nation’s people must be thought in a double-time; the people are the historical ‘objects’ of a nationalist pedagogy, giving the discourse an authority that is based on the pre-given or constituted historical origin or event; the people are also the ‘subjects’ of a process of signification that must erase any prior or originary presence of the nation-people to demonstrate the prodigious, living principle of the people as that continual process by which the national life is redeemed and signified as a repeating and reproductive process.<sup>125</sup>

In ‘DissemiNation’ Bhabha writes against ‘the historical certainty and settled nature’ of the term nationalism, asking us to conceive of the western nation as ‘more hybrid in the articulation of cultural differences and identifications – gender, race or class – than can be represented in any hierarchical or binary structuring of social antagonism’.<sup>126</sup> This re-conception of the nation prompts a reconceptualisation of nationalism as a performative practice characterised by multitudes of complex antagonisms. Instead of understanding identities within the nation in terms of hierarchical binaries (i.e. male/female, working/middle class, national/Other) he insists that in order to understand the dynamic that produces the nation we must consider social oppositions across the divisions of identity categories, by ‘reading between these borderlines of the nation-space’.<sup>127</sup> This means considering antagonisms between class and nation, between gender and nation, between class and gender, in order to understand ‘how the people came to be constructed within a range of discourses as a double narrative moment’.<sup>128</sup> This ‘double-narrative’ is manifest in the ‘tension between the pedagogical and the performative [...] in the narrative address of the nation’.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> Homi K. Bhabha, ‘DissemiNation: time, narrative and the margins of the modern nation’, in Homi K. Bhabha (ed.), *Nation and Narration* (London: Routledge, 1990), pp. 291-322 (p. 297).

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 292.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 297.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*

For my purposes, this tension is located in the antagonistic ways in which literary characters and narratives respond to inherited constructions of nationhood. Their doubleness is located in their performative participation in national life, which for Bhabha erases and modifies inherited traditions and institutionalised practices. The ambivalent, antagonistic responses to the pedagogical nation in the texts explored here embody the performance of the nation as ‘disjunctive, liminal space’, consisting of internal cultural differences which engender ‘the jarring of meanings and values generated in-between the variety and diversity associated with cultural plenitude’.<sup>130</sup> Rather than thinking of the nation as a unit of ‘social cohesion’<sup>131</sup>, Bhabha urges us to locate the production of national narratives in the hybrid liminality of the nation’s internal cultural differences.<sup>132</sup> In another formulation of Lloyd’s desire to affiliate nationalism with alternative social movements, Bhabha stresses the ambivalent relationship between national identity and the alternative categories which are constantly produced by the nation:

It is the mark of the ambivalence of the nation as a narrative strategy – and an apparatus of power – that it produces a continual slippage into analogous, even metonymic, categories, like the people, minorities, of ‘cultural difference’ that continually overlap in the act of writing the nation. What is displayed in this displacement and repetition of terms is the nation as the measure of the liminality of cultural modernity.<sup>133</sup>

As explored below, the narrative of Scotland’s literary criticism has consistently identified national literature with minoritarian discourse, often reading the literary enfranchisement of working-class identities in Scottish texts as analogous to the political enfranchisement of a Scottish nation-state. However, Lloyd and Bhabha’s interrogations of nationhood and nationalism prompt a reconsideration of this dominant claim. The literary texts explored in this thesis demonstrate the liminality of national society – its transformations, its internal divisions, its excess over the state and its plural identitarian affiliations – most visibly in their critique of the nation. The protagonists in these texts are frequently driven to view the nation as complicit in their conditions of stasis and as an active agent in

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<sup>130</sup> Homi K. Bhabha, ‘DissemiNation: time, narrative and the margins of the modern nation’, p. 312.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 293.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 312.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 292.

their suppression and marginalisation. Bhabha aims ‘to formulate the complex strategies of cultural identification and discursive address that function in the name of “the people” or “the nation” and make them the immanent subjects and objects of a range of literary and social narratives’ by providing ‘a perspective on the disjunctive forms of representation that signify a people, a nation, or a national culture’.<sup>134</sup> Literature and states are two such forms of representation, and my claim that the relationship between these is more disjunctive than the dominant reading allows is evidenced within the literary texts explored. The chosen texts continually demonstrate Bhabha’s ‘slippage’ into overlapping identities and differences in their explorations of characters which demonstrate multiple identifications with Otherness, through their nationality, gender, class or sexuality. This liminality problematizes Gellner’s conventional nationalist envisioning of a state coterminous with a homogeneous national culture, demanding a reassessment of the relationship between nation and state which ruptures dominant readings in Scottish Studies.

### **Criticising Cultural Nationalism**

Over the last decade, Scottish Studies has engaged in rupturing its own received pedagogy. Evaluating the field, Matthew Wickman asserts that Scottish Studies has emerged as a particularly self-conscious, self-critiquing discipline, which ‘bears a dynamic relation to its own past, even (or perhaps especially) when it seeks to renounce it altogether’.<sup>135</sup> He discerns a ‘current or dialogical phase’ enacted by Scottish literary studies in its re-evaluation of existing critical work.<sup>136</sup> This recently established trend in Scottish literary studies critiques and interrogates aspects of previous work in the field, and is particularly critical of cultural nationalist approaches to literary texts. This newer work challenges a critical narrative perceived as overly concerned with ‘Scottishness’. It argues that reading texts in terms of their approach to the nation is a limited, confining

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<sup>134</sup> Homi K. Bhabha, ‘DissemiNation: time, narrative and the margins of the modern nation’, p. 292.

<sup>135</sup> Matthew Wickman, ‘The Emergence of Scottish Studies’, in Gerard Carruthers and Liam McIlvanney (eds), *The Cambridge Companion to Scottish Literature* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 248-60 (p. 257).

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 250.

approach to literature, which should be read in more pluralist, cosmopolitan terms, advocating readings which are more engaged with critical theory and issues of class and gender. Critics engaging in this self-critiquing phase of the discipline include Eleanor Bell, Berthold Schoene, Alex Thomson, Gavin Miller, Aaron Kelly, Christopher Whyte, Stefanie Lehner, Scott Hames and Stuart Kelly.<sup>137</sup> Their work interrogates the established tenets of Scottish Studies, arguing for more accurate, useful and ethical critical agendas.

I define cultural nationalist literary criticism as criticism which considers literary texts written by ‘Scottish’ authors as forming an autonomous literary tradition. According to Stuart Kelly, cultural nationalism ‘assert[s] the existence of Scottish literature as, if not a separate, distinct and discrete entity, then at the very least an acknowledged field of study’.<sup>138</sup> In cultural nationalist literary criticism, the idea of a ‘Scottish’ writer or Scottish text is usually defined broadly, with due consideration given to writers born outside Scotland. For example, the works of John McGrath, Ellen Galford, Meaghan Delahunt and Margaret Elphinstone frequently feature in critical essay collections and literary histories including *The Literature of Scotland*, *Contemporary Scottish Women Writers*,

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<sup>137</sup> Eleanor Bell, *Questioning Scotland: Literature, Nationalism, Postmodernism*; Berthold Schoene, ‘Going Cosmopolitan: Reconstituting “Scottishness” in Post-devolution Criticism’, in Berthold Schoene (ed.), *The Edinburgh Companion to Contemporary Scottish Literature* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), pp. 7-16; Alex Thomson, “‘You can’t get there from here’: Devolution and Scottish literary history’, *International Journal of Scottish Literature* 3 (Autumn/Winter 2007), <<http://www.ijsl.stir.ac.uk/issue3/thomson.htm>> [accessed December 2014]; Gavin Miller, ‘Scotland’s authentic plurality: the new essentialism in Scottish Studies’, *Scottish Literary Review*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (1999), pp. 157-74; Aaron Kelly, ‘James Kelman and the Deterritorialisation of Power’, in Berthold Schoene (ed.), *The Edinburgh Companion to Contemporary Scottish Literature* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), pp. 175-83; Christopher Whyte, *Modern Scottish Poetry* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004); Stefanie Lehner, *Subaltern Ethics in Contemporary Scottish and Irish Literature: Tracing Counter-Histories*; Scott Hames, ‘Editorial: Theory and Scottish Exceptionalism’, *International Journal of Scottish Literature* 3 (Autumn/Winter 2007), <<http://www.ijsl.stir.ac.uk/issue3/editorial.htm>> [accessed December 2014]; Stuart Kelly, ‘How Tartan is Your Text?’, *International Journal of Scottish Literature* 5 (Autumn/Winter 2009), <<http://www.ijsl.stir.ac.uk/issue5/kellyOP.htm>> [accessed December 2014].

<sup>138</sup> Stuart Kelly, ‘How Tartan is Your Text?’, <<http://www.ijsl.stir.ac.uk/issue5/kellyOP.htm>>.

*Gendering the Nation: Studies in Modern Scottish Literature* and *The Edinburgh Companion to Contemporary Scottish Literature*.<sup>139</sup> Alasdair Gray's assertion of civic nationalism demonstrates a civic and inclusionary attitude to national identity, which has typified Scottish cultural criticism:

[B]y Scots I mean everyone in Scotland who is able to vote. [...] My definition cheerfully includes many who think themselves English but work here as hoteliers, farmers, administrators and directors of Scottish institutions: also those who live in Scotland because they could buy a pleasant house more cheaply here than in the south. My definition also includes a small but important group of Scots who mainly live or work elsewhere [...] I believe every adult in a land should have equal say in how it is ruled so therefore belongs to it, however recently she or he arrived.<sup>140</sup>

The agenda of cultural nationalist literary criticism has been broader, more inclusive, more ethical and more radical than its detractors often acknowledge. Where recent work in Scottish Studies accuses cultural nationalist literary criticism of narrow and reductive readings, this work itself conducts a narrow and reductive reading of previous work in the field, which often ignores earlier critical recognition of the resistant politics and marginalised identities explored by Scottish texts. Rather than taking a 'scorched earth' approach to Scottish literary texts which discards cultural nationalist critical work out of hand, this introduction will re-evaluate Scottish literary studies, asserting that the cultural nationalist critical narrative is most valuable in its acknowledgement of a radical agenda in recent Scottish literature. Cultural nationalist critics have centralised, and nationalised, the marginal, radical, 'subaltern' qualities of literary texts. Recent criticisms of previous scholarship do not sufficiently acknowledge this, instead reducing it to a misguided, unproductive and circular concern with 'Scottishness'.

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<sup>139</sup> Roderick Watson, *The Literature of Scotland*, 2nd edn, 2 vols (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); Aileen Christianson and Alison Lumsden (eds), *Contemporary Scottish Women Writers* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2001), Christopher Whyte (ed.), *Gendering the Nation: Studies in Modern Scottish Literature* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995); Berthold Schoene (ed.), *The Edinburgh Companion to Contemporary Scottish Literature* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007).

<sup>140</sup> Alasdair Gray, *Independence: Why Scots Should Rule Scotland* (Edinburgh: Canongate, 1992), p. 5.

Attacks on cultural nationalism are prominent in recent literary criticism. Eleanor Bell has termed any approach to Scottish literature which foregrounds issues of national identity ‘essentialist’, arguing that ‘for too long the discipline has been posited in parochial, stereotypical, cultural nationalist terms without recourse to the possible reverberations and limitations of such constructions’.<sup>141</sup> Similarly, Stefanie Lehner has criticised the cultural nationalist approach as having a ‘tendency to subsume all individual and communal identity politics under the privileged category of the national’.<sup>142</sup> For Alex Thomson, Scottish Studies has an inherent cultural nationalist agenda, and is therefore always at risk of trapping itself in a redundant, circular framework, since ‘[f]ramed in national terms, the study of literature in Scotland will always tend to become the analysis of Scottish literature, and ultimately, of what is “Scottish” about that literature’.<sup>143</sup> Stuart Kelly is particularly scathing of the discipline:

Scottish academia insists on its 'Albattitude' to the extent that deep-reading is foregone in favour of a desperate screaming of 'mehereIammetoo'. While other literary cultures discuss the pleasure, the carnivalesque, the difficulty and triumph, the *olio-podrida* of reading, the Scots stick with a great Yahweh-ish 'I AM'.<sup>144</sup>

For Kelly, even where Scottish literary studies has engaged with wider movements in literary criticism, it has failed to make a meaningful contribution to a critical understanding of literary texts. In the same article, he criticises Scottish literary studies’ engagement with post-colonial theory as a misguided ‘Postcolonialism 2.0, where Scotland’s lack of evident colony status, complicity with Imperialism and internal displacements and tensions are thought to make it even *more* pliable to “post-colonial” analysis’.<sup>145</sup> Kelly reads the postcolonial turn in Scottish literary criticism as an extension of a critical attitude characterised by Scottish exceptionalism, which reads literature as affirming a

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<sup>141</sup> Eleanor Bell, *Questioning Scotland*, p. 2.

<sup>142</sup> Stefanie Lehner, ‘Subaltern Scotland: Devolution and Postcoloniality’, in Berthold Schoene (ed.), *The Edinburgh Companion to Contemporary Scottish Literature* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), pp. 292-300 (p. 293).

<sup>143</sup> Alex Thomson, “‘You can’t get there from here’’: Devolution and Scottish literary history’ <<http://www.ijsl.stir.ac.uk/issue3/thomson.htm>>.

<sup>144</sup> Stuart Kelly, ‘How Tartan is Your Text?’ <<http://www.ijsl.stir.ac.uk/issue5/kellyOP.htm>>

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*

distinctive Scottish tradition and identity: ‘The rest of the world is the same, the argument goes, but we are more blatantly the same. Being self-consciously anomalous makes us potentially typical’.<sup>146</sup> Scottish literary studies is here criticised both for being too insular, and for a perceived overstatement of its relationship to international economic, social and political processes such as colonialism. Kelly’s agenda is to take issue with the processes of canon-formation undertaken by cultural nationalist critical approaches; processes which he believes to be exclusionary of writers including James Thomson, Ali Smith and Andrew O’Hagan. This criticism of Scottish canon-formation is shared by Sarah Dunnigan, for whom ‘the “tradition” of Scottish criticism is defined by repressive impulses’.<sup>147</sup> In her analysis, canon-formation ‘rests on the desire for a shining singularity of self-definition: the single, essentialist definition which occludes and excludes all others that impinge upon or confuse the desired clarity’.<sup>148</sup> Kelly and Dunnigan exemplify the current trend which I have identified in Scottish literary studies, in which opposition to cultural nationalist approaches is the basis for demanding a new and radically different approach.

### **Nationalising the Marginal**

The critical nationalist approach taken in this thesis responds to critical claims that Scottish literary studies has pursued a narrow and reductive agenda. However, it also demonstrates the pitfalls and problematic aspects of cultural nationalist criticism, taking issue with critical readings which contain Scottish literary texts within terms of British political devolution and which subsume its recalcitrant energies as a ‘national’ impetus. By establishing literary constructions of marginalised, working-class and female identities as at the forefront of Scotland’s contemporary literary culture, cultural nationalist criticism posits a politics of resistance as fundamental to these texts. When critics such as Berthold

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<sup>146</sup> Stuart Kelly, ‘How Tartan is Your Text?’, <<http://www.ijsl.stir.ac.uk/issue5/kellyOP.htm>>.

<sup>147</sup> Sarah Dunnigan, ‘The Return of the Repressed’, in Gerard Carruthers, David Goldie and Alasdair Renfrew (eds), *Beyond Scotland: New Contexts for Twentieth-Century Scottish Literature* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2004), pp. 111-32 (p. 111).

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 116.

Schoene celebrate ‘a definitive end to a critical tradition of tautologically measuring all things Scottish by their degree of “Scottishness”’,<sup>149</sup> they unfairly neglect this ground-breaking elucidation of the radical aspect of a cultural nationalist critical tradition, identified below in the work of Cairns Craig and Roderick Watson. Their work has established a Scottish literary canon predicated on resistant class and gender identities.

An early example is Cairns Craig’s essay ‘Resisting Arrest’.<sup>150</sup> Through an analysis of James Kelman’s early novels, Craig discerns and elucidates Kelman’s radical literary politics through an analysis of his formal techniques. He reads Kelman’s works in terms of refusal, arguing that their protagonists are characterised by ‘inner lives pitched against the enforced social order’ and by a continual and exhausting resistance by which they are ‘unable not to go on refusing to become part of the polis’.<sup>151</sup> Despite Christopher Whyte’s claims that Scottish literary studies has been characterised by an overemphasis on identity at the expense of aesthetic concerns, the relationship between identity and aesthetics is fundamental to Craig’s essay.<sup>152</sup> His consideration of the identity politics in Kelman’s novels enacts a nationalist reading which enables a critical understanding of their structural dynamics. Craig’s exploration of the language of Kelman’s texts begins with a recognition of its Scottishness, wherein he notes Kelman’s use of ‘traditional Scottish words’,<sup>153</sup> demonstrating a cultural nationalist impulse to claim Kelman as part of a national literary tradition. The use of vernacular language in both dialogue and third-person narration within Kelman’s novels becomes key to Craig’s influential understanding of their literary and structural politics:

In particular, what is characteristic of Kelman’s style is the fusion of the spoken with the written, so that the narrative voice itself can take on the characteristics of a speaking voice. By this method, Kelman has found his

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<sup>149</sup> Berthold Schoene, ‘Going Cosmopolitan: Reconstituting “Scottishness” in Post-devolution Criticism’, p. 12.

<sup>150</sup> Cairns Craig, ‘Resisting Arrest: James Kelman’, in Gavin Wallace and Randall Stevenson (eds), *The Scottish Novel Since the Seventies: New Visions, Old Dreams* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1993), pp. 99-114.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 113.

<sup>152</sup> Christopher Whyte, *Modern Scottish Poetry* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), p. 236.

<sup>153</sup> Cairns Craig, ‘Resisting Arrest: James Kelman’, p. 102.

very specific means of overcoming the distinction between English (as the medium of narration) and Scots (as the medium of dialogue) which has proved a constant dilemma to Scottish writers. The liberation of the narrative voice from the constraints of written English is an act of linguistic solidarity, since it thrusts that narrative into the same world which its characters inhabit. [...] The text, therefore, constructs a linguistic unity which resists the fragmentation and isolation that the novels chart as the experience of their characters. Unity of voice replaces unity of political or social purpose as the foundation of solidarity: the text *enacts* at a linguistic level what it points to as absent in the world.<sup>154</sup>

In this reading, the question of national language does not limit Craig's critical reading to considerations of 'Scottishness', but is presented as fully compatible with the resistant qualities of Kelman's formal and structural experimentation, which Craig posits as the site of a marginalised, Marxian political identity based on working-class solidarity. Where Craig recognises that Kelman's texts deal with the failure of traditional outlets for working-class politics such as trade unionism, characterising his fiction as inhabited by 'those who are marginalised from traditional working-class values, who do not believe in the possibility of communal political action', he posits the formal innovation of Kelman's texts as aesthetic resistance.<sup>155</sup> For Craig, Kelman's work resists containment of working-class language and identity by enacting 'liberation' at a formal level.

This impulse to demonstrate both the containment of working-class agency and anti-authoritarian textual resistance to this containment is shared by a critical nationalist agenda. However, Craig's reading frames Kelman's anti-authoritarian formal style as one which enacts, rather than challenges, the pedagogy of national tradition. Laurence Nicoll has identified 'an inability to think outwith a critical taxonomy the parameters of which are set by concepts of "nation" and "nationalism"' in readings of Kelman's work.<sup>156</sup> Nicoll's own reading locates Kelman within a tradition of existentialism. He argues that Kelman's work resists the authority of the author-God through enacting an 'existential aesthetic *freedom*' in which '[t]raditions need not be followed' and

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<sup>154</sup> Cairns Craig, 'Resisting Arrest: James Kelman', p. 103.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 101.

<sup>156</sup> Laurence Nicoll, "'This Is Not a Nationalist Position": James Kelman's Existential Voice', *Edinburgh Review* 103 (2000), pp. 79-84 (p. 79).

‘[t]here is no correct language’.<sup>157</sup> This break from pedagogical tradition, which rejects both traditional novelistic structures and narrative authority, is read by Mary McGlynn as a critique of the class system:

*How Late It Was, How Late* and *A Disaffection* [...] both buck expectations of narrative control, genre conventions, and lexical norms, not to mention political and national poses, to create a language and a form free from overt hierarchy, ready to critique with one gesture Britain’s class system and literature’s class system.<sup>158</sup>

The oppositional, critical qualities of Kelman’s texts are emphasized by both critics. However, Craig’s detection of a ‘unity of voice’ in novels characterised by polyphony and linguistic struggle demonstrates a desire to efface the antagonistic divisions which characterise his model of the divided nation discussed above, in which ‘neither the nation nor nationalism is singular, unified and “unisonant”’.<sup>159</sup> McGlynn’s reading recognises these antagonisms within Kelman’s work: antagonisms which critique the established order maintained by the nation-state in Gellner’s model. Where Craig views Kelman’s novels as constructing a national literary tradition, providing a solution to problems of marginalized Scots dialogue opposed to authoritative, Standard English narrative, in my own critical nationalist reading the nation is part of the ‘enforced social order’ which Kelman critiques.<sup>160</sup> This is particularly apparent in his short story collection *If It Is Your Life*, discussed in chapters One and Four of this study.

Roderick Watson has also conducted a reading of Scottish texts which emphasises a literary politics of resistance and opposition. As with Craig’s approach, Watson’s is based in the linguistic and class politics of these texts. He is amongst several critics, including Douglas Mack, Stefanie Lehner, Michael Gardiner, Craig Beveridge and Ronald Turnbull, who have utilised postcolonial theory as a context for reading Scottish writing. In his reading of *Sunset Song*, he discerns a marginalised voice which is the site of opposition, interrogation, and disruption to authoritative power:

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<sup>157</sup> Laurence Nicoll, “‘This Is Not a Nationalist Position’: James Kelman’s Existential Voice”, p. 83.

<sup>158</sup> Mary McGlynn, “‘Middle-Class Wankers’ and Working-Class Texts: the Critics and James Kelman”, *Contemporary Literature* 43.1 (Spring 2002), pp. 50-84 (p. 51).

<sup>159</sup> Cairns Craig, ‘Scotland and Hybridity’, p. 249.

<sup>160</sup> Cairns Craig, ‘Resisting Arrest: James Kelman’, p. 113.

This is cultural resistance with a vengeance, for Chris Guthrie's point of view – so similar in some ways to Kristeva's vision of a female semiotic – would call into question all linguistic and cultural and political authority, and all the patriarchal and phallogocentric constraints of the symbolic order. And for Gibbon, the best available language within which such insights are possible was the peasant and despised Scots tongue. [...] we are dealing with a 'colonised' voice from 'the margins' putting forward an alternative view of 'history' and 'culture' – and a radically unsettling one.<sup>161</sup>

Watson reads modern Scottish writing as the site of recovery of an ulterior, interrogative resistance to authority. He nationalises the marginal, resistant and oppositional qualities of working-class texts, establishing a Scottish tradition in literature which gains in influence through this nationalisation:

If [...] you were to ask of current Scottish writing 'but where is the central national consciousness? – as opposed to the class consciousness of Kelman and Leonard and (if you like) the marginalised and dismally *tribal* consciousness of Irvine Welsh's world of drug users and football hooligans?' I would have to reply by pointing out that since the 18th century, Scottish literary national identity has frequently been implicitly constructed from the margins – whether by class, language, belief or (sometimes) gender. And while those margins have been given a certain collective clout by being able to lay claim to a 'national' literary tradition, at the same time the polyphonic nature of that tradition has also served to destabilise the unifying and monological premises behind the very notion (at least the old fashioned notion) of what a 'nation' is in the first place.<sup>162</sup>

Watson's recognition that the nation is challenged, rather than supported, by these texts is one which my critical nationalist approach seeks to further. Douglas Mack has also nationalised the radical and resistant politics of Scottish literature, asserting that there is 'a radical and deeply rooted tradition in Scottish writing [that] seeks to give voice to the concerns and insights of people normally marginalised by mainstream society', which he discerns in Scottish culture from the anonymous oral ballads of the folk tradition, to the 'urban Renaissance' novels of Kelman and Welsh.<sup>163</sup> It is not an essentialist 'Scottishness' which is

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<sup>161</sup> Roderick Watson, 'Postcolonial Subjects? Language, Narrative Authority and Class in Contemporary Scottish Culture', *The European English Messenger* Vol. 7, Iss. 1 (Spring 1998), pp. 21-38 (p. 32).

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35.

<sup>163</sup> Douglas Mack, 'Can the Scottish Subaltern Speak? Nonelite Scotland and the Scottish Parliament', in Caroline McCracken-Flesher (ed.), *Culture, Nation and the New Scottish Parliament* (Lewisburg, NJ: Bucknell University Press, 2007), pp. 141-57 (p. 155).

fundamental to the readings of Scottish literary texts presented by Craig, Watson and Mack, but a critical agenda which centralises and nationalises a marginal identity distinguished by its politics of class, gender and vernacular language. In its recognition of marginality as a site of resistance and opposition, this critical discourse amplifies the anti-elite, anti-bourgeois politics of this literature, and aims to recover marginalised identity by imbuing it with the nation's 'collective clout'. However, this desire to amplify the marginal by recourse to the nation falls prey to Stefanie Lehner and David Lloyd's critique: that nationalism subsumes and relegates other social movements, serving to contain and neutralize social categories such as class and gender which oppose the nation through their demands for 'alternative system[s] of legality or rationality'.<sup>164</sup> Critical nationalism reads against the grain of these established critical agendas, which elide the oppositional with the national. Where these critics seek to establish a Scottish literary tradition characterized by oppositional radicalism, my readings argue that the texts under analysis rupture such traditions, persistently undermining critical attempts to contain their antagonistic energies within the confines of national tradition.

Douglas Dunn has criticised the critical centring of working-class texts in Scottish literary studies, arguing that this obscures the 'divergent Scottishness' manifest in middle-class texts:

Kelman's achievement can be admired, but it is hard to see how it can be exemplary for Scottish writing as a whole. Even if it is admitted to be a perennial dimension of Scottish writing that its innovative, self-renewing desires and tussles often take the form of vernacular upsurges, it can be a source of anxiety that their consequence can be to exclude other writers (and readers) from the contemporary picture. There is an atmosphere of 'political correctness' which encourages social narrowing in favour of a working-class, left-wing, vernacular authorship. More than a hint of perverse cultural censorship can be detected in the critical favouritism of the day; and as it is one which denies the full identity of the country, it can be considered seriously.<sup>165</sup>

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<sup>164</sup> David Lloyd, *Ireland After History*, p. 27.

<sup>165</sup> Douglas Dunn, 'Divergent Scottishness: William Boyd, Allan Massie, Ronald Frame', in Gavin Wallace and Randall Stevenson (eds), *The Scottish Novel Since the Seventies: New Visions, Old Dreams* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1993), pp.149-69 (p. 150).

Dunn expresses a concern that, by focusing on Scotland's subaltern 'others', cultural nationalism has undergone its own process of Othering. The assessment of Andrew O'Hagan's work in Chapter Two of this thesis provides a response to the challenge to extend a more inclusive approach to Scottish texts. O'Hagan's explorations of upwardly-mobile, middle-class identity do not fit comfortably within a critical tradition which privileges working-class writing and marginal identity. The confrontations between O'Hagan's protagonists and his constructions of nationhood enable a critical nationalist agenda to respond to his work more readily than the established cultural nationalist narrative, which elides oppositional and national voices.

### **Subalternity and Scottish literary studies**

For literary critics including Douglas Mack and Stefanie Lehner, an adaptation of the 'Subaltern Studies' approach in postcolonial thought has provided a useful framework for the assessment of contemporary Scottish literature. The term 'subaltern' originated in the *Prison Notebooks* of Antonio Gramsci, and was subsequently adopted and theorised by the influential Subaltern Studies school of postcolonial critics.<sup>166</sup> Foremost amongst those was Ranajit Guha, who provides a lucid definition of the term:

The word 'subaltern' in the title stands for the meaning as given in the Concise Oxford Dictionary, that is, 'of inferior rank', it will be used in these pages as a name for the general attribute of subordination in South Asian society whether this is expressed in terms of class, caste, age, gender and office or in any other way.<sup>167</sup>

Although the Subaltern Studies group were writing in a specific, postcolonial context, the use of the term 'subaltern' in Scottish Studies is now well established. Stefanie Lehner has articulated, and refined, a Subaltern Studies approach in the context of Scottish literary studies:

As with Gramsci and the Subaltern historians, I understand 'subaltern' as a relational term in a dialectic with 'dominant'. Its usage thus

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<sup>166</sup> Edward Said, 'Foreword', in Ranajit Guha and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (eds), *Selected Subaltern Studies* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), pp. v-x (p. v).

<sup>167</sup> Ranajit Guha, 'Preface', in Ranajit Guha and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (eds), *Selected Subaltern Studies* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), pp. 35-36 (p. 35).

predominantly consists in a metaphorical sense to designate unequal and iniquitous power relations between individuals and/or groups, underpinned by the institutional structures of the state. Accordingly, the term applies in my work to forms of disempowerment, oppression, exclusion and so on.<sup>168</sup>

Lehner's use of the term in a Scottish context has been challenged by Eleanor Bell's query: 'would this Western appropriation, for example, really be palatable to postcolonial critics working in non-Western contexts, in other parts of the globe?'.<sup>169</sup> However, Bell's interrogation of Lehner's approach disregards the Western origins of the term in the writings of Antonio Gramsci – origins which Lehner is aware of, and which she elucidates in her study at length, charting the history and 'problematic distortions' of the term's academic use.<sup>170</sup> Lehner's elucidation of subalternity demonstrates that she is not claiming postcolonial status for Scotland as a pre-requisite for her use of the term. Rather, she understands 'subaltern' as the condition of marginalisation, specifying subalternity as the status of 'social groups that have been subjugated and excluded by the dominant power, in particular peasants and the lower working classes, but also women and other minority groups'.<sup>171</sup> Protagonists from these dominated groups feature in a majority of texts vaunted by cultural nationalist critics, including the works of Lewis Grassie Gibbon, James Hogg, James Kelman, Janice Galloway, A. L. Kennedy, Alan Warner, Agnes Owens, Alasdair Gray, Jackie Kay and several more, which can all be said to focus on identities which fit within this definition of subaltern. The popularity of these authors within cultural nationalist criticism demonstrates a critical focus on subalternity.

Subalternity has been recognised by the Subaltern Studies school as a site of resistance to power, and therefore has proved an attractive theoretical concept

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<sup>168</sup> Stefanie Lehner, *Subaltern Ethics in Contemporary Scottish and Irish Literature: Tracing Counter-Histories*, p. 9.

<sup>169</sup> Eleanor Bell, 'Book Review: *Subaltern Ethics in Contemporary Scottish and Irish Literature: Tracing Counter-Histories* by Stefanie Lehner', *The Bottle Imp* 11 (May 2012). Available at: <<http://www.arts.gla.ac.uk/ScotLit/ASLS/SWE/TBI/TBIIssue11/Bell.html>> [accessed December 2014].

<sup>170</sup> Stefanie Lehner, *Subaltern Ethics in Contemporary Scottish and Irish Literature: Tracing Counter-Histories*, p. 12.

<sup>171</sup> Stefanie Lehner, 'Subaltern Scotland: Devolution and Postcoloniality', p. 293.

for critics of Scottish literature who, like Douglas Mack and Roderick Watson, have nationalised marginal identity in their establishment of a Scottish literary tradition. Edward Said's 'Foreword' to *Selected Subaltern Studies* makes a connection between subaltern identity and resistance explicit in the context of the British Empire:

What is missing [from history] is the constitutive role of an enormous mass of subaltern Indians, the urban poor and the peasants, who throughout the nineteenth century and earlier, resisted British rule in terms and modes that were quite distinct from those employed by the elite.<sup>172</sup>

However, Liam Connell has criticised approaches in Scottish literary studies informed by postcolonial theory, accusing this critical practice of creating a 'catchphrase criticism, which has seen critics loosely apply the terminology of postcolonialism without any extended explanation of its suitability and without a sustained application of the theoretical methodologies from which these terms derive'.<sup>173</sup> Aware of the problematic, complex relationship between postcolonial and Scottish contexts, some critics applying postcolonial theory to Scottish literature have been noticeably cautious in their approach, as Roderick Watson's use of quotation marks around the word 'colonised' demonstrates.<sup>174</sup> Michael Gardiner has considered the application of postcolonial theory to Scottish writing at length. However, his conclusions fall into the trap of Scottish exceptionalism identified by Stuart Kelly (see above):

Scotland is not in any sense post-colonial, but suffers from economic and cultural inequalities which can in part be articulated as part of a historical process on a national level. This problem shows a unique appropriateness [...] to the ambivalent postcolonial agencies I have been discussing.<sup>175</sup>

Lehner makes a similar claim for Scotland's national status, whilst avoiding the pitfalls of exceptionalism, viewing Scotland's position as one which allows critics to 'question and rethink the unilateral power dynamics and ideological deadlock

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<sup>172</sup> Edward Said, 'Foreword', p. vi.

<sup>173</sup> Liam Connell, 'Modes of Marginality: Scottish Literature and the Uses of Postcolonial Theory', *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 23: 1&2 (2003), pp. 41-53, (p. 41).

<sup>174</sup> Roderick Watson, 'Postcolonial Subjects? Language, Narrative Authority and Class in Contemporary Scottish Culture', p. 28.

<sup>175</sup> Michael Gardiner, 'Democracy and Scottish Postcoloniality', *Scotlands* 3:2 (1996), pp. 24-41 (p. 36).

of the colonial binary'.<sup>176</sup> There is a critical consensus that Scotland has not been colonised, but has both benefitted from its association with a colonial centre and been subjugated by that centre. This consensus identifies Scotland as a site of both resistance to and collusion with hegemonic power. This informs my critical nationalist approach, which demonstrates that literary texts since 1989 have implicated Scotland in authoritative processes of marginalisation and containment.

Where some critics of Scottish literature have nationalised subaltern identity, other critics have noted a fundamental incompatibility between subalternity and nationalism. For Lehner, subalternity and nationalism have fundamentally different interests, since the autonomous national state which political nationalism desires is implicated in the silencing and marginalisation of the subaltern:

Concerned with the histories, agency and politics of social groups that have been excluded, elided, dominated and oppressed by both colonial *and* post-colonial state formations, Subaltern studies contests the notion that a resurgent national culture ever works as a panacea capable of resolving issues of poverty, sexism, patriarchy, racism and so on.<sup>177</sup>

Where cultural nationalist critics have nationalised subalternity, for postcolonial critics the recovery of national statehood is unable to address or improve the subaltern condition: 'the nationalist narrative of decolonization is like a vaccine that did not take with the subaltern, precisely because the subaltern had no access to the culture of imperialism'.<sup>178</sup> As I will explore in Chapter One of this thesis, cultural nationalist critics have constructed a critical narrative which views British devolution as the recovery of Scottish statehood, and reads this state political process as channelling the resistant, subaltern energies of Scottish literary texts. However, for both Lehner and Spivak, the position of subalternity is not resolved by changing national status, since the subaltern is disenfranchised from the elite, authoritative power exercised by any national state. For Lehner,

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<sup>176</sup> Stefanie Lehner, *Subaltern Ethics in Contemporary Scottish and Irish Literature: Tracing Counter-Histories*, p. 37.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>178</sup> Leon de Kock, 'An Interview with Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak: New Nation Writers Conference in South Africa', *Ariel* Vol. 23, No. 3 (1992) pp. 29-47 (p. 46).

literary nationalism's nationalisation of marginalised identity has obscured, rather than recovered, the subaltern:

[T]he notion of the purported 'subaltern' credentials of nationalism in its assumed compatibility with the claims of marginalised or oppressed identity groups is highly problematic. For, in order to press and prioritise its claims, the politics of nationalism must either subsume and subordinate, or dissolve and displace, other forms of identitarian or emancipatory struggle (such as feminism or socialism, for example).<sup>179</sup>

For Lehner, the way out of a critical discourse dominated by nationalism is an intersectional Subaltern Studies approach, which foregrounds 'how class intersects with other marginalised identity categories, such as gender, sexuality and race'.<sup>180</sup> This approach informs my thesis, which exposes and foregrounds the instances in Scottish texts in which constructions of nationhood and marginal class and gender identities confront each other. Chapter four of this thesis is particularly relevant to this approach, since it is concerned with the interstices between gender, class and nation, which often become sites of conflict and antagonism in Scottish literary fiction since 1989.

### **The Critics, the Subaltern and the State**

Cultural nationalism's nationalisation of marginal identity becomes particularly problematic and exploitative in the context of critical readings which relate Scottish literary texts to parliamentary devolution. Generally, the authors of the working-class texts vaunted by cultural nationalist critics are from similar backgrounds to those of the characters they are writing about. Examples include Alasdair Gray, Janice Galloway, Jenni Fagan and James Kelman, who is especially vocal about his commitment to a writing which is faithful to his own background: 'The stories I wanted to write would derive from my own background, my own personal experience. I wanted to write and remain a member of my own community'.<sup>181</sup> On the other hand, the class identities of

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<sup>179</sup> Stefanie Lehner, *Subaltern Ethics in Contemporary Scottish and Irish Literature: Tracing Counter-Histories*, p. 9.

<sup>180</sup> Stefanie Lehner, 'Subaltern Scotland: Devolution and Postcoloniality', in Berthold Schoene (ed.), pp. 293-94.

<sup>181</sup> James Kelman, 'The Importance of Glasgow in my Work', in *Some Recent Attacks: Essays Cultural and Political* (Stirling: AK Press, 1992), pp. 78-84 (p. 81).

literary critics are generally far more privileged than the subaltern protagonists of Scottish novels. For Christopher Whyte, the cultural nationalist focus on vernacular fiction in particular has created a critical narrative which positions Scotland's working classes as representative of the nation, despite the fact that the writers of this critical narrative are themselves far more privileged than the disenfranchised, working-class protagonists of the texts they have posited as central to literary nation-building:

It is safe to presume that, in Scotland and further afield, the audience for Scottish fiction is largely drawn from the middle and upper-middle classes. In other words, the consumers of texts in which the 'hard man' plays a significant role are unlikely to be 'hard men' themselves. Many of them will be women. The men are unlikely to be out of work, and may well have a university education [...] [O]ne may posit a demand on the part of the Scottish middle class for fictional representations from which it is itself excluded; a demand, in other words, for textual invisibility. This would connect with the widespread perception of the Scottish middle classes as 'denationalised', as less Scottish in terms of speech and social practice than the lower classes. The task of embodying and transmitting Scottishness is, as it were, devolved to the unemployed, the socially underprivileged, in both actual and representational contexts.<sup>182</sup>

Whyte's observation prompts an interrogation of the subaltern focus within Scottish literary studies: is there a sense in which cultural nationalist critics are appropriating working-class texts as a spectacle of Scottish difference, in order to fulfil their own political agendas? Subaltern Studies critics have exposed a similar ethical dilemma within intellectual discourses which seek to 'reveal' the subaltern whilst concealing their own position: 'The banality of leftist intellectuals' lists of self-knowing, politically canny subalterns stands revealed; representing them, the intellectuals represent themselves as transparent'.<sup>183</sup> Intellectual 'invisibility' in terms of class status is significant in Scottish literary studies. Despite its focus on subalternity, Scottish literary nationalism is a bourgeois and privileged discourse; as Whyte notes in his observations, those who are most likely to read vernacular Scottish texts belong to the middle classes. By privileging working-class texts, Scottish literary studies can be seen to align itself with a left-liberal agenda.

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<sup>182</sup> Christopher Whyte, 'Masculinities in Contemporary Scottish Fiction', *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 34: 3 (1998), pp. 274-85 (p. 275).

<sup>183</sup> Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?', in Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (eds), *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988), pp. 66-111 (p. 70).

However, by positing the subaltern as representative of the nation, particularly – as I argue below – in the context of parliamentary devolution, literary critics are ‘speaking for’ the subaltern in a way which threatens to exploit subaltern identity in the interests of nationalism. One prominent example of a subaltern-oriented literary nationalism, in which the middle-class critic renders his own class position ‘invisible’, appears in the introduction to Cairns Craig’s influential study *Out of History*:

It is not by our colour, of course, that we have stood to be recognised as incomplete within the British context, it is by the colour of our vowels: the rigidity of class speech in Britain, the development of Received Pronunciation as a means of class identity, is the direct response of a dominant cultural group faced by a society in which the outsiders are indistinguishable by colour.<sup>184</sup>

Although Craig is particularly attuned to the formal dynamic of vernacular within Scottish literature – as argued above – here his critique is far more problematic. As Aaron Kelly explains, Craig ‘elides a class issue (the subordination of working-class language) with a national one (Scotland’s marginalisation as a nation)’<sup>185</sup>. In its conflation of national and class identity, the passage above fits Whyte’s description of a cultural nationalist critical narrative which ‘devolves’ representation of the nation to the underprivileged. Furthermore, through use of ‘our’ and ‘we’ Craig identifies himself – and implicitly, the cultural nationalist critical narrative – with the Scottish working classes. Thus Craig provides a clear example of the ways in which cultural nationalism renders its own bourgeois position ‘invisible’ through an over-identification with Scottish markers of working-class identity, such as vernacular speech. Furthermore, in this passage Craig posits Scottish identity as uniformly dominated by Britain; Scotland is posited as ‘subaltern’, submerged within and by the wider hierarchical structure of the UK state. The suggestion here is that the battle-lines of cultural resistance are drawn between Scotland and the rest of Britain, rather than within the Scottish nation itself.

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<sup>184</sup> Cairns Craig, *Out of History: Narrative Paradigms in Scottish and English Culture* (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1996), p. 12.

<sup>185</sup> Aaron Kelly, *Irvine Welsh* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), p. 63.

Where cultural nationalist critics have acquired a position of class ‘invisibility’, Lindsay Paterson and Tom Nairn have produced work foregrounding the stake which intellectuals have in the nation-state and in political devolution. Paterson elucidates a relationship between nationalist politics, cultural nationalism, and middle-class self-interest:

[T]he importance of elite groups is found in the key role played by the Scottish middle class, shifting from being the main beneficiaries of the welfare state to being self-conscious defenders of it against what was seen as Thatcher’s attacks, to being now the leaders of a cultural nationalism, and increasingly also of a political one.<sup>186</sup>

Tom Nairn also renders explicit self-interested, elite interest in Scottish statehood: ‘The governing elite and the liberal intelligentsia, and the dominant sector of the economic ruling class, all have an obvious vested interest in the state. The industrial bourgeoisie and the working class do not’.<sup>187</sup> Where nationalist literary critics have aligned themselves with subaltern texts, within the context of devolution this can be read as an exploitative act, in which ‘the most conscious and awakened part of the middle class’ nationalise the radical energies of literary texts in order ‘to beat “progress” into a shape that suits their own needs and class ambitions’.<sup>188</sup>

In readings which frame literary texts in devolutionary terms, the radical political energies of subaltern texts are posited as supportive of – rather than opposed to – state power. When cultural nationalist critics associate working-class Scottish writing with the event of parliamentary devolution, they embody ‘a restless middle-class and intellectual leadership trying to stir up and channel popular class energies into support for the new states’.<sup>189</sup> This is exemplified in Robert Crawford’s claim that radical literary texts published in the 1980s and 90s were ‘votes for a Scottish democracy’.<sup>190</sup> The second edition of Crawford’s study *Devolving English Literature* comments at length on the relationship between

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<sup>186</sup> Lindsay Paterson, *The Autonomy of Modern Scotland* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1994), p. 23.

<sup>187</sup> Tom Nairn, *The Break-up of Britain: Crisis and Neo-nationalism*, p. 45.

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 100.

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 41.

<sup>190</sup> Robert Crawford, *Bannockburns: Scottish Independence and Literary Imagination 1314 – 2014* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), p. 185.

British devolution and radical texts, but ultimately fails to make clear the relationship between literature and institutional, parliamentary authority:

The ringing first sentence of the 1997 *Scotland Bill*, ‘There shall be a Scottish Parliament,’ did not simply announce something new. It also re-echoed much older arguments about cultural and political authority. [...] In one way, it is nonsense to think of the new Scottish Parliament as a continuation of the old, which existed in a Scotland where only four thousand out of the population of a million had the vote; yet in another sense, it is undeniable that for poets, writers, academics, and people who are none of these, the cultural politics of modern Scotland do still relate to some of the issues of contested authority which preoccupied eighteenth-century Scots [...] Questions of vernacular language at odds with the discourse of institutional authority burn through the pages of James Kelman, Janice Galloway, Irvine Welsh, Duncan McLean and other present-day novelists as powerfully as they did in eighteenth-century Scottish writing. [...] It is undeniable though, that throughout the course of modern Scottish literature and criticism, authorship and national politics have been entangled.<sup>191</sup>

Crawford’s celebration of Scottish writing’s resistance to institutional authority, alongside his celebration of the creation of a new Scottish parliament, conveys the impression that he does not think that the Scottish parliament *is* such an institutional authority. There is a sense here in which Crawford views a Scottish parliament as *de facto* more benevolent, less authoritative and less objectionable than the UK government at Westminster, as if the anti-establishment politics he perceives as fundamental to Scottish writing do not apply to Scottish establishments. In this way he posits devolution as a process of liberation, viewing the institutional enfranchisement of a sublated national identity as an extension of the process of the literary enfranchisement of marginalised identities enacted by Scottish literature. Thus Crawford ‘channels’ and appropriates the oppositional energies of Scottish texts into support for Scottish statehood. My own critical nationalist agenda seeks to counter this appropriation.

Since 1989, cultural nationalist criticism has claimed that the history of devolution in Scotland has been closely connected to the nation’s literary history. For some critics, the resurgence in the Scottish novel in the 1980s and 90s was a reaction to the failed devolution referendum of 1979. Douglas Gifford has claimed that this referendum has resulted in a national cultural atmosphere of

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<sup>191</sup> Robert Crawford, *Devolving English Literature*, 2nd edn (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), pp. 310-11.

confidence and positivity, which has been termed a ‘new Renaissance’ in Scottish literary culture:

After 1980 [...] the fiction attempts a more positive vision of Scotland, increasingly working in new genres, mingling these in a determined contemporary eclecticism which simultaneously exploits Scottish cultural and fictional traditions and breaks with them. It is tempting to see this change in confidence as somehow related to the 1979 Devolution referendum and the growing assertion of Scottish identity and its varieties that emerged almost in defiance of that quasi-democratic debacle. With this new confidence, Scottish fiction approached the millennium as a standard bearer for Scottish culture, arguably even supplying the most successful explorations of changing Scottish identities, in a rich variety of voices and gestures. The new complexities in novelistic vision relate dynamically to the changes taking place in Scottish society at large, not only reacting to them, but influencing the framework of thought in which they took place.<sup>192</sup>

However, elsewhere Gifford has fleetingly acknowledged the oppositional qualities of Scottish literature of this period, asserting that ‘the “new urbanity” [...] is a revival which by and large is deeply critical of the very Scotland it “celebrates” [...]’. If we are witnessing a new “renaissance”, its subject matter is predominantly the dearth of real culture and aesthetic freedom in modern Scotland’.<sup>193</sup> Like Crawford, Gifford recognises the oppositional qualities of Scottish literature, but – unlike Crawford – he also recognises that these texts do not exempt Scotland from their criticism.

Alex Thomson’s article on devolution and Scottish literary history locates the earliest example of this devolutionary brand of cultural nationalism in Cairn’s Craig’s ‘Series Preface’ to the ‘Determinations’ series: a body of influential critical works published by Polygon, which includes *The Eclipse of Scottish Culture* and *Out of History: Narrative Paradigms in Scottish and British Culture*.<sup>194</sup> Craig’s ‘Preface’ recognised the debates taking place in Scottish

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<sup>192</sup> Douglas Gifford, ‘Breaking Boundaries: From Modern to Contemporary in Scottish Fiction’, in Ian Brown, Thomas Owen Clancy, Susan Manning and Murray Pittock (eds), *The Edinburgh History of Scottish Literature: Volume 3* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), pp. 237-22 (p. 237).

<sup>193</sup> Douglas Gifford, ‘At Last – the Real Scottish Literary Renaissance?’, in *Books in Scotland* 34 (1990), pp. 1-4 (p. 2).

<sup>194</sup> Alex Thomson, ““You can’t get there from here”: Devolution and Scottish literary history’, <<http://www.ijsl.stir.ac.uk/issue3/thomson.htm>>.

culture as innovative and paradigm-shifting, and – like Gifford – heralded the 1980s as the beginning of a new era in Scottish intellectual and cultural life:

[T]he 1980s proved to be one of the most productive and creative decades in Scotland this century – as though the energy that had failed to be harnessed by the politicians flowed into other channels. In literature, in thought, in history, creative and scholarly work went hand in hand to redraw the map of Scotland's past and realign the perspectives of its future.

In place of a the few standard conceptions of Scotland's identity that had often been in the past the tokens of thought about the country's culture, a new and vigorous debate was opened up about the nature of Scottish experience, about the real social and economic structures of the nation, and about the ways in which the Scottish situation related to that of other similar cultures throughout the world.<sup>195</sup>

By connecting a cultural resurgence in Scotland to the failed 1979 referendum on Home Rule, Craig's claim that Scotland's future has been 'realigned' by developments in its cultural and intellectual life anticipated subsequent critical arguments connecting Scottish literature to British devolution and the establishment of a new Scottish parliament.

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<sup>195</sup> Cairns Craig, 'Series Preface' to Polygon's 'Determinations' series, in Craig Beveridge and Ronald Turnbull's *The Eclipse of Scottish Culture* (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1989), no pagination.

## Chapter One

### Critiquing the Nation: Oppositional Writing

#### Critiquing the Nation

This first chapter will theorise and demonstrate a critical nationalist agenda with reference to literary texts and key cultural criticism. The critical nationalist approach to Scottish texts interrogates a cultural nationalist critical narrative which frames Scottish writing in terms of parliamentary devolution, and aims to recover these texts from a critical narrative that contains their oppositional and resistant qualities within the terms of state politics. It aims to further develop the aspects of cultural criticism which prioritise the resistant, oppositional qualities of these texts, whilst demonstrating the limitations of readings which reduce textual interrogations of the nation to support for devolved Scottish statehood.

In a thorough yet accessible account of Scotland's history since 1700, Tom Devine has provided an account of the causes and contexts of devolution. He views the Hamilton by-election victory of the Scottish National Party's Winifred Ewing in 1967 as 'sensational', and a landmark in a long process of the emergence of 'the nationalist challenge' to a centralised UK state.<sup>1</sup> He discerns that the increase in electoral support for the Scottish Nationalist Party (SNP) in the 1990s was not a bid for separate statehood, but an oppositional act intended as criticism of state policy: 'A vote for the SNP came to be regarded as an act of protest, a manifestation of Scottish discontent about government policy rather than a commitment to Scottish independence'.<sup>2</sup> This critical impulse led to considerations of Home Rule and the publication of a White Paper exploring the possibility of Scotland's devolution from the United Kingdom, which for Devine was designed 'not in order to improve the UK constitution, but to end the threat of separatism'.<sup>3</sup>

For both Devine and Michael Hechter, economic factors – rather than cultural ones – have been instrumental in the emergence of twentieth-century

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<sup>1</sup> T. M. Devine, *The Scottish Nation: 1700-2007*, 2nd edn (London: Penguin, 2006), pp. 574-75.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 575.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 576.

Scottish nationalism. Devine locates the roots of the political disenchantment which led to devolution ‘in the 1960s and 1970s when neither Tory or Labour, the two “unionist” parties, were capable of delivering long-term economic and social benefit as UK governments struggled against recurrent currency crises and the menace of rising inflation’.<sup>4</sup> Nationalist opposition to state policy was furthered in the 1980s, a decade which fostered ‘growing opposition to the social policies of a succession of Conservative governments’, leading Devine to term Margaret Thatcher the ‘midwife of Scottish devolution’.<sup>5</sup> For Michael Hechter, cultural differentiation and distinctiveness in Scotland provided a national platform for growing discontent with state economic policy in the mid-twentieth century. He detects ‘a profound shift in the legitimate rationale for regional autonomy’ in Britain’s peripheral nations, from cultural arguments in the nineteenth century to a nationalist response to ‘regional economic distress’ in the twentieth.<sup>6</sup> For Hechter, deindustrialisation in particular provided crucial impetus for the rise of nationalism, since the failure of the heavy industries had broken ‘the strong class-conscious links of the peripheral working class to national institutions’ such as trade unions and the Labour party.<sup>7</sup>

Thus an oppositional attitude to state economic and social policy can be seen as a crucial factor in the rise of Scottish nationalism in the twentieth-century, rather than the desire for a state congruent with the nation which Gellner’s formulation posits as the rationale for nationalist mobilization. Arguing that twentieth-century Scottish nationalism was not primarily motivated by separatism, Tom Devine notes that electoral support for the SNP was ‘liable to dissipate when grievances became less pressing’, indicating a lack of strong support for Scottish independence.<sup>8</sup> There is a disjuncture between the economic discontent which analysts have identified as a leading cause of the rise of nationalism in twentieth-century Scotland, and the policy

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<sup>4</sup> T. M. Devine, *The Scottish Nation: 1700-2007*, p. 621.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Michael Hechter, *Internal Colonialism: The Celtic fringe in British national development, 1536-1966* (London: Routledge, 1975), pp. 300-01.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 309.

<sup>8</sup> T. M. Devine, *The Scottish Nation: 1700-2007*, p. 586.

of devolution, which was devised to contain and neutralise Scottish opposition to state policy.

The vast majority of texts explored in this study were written by authors who have been publicly supportive of the establishment of a new Scottish Parliament. Undoubtedly, the explorations of identity politics in these texts have included questions of national identity. However, the deployment of these texts as cultural indicators of the state process of devolution obscures their critique of, and resistance to, the hegemonic power of the state and other national institutions. In the works of writers including James Kelman, A. L. Kennedy and Janice Galloway, identity politics are employed in order to critique the containment processes enacted by hegemonic institutions and institutionalised discourse. The intersections and antagonisms between the politics of nation, class, and gender in these texts mobilise my critical nationalist approach, which recognises that constructions of nationhood can be complicit in the marginalising and silencing of subaltern identities. In texts by authors who are often posited by cultural national critics as central to a devolutionary critical narrative in Scotland, protagonists frequently rage against institutional power from a position of marginalisation and powerlessness. Rather than viewing these texts as establishing the basis for institutional politics at a national level, critical nationalism demonstrates that these texts critique and oppose institutional power. The politics of this literature is that of an oppositional, antagonist attitude to the state, which demands more radical constitutional and social change than offered by parliamentary devolution. These texts therefore are not indicative of literary nation-building, but of an oppositional, critical dynamic, which implicates Scotland's institutions, traditions and identities in processes of marginalisation.

James Kelman's story 'talking about my wife'<sup>9</sup> draws attention to the differing, opposed political domains of the state and everyday life, through differing orthographies of the word 'politics'. At several points in the story, 'politics' is spelled with several 'p's – as either 'ppolitics' or 'pppolitics'.

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<sup>9</sup> James Kelman, 'talking about my wife', in *If It Is Your Life* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 2010), pp. 11-38.

These orthographic differences indicate a crucial difference between the limited, containing, elite spectrum of parliamentary politics, and a wider spectrum of political opinion which includes the radical and extra-parliamentary politics which concern Kelman's disenfranchised, frustrated protagonist – an 'ordinary worker', who is acutely aware that 'power there is none' for those of his socio-economic status.<sup>10</sup> A similar awareness of an opposition between political domains also appears in 'If It Is Your Life', another story from the same collection, in which a different protagonist remarks: 'People thought they knew about politics but they did not, only about parliaments'.<sup>11</sup> For the protagonist of 'talking about my wife', the site of the politics which immediately affect him is his own life, particularly his workplace: 'I was a would-be author on matters cultural, political and historical, to wit my life. [...] I existed in the world of "angry gaffers", data such as "sack" and other matters of fact'.<sup>12</sup> He inhabits a Scotland in which trade unionism and workplace organisation are no longer effective; where there is no remaining platform for working-class or left-wing political organisation. The protagonist conducts a critique of the devolved Scottish Parliament, in which it is viewed as enacting a process of containment and marginalisation, in which the institutional options on offer serve only to disenfranchise the 'ordinary worker':

See that crowd nowadays, they are so ignorant. But they think that they know everything. They actually believe the Scottish Nationalists are a left-wing party, them and the Lib Dems. Honest! At the same time but if ye want to vote socialist ye vote for the Labour party. Unless ye're an extremist. In that case you vote for the Scottish Socialists! Honest, that's what they think. Ye ever heard such crap!<sup>13</sup>

The political domain which Kelman's texts occupy is far removed from the narrow, elite nature of the Scottish Parliament as it is critiqued here. For his protagonist, the establishment of a Parliament is no substitute for the working-class organisation and representation that has declined into a '[b]loody joke' after the decline of trade-unionism.<sup>14</sup> The protagonist intends to write a book

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<sup>10</sup> James Kelman, 'talking about my wife', pp. 17.

<sup>11</sup> James Kelman, 'If it is your life', in *If It Is Your Life*, pp. 119-72 (p. 147).

<sup>12</sup> James Kelman, 'talking about my wife', pp. 17-18.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 30.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 25.

on the subject, suggesting that, in the absence of a representational political platform, the last available platform for working-class politics is writing. This resonates with Kelman's own agenda as a writer. His stated aim is to construct a literature which takes as its subject matter the everyday lives of the working classes, in order to demonstrate that '[f]or 80% of our society life is constantly dramatic in a way that the 20% who control the wealth and power find totally incomprehensible'.<sup>15</sup> Kelman's texts – along with those of several of his contemporaries – articulate a politics which is excluded from and obscured by mainstream discourse, and is disenfranchised from the elite institutional political domain which the Scottish Parliament embodies. Cultural criticism which views the work of these writers as part of the institutional, elite process of devolution serves to appropriate these texts, diverting from their attack on hegemonic power by yoking them into a narrative of parliamentary, state power.

Despite a strong critical focus on Kelman's novels within scholarship, for Adrian Hunter it is his use of the short story form<sup>16</sup> which is particularly effective as a vehicle for Kelman's literary enfranchisement of what Frank O'Connor has termed 'submerged population groups'.<sup>17</sup> In O'Connor's account of the modernist short story, he associates the form with nations which are – or have recently been – engaged in an anti-imperial struggle against their states. He views Czarist Russia, America and Ireland as sites of a flourishing of the short story form, in contradistinction to imperial England.<sup>18</sup> Opposition to the state is a marked feature of both content and form in Kelman's work, and this impulse can be termed as part of his project to 'transcend the structures – ideological as well as narrative – that capitalism would impose upon us'.<sup>19</sup> Hunter locates Kelman within a literary modernist tradition, since

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<sup>15</sup> Kirsty McNeill, 'Interview with James Kelman', *Chapman* 57 (Summer 1989), pp. 1-9 (p. 9).

<sup>16</sup> Adrian Hunter, 'Kelman and the Short Story', in Scott Hames (ed.), *The Edinburgh Companion to James Kelman* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), pp. 42-52.

<sup>17</sup> Frank O'Connor, 'The Lonely Voice', in Charles E. May (ed.), *Short Story Theories* (Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1976), pp. 83-93 (p. 86).

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 87.

<sup>19</sup> Adrian Hunter, 'Kelman and the Short Story', p. 52.

‘modernist stories tend to eschew any trace of omniscient narration, preferring instead to confine narrative point-of-view within character consciousness, either through first-person narration or the deployment of free indirect style’.<sup>20</sup> Kelman’s particularly claustrophobic focalization in both his short stories and novels evades constructing the horizontal sense of a national population engaged in ‘simultaneous activity’ which characterises Anderson’s formulation of novel as national form. One frequently discussed feature of Kelman’s extreme focalisation is that urban vernacular, Glaswegian language is employed as both narrative language and speech-language within his works, creating the ‘unity of voice’ which Cairns Craig has posited as oppositional to the social atomisation of late capitalism (see introduction). For Michael Gardiner, this particular realisation of a peripheral literature which rejects the language of the imperial core – implicitly, Standard English – enables Kelman ‘to create new literary forms below the level of the state’ through ‘a struggle with the core language [which] is associated with a struggle with the form of the state’.<sup>21</sup>

Kelman’s refusal to re-inscribe Standard English as omniscient narrative meta-language in his texts is often read by critics as a critique of existing social structures, including those of class and nation.<sup>22</sup> Where Gellner views the state as crucial in the maintenance and enforcement of the class system (see introduction), Kelman’s textual opposition resists colluding with this enforcement on a structural level. By railing against the limited – and limiting – range of parties which vie for the dominant role in this enforcement, the protagonist of ‘talking about my wife’ recognizes the excess of people over state which David Lloyd points to as crucial in the development of nationalisms against the state. In Kelman’s story this excess is articulated as a demand for working-class enfranchisement in the aftermath of devolution – a

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<sup>20</sup> Adrian Hunter, ‘Kelman and the Short Story,’ p. 43.

<sup>21</sup> Michael Gardiner, ‘Kelman and World English’, in Scott Hames (ed.), *The Edinburgh Companion to James Kelman* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), pp. 99-110 (p. 105).

<sup>22</sup> Mary McGlynn, “‘Middle-Class Wankers’ and Working-Class Texts: The Critics and James Kelman’, *Contemporary Literature* Vol. 43, No. 1 (Spring, 2002), pp. 50-84 (p. 51).

demand indicative of Kelman's refusal to 'dissolve' working-class difference 'in the hegemony of state-oriented nationalisms'.<sup>23</sup> Instead, Kelman's story articulates a working-class politics opposed to the 'homogenizing drive' of the state by demanding the 'alternative system of legality or rationality' which, for Lloyd, is the aim of an oppositional nationalism.<sup>24</sup> The text evades subsuming alternative social groupings – such as marginalised class identifications – within a hegemonic, state-oriented devolutionary narrative.

In Kelman's story, identification with a peripheral nation does not provide a means of resistance to state-imposed social injustice, since '[s]o called Scotland, be it known, [is] a complete waste of space'.<sup>25</sup> Instead, both 'Scottishness' and 'Britishness' are posited as part of the same process of disempowerment which the protagonist rails against: 'People needed month holidays in foreign domains. No bosses, no gaffers, no Scottishness or Britishness'.<sup>26</sup> Scottishness and Britishness are virtually interchangeable in this list of sites of hegemonic power. Simon Kövesi remarks that in Kelman's writing, '[n]ationality and nationalism are never asserted as an overarching structure of succour or confirmation [...]. Kelman's characters have little to do with accepted narratives of Scotland or Scottishness'.<sup>27</sup> However, despite this indifference to questions of nation – an indifference which develops into hostility in 'talking about my wife' – Kelman's work occupies a prominent position as part of the cultural nationalist argument that literature has been the carrier of nationhood in the absence of a nation-state. Dorothy McMillan has noticed an irony regarding the appropriative nationalisation of Kelman's work in its critical reception:

[I]t probably had most to do with the need of these inside the London egg to validate their fragile authenticity by adopting as mascots artists that seemed closer to the 'real life' of the people. Into this climate came Kelman's pure, naturalistic fictions calling into question any

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<sup>23</sup> David Lloyd, *Ireland After History* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1999), p. 33.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27.

<sup>25</sup> James Kelman, 'talking about my wife', p. 26.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27.

<sup>27</sup> Simon Kövesi, *James Kelman* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), pp. 20-21.

totalizing myth of Scottishness and ending up, through no fault or desire of his own, seeming to embody such a myth.<sup>28</sup>

Although McMillan associates this appropriation with London, several leading figures in Scottish Studies have frequently invoked Kelman in their assertions of literary nation-building. In these readings, the affiliation of these texts with marginalised identity is conflated with perceptions of Scotland as marginal within the British state:

Alasdair Gray, James Kelman, Janice Galloway, A. L. Kennedy – and even Irvine Welsh [...] Through works such as theirs Scotland went on imagining itself as a nation and went on constituting itself as a national imagination in defiance of its attempted or apparent incorporation into a unitary British culture, a defiance which has had profound political consequences in the last decade of the twentieth century.<sup>29</sup>

Craig reads these texts as carriers of nationhood in the absence of a Scottish state, positing them as fundamental to the establishment of a Scottish Parliament – here seen to be established in ‘defiance’ of British hegemony. However, this chapter will explore arguments that devolution was conceived as a strategic containment of Scottish nationalism, and orchestrated by a Scottish political elite motivated by self-interest. The ‘defiance’ in these novels is directed at Scotland’s institutions, narratives and traditions, criticising their complicity with elite processes of containment. Rather than providing a vehicle for dissent, constructions of nationhood are frequently implicated in processes of silencing and disenfranchisement within Scottish fiction since 1989. The defiance that characterises Scottish texts does not exempt Scottish manifestations of power from its critique. Two examples of oppositional literary responses to Scottish institutional practices, both by authors mentioned by Craig, will be examined in this chapter: A. L. Kennedy’s short story ‘The role of notable silences in Scottish history’ (1990), in which the nation is viewed as constructed and maintained by an elitist and totalising historical narrative, and Kelman’s novel *A Disaffection* (1989), in which the Scottish education system is critiqued by a protagonist who views it as

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<sup>28</sup> Dorothy McMillan, ‘Constructed out of bewilderment: stories of Scotland’, in Ian A. Bell (ed.), *Peripheral Visions: Images of Nationhood in Contemporary Scottish Fiction* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1995), pp. 80-99 (p. 85).

<sup>29</sup> Cairns Craig, *The Modern Scottish Novel: Narrative and the National Imagination* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), p. 36.

inducting young, working-class people into a capitalist system of exploitation and disempowerment.

### **Surrogate Statehood**

The assertion that literature has functioned as a surrogate for nationhood in the absence of a state or parliament is a commonplace in cultural nationalist criticism. For Roderick Watson, ‘the main “state” left to a “stateless nation” may well be its state of mind, and in that territory it is literature which maps the land’.<sup>30</sup> Liam McIlvanney’s statement of literature as the carrier of nationhood during the 1980s and 1990s is bolder:

[T]he novel itself [became] a centre of sorts, taking up the political slack, filling the space where politics ought to have been. [...] For much of the post-war period, Scotland’s unacknowledged legislators have outpaced the political ones. [...] The ‘post-British’ Scotland to which the Edinburgh Parliament was a laggard response had long been taking shape in the pages of Scottish novels.<sup>31</sup>

Within Scottish literary studies there is a critical desire to view the process of parliamentary devolution as strongly related to the construction of a modern Scottish novelistic tradition. National literary representation is charged with compensating for the absence of national political representation and with resisting the hegemonic power of the British state on a cultural level, in the absence of a democratic political platform for this resistance. Despite critical awareness of a discrepancy between cultural and political narratives of the nation – acknowledged above by McIlvanney in his assertion that literature has ‘outpaced’ parliamentary politics – this is most often read as literature being a more effective and complete part of the same political process as devolution. This thesis reads against the grain of a dominant critical desire to posit Scottish texts as cultural harbingers of political devolution, arguing that to map their oppositional politics onto a reading of Scotland as a marginalised,

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<sup>30</sup> Roderick Watson, ‘Introduction’, in Roderick Watson (ed.), *The Poetry of Scotland* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995), pp. xxxi-xxxvii (p. xxxi).

<sup>31</sup> Liam McIlvanney, ‘The Politics of Narrative in the Post-war Scottish Novel’, in Zachary Leader (ed.), *On Modern British Fiction* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 181-208 (p. 185).

‘stateless’ nation is to overwrite the non-elite, disenfranchised aspects of Scotland which these texts prioritise.

‘The role of notable silences in Scottish history’ articulates the marginalisation of the ‘ordinary’ within official discourse:

Go into any place where history is stored and listen. Hold your breath. Hear how still it is. Librarians and archivists will keep their visitors quiet, but this particular silence has nothing to do with them. It runs through buzzing computer rooms and waits in busy record offices, it is always there. It is the sound of nothingness. It is the huge, invisible, silent roar of all the people who are too small to record. They disappear and leave the past inhabited only by murderers and prodigies and saints.<sup>32</sup>

The nationalisation of this silence, by positing it as part of a particularly *Scottish* history, implicates the nation in the capacity of official discourse to marginalise and silence the majority of people. The importance of the textual enfranchisement of the ‘ordinary’ is apparent within both Kennedy and Kelman’s work, and has been acknowledged by key cultural nationalist critics, particularly Roderick Watson, who reads Scottish writing as a democratising process of ‘giving voice’ to those marginalised by hegemonic power.<sup>33</sup>

However, when such readings of Scottish literature as ‘giving voice’ are elided with the state process of devolution, voices emergent within Scottish writing of the 1980s and 1990s are read as representative of emerging statehood. For Michael Gardiner:

Kelman’s rise came at a time when Scots were literally finding a political ‘voice’ in the form of the new Parliament. Indeed, rather than thinking that devolution has created a situation where it is fashionable to write in Scottish dialects, we could reverse the proposition – that the long struggle to find a modern means of expression has pushed a national sense which, dissatisfied with being politically silenced in the 1980s and 1990s, had to find a creative solution.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> A. L. Kennedy, ‘The role of notable silences in Scottish history’, in *Night Geometry and the Garscadden Trains* (London: Vintage, 2004), pp. 62-72 (p. 64). First published 1990.

<sup>33</sup> Roderick Watson, ‘Alien Voices from the Street: Demotic Modernism in Modern Scots Writing’, *Yearbook of English Studies* 25 (1995), pp. 141-55 (p. 150).

<sup>34</sup> Michael Gardiner, *Modern Scottish Culture* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), p. 155.

This thesis aims to recover these texts from this devolutionary framing. Rather than viewing these texts as a ‘creative solution’ to stateless nationhood, this study contends that the oppositional qualities of Scottish writing since the 1980s are obscured by critical arguments which position it as part of a process of literary nation-building. What these texts are ‘giving voice’ to is not statehood, but an oppositional critique of power. The Scottish Parliament, a locus of state power, is not exempt from this critique – as demonstrated above in ‘talking about my wife’. Critical nationalist readings recognise that this literature often presents an oppositional perspective on the nation, in which Scottish institutions and constructions of Scottish identity are implicated in the silencing and containment of marginalised groups.

Other critics have taken issue with readings of Scottish literature which are seen to over-emphasise the importance of devolution to the nation’s cultural life. Christopher Whyte has been particularly direct in his interrogation of this reading, asking ‘[h]ow realistic is it, if we were to bring together the most significant works of Scottish poetry from the last sixty years, that they would dutifully reflect a growing desire for national autonomy?’<sup>35</sup> However, Whyte’s critique of devolutionary readings tends to conflate the politics of devolution with politics in a more general sense, and he advocates the ‘setting aside’ of political concerns as the necessary condition for the advancement of Scottish literary criticism:

[B]oth history and politics must renounce any privileged status as tools for the interpretation of Scottish literature. Surely it is best that those whose prime concern is history should study history, and those whose prime concern is politics, politics. [...] Hopefully it can be acceptable to set aside, for the moment, issues of national identity, searching for it, constructing it, reinforcing it, along with the illusion that the primary function of poetic texts lies in identity building, and that they are capable of resolving identity issues. There is an urgent need to approach Scottish texts from a range of different and complementary perspectives. As with the study of both history or politics, the becoming of a nation is only one among many considerations which compete for our attention.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Christopher Whyte, *Modern Scottish Poetry* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), p. 7.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

Whyte's agenda is a critical nationalist one, since it points to the limitations of a nationalist approach to Scottish literature and seeks to recover Scottish writing from reductive and limiting readings. It also exemplifies critical nationalism as a mode which opposes aspects of a cultural nationalist critical narrative, but is not incompatible with political nationalism. Whyte has discussed his support for Scottish independence in the essay collection *Unstated: Writers on Scottish Independence*.<sup>37</sup> However, Whyte's criticism that Scottish literary studies have been overly concerned with politics and history shares the faults of devolutionary criticism in its 'reduction of the political to the national'<sup>38</sup> by omitting the considerable strand of literary criticism which is concerned with identity politics, particularly class and gender, which have been central concerns for critics exploring marginalisation in Scottish texts. Matt Wickman has defended Scottish Studies against this reductive reading, arguing that criticism in the field is diverse and varied in its approach: 'Explorations of race, class, gender, and sexuality inform a great deal of new work in the field, supplemented by nuanced thinking about such subjects as vernacular language, national identity, the multi-mediated legacies of major Scottish authors, the role of culture in the public sphere, and much more'.<sup>39</sup> Responding to calls from within the field for a more diverse approach to Scottish Studies, Wickman states:

While the emphasis on diversity in the current era in some ways conserves categories like nationhood, it also potentially portends its own dissolution by admitting a 'cosmopolitan' criticism that views nation-states as obsolescent and thus liquidates the nationalist paradigm altogether. Originating in a kind of postmodern, Deleuzian

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<sup>37</sup> Christopher Whyte, 'Christopher Whyte', in Scott Hames (ed.), *Unstated: Writers on Scottish Independence* (Edinburgh: Wordpower, 2012), pp. 193-98.

<sup>38</sup> Aaron Kelly, 'James Kelman and the Deterritorialisation of Power', in Berthold Schoene (ed.), *The Edinburgh Companion to Contemporary Scottish Literature* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), pp. 175-83 (p. 176).

<sup>39</sup> Matt Wickman, 'Have Scottish Studies Ever Involved Cultural Studies?', *The Bottle Imp*, Supplement Issue 1 (March 2014). Available at: <<http://www.arts.gla.ac.uk/ScotLit/ASLS/SWE/TBI/TBISupp/TBISupp1/Wickman.html>> [accessed December 2014].

schizophrenia (as a national body without political organs), Scottish studies concludes by undercutting the very logic of its own existence.<sup>40</sup>

The views of Wickman and Whyte demonstrate a problem within Scottish Studies. Where Whyte advocates a de-centring of the field, for Wickman, the end result of this de-centring is the field's self-dissolution. As Alex Thomson argues, any study of Scottish texts cannot help but have cultural nationalist implications, since: 'taking Scottish literature as a starting point [...] is an act of exclusion and preferment'.<sup>41</sup> Whilst it is beyond the scope of this study to resolve this impasse, neither will I seek to evade it. The present study aims to critique aspects of the field of Scottish Studies without disregarding or reducing its nuance; to give due consideration to the achievements of cultural nationalist literary criticism whilst seeking to improve and further the field through self-critique. Critical nationalism seeks to add to these aspects of the discipline which recognise and centralise the marginal, oppositional qualities of Scottish texts since the 1980s. However, it also seeks to recover these recalcitrant energies from being subsumed into statist readings, aiming to refine the discipline through an interrogation of contentious claims – such as the claim that literary texts have created an institutional state.

David Lloyd has responded to a similar situation in the context of Irish literature. He claims that critical readings of Irish texts have appropriated their counter-hegemonic cultural politics in support of an official nationalism and new Irish state. He seeks to counter this appropriation in his own essays by exploring 'different forms of [...] self-estrangement [...] encouraged as much by official nationalism as by colonial powers', and by 'attempt[ing] to trace an alternative cultural politics in the resources of recalcitrance'.<sup>42</sup> For Lloyd:

What is at stake here is the gradual transformation of a counter-hegemonic concept within an oppositional nationalism into a hegemonic concept within a new nation state, a transformation which is [...] written already

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<sup>40</sup> Matt Wickman, 'Have Scottish Studies Ever Involved Cultural Studies?', <<http://www.arts.gla.ac.uk/ScotLit/ASLS/SWE/TBI/TBISup/Sup1/Wickman.html>>.

<sup>41</sup> Alex Thomson, 'Review: Scottish Culture After Devolution', *Scottish Affairs* 55 (Spring 2006), pp. 129-34 (p. 130).

<sup>42</sup> David Lloyd, *Anomalous states: Irish writing and the post-colonial movement* (Dublin: Lilliput Press, 1993), p. 3.

into the precepts of bourgeois nationalism.<sup>43</sup>

This thesis shares Lloyd's desire to foreground the resistant, recalcitrant qualities of texts allied to an 'oppositional' – rather than an 'official' – nationalism. The anti-state qualities of Scottish writing, which cultural nationalist critical narratives have subsumed into an emergent national identity read as analogous to an emerging Scottish state, are foregrounded in my readings. This emphasizes the 'oppositional' qualities of literary texts as resistant to containment within state discourse and state political processes.

Whyte's solution to a perceived preoccupation with nation, politics and identity is to urge critics to 'make space for purely aesthetic considerations'.<sup>44</sup> However, in some of the most celebrated works of modern Scottish literature, aesthetics and politics are inseparable. This is particularly true of vernacular writing. Cairns Craig has identified the use of vernacular language as a defining characteristic of post-devolution writing, since: 'The most radical change in the Scottish novel in the aftermath of devolution was, however, in its attitude to language [...] defying [Francis Russell] Hart's insistence that vernacular produced "a problem of uncertain narrative voice"'.<sup>45</sup> The vernacular language which Hart identified as a limitation on Scottish writing has become, in the work of experimental, left-wing writers, the site of radical oppositional energy – and the marker of a crucial 'watershed' in Scottish writing.<sup>46</sup> Vernacular language has also become central to cultural nationalist arguments which view this watershed in Scottish writing as a reaction to the failed 1979 referendum and the harbinger of a new Parliament. Therefore Whyte's argument that a renewed focus on the aesthetics of Scottish writing will enable a progression beyond a preoccupation with nationhood does not hold. Gardiner's contention that literature has enabled Scotland to 'find a political voice' associates vernacular language with the emergence of a 'national sense' culminating in the establishment of the new

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<sup>43</sup> David Lloyd, *Anomalous states: Irish writing and the post-colonial movement*, p. 3.

<sup>44</sup> Christopher Whyte, *Modern Scottish Poetry*, p. 236.

<sup>45</sup> Cairns Craig, 'Otherworlds: Devolution and the Scottish Novel', in Gerard Carruthers and Liam McIlvanney (eds), *The Cambridge Companion to Scottish Literature*, pp. 261-74 (p. 270).

<sup>46</sup> Liam McIlvanney, 'The Politics of Narrative in the Post-war Scottish Novel', p. 183.

Scottish parliament. This reading combines the politics of class and nation at the level of language, bringing identity politics and the politics of statehood onto the same – linguistic – plane. Ronald MacAulay has detected this double articulation in the everyday speech of working-class Scots: ‘Working-class speech in lowland Scotland thus has a double function: 1) to affirm Scottish identity and separateness from the English; and 2) to affirm working-class loyalty and distance from middle-class values’.<sup>47</sup> In the critical elision of nationhood and class identity, this double function is read by Gardiner and other critics as a granting of literary voice to a dispossessed working-class, which anticipates the granting of a national political ‘voice’ in the form of a new parliament. My critical nationalist approach asserts that this reading contains the oppositional energies of vernacular writing within an elite institutional process, and too often ignores the response these texts have to processes of global capitalism and manifestations of hegemonic and state power – processes in which the nation is frequently implicated by the texts. Where Scottish literary studies has centralised working-class texts in its readings of literature from the devolutionary era, readings of these texts which posit them as integral to parliamentary devolution leave the class politics of devolution unexamined.

### **The Limits of Devolution**

Over the last few years, cultural and political criticism has begun to challenge the nature of Scottish devolution, positing it as a strategy of containment and neutralisation of opposition to the British state. Alex Law and Gerry Mooney argue that devolution ostensibly preserves the power of the UK state:

The campaign for devolution respected the valid legal forms of the UK state at the same time as proclaiming the subjective rights of Scottish civil society to press demands for territorial justice. At no time did the campaign for Scottish devolution represent an extra-parliamentary challenge to the legal-rational authority of the UK state.

[...] Devolution was viewed by Scottish Labour as a tactic to forestall the electoral threat to its core support in urban central Scotland from a

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<sup>47</sup> Ronald K. S. MacAulay, *Extremely Common Eloquence: constructing Scottish identity through narrative* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2005), p. 21.

Nationalist-led opposition. It represented a pragmatic alternative to the risk of the break-up of the UK state.<sup>48</sup>

Where literary critics assert that Scottish culture is ‘difficult, disputatious and disaffected from authority’, it seems contradictory that the same critics view this anti-authoritarian culture as part of a state process designed to preserve the authority of the UK state.<sup>49</sup> In his discussion of the critical reception of vernacular Scottish texts, Scott Hames recognises that these texts are sites of ‘a marginal, subjected condition conceived as beyond any re-centring or “inclusion” within a hegemonic cultural order (such as a state, or a standardised language)’.<sup>50</sup> For Hames, cultural nationalist readings of vernacular texts ‘re-inscribe the containment logic’ of a limited parliamentary process, by reading the marginal element of these texts in terms of institutional state politics.<sup>51</sup>

Devolved institutions, in overtly ‘recognising’ the existence of national feeling, would assimilate it to the sphere of ‘representation’ – that is, the sphere of democratic spectacle. In essence, Scottish nationalism was to be neutralised via a ‘release’ which was truly a containment. I suggest that the fetishisation of linguistic difference in Scottish literary studies has unwittingly re-inscribed this logic, in which the display of reified ‘Scottish identity’ is equated with neo-national liberation.

Pervasive tropes of voice cement the expression of Scottishness with a demand for autonomy; a demand premised on romantic investments, but discharged in postmodern currency, ‘fulfilled’ by the instatement of an autonomous order of representation (in truth, an identitarian extension – a new particularist branch-office – of central authority). [...] Reified as a display-event within pre-constituted representative space, even those stirring voices saturated with ‘roots’, uttering the most stinging rebukes to institutional power, are incorporated within its legitimising rituals.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Alex Law and Gerry Mooney, ‘Devolution in a “Stateless Nation”: Nation-building and Social Policy in Scotland’, *Social Policy and Administration* Vol. 46, No. 2 (April 2012), pp.161-77 (p. 168).

<sup>49</sup> Cairns Craig, ‘Scotland: Culture After Devolution’, in Edna Longley, Eamonn Hughes and Des O’Rawe (eds), *Ireland (Ulster) Scotland: Concepts, Contexts, Comparisons* (Belfast: Cló Ollscoil na Banríona, 2003), pp. 39-43 (p. 43).

<sup>50</sup> Scott Hames, ‘On Vernacular Scottishness and its Limits: Devolution and the Spectacle of “Voice”’, *Studies in Scottish Literature* Vol. 39: Iss. 1 (August 2013), pp. 203-24 (p. 209).

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 204.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 224.

In their critiques of cultural nationalist readings, the work of Scott Hames and Aaron Kelly (discussed below) has been foremost amongst new critical work which opposes a tendency in cultural nationalist criticism to read Scottish Literature in devolutionary terms. The framing of literary texts in these terms does not take into account political critiques asserting the limited – and limiting – politics of devolution.

The limitations of parliamentary devolution as a democratising process have been critiqued by several political commentators. Gerry Hassan has posited devolution as part of a politics of elite self-interest:

‘Devolution’ became about narrow political change, institutionally focused on achieving a Parliament, and placing it in a polity and civil society, which only needed this change to renew and revive itself. And simultaneously, it allowed the political elites to take charge of a vision of change in which their position was central, maintained and remained unchallenged.

‘Devolution’ can thus be seen as an idea and ideology, bringing together the appearance of political change and democracy, with the point of restricting and restraining it.<sup>53</sup>

In these accounts of devolution as a cynical, elite process of containment functioning to preserve British state power, it is difficult to see any role for a literature of working-class opposition to authority. For Law and Mooney, the devolved Scottish state has legitimised itself through an exploitative elision of the discourses of territorial and social justice, whilst occluding class discourse at the level of policy in order to further a neo-liberal economic agenda:

While, since devolution in particular, ‘nation’ has become increasingly meaningful in Scotland, ‘class’ has been rendered relatively meaningless as political discourse. Class functions as an ‘absent presence’ in Scotland, mobilized only in euphemistic tropes – as ‘underclass’, the ‘socially excluded’, ‘anti-social’ youth, intransigent labour, the economically inactive – as calls to order for assorted ‘problem’ populations. Symbolic legitimacy for the devolved state in Scotland derives from a trans-class people-nation. Understood in this way, the state in Scotland yokes unequal social relations to territoriality through the nationalization of class. Although the Scottish state lacks full sovereign power it, nevertheless, exercises considerable economic, cultural and symbolic power, with profound consequences for the reproduction of class relations. Territorial politics is filled with different, often contradictory, class content, not least in the appeal to

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<sup>53</sup> Gerry Hassan, ‘Who Speaks for Scotland? Entitlement, Exclusion, the Power of Voice and Social Change’, in Gerry Hassan and James Mitchell (eds), *After Independence* (Edinburgh: Luath, 2013), pp. 434-52 (p. 437).

values of social justice at the same time as enacting neo-liberal policies in the service of Scotland's global economic competitiveness. Here, symbolic power rests on the common sense appeal of nationalism, concealing conflicting social interests behind the disinterest of national unity. [...] The emphatic nationalization of Scottish society and the occlusion of the class structuring functions of the devolved state are hallmarks of devolution.<sup>54</sup>

Scottish literary criticism risks repeating this process of obscuring class, even as it centralises working-class texts as its objects of study, by reconfiguring the working-class oppositional energies of these texts as nationalist support for a devolved Scottish parliament – a risk to which Robert Crawford succumbs in his claim that working-class Scottish texts ‘were votes for a Scottish democracy’.<sup>55</sup> This chapter aims to contribute to a critical agenda set by Hames and Kelly, which seeks to recover Scottish texts from critical readings in which it seems ‘as though the dissenting energies of post-1979 Scottish literary culture can only find political realisation when submerged within the discourse of liberal nationalism’.<sup>56</sup>

Aaron Kelly's article ‘James Kelman and the Deterritorialisation of Power’ interrogates a cultural nationalist critical narrative which reads modern Scottish writing in devolutionary terms, and demands a refocussing on the oppositional and class politics of Kelman's texts:

Kelman's post-devolution fiction confirms that what is ostensibly a deterritorialisation is ultimately a profound reterritorialisation, that is, not a democratising movement towards eventual national independence, or regionalised and micropolitical enfranchisement, but rather a shift to an increased interdependence of economic micro-units within global capitalism's shadowy institutions.<sup>57</sup>

In Kelly's reading, Kelman's post-devolution work in particular is characterised by a ‘stringent confrontation with power in all its forms’, which

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<sup>54</sup> Alex Law and Gerry Mooney, ‘Devolution in a “Stateless Nation”: Nation-building and Social Policy in Scotland’, pp. 172-73.

<sup>55</sup> Robert Crawford, *Bannockburns: Scottish Independence and Literary Imagination 1314 – 2014* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), p. 185.

<sup>56</sup> Scott Hames, ‘Introduction: Don't Feel Bought, You're Buying’, in Scott Hames (ed.), *Unstated: Writers on Scottish Independence* (Edinburgh: Word Power Books, 2012), pp. 1-18 (p. 10).

<sup>57</sup> Aaron Kelly, ‘James Kelman and the Deterritorialisation of Power’, in Berthold Schoene (ed.), *The Edinburgh Companion to Contemporary Scottish Literature* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), pp. 175-83 (p. 179).

is ‘both anticipating and demanding a more fundamental and revolutionary transformation’ than devolution.<sup>58</sup> In common with a critical nationalist approach, Kelly views Kelman’s texts as a forum for critique of constructions of the nation, since ‘literature harbours a complex mediation that enables a critique of both itself and its societal context. [...] Kelman’s writing contains precisely this “negative” capacity by which a critique of the conventional account of post-devolution Scottish society may be launched’.<sup>59</sup> However, Kelly does not provide this critique, instead utilising the work of major Marxist theorists – including Fredric Jameson, Theodor Adorno, and Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari – to inform his reading of Kelman’s post-devolution texts. Kelly’s article ultimately rejects the Scottish Studies approach. It views the nation as irrevocably complicit with ‘bourgeois hegemony’, eschewing it as a context for readings of Kelman’s writing in order to prioritise a ‘working-class experience that remains structurally incommensurate with, and socially excluded from, bourgeois hegemony and its apparent diversity’.<sup>60</sup> Kelly’s approach does not hesitate from, in Wickman’s terms, ‘undercutting the very logic’ of Scottish Studies, taking a cosmopolitan approach to Kelman’s work which reads it in terms of displacement, dislocation and the reterritorialisation of totalising power.<sup>61</sup> Where Kelly’s article appears to embody a critical nationalist approach in asserting that Kelman’s work ‘forces Scottish culture to consider its own implication in globalised networks of power and injustice’,<sup>62</sup> it is not an example of critical nationalism, because it rejects the cultural nationalist approach inherent in the discipline of Scottish Studies in favour of a Marxist approach.

Conversely, the critical nationalist readings conducted here do not reject, but seek to contribute to, Scottish Studies. While this study interrogates readings which see Scottish literature since 1979 as an agent in devolution, it

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<sup>58</sup> Aaron Kelly, ‘James Kelman and the Deterritorialisation of Power’, p 184.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., p. 177.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., p. 182.

<sup>61</sup> Matt Wickman, ‘Have Scottish Studies Ever Involved Cultural Studies?’, <<http://www.arts.gla.ac.uk/ScotLit/ASLS/SWE/TBI/TBISupp/TBISupp1/Wickman.html>>.

<sup>62</sup> Aaron Kelly, ‘James Kelman and the Deterritorialisation of Power’, p. 180.

is also informed by previous work in the field which views Scottish writing as a site of resistance to hegemonic power. However, through readings which demonstrate the texts' opposition to the institutions which constitute the nation, a critical nationalist approach aims to refine this discourse by confronting its tendency to subsume recalcitrant identities into a hegemonic, state-building nationalism.

### **Institutional Nationhood and Oppositional Literature**

Rogers Brubaker argues for a reframing of nationalism, which accommodates new forms that 'differ sharply from the state-seeking and nation-building nationalisms on which most theories of nationalism have been built'.<sup>63</sup>

Claiming that 'the upsurge in nationalism should not lead us to reify nations',<sup>64</sup> he argues that 'we should focus on nation as a category of practice, nationhood as an institutionalized cultural and political form, and nationness as a contingent event or happening'.<sup>65</sup> For Brubaker, nations do not simply exist as 'real groups', but are institutionalized through cultural and political practice.<sup>66</sup> Literary opposition to these institutionalized forms of nationhood provides a focus for critical nationalism, which traces antagonisms between these forms and the performative 'nationness' enacted by the protagonists of Scottish literature.

Despite the prevalent view that nationhood has been presented and preserved by Scottish culture in the absence of adequate institutional representation, Douglas Gifford and Cairns Craig have both produced arguments that privilege civil and state institutions as loci of nationhood. Douglas Gifford views Scotland's civic institutions in the same way as devolutionary literary criticism views Scottish texts – as the carriers of nationhood in the absence of a Scottish parliament:

Arguably only institutions define nationhood, and Scotland's situation after The Act of Union 1707 can surely be described in terms of constitutional dissociation, with two of the principal institutions of the

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<sup>63</sup> Rogers Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the national question in the New Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 10.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

time, Monarchy and Government, in London, while the three principal others remain. Scotland held onto its separate legal system [...]; it retained its distinctive educational system. And what probably mattered most to Scots in 1707 – and explains why, despite riots, the Union of Parliaments went ahead, – was the retention of what they saw as the fundamentally important institution of the established Presbyterian Church, for which their forefathers had so bloodily fought. Lacking a parliamentary vote, most Scots saw their voice as registering elsewhere.<sup>67</sup>

Both literature and institutions have been posited as compensating for the democratic deficit created by the absence of a Scottish parliament. However, Lindsay Paterson points to the elite nature of Scottish institutional governance after 1707 in *The Autonomy of Modern Scotland*: ‘The system of Scottish national government that emerged from the Union settlement can be characterised as political management by a social elite whose values were moderation and rationalism’.<sup>68</sup> Paterson’s analysis emphasises that ‘there were always [...] tensions between a ruling elite and the mass of the population who were not enfranchised. But all these tensions were indigenous’.<sup>69</sup> Where civic institutions granted Scotland considerable autonomy at the level of an institutional state, this autonomy was limited to an elite.

It therefore seems contradictory that the cultural nationalist critical narrative has posited both anti-institutional Scottish writing rooted in working-class life and state institutions controlled by an elite as carriers of nationhood. These arguments obscure tensions between the institutions of nationhood and the disenfranchised, isolated protagonists which populate Scottish literature. Cairns Craig’s argument that institutions play a fundamental role in connecting individuals to national life reinforces Gifford’s assertion of institutions as the locus of nationhood, claiming that ‘institutions [...] have, in many ways, defined and maintained the nation in the absence of a national government’.<sup>70</sup> For Craig, institutions – which he defines broadly, as both state institutions

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<sup>67</sup> Douglas Gifford, ‘Sham Bards of a Sham Nation?: Edwin Muir and the Failures of Scottish Literature’, *Studies in Scottish Literature* Vol. 35: Iss. 1 (2007), pp. 339-61 (p. 350).

<sup>68</sup> Lindsay Paterson, *The Autonomy of Modern Scotland* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1994), p. 31.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 36.

<sup>70</sup> Cairns Craig, *The Modern Scottish Novel: Narrative and the National Imagination*, p. 35.

and the repetitive, structured aspects of civic life – enable individual and communal action:

It is the nation which imagines not because there is some transcendental subject which ‘thinks’ separately from all the people who happen to live in the nation, but because the nation is the medium in which institutions have their being and which turns individual thinking into communal action. To act, in a national context, requires operating through (or in opposition to) those institutions – from the ritualised structures of everyday life to the vast organisations of modern bureaucracy – which are the carriers of the nation’s ‘embodied argument’. Those institutions provide the language(s) available in that place and time; they provide the medium through which the symbolic enactment of the possibilities of the future turns into the realities we have to live through and which, having become the past, constitute in turn the givenness from which our imagination of the future has again to begin.<sup>71</sup>

For Craig even to act in opposition to these institutions is to partake in the communal, national action which is mediated through them. However, in the literary texts explored in this chapter, protagonists find that these institutions prevent action and that their attempts to act in opposition to institutions are contained and neutralised by them. *A Disaffection* and ‘The role of notable silences in Scottish history’ are texts of frustrated action, in which characters can neither act through, nor in opposition to, institutions which contain attempts at subversion. My readings of these texts demonstrate that Scottish literature in the inter-referenda period has enacted the tension Paterson locates between Scottish society and the institutional nation.

In *A Disaffection*, Kelman’s protagonist Patrick Doyle – referred to throughout the novel as Patrick Doyle MA (HONS) – rails against the Scottish education system. His title marks him as a product of this system, since it is exclusively the ancient universities of Scotland which award Master of Arts degrees as undergraduate-level qualifications, and can thus be considered a marker of the institutional autonomy of the Scottish education system. Where Craig posits state institutions as the means through which individuals act, for Doyle his experience at one of these institutions – university – has diverted him from action:

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<sup>71</sup> Cairns Craig, *The Modern Scottish Novel: Narrative and the National Imagination*, p. 32.

What might he have done? He might have done things. Obviously he can't be expected to say what exactly these things are. But there are things he definitely would have done and that means he would not right at this moment be a fucking damn bloody bastarn schoolteacher, one who does fuck all in the world bar christ almighty nothing at all. It was them wanted him to go to uni and no him, his parents and his fucking big brother. It was all so stupid. Really, so stupid. He had not wanted to go. And even once he was there it was something else he was after. Something else altogether. [...] Patrick had wanted to do something. That was fucking definite. But what had it been? What had that thing been, the thing he wanted to do. Something massive, that's all, something massive.<sup>72</sup>

Not only has Patrick's encounter with the education system prevented him from taking action, he sees his own role within it as ineffectual and without agency, describing it as a 'life of revolutionary compromise'.<sup>73</sup> Institutional authority, which Patrick both rages against and implicates himself in, is represented by 'Old Milne': his head teacher. Patrick views Milne as a symbol of a totalizing authority which is assured of its own infallibility, due to 'his absolute certainty that everybody will stick to the rules of the game'.<sup>74</sup> For Simon Kövesi, Milne and the totalizing authority Patrick associates him with are associated with hegemonic Englishness:

Milne comes to stand for English power, for Empire, Queen and Country [...] Milne is the manager and representative of the status quo in Doyle's life and, unawares, bears the brunt of Doyle's resentment not only at what he himself is doing as a teacher, but also the resentment he feels as a disenfranchised and politically sidelined citizen of a stateless nation. Whether Milne is actually English or not, for Doyle he is a tool of the government and so might as well be.<sup>75</sup>

However, Milne's 'fucking flapping MA gown' associates him with an autonomous, Scottish education system.<sup>76</sup> Kövesi's reading is a nationalist one, which reads the novel in terms of stateless nationhood and a Scotland/England divide. However, when Scotland is mentioned in Kelman's novel it is usually as a disclaimer: 'But these pipes have got fuck all to do with Scotland'.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> James Kelman, *A Disaffection* (London: Vintage, 1999), pp. 52-53.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 178.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 29.

<sup>75</sup> Simon Kövesi, *James Kelman*, pp. 93-94.

<sup>76</sup> James Kelman, *A Disaffection*, p. 102.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24.

Patrick's repeated fantasies of confronting Old Milne reveal his desire to confront and overcome institutional power – to act, in Craig's words, 'in opposition to' the system. He is also painfully aware – and resentful – of his own role as an agent of this system: 'I am the fellow with the likeable personality who is to influence the weans of the lower orders so that they willni do anything that might upset the people with wealth, power and privilege'.<sup>78</sup> However, when Patrick finally does undertake his delayed, much-anticipated meeting with Old Milne, it is anti-climatic; there is no enactment of the self-empowering fantasies he has of confronting and murdering Milne. Instead, Patrick positions himself in the role of schoolboy in relation to the headmaster, playing hooky from scheduled meetings and making excuses: 'I've got to go to the toilet Mister Milne'.<sup>79</sup> The desired confrontation with Milne and the institutional power he represents has been reduced to a repetition and reinforcement of the education system which Doyle rails against; his attempts to oppose institutional authority and overcome his own disempowerment have merely reproduced these. Patrick's desire for a confrontation with Old Milne is ultimately misguided. Despite his positioning of the headmaster as a fantastical villain (quite literally, in his comparison of Milne to Dracula), the state authority he wishes to confront is not embodied in him, but is perpetually absent and deferred.<sup>80</sup> Ultimately, Doyle is subject to, contained by and an agent of a totalising institutional authority which he can neither confront nor resist. In a challenge to Craig's claim that individuals either act through or in opposition to state institutions in order to contribute to a national imagination, Doyle can do neither. Instead, the institutional state he desires to oppose contains and neutralizes his attempts to confront, subvert and dissent from it.

However, Kelman's narratives are able to enact dissent from institutionalised discourses on the level of form. Kelman's eschewal of traditional novelistic structures is manifest in his use of 'minimal or

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<sup>78</sup> James Kelman, *A Disaffection*, p. 209.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 30.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 156.

considerably reduced plotting'<sup>81</sup> – a strategy which refuses the ‘overarching narrative trajectory’ viewed as a definitive feature of both novel and nation.<sup>82</sup> His novels resist the closure that would be provided by ‘a consistent ending, where events are neatly rounded off’.<sup>83</sup> At the end of *A Disaffection*, Doyle’s repetitive, meandering monologue reaches ‘a terminus which is no conclusion’,<sup>84</sup> in which he is seen possibly evading capture by the members of another institution of the state – in this case, the police. His dilemmas remain unresolved, as does the question of whether or not the police-chase he is involved in is merely another fantasy of resistance to institutional authority. By means of its ‘non-teleological plot’,<sup>85</sup> *A Disaffection* formally resists the teleological critical narrative that encapsulates late twentieth-century Scottish texts within the trajectory of institutional statehood. This insistence on formal freedom from institutionalized discourses, in the absence of the possibility of individual freedom from them, enacts recalcitrance to totalizing ideologies such as nationalism.

Doyle’s attempts to subvert the education system are delivered from within it. He uses his authoritative platform as a teacher to teach his students to question authority and the education system: ‘You are here being fenced in by us the teachers at the behest of the government in explicit simulation of your parents viz. the suppressed poor. Repeat after me’.<sup>86</sup> In one lesson he has his students repeat this mantra back to him, in an act which – according to Scott Hames – ‘calls its own structure into question, and [...] crumbles into

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<sup>81</sup> Laurence Nicoll, ‘Facticity, or Something Like That: The Novels of James Kelman’, in James Acheson and Sarah Ross (eds), *The Contemporary British Novel* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), pp. 59-69 (p. 60).

<sup>82</sup> Cairns Craig, *The Modern Scottish Novel: Narrative and the National Imagination*, p. 9.

<sup>83</sup> Laurence Nicoll, ‘Facticity, or Something Like That: The Novels of James Kelman’, p. 62.

<sup>84</sup> Cairns Craig, ‘Resisting Arrest: James Kelman’, in Gavin Wallace and Randall Stevenson (eds), *The Scottish Novel Since the Seventies: New Visions, Old Dreams* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1993), pp. 99-114 (p. 109).

<sup>85</sup> Laurence Nicoll, ‘Facticity, or Something Like That: The Novels of James Kelman’, p. 62.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24.

comic irony'.<sup>87</sup> However, Kövesi reads these attempts at subversion more pessimistically, viewing Doyle's idiosyncratic teaching as an extension of the system he is attempting to resist:

What Doyle might well think is politically liberating seems at times to be nothing short of a frivolous and comedic abuse of his power, to do what *he* wants in the classroom, as he knows full well. [...] No matter what his opinions about power in the hierarchies of education, the fact is that he has power invested in him by his job, by his seniority, by his position as the only full-grown adult in the classroom. He does tell the students what to do, provides a narrative of what their lives are about, and points out the limitations on their lives [...] For the children, he is an authority, even if it is an authority on how corrupting authorities are.<sup>88</sup>

Where Doyle teaches his students to enact dissent through critique, he becomes the object of this critique when a student observes: 'I really don't think you're being fair because what ye do ye start all these things and then ye dont finish them or even just in a way follow them through properly'.<sup>89</sup> In his response to this criticism, Doyle reveals that he sees it as 'the teacher's real job' to incite his students to perform the acts of resistance which he does not – indeed cannot – enact, declaring: 'It's up to yous to get the things finished, or followed through properly'.<sup>90</sup> The students eventually walk out on him, enacting the dissent which he has encouraged them to perform. This act of protest against Patrick's expositions is paradoxically an act of obedience to him and his teaching. Where Patrick's attempts to dissent from authority are frustrated by a containing, neutralising system, this is reproduced in this act of his students. Once again, Patrick's attempts to subvert institutionalised education have only resulted in him becoming its unwitting agent by reproducing its conditions and structures.

If we accept Gifford and Craig's arguments that state institutions are fundamental to nationhood, *A Disaffection* functions to critique manifestations of nationhood by implicating these institutions in capitalism's containment and

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<sup>87</sup> Scott Hames, 'Fightin' Dominies and Form: Politics and Narrative in Some Modern Scottish Novels of Education', in Neal Alexander, Shane Murphy and Anne Oakman (eds), *To the Other Shore: Cross-currents in Irish and Scottish Studies* (Belfast: Cló Ollscoil na Banríona, 2004), pp. 56-67 (p. 64).

<sup>88</sup> Simon Kövesi, *James Kelman*, p. 101.

<sup>89</sup> James Kelman, *A Disaffection*, p. 196.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 197.

prevention of working-class dissent. For Craig, to act ‘in opposition to’ state authority is effectively to act ‘through’ it, and – in doing so – to enact a process of national imagining which amplifies individual action. The logic of this argument – where even to act in opposition to the institutions which manifest nationhood is to embody a national imagination – is as totalising as the education system in Kelman’s novel, since it too assimilates acts of dissent to its own operations. However, in *A Disaffection* it is possible neither to act through, nor in opposition to, a state institution which prevents action. Contrary to Craig’s argument that the nation gives individual action communal significance, Patrick’s dissent cannot be enacted on an individual or communal scale. Therefore Patrick resists participation in the ‘embodied argument’ of the nation.

### **Notable Silences**

Although A. L. Kennedy states on her website that she finds the national context tedious, her early work repeatedly invokes and comments on constructions of Scottish identity.<sup>91</sup> In ‘The role of notable silences in Scottish history’ her unnamed narrator embodies an oppositional relationship to constructions of a national narrative. It is this opposition that critical nationalism aims to account for. However, as Kirsten Stirling argues, Kennedy’s narrator is not critiquing Scotland exclusively, but rather implicates the nation in a wider process of identitarian myth-making:

[D]espite its Scottish focus, there is nothing exclusively Scottish about the narrator’s conclusions, which comment on the construction of identity in general rather than specifically Scottish identity. [...] This ‘fiction with a thread of Scottishness in its truth’ provides a Scottish stage for the working out of more universal ethical concerns.<sup>92</sup>

The narrator critiques a standard historical narrative which she sees as characterised by ‘lies’ and the invisibility of ordinary people. There is a

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<sup>91</sup> A. L. Kennedy, ‘ALK FAQ’. Available at: <<http://www.a-l-kennedy.co.uk/alk-faq/>> [accessed December 2014].

<sup>92</sup> Kirsten Stirling, “‘Lying is good like this’”: The Collaborative Lie in the Early Fiction of A. L. Kennedy’, in James McGonigal and Kirsten Stirling (eds), *Ethically Speaking: Voice and Values in Modern Scottish Writing* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2006), pp. 37-50 (p. 46).

playfulness regarding Scottish involvement in these ‘lies’. The narrator opines ‘there’s no point in being Scottish if you can’t make up your past as you go along’, invoking national specificity only to immediately dismiss it: ‘Everybody else does’.<sup>93</sup> Kennedy’s narrator invites us to read the story she presents in nationalist terms, yet defies these terms by making fun of national narratives in her own work, revealing an ambivalent attitude to nationhood. This is manifest particularly in her fictionalised account of Glen Flaspog, which invokes tropes of Scottish history including clan warfare and clan loyalty, only to render them absurd and meaningless. Her fictionalised account includes characters named The Evil Red McIver and The Evil Black McIver, with ‘spectacular falls’ named after them which have ‘now run without water for several centuries’ or ‘have, in fact, never run with water’.<sup>94</sup> In another example of her work the narrator reviews a book entitled ‘Killing Time: Seven centuries of Scottish slaughter’:

Readers may question some of Lindquist’s editorial decisions; Caligula’s excesses, for example, are included because of his rumoured fondness for the Sunday Post, and I must number myself amongst those who find this a somewhat tenuous Scottish connection. Attila the Hun’s penchant for potato scones would have made him a much stronger candidate for inclusion. [...] No doubt this latest volume will join the distinguished ranks of Scottish Classic Literature, alongside *Bonnie Charlie’s Glasgow Cookbook* and *Fish of the Outer Hebrides*.<sup>95</sup>

This review satirises both popular nationalist agendas which overemphasise Scotland’s international influence and a cultural nationalist desire to establish a tradition in Scottish literature. Throughout the story the narrator seeks to subvert and resist nationalist discourse. However, by the end of the story, her resistance is absorbed by the institutionalized discourse she seeks to subvert.

The narrator’s research implicates institutions of Scottish life in a history defined by lies. In her description of her project to compile a ‘list of lies’, several of the items listed invoke a sense of national identity:

We found lies about ships, the weather, trains, communal toilets, drink, pies, bridies, comedians, drunks, singers, happiness, tea shops, culture,

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<sup>93</sup> A. L. Kennedy, ‘The role of notable silences in Scottish history’, p. 64.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 63.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 69.

blueprints, socialists, hunger, anger, clay, houses, capitalists, painters, hogmanay and Irn Bru.<sup>96</sup>

Cairns Craig defines national institutions liberally, positing nation-carrying institutions as ranging ‘from the ritualised structures of everyday life to the vast organisations of modern bureaucracy’.<sup>97</sup> For Tudor Balinisteanu, history is portrayed as an institutional discourse in Kennedy’s story: ‘This story is remarkably concerned with how forms of writing create institutional fields that shape identities through discourses’.<sup>98</sup> The institutional field of history in this story is exclusionary, since it constructs a version of the past which is ‘inhabited only by murderers and prodigies and saints’.<sup>99</sup> The story associates Glasgow with a history of murderers. The narrator’s musings on Madeline Smith – a historical figure, murderer, and former inhabitant of the city’s Blythswood Square – foreground the murder of her partner in a Glaswegian bar.<sup>100</sup> The story posits murder as a Glasgow institution, functioning within a discourse of communal identity which is ritualised by means of its repetition and incorporation into the mythos of the city: ‘Because the stranger believed in lies about blood loyalty and city violence, he came to the pub to make them true. [...] I should immortalise our city’s strange effects. It is in the habit of murdering. Part of our construction is made for killing’.<sup>101</sup>

The narrator attempts to subvert the conventions of a history from which ordinary people are absent. Her subversion takes the form of documenting ordinary lives, striving to create a subaltern history which – to use Roderick Watson’s terms – ‘gives voice to the “voiceless”’ through

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<sup>96</sup> A. L. Kennedy, ‘The role of notable silences in Scottish history’, pp. 70-71.

<sup>97</sup> Cairns Craig, *The Modern Scottish Novel: Narrative and the National Imagination*, p. 32.

<sup>98</sup> Tudor Balinisteanu, ‘Dreaming Brokenly of Deaths by Fire. Deconstructions of Social Myths in A. L. Kennedy’s *Night Geometry and the Garscadden Trains*’. Available at: <<http://community.dur.ac.uk/postgraduate.english/Balinisteanu.htm>> [accessed December 2014].

<sup>99</sup> A. L. Kennedy, ‘The role of notable silences in Scottish history’, p. 54.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 67.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 71.

recording the truth of their lives.<sup>102</sup> Where history generally gives an account of the past, the subverted history which Kennedy's narrator creates includes a vision of the future, in the form of her subjects' obituaries:

I simply pick men and sometimes women, who are in no way notable, and when I know all about them, I write their obituary. [...] I have to imagine the way they might die, I have to make that up, but everything else I put down is the absolute truth. In this respect, my anthology is unique. Conventional reports are wholly truthful when they deal with the matter of death and only begin to lie when they look at the life.<sup>103</sup>

The narrator's practice inverts the relationships between life and death, truth and lies, which are established in her account of 'conventional' history. However, when one of her subjects is murdered, she discovers that her obituary has not subverted a historical narrative characterised by lies and the invisibility of ordinary people, but contributed to it. Her subject becomes subsumed in the mass of 'people who are too small to record',<sup>104</sup> since his death is 'too recent for history and too old to be news'.<sup>105</sup> Like Patrick Doyle, the narrator's attempts at subversion are contained and neutralised by the system she opposes. Where she has strived to oppose a historical discourse defined by lies by endeavouring to tell the 'absolute truth' about her subject, this endeavour is destined to become part of the lies about the past:

Someone else will find it later, someone like me. They'll take us out and write us down. My only contribution on the subject is already here: the obituary I wrote him before we first met. It is inaccurate.<sup>106</sup>

Any attempts the writer might make to rewrite this account, to tell the truth about the circumstances surrounding her partner's death, are already foreclosed by her previous contributions to historical discourse: 'everyone knows I lie too much, so who would believe me'.<sup>107</sup>

Kennedy's story also demonstrates the impulse to critique national narratives on the level of form. For Sarah Dunnigan, '[m]ost of Kennedy's

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<sup>102</sup> Roderick Watson, 'Alien Voices from the Street: Demotic Modernism in Modern Scots Writing', p. 150.

<sup>103</sup> A. L. Kennedy, 'The role of notable silences in Scottish history', p. 70.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 64.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 72.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 71.

fictions construct their own metafictional or meta-narratives. This is exemplified not only by their artistic formalism but in the process by which the act of writing is deconstructed by Kennedy's protagonists'.<sup>108</sup> This metafictional impulse has particularly national significance within 'The role of notable silences in Scottish history'. Several narratives of the nation's history and culture, including articles, plaques, road signs and book reviews, are contained within – and commented on by – an encapsulating, evaluative narrative. These narrative layers are invoked within the story: '[o]ur city and us inside it and me inside us'.<sup>109</sup> For the narrator, the city of Glasgow is also an encapsulating narrative, recalling the structure of the traditional realist novel: 'It's like strolling across a book, something big and Victorian with plenty of plots'.<sup>110</sup> The invocation of this form foregrounds the narrator's desire to construct a similar narrative, in which she aims to encapsulate the lives of 'ordinary' Glasgow citizens in order to rival the official, elitist discourse of Scottish history. The failure of the protagonist's resistance – through which her opposition becomes subsumed within the national narrative of 'lies' that she attempts to subvert – can be seen in itself as an act of critique, since it is this failure that most effectively demonstrates the capacity of unitary national narratives to subsume attempts at resistance and opposition.

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<sup>108</sup> Sarah M. Dunnigan, 'A. L. Kennedy's Longer Fiction: Articulate Grace', in Aileen Christianson and Alison Lumsden (eds), *Contemporary Scottish Women Writers* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), pp. 144-55 (p. 148).

<sup>109</sup> A. L. Kennedy, 'The role of notable silences in Scottish history', p. 71.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 67.

## Chapter Two

### **Regression and Re-generation: Janus-faced Scotlands in Andrew O'Hagan's *Be Near Me* and *Our Fathers***

This chapter focusses on representations of national and class identities in Andrew O'Hagan's novels *Be Near Me* (2006) and *Our Fathers* (1999). Set in post-devolution Scotland, these novels focus on social problems including poverty and housing, demonstrating that the re-emergence of Scottish statehood has not resolved the nation's internal divisions. O'Hagan's narratives confront the failures of the national past and the need for further political and social change, demonstrating a concern with nationhood which is not reducible to statehood. These novels critique the fragmented working-class communities and masculinities in crisis that dominate the Scottish literary canon. In both novels, upwardly-mobile protagonists struggle to negotiate the decline of industrial Scotland and the passing of an era of workerist politics. The post-industrial, workerist communities in O'Hagan's work constantly nurse their 'old injuries', dwelling on the hardships of an industrial past that they nonetheless sentimentalise and idealise as preferable to a present condition of emasculation, stasis and unemployment. O'Hagan portrays this predicament as enabling an insular, bigoted and self-occluding ideology which refuses progress or change. In *Be Near Me*, the national past has no transformative potential; the injustice of deindustrialization and the decline of workerist politics never become fuel for present action towards social justice. Instead, the industrial past is selectively appropriated by working-class characters in the novel, who use it to justify their reactionary attitudes and their passive, comfortable sense of victimhood. These novels demand a more active, engaged and critical relationship to the national past and the post-industrial predicament of the present. O'Hagan's use of temporal shifts in the narrative structure connects personal narratives to collective ones, emphasising the role of memory and individual agency in nationhood. Both novels demand a more dynamic relationship to nationhood, emphasising the disjunctures between received, pedagogical narratives of the nation and the performative, lived experience of national life.

In *Our Fathers* the focus on Scotland's socialist past, as enacted through Labourist housing policy, enables O'Hagan's exposure of these disjunctures. His protagonist, James Bawn, enacts a critique of this aspect of the national past through negotiations of the patriarchal masculinities embodied in his father and grandfather. This chapter argues that, in their criticism of nostalgia for a sentimentalised national past, and of the progressive ideals of socialist city councillor Hugh Bawn, these novels foreground Homi Bhabha's disjuncture between performative and pedagogical narratives of the nation. Exposing deep sectarian and social divisions within the nation, the Scotland represented here is markedly opposed to the homogeneous national culture which, for Ernest Gellner, engenders nationalism. Denying progressive narratives of national time, the national narrative in both novels is one of erasure and discontinuity. Instead of presenting Benedict Anderson's national 'community moving steadily down (or up) history',<sup>1</sup> O'Hagan's novels construct a national condition of stasis and decay. His work insists on oppositional counter-narratives, which challenge ideas of national progress.

Cairns Craig has theorised a 'Scottish Predicament', in which he criticises a culture of dislocation and erasure in intellectual discourse about Scotland, which forecloses the possibility of a national narrative:

The Scottish 'predicament' [...] is not simply the residue of a harsh industrial world, nor the effort of a people to build a better environment than the one they have inherited: it is the total elision of the evidence of the past and its replacement by a novelty so radical that it is impossible for the individual to relate to it his or her personal memories. The constant erasure of one Scotland by another makes Scotland unrelateable, unnarratable: past Scotlands are not gathered into the being of modern Scotland; they are abolished. Modern Scotland thus has no past, since no past Scotland can be related to the actually existing Scotland, and no narrative can be constructed to constitute its continuing identity.<sup>2</sup>

The 'gathering' of national narratives into 'the being of modern Scotland' desired by Craig bears some resemblance to the function of the 'overarching

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<sup>1</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, 2nd edn (London: Verso, 2006), p. 26.

<sup>2</sup> Cairns Craig, *The Modern Scottish Novel: Narrative and the National Imagination* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), p. 21.

narrative trajectory' that for Anderson characterizes the structure of both the nation and the novel. However, these visions of national unity are denied by O'Hagan's novels, which insist on the necessity of the critique and erasure of national pasts construed as damaging or redundant. Cultural nationalist literary critics are yet to acknowledge the work of Andrew O'Hagan, and there is little criticism available on his early work. However, Tom Nairn engages with *Our Fathers*, positing it as illustrating a regenerative dynamic of constructive deconstruction: '[t]o make a new Scotland, the old one must be unmade'.<sup>3</sup> Nairn sees O'Hagan's novel as encompassing a particular ambivalence within Scotland's Labourist history, exploring both the 'nobility' of reformist intentions and their 'ultimate degradation and final lingering collapse into the half-reforms of New Labour'.<sup>4</sup> He attributes the shortcomings of this national narrative of progress to its failure to reform the state: 'Scottish Labourism and the town-planning tradition of Patrick Geddes sought redemption in terms of civil society and moral will alone – not through a recapture of the state, and the constitutional reframing of their nation'.<sup>5</sup> In this reading, city councillor Hugh Bawn's progressive housing policies are read as part of the containment of radical change at the level of the state, which curtails much-needed transformation. In this respect it is analogous to a 'structurally incomplete' process of parliamentary devolution, designed to bypass democratic constitutionalism.<sup>6</sup>

Its aim was like that of local government reform: rejuvenation through good sense and reasonableness, and the more effective dissemination of centrally-cooked wisdom.

'Settling down' is the disablement of democracy. The enablement of a national democracy, on the other hand, requires a constitution. It needs a distinct statute related to history and national identity, and (nowadays) it needs to be approved by the citizen body. In fact people become 'citizens' via such approval. Reconvening a parliament was one thing, but there was no constitution to re-enact along with it: that has to be created.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Tom Nairn, *After Britain: New Labour and the Return of Scotland* (London: Granta, 2003), p. 223.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 224.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 224-25.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 276.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 277.

Through its critique of Hugh Bawn's housing policies, *Our Fathers* demonstrates the inadequacy of state processes – and the inadequacy of any singular narrative of nationhood – to contain and resolve the nation's social problems. It insists on recalcitrant, personal histories, using memories and genealogies in order to construct intersections and disjunctures between different stages of the nation's past. Through episodic, non-linear narrative forms, fragmented and interrupted by memories and intertextualities, O'Hagan's novels refuse a progressive, triumphalist national trajectory, instead demonstrating antagonistic, ambivalent attitudes to the nation.

*Our Fathers* insists on the necessity of the cycles of destruction and remaking that Craig criticizes. Critiquing a left-nationalist narrative of utopian ideals, social activism, and nation building, O'Hagan's novel portrays its left-nationalist characters as wilfully blind, bigoted and reactionary. James Bawn both criticizes and inherits a degenerated, decaying Labourist tradition, predicated on change and progress. James's negotiation of his inheritance leads him to an acknowledgement that '[e]ven progress changes',<sup>8</sup> which prompts Nairn's argument that it is the erasure and destruction of inherited Scotlands which engenders progressive change. The paradox explored by *Our Fathers*, in which an inherited national history and culture both enables – and is erased by – a projected progressive national future, recalls Nairn's theorisation of nationalism as ambivalent modern Janus. A vision of nationalist progress, characterized 'by a certain sort of regression – by looking inwards, drawing more deeply upon [...] indigenous resources, resurrecting past folk-heroes and myths',<sup>9</sup> is embodied in the novel by reformer Hugh Bawn, and critiqued by his grandson James.

*Be Near Me* can also be read in terms of Nairn's modern Janus, since it critiques the regressive, irrational, nostalgic and aggressive attributes that Nairn identifies in his model of a fundamentally ambivalent nationalism. Its protagonist, David Anderton, is a priest who is accused of paedophilia after a drunken encounter with a schoolboy. His Catholicism, his homosexuality and his naïve attitude to the teenagers he befriends make him a scapegoat for a disenfranchised

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<sup>8</sup> Andrew O'Hagan, *Our Fathers* (London: Faber, 1999), p. 71.

<sup>9</sup> Tom Nairn, *The Break-Up of Britain: Crisis and Neo-Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1981), p. 348.

community who are desperate to find a target for their frustrations. This community is deeply divided; riven by sectarian resentments and characterized by a condition of wilful stasis. Its members demonstrate a crippling obsession with the past which denies the possibility of any meaningful or progressive future. In *Be Near Me* the ‘irrational’ face of nationalism in the form of an obsession with past injury prohibits the developmental process of ‘catching up’ with modernity that, for Nairn, is the ultimate goal of nationalisms. The nationalist process of drawing upon indigenous resources – such as an industrial past – leads to violence and prejudice in O’Hagan’s novel; to insular regress rather than progress. The solidarity of Scotland’s left-wing workerist past now has no outlet: the only instance in which the working-class community mobilise collectively in order to take action is in the persecution of an outsider, who provides a scapegoat for their sense of injury and victimhood.<sup>10</sup> Reviewer Sean O’Brien makes an astute connection between the dispossession and stasis of the working-class culture critiqued in the novel, and the treatment David suffers at the hands of its members:

He is disgraced when accused of sexual assault on a teenage boy he has befriended, and his downfall also provides an unsentimental reading of the larger setting. Dalgarnock longs for the satisfaction and justification of an enemy it can see and touch. In Anderton, it finds one.

O’Hagan has the power and exactitude to take the measure of a politically inert ex-industrial society subsisting on the long-chewed bones of sectarian and ethnic prejudices. [...] Given that paedophilia here appears to have been the most exciting thing to happen to the working class since Rupert Murdoch, Anderton can hardly expect distinctions to be drawn between his stupid but affectionate indiscretion and the deeds of real predators.<sup>11</sup>

In *Be Near Me*, the degradation of traditional working-class culture, and the concurrent destabilization of traditional masculine identities, leads to a backlash against de-industrialised modernity in the form of renewed Orangeism – and a vicious, tribal attack on outsider David.

For Berthold Schoene such violent assertions of traditional masculine

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<sup>10</sup> Andrew O’Hagan, *Be Near Me* (London: Faber, 2006), p. 213.

<sup>11</sup> Sean O’Brien, ‘Be Near Me, by Andrew O’Hagan: Falling from Grace’, *The Independent* (22 September 2011). Available at: <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/reviews/be-near-me-by-andrew-ohagan-412275.html> [accessed November 2015].

identities are a response to the postmodern and postcolonial enfranchisements of minorities, reacting to attendant developments within the nation which mean that it can no longer be conceived of as internally cohesive:

Responding to the threat of a total dissipation of traditionalist boundaries that used to clearly demarcate the presence of both the masculine self and the patriarchal nation state, both man and nation seem inclined to reassert themselves hyperbolically, that is, by means of a deliberate pomophobic reinforcement of their allegedly original (yet in fact nostalgic and entirely imaginary) definitive contours and monumental stature. Fascism and ethnic cleansing are the inevitable result, propagating a relentless reinscription of terrifyingly atavistic, masculinist formations of subjectivity and nationhood.<sup>12</sup>

In Schoene's reading of the patriarchal nation he perceives an 'ideologically motivated split of the nation into a feminine body protectively contained and held together by a fixed set of masculine demarcations'.<sup>13</sup> However, the stability of this formation is undermined by the nation's internal divisions; by 'the tremulous, intrinsically recalcitrant body of the nation itself', its 'inveterate susceptibility to sudden socio-political shifts and fluxes' and 'its treacherous tendency to spawn rebellious or revolutionary counterdiscourses of the nation that threaten to undermine or spill across the homeostatic fixtures of the given status quo'.<sup>14</sup> The socio-political shift represented by deindustrialization in *Be Near Me* and the counter-narrative of homogeneous, tribal national life embodied in David's middle-class, English-educated 'outsider' experience are perceived as threatening by members of the community long before his transgression prompts them to attack him. David's transgression provides a scapegoat for a hyperbolic, re-assertive backlash against the divisions within the community itself. Through this backlash the community of Dalgarnock attempts to re-create the united, cohesive, protective border associated with the patriarchal nation, in opposition to the 'otherness' represented by David.

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<sup>12</sup> Berthold Schoene, 'The Union and Jack: British masculinities, pomophobia, and the post-nation', in Glenda Norquay and Gerry Smyth (eds), *Across the Margins: identity, resistance and minority culture throughout the British Archipelago* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), pp. 83-98 (p. 89).

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 86.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 84.

### Scotland, class and the arts in *Be Near Me*

In *Be Near Me* O'Hagan creates a divided West of Scotland community, characterised by hopelessness, paralysis and stasis. This chapter will demonstrate O'Hagan's creation of fictional Scotlands that embody the malaise with which he diagnoses the 'real' Scotland in his polemic essay 'Scotland's Old Injury'.<sup>15</sup> O'Hagan's work has been noted for blurring generic 'boundaries between fiction, memoir, documentary and journalism'.<sup>16</sup> In *Be Near Me* this experimentation with genre is perceptible as O'Hagan's construction of a novelistic form in which there is a distinctive, journalistic tendency to observe and critique the predicaments of the 'real' Scotland. This has implications for the relationship between O'Hagan's work and a cultural nationalist critical narrative which has centralised and nationalised working-class literature, since O'Hagan's novels interrogate and critique left-nationalist narratives which proclaim Scotland's working-class and socialist credentials. For Christopher Whyte, critical privileging of Glasgow and West of Scotland lives has resulted in the centring of an emasculated, post-industrial, Scottish masculinity:

In the last three decades, and especially since 1970, there has been what one might call a 'hegemonic shift', so much so that the city of Glasgow, and the West of Scotland more generally, are accused of exerting an unfair dominance, where representations of 'Scottishness' and Scotland are concerned. [...] [U]rban fiction in Scotland has increasingly and explicitly assumed the burden of national representation. It has done so, however, without relinquishing its past. As a result, issues around gender polarity and masculinity, specifically a masculinity in crisis, have moved to centre stage in Scottish fictional production.<sup>17</sup>

*Be Near Me* interrogates and critiques this masculinity in crisis, from the perspective of middle-class 'outsider' David Anderton, a homosexual Catholic priest who serves as a reminder that the working-class 'hard-man' privileged

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<sup>15</sup> Andrew O'Hagan, 'Scotland's Old Injury', in *The Atlantic Ocean: Essays on Britain and America* (London: Faber and Faber, 2008), pp. 19-30.

<sup>16</sup> Eve Patten and Guy Woodward, 'Andrew O'Hagan: Critical Perspective', British Council Literature website. Available at: <<https://literature.britishcouncil.org/writer/andrew-ohagan>> [accessed November 2015].

<sup>17</sup> Christopher Whyte, 'Masculinities in Contemporary Scottish Fiction', *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 34: 3 (1998), pp. 274-85 (p. 278).

by Scottish fiction and criticism is ‘not always, thankfully, the only possible Scotsman’.<sup>18</sup> Whyte argues that, in contemporary Scottish writing, ‘homosexuals are placed beyond the bounds of both Scottishness and masculinity’.<sup>19</sup> David’s homosexuality, his Catholicism and his middle-class background render him an outsider to a Scotland defined in terms of the West Coast working-class male, foregrounding the social exclusions which are reinforced by cultural nationalist literary criticism.

The challenge which David’s outsider status posits to the conservative values of post-industrial Dalgarnock is highlighted by the structure of the novel. A New York times reviewer has observed that O’Hagan’s novelistic structures enable constructions of ‘both a public history and a private one’.<sup>20</sup> Where Dalgarnock defines itself in terms of a workerist past, engaging in nostalgia for an inherited, pedagogical nationalist narrative fractured by de-industrialisation, David’s own nostalgic longing is for his studenthood. Entire chapters of *Be Near Me* are flashbacks of a personal history of spiritual, sexual and political development that contrasts with the stasis and decay of Dalgarnock. The nostalgia of David’s fellow students at Balliol is also criticised in these chapters. In their indulgences in high literary and philosophical culture, the group of ‘Marcellists’ with which he associates are seen as ‘wisely unoriginal’, performing a ‘very self-conscious, lurid amalgam of borrowings from the beautiful past’.<sup>21</sup> Alongside this stereotype of student pretension, David’s relationship with an opposing student stereotype – left-wing activist Conor – becomes a memory which pervades his life in Dalgarnock, and enables him to escape into his own interiority. In these flashbacks, David desires that ‘the anterior world might blossom into life and colour the current day’.<sup>22</sup> However, the disjuncture between his idyllic studenthood and his arrest on charges of paedophilia is emphasised by the chapter breaks. These flashbacks foreground the disjuncture between David’s

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<sup>18</sup> Christopher Whyte, ‘Masculinities in Contemporary Scottish Fiction’, p. 278.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 282.

<sup>20</sup> Jeff Giles, ‘What Goes Up’, *New York Times* (October 3 1999). Available at: <<https://www.nytimes.com/books/99/10/03/reviews/991003.03gilest.html>> [accessed November 2015].

<sup>21</sup> Andrew O’Hagan, *Be Near Me*, p. 167.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 161.

interiority and the realities of hostility and violence which characterise Dalgarnock's public life. The invasion and burning of David's house by a violent mob foregrounds antagonisms between David's interiority and the divided community he lives in – antagonisms which are also demonstrated at the level of form through the juxtaposition between David's memories and his life in Dalgarnock.

Where O'Hagan's work differs formally from the urban vernacular texts which dominate Scottish fiction in the period in which he writes, through this use of interiority he too constructs the oppositional monologism noted by Donald Wesling as characteristic of Scottish writing since 1979.<sup>23</sup> The 'clash' that Wesling observes 'between inward and outward speech and the need to confine much of verbal behaviour to the unsayable, inner, silent self'<sup>24</sup> is demonstrated in *Be Near Me* through the disjuncture between David's private inner life and his public life as a parish priest. The shifts in temporal perspective emphasise the 'collapse of continuity between past and present' and the 'irreparable fracturing of political traditions' which Eve Patten and Guy Woodward have observed in O'Hagan's work.<sup>25</sup> They foreground disjunctures between the optimistic socialism of David's former lover Conor and the bitter divisions, prejudices and aggressions of Dalgarnock's working-class community. This discontinuity presents a challenge to Anderson's conception of the horizontal nation as 'a solid community moving steadily down (or up) history'.<sup>26</sup> As Homi Bhabha's work informs us, it is the presence of the minoritarian 'outsider' within the nation which disrupts and changes its history, challenging the 'pedagogical' nation through the performance of difference.<sup>27</sup> David's own difference is lived through the anteriority that he

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<sup>23</sup> Donald Wesling, 'Scottish Narrative since 1979: Monologism and the Contradictions of a Stateless Nation', p. 87.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Eve Patten and Guy Woodward, 'Andrew O'Hagan: Critical Perspective', <<https://literature.britishcouncil.org/writer/andrew-ohagan>>.

<sup>26</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, p. 26.

<sup>27</sup> Homi K. Bhabha, 'DissemiNation: time, narrative and the margins of the modern nation', in Homi K. Bhabha (ed.), *Nation and Narration* (London: Routledge, 1990), pp. 291-322 (p. 132).

evokes through his appeal to his memories to persist into his present. This appeal to memory is manifest in the prayer-like invocation ‘be near me’, through which David appeals to the past to persist as a ‘place of fading togetherness’.<sup>28</sup> It recalls Julia Kristeva’s theorisation of a ‘women’s time’, of which she writes: ‘[t]he hysteric (male or female) who suffers from reminisces would [...] recognize his or her self in the anterior temporal modalities: cyclical or monumental’.<sup>29</sup> These anterior temporalities are opposed to the linear, teleological temporality of history and the nation-state, and serve to rupture it.<sup>30</sup> Despite the opposition Kristeva delineates between anterior, intuitive time and historical, national time, in *Be Near Me* O’Hagan provides a nationalised version of the ‘vertiginous visions and unnameable *jouissance*’, which Kristeva associates with ‘extrasubjective [...], cosmic time’:<sup>31</sup>

I looked back to see Scotland, the woods that fringe the headland and the green breast of the hills. From our position it seemed nothing could ever reach us or force us back, and we passed into a strange proximity with the advancing island of Ailsa Craig. More than an island, it seemed like a testament to physical endurance, this place, this lonely rock less than a dozen miles from the coast. It could have been the Aegean. It could have been the Bay of Bengal. But it was a golden spot on the Irish Sea, and we sat in the open boat as it moved into the shade. [...] For a short time that day, we were a nation on the island of Ailsa Craig, them and me, under a sky so blue it made all dreams seem continuous.<sup>32</sup>

It is only by leaving (mainland) Scotland behind that David is able to envision a positive representation of collective identity, which is in fact an extra-national vision of a non-teleological, timeless, utopian space.

David monumentalises his relationship with Conor in a literal sense, associating him with the dead soldiers memorialized on the wall of Balliol.<sup>33</sup> This memorial becomes a repeated motif throughout the novel, and connects David’s personal past with global history. The repetition and monumentalising

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<sup>28</sup> Andrew O’Hagan, *Be Near Me*, p. 191.

<sup>29</sup> Julia Kristeva, ‘Women’s Time’, translated by Alice Jardine and Harry Blake, *Signs* Vol. 7, No. 1 (Autumn, 1981), pp. 13-35 (p. 17).

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 18-19.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

<sup>32</sup> Andrew O’Hagan, *Be Near Me*, pp. 86-87.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 190.

of memories demonstrates the ‘*repetition* and *eternity*’ which, in Kristeva’s theorisation, characterise ‘the massive presence of a monumental temporality, without cleavage or escape, which has so little to do with linear time (which passes) that the very word “temporality” hardly fits’.<sup>34</sup> This anterior time provides a space from which to critique the tribalist mentality associated in the novel with nationalism and aggressive, working-class masculinity. For example, David describes the memorial as part of a conversation in which he tries to dissuade a teenage boy from joining the army, opposing the boy’s assertion that ‘[y]ou’ve got to have your team’ – a phrase which is also a repeated motif in the novel.<sup>35</sup> A scene at the memorial allows O’Hagan to ventriloquise an overt criticism of nationalism through Conor, who notes that the names of the five German soldiers on the memorial are ‘separated [...] off from the English boys’: ‘Typical England, typical Oxford, patriotic to the end. They all died, those guys, no matter where they were from’.<sup>36</sup> The critical significance of David’s anteriority is also demonstrated in a recalled conversation with a history professor at Balliol, which invites comparisons between David’s memories of college and his experience of Dalgarnock. The professor’s pronouncements seem prophetic of what will eventually happen to David in Dalgarnock: ‘Don’t speak to me of the people. [...] the one thing I can be sure of is their capacity to turn tyrannical in each other’s company and in the face of elements they neither see nor understand’.<sup>37</sup> Thus David’s anteriority becomes the basis for O’Hagan’s critique of working-class Scotland and the left-nationalist narrative associated with it.

David’s critique of working-class Scotland parallels O’Hagan’s essay ‘Scotland’s Old Injury’, in which he outlines his view of a nation characterised by resentment and blame – a situation which has not been improved by changes in the nation’s constitutional status:

A half-hearted nation will want to hold fast to its grievances, and in that sense Scotland has done well. The nation’s brickwork is cemented with resentments, from ruined monastery to erupting tower block: blame, fear, bigotry and delusion, their fragments powder the common air – and always the fault is seen to lie elsewhere, with other nations,

<sup>34</sup> Julia Kristeva, ‘Women’s Time’, p. 16.

<sup>35</sup> Andrew O’Hagan, *Be Near Me*, p. 261.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 185-86.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 188.

other lives. Scotland is a place where cultural artefacts and past battles – the Stone of Destiny, Robert Burns, *Braveheart*, Bannockburn – have more impact on people’s sense of moral action than politics does. The people have no real commitment to the public sphere, and are not helped towards any such commitment by the dead rhetoric of the young parliament. Yet the problem is not the parliament, it’s the people, and the people’s drowsy addiction to imagined injury – their belief in a paralyzing historical distress – which makes the country assert itself not as a modern nation open to progress on all its fronts, but as a delinquent, spoiled, bawling child, tight in its tartan Babygro, addled with punitive needs and false-memory syndrome.<sup>38</sup>

Where O’Hagan derides this perceived Scotland in his essay, he creates it in his fiction. For O’Hagan, Scotland is defined not by its left-nationalist politics, but by a reluctance to actively engage in public life. In this Scotland, symbols of past injustice are invoked as a substitute for action. For O’Hagan, constitutional change is neither the cause of, nor the cure for, this preoccupation with an imagined ‘old injury’; the newly-established parliament fails to provide a vehicle for public engagement or social change. He embodies the Scotland he criticises in his fiction through his construction of the characters Mr Buie in *Our Fathers* and Mr Nolan in *Be Near Me*, who perpetuate an ‘addiction’ to a history of injustice whilst disregarding the self-inflicted aspects of this injustice.

Both novels feature protagonists who have problematic insider/outsider relationships with Scotland, having spent significant periods of their lives in England. They are consequently identified as Other by characters that seem to refuse any notion of hybridity: for characters such as Mr Buie in *Our Fathers* and Mr Nolan in *Be Near Me*, to be identified with anything that doesn’t fit their narrow conceptions of Scottish identity is to be Other. As in many modern Scottish texts, accent and class are of importance here. A binary division is perpetuated by characters who perceive working-class accents and an impoverished background as Scottish, identifying the arts, more luxurious lifestyles and an educated background as English and middle-class. In *Be Near Me* David’s education, economic background, tastes and attitudes set him apart from the community. An encounter with the local music teacher reveals the extent of David’s ‘difference’ from the members of his parish:

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<sup>38</sup> Andrew O’Hagan, ‘Scotland’s Old Injury’, p. 21.

What can only be described as a look of utter hatred suddenly crossed the good man's eyes. [...] 'Has it ever occurred to you that you don't belong here, Father David?' [...] He looked at me as people do when they think they see right through you. 'Can I remind you,' he said, his jaw slackening, 'this is a comprehensive school. You may find it difficult to imagine just what that means, Father. It is a *com-pree-hen-sive*. We have to make certain allowances here. This is not Eton college.'

'Heaven forfend,' I said.

'Pardon?'

'That really would be something to worry about.'

'You know what this town is? It's an unemployment black spot. I don't think you understand what has happened here. The factories are empty. The churches are empty.'<sup>39</sup>

The music teacher's inverted snobbery is apparent here: he assumes that David is completely out of touch with the realities of a Scotland suffering the after-effects of deindustrialization. His assertion that a comprehensive school is fundamentally incompatible with serious artistic engagement is an act of exclusion that views high culture as the exclusive province of the privately educated and the middle-classes. Significantly, he appeals to an institutionalised national tradition in order to justify his choice in repertoire: 'Those hymns have been used in Scottish schools for quite some time'.<sup>40</sup> Crucially, it is middle-class 'outsider' David who refuses to acknowledge any boundary between high art and working-class Scottish communities, maintaining a somewhat idealistic, naïve, and bourgeois attitude that art transcends the limitations imposed by economic circumstance. David's admiration for a teacher at his public school who 'used the miracles of art to help one to live one's life'<sup>41</sup> indicates his own habit of retreating into a sheltered, interior, bourgeois world of books, music and wine. In *Be Near Me* there is no possibility of the engaged or committed art that literary nationalism has been most concerned with.

Mrs Poole, David's housekeeper, is the only working-class character in the novel to engage with the arts. She is fond of Bach, French, and wine, and her tastes endow her with a degree of social mobility which makes her more at

<sup>39</sup> Andrew O'Hagan, *Be Near Me*, pp. 34-35.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 105.

home with middle-class David than with her working-class, alcoholic husband. Mrs Poole is a socially mobile class hybrid, who ‘would have distinguished herself in any class’, and is ‘determined to overcome’ the perceived limitations of her working-class background.<sup>42</sup> She provides the only positive example of Scottish identity in the novel, emphasised by the narrative observation that ‘Mrs Poole had never seemed more Scottish than she was just then, her good common sense measured against the infinite smallness of others’.<sup>43</sup> She is also the most clear-sighted character in the novel, interrogating David’s retreat from the politics of social justice: ‘What do you care now for people? Oh, you had your five minutes of being the big man of action. [...] You had a good way of thinking once. Just once. How long did it last? A month? A year?’.<sup>44</sup> Mrs Poole recognises David’s capacity for action, and encourages him to adopt the ‘interest in the public sphere’ which O’Hagan asserts is missing from national life in ‘Scotland’s Old Injury’. Where Dalgarnock views itself as doomed, incapable of self-directed action and self-directed improvement, Mrs Poole represents a positive and engaged alternative. Her own green, conservationist politics demonstrate a political counter-narrative to the nostalgic, bitter version of socialism embodied by the novel’s other working-class characters. She represents a Scotland which refuses to passively accept the hand de-industrialization has dealt it. However, where *Be Near Me* critiques an aggressive and regressive Scottish working-class, the only alternative, positive manifestation of Scottishness it offers is of an idealistic social mobility enabled by access to cultural, but not economic, capital.

Working-class commitment to art, which is idealised by O’Hagan through Mrs Poole, has been the subject of Scottish cultural criticism since 1989. The Scottish novelist most often associated with an art of ‘commitment’ is James Kelman,<sup>45</sup> whose stylistic and formal innovations have been established as representative of a new wave of working-class writing in Scotland. However, Kelman has been criticised by O’Hagan as setting up a

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<sup>42</sup> Andrew O’Hagan, *Be Near Me*, pp. 8-9.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 227.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

<sup>45</sup> Ronald Turnbull (ed.), ‘Kelman and Commitment’, special edition of *Edinburgh Review* 108 (2001).

false dichotomy centred on antagonisms between a shadowy universal authority and a disenfranchised West-of-Scotland underclass:

Kelman's sense – his public position, if you like – is that his people, the particular underclass he writes about and has been part of, is a class of people whose internal differences melt away under the one Great Anglo-American Conglomerate of Establishment-and-Institutionally-Vested-Interests on Behalf of Imperialism, Racism and Associated Bad-Eggery. The message has been constantly, and often magically, clear: what the ex-working classes do to each other is one thing and bad enough – but nothing could ever match for badness what the big 'They' do to all of us together. Kafka's notion of the omnipotent state which could dispense with the nameless as a matter of whim, seems almost cosily camp next to Kelman's brutal Conspiracy of Universal Authorities bent on oppressing the Glasgow poor.<sup>46</sup>

O'Hagan's own novelistic style does not acknowledge the project of vernacularity which has proved so influential to contemporary Scottish novelists writing in Kelman's wake – some of whom are explored in this study. Where O'Hagan accuses Kelman's work of eroding the internal differences and antagonisms of the underclass, *Be Near Me* views the white, heterosexual, working-class male suffering from the effects of de-industrialisation critically. In a chapter entitled 'Mr Perhaps', O'Hagan portrays an antagonistic opposition between languages and registers in order to examine the working-class masculinity which has become dominant in Scottish writing. Through a confrontation between David and Mr Nolan, a working-class father who berates David on the condition of the Scottish working class, O'Hagan constructs a metafictional critique of the battle-lines drawn by vernacular Scottish writing – and the criticism which responds to it. Mr Nolan insists that his language is undermined by authoritative power, demanding of David 'What happens if the state is organized to undermine your language?'<sup>47</sup> This exchange seems to refer to Kelman's Booker Prize-winning novel *How Late It Was, How Late* (1994), in which Sammy's vernacular language is undermined by the administrative systems and agents of the state. However, in this scene Nolan is the perpetrator, rather than the victim, of the undermining of language. This is demonstrated through his mimicking of

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<sup>46</sup> Andrew O'Hagan, 'The Paranoid Sublime', *London Review of Books* Vol. 16, No. 10 (26<sup>th</sup> May 1994), pp. 8-9.

<sup>47</sup> Andrew O'Hagan, *Be Near Me*, p. 62.

David's innocuous use of the word 'perhaps', condemning the word as indicative of David's putatively authoritative, middle-class status – a condemnation that reaches a climax in its expression of hatred towards 'people that talk like [David]. Posh arseholes from England'.<sup>48</sup> Here O'Hagan responds antagonistically to the established tenets of Scottish literary culture by representing the post-industrial working-class Scottish male, who is aware of his own marginality and disenfranchisement, as a hypocrite.

Neil McMillan has acknowledged the dominance of white heterosexual masculinity within a Scottish critical tradition that claims a position of marginality for the working-class male:

[T]hinking through the construction of hegemonic masculinities will always pose a problem for the Scottish critical tradition because it trades on the idea that to be a Scot, of whatever class, is always to occupy a marginal position. Yet the bulk of the Scottish canon, like that of most Western literatures, consists of straight-male-authored texts which themselves marginalize other identities, whether on the grounds of gender, sexuality, religion or race.<sup>49</sup>

Fragmenting the dichotomy between authoritative institutional power and working-class disenfranchisement, the confrontation between David and Mr Nolan – which is also a confrontation between Mr Nolan's vernacular speech and David's Anglified middle-class speech – demonstrates O'Hagan's commitment to a meta-textual, critical examination of the dominant masculine subject of Scottish literature. Peter Middleton discusses an imperative within modernist and twentieth-century fiction to turn the male gaze upon itself, emphasizing 'the cultural unconsciousness of masculinity to which a politicizing self-aware men's gaze needs to be turned'.<sup>50</sup> He argues that, in recent cultural criticism, '[m]en are beginning to gaze at their subjectivity and power in a spirit of self-critical examination'.<sup>51</sup> This inward gaze, in which the male gaze is reflexively turned

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<sup>48</sup> Andrew O'Hagan, *Be Near Me*, pp. 61-62.

<sup>49</sup> Neil McMillan, 'Heroes and Zeroes: Monologism and Masculinism in Scottish Men's Writing of the 1970s and Beyond', in Daniel Lea and Berthold Schoene (eds.), *Posting the Male: Masculinities in Post-War and Contemporary British Literature* (Rodopi: Amsterdam and New York, 2003), pp. 69-89 (p. 69).

<sup>50</sup> Peter Middleton, *The Inward Gaze: Masculinity and Subjectivity in Modern Culture* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 13.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 230.

towards men, is inherent in the structure of *Be Near Me*. The narrative turns from criticism of the men of Dalgarnock in the Orange Lodge scene (see below), to criticism of the working-class West-of-Scotland male represented by Mr Nolan, to David's own criticism of himself and his retreat into a detached world of arts and luxury. While David consistently denies the charge of paedophilia made against him, he is subject to his own accusing 'gaze', which leads to an admission of his retreat into interiority and lack of commitment to public life: 'my faith was built on the wrong foundation. [...] I think I used the Church. It was a beautiful hiding place'.<sup>52</sup> The artistic 'commitment' manifest in *Be Near Me* is concerned with portraying a divided, fragmented nation, through a critique of male subjectivities.

### **Grievance and Deindustrialization in *Be Near Me***

The nation's internal fragmentations and antagonisms are apparent in the novel's portrayal of a West-of-Scotland community in which workerist solidarity has been replaced by an 'us and them' mentality of prejudice and scapegoating. In a scene set outside Dalgarnock's Masonic lodge, which its denizens proudly tout as 'the oldest Masonic establishment in Scotland',<sup>53</sup> O'Hagan associates the injury of deindustrialization with prejudice and violence, commenting on its fragmenting effect on entrenched divisions:

The older men seemed friendly with the younger ones but also somewhat embarrassed by them. It seemed possible to me that something had changed lately in terms of how those people inhabited their great beliefs and prejudices. The younger men growled like people rather sure and rather proud of their injuries, and this man in the football colours – his drunk eyes, his thin, begging laughter – appeared instantly to assume the wisdom of common authority. The younger men had an eager proximity to violent action, as they sometimes do, and this alone was enough to crowd the old men's moderation into silence.<sup>54</sup>

The generational and sectarian divisions indicated here are the targets of O'Hagan's critique of the nation, which is aimed neither at the British state, nor at an authoritative source of power. Through David, O'Hagan tells us that

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<sup>52</sup> Andrew O'Hagan, *Be Near Me*, p. 208.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 29.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 30.

‘what Dalgarnock had was a briny dilution of Ireland’s famous troubles, without the interest in votes, assemblies or breakable guns’.<sup>55</sup> Rather than a nationalist aspiration to statehood, it is the institutions and traditions of the nation’s civil society which are implicated in *Be Near Me* as the site of regressive, violent masculinity. For Joseph Bradley, Scottish Orangeism provides ‘a particularly Scottish manifestation of Britishness’, which is characterized by its ‘confrontational nature’.<sup>56</sup> Bradley argues that Scottish Orangeism provides ‘a prime example of an identity which has a duality of Scottish and British manifestations’, since Scottish Orangemen ‘are not British at the expense of being Scottish. [...] Scottish identity sits comfortably with British identity for Orange people’.<sup>57</sup> In O’Hagan’s work, both Unionist and Nationalist identities are subject to his critique of Scottish tribalism. This recurs throughout the novel, but is ventriloquized most clearly through David in a diatribe he delivers at a dinner party, in which he invokes Dalgarnock’s Orangeism in order to critique a left-nationalist vision of Scotland:

In a town like this, [...] with the history of bigotry and Orangeism and everything else, you’re going to give me a lecture on the fair-mindedness of the Scottish people? About their working-class camaraderie and feeling for the international poor? Their native opposition to economic self-interest? Their inclusiveness? [...] A girl in Glasgow had her throat cut in broad daylight the other month for wearing a Celtic scarf. Two asylum seekers were thrown off a block of flats not ten miles from here. You know why? Because they weren’t from here. Please spare me your homily about the glory of the tribe.<sup>58</sup>

The rhetorical tone of this passage recalls a journalistic style, demonstrating O’Hagan’s blurring of generic boundaries. His essays, journalism and novels are united in their critique of a ‘nationalist fantasy of some kind of pure, brave, virtuous and unadulterated Scottish identity’ and an attendant ‘notion of Scotland’s victimhood’.<sup>59</sup> For O’Hagan, the nation’s deluded adoption of

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<sup>55</sup> Andrew O’Hagan, *Be Near Me*, p. 31.

<sup>56</sup> Joseph Bradley, ‘Identity, Politics and Culture: Orangeism in Scotland’, *Scottish Affairs* 16 (Summer 1996), pp. 104-28 (p. 109).

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 124.

<sup>58</sup> Andrew O’Hagan, *Be Near Me*, pp. 154-55.

<sup>59</sup> Andrew O’Hagan, ‘The SNP are a “parcel of rogues”’, *The Telegraph*, 01 May 2007. Available at: <<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/comment/personal->

victimhood status effaces the divisions in its society. Berthold Schoene has argued that '[p]ostmodern thought has helped to disclose and accentuate the Scottish national identity as a heterogeneous conglomerate of a great diversity of mutable discourses', encouraging re-readings of Scottish cultural life as 'indicative of the great diversity of late-capitalist, postindustrial individual and group identities that together constitute contemporary Scotland'.<sup>60</sup> Through its portrayal of the divisions and fragmentations within Scottish society, *Be Near Me* invites such re-readings. In its portrayal of David's rejection on the grounds of his Catholicism, his English background and his middle-class status, O'Hagan's work demonstrates the need for the social and cultural enfranchisement of a plurality of identities, insisting on narratives of Scottish identity which run contrary to those of the aggrieved, working-class, urban male. In *Be Near Me* O'Hagan demonstrates his commitment to the literary enfranchisement of these counter-identities through the focalization of his novel through a homosexual male and through his portrayal of a divided, heterogeneous nation. For Schoene, such literary acknowledgements of the nation as both itself and its 'other' defy traditionalist conceptions of nationhood and engender a more self-conscious, pluralist re-envisioning:

Contemporary Scottish literature, authored by both men and women, riddles the traditionalist conception of national identity as definitive self-containment, bombarding the myth of closure with a self-conscious proliferation of ambivalence and heterogeneity. [...] [T]his new tradition in Scottish writing [protests] that Scotland's imminent secession from England must not result in the creation of yet another insular monolith but give birth to a vibrant communal conglomerate, aware of its own constitutive self-and-otherness and appreciative of the nation's affiliative dependency on a wide spectrum of fully emancipated others.<sup>61</sup>

*Be Near Me* criticises a Scotland which rejects its 'others', warning that the consequence for the nation that refuses to acknowledge its internal others is a backlash of violent, toxic masculinity – as manifest in the scene outside the

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[view/3639580/The-SNP-are-a-parcel-of-rogues.html](http://www.bbc.com/news/3639580/The-SNP-are-a-parcel-of-rogues.html)> [accessed December 2014].

<sup>60</sup> Berthold Schoene-Harwood, "'Emerging as the Others of Our Selves": Scottish Multiculturalism and the Challenge of the Body in Postcolonial Representation', *Scottish Literary Journal* 25 (1), 1998, pp. 54-72 (p. 54).

<sup>61</sup> Berthold Schoene, *Writing Men: Literary Masculinities from Frankenstein to the New Man* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), p. 103.

Orange Lodge and towards the end of the novel through the violent destruction of David's home. Through the juxtaposition of this critique of working-class, modern Scotland with the personal history of David's relationship with Conor, the novel enacts the literary emancipation of the homosexual, middle-class male 'other' of the modern Scottish literary canon. Thus *Be Near Me* formally enacts the imperative posited by David Lloyd – to re-articulate the nation with other minoritarian identities which 'are, in effect, its constitutive antagonists'.<sup>62</sup> By foregrounding the antagonism between the other characters' narrow tribalist mentalities and David's homosexual, middle-class identity, O'Hagan demonstrates the recalcitrance of minoritarian identities to absorption within the nation's traditions and institutions. Maintaining David's outsider status throughout, through flashbacks which demonstrate the 'different ends and correspondingly different narratives'<sup>63</sup> of the outsider, enables *Be Near Me* to insist upon the 'excess of the people over the nation' which Lloyd posits as imperative to the development of counter-hegemonic 'nationalisms against the state'.<sup>64</sup> This counter-homogenising structure enables recognition of the antagonisms and ambivalences within the nation, which I have posited as central to a critical nationalist agenda.

These antagonisms and ambivalences are also demonstrated through a confrontation between David and Mr Nolan. Nolan sees himself as constrained by a post-Thatcher economic and political situation, and constructs a victimology which he uses to justify a failure to take action:

'Respect isn't a thing you just get,' I said, 'like free school milk. People earn respect by their actions. And sometimes by their words.'

'And what, Mr Perhaps,' said Mr Nolan, 'if yer actions are limited by yer circumstances? What if yer thoughts urnay really yer ane? What happens if the state is organized tae undermine yer language?'

'That's paranoid,' I said. 'You've made a silk purse out of your grievances, Mr Nolan.'

'Now we're talking,' said his friend.

'You people come up here and buy houses and land. Not you. It's no you I'm talking about. You're just a priest. But people like you. English people. Or else people from fucked-up places who turn up here without as much as a working radio. They want the world.'

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<sup>62</sup> David Lloyd, *Ireland After History* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1999), p. 27.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 36.

‘You’re no’ being very consistent, Dom,’ said the friend.  
 ‘Either you don’t like rich folk or you don’t like poor folk. Make up  
 your mind. Sounds to me like you just don’t like anybody very much.’  
 ‘Inverted snobbery,’ I said.  
 ‘I don’t like people very much,’ said Nolan. ‘That’s part of my  
 charm. It’s part of the national charm, is that not right, Father? You  
 must have discovered that by now.’<sup>65</sup>

Nolan is the representative of the Scotland which O’Hagan castigates in ‘Scotland’s Old Injury’ – a nation obsessed with past injustice, which refuses to take action to either combat or move on from these injustices. The reference to Thatcherism in ‘free school milk’ is an indication that Nolan’s resentment is based in the effects of deindustrialization in 1980s Scotland – effects Dalgarnock continues to feel as an ongoing injustice, and from which it refuses to recover or progress. Nolan’s anti-state diatribe is displaced: his ‘inconsistency’ regarding his hatred of both the rich and poor demonstrates that he is not interested in class-based action and has no sense of solidarity with other victims of global capitalism. His dislike of people suggests that the atomisation and alienation which deindustrialization has created in working-class communities suits him; rather than being disenfranchised by the aftereffects of deindustrialization, this affords him a sense of comfort and justification for his habitual bad attitude and xenophobia. Where these injustices against the working class might otherwise be considered a reason for political action, Nolan posits these injustices as a feature of national character and a reason for inaction. His presentation of his community’s victimhood is initially sympathetic: ‘Men worked in these places for forty years and at the end of it the Jobcentre was trying to turn them into Avon ladies. [...] Humiliating. That’s yer global economy for ye’.<sup>66</sup> ‘Avon ladies’ indicates the emasculating effect of deindustrialisation, which subjects the working-class male to a feminised, marginal position, leading to a backlash manifest as the violent reinforcement of masculine subjectivities.

For Berthold Schoene, this backlash seeks to reinforce traditional boundaries and demarcations of nation and identity, in the face of the challenge posed by postmodernism’s enfranchisements of minoritarian identities.<sup>67</sup> The

<sup>65</sup> Andrew O’Hagan, *Be Near Me*, p. 62.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 55-56.

<sup>67</sup> Berthold Schoene, ‘The Union and Jack: British masculinities, pomophobia, and the post-nation’, p. 89.

charge of paedophilia made against David makes him an easy target for this backlash, manifest in the climax of the novel when his house is destroyed by a mob. David recognises that this attack provides the community with a perverse unity, noting their ‘easy [...] communion’ and his estrangement from it: ‘I didn’t know what it might be like to live so certain of togetherness’.<sup>68</sup> The backlash of aggressive masculinity reinforced in this scene serves to reconstruct the unity of a divided nation, reinforcing the boundaries which exclude and eradicate the nation’s ‘Others’. The conversation with Mr Nolan foreshadows this attack as a ‘hyperbolic reassertion’ of ‘both man and nation’, which responds to changes in the demarcation of traditional boundaries by a reinforcement of ‘atavistic’, violent masculinities.<sup>69</sup> The fascism and ethnic cleansing which characterise this backlash in Schoene’s formulation is demonstrated in Nolan’s hatred of fellow victims of the global economy. Nolan is symbolic of a regressive nationalist sentiment which poses as left-wing in its objection of the effects of Thatcherism and global capitalism, but which is actually conservative and reactionary in its refusal to act, its scapegoating of outsiders, and its comfortable victimhood. It refuses the regenerative, ‘radical re-envisioning’ of masculinities which Schoene posits as a solution to the ‘gradual minoritisation of the hitherto uncontested normative standard of imperial masculinity’<sup>70</sup>, instead resorting to regressive nostalgia for a previous era of male, working-class centrality. Mr Nolan represents the mobilization ‘*against* “progress”’ which Tom Nairn associates with an ambivalent, Janus-faced nationalism.<sup>71</sup> However, where nationalist mobilizations, in Nairn’s formulation, ‘contest the concrete form in which (so to speak) progress had taken them by the throat, even as they set out to progress themselves’,<sup>72</sup> the regressive nationalism associated with Dalgarnock does not share the progressive, modernizing impulse which Nairn posits as one ‘face’ of nationalism. Nolan’s is a regressive, truncated nationalism, which romanticizes the national past but does not utilize its resources in order to progress from a

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<sup>68</sup> Andrew O’Hagan, *Be Near Me*, p. 213

<sup>69</sup> Berthold Schoene, ‘The Union and Jack: British masculinities, pomophobia, and the post-nation’, p. 89.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 93.

<sup>71</sup> Tom Nairn, *The Break-Up of Britain: Crisis and Neo-Nationalism*, p. 339.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

predicament of under-development and backwardness. In this scene, and throughout the novel, O'Hagan critiques a regressive, 'abusive version' of Scottish nationalism, which 'tend[s] towards the encouragement of social and psychological atavism, the exploitation of senseless fears and prejudices, and so towards violence'.<sup>73</sup>

### **Janus-faced nationalism in *Our Fathers***

The progressive 'face' of nationalism is interrogated by *Our Fathers*, which explores similar subject matter to *Be Near Me*, but offers a less bleak vision of modern Scotland. The novel's protagonist, James, is from a Scottish working-class background, but has become more middle-class. He has spent significant periods of his life in England, identifying him with the same hybrid, outsider status as David in *Be Near Me*. The novel focusses on a decaying socio-political consciousness associated with a previous, socialist Scotland, critiquing a Labourist tradition of social housing situated within Scotland's left-nationalist history. This is manifest in the novel's setting, during the last days of James's grandfather Hugh Bawn. Hugh is a socialist who has inherited the political radicalism of his mother: suffragette and Glasgow rent-striker Euphemia Bawn. He has manifested this radicalism through his housing policies as a city councillor, earning the moniker 'Mr Housing' – along with reverence and infamy. For Sarah Martin, the critique of Hugh and the left-nationalist politics he espouses reveals 'a heavily gendered discourse sustaining the tower block and, definitely, behind its implementation in Scotland':

O'Hagan use[s] the tower block as symbol of the type of Scottish patriarchal masculinity [he] want[s] to see dismantled. Tower block demolitions and the main character's death are connected in a discourse claiming that the masculinist Utopia which shaped Scotland between the 1950s and the 1970s must go.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Tom Nairn, *The Break-Up of Britain: Crisis and Neo-Nationalism*, p. 347.

<sup>74</sup> Sara Martin, 'A Demolition Job: Scottish Masculinity and the Failure of the Utopian Tower Block in David Greig's Play *The Architect* and Andrew O'Hagan's Novel *Our Fathers*', Digital Repository of Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona. Available at:

Throughout the novel, flashbacks and accounts of four generations of Bawns interrogate left-nationalist utopianism and patriarchal, pedagogical masculinities. The centrality of James's interrogation of his ancestry is foregrounded by his father's observation: 'your mother and me made our own judge and jury when we made you'.<sup>75</sup> For Martin, *Our Fathers* is concerned with the construction of non-patriarchal masculinities, motivated by 'another branch of Utopia: the search for a more egalitarian, empathetic masculinity in answer, directly or not, to the demands of, possibly, the most potent contemporary Utopia: feminism'.<sup>76</sup> This new masculinity emerges from the tension Homi Bhabha identifies between the pedagogical and the performative in the narrative of the nation, which is manifest in the novel as antagonisms between successive generations of men – the 'fathers' of the title. For Bhabha, these antagonisms are the site of the emergent, liminal identities of cultural modernity.<sup>77</sup> He suggests that it is the antagonisms between the identity categories of class, gender and national identity that constitute the national narrative, advocating a reading between these categories.<sup>78</sup> O'Hagan's novel enables such a reading by articulating masculinities and the nation together, demonstrating a critical attitude to totalizing, patriarchal constructions of both. *Our Fathers* insists on a plurality of temporalities of both national narratives and masculinities, which evade the linearity of patriarchal inheritance:

At first he saw me as part of the mob – these forgetters of past necessities, those rectifiers of big mistakes. He thought that he saw me coming: the man with the killing truth. [...] I'll always say it: being lost in his time made my own time clearer. I wanted my own day, but not at the expense of every day that preceded my own. Hugh's gains and losses were mine too. [...] I came home to Ayrshire thinking I would take a stand against

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<[http://ddd.uab.cat/pub/worpaper/2014/123039/demjob\\_a2014.pdf](http://ddd.uab.cat/pub/worpaper/2014/123039/demjob_a2014.pdf)> [accessed December 2015].

<sup>75</sup> Andrew O'Hagan, *Our Fathers*, p. 264.

<sup>76</sup> Sara Martin, 'A Demolition Job: Scottish Masculinity and the Failure of the Utopian Tower Block in David Greig's Play *The Architect* and Andrew O'Hagan's Novel *Our Fathers*',

<[http://ddd.uab.cat/pub/worpaper/2014/123039/demjob\\_a2014.pdf](http://ddd.uab.cat/pub/worpaper/2014/123039/demjob_a2014.pdf)>.

<sup>77</sup> Homi K. Bhabha, 'DissemiNation: time, narrative and the margins of the modern nation', p. 292.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 297.

Hugh's delusions. But that is not what happened.<sup>79</sup>

James's critique of his grandfather leads to a revelation that the intended performative erasure of his pedagogical politics has enabled the 'double-time' and temporal 'splitting' with which Bhabha's essay is concerned.<sup>80</sup>

Hugh is frequently established as a pedagogical, patriarchal figure, who 'is the basis of everything [James] know[s]'.<sup>81</sup> James describes his childhood in his grandparent's flat as 'learning [Hugh's] trade',<sup>82</sup> which is associated with socialism, utopianism, and the New Towns which John Breuilly associates with the rise of Scottish nationalism.<sup>83</sup> The flat itself is significant, and is described in terms which recall Nairn's Janus-faced nationalism: 'Their new flat was a mausoleum to future prosperity. Their feeling for the past gave me hope for the future, and awakened my sense of the liveable times ahead'.<sup>84</sup> This oxymoronic image of Scottish high-rise housing as future-facing memorial is revisited several times throughout the novel. On James's return to Ayrshire, he repeats these terms in his description of the high-rises, which symbolize a past, idealistic vision of an intended – but unrealized – future:

They stand for how others had wanted to live, for the future they saw, for hopes now abandoned. [...] Proud like a Soviet gymnast. A face of iron looking out to the future, over the fields and the roads below, and so firmly her mouth was set on future glory. The high-rise future.<sup>85</sup>

The future-facing tower blocks, here associated with left-wing politics through reference to the former Soviet Union, are associated throughout the novel with Scottish radical political traditions. The Saltcoats street names are used to demonstrate this association, and continue the novel's thematic juxtaposition of the modern and the dead:

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<sup>79</sup> Andrew O'Hagan, *Our Fathers*, pp. 220-21.

<sup>80</sup> Homi K. Bhabha, 'DissemiNation: time, narrative and the margins of the modern nation', p. 297.

<sup>81</sup> Andrew O'Hagan, *Our Fathers*, p. 31.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 32.

<sup>83</sup> John Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1982), pp. 288-89.

<sup>84</sup> Andrew O'Hagan, *Our Fathers*, p. 32.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 68.

A grid of twelve streets. I wandered that night from one to the other; wandering slowly, the pavement all ice, a deep-lying chill in the tarmacadam bones.

Keir Hardie Drive.

John MacLean Drive.

Sandy Sloan Drive.

James Maxton Drive.

Arthur Woodburn Drive.

[...] Our modern housing. There it was, yellow through the trees. Street after modern street, named for the receding glory of dead socialists.<sup>86</sup>

The ‘receding glory’ of socialism – associated in the novel with Hugh Bawn’s fading reputation as an innovative and progressive housing planner – is elegised throughout *Our Fathers*, which also critiques Scottish and nationalist manifestations of socialism throughout. James Bawn represents a changing Scotland which has inherited a tradition of socialist political ideals, but must renegotiate these ideals in the face of their shortcomings and supersession. His own job, ordering the demolition of the tower blocks which Hugh has commissioned, demonstrates his ambivalence towards the Utopianism represented by Hugh. This Utopianism is critiqued through descriptions of the vandalism and deterioration of the flats. ‘Hugh kept his eyes to the roof of the lift’<sup>87</sup> demonstrates his unwillingness to acknowledge that the flats he has built have become new sites for the social problems they were designed to eradicate.

The renegotiation between James and the tradition he has inherited is also a renegotiation of his ambivalent relationship to his family:

There was only the past of Hugh and Margaret, the past of their people, the country, and buildings. I thought I knew what the country was made of. They said no, no: come along with us. ‘There are ruined buildings in the world,’ said Hugh, ‘but no ruined stones.’

Hugh then called me his project. He gave me his books, his tools, and his names for everything. He spoke of the busy years that had made our day. All the secrets of Scottish housing came to me first hand. Not all of them – not Hugh’s stone privacies – but the tricks of the trade, and the tale of our family’s bid for Utopia. I heard of trades unions. I heard of saints. But mostly Hugh told me of building bricks, of clays, and slates and cements, and steel.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Andrew O’Hagan, *Our Fathers*, p. 45.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 137.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 50-51.

In *Our Fathers* O'Hagan presents the progressive face of nationalism which is missing from Dalgarnock in *Be Near Me*. As with several of the texts examined here, the nation is embodied within the novel by traditions and institutions. The character Hugh Bawn is associated with both. He is posited as the driving force behind a regenerative, Labourist housing project, engineered by the municipal institutions which occupy a middle-ground between state authority and civil society. Such institutions, referred to by Nairn in his pronouncement that the relationship between state and civil society is of significance in any understanding of the nation, seem to embody both the 'customs' Nairn associates with civil society and the 'political and administrative structure' he associates with the state.<sup>89</sup> Through his critique of Hugh Bawn and the left-nationalism he represents, O'Hagan embodies the critique of the state that Nairn posits as characteristic of new nationalisms.<sup>90</sup> However, this critique is not of a dominating British state, but of distinctly Scottish political and administrative traditions enacted through localised manifestations of state power – such as city councils. *Our Fathers* embodies a self-reflexive national critique, particularly through the literary allusions to (mainly) Scottish texts which appear throughout the novel. These also serve to posit Hugh as a cipher for Scotland's civil society, constructed from its cultural and literary traditions. He is repeatedly associated with the lines from Hugh MacDiarmid's poem 'On a Raised Beach' quoted within the above extract. In another example of the meta-textuality that characterises O'Hagan's work, he frequently invokes parallels between Hugh Bawn, the 'father' of mass housing in Scotland, and Hugh MacDiarmid, the 'father' of the 1920s' Scottish Literary Renaissance. Like MacDiarmid, Hugh Bawn is an admirer of John Davidson and John MacLean. Angus Calder asserts that this meta-textuality is structural in the novel, praising O'Hagan for his 'return' to 'the Scottish Modernism of Gibbon and MacDiarmid, and back past them to Stevenson and Burns'.<sup>91</sup> Through this return to the national past, through the

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<sup>89</sup> Tom Nairn, *The Break-Up of Britain: Crisis and Neo-Nationalism*, p. 132.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 76.

<sup>91</sup> Angus Calder, 'Chips off the old block: Our Fathers by Andrew O'Hagan', *The Independent* (23 October 2011). Available at: <<http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books-chips-off-the-old->

‘inherited *ethnos*’ which characterises the backwards-looking face of nationalism in Nairn’s formulation,<sup>92</sup> O’Hagan evokes a Janus-faced nationalism which utilises the resources of the national past in order to envision a progressive national future. The most overt statement of Hugh as the embodiment of Janus-faced nationalism appears in his eulogy: ‘he bound tradition and the future like no one else’.<sup>93</sup>

However, the progressive future which Hugh’s tower blocks promise fails to radically transform the nation. Hugh’s patriarchal, pedagogical masculinity is critiqued by his grandson James. Where James in his childhood views his grandparents as a refuge from his violent, alcoholic father, in his adult life he associates his grandfather with the same atavistic, dogged, ‘hard-man’ masculinity: ‘The truth is that my granda, just like my father, really enjoyed a certain amount of aggro’.<sup>94</sup> In one of the novel’s stream-of-consciousness passages, James defines Hugh in terms of a heroic, yet violent, masculinity, characterized by a public bravado which masks private self-doubt:

Like all the men who liked to show how the world could never touch them. As children we loved these men. They could have told us the Clyde was all gold. They seemed so smart about things that scared us. Everyone outside their talk was a loser. They could doctor the world with their fists. And no one could force them – that was the message. They knew how to shine in this bastard mess. And they stuck with this knowledge. Even after the shine had gone. They stuck to their way of talking and seeming. Behind their doors those men could feel sorry. Some had always been sorry. But they marched on ahead with their infinite bravado.<sup>95</sup>

Passages like this feature throughout the novel and are characterised by short, repetitive sentences which construct the ‘sparse, lyrical prose’ that critics have associated with O’Hagan’s style.<sup>96</sup> These are particularly frequent in the

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block-our-fathers-by-andrew-ohagan-faber-faber-pounds-1699-282pp-1078669.html> [accessed December 2015].

<sup>92</sup> Tom Nairn, *The Break-Up of Britain: Crisis and Neo-Nationalism*, p. 340.

<sup>93</sup> Andrew O’Hagan, *Our Fathers*, p. 242.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 133.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 81-82.

<sup>96</sup> Jeff Giles, ‘What Goes Up’, *New York Times* (October 3 1999). Available at: <<https://www.nytimes.com/books/99/10/03/reviews/991003.03gilest.html>> [accessed November 2015].

sections of the novel in which James comments most overtly on his three generations of ‘fathers’. Berthold Schoene identifies a tradition in contemporary men’s writing which is concerned with a critique of patriarchal masculinities:

A major concern [...] is contemporary men writers’ self-conscious envisioning of an *écriture masculine* that would interrogate and deconstruct their predecessors’ often stereotyped and profoundly androcentric conceptions of masculinity.<sup>97</sup>

In these stream-of-consciousness passages, the fragmentation of linear sentence structure underpins the deconstruction of patrilineal inheritance in the novel. *Our Fathers* has been recognised by critics as a Bildungsroman,<sup>98</sup> but it is a particularly deconstructive one, which foregrounds disjunctures and antagonisms between succeeding generations of Bawns. For this reason I want to locate *Our Fathers* within what Schoene has termed ‘a genealogy of progressive masculine devolution from patriarchal man’s incarceration within the monolith of traditional *Bildung* to his present emancipatory re-authentication as a potential carrier of a pluralist diversity of post-patriarchal masculinities’.<sup>99</sup> Such a monolith is envisioned literally in the image of the tower blocks: ‘The tower blocks stood around us – we were wrapped in one too – they joined us up’.<sup>100</sup> However, the novel’s focalisation through a demolition man emphasizes its focus on resistance to, and disjuncture between, successive generations of fathers – a focus which defies the monolithic, totalizing politics of Hugh and James’s high school English teacher, Mr Buie (discussed below).

Throughout the novel Hugh is portrayed as a totalizing figure, whose own concerns and passions eclipse those of his family. In David Goldie’s reading, Hugh is a benevolent tyrant:

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<sup>97</sup> Berthold Schoene, *Writing Men: Literary Masculinities from Frankenstein to the New Man*, p. xiii.

<sup>98</sup> Angus Calder, ‘Chips off the old block: *Our Fathers* by Andrew O’Hagan’, *The Independent* (23 October 2011). Available at: <<http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books-chips-off-the-old-block-our-fathers-by-andrew-ohagan-faber-faber-pounds-1699-282pp-1078669.html>> [accessed December 2015].

<sup>99</sup> Berthold Schoene, *Writing Men: Literary Masculinities from Frankenstein to the New Man*, p. xii.

<sup>100</sup> Andrew O’Hagan, *Our Fathers*, p. 221.

Rapt in a grand utopian dream, he has also trodden down the modest and tender imaginative life of his wife, Margaret, and has undermined the self-esteem of his son. His earnest desire to do good, and blind self-belief in the rightness of his actions, have resulted in a subtle steady oppression that has been felt down two generations.<sup>101</sup>

James's analysis of his grandfather leads him to recognize this tyranny. He associates Hugh's wilful deafness with his nationalist politics: 'he had no ear for differences, no time for the opposing view, valiant in his deafness to contradiction. [...] [I]n his flurry of greatness and domestic pride, he imagined nothing could be really wrong with his country, nothing wrong that it made wrong itself'.<sup>102</sup> In James's own critique of the nation, he contradicts Hugh's nationalist belief that outsiders are to blame for Scotland's shortcomings, as argued below. He sympathises with his grandmother Margaret, whom he views as 'a prop in the fantasy of [Hugh's] own spotlessness', 'a well-spring of propoganda' and 'an everyday font of saving lies', recognizing that he too has adopted this role.<sup>103</sup> Despite James's critique of Hugh, he becomes absorbed and subsumed by his world-view, inheriting and reproducing the philosophies which he internally critiques: 'I learned in those months that it was too late to contradict Hugh. It was too late to argue. I came home thinking I might unteach my teacher. But no I would not: I'd offer my teacher his own best lessons. I'd bring his words back home'.<sup>104</sup> Hugh's absorption of James into his own ideology of nation-building threatens to silence and erase not only James's performative eradication of the pedagogical through critique, but his subjectivity as a 'potential carrier of a pluralist diversity of post-patriarchal masculinities'.<sup>105</sup>

Mr Buie, James Bawn's English teacher, is also a tyrannical figure who seeks to eradicate pluralism, and provides a target for O'Hagan's critique of cultural nationalism. Buie is an Anglophobe, who combines a narrow nationalism with a vision of Utopia borne out of the past:

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<sup>101</sup> David Goldie, 'The Scottish New Wave', in Brian W. Shaffer (ed.), *A Companion to the British and Irish Novel: 1945-2000* (Malden: Blackwell, 2005), pp. 526-37 (p. 534).

<sup>102</sup> Andrew O'Hagan, *Our Fathers*, pp. 145-46.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 180-81.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 146.

<sup>105</sup> Berthold Schoene, *Writing Men: Literary Masculinities from Frankenstein to the New Man*, p. xii.

The English teacher disliked me. He knew I was born in England. He was all for the Scots and the language of his forefathers, ‘them that fought to unsheathe the iron tongue’. Or, ‘thim that focht tae unshith the iron tongue’. That is the way he spoke. Our Scottish voices were canons and cutlasses to him. Our every word was an argument-in-the-making.

He refused to wear a tie. He proclaimed loudly of Dunbar, of Fergusson and MacDiarmid.

‘The poets of the heart and the head,’ he said.

Or, the poyets ae the hert an’ the heed.

[...]

Buie believed in a grand commonness: he spoke of real people; he spoke of oppression. We had never known anyone like that before. He wanted us to know that the way we spoke was a political matter.

‘They’ll try hard to take your language away,’ he said.

That was Buie. There was always ‘they’. He could never understand our lack of taste for abstract resentments. We knew who ‘they’ were all right. And most of them – the ‘they’ that we cared about, and who haunted us daily – were never so far as the other side of the Border. They snored in the room right next to ours, or dwelled long and nasty in a parallel street, and some took classes at the local school.

I got into a bit of a mess with Buie. He banned MacDiarmid’s ‘English poems’ from the class. He wouldn’t hear of Robert Louis Stevenson, except for those stories in braid Scots. He thought Walter Scott was a fascist. Buchan was a swine. Muriel Spark was a ‘turn-coat London harpie’.<sup>106</sup>

Buie’s strong linguistic nationalism, which weaponises Scots and proscribes English, is a reversal of an educational and cultural system in Scotland which has punished students for speaking Scots and Gaelic and which has advocated English as the language of Empire and socio-economic advancement.<sup>107</sup>

Goldie recognises this reversal of ‘the usual contrast between native Scots-speaker and English-speaking teacher’ as another instance of O’Hagan’s meta-textuality.<sup>108</sup> Buie’s singular definition of Scottish culture is challenged within the novel by a supply teacher, who uses the example of the Scottish Enlightenment to insist that ‘there is more than one way to make English Scottish’, quoting ‘a strong Scots accent of the mind’<sup>109</sup> from Robert Louis

<sup>106</sup> Andrew O’Hagan, *Our Fathers*, pp. 28-29.

<sup>107</sup> Douglas Mack, *Scottish Fiction and the British Empire* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), p. 7.

<sup>108</sup> David Goldie, ‘The Scottish New Wave’, p. 535.

<sup>109</sup> Andrew O’Hagan, *Our Fathers*, pp. 28-29.

Stevenson's correspondence.<sup>110</sup> This insistence on pluralism provides yet another instance of meta-textuality, referencing the internal debates of the Scottish literary tradition. Buie's reference to the 'poets of the heart and the head' evokes Edwin Muir's claim in *Scott and Scotland* that 'Scotsmen feel in one language and think in another; that their emotions turn to the Scottish tongue, with all its associations of local sentiment, and their minds to a standard English'.<sup>111</sup> Buie's insistence that Scots is the language of both sentiment and intellect opposes Muir. In the exclusivist nature of his argument – his assertion that *only* Scots is valid, politically and culturally – he inverts Muir's pronouncement that 'a Scottish writer who wishes to achieve some approximation to completeness has no choice except to absorb the English tradition'.<sup>112</sup> However, the extremity and exclusivity of Buie's Scots linguistic nationalism has no identifiable 'real world' counterpart. Even MacDiarmid, perhaps the most militant Scots language activist, was an advocate of 'the need to realise that there are many varieties of English'.<sup>113</sup> Either O'Hagan is tussling with a straw-man of his own construction, or Buie is intended as a warning against the absurdity and fascism of an extremist commitment to nationalism; against the backward-facing 'irrationalities' which Nairn has posited as inherent in nationalist ideology.<sup>114</sup>

Buie's politicization of Scots is also associated with a refusal to view Scotland as responsible for its own social and political injustices. He believes that an unnamed authority – implicitly England – is attempting to deprive Scotland of its language and culture. In Buie, O'Hagan creates a stereotype of a defunct cultural nationalism which exaggerates the marginalized status of Scottish culture and centres on linguistic debates which are irrelevant to the everyday lives of the students he teaches. It is not English-imposed linguistic oppression which James suffers from, but social problems which operate

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<sup>110</sup> Robert Louis Stevenson, 'The Foreigner at Home', in *Memories and Portraits* (Glasgow: Richard Drew, 1990), pp. 1-16 (p. 16).

<sup>111</sup> Edwin Muir, *Scott and Scotland: The Predicament of the Scottish Writer* (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1982), p. 8. First published 1936.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>113</sup> Hugh MacDiarmid, 'English Ascendency in British Literature', in Alan Riach (ed.), *Hugh MacDiarmid: Selected Prose* (Manchester: Carcanet, 1992), pp. 61-80 (p. 61). First published 1931.

<sup>114</sup> Tom Nairn, *The Break-Up of Britain: Crisis and Neo-Nationalism*, p. 345.

within Scotland: domestic violence, class warfare, and sectarianism. These internal social problems and divisions have become institutionalized through their transmission down a line of ‘fathers’:

Our fathers were made for grief. I could see it now. [...] Those Scottish fathers. Not for nothing their wives cried, not for nothing their kids. Cities of night above those five o’clock shadows. Men gone way too sick for the talking. And how they lived in the dark for us now. Or lived in our faces, long denied. [...]

Scotland again. We all sprouted up in these valleys of mirth. Possible fools with bigots for fathers, losers for husbands, and mean, mortal hours. And only the prospect of living in their wake, and one day becoming just like them. And how we were taught to wear our endowment lightly. A purple thistle sewn to the pocket of a school blazer. A hard drink the only promise. And nowhere named in our history books.<sup>115</sup>

Here the patriotic connotations of Scottish iconography are subverted. The thistle represents a national tradition of shame and misery, which James is afraid of transmitting to his own children – to the extent that he has coerced his girlfriend into having an abortion.<sup>116</sup> The novel overtly and repeatedly associates a lineage of ‘hard-man’, toxic, patriarchal masculinities with Scotland: ‘In my father’s anger there was something of the nation’.<sup>117</sup> James Bawn, referred to throughout the novel as a ‘soft lad’, represents an alternative to a patrilineal tradition of aggressive, self-assured hard men. Rather than reproducing a linear national tradition, he enacts a self-reflexive interrogation of it – an interrogation which insists upon Scotland’s internal divisions and injustices, constructing an emergent subjectivity from the antagonisms between generations and traditions.

In ‘Scotland’s Old Injury’, O’Hagan asserts: ‘Free-falling anxiety about Scottishness has a tendency, among Scots, not only to turn into a hatred of others, but into hating bad news about the country itself, and seeing critics as traitors’.<sup>118</sup> James is accused of this treachery by Hugh, as a result of his resistance to the totalizing narrative his grandparents attempt to construct encompassing Hugh’s urban Scottish background, Margaret’s Highland origins and the Irish independence movement.<sup>119</sup> Unlike his grandparents,

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<sup>115</sup> Andrew O’Hagan, *Our Fathers*, pp. 53-54.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 168.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>118</sup> Andrew O’Hagan, ‘Scotland’s Old Injury’, p. 28.

<sup>119</sup> Andrew O’Hagan, *Our Fathers*, p. 182.

James views the national narrative as constructed from the internal antagonisms and differences that Bhabha's work foregrounds. James's critique and deconstruction of Hugh's ideology and work enacts the performative erasure of the pedagogical in which Bhabha locates the nation's narrative address.<sup>120</sup> For Bhabha:

Counter-narratives of the nation that continually evoke and erase its totalizing boundaries – both actual and conceptual – disturb those ideological manoeuvres through which 'imagined communities' are given essentialist identities. For the political unity of the nation consists in a continual displacement of its irredeemably plural modern space, bounded by different, even hostile nations, into a signifying space that is archaic and mythical, paradoxically representing the nation's modern territoriality, in the patriotic, atavistic temporality of Traditionalism.<sup>121</sup>

James' insistence on these counter-narratives and his opposition to his grandparent's totalizing traditionalism engender his performance of post-patriarchal masculinity. In contradistinction to Hugh, he admits a reflexive self-doubt. He refuses to posit himself as authoritative substitute for the ideological nationalist Utopia he has critically deconstructed, surmising: '[m]aybe my work's not the only truth. Maybe it's not the truth at all'.<sup>122</sup> His post-patriarchal identity has inherited a plurality of masculinities: from the tyrannical influence of Hugh, to the violence of his father, to the poetic, hapless benevolence of his great-grandfather Thomas.<sup>123</sup> Thus James Bawn can be understood as a construction of Schoene's 'devolved masculinity' which defies monolithic traditionalism through its role as the 'carrier of a pluralist diversity of post-patriarchal masculinities'.<sup>124</sup>

### **Deconstructing Nation Building**

*Our Fathers* critiques a Janus-faced left-wing nationalist ideology, which 'can represent a dangerously ethnocentric chauvinism, but [...] can also represent a

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<sup>120</sup> Homi K. Bhabha, 'DissemiNation: time, narrative and the margins of the modern nation', p. 297.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 300.

<sup>122</sup> Andrew O'Hagan, *Our Fathers*, p. 198.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 90.

<sup>124</sup> Berthold Schoene, *Writing Men: Literary Masculinities from Frankenstein to the New Man*, p. xii.

set of progressive democratic demands'.<sup>125</sup> O'Hagan embodies this two-sided nationalism in Buie's combination of nationalist and progressive politics. His obsession with the literature and language of the past is juxtaposed with his utopian idealism: 'He dreamed of knowing the future, and he woke up knowing the dead'.<sup>126</sup> In O'Hagan's own, stated view of nationalism, the past has little redemptive potential for the nation:

Nationalism in Scotland is a place where good men and women busy themselves shaking the dead hand of the past, but the naming of a tradition is not the same as the forging of a nation, and modern Scotland, now more than ever, needs a new way of thinking, a new kind of relation to the old, a way to live, a way to make itself better than the badness that's been and the badness to come. The question of what the past amounted to can lie about the grass.<sup>127</sup>

For O'Hagan – as for Stuart Kelly (see introduction) – the cultural nationalist impulse of simply stating the existence of a national tradition is inadequate for the task of nation-building, and he demands a more dynamic engagement with the past. In *Our Fathers* he constructs this engagement as a critical one, which deconstructs Scotland's past in order to reveal a cyclical process of continual national becoming. *Our Fathers* envisions a non-teleological, constantly changing national narrative:

Those fields of blood and carbon. They became the sites for the newer wars, our battles for houses and redevelopment, fought by the likes of Hugh and his mother. The names of those dead warriors, Wallace and Eglinton, Maxton and Hardie, were now known as streets on the council estates, the former glories of Ardrossan and Saltcoats. But some of those houses, built on ruins, were now no more than ruins themselves. In fields they lay as rubble again.

I knew they were out there still. Beyond that bracken our dilapidations lay about in the grass. We had built houses after all. And we had torn them down with our own hands.<sup>128</sup>

In *Our Fathers* teleological, singular narratives of the nation are associated with a patriarchal masculinity, which is critiqued by a protagonist posited as an example of an emergent, post-patriarchal masculinity. James Bawn embodies an ambivalent, critical nationalism, demonstrating the split between

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<sup>125</sup> Michael Gardiner, *Modern Scottish Culture* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), p. 15.

<sup>126</sup> Andrew O'Hagan, *Our Fathers*, p. 30.

<sup>127</sup> Andrew O'Hagan, 'Scotland's Old Injury', p. 30.

<sup>128</sup> Andrew O'Hagan, *Our Fathers*, p. 59.

a pedagogical, nationalist ideology and the continual process of erasure and recurrence that – for Homi Bhabha – is the site of the nation as narration:

[T]he people are also the ‘subjects’ of a process of signification that must erase any prior or originary presence of the nation-people to demonstrate the prodigious, living principle of the people as that continual process by which the national life is redeemed and signified as a repeating and reproductive process. [...] In the production of the nation as narration there is a split between the continuist, accumulative temporality of the pedagogical, and the repetitious, recursive strategy of the performative. It is through this process of splitting that the conceptual ambivalence of modern society becomes the site of *writing the nation*.<sup>129</sup>

On a formal level, O’Hagan’s intertextual references to Scottish poems, novels and songs revise the literary narrative of the nation, encompassing a plurality of competing national counter-narratives which antagonise any subsuming, unitary account of the nation. Furthermore, both novels explored in this chapter constitute such a counter-narrative within Scottish literature, contradicting both the privileging of Scottish hard-men in literature and an institutionalised novelistic tradition of sentimental depictions of working-class life. Their critique of urban, post-industrial, patriarchal culture is focalized through figures designated ‘outsiders’ to Scotland due to their class, nationality and/or sexuality. Where the patriarchal hard-man is identified with the nation, both O’Hagan’s post-patriarchal male protagonists identify with utopian, extra-national spaces. David Anderton’s vision of an alternative social order on Ailsa Craig is repeated by James Bawn’s visions of bodies of water, which for him constitute autonomous, liminal spaces in between nations: ‘My thirst for the sea. I know of a home I have never known. [...] The coast is unclear. The landmarks are ruined or new. Yet water knows nothing of nations. It is called after them – is claimed by them – but water is only itself’.<sup>130</sup> These liminal spaces evoke visions of a new world-order, in which nationhood has become obsolete.

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<sup>129</sup> Homi K. Bhabha, ‘DissemiNation: time, narrative and the margins of the modern nation’, p. 297.

<sup>130</sup> Andrew O’Hagan, *Our Fathers*, p. 143

## Chapter Three

### Traditional Music, Political Song and Literary Representations

This chapter explores literary perceptions and representations of Scottish folk and traditional music. It also contains an examination of political song in the devolutionary period, demonstrating its contributions to, and criticisms of, cultural nationalist constructions. Writers and musicians alike present folk and traditional music in order to critique, comment on, and modify national narratives of identity and culture. Scottish traditional music in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries constitutes a critical nationalist practice in its creation of new modes which oppose and subvert the expectations of bourgeois cultural nationalism. Twentieth-century and recent folk music production counters popular ideas that folk music is nostalgic, escapist and illiterate. Music journalist Rob Young associates the genre with an impulse to ‘screen out modernity, to not quite see what’s actually there, but to distort it through the antiquarian eye and the mental scrying glass’.<sup>1</sup> This chapter argues that, whilst these popular views of folk are often shared by writers and perpetuated by literary representations, Scottish folk music is highly engaged with contemporary political contexts. This engagement has facilitated its development into a highly commercialised, professionalised and globalised musical culture.

#### Perspectives on Folk and Traditional Music

For the purposes of this chapter, ‘folk music’ and ‘traditional music’ are interchangeable terms, referring to a Scottish musical tradition revived in the twentieth century which is thought to be ‘of the people’ insofar as it has been passed down aurally through the centuries by the nation’s working-class and its ‘outsiders’, particularly – as Hamish Henderson discovered – the travelling people. In an oft-quoted phrase, Henderson described collecting folk song amongst rural workers and travellers as ‘like holding [...] a tin can under the

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<sup>1</sup> Rob Young, *Electric Eden: Unearthing Britain’s Visionary Music* (London: Faber, 2011), p. 609.

Niagra falls'.<sup>2</sup> Simon McKerrell's working definition of traditional music incorporates both aurally transmitted music and new compositions:

Traditional music: Music that functions as a marker of identity for a particular cultural group and that has grown out of their oral tradition or that has been composed using musical characteristics derived from oral tradition.<sup>3</sup>

Scotland's traditional music is also perceived as working-class and 'low' culture. For Henderson, it is part of an ulterior counter-culture, which he defines in opposition to intellectualised high art:

The truth is that the world of authentic traditional art – and particularly the world of folk-song and story – forms a kind of underground [...]. It is a sort of 'anti-culture' and embodies ideas, predilections and values which are not those of learned culture [...]. Today such genuine folk culture as survives coexists uneasily with the majority 'art-culture' and it is quite possible to live right in the middle of it and never to apprehend its existence.<sup>4</sup>

Collectors of folk song have emphasised its rural and working-class origins, claiming that it is characterised by accessibility and illiteracy. For Niall MacKinnon, recent revivalism in folk music within Britain has sustained this tendency towards the privileging of 'low' culture, whereas previous revivals and adaptations of folk music elsewhere in Europe had sought to elevate folk by incorporating it within art music and a bourgeois, antiquarian drawing-room culture:

British folk music is unusual among revivals of traditional music in seeking to place past 'low' culture at its core, not seeking to elevate it to 'high' culture as in the mode of many eighteenth- and nineteenth-century European composers, the 'first' English folk revival, and in the form taken by the interest of the Victorians in Scottish traditional music. Instead, the aim is to maintain accessibility to the music, to allow the form to superimpose itself on new songs composed in the genre and extend the stylistic form itself. But artistic accessibility remains at the core – the fact

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<sup>2</sup> Hamish Henderson, 'Folk-songs and Music from the Berryfields of Blair', in *Alias MacAlias: Writings on Songs, Folk and Literature* (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1992), pp. 101-03 (p. 102).

<sup>3</sup> Simon McKerrell, 'Understanding Scotland Musically' Blog, entry for 2nd June 2014. Available at: <<http://www.musicalmeaning.com/home/blog>> [accessed December 2014].

<sup>4</sup> Hamish Henderson, 'The Underground of Song', in *Alias MacAlias: Writings on Songs, Folk and Literature* (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1992), pp. 31-36 (p. 34).

that the music can be performed by anyone and not only by highly trained individuals. Conviviality and accessibility remain centre-stage.<sup>5</sup>

It is this accessibility which led to MacDiarmid's controversial rejection of Hamish Henderson's mid 20<sup>th</sup> century folk revival. MacDiarmid's hatred for popular culture was manifest in his dislike of Kailyardism, tartanry, Harry Lauder, music-hall culture and the use of the vernacular when this was not deemed to be in the interests of 'high art'.<sup>6</sup> In the letters to *The Scotsman* which MacDiarmid exchanged with Henderson and David Craig, he argued that the folk tradition was archaic, nostalgic, and intellectually impoverished:

The demand everywhere today is for higher and higher intellectual levels. Why should we be concerned then with songs which reflect the educational limitations, the narrow lives, the poor literary abilities, of a peasantry we have happily outgrown? The study of such productions may be of some historical value, but it is certainly of no literary value, in regard to which, as in every other connection in life, surely our regard and, if possible, emulation, should be given to the best and not to the lowest in past literary productivity. And above all we should not allow ourselves to be bogged in nostalgia for an irrecoverable way of life, and one, I think, in every respect fortunately irrecoverable.<sup>7</sup>

For MacDiarmid, folk song was the antithesis of a modern developed art, having no political, artistic or intellectual relevance. However, his penchant for flying and rhetorical posturing implies that we should not take this condemnation at face value. Corey Gibson has ably critiqued mid-twentieth-century literary arguments regarding the value of folk song, acknowledging 'the competing ideologies of MacDiarmid and Henderson's work; in the "high" and "low" arts, the popular and

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<sup>5</sup> Niall MacKinnon, *The British Folk Scene: Musical Performance and Social Identity* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1994), pp. 66-67.

<sup>6</sup> MacDiarmid's disdain for Scottish popular culture, and the role of Harry Lauder and the music-hall in this, has been ably critiqued by David Goldie in 'Hugh MacDiarmid, Harry Lauder and Scottish Popular Culture', *International Journal of Scottish Literature* 1 (Autumn 2006). Available at: <<http://www.ijsl.stir.ac.uk/issue1/goldie.htm>> [accessed December 2014]. See also Hugh MacDiarmid, *The Ugly Birds Without Wings* (Edinburgh: A. Donaldson, 1962), in which the poet vehemently castigates Ian Hamilton Finlay's use of Glaswegian urban vernacular in the context of 'low', humorous verse.

<sup>7</sup> Hugh MacDiarmid, *The Letters of Hugh MacDiarmid* (London: Hamilton, 1984), p. 821.

the elect, and the communal and the isolated'.<sup>8</sup> Despite these apparent dualities, Gibson ascertains an artistic agenda common to both men:

The renewal of folk-song in popular artistic expression was rooted in the same kind of aims that defined the Scottish Renaissance in its formative years. MacDiarmid's cry of 'Back to Dunbar!' is echoed by Henderson's emphasis on the old ballads and the vigorous folk-culture of Burns's era. Where the Renaissance 'made an open breach with the still vegetating "*Kailyard*"', the Folk-song Revival sought to oust the Celtic Twilight 'obfuscations' of collectors like Mrs Kennedy-Fraser and the tartan-clad kitsch of 'folksongs' that were broadcast by the BBC, to replace them with the genuine material.<sup>9</sup>

Despite this shared agenda, MacDiarmid's eschewal of 'low', accessible and popular culture is apparent in his poetry. A castigation of what MacDiarmid sees as a denatured, deracinated and irredeemably kitsch Scottish popular culture forms the first section of his most celebrated work, *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle*:

To prove my saul is Scots I maun begin  
 Wi' what's still deemed Scots and the folk expect  
 [...]
 Heifetz in tartan, and Sir Harry Lauder!  
 Whaur's Isadora Duncan dancin' noo?  
 Is Mary Grant in Chicago still  
 And Duncan Grant in Paris – and me fou'?

*Sic transit gloria Scotiae* – a' the floo'ers  
 O' the Forest are wede awa'.<sup>10</sup>

MacDiarmid draws on Scottish folk song ironically in this passage, through his reference to Jean Elliot's popular folksong 'The Flowers of the Forest', in order to castigate the nation's popular culture. In his scholarly notes to *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle*, Kenneth Buthlay shows that MacDiarmid frequently draws on traditional ballads as sources for sections of his epic poem.<sup>11</sup> Henderson was also aware of this influence on MacDiarmid: 'There can be no doubt that by

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<sup>8</sup> Corey Gibson, "'Tomorrow, songs / Will flow free again, and new voices / Be born on the carrying stream": Hamish Henderson's Conception of the Scottish Folk-Song Revival and its Place in Literary Scotland', *The Drouth* 32 (2009), pp. 48-59 (p. 57).

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Hugh MacDiarmid, *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle* (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1987), p. 55. First published 1926.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., pp. 94 and 100.

denigrating Scots popular poetry now, Mr MacDiarmid is trying to kick away from under his feet one of the ladders on which he rose to greatness'.<sup>12</sup> Despite drawing on the folk tradition as source material for this poem and other early lyrics, MacDiarmid otherwise refuses to acknowledge its existence or value as a politicised, contemporary popular culture.

Glaswegian poet Tom Leonard appears to share MacDiarmid's attitude to folk music, stating on his online journal: 'I have nothing to say against [...] folk music it's just that on balance I prefer root canal treatment on my teeth'.<sup>13</sup> However, for his fellow Glasgow writer Janice Galloway, folk music offers an alternative to the marginalisation and prohibition of female perspectives in high art:

Between Purcell and Byrd, Britten, Warlock and Gesualdo, I read and sang FOLK SONGS. I had always sung popular songs but these ones were OLD. And they had WOMEN IN: being pregnant and deserted, working and raising children, coping and GETTING THEIR OWN BACK OCCASIONALLY. This was not ART of course, but EXCITING. DANGEROUS, even.<sup>14</sup>

Galloway's identification of folk song as 'dangerous' contrasts with MacDiarmid's view of folk song as redundant and nostalgic. Her identification of folk as the carrier of experience marginalised elsewhere in art concurs with popular ideas of folk music's radical, underground quality. Alan Bissett has also identified folk music as politically radical. However, like MacDiarmid, he views Scottish music's primary role as that of the preservation of a past cultural mode. For Bissett, folk music is closely related to a radical tradition in literature. He argues that both are concerned with 'the preserved history and language of the working or peasant class for whom the "higher" voice of the establishment does

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<sup>12</sup> Hamish Henderson, *The Armstrong Nose: Selected Letters of Hamish Henderson* (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1996), p. 120.

<sup>13</sup> Tom Leonard, Web Journal, April 5th.  
<<http://www.tomleonard.co.uk/journal/sepjuly2011/3-journal/news-diary.html?layout=blog&start=5>> [accessed December 2014].

<sup>14</sup> Janice Galloway, 'Objective Truth and the Grinding Machine', in Jenny Brown and Shona Munro (eds), *Writers Writing* (Edinburgh: Mainstream, 1993), pp. 73-77 (pp. 75-76).

not speak'.<sup>15</sup> Kevin Williamson, former editor of *Rebel Inc.* – the magazine which first published Irvine Welsh – shares this view of folk music as part of a wider artistic platform for marginalized expression: 'It is not political parties – as many on the left mistakenly believe – but a country's radical writers, musicians and other creative individuals who piece together and preserve the often hidden or censored history of working people'.<sup>16</sup> Literary perspectives on folk music are polarised between arguments that folk is reactionary and views which posit it as a repository of radical, anti-establishment expression. However, this chapter will argue that neither of these perspectives are wholly accurate. Recent developments in folk since the 1980s have made the genre more mainstream than marginal, developing a commodified and highly marketable subculture from a musical genre which has been popularly viewed as a repository for communitarian and marginalised expression.

### **The Politics of Folk**

These literary perspectives are largely from outside the tradition. In recent decades, musicologists, many of whom are also practising musicians in the genre, have interrogated the class dynamics and political implications of traditional music culture and performance practices. Contemporary research in Scottish musicology elucidates innovations in traditional music, which problematise both views of folk music as radical and arguments that it is outmoded, amateurish and nostalgic. Where several of the literary perspectives outlined above see folk as a vehicle for marginalised expression, the consensus amongst researchers and genre 'insiders' is that Scottish folk has become a largely middle-class domain. For Marxist scholar Dave Harker, the bourgeois nature of folk and folk revivalism is rooted in the antiquarian practices of previous centuries, which have served to 'mystify workers' culture in the interests of bourgeois ideology and therefore of

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<sup>15</sup> Alan Bissett, 'Who Carries the Carriers?', *National Collective* (06 June 2013). Available at: <<http://nationalcollective.com/2013/06/06/alan-bissett-who-carries-the-carriers/>> [accessed December 2014].

<sup>16</sup> Kevin Williamson, 'My Resignation Letter from the SSP'. Available at: <<http://myresignationletterfromthessp.blogspot.co.uk/2006/08/letter-of-resignation-from-scottish.html>> [accessed December 2014].

capitalism'.<sup>17</sup> Harker implicates nationalism in this process, since bourgeois 'support for "folk" culture is a small but significant part of their attempts to reinforce *nationalism*, and so fend off danger of the only power which can challenge them – international working-class solidarity'.<sup>18</sup> For Harker folk revivalism is ostensibly a reactionary process which bowdlerises and commodifies workers' culture in the interests of global capitalism, a process in which he implicates nationalism.

However, Scottish folk since the mid-twentieth century has combined left-wing and nationalist politics, particularly in the lyrical practice of radical songwriters including the republican Anti-Polaris singers, Hamish Henderson and Dick Gaughan (analysed below). Niall MacKinnon's study of revivalist folk demographics has revealed that folk clubs are mostly patronised by an emergent bourgeoisie who wish to disassociate themselves from bourgeois values: 'the folk scene attracts those who have benefited materially from upward social mobility, but who have not chosen to identify with and refuse to aspire to the dominant competitive individualistic ethic'.<sup>19</sup> For MacKinnon the amateur folk practitioners who are the subjects of his study are engaging in nostalgia. However, this nostalgia is not for national origins or roots, but for an idealised version of their own working-class backgrounds:

The folk scene appeals to those in higher socio-economic class locations, not those who have failed according to the dominant bourgeois materialist ethic. It appeals to those who outwardly conform to the dominant value system, yet who inwardly do not fully identify with this lifestyle. Its referents are taken from the cultural forms of 'lower' socio-economic groups, and one possible explanation could be that these people do not feel comfortable in their new social location. The audience survey has indicated that they are very largely upwardly socially mobile. It is the music of the newly arrived middle classes. Folk music may epitomise or signify a lost world, a sense of community belonging, or nostalgic associations deriving from their personal and family backgrounds in other class locations.

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<sup>17</sup> Dave Harker, *Fakesong: the Manufacture of British Folksong 1700 to the Present Day* (Milton Keynes: Open University, 1985), p. xii.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xi.

<sup>19</sup> Niall MacKinnon, *The British Folk Scene: Musical Performance and Social Identity*, p. 130.

Here, therefore, is an interesting example of upward social mobility associated with ‘downward’ artistic affiliation.<sup>20</sup>

MacKinnon’s conclusions concur with popular ideas of Scottish traditional music as ‘low’ culture and a site of nostalgia for lost origins, arguing that folk provides respite from the capitalist processes from which his participants have materially benefitted. Leading bagpiper and musicologist Simon McKerrell concurs with MacKinnon, recognising that contemporary Scottish folk music is mostly patronised by a ‘white, middle-class, mixed-gender, Scottish and English audience’.<sup>21</sup> The work of these musicologists reveals that, although folk music in Scotland continues to be associated with working class origins and tradition bearers from marginalized Scottish subcultures, this is an idealised and outmoded view of folk music. Since the 1950s folk revival folk has increasingly been produced by highly trained professionals in commercial settings such as concert halls. The practice of folk ‘fusion’, explored in the final section of this chapter, is the culmination of this commercialisation in the genre.

These analyses of folk culture have something in common with Christopher Whyte’s observation, explored in the introduction to this study, that literary critics and consumers of Scottish vernacular writing belong to a highly educated, upwardly mobile, middle-class demographic.<sup>22</sup> Scotland’s folk music, like its vernacular literature, is a manifestation of a culture rooted in the forms and idioms of the working classes, which is largely patronised – and, in the case of folk music, practised – by the bourgeoisie. For MacKinnon, the solidarity he associates with folk music is manifest in traditional modes of practice – specifically, in the folk ‘session’, a communal performance in which a group of musicians gather to play traditional repertoire together, usually in a pub. Radicalism in folk music is not necessarily located in the politics or the class identifications of the songs, the performers, or audience members, but in the

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<sup>20</sup> Niall MacKinnon, *The British Folk Scene: Musical Performance and Social Identity*, p. 130.

<sup>21</sup> Simon McKerrell, ‘An ethnography of hearing: somaesthetic hearing in traditional music’, in B. Flath, A. Pirchner, E. Pölzl and S. Sackl (eds), *The Body Is The Message* (Graz, Austria: Grazer Universitätsverlag Leykam, 2012), pp. 77-89 (p. 79).

<sup>22</sup> Christopher Whyte, ‘Masculinities in Contemporary Scottish Fiction’, *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 34: 3 (1998), pp. 274-85 (p. 275).

specific musical practices associated with the genre. For MacKinnon, traditional music's communal, participatory properties enable its 'political function' of resistance to processes of commodification and commercialisation:

We see elements which have been transmitted over and beyond specific song texts and melodies. The surface structures of the music of the revival have been imbued with a profound social significance derived from their origins as music which was orally created, moulded and transmitted, a music whose function was and is to celebrate community and social solidarity. [...] The folk scene seeks to celebrate continuity and participation, itself a protest against musical passivity, spectacle and commodity. [...] The emphasis upon vernacular musical creation is itself a powerful ideological and political statement, far more than the creation or singing of songs whose lyrics are overtly political.<sup>23</sup>

MacKinnon optimistically views recent developments towards the construction of a highly marketable folk-fusion sub-culture as a rare example of 'small reversals which extend the vernacular domain over the commodified'.<sup>24</sup> However, the final section of this chapter will argue that the 'fusion' of musical production modes from more mainstream genres with folk has enacted the commodification which MacKinnon claims folk practice opposes. Folk fusion retains many of the musical qualities of the folk idiom. For example, use of conventional folk instruments (fiddles, accordions, bagpipes, banjos, etc.), formal structures derived from ceildh dance structures such as marches, jigs, reels, strathspeys and hornpipes, trends in ornamentation, bowing (in the case of the fiddle) and phrasing, the performance of long and carefully-constructed 'sets' of music, are all retained by the genre (to a greater or lesser extent which varies between bands and between pieces). In light of these innovations – widespread in Scottish folk since the 1970s – professional folk practice can no longer be seen as a site of resistance to commodification. Rather, the practice of folk-fusion manifests a highly constructed, highly marketable, popular subculture, designed to attract new generations of folk musicians and folk audiences and to appeal to demographics who identify with other musical genres and subcultures. Where Henderson's 1950s revival emphasised the imitation and ongoing transmission of traditional material, contemporary folk practice consists largely of performing

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<sup>23</sup> Niall MacKinnon, *The British Folk Scene: Musical Performance and Social Identity*, p. 135.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 137.

and recording an increasing proportion of original material which increasingly pushes at the boundaries of conventional folk-tune structures and arrangements. Experimenting with unusual keys and time-signatures has become commonplace, as has use of electric instruments and sampling in order to facilitate heavily-layered, complex harmonic arrangements. Where for Simon McKerrell ‘the commercialisation and commodification of traditional arts is wholly compatible with authentic creative practice and transmission’, it cannot be denied that the communitarian, participatory qualities MacKinnon associates with folk can no longer be assumed as the norm in the genre, since ‘[t]he distance between the audience and performer, once indivisible, has been growing steadily in the past 30 years’.<sup>25</sup>

### **Ceilidh and Community: A. L. Kennedy’s *Looking for the Possible Dance***

A. L. Kennedy’s debut novel *Looking for the Possible Dance* (1993) and Alan Bissett’s recent play *Turbo Folk* (2015) interrogate the nation’s traditional music and its popular associations with radical politics. Both works associate this music with cultural nationalism, and both implicate it in a false belief in national benevolence and Scotland’s ‘underdog’ status. In Kennedy’s novel, the ceilidh – a communal musical and social event originating in Scottish Highland and Gaelic culture, at which traditional arts are performed and mass participation is encouraged – takes on a particular symbolic significance. Where the train journey between Scotland and England undergone by the protagonist, Margaret, is often seen as the novel’s crucial framing device, ceilidhs are also used to structure the work. Both the beginning of Kennedy’s novel, and its climax, are set during ceilidhs. Both the train journey and the ceilidh provide Margaret with spaces of critique, which allow her to reassess and renegotiate her relationship with her nation, her father and her partner, Colin. For Eleanor Bell, the train journey Margaret undertakes locates her in an in-between, liminal space:

It is such *in-between* spaces, spaces which question the creation of social and cultural boundaries, which are particularly relevant with respect to A. L. Kennedy; and she has clearly rejected any ‘introverted’ or reductive depictions of Scotland in her work. [...] Both *So I am Glad* and the novella *Original Bliss* concern and are based in Scotland, yet in each there

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<sup>25</sup> Simon McKerrell, ‘Traditional Arts and the State: the Scottish case’, *Cultural Trends* Vol. 23, No. 3 (2014), pp. 159-68 (p. 160).

is also a need for the central character to leave the country in order to then expand her own self-knowledge and identity. There is an evident need in both texts to open up the concept of national boundaries, and it is therefore in the *in-between* spaces, between Scotland and the rest of Europe, that real awareness is generated for these characters. In order to avoid national self-obsession here, characters are visibly transported to a different location from where they can evaluate their own culture.<sup>26</sup>

Interrogative, boundary-transgressing spaces are posited by Homi Bhabha as integral to the formation of the national narrative, and as the location of antagonism between performative national life and a pedagogical, received narrative of nationhood (see introduction). The fragmented, non-linear structure of the novel is formed through the flashbacks and memories which Margaret has on the train. The circularities and repetitions engendered by this structure resists conceptions of the nation as progressive, linear teleology. Margaret's break-up with Colin in a café is portrayed twice, and phrases such as '[i]n his future, Colin has this memory'<sup>27</sup> demonstrate on a structural level the renegotiations between past and present which are a recurrent theme in the novel and which reach their climax in the ceilidh. Where the narrative presents us with flashes and episodes from Margaret's life, this structure mirrors the episodic structure of the ceilidh, in which act after act present performances which – like the novel – vary dramatically in tone, from humorous to nostalgic to tragic. Where Bell points to the liminal spaces in the novel as an evaluative escape from national self-obsession, the ceilidh offers a similar opportunity for evaluation and renegotiation that is located in a particular arrangement of the nation's narrative.

For McKerrell, the ceilidh format has resisted the processes of commodification which have affected Scottish traditional music in recent decades: 'The only social context that really remains free of financial exchange, and thus commerce, is the family or ceilidh contexts'.<sup>28</sup> The ceilidh in Kennedy's novel both operates within processes of commerce and enterprise, and – as this section will argue – resists these processes. The protagonist of the novel,

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<sup>26</sup> Eleanor Stewart Bell, 'Scotland and Ethics in the Work of A. L. Kennedy', *Scotlands* 5.1 (1998), pp. 105-13 (p. 107).

<sup>27</sup> A. L. Kennedy, *Looking for the Possible Dance* (London: Vintage, 2005), p. 91.

<sup>28</sup> Simon McKerrell, 'Traditional arts and the state: the Scottish case', p. 160.

Margaret, is a young social worker at a community centre, who is frustrated by the current state of her nation and her own inability to alleviate or improve the situation, remarking that: ‘It’s just impossible to work with people in the community, if your boss hates people and communities are being phased out as barriers to enterprise and foreign travel’.<sup>29</sup> *Looking for the Possible Dance* presents a Scotland in which community is undermined by a Thatcherist ideology that prioritises enterprise above welfare. This ideology is associated in the novel with Margaret’s enterprising boss Mr Lawrence, who reluctantly allows a fundraising ceilidh for a local fishing club when the fishermen offer to pay to hire the community centre. The irony of needing to pay in order to host a community event in a community centre is part of the novel’s thematic juxtaposition of commercial capitalism and communitarian values. Scotland’s traditional culture is implicated in this dichotomy through Kennedy’s representation of the ceilidh. Despite the need for financial exchange in order for the ceilidh to occur, the novel presents the ceilidh as a carnivalesque site of resistance, irreverence, possibility, and proscribed political and cultural identities. The ceilidh is the site of a subversive and anarchic energy; a space separate from the everyday isolation, hopelessness and stasis of Margaret’s community, in which the usual rules do not apply. In *Looking for the Possible Dance* literal rules are presented as ‘The Scottish Method (For the Perfection of Children)’. These indicate inherited, pedagogical national attitudes towards children, women and Scottish culture, which Margaret resists throughout the novel. The rules which make up the ‘Method’ include: ‘The history, language and culture of Scotland do not exist. If they did, they would be of no importance, and might as well not’.<sup>30</sup> The community centre where Margaret works – sarcastically referred to by the characters as the ‘Fun Factory’ – mirrors and extends the suppressive ideology of her self-effacing education through its own set of rules:

Although the CENTRE is open to all, ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOUR, POLITICAL DEBATE and agitation on behalf of DUBIOUS MINORITIES cannot be tolerated. [...] CLIENTS are not to be encouraged to linger on the premises without CONSTRUCTIVELY OCCUPYING their time. SINGING, DANCING, FIGHTING,

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<sup>29</sup> A. L. Kennedy, *Looking for the Possible Dance*, p. 75.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

DOMINOES, or OTHER GAMBLING, ALCOHOL, CHIPS, FISHING MAGGOTS and CLIMBING BOOTS are forbidden.<sup>31</sup>

Kennedy's portrays a Scotland where cultural, social and artistic activity is contained and proscribed, particularly for its youngest and most vulnerable citizens. This contributes to a national sense of hopelessness, particularly amongst working-class people suffering from unemployment, poverty, and the effects of deindustrialization. As a result, the only means of resistance to these neoliberal capitalist processes which remains available to Margaret is manifest as 'pointless gestures' such as protest politics, which are deployed as an ineffectual resistance to a Scotland characterised by a 'huge, alarming, unnatural peace that grew out of irrelevance and defeat: dying, unemployment, embarrassing old age'.<sup>32</sup> In contrast to the 'renewed confidence' cultural nationalists have associated with Scottish writing in the 1980s and 1990s, Kennedy presents a bleak picture of Scotland at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as a nation characterised by isolation and hopelessness.<sup>33</sup> A critical nationalist reading of *Looking for the Possible Dance* locates its resistant, oppositional and antagonistic qualities in its indictment of Scottish internalisation of Thatcherist ideologies – and in Margaret's opposition to the implementation of oppressive and psychologically damaging practices through Scottish state institutions such as the education system. The novel foregrounds antagonisms between state and society by criticising the economic, social and psychological effects which both institutionalised educational traditions and state-imposed economic ideologies have on working-class communities. Through the ceilidh, Kennedy interrogates the role played by Scottish culture in both perpetuating and resisting a culture of national victimhood and self-silencing.

The ceilidh produces an anarchic alternative to the 'peace' Kennedy associates with national hopelessness, transforming the ideologies provided by

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<sup>31</sup> A. L. Kennedy, *Looking for the Possible Dance*, p. 25.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 39-40.

<sup>33</sup> Douglas Gifford. 'Breaking Boundaries: From Modern to Contemporary in Scottish Fiction', in Ian Brown, Thomas Owen Clancy, Susan Manning and Murray Pittock (eds), *The Edinburgh History of Scottish Literature Volume 3: Modern Transformations: New Identities (from 1918)* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), pp. 237-52 (p. 237).

the Fun Factory rules and ‘The Scottish Method (for the Perfection of Children)’. The ceilidh becomes a means by which Margaret can rediscover a sense of own resistant, oppositional qualities and begin to reverse the process by which she has become alienated from her own identity by an oppressive education system:

As Margaret grew, her character seemed to shrink and by the time she was Gus’s age she had almost forgotten what she was like. And, oddly enough, Mr Lawrence and the Factory were proving very educational.<sup>34</sup>

She confides in unemployed socialist folk-musician Graham that the ceilidh primarily appeals to her because Mr Lawrence – enforcer of the Fun Factory’s rules and of a Thatcherist commitment to enterprise – does not approve.<sup>35</sup> The ceilidh provides another ‘pointless, but glorious’ gesture of protest aimed at a self-oppressing nation, providing a site of resistance to processes which eradicate communities and isolate individuals.<sup>36</sup> The ceilidh also has symbolic significance relevant to the existential crisis which plagues Margaret throughout the novel. She is haunted by happy childhood memories of dancing with her father at a ceilidh, and puzzled by his later insistence that he does not like dancing and his refusal to attend any more ceilidhs with her. Thus the novel associates ceilidhs with Margaret’s close relationship with her father. But they are also symbolic of something transcendental and fleeting, since ‘[w]henver a ceilidh is mentioned [...] somewhere in her mind, Margaret will compare it with the never repeated Anniversary Ceilidh at the Methodist Church hall and the blue light it called to her father’s eyes’.<sup>37</sup> The ceilidh becomes symbolic of a ‘possible dance’ – a way for Margaret to live that is not ‘a waste of time’, which transcends the limitations imposed by indifferent economic systems and oppressive education systems, reverses processes by which communities have been decimated, and facilitates Margaret’s need to rediscover and reassert herself.<sup>38</sup> The ceilidh is posited as a source of individual, communitarian and national identity, and provides a transcendental space in which these can be temporarily recovered from the effects of oppressive state and capitalist processes.

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<sup>34</sup> A. L. Kennedy, *Looking for the Possible Dance*, p. 85.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 173.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 40.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 2-3.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

However, Kennedy's presentation of this aspect of Scottish traditional culture is not idealised, nor does she present the ceilidh as an un-ambivalent representation of a flawless Scottish culture. Rather, the political implications of the ceilidh are interrogated in the novel through an alternative set of 'rules'. These mirror and subvert the Fun Factory rules, implicating Scotland as a country detached from its own identity:

The purposes of the ceilidh, a uniquely unsullied flowering of Scottish culture, are many. Among these are the taking of spirituous liquors, the singing of songs, the playing of music, dancing, joking, wynching, fighting, greeting, eating stovies and looking at the moon [...].

As the Israelites in slavery had their psalms, so we have the ceilidh. As the Africans transported to Haiti kept their voodoo, so we have the ceilidh. As every languageless, stateless, selfless nation has one last, twisted image of its worst and best, so we have the ceilidh. Here we pretend we are Highland, pretend we have mysteries in our work, pretend we have work. We forget our record of atrocities wherever we have been made masters and become comfortable servants again. Our present and our past creep in to change each other and we feel angry and sad and Scottish. Perhaps we feel free.<sup>39</sup>

By positing the ceilidh as a repository for Scottish identity in the absence of a parliament, these parodic rules recall the popular view in cultural nationalist criticism that culture has served as a repository for suppressed national political representation in the absence of an autonomous state. However, part of the 'unsullied' nature of the ceilidh depends on an inherent denial of the imperialist and oppressive aspects of Scotland's history. The traditional ceilidh is thus the site of a nationalism identified by Edward Said as dependent on 'a history selectively strung together in a narrative form'.<sup>40</sup> These parodic rules implicate cultural nationalist allegiance to Scotland's traditional arts in a process of selectively forgetting Scotland's imperial past and its impoverished present. They interrogate the nation's inherited, institutionalised traditions, thus transforming the ceilidh into a self-reflexive and self-critiquing performance of nationhood.

The ceilidh creates a participatory atmosphere and collectivity that is denied by the self-effacing and institutionalised practices criticised in Kennedy's novel. It is not an idealised site of national high art, but demonstrates a low,

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<sup>39</sup> A. L. Kennedy, *Looking for the Possible Dance*, pp. 145-46.

<sup>40</sup> Edward Said, 'Reflections on Exile', in *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), pp. 173-86 (p. 176).

bawdy, irreverent, anarchic working-class culture. Amongst Margaret's Youth Theatre's performance is a rendition of Matt McGinn's comic verse 'The Big Effan Bee', covers of pop songs, bad singing and unrestrained heckling. However, the ceilidh is also posited as a radical liminal space, emerging from the interstices between this irreverent culture and an intellectual, 'high' culture. As part of his decorating, Graham hangs up quotes from philosophers and radical thinkers, connecting them to the impetus of the ceilidh:

When folk sing the songs, they don't always think what they're saying. That's the Scottish Problem; we're aye fucking singing, but what do we ever hear? [...]

René Descartes. His Second Meditation, fucking read it. He's telling me I can be everything, the whole fucking world – telling me that I can do that. I have that inside. And I'm fed up with folk who are certain that I'm nothing but shite underfoot. Tonight, I'm backing Descartes. We all are.<sup>41</sup>

This presentation of the ceilidh concurs with popular perceptions of folk as the site of radical politics and a forum for marginalised expression. For Hamish Henderson, the folk genre is characterised by resistance:

Folk – the "Folk" that matters – has always in fact something of the rebel underground about it; whether it be the love-songs which reject the values and prejudices of a money-minded bourgeois society or a hypocritical puritan religious set-up [...] all share to a greater or lesser extent this rebel élan.<sup>42</sup>

In Kennedy's novel the ceilidh has a similar significance, rejecting the rules dictated by 'money-minded' Mr Lawrence. It is formed by the rebels and misfits within the novel: socialist, unemployed Graham and the unruly members of Margaret's Youth Theatre. Its subversion of the established norms of everyday existence is apparent. Child singers bring grown men to tears, spontaneous waltzes are danced during the after-party tidy-up, delinquent teenagers are transformed into dedicated tradition bearers and the fragmented, disenfranchised community are unusually united in their desire to participate and contribute: 'Folk would appear in the doorway, faces raw in the wind, and ask about the ceilidh. They would offer to cook or to help behind the bar, to sing'.<sup>43</sup> The participatory

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<sup>41</sup> A. L. Kennedy, *Looking for the Possible Dance*, pp. 172-73.

<sup>42</sup> Hamish Henderson, "'It Was In You That It A' Began": Some thoughts on the Folk Conference', in Edward J. Cowan (ed.), *The People's Past: Scottish Folk, Scottish History* (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1980), pp. 4-15 (p. 8).

<sup>43</sup> A. L. Kennedy, *Looking for the Possible Dance*, p. 148.

nature of the event is crucial. During the ceilidh the barriers between audience and performers are extremely fluid. Audience members become performers and the audience's heckling, joining-in and other responses are as much a part of the performance as events on the stage. In this way Kennedy's novel illustrates the radical character of a 'folk scene [which] seeks to celebrate continuity and participation', supporting McKinnon's assertions that the genre is 'itself a protest' and 'a powerful ideological and political statement'.<sup>44</sup> Thus the ceilidh provides an example of national transformation through its opposition to the alienating, self-effacing, institutionalised 'rules' of pedagogical national traditions and the atomising effects of state-imposed ideology.

### **Turbo Folk**

Despite Alan Bissett's assertion of the democratic values of traditional music in 'Who Carries the Carriers', his play *Turbo Folk* interrogates the politics of traditional music, associating traditional and folk music with a violent, regressive, irrational nationalism, which paradoxically insists on both Scotland's underdog status and its superiority. The denial of Scotland's culpability for global injustice leads to danger, violence, and death for the main character, Cameron Campbell, who insists that Scotland is ostensibly benevolent and that its music is neither 'harmless' nor 'dangerous', but 'just music'.<sup>45</sup>

The title of the play refers to a genre of Balkan traditional music which is infused with pop, and thus has much in common with contemporary Scottish folk-fusion music (explored below) in terms of the hybridity and commercialisation undergone by both traditions. Turbo folk is highly politicised and militant, sharing the inherent politicisation which Henderson and MacKinnon claim for the folk genre in Britain: 'Turbo is a hardcore ethnic music, often perceived as such even when the lyrics have no overtly nationalist content. [...] Turbo can be seen as a paramilitarized ex-Yugoslav form of pop culture and as a

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<sup>44</sup> Niall MacKinnon, *The British Folk Scene: Musical Performance and Social Identity*, p. 135.

<sup>45</sup> Alan Bissett, *Turbo Folk*, in *Collected Plays 2009-2014* (Glasgow: Freight, 2015), pp. 49-107 (p. 53).

form of reaction to fears of globalization'.<sup>46</sup> The use of pop music and Westernised forms in Turbo Folk is seen as an act of 'reprocessing', which renegotiates the relationship between Balkan and Western cultures:

The language and the 'Balkan' melodies of Turbo might seem strange to a Western audience, but otherwise there is little difference to what is heard on Western media, particularly in the case of less overtly ethnic Serbian variants of rock. [...] This reprocessing of Western forms has taken to the extreme their repressive potential. As with any reprocessing operation, there are always some side effects from the hardcore residue or toxic excess. However, in this case, these side-effects – the production of a siege mentality and constant antagonism combined with militant optimism and nostalgia – are what the reproducers actually seek to reproduce.<sup>47</sup>

This hybrid form fuses both Western and indigenous Balkan musical genres to produce a highly politicised and highly nationalistic hybrid, which resists stereotypes of Serbs as backwards and naïve to western cultural forms. The ability of this music to 'amplify' the national and to 'reprocess' Western culture through an antagonistic juxtaposition with Serbian musical culture, which highlights processes of globalisation and Western dominance, gives it a particular significance as 'a paramilitary form that is never off-duty and even at its most disposable is absolutely committed'.<sup>48</sup> This is a militant music which aims to inspire paramilitary action and violent opposition to ongoing, neo-imperial Western cultural and political dominance in the Balkans. Bissett's play deals with these themes through a critique of a chauvinistic nationalism, which views Scottish identity as ostensibly benevolent, egalitarian, and socially just. Belief in a monolithic national identity is interrogated in the text through the continual undermining of Cameron, who continually berates his Balkan companions with naïve assertions of Scottish benevolence. Cameron's implied murder by paramilitary forces, contacted by one of these companions, is ultimately the result of his refusal to accept Scottish culpability in British 'peacekeeping' missions in the Balkans (Bissett presents the word 'peacekeeping' in quotation marks within his play) and his eventual justification of NATO intervention as part of his naïve nationalism. Both *Turbo Folk* and *Black Watch* (analysed in Chapter 5 of this

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<sup>46</sup> Alexei Monroe, 'Balkan Hardcore: Pop culture and paramilitarism', *Central Europe Review* Vol. 2, No. 24 (June 2000). Available at: <<http://www.ce-review.org/00/24/monroe24.html>> [accessed December 2014].

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

study) demonstrate a concern with Scotland's status in a globalised, postnational world-order through explorations of Scottish participation in contentious military campaigns enacted by supra-national coalitions and organisations.

In Bissett's play, the Scottish traditional music Cameron performs takes on the paramilitary qualities of Turbo Folk when viewed through the eyes of the Balkan characters Vlad and Miko. The version of Bonnie Dundee which he sings is a product of the Romantic revivalism of Scottish music, with lyrics written by Walter Scott:

Tae the Lords o convention twas Claverhouse spoke  
E'er the King's Crown go down there are crowns to be broke  
So each cavalier who loves honour and me  
Let him follow the bonnets o' Bonnie Dundee.

Come fill up my cup, come fill up can  
Come saddle my horses and call out my men  
Unhook the West Port and let us gae free  
For it's up with the bonnets o' Bonnie Dundee.<sup>49</sup>

The lyrics depict Graham of Claverhouse rallying Scots to the Jacobite cause, giving the song has clear paramilitary relevance. This resonates with the Turbo Folk genre's paramilitary function, which instils and amplifies militant nationalism through popular culture. Cameron's failure to see the connection between the paramilitary implications of the song he performs and the paramilitary background of his Balkan companions leads to his death. Initially critical of Cameron's choice of repertoire, Miko and Vlad goad Cameron into 'making them believe' in the sentiment of Bonnie Dundee, and claim his performance eventually succeeds in achieving this. Cameron's performance functions as Turbo Folk because it riles up a paramilitary nationalist sentiment in Miko and Vlad, who eventually participate enthusiastically in the song. The ensuing conversation implicates Cameron's Scottish nationalism in a self-justifying pro-Western political ideology: 'I heard youse were up to all sortsay dodgy/ shit round here, eh? [...] If yes werenay up tae anything/ we wouldnay have been here, would we?'.<sup>50</sup> Cameron's continual insistence that he is Scottish,

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<sup>49</sup> Walter Scott, 'Bonnie Dundee', as reproduced in *Turbo Folk*. Scott's lyrics originally published in Walter Scott, *The Poetical Works of Sir Walter Scott, Bart.* (12 vols, Edinburgh: 1833-4), ed. J. G. Lockhart, Vol. 12, pp. 903-04.

<sup>50</sup> Alan Bissett, *Turbo Folk*, p. 92.

not British, and is therefore of a ‘very tolerant race’ does not convince his companions, who counter that British and Scottish ‘Iz zame heeng, naw?’<sup>51</sup> Both Miko and Vlad reveal themselves to be former soldiers in the course of the play. Vlad in particular is hostile to NATO-allied troops in the aftermath of their occupation of the country. He also opposes the processes of globalisation and Westernisation which Cameron’s tour represents: ‘Now you are bringing/ this *singer*. Their ... culture [...] to our homeland?’<sup>52</sup> The presence of un-‘reprocessed’ Western music in the Balkan pub evokes resentment against Westernisation, whilst the presence of ‘uninvited’ Western culture in the pub invokes memories of an uninvited military presence and nationalist resentment of both political and cultural Westernisation in the Balkans. Through Cameron’s assertion of his national culture, he stokes the antagonistic aspects of his companions’ nationalism.

Folk music is described as ‘the music of the people’ throughout the play. However, in *Turbo Folk* national and traditional music is not seen as a class statement, nor does it have the underground, rebellious, anti-authoritarian qualities which Henderson associates with folk. Both Balkan and Scottish musical forms are portrayed as accessible in the play, engendering audience participation. But where for MacKinnon the accessibility of folk music results in a particular communality and solidarity, Bissett’s portrayal of folk implicates it in a violent, nationalist ideology. The play insists that folk song has political implications, which are manifest both in its lyrical content and its national origins. The politics of folk are at the forefront of the conversation between Balkan characters Miko and Vlad, who recognize Cameron’s naivety: ‘Song for army marching? About family? Blood? Fighting enemy of homeland? You sing like small girl [...] with [...] pigtails’.<sup>53</sup> For Vlad in particular, Cameron’s performance invokes ‘those British soldiers/ who took over this very bar/ with their drunken songs /and their beatings for anyone/ who dared to ask them why/ they were here’.<sup>54</sup> The Balkan characters’ assessment of Cameron’s performance and the national identity it

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<sup>51</sup> Alan Bissett, *Turbo Folk*, p. 63.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 78.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 85.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 76.

evokes contrasts and conflicts with Cameron's naïve view that Scotland is ostensibly benevolent and socially just – a view foregrounded from the opening lines of the play: 'Miko, I've told you, / there's no need to call me sir. / Where I come from people don't / stand on ceremony with each other. [...] we're a very ... tolerant race'.<sup>55</sup> Gerry Hassan has critiqued naïve identity myths of a Scottish identity based on social justice: 'we need to dispel these prevailing myths which define us: that we are egalitarian, inclusive, the land of educational opportunity, and a place which holds elites and power to account, if we are to ever embrace radical change'.<sup>56</sup> In *Turbo Folk* the essentialist belief that Scotland is inherently socially just prevents awareness of Scotland's culpability in global politics and attempts to obscure its dominant, oppressive status within a postnational world order.

*Turbo Folk* implicates Scottish nationalism in obscuring Scottish culpability for international military campaigns led by postnational entities such as NATO. These military campaigns divide allegiances and political opinion within nations, as demonstrated by the play in the debate between Vlad and Miko, challenging unitary conceptions of nationhood. NATO represents an example of Richard Kearney's formulation of a postnational world order in which power is 'disseminated *upwards* from the state'.<sup>57</sup> For Kearney, this postnational dissemination results in processes of globalisation and localisation of identities (see introduction). The potential for allied, globalised identities is realised structurally and linguistically in *Turbo Folk*. The published script of the play presents the three characters' dialogue in a parallel, simultaneous layout of three columns, with Cameron's speech on the left. The speech of Vlad – his main antagonist – is printed on the right, with Miko's dialogue forming the middle column, demonstrating his functions as a mediator in the play, who alternates between advocating for Cameron and conspiring with Vlad. Linguistic codes are juxtaposed between these columns. The play begins with Cameron's Scottish-

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<sup>55</sup> Alan Bissett, *Turbo Folk*, p. 50.

<sup>56</sup> Gerry Hassan, 'The Importance of Growing Up: Heroes and Villains in Modern Scotland'. Available at: <<http://www.gerryhassan.com/uncategorized/the-importance-of-growing-up-heroes-and-villains-in-modern-scotland/>> [accessed December 2014].

<sup>57</sup> Richard Kearney, *Postnationalist Ireland: Politics, Culture, Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 15.

English speech on the left, opposing Vlad's curiously Scottish, urban vernacular-inflected heavily-accented Balkan-English on the right, with Miko frequently code-switching between the two languages. However, after establishing this linguistic division at the beginning of the play, Bissett subverts it by enabling the Balkan characters to converse with each other in Standard English when Cameron is not present, and – at one point – inverting Vlad and Cameron's linguistic codes so that Vlad speaks in Standard English and Cameron in Vlad's synthetic, hybrid, Balkan- and vernacular Scots-inflected English. Despite the ability of each character to adopt the other's linguistic code, Cameron and Vlad never speak to each other in the same language. This highlights the antagonism between the characters – an antagonism which is rooted in their rival nationalisms. Nonetheless, their ability to adopt each other's linguistic codes indicates a potential transformation of a world-order of competing nationalisms. *Turbo Folk's* linguistic reversals suggest a never-realised potential for an internationalist, anti-imperial, postnationalist identity which is as hybrid, global and local as the Balkan-Scots-English language which both Vlad and Cameron speak during different parts of the play. This synthetic language demonstrates on a linguistic level a globalised, hybrid culture, which opposes the official language and hegemonic politics of nation-states.

In *Turbo Folk* Bissett uses both vernacular language and structural repetitions to evoke comparisons between the Balkan characters and Cameron. Throughout most of the play, the synthetic Balkanised-Scots-English spoken by the Balkan characters is intelligible to the audience, but not to Cameron. The effect is usually comic, since the idiolect includes vernacular Scots but nonetheless goes over the Scottish character's head: '<Excusisto. Touristaz, ken?/ Numpty./ Dane ma heid in tay!>'.<sup>58</sup> Critics including Roderick Watson have seen vernacular Scottish literature as the site of Bakhtinian polyglossia, and have posited the hybrid character of vernacular language as a challenge to authority and bourgeois complacency.<sup>59</sup> Bissett makes his Balkan characters the site of this anti-hegemonic, anti-statist polyglossia, which ruptures the monolithic conceptions of national identity subscribed to by both Vlad and Cameron.

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<sup>58</sup> Alan Bissett, *Turbo Folk*, p. 63.

<sup>59</sup> Roderick Watson, 'Alien Voices from the Street: Demotic Modernism in Modern Scots Writing', *Yearbook of English Studies* 25 (1995), pp. 141-55.

In a key scene Vlad speaks Standard English, while Cameron adopts his synthetic Balkan-Scots-English vernacular hybrid idiolect. This code-switching renders Vlad's interrogation more intelligible to the audience, and also renders it more serious through juxtaposition with the comic qualities of Bissett's hybrid language. Vlad adopts this more serious register in order to interrogate Cameron's nationalism. He demands that Cameron acknowledge Scotland's culpability in NATO's military intervention, refusing Cameron's insistence on Scottish exceptionalism: 'Your country fought in that war too'.<sup>60</sup> By the end of the play, Cameron and Vlad embody a linguistic and ideological doubling. Vlad's assertion of an oppositional, monolithic and violent national identity: 'Britiz. Scottiz./ Zey keel./ Zey keel./ Myoooooordoraaaaaz',<sup>61</sup> is repeated by Cameron in his characterisation of Vlad, Miko and their compatriots as a 'bunch of murderin bast-[ards]'.<sup>62</sup>

Both Vlad and Miko engage in critiques of nationalism, rendering this critique a central theme of the play. Miko recognises the regressive nature of Vlad's nationalism, recognising its role in an internal splitting of the nation: 'This is all in the past./ It is people like you who/ will not let our country/ move forwards./ Become whole again'.<sup>63</sup> In Michael Billig's formulation of a postnationalist world-order, monolithic statist nationalisms are challenged by internal national divisions, which undermine the powers of individual states, rendering them 'no longer able to impose a uniform sense of identity'.<sup>64</sup> These internal divisions are revealed by the play through its juxtaposition of Vlad's regressive nationalism with more moderate Miko. They are further revealed by the antagonisms between Cameron's conception of a benevolent, tolerant Scottish identity and an oppositional counter-narrative of Scotland's complicity with Western imperialism.

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<sup>60</sup> Alan Bissett, *Turbo Folk*, p 100.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 71.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 96.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 77.

<sup>64</sup> Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism* (London: Sage, 1995), p. 133.

### Scottish Song and Nationalism

Where *Turbo Folk* demands questioning of British state agendas and foreign policy, political and protest song in the folk idiom has already established an interrogation of British state policy in the years since the 1950s folk revival. In the 1960s, the Anti-Polaris singers – styling themselves the ‘Glesca Eskimos’ after a street song and a derisory comment from the police – protested government use of Dunoon as a base for nuclear submarines. The singing of anti-nuclear songs, with lyrics which fused oppositional politics with Scottish republicanism, was instrumental to this protest. For revivalist musician Ewan McVicar, it is the Eskimos’ use of existing traditional melodies which connects them to a national and revivalist tradition in song:

Scottish political song is lyric[-]based and exploitative of existing tunes. [...] Up until very recent times, in both the Scots and the Gaelic traditions, the creation of Scottish song has been the creation of lyrics. Neither Robert Burns nor Hamish Henderson composed a single tune, though they and many others trawled deeply for the airs, marches and dance tunes they used, and then freely amended melody, tempo and rhythmic feel.<sup>65</sup>

The tunes which the Anti-Polaris singers used were less sophisticated than the airs, marches and other dance forms usually associated with Scottish traditional music. They plundered melodies from children’s songs, nursery rhymes, street songs and sectarian songs. This is consistent with Ailie Munro’s conception of a ‘democratic muse’ in Scottish traditional music, which is characterised by an ‘all-embracing approach’ to culture.<sup>66</sup> Scottish folk is typically characterised by its inclusiveness and its associations with working-class culture: ‘Folk music was once an alternative music which everyone, “kings and ploughmen” could take part in; but after the advent of literacy it too, like the Scots tongue, came to be identified with the lower classes’.<sup>67</sup> The Anti-Polaris singers’ use of tunes plundered from the street, the playground and the football ground conforms to both these criteria of folk as all-encompassing and as a site of low culture, concurring with Bissett and Henderson’s views of folk as an alternative medium

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<sup>65</sup> Ewan McVicar, *The Eskimo Republic: Scots Political Song in Action, 1951-1999* (Linlithgow: Gallus, 2010), p. 10.

<sup>66</sup> Ailie Munro, *The Democratic Muse: Folk Music Revival in Scotland* (Aberdeen: Scottish Cultural Press, 1996), p. 1.

<sup>67</sup> Sheila Douglas, cited in Ailie Munro, *The Democratic Muse*, p. 2.

to official discourse and conducive to marginalised and radical expression. These songs embody a folk which is anarchic, irreverent, and left-wing. Extensive sleevenotes, most likely written by Hamish Henderson and Morris Blythman (alias ‘Thurso Berwick’), explain that the tradition of satire the Polaris Singers seek to embody is rooted in an ancient tradition of literary flyting, inherited via the MacDiarmid-led modern literary Renaissance and the twentieth-century folk revival. Henderson characterises the folk revival as one in which ‘[e]verything was thrown in the pot’, from army ballads, to Child ballads, to the work of collectors MacColl and Lomax, to Gaelic songs, to Glasgow street songs and the comic songs of Matt McGinn.<sup>68</sup> Their anti-authoritarian qualities are posited within a left-nationalist, republican context. The sleeve notes declare that ‘[t]he United Kingdom has never really been united’ and invoke ‘the great flood of independent republican feeling that is rising throughout the “Untied Kingdom”’:

This is what the songs on this record are about. They are anti-monarchy[,] anti-establishment and anti-Yankee. The American Polaris submarine, berthed in Scotland acted as a focal point, representing foreign political interference in Scotland at its most impertinent. This record has some pertinent impertinents to offer in return.<sup>69</sup>

These stated aims of the Anti-Polaris singers associate this movement in Scottish political song with the nationalist and devolutionary politics that literary nationalist critics posit as influential to, and influenced by, Scottish literature. Gifford writes: ‘Perhaps in reaction, perhaps in defiance of the 1979 result, the urban novelists as much as any other group went on to create work sustaining Scottish self-confidence and implying the need for home rule’<sup>70</sup>. However, Scottish political song has responded more overtly than literature to Scotland’s constitutional status. Songs which comment on Scottish autonomy include Davy

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<sup>68</sup> Glasgow Song Guild, *Ding Dong Dollar: Anti-Polaris and Scottish Republican Songs*. LP, Folkways, FD 5444 (1962). Lyrics and Sleevenotes reproduced at The Balladeers Scotland. Available at:

<[http://www.theballadeersscotland.com/scots/ge\\_d02\\_Ding\\_Dong.htm](http://www.theballadeersscotland.com/scots/ge_d02_Ding_Dong.htm)> [accessed December 2014].

<sup>69</sup> Glasgow Song Guild, Sleevenotes, *Ding Dong Dollar*, <[http://www.theballadeersscotland.com/scots/ge\\_d02\\_Ding\\_Dong.htm](http://www.theballadeersscotland.com/scots/ge_d02_Ding_Dong.htm)>.

<sup>70</sup> Douglas Gifford, ‘Breaking Boundaries: From Modern to Contemporary in Scottish Fiction’, p. 245.

Steele's 'Scotland Yet',<sup>71</sup> which calls for national unity and self-determination; Runrig's Gaelic stadium anthem 'Alba', which references 'the empty house in Edinburgh/ Without authority or voice'<sup>72</sup> and Dick Gaughan's popular 'Both Sides the Tweed', discussed below.<sup>73</sup>

The precedent for civic nationalist, republican songs in favour of home rule was set by *Ding Dong Dollar*: a recording of the Anti-Polaris singers' repertoire released by Smithsonian Folkways records. The record included Thurso Berwick's overtly republican and nationalist 'Coronation Coronach':

Noo Scotland hasnae got a King,  
An it hasnae got a Queen;  
For ye cannae hae the second Liz  
When the first yin's never been.

Chorus:  
Nae Liz the Twa, nae Lillibet the Wan --  
Nae Liz will ever dae!  
For well mak oor land republican  
In a Scottish break-away.<sup>74</sup>

The sleeve notes inform us that 'The tune, an Orange one: "The Sash Me Father Wore", is the archetype rebel tune' and describe the style as 'rebel-direct'.<sup>75</sup> However, despite the stated aims of the Anti-Polaris singers towards the creation of a Scottish republican state, the majority of the Anti-Polaris songs share the anti-statist qualities of late twentieth-century Scottish literature. They rail against state decisions from the margins, harnessing the energies of demotic, vernacular culture. However, T. M. Devine connects the Anti-Polaris movement, which was foundational to the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND), with state politics. Many prominent emerging Scottish National Party (SNP) leaders had

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<sup>71</sup> Davy Steele, 'Scotland Yet'. Available on *Chasing Shadows*, CD, Temple, COMD2071 (1998).

<sup>72</sup> Runrig, 'Alba'. Available on *The Cutter and the Clan*, LP, Chrysalis, FV41669 (1987). Lyrics originally in Gaelic are given here in a translation taken from the LP's sleeve notes.

<sup>73</sup> Dick Gaughan, 'Both Sides the Tweed'. Available on *Handful of Earth*, LP, Topic, 12TS419 (1981).

<sup>74</sup> Glasgow Song Guild, Sleeve notes, *Ding Dong Dollar*, <[http://www.theballadeersscotland.com/scots/ge\\_d02\\_Ding\\_Dong.htm](http://www.theballadeersscotland.com/scots/ge_d02_Ding_Dong.htm)>.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

been members of CND, indicating a connection between the anti-statist energies of the Anti-Polaris songs and the SNP's electoral successes.<sup>76</sup>

Nonetheless, the cultural atmosphere of the Anti-Polaris singers is rooted in an anti-establishment street culture, which contrasts with the tenor of official parliamentary and party politics. Its rhetoric is demotic language, swearing, sectarian songs and making fun of the police – characteristics all very far removed from state elections and authoritative political discourse. This atmosphere is captured in Hamish Henderson's celebrated 'internationalist' anthem, 'The Freedom Come All Ye', which appeared on the *Ding Dong Dollar* record and continues to be performed in protest contexts. In its use of a more literary, richer Scots than the other songs on the recording, MacDiarmid's influence on Henderson is clear. This influence is combined with the folk tradition through the tune which Henderson selects for his lyrics: a pipe march called 'The Bloody Field of Flanders'.<sup>77</sup> Henderson's use of traditional material contrasts with the representation of traditional music in *Turbo Folk*. Where Cameron's song is regressive, Henderson's is progressive; where Cameron's takes on a militant nationalist significance, Henderson's is an internationalist anthem of peace – one which embodies the Anti-Polaris singers' penchant for subversion, since this peace anthem is created from a military pipe march written in commemoration of a war. In its reference to the patriotic song 'Scotland the Brave', Henderson's anthem envisions a future in which Scottish identity and culture are no longer associated with imperialism and oppression, and sets an important precedent in the anticipated creation of a tradition in Scots culture associated with socialism, internationalism and solidarity. This tradition within Scottish political song is the subject of singer Ewan McVicar's study *The Eskimo Republic*, and connects the Anti-Polaris singers to influential twentieth-century political songwriters including Mary Brooksbank, Nancy Nicolson and Ewan MacColl. Henderson's song embodies the anti-establishment values of the other songs on the Anti-Polaris recording, since it rallies against an imperial state, imagining a utopian Scotland led by outcasts, misfits, the working-class, and

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<sup>76</sup> T. M. Devine, *The Scottish Nation: 1700-2007*, 2nd edn (London, Penguin, 2006), pp.178-79.

<sup>77</sup> Hamish Henderson, 'The Freedom Come All Ye', in *Collected Poems and Songs* (Edinburgh: Curly Snake, 2000), pp. 143-44.

immigrants. In their stated affiliation with the republicanism of John MacLean, the lyrics yoke the nationalist energies of the Scots song tradition to the history of Scottish leftwing politics in order to critique Scotland's role in British Imperialism. 'The Freedom Come All Ye' envisions a multicultural post-imperial Scotland, led by those formerly oppressed by imperialism:

Nae mair will the bonnie gallants  
 March tae war, when oor braggarts crouselly craw,  
 Nor wee weans frae pit-heid an clachan  
 Mourn the ships sailin doon the Broomielaw;  
 Broken faimlies, in lands we herriet  
 Will curse Scotland the Brave nae mair, nae mair;  
 Black an white, ane til ither mairret  
 Mak the vile barracks o their maisters bare.

O come all ye at hame wi freedom.  
 Never heed whit the hoodies croak for doom;  
 In your hoose aa the bairns o Adam  
 Can find breid, barley bree an painted room.  
 When Maclean meets wi's freens in Springburn  
 Aa the roses an geans will turn tae bloom.  
 An a black boy frae yont Nyanga  
 Dings the fell gallows o the burghers doon.<sup>78</sup>

Henderson's lyrics embody a critical nationalist agenda through castigating elements of the national past, using the medium of folk song in order to demand a break with this past and envision a more egalitarian Scotland. They exemplify the folk revival's creation of an alternative to official political discourse through song. The alternative tradition espoused drew on several sources and cultural modes including street song, traditional music, military songs, Scotland's literary tradition, protest song, demotic speech, and pipe melodies. This mongrel identity, and the juxtaposition of traditional music with 'low' street culture, has been influential in the subsequent creation of songs which both continue a tradition in national song, and critique it from the inside. This self-critique provides another example of the antagonisms between the performative and pedagogical national narratives in which Homi Bhabha locates national culture (see introduction). 'The Freedom Come All Ye' overtly states its intention to erase and modify the

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<sup>78</sup> Glasgow Song Guild, SleeveNotes, *Ding Dong Dollar*,  
 <[http://www.theballadeersscotland.com/scots/ge\\_d02\\_Ding\\_Dong.htm](http://www.theballadeersscotland.com/scots/ge_d02_Ding_Dong.htm)>.

national past, replacing Scotland's institutionalised imperial traditions with a progressive, idealised, Utopian state.

Henderson's use of literary precedents in his songwriting defies MacDiarmid's belief that traditional folk culture is irrelevant to a progressive nationalism. For Henderson the folk song revival is a natural progression from the literary renaissance:

Hugh MacDiarmid has dragged Scotland kicking and screaming into a Twentieth Century literary renaissance, reasserting with all the power of faith, passion and intellectual ferocity, everything that is most mordant in this tradition [...] It is not surprising, then that younger poets following in such yeti footsteps should see so clearly the line of advance: a Scottish folk-song renaissance.<sup>79</sup>

Although Henderson's sleeve-notes state that the energy of the Anti-Polaris singers is inspired by MacDiarmid's literary agenda, the radical credentials of the songs are rooted in their commitment to 'low' culture, which speaks directly to authority in terms which are mocking, humorous, and irreverent. MacDiarmid's literary revival politicised the 'precedents' of the ancient Scots Makars; in contrast, the Anti-Polaris singers found their precedents in a rowdy, populist, street culture.

In his lyric practice, Dick Gaughan has engaged with this opposition between literature and folk-song. In 'Come Gie's a Sang' he sets poetry and song in opposition to each other, claiming the tradition of the 'makar' for song (despite that the title of 'makar' is often applied to Scots poets, particularly the medieval makars William Dunbar, Robert Henryson and Gavin Douglas):

The poet waved his pen aloft  
'My art's too great for the common trough'

'What fame is there for one like me  
Reciting poor folk's history?'

'There's precious little wealth or glory  
In telling common people's story'

The people turnt untae thair ain  
Tae sing thair passion an thair pain

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<sup>79</sup> Glasgow Song Guild, Sleeve notes, *Ding Dong Dollar*,  
<[http://www.theballadeersscotland.com/scots/ge\\_d02\\_Ding\\_Dong.htm](http://www.theballadeersscotland.com/scots/ge_d02_Ding_Dong.htm)>.

[...]

The poet's word lies in a book  
Whaur naebody but scholars look

But still the makar's sang is sung  
His words are pairt o everyone.<sup>80</sup>

Gaughan's caricature of poetic elitism posits traditional song as rooted in the everyday lives of 'the people', opposing the authoritative, 'high art' status of literature. Recording his song in 2006, Gaughan was presumably unaware of the literary contribution of writers such as James Kelman and Tom Leonard, who are very much concerned with 'common people's stories', and share his propensity to rail against self-interest in art and politics. Gaughan's song brings the interaction between literary and traditional cultures in Scotland into the twenty-first century, continuing the practice of politicised folk song as a forum for critical resistance to elite, high culture. Corey Gibson has described this interaction as both oppositional and mutually supportive:

While the anonymous masses that act as folksong's carriers are set against the model of the individual literary poet, different conceptions of authorship clash: the 'communal' and the 'individual'. While the relationship between the two can be mutually supportive [...] they are always in dialogue with one another: one speaking from the singular to the many, and the other singing with the voice of countless anonymous 'carriers'.<sup>81</sup>

Folk musicologists including McKerrell and MacKinnon have noted that the primary audiences and performers of folk music in the contemporary era are upwardly-mobile members of the middle-classes, undermining Gaughan's idealised view of folk song as the aesthetic form closest to working-class life. Furthermore, Gaughan's own best-known work 'Both Sides the Tweed' is adapted from 'a book/ Whaur naebody but scholar's look' and is also an adaptation borne out of the bourgeois practice of folk-song collection. This makes

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<sup>80</sup> Dick Gaughan, 'Come Gie's a Sang'. Available on *Lucky for Some*, CD, Greentrax, CDTRAX290 (2006). Lyrics reproduced in *Dick Gaughan's Song Archive*. Available at: <<http://www.dickgaughan.co.uk/songs/>> [accessed December 2014].

<sup>81</sup> Corey Gibson, 'The Politics of the Modern Scottish Folk Revival', in Sarah Dunnigan and Suzanne Gilbert (eds), *The Edinburgh Companion to Scottish Traditional Literatures* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), pp. 134-44 (p. 143).

the opposition he draws between folk song and literature seem somewhat disingenuous, since his own practice as a folk singer is informed by literary culture. Adapting the lyrics from a song found in James Hogg's *Jacobite Relics*, Gaughan wrote 'Both Sides the Tweed' in response to the failed devolution referendum of 1979.<sup>82</sup> The lyrics echo the sentiments of the Anti-Polaris singers by calling for a nationalism based on republicanism, solidarity and the moral virtue of the nation's poor:

Let the love of our land's sacred rights  
To the love of our people succeed  
Let friendship and honour unite  
And flourish on both sides the Tweed.

Let virtue distinguish the brave  
Place riches in lowest degree  
Think them poorest who can be a slave  
And richest who dare to be free.<sup>83</sup>

According to Gaughan, '[t]he verses claim for the recognition of Scotland's right to sovereignty and the choruses argue against prejudice between our peoples'.<sup>84</sup> For Ewan McVicar, the changes which Gaughan has made to the version of the song first published in Hogg's collection (which Gaughan believes to have been written by Hogg) are crucial to the song's left-wing, republican aspect: 'Gaughan's alternation of the text from "our King's sacred rights" to "our land's sacred rights" shifts the song from right-wing to left-wing'.<sup>85</sup> In his adaptation of Hogg's text, Gaughan uses the medium of folk song in order to both modify and continue the tradition of bourgeois folk-song imitation, responding to literary culture through folk song in a less oppositional way than 'Come Gie's A Sang'.

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<sup>82</sup> Dick Gaughan, 'Song Notes', *Dick Gaughan's Song Archive*, <<http://www.dickgaughan.co.uk/songs/texts/tweed.html>> [accessed December 2014].

<sup>83</sup> Dick Gaughan, 'Both Sides the Tweed'. Available on *Handful of Earth*, LP, Topic 12TS419 (1981). Lyrics reproduced in *Dick Gaughan's Song Archive*. Available at: <<http://www.dickgaughan.co.uk/songs/>> [accessed December 2014].

<sup>84</sup> Dick Gaughan, 'Song Notes', *Dick Gaughan's Song Archive*, <<http://www.dickgaughan.co.uk/songs/texts/tweed.html>>.

<sup>85</sup> Ewan McVicar, *The Eskimo Republic: Scots Political Song in Action, 1951-1999* (Linlithgow: Gallus, 2010), p. 79.

Gaughan's modification of Hogg's verses eschews tribal, ethnic nationalism, in favour of a civic and egalitarian nationalism. A verse in Hogg's version reads:

Let us think how our ancestors rose  
 Let us think how our ancestors fell,  
 The rights they defended and those  
 They brought with their blood we'll ne'er sell.<sup>86</sup>

The civic nationalism of Gaughan's song, combined with its republican and socialist sentiment, positions it as the inheritor of the ideologies of the Anti-Polaris singers and Hamish Henderson. Although Hogg presents his own lyrics as a Jacobite song – and the monarchist, regressive aims of Jacobitism are far removed from Gaughan's own civic nationalist republicanism – Gaughan reads Hogg's verses as 'an attack upon the Treaty of Union of 1707 which abolished the independent Scots and English Parliaments and set up the United Kingdom'.<sup>87</sup> The key feature of Hogg's version – which Gaughan has not changed – is the song's invocation of the Tweed, which takes on a significance in terms of Philip Bohlman's analysis of the characteristics of nationalist music: 'nationalist music represents cultural boundaries that have political purposes. Rivers, rather than providing a cultural core to the nation, trace the nation's boundaries'.<sup>88</sup> Through the invocation of the river Tweed, which runs along the border between Scotland and England, both Hogg and Gaughan's versions of 'Both Sides the Tweed' can be said to embody nationalist music. However, in Gaughan's version this is a pacifist nationalism, which distinguishes the modern song from both Hogg's version and from the representation of folk song music in *Turbo Folk*. In Nairn's terms, the adaptation disavows the regressive, violent 'face' of nationalism in favour of an emphasis on progressive politics. Through this performative modification of a violent, monarchist aspect of literary and cultural inheritance dredged from the past, which aims to invoke progressive change using the indigenous medium of folk song, Gaughan embodies Nairn's characterisation of

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<sup>86</sup> James Hogg, *The Jacobite relics of Scotland: being the songs, airs, and legends of the adherents of the House of Stuart (First Series)* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2002), p. 127.

<sup>87</sup> Dick Gaughan, 'Song Notes', *Dick Gaughan's Song Archive* <<http://www.dickgaughan.co.uk/songs/texts/tweed.html>>.

<sup>88</sup> Philip Bohlman, *Music, Nationalism and the Making of the New Europe*, 2nd edn (New York: Routledge, 2011), p. 87.

nationalism as a process by which ‘societies try to propel themselves forward to certain kinds of goal (industrialization, prosperity, equality with other peoples, etc.) *by a certain sort of regression* – by looking inwards, drawing more deeply upon their indigenous resources, resurrecting past folk-heroes and myths about themselves and so on’.<sup>89</sup>

Gaughan’s collaborator Brian McNeill can also be identified with a Janus-faced nationalist agenda, which seeks to construct a national future using the resources of the past. McNeill is the founder of The Battlefield Band, a traditional music collective who use the tagline ‘Forward with Scotland’s Past’ to sum up their agenda.<sup>90</sup> Simon McKerrell has identified the band as pioneers in the professionalisation and commercialisation of Scotland’s traditional music.<sup>91</sup> Countering the embourgeoisment of folk music identified by MacKinnon, McKerrell and Harker, McNeill’s lyric practice functions as the site of a radical working-class solidarity, which is rooted in the past and opposes bourgeois nationalist narratives. McNeill uses the idiom of traditional song to critique the popular iconography of nationalism. The Janus-faced tagline ‘Forward with Scotland’s Past’ is both an imperative to continue past national narratives and a desire for a progressive Scotland borne out of the past.

For Philip Bohlman, the simultaneous processes of identification with the past and innovation in the present are the basis for tradition, since ‘[t]radition is fashioned from both an authenticity that clings to the past and a process of change that continually reshapes the present’.<sup>92</sup> In several of his songs, McNeill critiques the manner in which Scottish history has been constructed and exploited by elite nationalist interests. His most antagonistic song, which he describes as the result of a need to ‘stand up, throw [his] head back, and rant’, is particularly

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<sup>89</sup> Tom Nairn, *The Break-Up of Britain: Crisis and Neo-Nationalism*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (London: Verso, 1981), p. 348.

<sup>90</sup> Battlefield Band, *Forward with Scotland’s Past: a Collection of their Songs and Music* (Shillinghill, Midlothian: Kinmor Music, 1988).

<sup>91</sup> Simon McKerrell, ‘Modern Scottish Bands (1970-1990): Cash as Authenticity’, *Scottish Music Review*, Vol. 2, No. 1. Available at: <<http://www.scottishmusicreview.org/index.php/SMR/article/viewFile/22/19>> [accessed December 2014].

<sup>92</sup> Philip Bohlman, *The Study of Folk Music in the Modern World* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), p. 13.

significant.<sup>93</sup> Its title ‘No Gods (and Precious Few Heroes)’ invokes Hamish Henderson’s poem ‘Elegy for the Dead in Cyrenica: End of a Campaign’, demonstrating the younger songwriter’s allegiance to the mid-twentieth century revivalist agenda.<sup>94</sup> Like Henderson’s ‘The Freedom Come All Ye’, McNeill also refers to ‘Scotland the Brave’ and like *Turbo Folk* he also implicates Jacobitism as part of a regressive nationalist narrative. For McNeill the nationalist rhetoric of being ‘proud to be Scottish [...] with the glories of our past to remember’ obscures the class politics which he posits as central to Scotland’s national narrative.<sup>95</sup> The song declares ‘it’s time now to sweep the future clear o’ the lies of a past that we know was never real’, asserting McNeill’s desire to re-read the past in a manner that has more relevance to Scotland’s contemporary situation, represented in the song by the ‘plenty on the dole in the land o’ the leal’.<sup>96</sup> For McNeill the appropriation and romanticisation of Jacobite insurgency by cultural nationalist revivalists serves a bourgeois nationalist agenda that detracts from more immediate issues of class, poverty and social justice:

Or are you sittin in your council house, thinking o’ your clan?  
 Waitin’ for the Jacobites to come and free the land?  
 Try goin’ down the broo wi’ a claymore in your hand,  
 and then count all the princes in the queue.

Don’t talk to me o’ Scotland the Brave  
 for if we don’t fight soon, we’ll have nothin’ left to save.  
 Or would you rather stand and watch them dig your grave  
 while we wait for the Tartan Messiah?<sup>97</sup>

McNeill’s evident scorn for the cultural nationalist iconography with which Scottish folk music is popularly associated indicates his agenda as the writer of an engaged, contemporary folk song, which insists on the need to counter systemic poverty and injustice in Scotland. For McNeill, identitarian displays of sentimental nationalism are a bourgeois distraction from class war. His songs

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<sup>93</sup> Brian McNeill, sleeve notes, *No Gods*, CD, Greentrax, CDTRAX089 (1995).

<sup>94</sup> Hamish Henderson, *Collected Poems and Songs* (Edinburgh: Curly Snake, 2000), pp. 52-53.

<sup>95</sup> Brian McNeill, *The Back O’ the North Wind: the Songs and Music of Brian McNeill* (Newbiggin-by-the-Sea, Northumberland: Dragonfly Music, 1991), p. 45.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*

pose an alternative national history predicated on class war and social injustice, rallying against sentimental appropriations of Highland culture with an invocation of the reality of the Clearances, which he connects to ongoing inequalities in Scotland: ‘They cleared us off once and they’ll do it again [...] There’s nothing much to choose between the old laird and the new’.<sup>98</sup> McNeill’s critical commentary of the popular reception of the national past – a reception which has been facilitated by sentimental folk song – is a bid to transform the nation’s song tradition in order to advocate for the disenfranchised. In their focus on class issues through the medium of traditional song McNeill’s lyrics insist on the connection between national tradition and the working poor. His re-articulation of the nation’s historical narrative with class politics opposes the absorption of recalcitrant working-class identity into dominant, populist symbols of nationhood, recognising the imperative to rearticulate nationalism with emancipatory class movements outlined by David Lloyd (see introduction).

McNeill returns to the subject matter of anti-Jacobitism in his narrative song, ‘Strong Women Rule Us All With Their Tears’. It dismisses Charles Edward Stuart as a ‘waster’ and focuses instead on his rescuer Flora MacDonald’s experiences in America as an immigrant.<sup>99</sup> This recognition of a counter-narrative of national history seeks to culturally enfranchise the experience of immigration in such a way as to counter the absorbing, regressive and de-politicising tendencies of tartantry and sentimental Jacobitism. The lyrics foreground a disjuncture between Flora’s provision of aid to Charles Stuart and her husband’s later service in the Hanoverian army fighting against American independence, indicating the ambivalent relationship to nationalist and statist politics which McNeill espouses throughout his work.

The lyrics of these songs often embody a creative tension which engages critically with institutionalised tenets of the Scottish folk tradition. In ‘The Yew Tree’ McNeill uses the imagery of medieval balladry in order to critically assess the border ballad tradition. Border ballads were valued by revivalist collectors from Walter Scott to Francis Childe to Alan Lomax, and were viewed by Hamish

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<sup>98</sup> Brian McNeill, *The Back O’ the North Wind: the Songs and Music of Brian McNeill*, p. 45.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

Henderson as foundational to Scottish oral culture.<sup>100</sup> McNeill re-evaluates the border skirmishes central to the narratives of the ballads, eschewing nationalist readings of these and advocating a class-based reading: ‘when the poor hunt the poor across mountain an moor/ The rich man can keep them in chains’.<sup>101</sup> Unlike other revivalist treatments of the subject of battles and the Scottish Borders – Jean Elliot’s ‘Flowers of the Forest’ is perhaps the best known – McNeill’s lyrics are not elegiac but a call to arms.

In one of his uncharacteristically celebratory songs, ‘Lads O’ the Fair’, McNeill invokes an image of the nation as a community of the rural and urban working-poor, congregating at the market place:

You can see them aa, the lads o the fair  
 Lads frae the Forth an the Carron water  
 Workin lads an lads wi gear  
 Lads who’d sell you the provost’s dochter  
 Sodgers back frae the German wars  
 Peddlers up frae the Border  
 An lassies wi an eye for amir than the kye  
 At the Trystin fair in Falkirk

The wark o the weaver’s over  
 Likewise the days o the drover  
 An the ploughboy sits on a tractor nou  
 Too high to see the plover  
 The warkin’s no sae steady  
 But the lads are aye still ready  
 Tae drink a health tae the working man  
 In Falkirk toun the morn.<sup>102</sup>

The song insists that, despite deindustrialisation’s creation of a fragmented and dispossessed workforce, it is ostensibly working-class identity and history that has created and maintained a national sense of community and continuity.

McNeill’s songs, like most of the Scottish literature examined in this thesis, belong to a radical independence-supporting culture that seeks to bring the socio-economic problems of contemporary Scotland to the fore. Where Dave Harker has argued that the revivalist song-collecting culture which created the concept of

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<sup>100</sup> Hamish Henderson, ‘The Ballads’, in *Alias MacAlias: Writings on Songs, Folk and Literature* (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1992), pp. 23-27 (p. 24).

<sup>101</sup> Battlefield Band, *Forward with Scotland’s Past: a Collection of their Songs and Music* (Shillinghill, Midlothian: Kinmor Music, 1988), p. 85.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 91-92.

‘folksong’ was a bourgeois appropriation of oral tradition, Gaughan and McNeill have transformed revivalist responses to the folk tradition through their aims to reclaim folksong as a carrier of working-class Scottish identity. Their work re-articulates the cultural-nationalist practice of song collection with working-class emancipation.

### **More Mainstream than Marginal: the New Aestheticism in Scottish Traditional Music**

In the contemporary folk scene there is a significant tendency towards newly composed instrumental music, which counters the focus on traditional song prominent in Hamish Henderson’s revival. In the late twentieth century, bands such as Wolfstone, Runrig and Capercaillie created a ‘fusion’ style of folk music (defined below), combining revivalist values with the professionalisation and commodification of traditional music. In Tamara E. Livingston’s theorisation of the ideologies which drive folk revivalism, she provides this definition:

I define music revivals as any social movement with the goal of restoring and preserving a musical tradition which is believed to be disappearing or completely relegated to the past. The purpose of the movement is twofold: (1) to serve as cultural opposition and as an alternative to main-stream culture, and (2) to improve existing culture through the values based on historical value and authenticity expressed by revivalists.<sup>103</sup>

Folk fusion draws heavily on the playing styles and formal structures of previous music in the traditional idiom. However, although new musicians contributing to the genre frequently identify with a lineage and inheritance of traditional music, values of authenticity and preservation are superseded in their practice by the desire to modify and innovate the tradition. The drive to modify a pedagogical tradition through non-traditional performance practices does not reject the historical value of folk. Instead it seeks to create a contemporary practice in traditional music which emphasises its ‘alternative’ qualities, creating an alternative musical subculture by ‘fusing’ Scotland’s traditional musical forms (jigs, strathspeys, reels, marches, etc.) with the conventions of more commercial, mainstream genres. For Corey Gibson, the Scottish folk tradition established by

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<sup>103</sup> Tamara E. Livingston, ‘Music Revivals: Towards a General Theory’, *Ethnomusicology* 43.1 (1999), pp. 66-85 (p. 67).

Henderson's 1950s revival 'could naturally adapt to suit the modern age whilst also retaining something of its heritage'.<sup>104</sup> The People's Festival Ceilidhs (1951-1954), instigated by Henderson as an alternative to a bourgeois Edinburgh festival which he perceived as ignoring indigenous Scottish culture, provided an international and commercial platform for ballad singers such as Jeannie Robertson and Belle Stewart. Alongside several revivalist radio and television programmes, these festivals marketed folk as a national cultural asset and transformed tradition bearers into celebrities.<sup>105</sup> Folk fusion has continued this adaptation of traditional material to modern conditions, completing the process, begun by Henderson, which brought folk performances from the berry-fields of Blairgowrie to the concert halls and stadiums of Europe. The political implications and style of folk have been transformed as a result of this commodification – as has its reception and target audiences. Folk fusion operates in opposition to mainstream views of folk music as irredeemably nostalgic and sentimental, eschewing a regressive cultural nationalism in favour of constructing a contemporary, tradition-based counterculture. This counters both an inferiorist 'cultural cringe', which associates Scotland's traditional music with nostalgic, sentimental, 'tartan monster' kailyardism, and earlier revivalist attitudes, which idealised folk as an essentially left-wing, 'authentic' genre with inherent resistance to commercialisation. Henderson marketed folk as a counter-cultural 'Underground of Song', insisting on its ongoing contemporaneity and criticising previous revivalist views of folk as partially-recoverable relics.<sup>106</sup> Folk fusion provides an updated manifestation of this, recovering folk from its 'underground' status by marketing it as a contemporary, countercultural genre. It is complicit with revivalist goals through this recovery and emphasis on alternative cultural identity, whilst eschewing values of authenticity and historical fidelity.

Folk fusion is significant to critical nationalism, since it seeks Bhabha's 'double articulation' of national narrative through its aims to both modify and continue national tradition. The 'rupturing' which Bhabha views as the result of

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<sup>104</sup> Corey Gibson, "'Tomorrow, songs / Will flow free again, and new voices / Be born on the carrying stream": Hamish Henderson's Conception of the Scottish Folk-Song Revival and its Place in Literary Scotland', p. 54.

<sup>105</sup> Adam McNaughton, 'The Folksong Revival in Scotland', in Edward J. Cowan (ed.), *The People's Past*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1991), pp. 180-193.

<sup>106</sup> Hamish Henderson, 'The Underground of Song', p. 31.

this double articulation (see introduction) is driven in folk fusion by a creative ‘tension’ between innovator and purist, identified by Lori Watson in her study of a ‘New Traditional School’:

Both within and between Traditional musicians, the connection and tension between purist and innovator continues and provides a positive influence. The tradition is broad enough and sufficiently robust to absorb this and will remain so, supporting the New Traditional School and other developments into the future.<sup>107</sup>

The tension Watson identifies between recent developments and a ‘purist’ attitude to traditional music can also be identified in earlier revivals, including in the practices and attitudes of bourgeois, cultural nationalist collectors during the era of literary Romanticism. Where bourgeois collectors of the past such as Walter Scott have seen traditional music – particularly folk song and balladry – as of primarily historical and antiquarian value, embodying national and ethnic origins, more recent musical activity is no longer understandable in terms which posit it as the cultural embodiment of a national character. Scott valued folk song not for its aesthetic qualities or artistic merit, but for its perceived status as ‘the popular poetry of our ancestors’ and ‘the first products of national genius’.<sup>108</sup> Philip Bohlman describes the song-collecting movement of this era as integral to the formation of national languages, cultures and ideologies:

In the second half of the nineteenth century, national song participated in the forging of new expressive symbols and practices, such as the formation of standardized literary languages and the creation of national folk-song collections, and in the transformation of these into national music canons. [...] Folk songs previously circulating in dialect and oral tradition were collected and set as art songs in the national language – indeed, encoding the national language through song.<sup>109</sup>

This widespread movement of an educated readership subscribing to a fashion for folk-song revival, engaged in reproducing, publishing and imitating both lyrics and tunes which they believed to have sprung from their nations’ primitive

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<sup>107</sup> Lori Hope Watson, *The New Traditional School in Scotland: Innovation, beyond-tune composition and a traditional musician’s creative practice*, unpublished PhD Thesis (Glasgow: Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, 2012), p. 235.

<sup>108</sup> Walter Scott, *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* (London: Adam and Charles Black, [1987]), Vol. 1, p. 27. First published 1802.

<sup>109</sup> Philip Bohlmann, *Music, Nationalism and the Making of the New Europe*, pp. 39-40.

history and people, included (in Britain): Scott, Hogg, James MacPherson, Allan Ramsay, Bishop Percy, Joseph Ritson, Cecil Sharp and William Motherwell. Whilst Scott was a supporter of the Union, his antiquarianism valued folk-song as part of a cultural nationalist agenda, viewing songs as museum pieces standing as testament and memorial to ‘the history of [Scott’s] native country; the peculiar features of whose manners and character are daily melting and dissolving into those of her sister and ally’.<sup>110</sup> Scott valued ‘authenticity’ and was dismayed by the modification and perceived bowdlerisation of this ‘popular poetry’ by generations of tradition bearers and fellow editors – although he was not above bowdlerising it himself, evoking the ire of James Hogg’s tradition-bearing mother.<sup>111</sup> Scott’s antiquarian cultural nationalist desire for an ‘untouched and uncorrupted’ traditional culture<sup>112</sup> is the ancestor of the purist attitudes to folk and traditional music that Watson invokes in the above-quoted passage. However, Suzanne Gilbert’s research on song-collecting practices in the era of literary Romanticism reveals a wider spectrum of values amongst collectors, despite a commonly held ‘culturally-nationalistic drive to reclaim and highlight Scotland’s cultural richness’.<sup>113</sup> Noting the prominence of Scott, Gilbert contrasts his antiquarian, regressive agenda to ‘[preserve] historical elements that could be reconstructed into narratives of an idealised past’ with the practices of his contemporaries James Hogg and William Motherwell, who viewed folk culture as an ongoing, contemporary ‘living tradition’.<sup>114</sup> Contrasting with Scott’s agenda, Motherwell argued for the value of contemporary manifestations of the folk tradition:

[I]t has become of the first importance to collect these songs with scrupulous and unshrinking fidelity. If they are at all worth preserving [...] it must assuredly be in the very garb in which they are remembered and known, and can be proved to exist among us. It will not do to indulge

<sup>110</sup> Walter Scott, *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*, p. 238.

<sup>111</sup> Hamish Henderson, ‘The Ballads’, p. 23. Henderson quotes Margaret Laidlaw accusing Scott of destroying the ballad tradition through his attempts to document and edit traditional song: ‘ye hae spoilt them awthegither. [...] ye hae broken the charm noo, and they’ll never be sung mair.’

<sup>112</sup> Walter Scott, *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*, p. 64.

<sup>113</sup> Suzanne Gilbert, ‘Tradition and Scottish Romanticism’, in Sarah Dunnigan and Suzanne Gilbert (eds), *The Edinburgh Companion to Scottish Traditional Literatures* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), pp. 105-13 (p. 108).

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 109-10.

in idle speculations as to what they once may have been, and to recast them in what we may fancy were their original moulds.<sup>115</sup>

For Gilbert, Motherwell's commitment to faithfully transcribing several versions of the same ballad from carefully-credited tradition bearers opposed both Scott's treatments of ballads as 'fragments' of a lost national culture and popular impulses to present 'dressed up', embourgeoisied versions.<sup>116</sup> This suggests that aspects of folk-song collecting in the Romantic era, despite Henderson's criticism, have provided precedents for later attitudes to national folk culture. Where Motherwell and Hogg espoused the contemporaneity of the tradition, both Henderson's revivalist values and the practice of folk-fusion can be seen to further this.

However, in contrast to Motherwell's faithful transcriptions of tradition bearers, folk fusion insists on modification, cross-genre influences, and the production of a traditional music concurrent with contemporary musical trends and subcultures. Gilbert's work suggests that such practices have their roots in the intertextuality of Romantic writers such as Hogg, who adapted folk culture to their purposes in ways that 'prefigured modern – and postmodern – techniques'.<sup>117</sup> The cross-genre impulse of folk fusion provides a contemporary, musical counterpart to this intertextuality. Through contemporary folk practice, the national tradition in folk music becomes the site of elision between past and present, a progressive site in which – in the words of Kennedy – the past and present 'creep in to change each other'.<sup>118</sup> New traditional music does not memorialise or preserve the national past, but increasingly embodies the nation's progression from that past into globalised, commercial, contemporary society.

For Simon McKerrell, the commodification of traditional music through innovation and 'fusion' with practices and techniques adapted from other genres is 'effectively undermining essentialist readings of authenticity'.<sup>119</sup> Changes in traditional music have relocated it from cultural nationalist contexts to a

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<sup>115</sup> William Motherwell, 'Introduction', in *Minstrelsy Ancient and Modern* (Detroit: Singing Tree Press, 1968), pp. i-cv (p. iv).

<sup>116</sup> Suzanne Gilbert, 'Tradition and Scottish Romanticism', pp. 110-11.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 113.

<sup>118</sup> A. L. Kennedy, *Looking for the Possible Dance*, p. 146.

<sup>119</sup> Simon McKerrell, 'Modern Scottish Bands (1970-1990): Cash as Authenticity', p. 9.

professionalised and commodified genre; from a site of ‘authentic’ national identity prior to and apart from industrial capitalism, to an industry which manufactures ‘musical products’ for mass consumption:

By the 1980s there was a faster adoption of new musical ideas and it is noticeable throughout the recent history of traditional music in Scotland that the most successful bands have been those that have appropriated many of the popular music signifiers, and thus increasingly [...] this blurs the lines between popular and traditional music. We also see a rejection of the earlier term ‘folk music’ and its associations with socialist-nationalist identity of the 1950s and 60s revival, and its replacement with the more neutral term ‘traditional music’ amongst the performing community. The groups discussed here began placing the emphasis on their musical product and the widespread use of the terms ‘traditional musicians’ and ‘traditional music’ replaced ‘folk music/ians’. This shift in terminology, combined with the greater adoption of the musical ideas from other genres, reflects the move towards representations of Scottish traditional music as an aesthetic construction rather than one that is geographically bounded.<sup>120</sup>

Folk-fusion band Treacherous Orchestra embody this ‘shift’ from previous nationalist and socialist implications of folk music revivalism to the aestheticism and commodification of traditional music. This is achieved through innovations in composition, musical arrangement and performance practices. Their radicalism is not that of working-class and left-wing opposition to a political status quo (as in many of the novels discussed in this thesis), but is embodied through a fundamental change in the nature, style, idioms and implications of the genre. Through this shift, traditional music not only challenges assumptions based on authenticity and ‘purism’, but eschews its utilitarian status as ‘the music of the people’ – a claim frequently invoked in Bissett’s play, which has been associated with an idealised view of traditional music as amateurish, left-wing and accessible. Formal, rehearsed concerts – rather than folk sessions or ceilidhs – are the main means by which folk fusion music is performed live, separating the audience from the performers, but also enabling more complex harmonic arrangements and the showcasing of performers’ virtuoso musicianship. This trade-off between accessibility and aestheticism is a move that Lori Watson interprets as a desire to establish a more elitist view of traditional music:

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<sup>120</sup> Simon McKerrrell, ‘Modern Scottish Bands (1970-1990): Cash as Authenticity’, p. 9.

NTCs [New Traditional Composers] are eager for their work to be associated with ‘high art’, to gain recognition beyond that given to music for social function (not ‘serious’ music but ‘fun’ music), often itself undervalued, to ‘ascend’ beyond the realm of craft for function towards music for music’s sake.<sup>121</sup>

This desire to elevate a national culture to the status of high art would be familiar to MacDiarmid. It marks a clear distinction between current trends in traditional music and the irreverent celebration of ‘low’ culture in earlier twentieth-century revivalism.

Watson identifies four main avenues by which traditional music has undergone radical aesthetic change since the 1980s:

1. Non-traditional instrumentation and/or form, scored in ‘standard’ notation.
2. Improvisation.
3. Technology/electronics
4. ‘Fusion’ of traditions and/or genres.

These streams of innovations can be viewed in relation to the water analogy [...] as creative streams, flowing forward into new and innovative territories from their source in the tradition and its established practices.<sup>122</sup>

Numerous bands, recording artists and acts performing traditional music can be identified with some or all of these techniques, including the Battlefield Band, Shooglenifty, Wolfstone, Runrig, Martyn Bennett, Lau, Nae Plans, Niteworks and the Treacherous Orchestra. At present, ‘fusion’ remains one of the most established and popular innovations in the genre. In my exploration of Treacherous Orchestra's performance practices, I argue that the band constructs a version of Scottish traditional music which emphasises a folk sub-culture as alternative identity. This is achieved through their use of ‘fusion’ as fundamental to their practice; constructing Scottish music as a subculture which reacts against mainstream musical norms through a paradoxical engagement with more commercial genres, including rock, metal and electronica. Watson defines fusion as follows:

A ‘buzz’ word among some Traditional musicians since the 1990s, this concept is related to the advent of commercial ‘World music’ and the

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<sup>121</sup> Lori Hope Watson, *The New Traditional School in Scotland: Innovation, beyond-tune composition and a traditional musician’s creative practice*, p. 230.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 87-88.

opportunities provided by globalisation and mass media. Most examples combine traditional elements: motifs, stylistic performance elements, scales/modes, instrumentation, and context, with elements from other genres.<sup>123</sup>

In its elision of traditional and globalised forms, folk fusion resembles the genre of Turbo Folk (explored by Alan Bissett in the play of the same name discussed above). However, fusion is also part of the move away from nationalism which McKerrell notes, wherein commercialised genre-crossing traditional music resists associations with essentialism and authenticity. Consequently music by current Scottish bands does not have the nationalist paramilitary associations of the Balkan genre.<sup>124</sup> Instead it resists former revivalist concerns with authenticity and a primitive national essence, taking the perceived bowdlerisations and modifications that vexed Scott to another level.

Treacherous Orchestra self-style themselves ‘Scotland’s foremost group of anarchic tunesmiths’.<sup>125</sup> However, the influences cited on their website include fusion acts Wolfstone, Shooglenifty and Martyn Bennett, demonstrating that they are by no means the first band to establish folk fusion as a genre. The claim to be ‘foremost’ seems to refer to the band’s growing popularity. Treacherous Orchestra have been enormously successful in recruiting a new audience for traditional music, particularly a young audience, through their spectacular performances. Their repertoire is founded in tune-forms associated with dance music in the Scottish idiom: reels, marches, airs and strathspeys form the bulk of their repertoire, although an experimental attitude is taken in some pieces in the use of unusual and irregular time signatures.<sup>126</sup> They place a heavy emphasis on newly-composed material, sourcing repertoire from composers within the band and from contemporaries including Brendan Ring and Gordon Duncan. Core traditional instruments – pipes, accordion, fiddles, flute, and banjo – are combined with electric bass, electric guitars, full drum kit, and electronic

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<sup>123</sup> Lori Hope Watson, *The New Traditional School in Scotland: Innovation, beyond-tune composition and a traditional musician’s creative practice*, p. 78.

<sup>124</sup> Simon McKerrell, ‘Modern Scottish Bands (1970-1990): Cash as Authenticity’, p. 9.

<sup>125</sup> Treacherous Orchestra, website. Available at: <http://www.treacherousorchestra.com/about/> [accessed December 2014].

<sup>126</sup> Treacherous Orchestra, *Blueprint*, sheet music, self-published by band members (2013).

sampling and effects. Treacherous Orchestra performances are generally in a concert setting which resembles that of rock and metal genres, rather than the participatory, generally amateur settings of the session or the folk club. Here virtuoso musicianship (most members of the band are graduates of university music courses) is combined with an energetic and anarchic atmosphere. The band's musical practice has attracted teenagers and young people in particular, creating a new youth counter-culture within Scotland which is rooted in traditional practice. Their use of 'fusion' attracts fans and modes of audience interaction from other musical genres. Treacherous Orchestra audiences frequently form mosh-pits, facilitate crowd-surfing and engage in other activities more familiar to audiences of rock and metal.<sup>127</sup> One of the ways in which the band encourage this behaviour is through their use of costumes, wearing black and white, 'steampunk'-styled costumes with makeup and accessories that recall goth and metal subcultures.

The band's performance of Scottish tune forms as extremely loud, very fast and imbued with the heavy bass riffs and atmospheric electronic effects of other genres presents Scottish traditional music as an alternative subculture. It bears no resemblance to the Tartan Monster imagery associated with the music hall and stereotypical associations with bagpipes – but it is no less monstrous for that. This, too, is identity as spectacle. Instead of a stereotypical version of Scottishness, the Treacherous Orchestra manifests the national musical tradition as an alternative genre which is attuned to global subcultures and commercial musical influences. Accordionist and composer John Somerville has posited Scottish music as separate from 'mainstream' culture:

I felt at school I had to slightly hide from the mainstream [...] It wasn't trendy to be playing Scottish music. Now with the Feis workshops, there are people learning instruments because it's cool. I'm not saying it's

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<sup>127</sup> *The Scotsman*, 'The Treacherous Orchestra stay faithful to their reputation for loudness without betraying folk roots', *The Scotsman* (15 January 2012). Available at: <<http://www.scotsman.com/what-s-on/music/the-treacherous-orchestra-stay-faithful-to-their-reputation-for-loudness-without-betraying-folk-roots-1-2058041>> [accessed December 2014].

changed everywhere but there is a greater awareness now and there's been a real renaissance.<sup>128</sup>

Paradoxically, the band have elaborated on the revivalist conception of Scottish folk music as an alternative to 'mainstream' culture as part of wider developments in the genre which have made Scottish traditional music more marketable – and thus more mainstream. This is the edgy, trendy face of Scottish culture, traditional music's equivalent of Irvine Welsh's *Trainspotting*, characterised by 'cool marginality'.<sup>129</sup> The title of the band's debut album *Origins* reinforces their marketing strategy,<sup>130</sup> which combines an edgy subcultural aesthetic with values of tradition, inheritance, and musical ancestry: the terms through which the band describe their 'origins' at some length on their website.<sup>131</sup> Their origin story traces the musical heritage and journeys of the members from various locations throughout Scotland and Ireland, mirroring the process described by Philip Bohlman:

National music [...] follows a journey that implicitly charts the landscape of the nation, beginning in the remotest core and reaching the end of the journey in the national metropolis. [...] When folk music follows the national journey, it undergoes a transition from representing the immanent quintessence of the nation to representing the nation itself. [...] In the course of its travels from the land to the nation, folk music becomes suddenly modern, and it is that transformation that makes it profoundly national.<sup>132</sup>

This entry into modernity and globalised culture is a paradigm shift in Scottish music that reterritorializes the 'mainstream' culture which Somerville opposes to his own musical practice as a young traditional musician. No longer a marginalised, peripheral, threatened movement in need of bourgeois 'recovery'

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<sup>128</sup> John Somerville, quoted in *The Scotsman*, 'The Treacherous Orchestra stay faithful to their reputation for loudness without betraying folk roots', <<http://www.scotsman.com/what-s-on/music/the-treacherous-orchestra-stay-faithful-to-their-reputation-for-loudness-without-betraying-folk-roots-1-2058041>>.

<sup>129</sup> Scott Hames, 'On Vernacular Scottishness and its Limits: Devolution and the Spectacle of "Voice"', *Studies in Scottish Literature* Vol. 39: Iss. 1 (August 2013), pp. 203-24 (p. 210).

<sup>130</sup> Treacherous Orchestra, *Origins*, CD, Navigator, NAVIGATOR062 (2012).

<sup>131</sup> Treacherous Orchestra, website, <<http://www.treacherousorchestra.com/about/>>.

<sup>132</sup> Philip Bohlman, *Music, Nationalism and the Making of the New Europe*, pp. 62-63.

from the nation's oldest members and most marginalised groups, late 20th and 21st century innovations in traditional music have established the genre very differently from the literary portrayals of folk music described at the start of this chapter. Neither regressive, archaic, nor the site of a claim to national victimhood, Scottish folk in the 21st century is the site of alternative, subcultural identity and aesthetics, desiring commercial success and parity of esteem with other genres.<sup>133</sup> In the context of Harry Lauder's music hall performances, David Goldie has written that Scottish popular culture 'needs to be recognised not only for its technical excellence, but also for the way it speaks directly and in differing ways to a wider national culture than that normally reached by serious literature'.<sup>134</sup> This is true of Treacherous Orchestra, who are the contemporary manifestation of a national culture in a postnational age. They demonstrate that traditional music since the 1980s fundamentally differs from the politically-engaged aesthetic radicalism of Scottish literature in the same period. Where experiments with the aesthetics of form, structure, and vernacular language in Scottish literature have served to renew, continue and consolidate a Scottish tradition of writing from the margins identified by Mack and Watson (see introduction), aesthetic developments and fusion practices have made the current traditional music scene more mainstream than marginal.

Folk-fusion marks a transition from Scottish traditional music as the carrier of a national culture to its rebranding and resituating within a postmodern world-order, dominated by global capitalism and more localised identities. For Matt McGuire in his examination of postmodern Northern Irish novels, postnational identity is characterised by reconfigurations and rebrandings of national identity: 'The impulse to reimagine is something of a leitmotif within Northern Irish art. From punk rock to poetry, the search for an alternative Ulster has never been far from the cultural agenda'.<sup>135</sup> For McGuire, recent

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<sup>133</sup> Lori Hope Watson, *The New Traditional School in Scotland: Innovation, beyond-tune composition and a traditional musician's creative practice*, p. 68.

<sup>134</sup> David Goldie, 'Hugh MacDiarmid, Harry Lauder and Scottish Popular Culture', <<http://www.ijsl.stir.ac.uk/issue1/goldie.htm>>.

<sup>135</sup> Matt McGuire, 'The postmodern promise of Robert McLiam Wilson's fiction', in Irene Gilson and Carmen Zamorano (eds), *Redefinitions of Irish Identity: A Postnationalist Approach* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2010), pp. 125-140 (p. 125).

developments in literature and music have relocated ‘Northern Irish experience within the economic narratives of capitalism and in particular, consumer driven commodity culture’, signaling ‘the increasing influence of global capitalism on contemporary society’.<sup>136</sup> Treacherous Orchestra’s folk fusion can also be read in these terms, as relocating Scottish experience within a consumer-driven global capitalism. Treacherous Orchestra incorporate their national musical heritage into what David McCrone has characterised as a postmodern “pick ‘n mix” identity, in which we wear our identities lightly, and change them according to circumstance’.<sup>137</sup> This postmodern reconfiguration of national identity for a postnationalist era refutes unitary notions of a distinct, homogenized national identity which – in Ernest Gellner’s formulation – is reinforced, and reinforces, the state.<sup>138</sup> These developments in the folk genre challenge cultural nationalist views of Scottish folk as essentially left-wing, nostalgic, aesthetically simple museum pieces, through the creation of a folk subculture characterised by virtuoso musicianship and of musical identities which are marketed as an alternative to mainstream culture, but – paradoxically through their designation as ‘alternative’ – are highly suited to the condition of contemporary global capitalism.

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<sup>136</sup> Matt McGuire, ‘The postmodern promise of Robert McLiam Wilson’s fiction’, p. 132.

<sup>137</sup> David McCrone, *Understanding Scotland: The Sociology of a Stateless Nation* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 170.

<sup>138</sup> Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2008), p. 134.

## Chapter Four

### 'Reprioritising': Gender, Class and Nation in Recent Scottish Fiction

This chapter explores the role of women in Scottish writing, examining their relationship to literary nationalism and to the working-class male identities which cultural nationalist critics have both centralised and nationalised. Focussing on work by Janice Galloway, Alasdair Gray and James Kelman, my readings examine tensions in these texts between female identity and high art, working-class affiliation, and constructions of Scottishness.

Kelman's work has been a significant influence for Janice Galloway, who shares his hostility to bourgeois artistic norms which exclude everyday reality – and thus most people's lives – from artistic representation. However, Galloway's fiction also resists the implications of the critical reception of working-class, West of Scotland male writers like Kelman. Through the critical positioning of Kelman and Gray at the centre of a late-twentieth century urban Renaissance in Scottish writing, West of Scotland, working-class masculinity has been nationalised as the lynchpin of a modern Scottish literary canon:

It has to be admitted that Glasgow writing, Gray, Kelman *et al* also gave major impetus. [...] At times it seemed that Glasgow was the revival, such energy seemed to have been released.<sup>1</sup>

The antagonisms between women and predominant representations of national identity in the texts explored by this chapter foreground a need for the 're-articulation' of nation with feminism, which David Lloyd has posited as a crucial stage in the development of nationalisms against the state (see introduction). These antagonisms between women and institutionalised constructions of nationhood also invite the non-binary considerations of divisions across identity categories which Bhabha advocates as a process of 'reading between these borderlines of the nation space'.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Douglas Gifford, 'At Last – the Real Scottish Literary Renaissance?', *Books in Scotland* 34 (1990), p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Homi K. Bhabha, 'DissemiNation: time, narrative and the margins of the modern nation', in Homi K. Bhabha (ed.), *Nation and Narration* (London: Routledge, 1990), pp. 291-322 (p. 297).

Roderick Watson positions male writers at the centre of a national literary tradition constructed from the margins, acknowledging gender only as a part-time mode of marginalisation:

If, however, you were to ask of current Scottish writing ‘but where is the central national consciousness? – as opposed to the class consciousness of Kelman and Leonard and (if you like) the marginalised and dismally tribal consciousness of Irvine Welsh’s world of drug users and football hooligans?’ I would have to reply by pointing out that since the 18th century, Scottish literary national identity has frequently been implicitly constructed from the margins – whether by class, language, belief or (sometimes) gender.<sup>3</sup>

Responding to a tendency within Scottish cultural criticism to equate marginalised identities with marginalised nationhood, Aileen Christianson has posited marginal group identities as sites of interrogation and resistance to the imperative to centralise national identity:

Problems created by systems of representation for the nation are only one aspect of the issue of identification. Region, gender, nation, sexuality, class (as well as work and family) also produce particular and conflicting demands on our loyalties, creating a shifting sense of priorities and commitment. It is not so much that class, region or gender intersect with nation, as that they interrogate and problematise it. There is no need to be an international Marxist or Catholic or feminist believing that loyalty to class, religion or gender is supra-national, to be conscious that particular group identities can resist a central national identity.<sup>4</sup>

For Christianson, nationalist assertions of identity create their own marginalising dynamic, in which ‘one region, class or gender (for example Glasgow, working-class, male) is used for the representation of the “whole nation” to the exclusion of others’.<sup>5</sup> This resonates with Gellner’s model of the nation-state, in which the symbiotic relationship between nation and state functions to homogenise national culture in order to reinforce the social hierarchies endorsed by the state (see introduction). By prioritising one particular culture – associated with working-

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<sup>3</sup> Roderick Watson, ‘Postcolonial Subjects? Language, Narrative Authority and Class in Contemporary Scottish Culture’, *The European English Messenger* Vol. 7, Iss. 1 (Spring 1998), pp. 21-38 (p. 35).

<sup>4</sup> Aileen Christianson, ‘Gender and nation: debatable lands and passable boundaries’, in Glenda Norquay and Gerry Smyth (eds), *Across the Margins: Cultural Identity and Change in the Atlantic Archipelago* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), pp. 67-82 (pp. 69-70).

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 74.

class, West coast masculinity – cultural nationalist literary criticism has mimicked the homogenising, order-enforcing logic of the state, even as it declares its allegiance to a decentralising agenda associated with devolution.<sup>6</sup> The texts explored here critique the nation’s collusion with the patriarchal repression of women, whilst positing recalcitrant female subjectivities in opposition to state authority through their rupture of homogenised nationhood.

### **Gender, Class and Nation: Galloway’s ‘the bridge’ and ‘Fearless’**

Galloway’s story ‘the bridge’ resists the critical alignment of working-class masculinity with stateless nationhood, by rerouting a marginalised, anti-bourgeois, resistant ideology through Galloway’s female protagonist, Fiona. Like most of Galloway’s texts, the story adapts the style of ‘oppositional monologism’ (see introduction)<sup>7</sup> to a female perspective, using an established, recognisably ‘Scottish’ narrative form in order to resist and critique attitudes to Scotland which privilege statehood. Fiona’s lover Charlie refuses to identify with Scotland due to its status as stateless nation:

I used to [...] pretend I was Irish. At least they’ve got a fucking country. Less embarrassment all round. [...] I don’t want to belong to any of that thanks. *Being Scottish*. [...] At least if you live in London people take you seriously.<sup>8</sup>

Galloway’s story foregrounds forms of exclusion, articulating marginalised nationhood with women’s exclusion from narratives of artistic canonicity, evoking potential connections between liberatory social movements. The ‘in-between’ setting of the bridge foregrounds Fiona’s interstitial agency, emerging from potential intersections between feminism and nationalism. This suggests that women’s political agency is crucial in the re-formulation of nationalism as a political mode which allies itself with other emancipatory movements.

The re-articulation of the national by a marginalised character takes on a particularly critical form in Fiona’s opposition to Charlie’s patriarchal, bourgeois

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<sup>6</sup> Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2008), p. 134.

<sup>7</sup> Donald Wesling, ‘Scottish Narrative since 1979: Monologism and the Contradictions of a Stateless Nation’, *Scotlands* 4: 2 (1997), pp. 81-98 (p. 87).

<sup>8</sup> Janice Galloway, ‘the bridge’, *Collected Stories* (London: Vintage, 2009), pp. 287-301 (p. 294).

mentality. He asserts a dichotomy between Art and Life, which excludes the traditionally feminised ‘domestic’ sphere. Through Fiona, Galloway ventriloquises advocacy of a committed art, rooted in everyday experience and domesticity:

This supposed Life and Art debate, this notion you’re somehow *above* ordinary living in order to be an Artist and Life is for the lower orders or something – it’s all crap. Maybe male crap, maybe just elitist crap but definitely crap. [...] If there’s no Life there is no bloody Art, is there?

And what’s Life then? he said.

Talking and interchanging, the raising of weans. Getting by. Behaving decently towards other people. Love, I suppose. If you don’t attend to that, you attend to nothing.<sup>9</sup>

Fiona’s critique of Charlie’s ideology negotiates the relationship between class, gender, art and nation. Her alignment with submerged identity is manifest in her identification with Scotland, her status as a woman, her insistence that London ‘isn’t the Big World at all’ and that Art is not only relevant to the everyday but depends upon it: ‘what’s ordinary is what’s universal, isn’t it? That’s where the biggest meanings are’.<sup>10</sup> Charlie’s insistence that one kind of identity is most suited to high art reinscribes the statist privileging of particular identities in Gellner’s formulation. His grand pronouncements on nation, art and gender continually damn him, producing a monolithic conception of art and a target for the text’s critical energies:

You mind Alison Sime? She could paint. She could really paint. You know what she’s doing now? [...] Two kids and the glory of motherhood, that’s what she’s fucking doing. Not painting. Not bloody making a name for herself. Women’s priorities. He shook his head. The things they do to themselves. That’s where women always fuck up, you know?

Sentimentality. What your lot need to do is realign your priorities.<sup>11</sup>

The antagonistic oppositions suggested here between art, gender, class and nation are recurring tropes in Galloway’s work. Her writing resists a critical narrative which has centralised male identities in its discussions of working-class marginality, and has in turn centred this marginality in its discussions of nationhood. Galloway’s texts expose female marginality within discourses which

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<sup>9</sup> Janice Galloway, ‘the bridge’, p. 298.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 297.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 300.

privilege masculinity, enabling a re-articulation of female marginality with a critique of the nation.

Charlie and Fiona represent two stereotypical and highly contrasting versions of art. Charlie's metropolitan, bourgeois, patriarchal values reject and ignore the domestic and subcultural values which Fiona supports. This opposition recalls Gellner's formulation of nationalism, in which he argues that nationalism privileges homogeneous, anonymous groups that identify with state values:

Nationalism is a species of patriotism distinguished by a few very important features: the units which this kind of patriotism, namely nationalism, favours with its loyalty, are culturally homogeneous, based on a culture striving to be a high (literate) culture; [...] they are poorly endowed with rigid internal sub-groupings; their populations are anonymous, fluid and mobile, and they are unmediated; the individual belongs to them directly, in virtue of his cultural style, and not in virtue of membership of nested sub-groups.<sup>12</sup>

Although Charlie disavows any assertions of belonging to nation or place, he represents the anonymity, mobility and high cultural aspirations invoked by Gellner in his model of statist nationalism. Fiona's opposition to metropolitan values and her identification with Glasgow connect her to a radically different, emergent formulation of nationalism, which rejects the monolithic culture privileged by state nationalism and is identified with subcultural, 'outsider' status. While she emphasises the importance of interpersonal connections to Charlie, the episodic structure of the story interjects their conversation with Fiona's interpersonal encounters, foregrounding identities excluded by homogenising state nationalisms and Charlie's elitist mentality.

Although Charlie claims to be a misunderstood outsider, belonging to nothing 'except art', he does not notice the outsiders whom Fiona interacts with. These include a homeless beggar and a slumped boy in a café, whose eyeliner signals his identification with a youth counter-culture. Fiona's identification with subcultural, submerged identities is reinforced by her critique of London as locus of statehood and institutionalised attitudes: 'The seat of government, the critical establishment and all that. Just it must be so easy to get . . . sucked in to those kind of priorities down here and think it's the world'.<sup>13</sup> Galloway's re-

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<sup>12</sup> Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, p. 132.

<sup>13</sup> Janice Galloway, 'the bridge', p. 296.

articulation of female experience with a critique of the metropolitan centre connects her feminist agenda to a cultural nationalist agenda, which seeks to recover marginal Scottish experience within art:

[T]o reprioritise, to speak as though your norms are the ones that matter, is what's happened to Scottish writing as well recently. Scottish writers have started writing as though their language and national priorities signify, whereas for years we took on the fiction that they didn't. The Let's Imagine We Matter thing is important. *What if I don't accept that I'm marginalised, add-on territory* – it's the same root for me. I think that's what's happened to Scottish work in general, what happens with some women who write. Sure, there's a paradox in that Scotland has bother big-time with noticing the links here, but there you go. Ha. Anyway. Reprioritising.<sup>14</sup>

Galloway's story 'Fearless' demonstrates her concern with the relationship between marginalised female identity and the constructions of 'Scottishness' which have been privileged by cultural nationalist criticism. In 'Fearless', reverence for a Scottish, working-class 'West Coast Legend' perpetuates the containment and control of women:

And men? [...] What I do know is that I never saw any of them shut him up when the anger started or try and calm it down. [...] There was a kind of respect for what he was, almost as though he had a right to hurl his fists, spit, eff and blind – christ, some people seemed to admire this drunken wee tragedy as a local hero. They called him a *character*. *Fearless is a character right enough* they would say and smile, a smile that accounted for boys being boys or something like that. [...] So we had to put up with it the way we put up with everything else that didn't make sense or wasn't fair, the hard, volatile maleness of the whole West Coast Legend. You felt it would have been shameful, disloyal even, to admit you hated and feared it. So you kept quiet and turned your eyes away.<sup>15</sup>

'Fearless' exposes the conflicted loyalties between region and gender theorised by Christianson.<sup>16</sup> Where literary nationalism has centralised working-class, West of Scotland masculinities, this has further marginalised female identity within literature, creating a dichotomy between working-class Scottishness and women. In 'Fearless', Galloway insists on women's ongoing powerlessness in the aftermath of a cultural recognition of the validity of male, working-class, Scottish

<sup>14</sup> Christie L. March, 'Interview with Janice Galloway', *Edinburgh Review* 101 (1990), pp. 85-98 (p. 86).

<sup>15</sup> Janice Galloway, 'Fearless', *Collected Stories* (London: Vintage, 2009), pp. 110-15 (pp. 112-13). First published 1991 in *Blood*.

<sup>16</sup> Aileen Christianson, 'Gender and nation: debatable lands and passable boundaries', p. 69.

culture, which has served to further alienate women from discursive spaces of nationhood. 'Fearless' opposes the subordination of other identities to those privileged as 'national' (see introduction), insisting on antagonisms and divisions within the West Coast, urban communities that dominate canonical Scottish literary fiction.

Like 'the bridge', 'Fearless' also uses the form of 'oppositional monologism', associated with late twentieth-century Glasgow writers (see introduction), in order to produce a critique of the cultural institutionalisation and privileging of selected identities within Scotland. Thus Galloway adapts the oppositional qualities of the experimental formal structures of Scottish writing, aligning herself with formal structures already associated with writing from a position of marginalisation by articulating her narrative through a working-class character. She eschews the construction of a Standard English, omniscient narrative meta-language, and collapses the division between narration and dialogue through a refusal to use inverted commas. 'Fearless' foregrounds a need to rearticulate nationalism in order to revise its complicity with the submergence of women within male-dominated social, literary and critical spaces. It demands the rearticulation of a nationalist agenda in allegiance with women's social and literary emergence as increasingly visible, resistant, political agents. Galloway's work anticipates this re-articulation on a structural level, through her use of a recognisably 'national' experimental literary form to express the ongoing marginalisation of women – and the emergent resistance to this marginalisation – within a national context identified as complicit with patriarchal repression. The militant, polemic tone of the final lines of 'Fearless' foregrounds emergent female resistance to this repression, articulating women's agency as oppositional politics:

It was all a long time ago. My mother is dead, and so, surely, is Fearless. But I still hear something like him; the chink and drag from the close-mouth in the dark, coming across open, derelict spaces at night, blustering at bus stops where I have to wait alone. With every other woman, though we're still slow to admit it, I hear it, still trying to lay down the rules. It's more insistent now because we're less ready to comply, less ready to know our place. And I still see men smiling and ignoring it because they don't give a damn. They don't need to. It's not their battle. But it was ours and it still is. I hear my mother too and the warning is never far away. But

I could never take a telling.  
The outrage is still strong, and I kick like a mule.<sup>17</sup>

In order to oppose Fearless and the patriarchal dominance he represents, the protagonist must become both fearless (in terms of bravery) and Fearless (in terms of mirroring his violence and rage). For Willy Maley, these ‘violent reactions to violence’ highlight that ‘[r]epression not only leads to violence but is itself a kind of violence’.<sup>18</sup> It is this literary recognition of repression as violence that is crucial to Galloway’s agenda, which aims to ‘[d]eliberately point up that otherness, where what passes for normal has no bearing on you or ignores you’.<sup>19</sup>

The project of Galloway’s work is not only to expose the marginalised lives of Scottish women, as Christie March observes, but to expose and critique the institutionalised processes and structures by which marginalisation and oppression occur.<sup>20</sup> Scotland’s literary culture is not exempt from charges of patriarchal repression, as Kirstin Innes explains:

The much-feted new visibility of Scottish culture, which coincides with the working-class male’s literary enfranchisement, appears to be won at the expense of women, gay men and ethnic minorities. [...] Even though the protagonist of the new canon is now often working-class, presented as fallible, disenfranchised and incapacitated by ennui, his identity is still constructed through an understanding of culture, society and nation that leaves his ultimate superiority uncontested.<sup>21</sup>

Galloway’s insistence on women’s continuing marginality is the means by which she has gained entry into a new Scottish literary canon. Her work both furthers the literary enfranchisement of marginalised identity which has been privileged by literary nationalism, and opposes literary nationalism’s reterritorialization of hegemonic, patriarchal dominance. Her celebration of women’s entry into a

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<sup>17</sup> Janice Galloway, ‘Fearless’, p. 115.

<sup>18</sup> Willy Maley, ‘Onto Plums: Spending “A Week with Uncle Felix”’, in Linda Jackson (ed.), *Exchanges: reading Janice Galloway’s fictions* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh Review, 2004), pp. 43-53 (p. 46).

<sup>19</sup> Christie L. March, ‘Interview with Janice Galloway’, p. 86.

<sup>20</sup> Christie L. March, *Rewriting Scotland: Welsh, McLean, Warner, Banks, Galloway and Kennedy* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), p. 129.

<sup>21</sup> Kirstin Innes, ‘Mark Renton’s Bairns: Identity and Language in the Post-*Trainspotting* Novel’, in Berthold Schoene (ed.), *The Edinburgh Companion to Contemporary Scottish Literature* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), pp. 301-09 (p. 303).

radical politics of resistance in 'Fearless' anticipates the entry of female authors into the Scottish canon and the discourse of Scottish literary studies.

Read together, 'the bridge' and 'Fearless' embody both sides of a predicament facing emergent national cultures, which Marilyn Reizbaum has termed a 'Canonical Double Cross':

Women in the cultural field [...] in Scotland and Ireland [see] on the one hand the paternalistic nature of cultural marginalisation (their identification with the nationalist cause) and, on the other, the patriarchal dimension of their own cultures' nationalist movements (their exclusion from it).<sup>22</sup>

Where 'the bridge' suggests a role for marginalised female identities as primary agents of an emergent peripheral nationalism, 'Fearless' posits nationalist reverence of Scottish, working-class, male identity as complicit with the marginalisation and silencing of women.

### **Gendering Space in Gray's 'Are You a Lesbian?'**

In Gray's 'Are You a Lesbian?' (2004), a middle-class woman is harangued by a man in a pub in Glasgow. The story foregrounds the ongoing exclusion of women from the nation's working-class, male-dominated spaces: 'Solitary women are liable to stir up trouble as you have just noticed. This is not your kind of pub. Try one nearer the top of the road'.<sup>23</sup> Within both domestic and public spaces in the story, the woman is contained within restrictive roles, which prevent her from pursuing her study of Divinity:

[L]ike everybody who comes to a pub you are here for the company, so why shut me out by sticking your nose in a book? [...] I cannae be too plebeian nor too old for ye neither. You would have gone to a pub higher up Byres Road if you wanted posher or younger company.<sup>24</sup>

The woman's insistence on reading in the pub, in addition to her solitude and middle-class economic status, renders her presence unacceptable to the bartender

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<sup>22</sup> Marilyn Reizbaum, 'Canonical Double Cross: Scottish and Irish Women's Writing', in Karen R. Lawrence (ed.), *Decolonizing Tradition: New Views of Twentieth-Century 'British' Literary Canons* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992), pp. 165-90 (p. 168).

<sup>23</sup> Alasdair Gray, 'Are You a Lesbian?', in *Ten Tales Tall and True* (London: Bloomsbury, 2004) pp. 80-89 (p. 89). First published 1993.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 82.

and the pub's clientele. She is a graduate of Divinity, whose pursuit of academic interests in the pub transgresses her domestic role. Her awareness of her containment within such roles is clear:

After marriage I perfectly suited someone who wanted a wife to give him polite well-dressed children and a home where he could entertain his friends and colleagues and their wives. So marriage completely changed my character and maybe destroyed part of it.<sup>25</sup>

For Julia Kristeva, women's marginal place in a symbolic order which separates men from women is enforced by their restricted, 'sacrificial' functions as caregivers and perpetuators of a social contract which contains them within these sacrificial roles:

If the social contract, far from being that of equal men, is based on an essentially sacrificial relationship of separation and articulation of differences which in this way produces communicable meaning, what is our place in this order of sacrifice and/or of language? No longer wishing to be excluded or no longer content with the function which has always been demanded of us (to maintain, arrange and perpetuate this sociosymbolic contract as mothers, wives, nurses, doctors, teachers . . . ), how can we reveal our place, first as it is bequeathed to us by tradition, and then as we want to transform it?<sup>26</sup>

The woman's autobiographical monologue, which is coerced from her by an unnamed male antagonist, reveals the place 'bequeathed' to her, not only by articulating her frustration at her containment within domestic roles, but also through its bringing about her ejection from the pub – a space from which women have traditionally been excluded. Her monologue, which is continually interrupted, challenged and qualified by the male antagonist, also demonstrates her desire for transformative experience through study and divinity:

Nowadays I want to hear people talk about the soul, and God, and how to build bridges between them. I can meet these people in books – nowhere else – but my friends and children and husband give me no peace to read. They can't stop telling me news and discussing problems which strike me as increasingly trivial. I can't help listening and smiling and answering with an automatic sympathy I no longer feel. They cannot believe my reading matters. If I locked myself for an hour in the bedroom with a book and a can of lager they would keep knocking on the door and asking what was wrong. Now you know why I come here to read.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Alasdair Gray, 'Are You a Lesbian?', p. 85-86.

<sup>26</sup> Julia Kristeva, 'Women's Time', translated by Alice Jardine and Harry Blake, *Signs* Vol. 7, No. 1 (Autumn, 1981), pp. 13-35 (p. 23-24).

<sup>27</sup> Alasdair Gray, 'Are You a Lesbian?', p. 86.

Kristeva asserts that ‘there are attempts to take hold’ of the sociosymbolic order that submerges women, ‘to possess it in order to enjoy it as such or to subvert it’.<sup>28</sup> The protagonist’s desire for communion through her study of divinity can be read as such an attempt, through which she seeks to re-negotiate the symbolic order and transform her position within it. Her desire for this transformation occurs in the aftermath of a revelation that her traditional, ‘bequeathed’ position is sacrificial and unsatisfactory: ‘I think I’ve suddenly started seeing myself clearly after eighteen years of looking after other people’.<sup>29</sup> The protagonist’s study parallels Kristeva’s example of women’s research in the human sciences, which she argues manifests women’s ‘always dissident’ attempts ‘to break the code, to shatter language, to find a specific discourse closer to the body and emotions, to the unnameable repressed by the social contract’.<sup>30</sup> The protagonist’s attempt to reposition herself in a more equal, less sacrificial role is manifest in the communion she seeks, both in her studies and in the working-class space of the pub, asserting: ‘I feel less lonely among people who are quietly talking and drinking’.<sup>31</sup> However, the text she reads reinforces the containment within domestic roles that she encounters at home and in the pub, on both formal and thematic levels.

The story presents several excerpts from the theological text, which is a commentary on a Biblical passage on love, taken from St Paul’s address to the Corinthians. The discourse between the woman and both men she interacts with in the pub is interrupted by passages of the book she is reading, inviting comparisons between their exclusion of her and the message within the text. Repetition of ‘[love] is not easily provoked’ when the woman continues to be harassed by her antagonist confirms these comparisons.<sup>32</sup> This immediately follows the only part of the quoted passage which genders love: ‘Love envieth not, and is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own’.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Julia Kristeva, ‘Women’s Time’, p. 24.

<sup>29</sup> Alasdair Gray, ‘Are You a Lesbian?’, p. 83.

<sup>30</sup> Julia Kristeva, ‘Women’s Time’, p. 24.

<sup>31</sup> Alasdair Gray, ‘Are You a Lesbian?’, p. 87.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

Since the woman, by her solitary reading, is behaving in a way that both her family and the man in the bar consider inappropriate, the connection between her situation and the passage she is reading becomes clear. Where her theological study is a response to dissatisfaction with her sacrificial position in the social order, she can be seen not to be following the advice of the Biblical passage quoted: by coming to the pub with her book she does ‘seeketh [...] her own’.<sup>34</sup> Thus the passage she studies reinforces her sacrificial role, rather than providing the transformative communion that she seeks.

The woman’s recognition of this reinforcement might indicate why she is sobbing at the end of the story, although no clear explanation is given by the text. Gray provides no narration to qualify or contextualise dialogue; the story consists only of the characters’ speech and excerpts from the theological text. This unusual structure obliterates both any insight we might gain into the woman’s thoughts and any authoritative narrative position. This indicates a textual refusal to further relegate her through formal containment within a literary manifestation of the sociosymbolic order she seeks to transcend. Alison Lumsden has asserted that, in Gray’s fiction, characters discover that ‘while the vast economic and political structures which form systems of entrapment [...] may be difficult, if not impossible, to challenge, the individual may nevertheless find some sort of freedom *within* these frameworks’.<sup>35</sup> When the woman’s attempts to find this freedom within the grand narrative of religion are curtailed, the only freedom left available to her is structural freedom from containment within authorial narration. However, the woman’s encounters in the pub are bookended at the beginning and end of the story by both dialogue from the male characters and quoted excerpts from Corinthians. This demonstrates formally that her experience is contained within these male-attributed discourses, which reinforce the sociosymbolic order she seeks to transcend. By coming to the pub she has left one form of entrapment – domestic servitude – only to encounter another containment, which relegates her to designated, bourgeois space at on the other end of Byres Road.

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<sup>34</sup> Alasdair Gray, ‘Are You a Lesbian?’, p. 87.

<sup>35</sup> Alison Lumsden, ‘Innovation and Reaction in the Fiction of Alasdair Gray’, in Gavin Wallace and Randall Stevenson (eds), *The Scottish Novel Since the Seventies: New Visions, Old Dreams* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1993), pp. 115-26 (p. 120).

Gray's presentation of competing discourses through his elimination of any narrative position presents the working-class pub as a forum for antagonisms between constructions of gender, class and nation. The pub, as an institution of Scottish social life and a recurring trope within canonical Scottish literature, is implicated in the story as a space which has traditionally excluded women and continues to be complicit with women's repression. The pub's reinforcement of a patriarchal social order exemplifies one of the 'particularly Scottish forms of entrapment', which, in Lumsden's reading, 'Gray himself places within his fiction [...] as the basis of a critique of containment'.<sup>36</sup> For Lumsden, Gray's fiction 'ultimately [...] cooperate[s] with that process of "entrapment"' through the author's provision of controlling footnotes, epilogues and other forms of commentary.<sup>37</sup> Unusually among Gray's works, all of these controlling devices are absent from this story. Instead it presents a stark, unmediated opposition between working-class masculinity and the middle-class and female identities that have been submerged within an urban- and Glasgow-centric Scottish literary canon.

Anne McClintock argues for a liberatory nationalism which will critically assess traditions from a position 'informed by an analysis of gender power', seeking to transform these traditions and – consequently – the nation.<sup>38</sup> Gray's story enacts this critical assessment. By re-articulating gender exclusions with flawed social practices, exclusionary traditions and the national institution of the working-class pub, Gray's story evokes ongoing antagonisms between gender and nation, demanding a radical transformation of the national institutions which reinforce a patriarchal sociosymbolic order.

### **'They were all middle-class' – Kelman's 'talking about my wife'**

In Kelman's recent short story collection *If It Is Your Life* (2010) the reversal of gender roles leads to the reinforcement of binary gender divides. In 'talking about my wife' and 'If it is your life' this reinforcement is facilitated by intersectional

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<sup>36</sup> Alison Lumsden, 'Innovation and Reaction in the Fiction of Alasdair Gray', p. 123.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 124.

<sup>38</sup> Anne McClintock, "'No Longer in a Future Heaven": Women and Nationalism in South Africa', *Transition* No. 51 (1991), pp. 104-23 (p. 105).

antagonisms between class and national identities. For Neil McMillan, ‘capitalism profits by womanly collusion, but at the same time severs man from woman at the domestic level’.<sup>39</sup> In ‘talking about my wife’, this severance is reinforced by the protagonist’s perception of his wife, Cath, as colluding with the capitalist system that confines and dehumanises him. He views his domestic life as an extension of the workplace from which he has just been fired:

Here is the reality. I was an ordinary worker. Power there is none. [...] I existed in the world of ‘angry gaffers’, data such as ‘sack’ and other matters of fact.

Man, I was fucking sick of it. And having to please everybody. That was part of it. That was an essential part of it. Then coming home and having to do the same in one’s domestic life.<sup>40</sup>

This view of Cath as extending the demands of the workplace over the domestic sphere implicates her in the reinforcement of class structures enacted by the state in Gellner’s model (see introduction), placing her on the same authoritative level as the state institutions which Kelman’s work criticises.

In Kelman’s work deindustrialisation reinforces capitalism’s role in an antagonistic gender divide, since it has resulted in a disenfranchisement of the working-class male alongside a concomitant socio-economic enfranchisement of women.<sup>41</sup> For the protagonist of ‘talking about my wife’, women’s perceived socio-economic enfranchisement results in their exclusion from the discourse of radical class politics:

There are a lot of women like Cath. They know nothing. Cath knew nothing. She had never experienced the actuality of work. Genuine work. Jobs where things like ‘angry gaffer’ and ‘sack’ crop up regularly. In her whole life she had never worked in an ordinary hourly paid job. Office stuff was all she did. That was a thing about women, they were all middle-class. She knew nothing about real life, the kind of job where if ye told a gaffer to eff off you collect yer cards at the end of the week. That was power and that was powerlessness.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Neil McMillan, ‘Wilting, or the “Poor Wee Boy Syndrome”’: Kelman and Masculinity’, *Edinburgh Review* 108 (2001), pp. 41-55 (p. 51).

<sup>40</sup> James Kelman, ‘talking about my wife’, in *If It Is Your Life* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 2010), pp. 11-38 (p. 18).

<sup>41</sup> Carole Jones, *Disappearing Men: Gender Disorientation in Scottish Fiction 1979 – 1999* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2009), p. 18.

<sup>42</sup> James Kelman, ‘talking about my wife’, p. 17.

In this critique of Cath and her gender, Kelman's protagonist both extends the domain of class struggle from the workplace to the domestic sphere and foregrounds a post-industrial fragmentation of the class structure. For Aaron Kelly, Kelman's stories 'maintain, firstly, that class most certainly shifts and changes through history, taking on new forms and identities, but, equally, that this historical contingency is not synonymous with the disappearance of class and the onset of a classless society'.<sup>43</sup> In 'talking about my wife' these shifts reinforce the gender divide by stratifying and polarising working-class identity. This creates antagonism between the traditionally male domain of precarious industrial jobs and the feminised domain of office work – associated with more job security than Scotland's crumbling traditional industries. Where Kelman's protagonist critiques these industries, he is at least as critical of his wife for evading the abuses he associates with them. In his reading of Kelman's early work, McMillan writes: 'Kelman [...] persistently identifies womanliness with negative bourgeois aspirations, [...] figuring gender at the heart of a representation of class'.<sup>44</sup> The protagonist's perception of his wife as economically superior leads him to view her as inferior in terms of experience. Whilst protesting his own containment within an environment defined by dehumanising terms, he imposes dehumanising terms on his wife through his designation of her reality as attenuated, sanitised, and unreal. By displacing the social injustice of his workplace onto her, he re-enacts the processes of containment and exclusion which he perceives as endemic to 'so-called Britain and the fucking political system', which he rails against elsewhere in the story (see Chapter One).<sup>45</sup> His terms of 'reality' position Cath as ideologically and morally inferior due to her perceived complicity with bourgeois hegemony, excluding her from the discourse of class struggle.

For Anne McClintock, the nation-state is implicated in reinforcing the gender divide, since '[n]o nationalism in the world has granted women and men

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<sup>43</sup> Aaron Kelly, 'If It Is Your Life', *Edinburgh Review* 130 (2010), pp. 164-65 (p. 165).

<sup>44</sup> Neil McMillan, 'Wilting, or the "Poor Wee Boy Syndrome": Kelman and Masculinity', p. 49.

<sup>45</sup> James Kelman, 'talking about my wife', p. 25.

the same privileged access to the resources of the nation-state'.<sup>46</sup> Where Kelman's protagonist criticizes this gendered difference in terms of economic enfranchisement, he attributes superior status and autonomy to women. For McClintock, a woman's enfranchisement is mediated through their husband's status: 'A woman's *political* relation to the nation is thus submerged in a *social* relation to a man through marriage. Citizenship in the nation is mediated by the marriage relation'.<sup>47</sup> Despite the liberation implied by Cath's ability to adopt a class position which is independent of her husband, her status is still defined in terms which privilege the traditionally masculine domain of industrial labour and class struggle. Although the protagonist views his wife as collusive with state power, his foregrounding of her apparent ability to transcend the rigidity of the class system locates women's ascending socio-economic status as a point of rupture with respect to state preservation of traditional class structures (see introduction). Furthermore, his consistent 'Othering' of his wife as inferior to his own terms of class struggle demonstrates her agency as located in a liminal, 'in-between' state. She has transcended both traditional working-class identities and sacrificial, socio-economically submerged female identities, but has not gained the hegemonic, superior, 'middle-class' status the protagonist attributes to her.

The ongoing submergence of Cath within political and social orders is demonstrated by the text's form. Kelman's work uses formal innovation to indicate a textual refusal to co-operate with the state's maintenance of the class system. His structural devices have been read as constructing an 'antihierarchical prose'<sup>48</sup> through their collapsing of formal boundaries between Standard English narrative meta-language and vernacular dialogue. Where the protagonist refuses to acknowledge the ongoing marginalisation of women, this is demonstrated at the level of structure. Unlike the protagonist, Cath remains in the position that

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<sup>46</sup> Anne McClintock, "'No Longer in a Future Heaven": Women and Nationalism in South Africa', p. 105.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 112.

<sup>48</sup> Mary M. McGlynn, *Narratives of Class in New Irish and Scottish Literature: From Joyce to Kelman, Doyle, Galloway and McNamee* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), p. 48.

literature has traditionally allocated to the working-class: ‘confined to the margins, kept in [her] place, stuck in the dialogue’.<sup>49</sup>

In her influential essay ‘Sorties’, Hélène Cixous relates an oppositional, hierarchical, binary structuring of language to “‘the’ couple, man and woman’, locating the feminine as structurally inferior, since ‘[s]ubordination of the feminine to the masculine order [...] appears to be the condition for the functioning of the machine’.<sup>50</sup> Where the protagonist views his wife as having transcended this subordination economically by gaining access to the economic and political resources from which he is disenfranchised, his critical commentary of her, enacted through the narrative, re-submerges her within a sociosymbolic order which is reinforced by his hierarchical privileging of masculine, industrial, labourist identity. The protagonist’s dominance over his wife through the narrative is an exception to Kelman’s collapse of narrative hierarchies, entrapping and encapsulating her within the hierarchical oppositions which the text’s formal structures otherwise resist.

For Carole Jones, processes of deindustrialisation and the feminisation of the labour force raise the question of ‘whether the changing economic conditions fulfil their threat and deliver greater equality for women in the face of a dominating Scottish masculinism’.<sup>51</sup> In the case of ‘talking about my wife’ and ‘If it is your life’ (explored below), Kelman’s women do not gain greater equality as a result of these changing conditions, but instead are further excluded as a result of their perceived enfranchisement and liberation, which results in the reinforcement of their containment within ideological, political and formal structures. Their enfranchisement within the workplace has paradoxically led to their alienation from workplace politics, since they are viewed as complicit with bourgeois, hegemonic power.

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<sup>49</sup> James Kelman, ‘Elitism and English Literature, Speaking as a Writer’, in *And the Judges Said...’: Essays* (London: Vintage, 2003), pp. 57-74 (p. 63).

<sup>50</sup> Hélène Cixous, ‘Sorties’, in Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtivron (eds), *New French Feminisms: An Anthology* (Hertfordshire: Harvester, 1981), pp. 90-98 (pp. 91-92).

<sup>51</sup> Carole Jones, *Disappearing Men: Gender Disorientation in Scottish Fiction 1979 – 1999* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2009), p. 18.

### Self-effacing male identity in Kelman's 'If it is your life'

The designation of women as bourgeois takes on national significance in 'If it is your life'. In this story a young, working-class Scottish man, studying at university in England, considers his relationship with English drama student Celia whilst journeying home across the border. The story overtly identifies the territory of the nation with male working-class identity. Celia, by contrast, is identified with bourgeois, upwardly-mobile spaces:

She was so absolutely different to anything. There were no other girls like her. The idea of meeting one like her in Glasgow. Unless maybe you were up the West End round the Byres Road area or else Sauchiehall Street; some place with students, otherwise where? Nowhere.<sup>52</sup>

Celia's middle-class, English identity makes her impossible for the protagonist to locate within a Scotland he perceives as normatively working-class. As in 'Are You a Lesbian?' women are confined to bourgeois, upwardly mobile spaces considered separate from Glasgow proper. McMillan argues that Kelman's work generally posits women as 'middle class, or at least upwardly mobile', which is exemplified in 'If it is your life' by the construction of a geography of gendered and class identity.<sup>53</sup> This geography is reinforced by the national border, which the protagonist crosses on the working-class space of the bus. His consideration of these geographies with regard to his male, Scottish, working-class friend Eric, and middle-class, English Celia, locates the protagonist in a liminal space: transitioning between the nations and classes he views as opposed to each other:

I could not imagine Celia and Eric ever meeting. They were both aliens. She would not fit into his world and neither would he in hers. Yet they were both mine. His world was my world before leaving Glasgow. A woman like Celia could not exist in Glasgow. Perhaps she could but I could not imagine it. Or a guy like Eric Semple at university down South. I could never imagine that either. People would not understand him. It was a separate brand of humour. You saw things differently; your whole way of thinking. Almost like it was disconnected. Eric could have gone to a Scottish university though maybe not Edinburgh, and never St Andrews. Never an English one.

It was class. I did not show my class but Eric did. This is what it was.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> James Kelman, 'If it is your life', in *If It Is Your Life* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 2010), pp. 119-72 (p. 125).

<sup>53</sup> Neil McMillan, 'Wilting, or the "Poor Wee Boy Syndrome": Kelman and Masculinity', p. 48.

<sup>54</sup> James Kelman, 'If it is your life', p. 127.

Despite the protagonist's own interstitial position, he views social mobility as impossible. His conceptualisation of English universities as particularly incompatible with working-class identity elides class with nation by aligning Scottish and working-class identities. The protagonist's return from England to Scotland, which is the story's key structural component, is also a return from social mobility to working-class origins. Social mobility is perceived as a process of multiple alienations: from working-class identity, from Scotland and from an attendant sense of 'imagined community' which is reconstructed in the act of border-crossing:

But what was striking about the Glasgow bus home, right at that minute in time, and you noticed it immediately, and you could not help but notice, that everybody, every last person on the entire bus, each single solitary one was Scottish, they all had accents and were ordinary accents; none was posh. The woman next to me as well, she did not smile or even look at me but I knew. I did not find it relaxing; I did not think I did. I was the same as them but on the other hand was I? Maybe I was not. And what if there were others in a similar situation? It was like we were each one of us disconnected, each one of us, until we were on the bus home, and starting to become Scottish again, Scottish working class. My father would have said that, never to forget it, because they would never allow it.<sup>55</sup>

The protagonist conflates 'working class' and 'Scottish' identities in the opposition he constructs between Scottish accents and 'posh' ones. Within his rigid perception of Scotland as a working-class community, his social mobility designates him an outsider to the nation since he now occupies the upwardly-mobile, interstitial state of studenthood. This failure to belong to a community is reinforced structurally by the text's monologic form, in which the narrator recounts his experiences at both home and university in solitude on a bus – a space in which he is paradoxically both solitary and part of a group of travellers. The enclosure of Celia, Eric, the protagonist's father and the other characters within Eric's limited narrative point of view denies the reader access to an omniscient, authorial position in which we are able to conceive of the 'simultaneous activity' that characterises the traditional, nineteenth-century novelistic structure which Anderson posits as a model of nationhood (see introduction). The only sense of simultaneous activity the story grants us is at its

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<sup>55</sup> James Kelman, 'If it is your life', p. 128.

close, when the protagonist's backpack is stolen in an area of Glasgow which he associates with rape. The reader does not fully witness this event, which occurs simultaneously with the continuation of the protagonist's musings on his background and Celia. This simultaneity does not reinforce an idea of community, but serves to remind the protagonist of the hostilities within the nation which manifest as crime.

Despite the protagonist's social freedom – his ability to be upwardly mobile whilst retaining access to his inherited Scottish working-class identity – the resulting interstitial identity renders him anxious and disconnected from any sense of the imagined community of Scotland: 'I was a stranger. I was a foreigner, a visitor from another planet, an alien, maybe I was invisible'.<sup>56</sup> Like James Bawn in Andrew O'Hagan's *Our Fathers* (see Chapter Two), the protagonist is trapped between critiquing and conforming to the inherited, pedagogical and patriarchal class ideology of his father. His own performance of identity, which attempts to erase this pedagogical ideology but ultimately reinforces and reproduces it, emerges from the antagonistic opposites of the working-class, Scottish identity he associates with his father and the bourgeois, English space associated with Celia. This emergence of identity from a tension between the pedagogical and the performative is posited by Homi Bhabha as the site of a non-essentialist construction of nation in its erasure and modification of inherited traditions (see introduction). This conception of identity as liminality, emerging as a process of splitting and rupture from sites of antagonism, opposes the protagonist's essentialist vision of class geography.

This geography of class excludes the protagonist's own socially-mobile identity from the polarities of class and nation, since he is disconnected from both working-class Scotland and bourgeois England. His ideology is challenged by Celia, who privileges individualism against collective identities. However, rather than providing the protagonist with an alternative position or ideology, his confrontation with Celia forces him to choose between bourgeois Englishness and working-class Scottishness, erasing his own emerging, interstitial identity and reversing his social mobility:

[Celia] said people were all unique and individuals [...]. If she liked people it did not matter lower class or upper class, only if they had a

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<sup>56</sup> James Kelman, 'If it is your life', p. 153.

certain view of the world to do with being free and relaxed or all wound up and roped into society's social spheres. You had to rise above society. The people she admired were above it. It did not matter their background, even royalty. Individuals were unique and could do anything, and not be hidebound. Class did not enter into it, lower or higher.

What did that mean, lower or higher?

I almost laughed when she told me that. It was my father. I should have laughed. I was too respectful. I should have been more – something, different anyway, different to myself. If I wanted to be. But I did not want to be. I would have said the same as her if it was to my dad. But hearing Celia say it made me into him. [...]

It is working-class. Not lower-class. Not lower-class, *working-class*. I told her that and swore.<sup>57</sup>

Celia's privileged view that class does not constrain individuals forces the protagonist into a binary choice, which denies the possibility of social mobility and reasserts class as a primary marker of identity. Carole Jones has stated that:

Political and economic changes in western societies, such as the vastly increased equality of women owing to feminist activism and major changes in employment patterns and the nature of work, created a mood suffused by a consciousness of a decline in men's authority and a lack of conviction in patriarchal values.<sup>58</sup>

However, the protagonist's confrontation with Celia leads him to reinforce patriarchal values, which threatens him with the effacement of his own identity through absolute identification with his father. Despite this, he states that if confronted with his father's views on class he 'would have said the same as [Celia]', leading to another absolute identification with an ideology which is not the protagonist's own. He is consequently the site of an unaligned, unstable status, embodied by a self-effacing identification with/opposition to both ideologies. This problem of class and ideology is consistently gendered by the protagonist, who asserts elsewhere in the story that 'I came out sounding bad but it was not me so much as a class thing, male working class'.<sup>59</sup> He is trapped between the polarities of Celia's bourgeois English world and his father's working-class Scottish world. The story thus exposes the need for new identity models which evade the oppositional, divisive polarities of Scottish and English, working-class and middle-class, male and female. However, rather than

<sup>57</sup> James Kelman, 'If it is your life', pp. 143-44.

<sup>58</sup> Carole Jones, *Disappearing Men: Gender Disorientation in Scottish Fiction 1979 – 1999*, pp. 11-12.

<sup>59</sup> James Kelman, 'If it is your life', p. 135.

challenging these socially constructed oppositional binaries, the protagonist reinforces them.

Both ‘talking about my wife’ and ‘If it is your life’ identify women with bourgeois identity and ideologies, presenting female identity as opposed to working-class masculinity and associating women with hegemonic socio-economic power. Jones argues that ‘Kelman presents us with a world of gender reversal where the dominant values, traditionally privileged as masculine, are promoted by women’, in an inversion which ‘does not signify alternative power relations, simply a reversal of the existing ones’.<sup>60</sup> This is particularly visible in both stories discussed here, presenting a progression from a trait which McMillan has perceived in Kelman’s early work, claiming that ‘his texts fail to question their own residual masculinism [...] joining the works of many other Scottish male writers who behave as though there is nothing to say about men’.<sup>61</sup> In his most recent works Kelman makes issues of sex and gender his principal themes.<sup>62</sup> In the stories discussed here women are associated with superior class status by male protagonists who perceive them as unencumbered by problems of working-class representation and existential crisis. Where these male protagonists are constrained and contained by representative and identity politics, the female characters’ access to socio-economic and ideological freedom is the means by which these stories establish ‘a gender reversal which re-routes hegemonic masculinity through women’.<sup>63</sup>

This rerouting of hegemonic masculinity is particularly apparent in ‘If it is your life’, where Celia is seen by the male protagonist to be objectifying him on the basis of his gender. Initially he wonders if she is fetishising his national and class difference: ‘Okay she did not like me but she slept with me. Why? Was it because I was Scottish? Scottish working-class?’, but ultimately it is Celia’s

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<sup>60</sup> Carole Jones, *Disappearing Men: Gender Disorientation in Scottish Fiction 1979 – 1999*, p. 60.

<sup>61</sup> Neil McMillan, ‘Wilting, or the “Poor Wee Boy Syndrome”: Kelman and Masculinity’, p. 41.

<sup>62</sup> See James Kelman, *Mo Said She Was Quirky* (London: Penguin, 2012) for Kelman’s most recent literary exploration of gender politics.

<sup>63</sup> Carole Jones, *Disappearing Men: Gender Disorientation in Scottish Fiction 1979 – 1999*, p. 59.

apparent disregard for the protagonist's identity which is associated with her sexuality.<sup>64</sup>

And Celia said something and it was like she excluded me too. Maybe I misheard. I do not even know what it was and have forgotten about it almost completely, it was just a wee comment, just something whatever it was and it was to do with 'people from the north'. Yet when she made it her hand was on my wrist and she was stroking. That was a funny thing to do. How could she do that at the same time? What did that make me to her? I was just a body.<sup>65</sup>

Celia's sexual agency is disarming and objectifying. While Kelman's narrator consistently agonises over his identity, pontificating what it means to be Scottish and working-class in an English university, analysing whether or not he is becoming alienated from his origins and his father's values, Celia refuses to acknowledge his class difference and consequently his identity crisis: 'Everyone is working class. She said it to me. We all have to work'.<sup>66</sup> Where the protagonist is frustrated by Celia's refusal to acknowledge his difference in terms of class and nationality, he posits his sex and gender as the only significant aspects of his identity to her:

We were going along the road and she finished her lines and she did it, maybe just saying Ohh, and then pinching me on the upper arm and turning half on to me as we walked. It made me hard, and walking along the street, I told her, how was I to walk, she laughed. That was a thing how she laughed. She did not laugh at much but me and sex, I made her laugh. She liked me because I got hard. Just thinking about her, jeesoh. Wherever, I could not sit down, or stand up, having to disguise it all the time. She laughed at that and walking along the street and her hand in my pocket, she did that just to get to me and she always did, always, she did not care, just her hand.<sup>67</sup>

Celia's control over the protagonist's sexuality becomes both debilitating and a source of embarrassment to him; he is powerless when confronted with her desire. Celia is the site of a female sexuality which contributes to the effacement of the protagonist's identity through her reductive disregard of his class and national identity. This is a reversal of the situation in 'Are You a Lesbian?', where a woman is told that her public presence in a bar automatically invites a male gaze which sees her as a sex object: here a man is seen as a sex object by a

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<sup>64</sup> James Kelman, 'If it is your life', p. 150.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 153.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 149.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 142.

woman, and – like the female protagonist of ‘Are You a Lesbian?’ – feels frustrated and subordinated by this gaze. Consequently, in ‘If it is your life’, a woman is the perpetrator, rather than the victim, of social injustice, objectification and hegemonic power. Celia is portrayed as an empowered, post-feminist woman who refuses to subscribe to traditional binary relationships and to traditional constructions of identity (such as a class system), but this empowerment has not resulted in greater levels of social justice, but in a relocation of the hegemonic power which perpetuates social injustice.

In the Kelman stories discussed above, women are excluded from radical political discourse and are viewed as complicit with marginalisation. This positioning of women as socio-economically superior perpetrators of social injustice threatens to mask the ongoing socio-economic and social injustices to which actual women are subject. In Kirsten Stirling’s examination of the trope of woman as nation in 1920s Scottish Literary Renaissance writing, she writes:

[T]his use of the female figure elevates and semi-deifies women on the symbolic level but can contribute to disenfranchising them from the position of citizen on a practical level. The symbolic elevation appears to value women’s role in the nation but it masks the political powerlessness of actual women.<sup>68</sup>

Kelman’s female characters reverse this disenfranchisement as citizens, in that they are more enfranchised socio-economically than their male counterparts. However, Kelman’s portrayal of women in both stories is also an elevation which ‘masks the political powerlessness of actual women’, since it portrays them as collusive with the marginalising institutions which Kelman’s work critiques. The perceived economic and sexual empowerment of Kelman’s women is also a disenfranchisement from nation and from radical discourse, which reconfigures, rather than opposes, the disenfranchisement of women’s agency which Stirling notes in 1920s Scottish Renaissance writing. In both stories women are viewed as sites of bourgeois identity, rendering them fundamentally incompatible with a Scottishness predicated on working-class identity – and with the discourse of marginalisation and radical class politics privileged by Scottish literary studies.

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<sup>68</sup> Kirsten Stirling, *Bella Caledonia: Woman, Nation, Text* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2008), p. 11.

Despite Kelman's positioning of women as socio-economically empowered compared to working-class men, both his male and female characters can be read in terms of exclusion. Where Kelman's male protagonists are excluded from socio-economic power, from a defunct working-class politics and from a stable sense of identity, by viewing women as having privileged access to hegemonic power they exclude them from discourses of radical resistance and social justice – and from a nation-space defined as working class. Kelman has written:

Being 'too indigenous' is the same as being 'too working class' and, predictably, the closer we move to the realm of class the clearer we find concerns of race and ethnicity. [...] A colonial or imperial context helps clarify the argument. The key is class. 'Scottishness' equates to class and class equals conflict. Even within Scotland we can be criticised for this. The work of writers deemed 'too Scottish' shares a class background. Occasionally we are condemned for *confining* our fiction to the *world of the urban working class*.<sup>69</sup>

For Kelman the dismissal of Scottish people and Scottish art is coterminous with the dismissal of working-class culture. However, in all three of the stories by Kelman and Gray discussed above, women are prevented from accessing, or perceived as being unable to access, working-class culture. The protagonist of 'Are You a Lesbian?' is barred from a pub frequented by a 'plebian' clientele, Cath is seen by her husband as unable to access or understand working-class struggle, and Celia is seen as similarly blinded by her privilege and by an attendant bourgeois-liberal attitude which refuses to acknowledge class difference. Scottishness and the working-class identities associated with it are determined by men in each story. Women are represented in these texts as either dismissive of, or outsiders to, questions of class and nation, and are never subject to working-class anxieties such as lack of job security. Where Celia, being English, is presented most explicitly as external and Other to Scotland, it is significant that her Scottish counterpart – the protagonist's father – is male. These texts offer no female class-warriors of either nationality. In 'Are You a Lesbian?', 'talking about my wife' and 'If it is your life', working-class Scotland comes to the fore as both setting and subject, but as women are continually denied access

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<sup>69</sup> James Kelman, 'James Kelman', in Scott Hames (ed.), *Unstated: Writers on Scottish Independence* (Edinburgh: Wordpower, 2012), pp. 118-25 (p. 119).

to working-class spaces and discourse, they are denied access to both radicalism and to Scottish identity. This resonates with a critical discourse which posits Scottish literature as a site of radical class politics, by rendering these female characters marginal to the priorities of the cultural nationalist critical narrative. The exclusion of women from the working-class Scotland portrayed in these stories demonstrates the same tendency as critics have discerned within nationalist critical agendas, which subsume or occlude other social categories through their privileging of the nation (see introduction). This exclusion indicates a need for a countering re-articulation of female identity with Scottish identity, in such a way as to evade subsuming feminist politics within nationalism. This re-articulation is achieved by Galloway's work, which counters portrayals of women as collusive with hegemonic, state power.

### **Critique and Control in *The Trick Is To Keep Breathing***

This final section of the current chapter will provide a reading of Galloway's novel *The Trick is to Keep Breathing* (1989), exploring its critique of patriarchal norms of female identity. Significantly, the novel evades the construction of a hegemonic femininity such as that which is portrayed in Kelman's stories, challenging and subverting – rather than inverting – oppositional gendered binaries. Galloway's protagonist, Joy Stone, recognises and critiques the patriarchal structures which marginalise her, most prominently through her conversion of these into darkly humorous scripts and jokes.

Clearly influenced by Kelman, both in its formal experimentation and its exploration of an extremely isolated protagonist, Galloway's novel shares Kelman's themes of resistance to hegemonic and state power through a protagonist identified with marginal, West of Scotland identity. Where Kelman's protagonists view women as incompatible with politics of marginality and resistance, Galloway's novel creates a female protagonist who shares their characteristic existential crises and oppositional, anti-institutional politics. However, where the protagonists discussed above reinforce the hegemonic binary structures of the established sociosymbolic order, Galloway's protagonist mounts a more effective critique. Her oxymoronic name: Joy Stone, foregrounds her struggle with oppositional binaries, which implicates state institutions in the

repression of alterity through their reinforcement of patriarchal gender roles and social structures.

The novel portrays Joy's grief after the death of her married lover Michael, with whom she has been living. Significantly, her relationship with Michael is not recognised in the aftermath of his death; instead the minister who performs a memorial service at Joy's workplace chooses to acknowledge the more conventional family-structure – however broken – which Michael has left, ignoring Joy's role in his life:

Half-way into the silence for Norma Fisher, my arms were weightless.  
The rest came piecemeal as the moral started to compute.

1. The Rev Dogsbody had chosen this service to perform a miracle.
2. He'd run time backwards, cleansed, absolved and got rid of the ground-in stain.
3. And the stain was me.

I didn't exist. The miracle had wiped me out.<sup>70</sup>

Joy's lack of 'status' in relation to Michael recalls Anne McClintock's assertion that the patriarchal nation determines a woman's status in relation to her husband.<sup>71</sup> Because Michael is not Joy's husband, she has no status in the view of the institutional authorities – such as the church – which structure, order and contain national life. For Margery Metzstein:

[W]hen Michael dies, the smooth machinery of legitimised institutions judders into action and operates to negate and label Joy Stone. Her presence must be denied. If she is not mother-wife-daughter-sister, who is she? There is no legitimate name for her in relation to Michael, which means she *must* not exist.<sup>72</sup>

These institutional renderings of Joy as illegitimate within the social order demonstrate one of several interplays between state institutions and gendered social structures, which collude to designate Joy as illegitimate throughout the novel. For Patricia Waugh, some twentieth-century writers 'have been [...] concerned to express the inevitability of alienation in relations formed within the structures of a society which has only allowed women the position of "other",

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<sup>70</sup> Janice Galloway, *The Trick is to Keep Breathing* (London: Vintage, 1999), p. 79.

<sup>71</sup> Anne McClintock, "'No Longer in a Future Heaven': Women and Nationalism in South Africa", p. 112.

<sup>72</sup> Margery Metzstein, 'Of Myths and Men: Aspects of Gender in the fiction of Janice Galloway', p. 139.

there to confirm the subjectivity of the male but excluded from the subject position themselves'.<sup>73</sup> It is this structural marginalization and erasure which *The Trick is to Keep Breathing* both reveals and opposes, particularly on the level of form. In doing so, Galloway's texts go beyond representation in order to 'present aesthetic challenges to "patriarchal" systems of discourse and knowledge'<sup>74</sup> through her use of the formal experimentation which has come to be associated with a national literary tradition.

In her study of twentieth-century women's writing, Waugh suggests that female subjectivity cannot be adequately accommodated within traditional novelistic structures, relating these structures to the institutional ordering which marginalizes women:

Those excluded from or marginalized by the dominant culture – for reasons of class, gender, race, belief, appearance, or whatever – [...] may never have experienced a sense of full subjectivity in the first place. They may never have identified with that stable presence mediated through the naturalizing conventions of fictional tradition. Such Others may, indeed, *already* have sensed the extent to which subjectivity is constructed through the institutional dispositions of relations of power, as well as those of fictional convention.<sup>75</sup>

An emergent national tradition of experimental fiction enables Galloway to construct a formal platform for her anti-institutional text, enacting a re-articulation of national form with the politics of gender liberation. Galloway furthers this national experimental tradition, argues Mary McGlynn, in her exploration of 'the relationship of nation, gender and formal experiment, making a case for the reconception of the first two via the third'.<sup>76</sup> The structural challenge posed to conventional forms – both social and aesthetic – is realized in Galloway's texts by several mechanisms, including the scripting technique described below. Galloway's use of the page margins defies typesetting conventions, prompting critical considerations of the text as resistance. For

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<sup>73</sup> Patricia Waugh, *Feminine Fictions: Revisiting the Postmodern* (London: Routledge, 1989), p. 11.

<sup>74</sup> Glenda Norquay, 'Janice Galloway's Novels: Fraudulent Mooching', in Aileen Christianson and Alison Lumsden (eds), *Contemporary Scottish Women Writers* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2001), pp. 131-43 (p. 136).

<sup>75</sup> Patricia Waugh, *Feminine Fictions: Revisiting the Postmodern*, p. 2.

<sup>76</sup> Mary M. McGlynn, *Narratives of Class in New Irish and Scottish Literature: From Joyce to Kelman, Doyle, Galloway and McNamee*, p. 136.

Cairns Craig, ‘the marginal material of the text becomes the site of the author’s insistence on the fact that her character is not simply contained within her novel but challenges the boundaries by which she is contained’.<sup>77</sup> These marginal sections of the narrative also indicate the structural fragmentation which manifests the author’s response to the challenge posed by the novel’s insistence that the hegemonic social ordering to which Joy is subject must be reconfigured in order to accommodate the marginalized Other. Cairns Craig also draws our attention to the dual narrative utilized throughout the novel. Joy’s continual recounting of the circumstances surrounding Michael’s death indicates a fragmenting of her consciousness as past events continually interrupt and influence her present state of mind.<sup>78</sup> Other textual sites of fragmentation include the repeated motif ‘ooo’, used to separate episodes of the narrative. This indicates Joy’s acknowledgement of a social ordering that continually attempts to reduce her to nothing, and is also a typographical tribute to a similar motif in James Kelman’s novel *The Busconductor Hines* (1984) – demonstrating the novel’s ambivalence towards the nation by asserting an allegiance to its literary tradition even as it critiques Scotland’s complicity with the repression of women (see below). For modernist nationalist critics, the nation has been the predominant unit of social ordering since the eighteenth century (see introduction). Partha Chatterjee views fragmentation as a distinguishing feature of subaltern resistance to the institutional forms which characterize ‘the hegemonic project of nationalist modernity’, arguing that ‘[t]o make a claim for the fragment is also, not surprisingly, to produce a discourse that is itself fragmentary’.<sup>79</sup> Where Anderson has posited the ‘simultaneous activity’ and ‘overarching narrative trajectory’ of the traditional novelistic form as the unitary discourse of nationalist modernity (see introduction), Galloway’s highly fragmented forms pose an alternative novelistic structure in order to accommodate a subjectivity which is radically Other in relation to the nation, its order-enforcing institutions and the hierarchical social ordering which it reinforces.

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<sup>77</sup> Cairns Craig, *The Modern Scottish Novel: Narrative and the National Imagination* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), p. 195.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 192.

<sup>79</sup> Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), p. 13.

The order-enforcing institutions of the state consistently use Joy's resistance to conventional social structures and gender roles in order to legitimise her ongoing marginalisation within a phallogentric social order and threaten her survival. For example, 'tiny-minded Mr Dick from the housing authority', points out Joy's illegitimacy in relation to Michael's house: 'Strictly speaking, we're under no obligation to house you at all, not when you were never registered as tenant'.<sup>80</sup> Where Kelman's reversal of gender roles makes women the agents of hegemonic power, Joy's refusal to fit normative patriarchal roles does not enable her to transcend a phallogentric social order, but leads to her further marginalisation within it, consequently evading the construction of a hegemonic feminine identity. However, her re-naming of the agents of marginalising institutional discourse as 'Rev. Dogsbody' and 'Mr Dick', constitutes an act of critique and resistance to their collusion with the reinforcement of hegemonic, patriarchal gender roles. Where they seek to reduce and marginalise Joy, her comic naming responds to this by reducing them to their roles, their insignificance, their unpleasantness and their phallogentric world-views. Where Joy never gains power over the marginalising discourses which threaten to erase her, her resistance to these discourses is manifest as a darkly comic critique.

Galloway uses scripts to demonstrate Joy's acute awareness of the roles she is expected to play for the male characters of the book – roles which she evades. In one of these scripts, where Joy is speaking to Paul, her ex, she casts herself in the role of 'Harridan'. However, during this exchange Joy demonstrates vulnerability and concern, making her unsuited to this role:

HARRIDAN: So, you're off then?

EX: Yup. [Tosses keys nonchalantly in one hand]

HARRIDAN: Well. [Pause. Someone should YOOHOO outside the window. EX takes a sharp breath. HARRIDAN driven over edge of discretion] Can I ask you something? I never know what you don't want me to say. Can I just ask you something? [Thinks about the times they said they'd always be friends and how hopeful it seemed then. Can't understand the difference.]

EX: [Feigned puzzlement] Sure. Sure. [Thinks about the times they said they'd always be friends and how naïve they were then. Can't understand why she can't understand.] Anything you like.

HARRIDAN: [Bull by the horns] Are you all right? Are you happy?

EX: [Considers for a second. Tries to look calm while brain is in overdrive and eyes glaze over] Happy enough.

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<sup>80</sup> Janice Galloway, *The Trick is to Keep Breathing*, p. 18.

[...]

HARRIDAN: I can't talk to you any more. I'm scared you want that to be the case. Can I touch you? [Sensation of breaking glass] I just want to touch your arm. I get the feeling I'm not going to see you again.

EX: [Blushes and looks at floor] Don't be silly. You'll see me. [Both know now this isn't true but no-one is allowed to say it out loud. They have to play out the charade to the end. Anything else would be tacky.]

HARRIDAN: [Waxwork] Yes. So, what's your new place like?<sup>81</sup>

Joy's honesty and vulnerability in this scene demonstrate a refusal to play by the unspoken 'rules' which require that she and her ex act coldly towards one another and refuse to address the situation: that Paul is returning the last of Joy's things, and consequently this is likely to be their last meeting. Paul's insistence that the meeting does not have any particular significance eventually forces Joy from the agency she exerts through her non-conformance into an act of indifference. Joy's unsuitability to the role set by her in this script demonstrates her refusal to play 'the game' in which the rules are set by male characters: 'The game they want Joy to play is that of the obedient, pliant other who will be the good patient, the distant ex-lover or the gratefully seduced'.<sup>82</sup>

Where these scripts demonstrate Joy's resistance to stereotypical, gendered roles such as 'harridan', the vulnerability and uncertainty she demonstrates through this resistance means that she does not occupy a position of power, remaining in an inferior role throughout the conversation. *The Trick is to Keep Breathing* is concerned with an evasive, non-patriarchal mode of female identity which does not fit within patriarchal structures such as the traditional family, but also does not reconfigure hierarchical power relations through a construction of a powerful, hegemonic female identity. Instead Joy is characterised by her resistance to hegemonic structures, manifesting a counter-hegemonic femininity that insists on creating the 'sensation of breaking glass' by rupturing allocated, binary roles, whilst evading the pitfalls of counter-hegemonic femininity manifest in Kelman's stories.

Joy's subversion of the roles allocated to her is manifest in similarly scripted scenarios in the novel, such as when Joy asks one of her doctors, 'Are

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<sup>81</sup> Janice Galloway, *The Trick is to Keep Breathing*, p. 213

<sup>82</sup> Margery Metzstein, 'Of Myths and Men: Aspects of Gender in the fiction of Janice Galloway', pp. 140-41.

you OK? How's your head?', inverting the usual Doctor/Patient relationship.<sup>83</sup> Elsewhere in her scripted conversations with doctors, Joy's role is playfully subverted from 'Patient' to 'Impatient'.<sup>84</sup> This refusal to be compliant is the means by which Joy resists the institutional discursive practices which threaten to contain and erase her. Her illegitimacy within her relationships leads to her marginalisation by the Reverend Dogsbody and Mr Dick, but it is also the means by which she resists the social ordering which is recognised and imposed by the state. A teacher from a working-class background, Joy's social mobility does not grant her the privileged access to the state and its resources which Yuval-Davis argues is granted to privileged groups within the nation.<sup>85</sup> Instead the institutions of the welfare state – especially those which administer housing and healthcare – collude with these institutions which have been posited as the carriers of Scottish identity in the absence of full statehood – church, education, law – to control and threaten Joy. For example, Mr Dick from the housing authority informs her that '[s]trictly speaking, you're breaking and entering every night',<sup>86</sup> using institutionalised legalese to indicate Joy's illegitimacy – and thus legitimise his threat to make her homeless. For Mary McGlynn, Joy's rejection of state-sanctioned, traditional family structures leads to this threat: 'While people are welcome to emulate the dominant patterns of gender role organization, only full participation in them guarantees the protection of (and from) the state'.<sup>87</sup> Joy's refusal of traditional female roles and family structures – wife, mother, monogamy – makes her illegitimate and surplus for the purposes of these institutions, which are predicated on family structures she does not conform to, and are complicit with the hierarchical ordering which restricts her. Her critique of the inferior roles to which she is expected to conform is also a critique of the institutions of the nation and state, which are shown to require radical change in light of the social and economic restructuring of women's roles and identities.

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<sup>83</sup> Janice Galloway, *The Trick is to Keep Breathing*, p. 165.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 52-53.

<sup>85</sup> Nira Yuval-Davis, *Gender and Nation* (London: Sage, 1997), p. 2.

<sup>86</sup> Janice Galloway, *The Trick is to Keep Breathing*, p. 66.

<sup>87</sup> Mary M. McGlynn, *Narratives of Class in New Irish and Scottish Literature: From Joyce to Kelman, Doyle, Galloway and McNamee*, p. 145.

Joy subverts traditional binary relationships through her repeated infidelities, but never gains a position of control or authority over any of the men she has been involved with. Patricia Waugh argues:

Once women have experienced themselves as ‘subjects’, then they can begin to problematize and to deconstruct the socially constructed subject positions available to them, and to recognize that an inversion of the valuation of ‘maleness’ and ‘femaleness’ will not in itself undermine the social construction of ‘masculinity’ and ‘femininity’.<sup>88</sup>

Joy’s deconstruction of these socially constructed subject positions, demonstrated above through analysis of Galloway’s formal scripting strategies, evades inverting hierarchical power relations. Her relationship with David demonstrates Joy’s simultaneous subversion of binary roles and evasion of positions of control. Although David is a former student at the school where Joy teaches drama, and ten years younger than her, Joy cannot be cast in any stereotypical role such as ‘predatory older woman’ in relation to David.<sup>89</sup> Instead, it is David who assumes the ‘older’, more responsible role in their relationship, appearing at Joy’s lowest moment: on her birthday when she is contemplating suicide.<sup>90</sup> For Carole Jones, David represents ‘an ideal masculinity, a disarmed youthful projection of a man [...] in the role of a saviour’.<sup>91</sup> Galloway’s novel presents more of a challenge to the subversion of gender roles than Kelman’s stories discussed above, since it posits a ‘disarmed’ masculinity which is not countered or dominated by a hegemonic femininity, evading the reversal of gender roles which Kelman’s stories enact. Through David, Galloway responds to ‘the challenge [...] to re-imagine identities and relations outside of the hegemonic masculine models, in modes which do not reiterate their oppressive dominating impulse’.<sup>92</sup>

Galloway’s novel serves to critique a patriarchal society which expects women to fit sacrificial gender roles which silence, marginalise and diminish them. Tony, a character who is both Joy’s boss and her rapist, exemplifies this during a phone conversation:

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<sup>88</sup> Patricia Waugh, *Feminine Fictions: Revisiting the Postmodern*, p. 25.

<sup>89</sup> Janice Galloway, *The Trick is to Keep Breathing*, p. 93.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 203.

<sup>91</sup> Carole Jones, *Disappearing Men: Gender Disorientation in Scottish Fiction 1979 – 1999*, p. 78.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 191.

ME: Tony I'm tired. No.

TONY: [Pause] What did you say?

ME: [Trying it out again.] No.

TONY: What do you mean, NO? NO? Don't play up. Just do it.<sup>93</sup>

Faced with Joy's resistance to his predatory advances, Tony's instruction that she 'Stop playing up' seeks to reduce Joy to childlike status, where she is expected to do as she is told. This diminishing treatment of Joy by her rapist is similar to the way she is treated by the institutions she encounters – particularly the psychiatric hospital where she becomes a patient. The doctors and staff also treat her like a child: 'Nassim tells me to shoo'.<sup>94</sup> She is given pink pyjamas marked 'girls' aged 11' and instructed not to wander about the hospital in them, because '[i]t's not fair on the men'.<sup>95</sup> Joy's adoption of a 'little girl voice' in response to the doctor's instructions demonstrates her recognition that she is being treated like a child. However, she subverts this treatment in her observation that the doctor's 'face looks as though it could be in my Third Year Upper class'.<sup>96</sup> Joy often refuses to submit to the unwritten rules and codes of obedient behaviour expected of the patients, gaining a reputation amongst staff and other patients for being 'difficult'.<sup>97</sup> Another patient demands of Joy: 'Think you're better than this place, don't you. Think you're better than me. Eh? Well fuck you teacher. Fuck you'.<sup>98</sup> Thus Joy's resistance to processes which seek to contain and control her leads to her being identified with an assumed superiority, which in turn leads to the reinforcement of attempts to silence her. Her critique of the hospital's reinforcement of binary gender roles also leads to silencing:

I ask Nancy why she didn't get any of the men to paint Christmas pictures. She bristles.

I don't see what that's supposed to mean. Miss Pass-Remarkable. If you're trying to stir up trouble you can just forget it.<sup>99</sup>

Elsewhere Joy is disturbed by the reaction of the male patients to a violent film: 'the video scares me. It isn't the film so much as the men enjoying it so much'.<sup>100</sup>

<sup>93</sup> Janice Galloway, *The Trick is to Keep Breathing*, p. 209.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 127.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 137.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 219.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 220.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 182.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 183.

The psychiatric hospital serves as a microcosm foregrounding the differing socialisation of men and women, and is implicated in the imposition of repressive violence on women by expecting Joy to conform to the same compliant, passive role demanded of her by predatory Tony. By implicating state institutions in the same processes of control that are manifest in Tony's sexual violence, Galloway critiques patriarchal society as conditioning men to perpetrate violence, whilst punishing women for resisting it.

The novel also implicates constructions of national identity in the repression of women. Joy's is an environment where emotions – particularly women's emotions – are an inconvenience. She states that she has a history of complying with repressive processes which expect her to act in a way which is convenient for others: 'I used to be so *good* all the time'.<sup>101</sup> She gives examples of what being 'good' entails in her specific cultural background, including 'where good = not putting anyone out by feeling too much, blank, unobtrusive'.<sup>102</sup> This definition of 'good' has a footnote which implicates Scotland in emotional repression: 'Love/Emotion = embarrassment: Scots equation. Exceptions are when roaring drunk or watching football. Men do rather better out of this loophole'.<sup>103</sup> Mary McGlynn comments: 'The inseparability of a woman's status and national identity are [...] foregrounded here; national identity is in custody of men, who retain an outlet via sport, while women are silenced'.<sup>104</sup> In its critique of Scotland, the novel consistently implicates nationhood in patriarchal oppression. For Glenda Norquay:

Although Scottishness is not an explicit concern of *The Trick is to Keep Breathing* it is part of the exploration of identity and fragmentation carried on within it. It is too easy, however, to see Joy as representative of any particular kind of Scottishness, or Scotland. Her existence as a woman in Scotland, in a specific class context, produces certain markers of identity: she is a product of a culture in which women are silenced and marginalised in particular ways.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Janice Galloway, *The Trick is to Keep Breathing*, p. 81.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 82.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>104</sup> Mary M. McGlynn, *Narratives of Class in New Irish and Scottish Literature: From Joyce to Kelman, Doyle, Galloway and McNamee*, p. 161.

<sup>105</sup> Glenda Norquay, 'Janice Galloway's Novels: Fraudulent Mooching', p. 137.

Joy resists reproducing the women-as-nation trope identified by Kirsten Stirling.<sup>106</sup> Instead, her critique of Scotland implicates constructions of national identity in the misogynist, state-sanctioned emotional repression which she encounters throughout the novel.

Scotland provides part of the ‘bricolage’ which Joy must negotiate in order to recover a sense of self.<sup>107</sup> Her textual negotiations have a significant role in locating her as ‘being between, rather than working within, tradition’.<sup>108</sup>

It’s important to write things down. The written word is important. The forms of the letters: significance between the loops and dashes. You scour them looking for the truth. I read *The Prophet*, Gide, Kafka and Ivor Cutler. *Gone with the Wind*, *Fat is a Feminist Issue*, Norman MacCaig and Byron. *Lanark*, Muriel Spark, *How to cope with your Nerves/ Loneliness/ Anxiety*, Antonia White and Adrian Mole. *The Francis Gay Friendship Book* and James Kelman. ee cummings. *Unexplained Mysteries* and *Life after Death*. I read magazines, newspapers, billboards, government health warnings, advertising leaflets, saucebottles, cans of beans, Scottish Folk Tales and the Bible. They reveal glimpses of things just beyond the reach of understanding but never the whole truth.<sup>109</sup>

‘The whole truth’ must be pieced together from a multitude of sources, which include several examples of Scottish literature. However, Joy’s identity proves recalcitrant to containment within national paradigms, demonstrating that the intersections of her particular class, gender and national identities produce an ‘excess’ that challenges the totalising boundaries of the nation. Joy’s recognition that national narratives only provide a ‘partial’ truth demonstrates her awareness of herself as excess.

However, literary nationalist criticism can be seen to overwrite Joy’s resistance to totalising nationalism. Norquay, Stirling, Jones and Lehner all oppose an assertion made by Craig in which he reads Joy’s anorexic body in terms of the failed devolution referendum.<sup>110</sup> Craig’s reading states:

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<sup>106</sup> See Kirsten Stirling, *Bella Caledonia: Woman, Nation, Text*.

<sup>107</sup> Glenda Norquay, ‘Janice Galloway’s Novels: Fraudulent Mooching’ p. 131.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 136.

<sup>109</sup> Janice Galloway, *The Trick is to Keep Breathing*, pp. 195-96.

<sup>110</sup> Glenda Norquay, ‘Janice Galloway’s Novels: Fraudulent Mooching’, pp. 136-37; Kirsten Stirling, *Bella Caledonia: Woman, Nation, Text*, pp. 122-23; Carole Jones, *Disappearing Men: Gender Disorientation in Scottish Fiction 1979 – 1999*, p. 75; Stefanie Lehner, *Subaltern Ethics in Contemporary Scottish Literature: Tracing Counter-Histories*, p. 144.

That ‘black hole’, that ‘nothing at all’ is the image not only of a woman negated by a patriarchal society but of a society aware of itself only as an absence, a society living, in the 1980s, in the aftermath of its failure to be reborn.<sup>111</sup>

For Carole Jones, this reading ‘absolves [the] specifically Scottish patriarchy’<sup>112</sup> that the novel critiques. These critics perceive that a nationalist critical practice predicated on state politics subsumes what Stefanie Lehner has termed a ‘critique of the ideological constituents and oppressive structural components of and within the national whole’<sup>113</sup> within a critical agenda which reinscribes the nation’s repression of female identity. Rather than responding to Scottish statelessness, *The Trick is to Keep Breathing* reveals intersections between national culture and the repressive social structures which are reinforced by the state’s refusal to recognise identities that resist traditional gender roles.

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<sup>111</sup> Cairns Craig, *The Modern Scottish Novel: Narrative and the National Imagination*, p. 199.

<sup>112</sup> Carole Jones, *Disappearing Men: Gender Disorientation in Scottish Fiction 1979 – 1999*, p. 75.

<sup>113</sup> Stefanie Lehner, *Subaltern Ethics in Contemporary Scottish and Irish Literature: Tracing Counter-Histories*, p. 7.

## Chapter Five

### Cultural postnationalism? Contemporary literature and Scottish literary studies

This chapter explores the ways in which contemporary Scottish writing responds to the tradition of modern Scottish literature established by cultural nationalist literary criticism. Scottish literary studies has established a critical platform based on its identification of a national literary tradition characterised by marginality, vernacular language and formal experimentation. The texts explored in this chapter engage with themes of identity and community from a perspective which critiques existing group narratives, envisioning alternative communities based on an ‘Otherness’ that is not solely predicated on national difference. In her analysis of the post-*Trainspotting* novel, Kirstin Innes has observed that several post-devolution Scottish novels ‘express a fundamentally incongruous identity, which is at once “Scottish” and representative of an “other form of difference”’.<sup>1</sup> My readings of new Scottish texts as manifesting a plurality of differences responds to Stefanie Lehner’s reading of cultural nationalist criticism, in which critical privileging of nationhood can serve to ‘subsume and occlude alternative forms of social and cultural relationships in terms of gender, class, region, religion, ethnicity and so on – that would allow establishing affiliations “across the margins”’.<sup>2</sup> These texts insist on their protagonists’ incompatibility with established traditions, demonstrating subjectivities which react against their various pedagogical inheritances. This makes manifest the rupture Homi Bhabha associates with the performance of nation as narration (see introduction).

In their focus on forms of difference which compete with national affiliation as primary identification, the texts explored in this chapter invite postnationalist readings. Arjun Appadurai lists the implications of emerging postnational formations, delineating the challenge they mount to the nation as supreme unit of cultural and political organisation:

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<sup>1</sup> Kirstin Innes, ‘Mark Renton’s Bairns: Identity and Language in the Post-*Trainspotting* Novel’, in Berthold Schoene (ed.), *The Edinburgh Companion to Contemporary Scottish Literature* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), pp. 301-09 (p. 309).

<sup>2</sup> Stefanie Lehner, *Subaltern Ethics in Contemporary Scottish Literature: Tracing Counter-Histories* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p. 6.

The first is temporal and historical and suggests that we are in the process of moving to a global order in which the nation-state has become obsolete and other formations for allegiance and identity have taken its place. The second is the idea that what are emerging are strong alternative forms for the organization of global traffic in resources, images and ideas – forms that either contest the nation-state actively or constitute peaceful alternatives for large-scale political loyalties. The third implication is the possibility that, while nations might continue to exist, the steady erosion of the capabilities of the nation-state to monopolize loyalty will encourage the spread of national forms that are largely divorced from territorial states. These are relevant senses of the term *postnational*, but none of them implies that the nation-state in its classical territorial form is as yet out of business. It is certainly in crisis, and part of the crisis is an increasingly violent relationship between the nation-state and its postnational Others.<sup>3</sup>

For Appadurai emergent postnational formations have implications beyond pluralism: they are agents of antagonism in their challenge to the nation's authority as object of identitarian and militaristic loyalties. For Richard Kearney, the formation of European political and economic networks similarly demands a reconfiguration of identities and affiliations:

The European configuration calls for postnationalist ways of thinking. It is emphatically not a question of abandoning self-determination for some European super-state. On the contrary, it is a question of finding modes of self-determination – political and cultural – that are more effective and accommodating than the purely 'national'.<sup>4</sup>

These more accommodating modes of cultural and political self-determination counter the nation's tendency to subsume its Others, resisting the dominating impulses of hegemonic nationalisms that Kearney identifies:

The difficulty arises when 'emergent' nationalism congeals into 'dominant' nationalism and begins to assume exclusivist proportions. This shift often sees notions of absolute sovereignty being invoked to define the 'people' according to a single homogeneous grid which casts others as adversaries and eliminates, or absorbs, minorities.<sup>5</sup>

The texts explored in this chapter demonstrate oppositional identitarian positions, which resist incorporation by the nation's homogenising impulse. They envision the formation of new solidarities which take localised, gendered and marginalised

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<sup>3</sup> Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity At Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), pp. 168-69.

<sup>4</sup> Richard Kearney, *Postnationalist Ireland: Politics, Culture, Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 180.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 183.

identities as primary points of identification, anticipating the subsequent formation of alternative communities.

However, in their centralising of marginalised identity, these texts correspond to a critical narrative within Scottish Studies which has posited subalternity as a hallmark of canonical Scottish fiction. For Liam McIlvanney, '[b]y the late 1970s, novels lamenting the absence of a viable tradition had themselves become a tradition of sorts'.<sup>6</sup> In contrast, the three contemporary writers discussed in this chapter are clearly writing out of an established literary tradition, using techniques that echo the linguistic, structural and experimental modes of their predecessors in Scottish vernacular working-class fiction. Concerns with vernacular language, fragmentation, experimental novelistic structures and marginalised subjectivity are utilised by each author. Thus each author adapts a pedagogical literary inheritance from an institutionalised national tradition in order to formulate their resistance to institutionalised narratives and identities, demonstrating a circularity and entrapment resulting from cultural nationalist criticism's establishment of a tradition of resistance.

Various critical efforts to establish more 'ethical' co-ordinates for Scottish literature address the relationship between resistant texts and a cultural critical narrative that seeks to incorporate them into a linear narrative of literary history. For the editors of *Ethically Speaking: Voice and Values in Modern Scottish Writing*, 'there is no simple way to talk about Scottish literature as if it were one thing'.<sup>7</sup> Their stress on plurality indicates a resistance to the monolithic, homogenising impulses of nation and state: 'Ethically speaking, Scottish writers point out the need to attend to many different narratives and retellings in order that Scots might live more honestly and clear-sightedly with themselves and with the wider world'.<sup>8</sup> Such pluralist agendas fall into the trap identified by Stefanie Lehner, in which ongoing inequalities are masked by postnationalist assertions of

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<sup>6</sup> Liam McIlvanney, 'The Politics of Narrative in the Post-War Scottish Novel', in Zachary Leader (ed.), *On Modern British Fiction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 181-208 (p. 184).

<sup>7</sup> James McGonigal and Kirsten Stirling, 'Introduction', in James McGonigal and Kirsten Stirling (eds), *Ethically Speaking: Voice and Values in Modern Scottish Writing* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2006), pp. 9-15 (p. 10).

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

inclusiveness (see introduction). The last section of this chapter argues that an emergent critical acknowledgement of exploitation within Scottish literary culture counters this effacement, without seeking to rehabilitate Otherness by incorporating it ‘into a grammar of pluralism and inclusiveness’.<sup>9</sup>

Consciously working from within an established national tradition, the literary writers whose work is explored below de-centre and critique notions of solidarity and community, envisioning postnational communities which disregard or transcend boundaries of nation, class, and ethnicity. Gregory Burke’s *Black Watch* (2007) interrogates and laments the end of a military tradition rooted in the regiment’s recruitment heartlands of Fife and Tayside. Alison Miller’s *Demo* (2006) marks the passing of a masculinist Red Clydeside political tradition based in west-coast Scotland, anticipating the formation of new political traditions in which women have a more prominent role. Jenni Fagan’s *The Panopticon* (2012) creates a protagonist whose resistance to fixed identity, traditions and origins make her paradoxically susceptible to readings in terms of the dominant tradition in modern Scottish writing established by cultural nationalist literary criticism. Where invocations of nationhood are necessarily inherent in any discussion of ‘Scottish literature’, explorations of individual and collective identity in these texts resist containment within constructions of nation.

### **Unravelling the Golden Thread: Black Watch and Regimental Identity**

Gregory Burke’s *Black Watch* explores regimental identity and tradition as a basis for solidarity, eschewing the primacy of national identity by evoking the locality of the regiment’s recruiting heartlands in Fife and Tayside as the geographic territory which forms the basis of the recruits’ communal identity. The play simultaneously questions and affirms attitudes to the army and its recruits, through a critique of the identity-myths which reinforce regimental identity. These are perpetuated by an officer class in the play, whilst they are interrogated by the lower-ranking soldiers. Media representations of warfare are also questioned and resisted throughout the play. These are juxtaposed with each other and with the soldier’s dramatized experience of war. This emphasises

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<sup>9</sup> Stefanie Lehner, *Subaltern Ethics in Contemporary Scottish and Irish Literature: Tracing Counter-Histories*, p. 7.

antagonism between the infantry soldiers' experience and opposing narratives constructed by the media and political elites.

Gregory Burke and director John Tiffany employ several experimental techniques in order to emphasise antagonisms between the soldiers and the narratives which attempt to represent them. This is most evident in the use of the 'Writer' character, whose voyeuristic, outsider status connects him with the audience. The Writer is portrayed conducting interviews with the reluctant soldiers in a Fife pub, inviting comparisons with Burke's own status as playwright and researcher and 'hint[ing] at the authorial shaping of the documentary material on which his play is based'.<sup>10</sup> This scenario both fictionalises and documents the innovative writing processes of *Black Watch*, which does not orient itself around an overarching plot, but is structured in such a way as to foreground interrogation of the regiment's identitarian narrative. Rather than dramatising the 'overarching narrative trajectory' associated with interpretations of the novel as a model of the nation, the play uses a fragmented structure, which seeks to deconstruct the encompassing, totalising impulse of the 'Golden Thread' – the mythic narrative of the regiment's history. Instead of a conventional script, the play juxtaposes scenes in a Fife pub with scenes from the soldiers' deployment in Iraq, employing direct address to the audience, military songs, physical theatre and representations of media and political discourses.

Janine Hauthal has described the play as 'an example of the recent rise of documentary realism'.<sup>11</sup> She explains: '*Black Watch*'s extensive use of verbatim techniques is predicated on a realist epistemology, seeking a "truthful" representation of "reality"'.<sup>12</sup> The play's use of verbatim techniques are foregrounded by the presence of the Writer, who also provides a vehicle for the soldier's hostility towards any containing or representative narrative. Resistance to, and refutation of, imposed identities and representations becomes a structural

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<sup>10</sup> Janine Hauthal, 'Realisms in British Drama since the 1990s: Anthony Neilson's *Realism* and Gregory Burke's *Black Watch*', in Dorothee Birke and Stella Butter (eds), *Realisms in Contemporary Culture: Theories, Politics and Medial Configurations* (Berlin: Walter De Gruyter, 2013), pp. 146-77 (p. 167).

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 147.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

device in the play.<sup>13</sup> This is particularly striking in the opening lines, in which Cammy directly addresses the audience with his resistance to stereotypes of military identity: ‘I think people’s minds are usually made up about you if you were in the army. [...] They poor fucking boys, they cannay dae anything else. [...] I want you to fucking know. I wanted to be in the army. I could have done other stuff. I’m not a fucking knuckle dragger’.<sup>14</sup> The use of urban vernacular language demonstrates the play’s allegiance to Scottish literature’s textual enfranchisement of the working class, while the antagonistic tone of the soldiers when addressing both audience and Writer demonstrates an oppositional resistance to stereotyping. The theatrical techniques employed, including the ‘documentary realism’ and ‘verbatim’ writing processes – which make use of material adapted from interviews conducted with former Black Watch soldiers – privilege the soldiers’ accounts above the other competing discourses within the play.

Although the play draws on the frustrated, working-class Scottish masculine subjectivities which have been nationalised through cultural criticism, solidarity within the regiment is continually identified as the primary site of allegiance and identity over the nation. The final scene of *Black Watch* attests to the power of the regimental solidarity created by military culture, which is overtly asserted as more fundamental than nationalist loyalties:

<b>Macca</b>	It was the regimental system ay. It was perfect.
<b>Granty</b>	You got tay go way the people you kent.
<b>Rosco</b>	And you get to fight.
<b>Nasby</b>	That’s what we’re trained for.
<b>Cammy</b>	That’s what we joined the army tay day.
<b>Rosco</b>	Fight.
<b>Cammy</b>	No for our government.
<b>Macca</b>	No for Britain.
<b>Nasby</b>	No even for Scotland.
<b>Cammy</b>	I fought for my regiment.
<b>Rosco</b>	I fought for my company.
<b>Granty</b>	I fought for my platoon.
<b>Nasby</b>	I fought for my section.
<b>Stewarty</b>	I fought for my mates.
<b>Cammy</b>	Fucking shite fight tay end way tho. <sup>15</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Janine Hauthal, ‘Realisms in British Drama since the 1990s: Anthony Neilson’s *Realism* and Gregory Burke’s *Black Watch*’, p. 166.

<sup>14</sup> Gregory Burke, *Black Watch* (London: Faber, 2007), p. 4.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 72.

The supercession of regimental affiliation over nationalism resonates with a wider de-centring in contemporary Scottish writing, in which alternative, sub- and supra-national communities are posited as more fundamental than the nation.

Nira Yuval-Davis explains:

While ideological patriotic convictions on the one hand, and material and status rewards on the other, can be more or less important in different experiences of fighting, it is always the feeling that one can rely on one's fellow soldiers and on mutual loyalty in situations of life and death which is mentioned as the continuously nurturing sentiment in the daily lives of the warriors.<sup>16</sup>

However, for Michael Billig, armies play a crucial role in the reinforcement of nationalist ideology:

All societies that maintain armies maintain the belief that some things are more valuable than life itself. [...] Much [...] slaughter has been performed in the name of the nation, whether to achieve national independence, or to defend the national territory from encroachment, or to protect the very principle of nationhood.<sup>17</sup>

However, the relationship between the soldiers in the play and the nation is fraught with tension. In *Black Watch*, the history, narratives and institutions of Scottish national identity are implicated in the reinforcement of the regimental identity which is critiqued by the soldiers – particularly Cammy – as a decayed, defunct narrative. The decline in the authority of the regiment's identitarian mythos demonstrates the decline in the nation's authority as commander of military loyalty and sacrifice.

In *Black Watch*, solidarity between the soldiers is reinforced even as notions of the regimental tradition which created this solidarity are critiqued and undermined. The interrogation of narratives of identity is manifest by the play's final scene, in which the regiment are portrayed as losing a battle, which undermines the Officer's desire for a fitting end to what he sees as a triumphant regimental history: 'This may be the last attack for the First Battalion, the Black Watch. Let us make sure it goes as well as anything we have done in the past and

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<sup>16</sup> Nira Yuval-Davis, *Gender and Nation* (London: Sage, 1997), p. 108.

<sup>17</sup> Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism* (London: Sage, 1995), p. 1.

is one that we can be proud of'.<sup>18</sup> The scene symbolises the demise and decline of the regiment in the form of the soldiers' attempt to parade, which fails:

Music. The bagpipes and drums start playing 'The Black Bear'. The soldiers start parading. The music intensifies and quickens as the parade becomes harder and the soldiers stumble and fall. The parade formation begins to disintegrate but each time one falls they are helped back onto their feet by the others. As the music and movement climax, a thunderous drumbeat stops both, and the exhausted, breathless soldiers are left in silhouette.<sup>19</sup>

The disintegration of the parade symbolises the decline of a sense of regimental identity, which a distinguishing mythos – aided by Scottish culture in the form of kilts, tartan, bagpipes, military songs and music of the national folk tradition – has failed to sustain, since the Black Watch faces amalgamation and reorganisation within the British army. This threatens to alienate the regiment from some of its traditional recruiting heartlands and subsequently from aspects of the foundational narrative of the Golden Thread.<sup>20</sup> However, the soldiers' assertions that their primary loyalty is to each other are reinforced in this final scene, which leaves audiences with an emotive image of the soldiers helping each other in the face of defeat – and helping each other towards that defeat. *Black Watch* critiques the regiment's reinforcement of an identity myth which vindicates and glorifies Scottish involvement in global conflict, whilst frequently affirming and glorifying the solidarity created by this regimental identity myth through dramatic techniques. The choreography here functions for Janine Hauthal as part of a wider strategy of 'enlistment' within the play, which 'uses the resources of performance to encourage emotional contagion'.<sup>21</sup> The choreography and music (discussed below) function to 'address audiences emotionally and [...] to align them with the characters'.<sup>22</sup> Despite the play's critique of the strategies that produce the Black Watch's regimental solidarity, *Black Watch* extends this solidarity to the audience through use of metatheatrical devices: 'the metatheatrical devices written into the play – the writer-figure and the direct

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<sup>18</sup> Gregory Burke, *Black Watch*, p. 72.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 73.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 42.

<sup>21</sup> Janine Hauthal, 'Realisms in British Drama since the 1990s: Anthony Neilson's *Realism* and Gregory Burke's *Black Watch*', p. 172.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

address of the audience – support the notion of theatrical immediacy and thus of the performance as a shared intimate experience of actors and audience’.<sup>23</sup>

For the soldiers, the regiment offers a source of community and identity which the nation has failed to provide. In a conversation between infantry soldier Cammy and his officer, the decline of the Black Watch regiment is posited as the last remaining site of a continuous narrative of inherited identity, and in this capacity is akin to the Scottish industries which have declined before it:

**Officer**           Some of us . . . it’s in the blood.

*Beat.*

And I always thought . . . well, it’s not like any other job, is it?

*Beat.*

It’s part of who we are, where we come from. It’s the reason you join up in the first place. The Golden Thread.

**Cammy**           People have said that about a lot of things. The shipyards, the pits. They can have all the adverts they want, but if cunts like me are sacking it, it’s . . .

**Officer**           It’s a fucking shame.

**Cammy**           It’s fucking knackered. Don’t you think it’s knackered, sir?

**Officer**           It takes three hundred years to build an army that’s admired and respected around the world. But it only takes three years pissing about in the desert in the biggest western foreign policy disaster ever to fuck it up completely.<sup>24</sup>

Cammy has previously viewed joining the regiment as a preferable option to the others afforded to young working-class men in Scotland, informing the officer that he ‘couldnay ever have seen [him]self behind the deli counter in Tesco or anything like that’.<sup>25</sup> However, he refuses to accept the officer’s reinforcement of a Golden Thread narrative that posits service in the regiment as a continuous and noble inheritance. For Cammy, these other, redundant occupations in Scotland – his mention of shipbuilding and mining indicates the nation’s industrial past – have each formed cultures and traditions too, and yet have been subject to a pattern of redundancy and disillusionment to which the regiment is not immune. In his view, the regiment is equally as ‘knackered’ as the deindustrialised Scotland which he has joined the army in order to escape, repeating the crises of post-industrial Scotland rather than presenting an alternative.

<sup>23</sup> Janine Hauthal, ‘Realisms in British Drama since the 1990s: Anthony Neilson’s *Realism* and Gregory Burke’s *Black Watch*’, p. 173.

<sup>24</sup> Gregory Burke, *Black Watch*, p. 71.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 70.

For Nicholas Cull, Burke's portrayal of the Black Watch regiment posits the regiment's Golden Thread identity narrative as exploitative of class identity and radical political energy:

Burke approached the play knowing that the Black Watch are raised in the same towns and pit villages as furnished the ranks of the Scottish labour movement. Their regimental spirit, in Burke's hands, seems like an embezzlement of the resource of class solidarity, which has been redirected to serve the ends of the Imperial and post-Imperial state.<sup>26</sup>

While *Black Watch* critiques a regimental myth which exploits class solidarity, the play utilises – and, as I argue below, exploits – literary markers of radical class politics which have been established as central to recent Scottish fiction. Burke's highly successful, award-winning play inherits the literary tropes associated with 1980s and 90s working-class urban Renaissance writing: vernacular language, working class identity, damaged masculinity, and post-industrial decline. *Black Watch* uses the vernacular and working-class energies of earlier writing to demonstrate Scotland's role in contemporary neo-imperialism — and, crucially, the compatibility of Scottish working-class identity with imperialist narratives. His stated aim is to demonstrate that 'Scotland has been part of the brutal suppression of freedom'.<sup>27</sup> Through Burke's portrayal of the Golden Thread mythology as an exploitation of Scottish working-class identity that serves British imperial directives abroad, *Black Watch* delineates a working-class Scottish identity that does not resist, but is entirely compatible with, imperialism. The Golden Thread mythology demonstrates the limits of critical claims that cultural constructions of Scottish working-class identity are radical, anti-imperialist and left-wing. Where critics including Roderick Watson and Douglas Mack have read recent working-class Scottish texts as literary manifestations of oppositional, anti-imperial voices from the margins (see introduction), *Black Watch* presents a divergence from these portrayals of resistant working-class masculinity, demonstrating a post-industrial, working-

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<sup>26</sup> Nicholas Cull, 'The National Theatre of Scotland's Black Watch: Theatre as Cultural Diplomacy', University of Southern California Centre on Public Diplomacy. Available at: [http://uscpublicdiplomacy.org/sites/uscpublicdiplomacy.org/files/legacy/media/Black\\_Watch\\_Publication\\_010808.pdf](http://uscpublicdiplomacy.org/sites/uscpublicdiplomacy.org/files/legacy/media/Black_Watch_Publication_010808.pdf) [accessed December 2014].

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

class, Scottish masculinity which is complicit with marginalisation and disenfranchisement.

Cammy's staunch refusal to apologise for the most brutal aspects of the regiment's history, or for its recent tactics in Iraq, demonstrates this. For him, the public perception of British troops in Iraq as 'bullies' does not require countering, since '[b]ullying's the fucking job'.<sup>28</sup> Similar arguments aimed at the regiment's past – particularly regarding Culloden – are also dismissed: 'The Highlands were fucked'.<sup>29</sup> Cammy's initial recounting of the Golden Thread narrative demonstrates a regimental identity which is confidently and proudly aware of its role in the enforcement of imperial power, both at home and abroad. This refusal to criticise the regiment's actions post-Culloden also serves to dispel any nationalist basis for the regiment's foundations. Where otherwise the use of pipes and kilts might posit the regiment as a repository of Scottish cultural difference, its active role in the decimation of the Highlands – where these markers of Scottish national difference originate – counters this, positioning the Highland regiments as sites of the exploitation and appropriation of traditional Highland culture, rather than sites of its preservation. This presentation of imperialist domination as justified and inevitable marks a departure from the anti-imperialist agenda of working-class Scottish writing in the 1980s and 90s.

Despite their assertions of active complicity with power, the soldiers display an ambivalent relationship to their job which is manifest through their interrogation of the campaign in Iraq, and of the Golden Thread narrative. This interrogation exposes the limitations of notions of inheritance, tradition and communal identity. The Golden Thread is frequently evoked by the unnamed Officer, whose emails are narrated as part of the play. These affectionate tone of these emails, and their use of a more elevated register than the soldiers' accounts of their experiences, demonstrates an ideological and class division between the Officer and the other soldiers portrayed. The emails demonstrate the officer's awareness of his role in the reinforcing morale, and he relies on repetition of the Golden Thread to vindicate the regiment's role in global injustice, as manifest by their controversial campaign in Iraq.

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<sup>28</sup> Gregory Burke, *Black Watch*, p. 4.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.

However, the version of the Golden Thread related by Cammy opposes and undermines the officer's affirmations. In one of the play's key scenes, Cammy is dressed and re-dressed in the various uniforms worn by the Black Watch throughout its history, whilst he narrates a version of this history which invites us to read it against the grain. His retelling interrogates the mythical basis of regimental identity, revealing the circularity of the regiment's history through repeated references to the battle of Culloden. Culloden is posited as fundamental to the regiment's origin story, providing a connection between regimental and national history:

**Cammy** We started before Culloden. We dinna really ken when. 1715, or maybe 1725. When Scotland was an independent nation we were fucking mercenaries tay half ay fuckin Europe. But it was 1739 when we really threw our lot in way the British.

*Beat.*

Some people thought we chose this dark tartan to reflect our black, betraying hearts. Bollocks. Fuck all that Cullodenshite. The Highlands were fucked.

*Beat.*

And they let us keep our weapons. Our kilts and our bagpipes. And they told us that we'd never have to serve abroad. (*Laughs.*) But that's the fucking army for you.<sup>30</sup>

The irreverence of this take on the Golden Thread mythology and the implication that the regiment is founded on false assurances – a falsity which Cammy associates with the army more generally – serve to undermine the ideas of grandeur, glory and inheritance that are crucial to the regiment's self-constructed and self-perpetuating mythology. Cammy recognises that this mythology is an exploitative recruiting technique, which is furthered by the distinctive indicators of regimental identity which in turn become incorporated into the Golden Thread: 'The Red Hackle. [...] The British army likes little touches like that. It calls them force multipliers. Gets the cannon fodder hammering down the recruitment office doors'.<sup>31</sup> These identity markers are instruments of a manipulation which extends to the British army 'allowing' the Highland regiments to retain kilts and bagpipes in order to exploit these indicators of Scottish difference in the interests of the British empire.

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<sup>30</sup> Gregory Burke, *Black Watch*, p. 30-31.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 32.

The regiment has an ambivalent status as both carrier and eradicator of a distinctive, proscribed Scottish Highland identity. This ambivalence is demonstrated through Cammy's assertion of ethnic tribalism, which demonstrates his allegiance to group identity myths even as he questions them:

We're warriors. We're Celts. [...] The thing about the Celts, apart fay being an oral culture and disappearing fay history, was that they looked upon warfare as sport. [...] a lot ay the time we've been used in tribal conflicts. [...] We're a fucking tribe ourselves.<sup>32</sup>

However, Cammy's reinforcement of tribal and ethnic identities is soon undermined by his recounting of the regiment's involvement in 'the American War ay independence', after which 'it was rightly decreed that Battle Honours should not be granted for a war with our own kith and kin. [...] I didnay see any cunt I knew'.<sup>33</sup> Throughout this scene the Black Watch's history is presented as fragmented and partial. For Nicholas Cull, Cammy's self-contradiction indicates the 'disorientation of being caught in the flow of a half-understood history'.<sup>34</sup> It also establishes the characters' ambivalent relationship to their regiment and the war they are fighting in. For David Archibald, this ambivalence is insufficient as an interrogation of Scotland's complicity in British imperialism, since the play does not question official history so much as it reinforces it:

So there is space, if not to construct an alternative history, then at least to read the one that is presented against the grain; nevertheless, the historical narrative that is privileged is the official one, the myth of 'The Golden Thread'. [...] *Black Watch* slots unproblematically into an official (Scottish) state version of the past. It has issues with Iraq, but not with the previous three centuries of imperial subjugation.<sup>35</sup>

For Archibald, the message presented by the play is articulated by Cammy's Officer, who views Scottish involvement in Iraq as 'an aberration in a 300-year

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<sup>32</sup> Gregory Burke, *Black Watch*, p. 31.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Nicholas Cull, 'The National Theatre of Scotland's Black Watch: Theatre as Cultural Diplomacy', <[http://uscpublicdiplomacy.org/sites/uscpublicdiplomacy.org/files/legacy/media/Black\\_Watch\\_Publication\\_010808.pdf](http://uscpublicdiplomacy.org/sites/uscpublicdiplomacy.org/files/legacy/media/Black_Watch_Publication_010808.pdf)>.

<sup>35</sup> David Archibald, "'We're just big bullies...'" Gregory Burke's *Black Watch*, *The Drouth* 26 (2008), pp. 8-13 (pp. 9-10). Available at: <<http://www.thedrouth.org/singles/?author=52da9d48e4b03d3145759f90>> [accessed December 2014].

history'<sup>36</sup> – a regimental history which is ultimately celebrated by the play's strategies of 'emotional enlistment'. Thus it ultimately reaffirms, rather than challenges, official state narratives. This position finds reinforcement in the Scottish Government's support for the play. Along with several other commentators, Trish Reid notes that '[i]n 2007, the newly-elected SNP government mounted two Gala productions of *Black Watch* to mark the opening of the new parliamentary session'.<sup>37</sup> For her, government – and nationalist – approval of the play is facilitated by its failure to address the regiment's involvement in British imperialism.<sup>38</sup> The endorsement of the play by a government claiming Scottish nationalist credentials indicates its collusion with official, state discourse and implies that the play does not overtly critique the institutionalized, established practices and traditions of the nation – or the state. However, despite *Black Watch's* failure to sufficiently criticise Scottish collusion with imperialism, its critique of identity myths and the loyalties they instil is crucial to a nuanced understanding of the play. The working-class solidarity which the regiment redirects and exploits has been undermined and disenfranchised within Scotland. Therefore, if the play can be read as a lament for the soon-to-be-amalgamated Black Watch regiment, it can also be read as a critique of regimental identity through its recognition and exposure of the Golden Thread's role in the exploitation of working-class solidarity.

In his 'Author's Note' for the play's 'Press Pack', Burke makes explicit reference to a relationship between identity and exploitation:

Young men around the world are often limited to narrow, predetermined roles that prove more fragile and less sustainable under the pressures of growing up. Many of them find that the identities they would wish to choose for themselves aren't available when they reach adulthood. If the environment does not offer an alternative when this change confronts

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<sup>36</sup> David Archibald, "'We're just big bullies...'" Gregory Burke's *Black Watch*', p. 10.

<sup>37</sup> Trish Reid, 'Post-Devolutionary Drama', in Ian Brown (ed.), *The Edinburgh Companion to Scottish Drama* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), pp. 188-99 (p. 196).

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

them, then sometimes they turn to those organisations that are adept at exploiting this need for identity.<sup>39</sup>

The attraction of the *Black Watch* for these young men is, by this logic, its provision of an instant history and identity. In his recounting of the Golden Thread mythology, Cammy identifies with the Celts as a race which have disappeared from history (see above). The regiment's identity narrative counteracts this sense of identity crisis: 'That's what a regiment is, ay? It's history'.<sup>40</sup> The attraction of the regiment is its perceived connection to a localised, communal identity, rooted in the working-class towns and villages which form its traditional recruiting heartlands: 'It's part of who we are, where we come from. It's the reason you join up in the first place'.<sup>41</sup> The pageantry of the regiment provides a substitute for cultural identity and belonging, which resonates with one of the play's 'Officer Emails', in which the 'logic of suicide terrorism' is described in terms which recall the infantry soldiers' account of their attraction to the regiment: 'The choice to become a religious martyr is the outcome of a struggle to establish an identity in adolescence'.<sup>42</sup> In the discussions between the soldiers and the Writer (a fictionalised version of Burke), there is a suggestion that they joined the regiment as teenagers due to a similar identity crisis, resulting from dissatisfaction with the other career/employment options available to them: 'I went tay college first. Daying computers, but it was pish. I fucking hated it'.<sup>43</sup> Burke's play posits both the regiment and terrorist insurgency as quick fixes to adolescent uncertainties. This structural parallel between the soldiers' accounts of their rationale for joining the army, and the Officer's account of the insurgents' rationale, posits a disenfranchised youth identity which resonates across international borders, functioning 'across the margins' in the manner of emergent postnational identity formations.

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<sup>39</sup> Gregory Burke, 'Author's Note', in '*Black Watch* Press and Marketing Pack' produced by National Theatre of Scotland. Available at: <[http://www.nationaltheatrescotland.com/content/mediaassets/doc/BW\\_Press\\_Marketing\\_Pack.doc](http://www.nationaltheatrescotland.com/content/mediaassets/doc/BW_Press_Marketing_Pack.doc)> [accessed December 2014].

<sup>40</sup> Gregory Burke, *Black Watch*, p. 25.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 71.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 58.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.

The play implicates Scottish culture in the regiment's provision of a substitute identity. The regimental culture of the Black Watch is rooted in Scottish cultural difference, and traditional, folk culture in particular is implicated in the perpetuation of the Golden Thread mythology. The play is punctuated with Scots songs from the tradition that are associated with the regiment and military culture, which have been set to visceral, minimal piano arrangements by Davey Anderson.<sup>44</sup> These arrangements have been aptly interpreted by Cull as 'reimaginings' which posit the songs 'as laments for the dead'.<sup>45</sup> Their use of minor keys and minimalist techniques overwrites militancy with poignancy, providing one of the play's strategies of 'emotional enlistment' analysed by Hauthal (see above). Where these songs are traditionally performed as jolly, upbeat and driven, Anderson's arrangements are more in-keeping with the play's aim to capture, preserve, and interrogate the history and identity of a regiment soon to be amalgamated and reorganised within larger forces of the British army. However, the lyrics and basic melodies of the songs were not written for the play but are 'real' Scottish traditional songs associated with the regiment, which are still widely performed by folk musicians in Scotland. When Granty persuades Cammy to leave college and join the regiment with him, he uses the language of one of the songs to do so, specifically the phrase 'come awa way me' from the song 'Twa Recruiting Sergeants'.<sup>46</sup> This song develops an anthemic quality within the play: it is performed in full in one scene, and repeated in a refrain the soldiers sing in chorus to the Writer.<sup>47</sup> Scottish army songs punctuate and echo throughout the play, implicating Scotland's national and folk culture in the country's involvement in global imperialism and military dominance.

A parodic recruitment scene further reinforces the relationship between nationhood and army recruitment strategies. The scene is reminiscent of John McGrath's celebrated play *The Cheviot, the Stag and the Black, Black Oil* in its

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<sup>44</sup> Davey Anderson, 'Backstage: Creating the Music of Black Watch'. Available at: <<http://www.nationaltheatrescotland.com/content/default.asp?page=s669>> [accessed December 2014].

<sup>45</sup> Nicholas Cull, 'The National Theatre of Scotland's Black Watch: Theatre as Cultural Diplomacy', <[http://uscpublicdiplomacy.org/sites/uscpublicdiplomacy.org/files/legacy/media/Black\\_Watch\\_Publication\\_010808.pdf](http://uscpublicdiplomacy.org/sites/uscpublicdiplomacy.org/files/legacy/media/Black_Watch_Publication_010808.pdf)>.

<sup>46</sup> Gregory Burke, *Black Watch*, p. 21.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 46.

use of comedy and its portrayal of a stereotype of Scottish aristocracy. In the scene Lord Elgin urges working-class Scots to fight in the First World War, by invoking a national military lineage which originates with Robert the Bruce:

**Lord Elgin** Now, as you know, my ancestor led his men at Bannockburn and is buried nearby in Dumfermline Abbey. He led his men in a fight for freedom from tyranny of a foreign power and the need then, as now, for Scotland to serve their country in its hour of need is great. [...] I raise the sword of King Robert the Bruce of Scotland high above my head – (*he does.*) and ask you – (*Shouts.*) wha’ll follow Bruce?  
**Granty** How much?<sup>48</sup>

The anti-climactic response to Elgin’s bourgeois nationalism demonstrates that official national history is seen as irrelevant by the working-class recruits, while the speech itself represents the way in which the ruling class are able to use even the most directly nationalist aspects of Scottish history in the interests of the British state. This manipulation mirrors the the regiment’s use of the Golden Thread narrative, which similarly appropriates Scotland’s national military past as an incitement to serve British interests overseas. Both exploit working-class backgrounds in their recruitment strategies. Lord Elgin states: ‘The Somme region’s fucking beautiful this time ay year . . . You’ll no be crouching in an eighteen-inch seam over there’.<sup>49</sup> The double meaning of eighteen-inch seam as coal-mine and war-trench invites a comparison between mining and soldiering as repositories of Scottish working-class masculinity – and as similar sites of working-class exploitation in British imperial interests. It is Elgin’s vision of ‘[g]uns and football and drink and exotic pootang and that’, positing war as the site of a toxic stereotype of hegemonic masculinity, which eventually persuades the recruits in the scene to join up.<sup>50</sup> Reading this scene in parallel with the attractions of the Golden Thread narrative exposes the regiment’s attraction for working-class men, as the site of restoration of a masculinity which has been broken by harsh industrial conditions and by the effects of deindustrialisation on traditional mining communities. The scene demonstrates an exploitative ‘marketing’ of war, in which the ruling class posit it as the site of opportunities and identities not available to the recruits at home, whilst the scripting

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<sup>48</sup> Gregory Burke, *Black Watch*, pp. 25-26.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27.

undermines this by evoking comparisons between industrial labour and war. *Black Watch* does not counter imperialist narratives, however it does posit imperialism as facilitated by ruling- and officer-class exploitation of crises in masculinity and the identity of traditional mining communities in a post-industrial era. The nation is implicated as enabling this exploitation, since Scotland's history and culture are easily adapted to suit the purposes of the army through the Golden Thread narrative.

Trish Reid notes that, although the play takes as his subject matter the established theme of 'the negative effects of heavy industry on the working-class male psyche', it repeats stereotypes of the Scottish hard-man whilst failing 'to problematize its own residual masculinism – that is, the grounds on which it constructs and critiques the world from an exclusively male perspective'.<sup>51</sup> Women are conspicuously absent from the account of the *Black Watch* given here – except as promised rewards for military participation. However, the group mentality and male solidarity constructed by the Golden Thread, which is celebrated during the scenes which dramatise combat, is also revealed as toxic, violent and dangerous throughout the scenes in the pub. At the start, the soldiers who have gathered to be interviewed by the Writer declaim, in misogynist terms, the absence of a female researcher.<sup>52</sup> In the civilian world, the group dynamic created by the Golden Thread becomes particularly sinister, and is manifest as the soldier's obligation to protect outsiders from each other – and to protect each other from themselves. In a perversion of shared experience and the solidarity it invokes, Stewarty threateningly insists that the Writer must share his experience in order to accurately portray it:

**Stewarty** [...] See when it got better. My arm. I fucking broke it again myself. (*Pause.*) And I kept breaking it. [...] Write that down.  
**Writer** I will.  
**Stewarty** Write it down way a broken arm though.  
*Stewarty grabs the Writer's arm.*  
**Cammy** Come on Stewarty, leave the boy alone.  
 [...]  
**Stewarty** If he wants tay ken about Iraq, he has tay feel some pain?  
**Cammy** It's no his fault.  
*They pull Stewarty away from the Writer.*

<sup>51</sup> Trish Reid, *Theatre and Scotland* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), pp. 80-81.

<sup>52</sup> Gregory Burke, *Black Watch*, pp. 4-5.

[...]

**Cammy** I knew it was gonnam be a fucking disaster, you coming here . . .

**Writer** Is he always like that?

**Cammy** Stewarty was signed off with depression after we got back from Iraq the first time. But when they knew they were going back they lost his paperwork. No just his. Everycunt who'd tried to leave. Stewarty shouldn't have been there the second time. [...] If they need you they'll lose your paperwork.<sup>53</sup>

Stewarty's continual conscription despite his poor mental health indicates a more sinister side to *Black Watch* solidarity: that the soldiers must fight united, as a complete regiment, regardless of whether all are fit to do so. This is a solidarity in which there is no accommodation for the individual; the regiment is prioritised at all costs. For Berthold Schoene in his reading of nationalism and masculinities, this self-effacement is a manifestation of a patriarchal nationalism which reinscribes national boundaries through masculine collectivity:

Summoned to project and uphold an appearance of invincible strength in order to deter other nations from attempting to attack or invade their territory, men must subscribe, not only with their bodies but with their whole being, to the formation of a hard national shell [...]. This collective masculine fortification of the nation's boundaries requires a total disembodiment of the individual male, a self-effacing, evacuative surrender of his individual interiority to the tumescent inscription of supra-individual, communal causes. [...] As an indispensable part of the rhetoric of the patriarchally organised nation state, the individual male's private persona is required to perform a vanishing act by allowing itself to be assimilated without trace into a collective masculinist show of communal uniformity, designed to camouflage the nation's otherwise helplessly exposed feminine body within.<sup>54</sup>

Despite Reid's claims (above) that *Black Watch* fails to problematize its own masculinism, its portrayal of masculine solidarities does interrogate the male solidarity constructed by the regiment, by implicating it in a regressive reinscription of the boundaries of the patriarchal nation-state.

*Black Watch* explores the decline of a particular era of working-class masculinity, dramatising the regiment's dependence on male adolescent and post-

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<sup>53</sup> Gregory Burke, *Black Watch*, pp. 64-65.

<sup>54</sup> Berthold Schoene, 'The Union and Jack: British masculinities, pomophobia, and the post-nation', in Glenda Norquay and Gerry Smyth (eds), *Across the Margins: identity, resistance and minority culture throughout the British Archipelago* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), pp. 83-98 (pp. 85-86).

industrial identity crises in order to recruit. Where the regiment has been posited by Burke as the last repository of an industrial, working-class solidarity, it exploits the post-industrial decline in community and masculine identities which is explored in the 1980s and 90s urban Renaissance fiction of James Kelman, Janice Galloway and A. L. Kennedy. By positing an alternative group identity in the form of a regiment who insist that their loyalties are to each other, rather than their country, *Black Watch* gestures towards an alternative narrative of group identity. The regiment re-inscribes the boundaries of the nation in its demands for self-effacing unity, yet commands a solidarity and loyalty which is more binding for the soldiers than the nation. The play ultimately reproduces the same malaise of broken masculinity and post-industrial decline as earlier Scottish writing, repeating these tropes in the absence of the radical and subversive character of the earlier work. For Kirstin Innes, some new vernacular writing is ‘keen to appropriate, and financially benefit from, the new literary kudos of “cutting-edge”, working-class machismo’.<sup>55</sup> Where the play is attuned to the exploitative nature of a Golden Thread narrative which appropriates and redirects working-class solidarity, it repeats this exploitation in its utilisation of tropes established by earlier Scottish fiction. *Black Watch* presents vernacular Scottishness and broken post-industrial masculinity through the topical lens of the Iraq war, confronting paying audiences globally with a sensationalised portrayal of damaged Scottishness.

**‘Piecing together some kind of narrative’: Intertextuality and female solidarity in Alison Miller’s *Demo***

Alison Miller’s debut novel *Demo* focuses on characters who are traditionally marginalised by identitarian narratives predicated on working-class solidarity, seeking to construct alternative narratives of female radical political identity. Through intertextuality and a fragmented novelistic structure, Miller’s novel indicates an emergent community of politically radical women. Her two protagonists, Clare and Laetitia, demonstrate an alienation from each other which is reinforced by their differing class and national identities. This alienation

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<sup>55</sup> Kirstin Innes, ‘Mark Renton’s Bairns: Identity and Language in the Post-Trains-potting Novel’, p. 304.

prevents the female solidarity desired, and anticipated, by the novel. *Demo* posits an emergent community predicated on female political agency and action. Kirsten Stirling and James McGonigal have posited the envisioning of alternative imagined communities as a part of wider tendency in modern Scottish writing, which they recognise as concerned ‘with the complex relations of the individual to the community’, specifying that ‘[t]he community that is imagined, however, need not necessarily be the nation’.<sup>56</sup>

For Mohammad A. Bamyeh, ‘postnational culture is perspectively fragmented rather than wholistic’.<sup>57</sup> Fragmentation of narrative perspective is a key structural feature in *Demo*’s split narrative, which focalises events through two female narrators. This splitting is emphasised by a linguistic tension between the narratives. Teenaged, working-class Clare’s narrative is written in an urban vernacular Glaswegian, which does not use quotation marks to separate narration from dialogue, demonstrating an allegiance to the experimental narrative styles of Kelman, Gray and Galloway. The centrality of this style to an established canon of modern Scottish writing means that its utilisation here demonstrates an allegiance to an autonomous national literary tradition. However, the novel subsumes this national tradition within an emergent female radical political identity, countering nationalism’s tendency to subsume competing identities. Contrasting with Clare’s vernacular narrative, middle-class, English Laetitia’s narrative is constructed in a conventional Standard English (although it also eschews use of quotation marks). Laetitia’s narrative is mainly in third person, with the exception of the extracts from her diary, creating further contrast between the two characters. These stylistic choices emphasise the difference between the two women in terms of class, nationality and accent, and also foreground their alienation from each other throughout the novel. However, the intertextual relationship between the narratives indicates the potential, unrealised solidarity between the two characters. Alison Miller’s formal choices both demonstrate allegiance to an established Scottish literary tradition, and a desire to

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<sup>56</sup> James McGonigal and Kirsten Stirling, ‘Introduction’, p. 10.

<sup>57</sup> Mohammad A. Bamyeh, ‘Postnationalism’, *Bulletin of the Royal Institute for Inter-faith Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 2 (Autumn/Winter 2001). Available at: <[http://208.112.119.94/journal/essay\\_v3no2\\_bmyeh.htm](http://208.112.119.94/journal/essay_v3no2_bmyeh.htm)> [accessed December 2014].

re-articulate the motifs centralised by cultural nationalism with emergent female political identities. The frustrated, ambivalent and antagonistic relationship between the narratives anticipates the construction of an emergent, postnational formation, which challenges the totalising boundaries of nationhood by competing with an increasingly defunct national identity as a basis for solidarity.

This emergent, radical, female political community transcends boundaries of nation, race, religion, and class. *Demo* is set in a Glasgow where deindustrialisation and the decline of trade union activism have resulted in a departure from traditional class identities, engendering a new generation defined by a globalised political landscape. The performance of political agency in *Demo* ruptures inherited, institutionalised, masculinist formations of industrial action and trade-unionism:

Ma da keeps goin on about Danny no havin a job. Like it's his fault he got his books fae the Call Centre. They're always arguin. [...] Danny used to say nothin, but since he joined his group he's more able for my da and he gives it, So where's your politics now? The big socialist, eh? The Big Red Clydesider. That kinda work's crap and you know it. You're no even allowed out for a pish. Some a they boys in there have never even *heard* of a union.<sup>58</sup>

The anti-capitalist, anti-war politics shared by Miller's characters exemplify a postnational solidarity which responds to global political systems through opposition to neo-colonialism, capitalism and war, viewing international alliances between states as more a fundamental target for their opposition than the nation. Bamyeh elucidates a postnationalist desire for global solidarity amongst those with shared interests:

The idea of 'interests' as a basis for solidarity may be generalised to include those that are indeed identified as 'material' in nature, yet shared beyond various kinds of lines, including class lines. Adherents of these types of solidarity assert that there are global causes – precisely because large sectors of humanity have shared interests – that can be articulated in broader terms than economic interest to the self and beyond national borders. Movements that exhibit such an outlook include variants of environmentalism, pacifism, human rights, feminism and so on. [...] Movements oriented toward human causes in any genre tend to articulate them on the basis of passions for objectives that are seen to be irreducibly universal in nature.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Alison Miller, *Demo* (London: Penguin, 2006), p. 4. First published 2005.

<sup>59</sup> Mohammad A. Bamyeh, 'Postnationalism', <[http://208.112.119.94/journal/essy\\_v3no2\\_bmyeh.htm](http://208.112.119.94/journal/essy_v3no2_bmyeh.htm)>.

Miller's two narrators, Clare and Laetitia, are from different classes and opposite sides of the Scottish-English border. However, their mutual participation in global resistance to state power intersects with the novel's fragmented narrative of female experience, resistance and agency, which desires and anticipates a cross-cultural female solidarity.

The protagonists of *Demo* have inherited their interests in radical politics from women. As the title of the novel demonstrates, the platforms for political agency available to them differ significantly from those provided by male-dominated trade-unionism. The two main demonstrations within the novel are a protest against capitalism – which takes place in Florence – and a protest in Scotland opposing the war with Iraq. However, these platforms for political agency prove hostile for Clare, who is raped by fellow demonstrator Julian.<sup>60</sup> Demonstrations and student politics are shown to be ineffective for both protagonists, who become aware of their futility in the course of the novel. These demonstrations are intended to provide a platform for global solidarity. However, they fail to manifest this solidarity between the main characters, who remain alienated from each other throughout the novel. Ultimately, *Demo* places more emphasis on Clare and Laetitia's individual narratives than on their experiences of collective political action, foregrounding the forging of their individual political identities and their discoveries of radical inheritance. Their narratives often mirror each other, in an intertextual narrative structure which evokes – but never fully realises – the female political solidarity desired by the novel.

For example, both protagonists are shown to be interested in the arts, often referencing paintings, sculptures and music. Working-class, teenage Clare in particular views fine art as the site of radical resistance and agency:

The gallery's got a bit high ceiling and there's like statues all round the walls. One a them's got one arm behind him, twisted up his back and the other one coverin his face. His feet are still buried and his prick's been knocked off. He looks like he's pure stuck in the stone.

Another one is sorta sittin *in* the stone and he's holdin this big block where his head should be. And then there's one wae a beard and bands round his legs.

[...]

Julian points at the huge statue at the end of the gallery. The *David*. I look up at it. And then I look back to the slaves. It's like ... that's it ... if you

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<sup>60</sup> Alison Miller, *Demo*, p. 40.

manage to get out the stone ... you ... you can ... he's so amazin ... I don't care what the guidebook says.<sup>61</sup>

Clare's encounter with the partially-sculpted stone prisoners foregrounds *Demo's* narratives of partially submerged identity. The female characters lead partially hidden lives. Clare's hair contains a stolen dreadlock from Julian's head, carefully concealed amongst her own dreadlocks. Clare's friend Farkhanda refuses to divulge the meaning of the Urdu slogan on her anti-war demonstration placard to Clare and the others present at the demo. Laetitia hides her antidepressants from her partner Julian. Clare does not tell her parents that Julian has raped her, despite her parents' eventual friendship with Julian, Laetitia and their son. Laetitia does not reveal that Danny, not Julian, may be the father of her child. Laetitia's great-aunt has censored her journal, concealing crucial parts of her narrative of female political action and her relationship with another woman. The novel's female characters maintain partially submerged, elusive identities, in contrast to the fully-realised 'David'. Clare's admiration of the sculpture represents her desire for agency and autonomy, signified by the action of 'get[ting] out the stone'.

The portrayal of enabling and profound encounters with fine art is common to both Clare and Laetitia's narratives. Laetitia's sections of the novel are scattered with extracts from her great-aunt's diary, which detail her experiences as a suffragette and protester during the 1910s. This great-aunt is also named Laetitia, positing younger Laetitia as the inheritor of her radical politics as well as her diary and providing one of the novel's many examples of interpersonal connections between women's experiences. An extract from the diary recalls Clare's profound encounter with art in Florence:

Today in la Galleria degli Uffizi we saw a painting of Judith beheading Holofernes. As soon as my eyes lit upon it, I knew: a woman has painted this! And so it proved. The painter's name was Artemisia Gentileschi. Her subjects [...] were so muscular and alive to each other, it was clear no man could have conceived the vision.<sup>62</sup>

Gentileschi's painting provides an image of female solidarity between women of two different classes, in which Judith and her maid Abra co-operate in order to

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<sup>61</sup> Alison Miller, *Demo*, p. 35.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 196-97.

destroy a destructive and tyrannical man. The painting has been widely interpreted as Gentileschi's 'revenge against the man who raped her'.<sup>63</sup> This resonates with Clare's experience of rape at the hands of overbearing Julian. The co-operation between the women in the painting anticipates the solidarity that is never realised between Laetitia and Clare, and also provides one of the novel's many instances of intertextuality. Judith is a figure associated with empowered, politically active women, posited by Emma L. E. Rees as 'Gentileschi's alter ego' and credited with having 'pragmatically [redrawn] the boundaries of gendered roles' through her slaughter of a man who has besieged her city.<sup>64</sup> The book of the Bible that bears her name is absent from the canon, confined to the Apocrypha. The reference to Judith foregrounds the submergence of women within the social order and the concealment enacted by Miller's female characters.

The artistic and interpersonal identifications in *Demo* posit a lineage of politically-minded women, who have forged a submerged narrative of female radicalism through the mediums of art and writing. These provide a platform for Miller's emergent female solidarities, which function across generations, classes, races, nationalities, and religions, anticipating the connections 'across the margins' that cultural nationalism forecloses. This emergent solidarity is realised on a textual level throughout the novel. As Julian indicates, '[i]t's intertextuality, darlings. Interfuckingtextuality' which is key to an understanding of the novel's intersecting narratives, which formally enact a solidarity between women that is never fully realised by the plot.<sup>65</sup> For example, both Laetitia and her great-aunt write journals, and both Laetitia and Clare discover journals. Clare's reading of Laetitia's journal mirrors Laetitia's reading of her aunt's, in one manifestation of the women's uncannily similar existences. Intertextuality is a prominent theme

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<sup>63</sup> Barbara Gunnell, 'The Rape of Artemisia', *The Independent* (Sunday 04 July 1993). Available at: <<http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/the-rape-of-artemisia-four-hundred-years-ago-this-week-artemisia-genteleschi-was-born-in-rome-today-she-is-recognised-as-a-great-painter-but-for-more-than-three-centuries-her-works-have-regularly-been-attributed-to-other-artists-all-of-them-men-in-1612-she-was-allegedly-raped-by-a-painter-in-her-fathers-studio-and-so-she-brought-him-to-trial-1482748.html>> [accessed December 2014].

<sup>64</sup> Emma L. E. Rees, *The Vagina: A Literary and Cultural History* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), p. 152.

<sup>65</sup> Alison Miller, *Demo*, p. 170.

throughout the novel. It enables the reader to negotiate between Clare and Laetitia's narratives, inviting readings which foreground the artistic and political traditions they have both inherited. This anticipates the construction of a radicalised female society. For Julia Kristeva, such a female society has feminist significance in its refusal to identify with an existing sociosymbolic contract:

[T]here are [...] radical feminist currents which, refusing homologation to any role of identification with existing power no matter what the power may be, make of the second sex a *countersociety*. A 'female society' is then constituted as a sort of alter ego of the official society, in which all real or fantasized possibilities for *jouissance* take refuge. Against the sociosymbolic contract, both sacrificial and frustrating, this countersociety is imagined as harmonious, without prohibitions, free and fulfilling.<sup>66</sup>

However, rather than indicating the forging of a harmonious counter-society that eliminates the frustrations of the established sociosymbolic order, the intertextualities within the novel frequently become sites of alienation and frustration, demonstrating the protagonists' continued antagonisms towards each other and mutual separation from their radical inheritances. Thus Miller's novel evades the textual construction of a 'fetishist counterpower', which Kristeva argues is the logical conclusion of a counter-society.<sup>67</sup> Such a counterpower generates 'its essence as a simulacrum of the combated society or of power' by reconstructing the exclusions and systemic violence of the sociosymbolic contract it seeks to counter.<sup>68</sup> Rather than establishing such a counterpower, the counter-narrative of female radicalism established by the novel is always partial, fragmented and emergent. The absence of crucial pages from great-aunt Laetitia's diary serves to alienate Laetitia from an inheritance of radical female political identity, even as the diary establishes her connection with this inheritance. Similarly, Clare's education serves to alienate her from a radical tradition in national literature. Despite her aptitude for English literature, she does not sit her Higher English exam – for reasons that are omitted in her narrative. Her English teacher criticises her vernacular speech, ironically in the context of a discussion about the vernacular Scottish novel *Sunset Song*:

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<sup>66</sup> Julia Kristeva, 'Women's Time', translated by Alice Jardine and Harry Blake, *Signs* Vol. 7, No. 1 (Autumn, 1981), pp. 13-35 (p. 27).

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

Chae's WENT and joined up, has he? You know better than that, Clare. What have I told you about the Glasgow past participle? You'll never get your higher English if you insist on using it.<sup>69</sup>

The same English teacher later comments on Clare's essay on *Sunset Song*: 'No taint in your written work of demotic Glasgow speech, I'm delighted to see!'<sup>70</sup> Despite the education system's ratification of (some) vernacular texts, Clare's own vernacular speech is proscribed, portraying an education system that neutralises the radical implications of art, alienating students from a cultural inheritance of politicised resistance. In another of *Demo*'s many instances of intertextuality, *Sunset Song* has a protagonist who faces the same dilemma as Clare: whether to go to University, or not. Also mirroring Clare's experience, Chris Guthrie/Tavendale is raped by her lover. Clare recognises the parallel, quoting a part of *Cloud Howe* in her narrative, commenting that: 'It comes back to me when I think of bein with Julian. Only I canny imagine knowin him that well. Or Julian knowin me'.<sup>71</sup> In the novel, these intertextual connections and empathies become substitutes for an empathy which is not realised by the protagonists. Where they fail to realise the solidarity which the text enacts, their shared experience is mediated through similar, shared encounters with art.

However, the connections which Laetitia makes between Clare and art also serve to alienate the women from each other. Laetitia continually describes Clare in terms derived from painting and literature, viewing her as a 'cross between a Burne-Jones and a Waterhouse vaguely, with hair by Rosetti'.<sup>72</sup> Elsewhere she compares Clare to Austen's Elizabeth Bennett, quoting 'my courage always rises with every attempt to intimidate me' in reference to 'a definite hard gleam' she notices in Clare's countenance.<sup>73</sup> Laetitia repeatedly refers to Clare as a 'nymph', which resonates with Laetitia's repeated encounters with artistic renderings of nymphs throughout the novel: in the stained glass art in her mother's house, and in the Burne-Jones painting reproduced on the shower curtain she installs in her Glasgow flat. Clare seems to haunt Laetitia's consciousness through the presence of these nymphs in both her homes,

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<sup>69</sup> Alison Miller, *Demo*, p. 228.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 243.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 227.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 246.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 200 (Miller's emphasis).

emphasising the closeness of the women's experiences in spite of their apparent alienation from each other.

The novel's identification of Clare with art becomes particularly sinister and misogynistic in Julian's male gaze. The quotes from Henry Miller's novels that Laetitia finds written in Julian's handwriting recall the scenes he has acted out with Clare during sex, and indicate his desire to reduce Clare to a 'whore' stereotype of female identity.<sup>74</sup> Laetitia's designation of Clare as a 'nymph' reiterates this misogynist desire to contain Clare within stereotypes of female identity, and seeks to reduce her to a consumable artefact such as a novel or shower curtain. The novel thus portrays ambivalent negotiations between the two women and the artistic and written narratives which they encounter and inherit. Where the statues and paintings in Florence enable a female identification with a politics of resistance, other literary and visual artefacts reinforce the women's alienation from each other, and counter the female solidarity enacted by the novel on a structural level. For Toril Moi in her reading of Hélène Cixous, the construction of a united female opposition to the patriarchal sociosymbolic order would reproduce the oppositional binaries that Cixous opposes:

[F]or a feminist to continue advocating binary thought, implicitly or explicitly, would seem to be tantamount to remaining inside patriarchal metaphysics. The idea of a unified *female* opposition pitting itself against a *male* front would thus not be a possible feminist strategy for the defeat of patriarchy: on the contrary, it would shore up the very system it sees to undo. Against any binary scheme of thought, Cixous sets multiple, heterogeneous *difference*.<sup>75</sup>

The continuing alienation between Clare and Laetitia – as well as their difference from each other in terms of class, nationality and accent – enables *Demo* to evade the construction of a fully realised, united counter-society that reproduces the binary oppositions perpetuated by patriarchy.

Nonetheless, fleeting, partial and intuitive connections between the two women are continually evoked by the novel. In Florence, Laetitia is struck by 'the

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<sup>74</sup> Alison Miller, *Demo*, pp. 161-62

<sup>75</sup> Toril Moi, 'Feminist, Female, Feminine', in Catherine Belsey and Jane Moore (eds), *The Feminist Reader*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 1997), pp. 104-16 (p. 111).

growing apprehension that she didn't want to be there' whilst having sex with Clare's older brother Danny:

It was more an apprehension. She apprehended something. But what? It felt utterly momentous at the time. Something not to be ignored. Or the whole of one's life could be blown off course. It was this that had made her cry as she came.<sup>76</sup>

Simultaneously within the novel's timeframe, Clare is also crying, in the aftermath of her own sexual encounter. However, despite repeated striking similarities between the women's experiences, and Laetitia's intuitive suspicion that Julian has abused Clare, the relationship between the women is characterised more by animosity than solidarity: 'She felt something close to empathy for her. Close, but not close enough to offer any kindness. She wanted her out. Now'.<sup>77</sup>

At the end of the novel, the female solidarity evoked by the text remains unrealised between the characters:

[E]very Tuesday and Thursday I'm pure keyed up, wonderin if it will be Laetitia or Julian collectin the wean. Yesterday it was Laetitia. She makes a point of talkin to me, bein nice, but the nicer she is, the more my face willny behave itsel.<sup>78</sup>

The animosity and alienation between the women intersects with, and contradicts, the text's representations of their shared experience, and their intuition with regard to each other's experience. In another moment of half-realised insight into the other woman's life, Clare remarks of Laetitia's baby: 'I don't see nothin a Julian in him', resonating with Laetitia's suspicions that Danny is the father.<sup>79</sup> Where both Laetitia and Clare feel misunderstood by and alienated from their mothers, the significance of aunts in the novel seems to present another of its many instances of intertextual and interpersonal connection: Laetitia inherits her great-aunt's diary and her politics of social justice, Clare leaves her parents' home in order to live with her aunt at the end of the novel. The possibility that Clare is aunt to Laetitia's baby manifests another covert connection between the two women. Clare's aunt lives near Faslane, which the novel identifies as a site of female political action, demonstrating that Clare, like Laetitia, has inherited her politics of female resistance and protest from a radical lineage:

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<sup>76</sup> Alison Miller, *Demo*, p. 106

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 117.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 312.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 304.

I'll maybe even check out the Peace Camp at Faslane. There's gonny be protests there just before the G8 this summer. Jed says three women got into a wee blow-up dinghy a few years back, steered it out to one a the nuclear submarines, climbed up and done some damage wi wire cutters and glue; jammed winches, wrecked computers, chucked stuff over the side. The Trident Three. One a them was over sixty! Another time two women *swam* out and boarded a submarine to protest against weapons of mass destruction.<sup>80</sup>

Where both women are posited as inheritors of a radical, resistant politics rooted in female agency, the consolidation of a collective female radical identity is frustrated by their alienation from each other. Throughout *Demo*, Clare and Laetitia are shown to have similar experiences and similar habits of concealing these experiences, which mirror the process of self-censorship great-aunt Laetitia enacts in ripping out the pages of her diary – a process Laetitia will eventually adapt in her own diary, scoring out the beginnings of thoughts which she decides not to record, for reasons which she does not divulge to the reader. The 'reconstructive' quality which Jones discerns in some modern Scottish fiction is manifest in *Demo*'s intertextual connections between fragmented, partially-obscured, simultaneous narratives.<sup>81</sup> As Laetitia attempts to 'piece together some kind of narrative' of her great-aunt's experience through reading her fragmented diary, Miller's novel invites her readers to mirror this process of reconstructive reading.<sup>82</sup>

*Demo* imagines a narrative of female radical identity enabled by the character's negotiations with writing and art, anticipating 'the gradual appearance of new possibilities' of communal identity which characterise contemporary Scottish fiction according to Carole Jones.<sup>83</sup> In her reading of devolutionary Scottish fiction, Jones observes that:

[I]t is generally the women in these texts who are more able to live and imagine life beyond the traditional styles. Thus, this devolutionary Scottish fiction suggests that re-imagining identities may most fruitfully

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<sup>80</sup> Alison Miller, *Demo*, p. 319.

<sup>81</sup> Carole Jones, *Disappearing Men: Gender Disorientation in Scottish Fiction 1979 – 1999* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2009), p. 189.

<sup>82</sup> Alison Miller, *Demo*, p. 184.

<sup>83</sup> Carole Jones, *Disappearing Men: Gender Disorientation in Scottish Fiction 1979 – 1999*, p. 192.

begin with a reconsideration and revaluation of the feminine, the principal goal of feminism.<sup>84</sup>

In accordance with this agenda, Miller's novel evokes a re-imagining of collective identities which is centred on women's experience, which opposes the submergence of women within dominant, phallogentric narratives of history, art and politics. In this respect the novel contrasts with – and transcends – *Black Watch*'s residual masculinism and exploitation of established literary tropes, stripped of their radical implications. Where *Black Watch* reiterates male-dominated narratives of war, neo-imperialism and post-industrial decline, utilising tropes established by earlier Scottish writing in its construction of an evocative spectacle of broken masculinity, *Demo* utilises these tropes in order to posit an alternative tradition rooted in a submerged narrative of female radicalism. This transcends the re-inscription of national boundaries enacted through the solidarity of the Black Watch, positing a new basis for communal identity and solidarity which challenges – rather than reinforces – the boundaries of the nation-state.

**‘I Wouldnae Stick to the Uniform’: Autonomy and its limits in *The Panopticon***

Like the other works discussed in this chapter, Jenni Fagan's debut novel *The Panopticon* is clearly influenced by vernacular Scottish writing from the 1980s and 90s. Its protagonist, Anais Hendricks, is a fifteen-year-old girl in the state care system, with no family and no knowledge of her origins. She has had several names, and continually constructs and reconstructs identities for herself through an imaginative 'birthday game', demonstrating that identity in *The Panopticon* is impermanent and disconnected from any fixed origins or inheritance. Anais's adoptive mother, a prostitute, has been murdered, and Anais has been shunted from foster home to foster home, eventually ending up at the Panopticon – an institute for young offenders in the care system. Anais is the site of a radical individuality, in which she is profoundly disconnected from any conventional markers of belonging or collectivity, such as family, nation, tradition or

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<sup>84</sup> Carole Jones, *Disappearing Men: Gender Disorientation in Scottish Fiction 1979 – 1999*, p. 191.

community. Carole Jones has identified the disintegration of the family unit as an enabling trope in post-devolution Scottish writing:

The breakdown of the family, particularly in the patriarchal mode, is almost ubiquitous in this writing, and considering this model traditionally informed the conceptualisation of the nation, this breakdown signals a changing attitude towards Scotland itself. Resisting the paradigm of the ‘intact, wholesome and self-contained’ nation promoted by the patriarchal model, a break with this conception of the family signifies a willingness to ‘develop a more clearly defined and morally superior sense of national identity’ that is not founded on the norm of hegemonic masculinity.<sup>85</sup>

However, *The Panopticon*, like the other texts explored in this chapter, is not concerned with re-imagining national identity, but with the creation of alternative identities – both individual and collective. Reviewing the novel, Martin Macaulay has located a community identity formed by the residents at the Panopticon, which indicates a bid to re-imagine the family: ‘[Anais] and her fellow residents form their own family of sorts, their histories a unifying, shared experience’.<sup>86</sup> However, like all Anais’s individual and group identities, this alternative family – and the relative security it offers her – is fleeting and temporary.

Anais’s lack of identity is a prominent theme in the novel:

Identity problem. Funny that. Fifty odd moves, three different names, born in a nuthouse to a nobody that was never seen again. Identity *problem*? I dinnae have an identity problem – I dinnae have an identity, just reflex reactions and a disappearing veil between this world and the next.<sup>87</sup>

Identity in *The Panopticon* is always fleeting, temporary, and oppositional. Not knowing who she is, Anais constantly defines and redefines herself in terms of what she is not. Where her disregard for the law is apparent in her frequent use of drugs – and occasional indulgences in violence, underage sex, theft and arson – she outlines her own personal morality in antagonistic, oppositional terms: ‘I’d die before I’d pick on someone. I would. You dinnae bully people, ever, cos all bullies are cowards and I umnay a fucking coward. [...] I’d take my own life, I mean totally fucking kill myself, before I’d hurt even one hair on a bairn’s

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<sup>85</sup> Carole Jones, *Disappearing Men: Gender Disorientation in Scottish Fiction 1979 – 1999*, pp. 190-91.

<sup>86</sup> Martin Macaulay, ‘The Panopticon’, *Edinburgh Review* 135 (2012), pp. 139-40 (p. 140).

<sup>87</sup> Jenni Fagan, *The Panopticon*, p. 99.

head?'.<sup>88</sup> Throughout the novel, Anais is acutely aware of power hierarchies and her own status as subject to various authorities, some of which may be entirely her own invention. She believes she is being watched by an experiment, which she suspects may have created her in the absence of any evidence as to her real origins. Anais's constant state of opposition to power and control is enacted through an imagined, creative resistance:

The Panopticon windows are lit blue; the night-nurse'll be in now. That building is not a place to live, it's a place to grow specimens. The experiment know I'm back. They're pissed I slipped off their radar for two seconds. They obviously cannae see girls who fly on cats. I'll pretend I didnae go off their radar, but I know I did. If you can do it once, you can do it again, right?<sup>89</sup>

Anais's imagination resists totalising institutions, allowing her an autonomy which the state care system denies her.

Although the 'experiment' Anais resists is an imagined authority, her incarceration in the Panopticon, where she is subject to constant surveillance and reports from various officials, means that her paranoia that she is being watched has some grounding in reality. Both the imagined experiment and the Panopticon itself function as metaphors for the care system, and demonstrate the influence of James Kelman, whose novels and short stories frequently critique state institutions – the DHSS, the healthcare system, and the education system – which his protagonists depend on for survival, but which ultimately function to contain and control those who depend on them. Through her imagining of an experiment, Anais internalises the surveillance dynamic enacted by the Panopticon. This conforms to Michel Foucault's musings on the structure's design, which instils the watched individual with the functions of both agent and subject of surveillance:

He who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself; he inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjection. By this very fact, the external power may throw off its physical weight; it tends to the non-corporal; and, the more it approaches this limit, the more constant, profound and permanent are its effects: it is a

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<sup>88</sup> Jenni Fagan, *The Panopticon*, p. 19.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 156.

perpetual victory that avoids any physical confrontation and which is always decided in advance.<sup>90</sup>

Anais internalises the control exerted on her by the Panopticon, and the state authority which it represents. This control cannot be effectively resisted by Anais, since the care system is both a mechanism by which she is contained, and necessary for her survival. On one occasion where she manages to escape from the building in order to visit a boyfriend, she is gang-raped, filmed and exploited as a substitute currency in lieu of her boyfriend's failure to pay his drug-debts while in prison. Where Kelman's characters seek autonomy by raging against the institutions of the state, autonomy for Anais is dangerous, and only leaves her more vulnerable. Her attempts to resist totalising state institutions through vandalism, violence and theft – however humorously spectacular these appear to the reader – merely serve to further institutionalise her, as one reviewer notes:

Is Anais' compulsion to defy the rules and offend her superiors actually evidence that the system is working on her – compelling her by systematic devaluation to sustain a life of petty criminality rather than deploying her much-vaunted intellectual gifts to 'better herself'? Is she rebelling, or allowing herself to be kept down?

Anais is not only in prison, but in a psychological trap known to all dispossessed and disenfranchised youth: no way out of her life appeals, since to change for her own good is to join a system that has treated her with contempt.<sup>91</sup>

Anais's imagining of an experiment, and her imagined resistance to it, is the site of her internalisation of the power-dynamic between the state and herself. She cannot confront a state power which is always deferred through social workers and officials, and cannot escape from the confines of a system which has always already foreclosed her desire for autonomy, since she depends upon it. In the absence of any more effective means of resistance to power, the primary site of Anais's resistance is her imagination.

Another site of Anais's struggle against the containment which the care system embodies is language. Her social worker, Angus, produces a report which provides an account of the young people who live in the Panopticon. It

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<sup>90</sup> Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: the Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Penguin, 1977), pp. 202-03.

<sup>91</sup> *The Scotsman*, 'Book Review: The Panopticon, Jenni Fagan', in *The Scotsman*, 06 May 2012. Available at: <<http://www.scotsman.com/lifestyle/books/book-review-the-panopticon-jenni-fagan-1-2277535>> [accessed December 2014].

demonstrates their opposition to institutional discourse and its imposed definitions of their identity:

The residents in the Panopticon have publicly stated that they refuse to identify themselves as ‘Cared-for Young People’. [...] they cited among their reasons that: ‘cared-for was blatantly taking the piss’ (their words). Staff at the Panopticon were recently informed that ‘Clients’ is going to remain the term used to describe residents. [...] One girl stated that Clients was inappropriate, as ‘Clients have the right to respond’. The residents do not think they have this right.<sup>92</sup>

The relationship between the young people and the care system is one of resistance, exemplified here by a refusal to be identified or contained by terms established by the system. Anais voices her objection to these terms, responding to one of her careworkers, who asks if she is ‘having an outing later’, with ‘Why can you not just say – are you going out?’<sup>93</sup>

Anais’s own vernacular language, privileged on a formal level as the language of narrative, becomes the site of her individuality and refusal to be contained by official terms. Fagan views the Scottish vernacular language with which Anais speaks as the textual embodiment of her autonomy and her resistance to institutional, state power:

She didn’t want to do kind of what the system wanted her to do, and she didn’t really want to do what I wanted her to do. Until I got it right, and allowed her to speak for herself in the novel, it didn’t work. And as soon as I let her speak for herself in the novel, including the fact that she speaks in Scottish, she then completely came to life as her own being.<sup>94</sup>

Anais’s demotic language signifies her alternative identity and her transgression of institutional containment and control. She continually pushes the boundaries of expected behaviour, refusing to conform to any imposed codes of conduct which threaten to contain or restrict her identity:

‘So what were you doing?’  
 ‘I was getting laid.’  
 He turns on the engine and looks at me.  
 ‘You cannae say things like that tae yer support worker, Anais.’  
 ‘I just did.’<sup>95</sup>

<sup>92</sup> Jenni Fagan, *The Panopticon*, pp. 19-20.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 138.

<sup>94</sup> Jenni Fagan, ‘Granta Best Young British Novelist Jenni Fagan’. Available at: <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DqawLwbobxY#t=229>> [accessed December 2014].

<sup>95</sup> Jenni Fagan, *The Panopticon*, p. 167.

Anais continually says what she ‘cannaie say’, positing language as one of the few repositories she has for autonomy. In *The Panopticon*, demotic Scots speech serves as an assertion of individual identity and the site of transgression, rather than an assertion of national identity. For Matthew Hart, ‘with vernacular language and forms subject (as all media become subject) to modernism’s critique of representation, vernacular discourse could not possibly be explained according to a bifocal logic between the native and the foreign, between what “we” are and are not’.<sup>96</sup> Anais’s use of vernacular language does not indicate a sense of belonging to a community, region or nation, but is rather the site of her refusal to fully belong to the care system.

However, Anais’s use of vernacular language marks her out as belonging to a novelistic tradition in Scottish literature which has been established by cultural nationalist criticism. Where Anais does not know her origins, she has inherited the established tenets of 1980s and 90s Scottish fiction. Her existence may not be the result of an experiment, but it is the result of an experimental literature, in which vernacular language has played a central role. Where Anais constantly rails against and resists totalising discourses, the discourse which she cannot evade is that of cultural nationalist literary criticism, which posits her language, her damaged identity, her resistance to authoritative power and her sense of traditionlessness as markers of a national literary inheritance. Macaulay observes that ‘Anais has a constant sense of being part of someone else’s game plan’.<sup>97</sup> Her resistance to agendas which seek to appropriate her is manifest in her oppositional relationship to her social worker, Helen:

The *I can save you* brigade are particularly radioactive. They think if you just inhale some of their middle-classism, then you’ll be saved.

Helen’s like that. [...] What she really didnae like, though, was that I wouldnae stick to the uniform. No hair extensions, no tracksuits, no gold jewellery. That really pissed her off. The first time she saw me in a pillbox hat and sailor shorts, you’d have thought I’d just slapped her granny.

She wanted a case that was more rough-looking. More authentic, so that she could take me for meetings at that bistro near hers, where her posh pals would see and think she was dead cutting-edge and that.<sup>98</sup>

<sup>96</sup> Matthew Hart, *Nations of Nothing But Poetry: Modernism, Transnationalism, and Synthetic Vernacular Writing* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 43.

<sup>97</sup> Martin Macaulay, ‘The Panopticon’, p. 140.

<sup>98</sup> Jenni Fagan, *The Panopticon*, p. 185.

Anais's literal self-styling as a vintage fashion icon enables her to construct an alternative identity, which evades Helen's desire to contain her within a recognisable stereotype of 'authentic', working-class, youth identity. However, this self-styling is dependent on what Anais buys and wears, indicating a commodification of identity which differs considerably from earlier Scottish writing's creation of identities which resist the structures of global capitalism. In this context, Anais's refusal to conform is an evasion of one totalising system via collusion with the ultimate totalising system within modernity – that of global consumer capitalism. Is Anais's Scottish vernacular language simply another accessory, acquired off-the-peg in the same manner as her pillbox hats?

Fagan's utilisation of an established style of urban vernacular writing indicates a display of difference which ultimately colludes with the logic of literary marketing. This display of national difference as consumable alternative identity is comparable to the analysis of Treacherous Orchestra's practice provided in Chapter Three. A *New York Times* reviewer has noted *The Panopticon*'s success in courting comparison with a well-established and highly marketable literary sub-genre:

What we have here is a fine example of Caledonian grunge, wherein writers north of the River Tweed grab the English language by the lapels, dunk it in the gutter and kick it into filthy, idiomatic life, thus leaving terrified book reviewers with no option but to find them 'gritty' or 'authentic'.<sup>99</sup>

For Michael Gardiner, the success of James Kelman's recent writing is in its evasion of the demands of a global literary marketplace. He argues:

The local is linked to the global via the systematic nature of cultural capital, and nations accumulate status, authority and legitimacy via recognition by literary institutions of global reach. Classic works and characteristic styles then become distinctive and are 'nationalised' to serve as models. This means that the differentiating function of a national literature depends less on the achievements of the singular genius than on the sameness of its institutional productions of a model, and national tradition is the demand to compete for distinctness, marketing literary

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<sup>99</sup> Tom Shone, 'Surveillance State: "The Panopticon", by Jenni Fagan', in *The New York Times* (18 July 2013). Available at: [http://www.nytimes.com/2013/07/21/books/review/the-panopticon-by-jenni-fagan.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/07/21/books/review/the-panopticon-by-jenni-fagan.html?_r=0). [accessed January 2016].

products along ethnic lines. Frequently Scottish literature is divided into schools along these lines and prepared for a global literary marketplace.<sup>100</sup>

Each of the texts explored by this chapter could be considered as following an established, nationalised model, conforming to market demand for literary displays of Scottish, working-class difference. This conformance to an established model entrenches Scottish literature within monolithic constructions, which re-inscribe the homogeneity associated with the nation-state and its maintenance of capitalist structures in Ernest Gellner's formulation (see introduction). For Stefanie Lehner, an ethical reading of subaltern radical alterity 'insists on the non-identity and incommensurability of [subaltern] demands with a capitalist utopia', rupturing attempts 'to rewrite inequality in a class society as heterogeneity or pluralism'.<sup>101</sup> This concern with a postnational and postmodern agenda, which threatens to obscure inequality through its emphasis on a plurality of difference, has become more widely discernable within current Scottish literary criticism. The criticism discussed below opposes a perceived literary exploitation of vernacular forms, which utilizes their alterity in collusion with a global market for aesthetic and identitarian 'difference' whilst divorcing them from the context of radical class politics.

### **Exploitation and Scottish literary studies**

Critics including Scott Hames, Kirstin Innes and Alex Thomson have identified Irvine Welsh's *Trainspotting* as the herald of a new era in Scottish fiction, characterised by texts which draw heavily on the influences of Kelman, Galloway and Gray, but which do not share their radical politics or aesthetic innovation. Thomson's concern that Welsh's novels are the manifestation of a literary trendiness could be applied to any of the texts explored by this chapter:

It may be true that Irvine Welsh's novels are sites where identity is challenged and negotiated, but they are also political and cultural artefacts in themselves: what if their virtuous hybridity turned out to be merely a

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<sup>100</sup> Michael Gardiner, 'Kelman and World English', in Scott Hames (ed.), *The Edinburgh Companion to James Kelman* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), pp. 99-110 (p. 99).

<sup>101</sup> Stefanie Lehner, *Subaltern Ethics in Contemporary Scottish Literature: Tracing Counter-Histories*, p. 10.

fashionable commodity rather than the energy of the oppressed rising from below?<sup>102</sup>

For Scott Hames, the use of an apparently resistant vernacular language in Scottish writing since and including *Trainspotting* has served not as the site of radical political energy, but as an appropriative marker of ‘cool marginality’ and “‘edgy,’ MTV Scottish difference’.<sup>103</sup> Countering Alan Bissett’s reading of new vernacular writing as the site of a resistant and politicised youth identity, Hames argues:

Just as the creative ‘recontextualisation’ of a musical sample presupposes its prior reification – its de-contextualisation and reduction to an aural pose – this ‘bad’ aestheticisation of vernacular language, reducing it to a colourful or gritty ‘idiom’ available for consumption and political exploitation cannot but participate in the MTV commodification Bissett sees this ‘New Weegie’ writing as counter-acting. The semiotic exoticism of the vernacular, encountered in the context of international popular culture, tends to reinforce identitarian display by ‘emptying’ (or, to side-step tropes of romantic embodiment, *shallowing*) the ideological inscription of the vernacular sign (as socially inferior speech). Far from ‘eradicating political, racial and national disparities’, this difference-fetishising appetite for signs, motifs and languages encrusted with historical conflict merely renders them up as exhilarating spectacle to the dislocated cosmopolitan consumer.<sup>104</sup>

Hames and Thomson’s analysis of the commodification of vernacular literature’s structural and formal developments demonstrates a new concern within Scottish literary studies. However, their readings indicate a further impasse in the field. Now that there is a recognisable modern Scottish literary tradition, how can this be utilised by a new generation of writers in a way which furthers, rather than exploits, its radical politics of resistance, de-centring and marginal recovery?

For Kirstin Innes, some new Scottish writing is redeemed from accusations of exploitation through its continuation of a de-centring agenda, which enacts the literary enfranchisement of other forms of marginal identity:

What these writers have in common, aside from a nasty media-stereotyping rash, is that they all write about Scottish urban life at the turn of the millennium. Some writers – Christopher Brookmyre for example –

<sup>102</sup> Alex Thomson, ‘Review: Scottish Culture After Devolution’, *Scottish Affairs* 55 (Spring 2006), pp. 129-34 (p. 132).

<sup>103</sup> Scott Hames, ‘On Vernacular Scottishness and its Limits: Devolution and the Spectacle of “Voice”’, *Studies in Scottish Literature* Vol. 39: Iss. 1 (August 2013), pp. 203-24 (p. 210).

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 215-16.

deliberately court comparison with Welsh by employing *Trainspotting*'s code of fucks, cunts, scatological humour and casual, brutal violence, proving themselves to be not only beyond doubt Scottish-identified but also keen to appropriate, and financially benefit from, the new literary kudos of 'cutting-edge', working-class machismo. By contrast, recent novels by Zoe Strachan, Bissett and Saadi problematise the difficulties of enunciating and authenticating a voice that is both identifiably Scottish and representative of an 'other form of difference'.<sup>105</sup>

For Innes, an ongoing commitment to 'difference', which rearticulates Scottishness with emergent identities, counters the exploitative qualities of writing which fetishises established tropes of literary Scottishness. However, this rearticulation does not exempt new vernacular writing from charges of effacing inequalities through a fetishisation of difference.

These readings transcend the dominant paradigm discussed in the introduction and first chapter to this study, in which literary texts are contained within terms of state devolution. However, they threaten to delimit the field in other ways by instigating a paradigm in which the works of new authors are read in terms of whether they are 'good' or 'bad' students of the Scottish urban Renaissance school. Nonetheless, these readings respond to the challenge to progress from critical reiterations of Scottishness, whilst demonstrating the limitations of former, cultural nationalist critical readings, which have implied that Scottish vernacular literature is invariably the site of a radical, resistant politics. For these critics, contemporary vernacular literature does not necessarily further, but counters and exploits, this radical literary inheritance.

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<sup>105</sup> Kirstin Innes, 'Mark Renton's Bairns: Identity and Language in the Post-*Trainspotting* Novel', p. 304.

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